

University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Impact of
Virtual Learning Environment

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Summary

This report will discuss the impact that online learning has had over students enrolled at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David London Campus.

We will review both the positive and negative impact the online learning has had over the students.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Students enjoy the flexibility that online learning has offered
- Students have been affected from a social point of view
- Online learning has affected the relationships usually formed between students and lecturers.
- Virtual learning is an efficient method of teaching.

The information presented in this report has been collected from both primary and secondary data.

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1. Introduction

Since the beginning of time a great emphasis has been placed on the act of learning and studying.

Acquiring knowledge such as writing, reading, mathematics has been one of the most important skills that a person can achieve for centuries. The education that people receive has evolved thorough time from the most basic skills to specific skills related to a certain field.

Due to the evolution of technology both teachers and students have introduced new elements in the learning process. From the most basic skills such a PowerPoint presentation, basic use of computers we have evolved to being able to have online classes thus eliminating the necessity of the classroom.

Specialist in the field can provide us with both positive and negative aspects on online teaching but in this report, we are going to consider a real-life situation and the way it affected the students.

Due to the spread of COVID-19 most schools have had to close-down for the time being and online teaching was implemented by most. This presented a challenge for both the teacher and the students as full-time online classes are a novelty in public schooling.

2. Findings

2.1 Online courses statistics in the UK

As I have mentioned before due to the progress of technology online courses have had a considerable success in the last few years.

This is due to the way society has progressed, companies requiring people to get certain qualifications, people not being able to physically attend courses due to workload, location and/or other reasons.

The positive points of attending an online course would be the following:

- Quick access to all learning material
- Time effective (participant does not need to travel to a certain location)
- Easy access to programs such as MS OFFICE
- Can be used by more than one person at the same time
- Flexible schedule

The negative points of attending an online course might be:

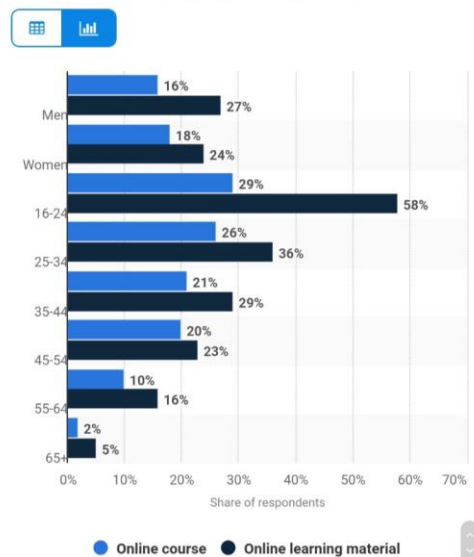
- Difficulty is using technology
- Lack of physical/social contact
- Unexpected system issues (lack of internet connection, system failure)
- Lack of participation to lectures

According to Statista¹ in 2019 most people taking online courses were aged between the age of 16 and 24 with men being the most likely to do so. The statistics have drastically changed during 2020 with most schools switching to online learning. (Pic 1)²

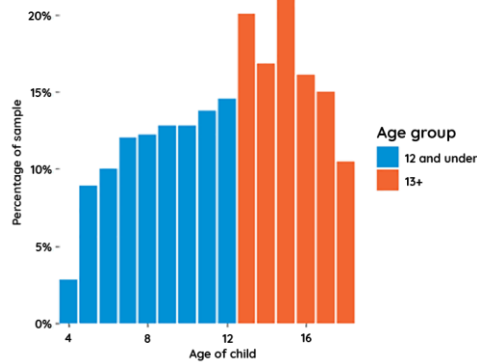
In this respect we can see the research done by the Children's Commissioner³ (Pic. 2) where we can see exactly how the spread of the Covid virus has affected schooling.

(Pic1)

Share of individuals using online learning materials and doing online courses in Great Britain in 2019, by age and gender



(Pic2)



2.2 Online classes in public schooling

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/882117/online-learning-in-the-uk-by-demographic/>

²

³ <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/2020/06/11/the-numbers-behind-homeschooling-during-lockdown/>

According to new research studies the switch from traditional classroom teaching to online courses has come with quite a lot of difficulties in the primary and secondary schools.

A new report done by the Institute for Fiscal Studies called " Learning during the lockdown: real-time data on children's experiences during home learning"⁴ has shown that online classes have not helped all students.

Amongst their key findings we found out that:

- Primary and secondary students are each spending about 5 hours a day on average on home learning
- Higher-income parents are much more likely than the less well-off to report that their child's school provides online classes and access to online videoconferencing with teachers
- Children from better-off families are spending 30% more time on home learning than are those from poorer families
- Many parents of both primary and secondary school students report struggling with supporting
- home learning.

2.3 Online classes in UK universities

Most universities have traditionally offered in the last few years the possibility of taking online courses. The courses were available for only in certain subjects of study but certainly not for full-time university studies.

