

**Widening access to
Maltese adult vocational education
in the digital age**

by

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Abstract

The role of information and communications technology (ICT) in widening participation in lifelong learning has been long established in various developed countries, including Malta. Though Maltese politicians and educationalists hail the importance of ICT, such initiatives are not fully integrated in all educational sectors. Particularly, ICT deployment is lacking in adult training during Evening Classes. ICT is being seen as a dynamic means of propagating education to people, irrespective of age. New styles of teaching are somewhat challenging, but educationalists have to consider society's prevailing approach to learning. In extending learning opportunities to 'anyone' at an 'anytime', from 'anywhere', there has been no empirical analysis on how ICT may actually assist educationalists and evening classes candidates alike in lifelong learning in Malta. With this in mind this investigation presents a converging analysis, through a comprehensive approach that integrates both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Different methodologies in obtaining primary data were deployed. These were F2F interviews with ex-evening classes students, two surveys were conducted one being with evening classes students enrolled for 2009 and the other with evening classes teachers. Lesson observations and focus groups were conducted with evening classes students who experienced some enhanced online teaching.

Overall, the study considered, through sampling, whether Maltese evening classes students preferred a mix of traditional and non-traditional (technology-enhanced) teaching methodologies to a more technology-oriented scenario. Subsequent analyses dealt with reasons underlying this choice. Of particular notice is the fact that, had courses been

available online, more than half of those (sampled) who had dropped stated they would have continued the course they had been pursuing.

Keywords

Training accessibility, Adult Education, Lifelong learning, e-learning, Technology-enhanced Teaching, Virtual Learning Environments, Digital Divide, Digital Change, Digital Choice, ICT, Educational policy, change management, educational innovation, flexible learning

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The study proposes an in-depth investigation about adult education in vocational evening classes that fall under the Department of Further Studies and Adult Education (DFSAE). The aim is to determine the status of participation in such courses with respect to the digital divide and the digital change. This will give policy makers and researchers a better view of the readiness of current Maltese society to embrace wider access and engagement through the use of ICT as proposed by the National eLearning strategy. Thus the underlying research question is: **How can the DFSAE widen its access to adult education through the use of ICT?**

Preliminary Study

The opening part of this research study is intended to define and describe lifelong learning. The factors that affect citizens to remain engaged in lifelong learning are diverse. Indeed Paula Ketter, a researcher, synthesizes these factors in the following statement:

“Technological advancements, competition, restructuring, “me-ism,” and globalization point to the need for lifelong learning ” Ketter (2006)

This post-modern perspective of lifelong learning is corroborated further by various oft-quoted post-modern philosophers, like Hargreaves (2004), Wain (2004), Schulz (Nov 2008, p2-9) and Rosenberg (2001). Demographic, technological and global rapid changes

are all affecting our rhythm of knowledge, bringing about the need to learn continuously and consistently throughout our life in an attempt to develop a better style of living for us and the coming generation.

"... the global economy has largely extinct the notion of a 'job for life'. The imperative now is employability for life.... New practices - seeing things differently in a service industry: from distinct glamour to DIY... We need to change the culture to enable our children to succeed.... [and] help people to engage in today's technology - children have to develop naturally within today's world. " Dykes & Khoot¹ (2007)

The economic and social skills are being challenged by countries from outside the EU. In addition global and regional problems such as the financial recession, global warming and migration are demanding a more informed society capable of collective decision making. Therefore, Malta has to think seriously about investing acutely in lifelong learning so as to strengthen the knowledge of its citizens and maximize their economic prosperity, productivity and, improve social justice. The alternative would lead the nation to economic stagnation, decline in competition, weakening of economic growth (which can be critical to the small size of Malta is with no natural resources) and the degeneration of social values.

Intrinsically, as stated by Dykes & Khoot (2007), in order to link the traditional with the modern we need to: 1) engage from passive to active; 2) from shallow learning to deep

¹ Strategy & plan to prepare the culture towards e systems: The economic and educational challenges - Malta ICT Day Seminar 23/05/07 at Le Meridian Phoenicia.

learning; 3) a step by step route. The past should not be replaced with technology, but to adopt it in a creative and appropriate way to exchange and enrich our knowledge.

Background

Local media often advise the importance of becoming knowledgeable in the use of technology. While to date, much progress has been registered, one cannot negate the existence of a digital divide, despite the relatively lower costs and even free access to computers and Internet. Effort is being made to minimize this problem, but we cannot accept the status quo, waiting for those that are on the wrong side of the divide to cross the border. What about those who are already on the right side of the divide, how are they using technology?

Technology may be utilized in different ways, but management is crucial. Today's people, mostly the internet generation, "prefer to learn by doing rather than by telling or reading" through the aid of the net (Oblinger, 2008). So, educators have to direct their students in gaining maximum benefit from this technology. ICT is a great motivating tool that may serve as a catalyst to make learning and teaching more pleasant and efficient.

