

## Forum Insights

### TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING

#### SUMMARY RESULTS ARISING FROM THE NATIONAL FORUM 20Qs TEL SURVEY MAY 2014

Updated June 2015

#### Introduction

Technology offers opportunities to enhance teaching and learning in higher education. The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education conducted a survey to get a picture of how those teaching in higher education are engaging with technology in teaching and learning. We were particularly interested in getting a better picture of the attitudes and beliefs of education professionals regarding the actual and potential role for technology in education.

The survey ([http://www.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Survey\\_51093715.pdf](http://www.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Survey_51093715.pdf)) was distributed through the National Forum's contact network to those who teach in Universities, IoTs, Colleges of Education and Private Colleges. The responding sample (over 750 respondents) is a good reflection of the range of teaching staff in Irish higher education. This document presents a quick summary of the most relevant insights of the survey. A more detailed report will be available by the end of June 2015.

#### Engagement with TEL Activities

More than 80% of teachers in the sample expressed confidence in the use of technology in teaching. Three-quarters of the sample expressed a strong willingness to experiment with technology to enhance their teaching. Respondents generally shared a strong belief that students are competent with routine, discipline-specific and HEI-specific technology. Almost half the survey participants indicated that students look to their teachers for technology support. 25% of respondents reported being less confident than their students when using technology.

The survey indicates that the perceived barriers to engaging in TEL are diverse. The most frequently cited obstacles were lack of training, or the lack of time to attend training. Also cited were uncertainties regarding the possibilities afforded by TEL, and a relatively low expectation that support would be provided when required.

A third of the respondents agreed that the students, in all HEI types, drive the adoption of technology to enhance their learning. There was an almost unanimous view that technology will be an essential part of teaching in the future. 80% of respondents agree that HEIs encourage utilising technology in the interests of learning.

#### VLE use as a component of TEL activity

The most frequently reported important uses for VLEs include the distribution of learning materials, administration information and online assessment. Less frequently cited uses include the detection of plagiarism, student/teacher communications, and submission of coursework.

In general, respondents report using VLEs at least once a week and view them as a useful tool to enhance teaching and learning. VLEs are considered to be 'critical' to 70% of respondents; though there is not universal agreement among respondents about whether VLEs improve teaching. The main VLE uses (80%) are related to class management and dissemination of information, including email, slide-decks, video clips and links to other material, supported by general-purpose platforms. In contrast, applications specifically designed for the education environment e.g., Smartboard, Clickers, E-Portfolios and MOOCs etc., were reported to be used by relatively few (8%) of the respondents in this survey.

#### Teaching and learning-specific qualifications

The underlying trend among responding teachers with 5 or fewer years experience, suggests strong recognition of the importance of Teaching and Learning qualifications as evidenced by their having achieved, or intending to obtain a T&L-specific qualification. Roughly half of all respondents hold a qualification in teaching and learning. The most experienced teachers are least likely (42%) to report an intention to pursue such a qualification at this time.

#### Gender

In this sample, more females than males had achieved, or were pursuing a T&L qualification (F: 65%, M: 51%). More males than females reported that, at the moment, they do not intend to pursue such a qualification. (M: 34%, F: 22%).

#### HEI Role

Teachers who described their role as being 'primarily teaching and learning support with teaching' are most likely to report holding, pursuing or intending to pursue a T&L qualification (65%), while 19% report no current intention of pursuing one. 59% of those with roles described as 'primarily teaching with research' have or intend to have a T&L qualification, with 30% currently declaring no intention to pursue one. 54% of those occupying roles described as 'teaching only' hold or intend to hold a T&L qualification, while 29% currently have no intention of pursuing one.

## Employment Status

Most of the respondents who hold, or are in pursuit of, T&L specific qualifications are those occupying temporary, or permanent part-time positions. While the intention to pursue a qualification is similar across all employment status categories, those with permanent full-time positions are twice as likely as all others to indicate no current intention of pursue one.

## The role of Organisations in realising TEL

Respondents acknowledged the key role of the HEI in implementing, enabling, encouraging and supporting advances in Technology Enhanced approaches to learning. However, only 40% of respondents reported being aware of their home institute's TEL strategy. The TEL environment provided by the HEIs was experienced as 'at least adequate' in the preceding year. While many relied on supports such as HEI helpdesks and T&L Support units, very high proportions found their support among their peers, local champions, and online resources, these being cited most frequently by the newest teachers. The lack of training or time to engage in training were cited by teachers as barriers to engaging with TEL.

## Summary of survey participants' comments

Additional comments invited by the survey attracted positive and negative contributions in roughly equal measure. The respondents were positive regarding the convenience of tools enabling them to provide links, conduct polls, use wikis, present e-clips, videos, engage with adobe connect, class management, podcasts and so on. The advantages identified for students included mind maps, collaboration, submitting work, chatroom, learning journals, access to lectures and material, distance learning, and feedback.

A small proportion of the respondents reported that they have plans to acquire more TEL skills, to experiment, develop quizzes, support group work, and E-portfolios, and in one instance, to overcome their fear of technology.

Some suggested that National Forum produce guidelines and instructions for lecturers who want to integrate technology, but do not know how, or provide a 'drop-in' centre for TEL queries.

Survey participants made challenging comments regarding funding and resources for technology enhanced teaching. Some voiced their concern about its pedagogical value and expressed concern that technology cannot generate or substitute personal engagement in the classroom. Teaching with technology seemed to be associated with an extra commitment in time and effort, and reliant on technical support that was often seen as either inadequate or absent. There were some concerns that promoting Technology Enhanced Learning was a mask for more serious problems in Higher education and concerns that it underpinned a 'distance correspondence' culture and was constrained by institutional policies. There were minor complaints regarding desirable VLE functionality, and its shortcomings.

In general though, the survey reports a developing confidence with technology use, and its increasing importance to practitioners. Respondents generally consider technology in teaching to be indispensable, to enable discussion, offer a safe repository for submitted work, provide customised learning materials, enable concept-visualisation, to engage students, accommodate mixed ability groups, free-up time for research activity, in ways that can be used with, rather than instead of, face-to-face learning events. TEL is seen as enabling creative innovation including for example the 'flipped' classroom and allowing complete access to teaching materials thereby increasing class-contact time. While challenging traditional methods, technology in teaching is seen as supporting inclusion, and was broadly endorsed by respondents for its power to enhance the learning experience.