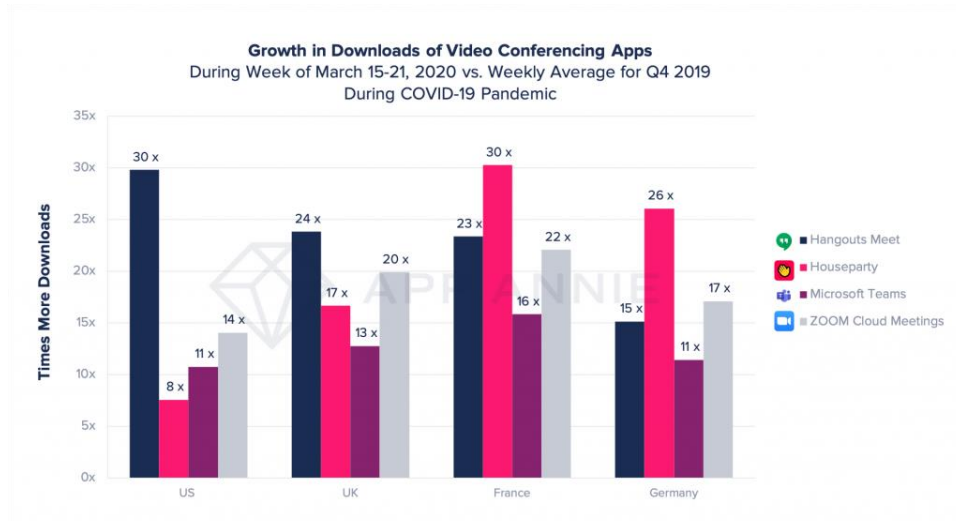
Due to the COVID 19 spread all the universities in UK have had to change to online courses to minimize the spread of the virus.

The sudden change in direction had a strong impact on both the lecturers and students as they had to adapt to the new system.

Luckily, there are several systems that are currently available for holding an online class. The most used currently are Zoom, Google Meets, Microsoft Teams, Skype.

⁴ Learning during the lockdown: real-time data on children's experiences during home learning

As an example according to Tech Crunch the number of people downloading video conferencing apps saw over 62 million downloads only in March 2020.⁵



2.4 Online Learning at University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Like most universities in the UK, University of Wales decided to switch to online courses.

The courses were moved from the classroom to Microsoft Teams with aid from the university own internal software Moodle.

The classes were held on Teams where both lecturers and students had access to video courses, chats, and the possibility of uploading documents.

The video conference program has all the necessary functions for a successful meeting to take place.

Moodle, the University software, was constantly updated with helpful information about the assignments, courses, useful links, and university updates.

Despite all this the entire concept of student has been completely overturned with a lack of the usual social aspect that goes with the usual student life.

To see how the switch to online courses has affected the students of the university we have proposed the following survey.

⁵ https://techcrunch.com/2020/03/30/video-conferencing-apps-saw-a-record-62m-downloads-during-one-week-in-march/?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAABbBGF9rb0VugOvRXDF2dEObUMMU3qu0EnwThYNISBt1yipsYFCyNTS89Y5QLOqsEJaecS3C7mtjOI3XPdN9BfLgecoPv9Y2jvJnype_U7h1cOdIDChahUxBaggy7cFWZwKT60mmiYnyeuOJHZP_eAkwN7WjGY519qsBWWRIHhXD

3. Survey

In order to support my research, I have created the following survey:

Subject: Virtual Learning at University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Target group: Group Skills in the Workplace Weekend (10 students)

Age group: 20-35

Aim: To investigate the overall satisfaction of the students with online classes

Results: The survey was sent out to 10 people.

Question 1: 6 people gave it an 8

2 people gave it a 4

1 person marked it as 10

Question 2: 5 people responded with 9

3 people responded with 7

2 people responded with 8

Question 3: 4 people responded with 6

2 people responded with 8

4 people responded with 7

Question 4. 6 people selected Content and Accessibility as their main priority.

4 people selected Content and Social aspect as their main priorities.

Question 5.

Overall responses were positive with people being happy with the flexibility the online courses provided. Most of them have mentioned the lack of social contact which is the greatest setback. Students feels supported by certain lecturers more so than others.

Question 6.

Students have suggested that for the time being they are happy with the online classed due to health concerns, but they are looking forward to returning to normal classrooms.

1. On a scale from 1 to 10 how satisfied were you with online courses?

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10

2. How satisfied were you with the use of Microsoft Teams?

Extremely dissatisfied

Somewhat satisfied

Neutral

Somewhat satisfied

Extremely satisfied

3. How satisfied were you with the use of Moodle?

Extremely dissatisfied

Somewhat satisfied

Neutral

Somewhat satisfied

Extremely satisfied

4. Rank the following items in terms of their priority to your online learning process.

Technology

Content

Accessibility

Flexibility

Social aspect

5. Please answer in a few short sentences to the following questions:

A) Do you feel you have learned more during online classes than you would have in the classroom?

B) Do you feel the quality of the classes has gone down due to the online change?

C) Do you feel you have received enough support from the university staff during the online term?

5. How can we improve your experience for the future?

4. Conclusions

In my paper I have tried to show with statistics and data how online learning has changed the normal student life.

From a life in the dorms, surrounded by colleagues, social events, and face-to-face lectures each of us has had to adapt to this new way of learning.

Online teaching has had a profound impact on students, and it will continue to do so. From a technological and flexibility point of view it was a good thing, but students still need traditional learning in a classroom as shown in the survey results.

5. References

1. Statista <https://www.statista.com/statistics/882117/online-learning-in-the-uk-by-demographic/>
2. Children Commisioner <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/2020/06/11/the-numbers-behind-homeschooling-during-lockdown/>
3. Learning during the lockdown: real-time data on children's experiences during home learning <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14848>
4. Tech Crunch https://techcrunch.com/2020/03/30/video-conferencing-apps-saw-a-record-62m-downloads-during-one-week-in-march/?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlMnVbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAABbBGF9rb0VugOvRXDF2dEObUMMU3qu0EnwThYNISBt1yjpsYFCyNTS89Y5QLOqsEJaecS3C7mtjOI3XPdN9BfLgecoPv9Y2jvJnype U7h1cOdIDChahUxBaggv7cFWZwKT60mmiYnyeuOJHZP eAkwn7WjGY519qsBWWRIHhXD