"Each e-learning activity can aid high quality, effective teaching and learning when it is appropriate to the needs of the learner." BECTA (2006a, p22)

"ICT is increasingly being used to support and deliver learning, and ICT as a subject has grown substantially." Clarke (2004, p7)

As an ICT evening classes teacher, I have been engaged teaching MyWeb, ECDL and Computer Studies with DFSAE for over ten years and I have always wondered whether non-ICT colleagues and their students have had their learning and teaching experiences effected through the deployment of ICT. My aim is to obtain empirical evidence that can be used by policymakers get a better view of what has been achieved to date and what is being done or can be done in order to apply ICT to other vocational subjects provided by DFSAE. The deployment of ICT as a teaching/learning tool in other subjects is an excellent approach to bring more people across from the wrong side of the digital. The scope is not to develop another divide by barring participation to traditional learners. DFSAE can adopt both traditional and non-traditional methods working in tandem, with the lowest level of interference. Technology-enhanced approaches widen access to educational and training opportunities thus promoting lifelong and life wide learning. NSO (National Statistics Office - 2006b) defines lifelong learning “as all purposeful learning activities, whether formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences.” This emphasizes an integrated ongoing approach to education and training, rather than a fragmented one that makes available isolated, ‘stand-alone’ courses.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The aim of this investigation is to understand the level of readiness of both tutors and participants in Maltese evening classes with respect to the deployment of ICT. DFSAE is already making use of technology to out-reach adult learners, such as broadcasting tuitions sessions on Channel E22. Each year evening classes services are promoted on a local radio station². Feedback from the audience revealed a demand for online teaching – a demand that has not yet been met.

NSO (2006a) findings reveal that 43% of a 1500-element sample representative of the population does not have computers at home and 51.3% never used computers. Admittedly, these results may not reflect the situation of evening classes participants. Direct interaction with classes attendees reveals a clear picture of the underlying perceptions as to whether ICT can be used to widen access to these courses.

Lifelong learning from an early age

The strategy outlined in the document about the national minimum curriculum *For all children to succeed* (Ministry of Education, 2005), emphasizes the importance of furthering education especially beyond compulsory schooling. Colleges have been

² In 2007, the service was broadcast on 28 August.

conceived to facilitate a smooth transition from primary to secondary and between forms two and three when the optional subjects are chosen. This easing of the transition will reduce students' disorientation, even for future changes. Therefore, "...the challenge now is to think global and act local...to provide smooth and seamless lifelong learning that is of highest caliber." The NMC also states that

"On the threshold of the new millennium, the people of Malta must continue to engage in critical reflection and training that will enable them to confront the socio-cultural, economic, industrial and political challenges that characterize a small island state in a world that is evolving into a global village." (NMC 1999, p.16)

Children will develop stronger characters and face future challenges with success. But in order to achieve this target, "[t]here still is a need for further development of life-long learning, from the earliest stages (with emphasis on learning how to learn) right up to the University of the Third Age and similar institutions." (For all children to succeed, 2005, p. 26)

Education has a tremendous impact on the development of adults especially in the case of those who form part of the workforce industry. Mouro Castro (2002, p76) states that most adults perceive education as if it is the passport to good jobs. Consequently this motivating factor challenges them to become self-directed learners as they will take every opportunity to further develop their own knowledge. Technology, particularly communication such as Internet, in this regard has been the major contributor to drive today's society to an advantage stance. Mouro Castro (2002, p78) also maintains that many of the published

articles in the United States today are of the “do-it-your-self” and “how-to-do” categories. Even the Internet has confirmed this idea particularly in the educational stance where people around the globe can learn without any physical restriction whatsoever. Hence, technology is a source of growth, particularly to the majority of adults who are seeking to develop on their own or as part reference to crystallize and widen their knowledge.

Technology, as stated by Minister Gatt³ (2007), should not be considered as a means to separate, but a means to unite. The use of the computer is to enable to permit this unification of the individual’s skills with other subjects. The computer should not be used simply as an image production, but as a means to instruct people in a better way. Children are e-natives and so are most adults gaining to this notion. Children, especially, expect to do everything through the computer. We cannot impart e-learning unless we produce e-content as a resource. We have to enrich our culture with e-learning. People can do other work and not being wasted for duties that could be done through e- means.

Educators therefore need to upgrade “their professional knowledge and skills. Only thus can we keep abreast of the ever-changing conditions of work and life occurring in a changing world that constantly threatens us with irrelevance” (NMC). It is interesting to note that the maxim that a student may never be better than his master is nowadays often proved wrong. In a digital society, the opposite is a frequent reality where students are the masters in skills related to digital technologies.

³ Dr Austin Gatt Minister for Information Technology and Investment: Strategy & plan to prepare the culture towards e systems: The economic and educational challenges - Malta ICT Day Seminar 23/05/07 at Le Meridian Phoenicia.

“... [I]n the past, the teacher was the crucial gateway to knowledge, one to which learners had few alternatives ... In the age of lifelong learning, the teacher has to motivate students to learn the curriculum at hand, as always.”

Hargreaves (2004, p9)

Educators need to cater for such situations through updating themselves in their specific areas of specialization. Indeed, the policy document *The Smart Island* (2008) stresses the need to expand the ICT horizon through all educational levels:

“We shall aggressively expand the ICT educational content at all levels of our educational system, increasing its depth and range and providing for specialized IT education in which pupils and students can take up as much or as little as they feel able to.” p30.

The result of this is an alarming one that may widen the gap between technology-enhanced approaches characterizing a knowledge society and the traditional type of education. It is up to the educators to address this problem through the appropriate investments and support structures.

The introduction to the handbook *Knowing our schools*⁴ stresses the fact that “[w]e no longer speak of the compulsory schooling years as our main focus [but w]e now speak of the lifelong learning focus” (2004, p10). If people are not exposed to the proper channels of technology and their use, then poverty, economical stagnation and socio-economical problems will develop. This is particularly highlighted in the ICT strategic plan, *The Smart*

⁴ Ministry of Education, Youth & Empl. (2004). *Knowing Our Schools* – Malta.

Island (2008), where the Maltese government is already on the alert about this might-be-problem if no continual ICT development is implemented.

“Technology will become the vehicle through which being an island and a micro-market become truly irrelevant. We are looking towards the kind of investment that will make us better than the rest... We will also work to encourage Maltese businesses to move towards e-commerce, helping them to implement change while carrying out their routine core operations.... Our strategy aims to attract more people to on-line shops and to attract more business operators to open more shops online...” (p48)

Moreover, this will occur as technology has geared into a high momentum where people have to be quick enough to adapt and respond to this ever fluctuating world (Wain, 2004). As stated by Hargreaves (2004, p87) “...[ICT]... is pursued not as a fad or fashion or from wanting to be first on a bandwagon, but because it fits with what is needed and can accelerate, but not create, momentum towards it.”

In education, the start must be at the foundation. The concept of colleges can help develop the sense of networking beyond the school walls, by letting schools intercommunicate even via e-mail and video conferencing. Nurturing students with this mentality will result in future generations with the right technological orientation. Those who fail their secondary school are becoming at risk of not being able to continue lifelong learning (Hargreaves, 2004, p.9). Hence, the importance to principles 2 and 9, that address diversity and assessment respectively. Formative assessment can identify those who are at risk and help them accordingly (NMC).

Furthermore, according to enGauge 21st Century Skills, Literacy in the Digital Age (2003), a report by NCREL, “Today’s children are “growing up digital”. Children are native to technology whereas adults are immigrants to it (Prensky, 2001). Adults feel the need to re-engage in education so make up for what they missed earlier.” Many Maltese adults feel concerned that technological innovations may pose a threat to them and address this challenge by putting lifelong learning as one of the highest priority in their lives. In *The SmartIsland* handbook, argues that the Maltese people are capable to adopt and adapt in work and learning and thus they can easily be trained.

“It is not simply a matter of having as many information-technology resources as everyone else. There, we are well and truly ahead of our competitors...”
(p28).

Busy people need better options

Kvasny (2006) argues that we are becoming a more dependent online nation, needing internet resources and skills to compete in the global economy. Additionally, Webb (2006) suggests that ICT can reduce the exclusion of the marginalized so as to help these minorities. Such people often have other commitments that preclude them from attending with regularity evening classes run in the traditional didactical approach. The result would inevitably be dropouts from courses. Technology-enhanced learning (TeL) proposes a viable solution for such persons. Inevitably, ICT-based learning is being seen as a dynamic means of providing lifelong learning without any obstacles to other commitments. So TeL may act as catalyst for these diverse situations to free people to learn in a democratic society (Barraket et al., 2001 p91). Educationalists have to provide this new avenue to

maintain equity between those in a position to attend physically in classes and those who resort to an on-line solution. Thus technology can free citizens from unhealthy perceptions that view education and training as problematic, unattractive and inaccessible. ICT imparts 'flexible learning' in terms of time and distance and in, overcoming traditional barriers (Collis & Moonen 2001).

These initiatives can widen participation and also reduce the current inequalities in participation amongst groups traditionally under-represented in adult education. (Selwyn 2002). Education can establish an inclusive learning society, in order to:

1. open opportunities to all
2. Strengthen the idea of lifelong learning
3. make online teaching relevant to the needs of any willing client.

Webb (2006) adds that it is good practice for authorities to encourage people to attend ICT courses, so that more people will eventually be more willing to continue learning through modern means. Success in attracting people who are still on the other side of the digital divide, can be achieved by making the content and process of ICT teaching as relevant as possible for them. The flexibility of TeL will also facilitate the widening of access in "both spatial and temporal matters, namely changes that allow students access education in locations and modes (e.g. in workplace and via the use of ICT)" (Osborne & Gallacher, p7). Similarly, Barraket (2001, p.91) suggests that:

*"...facilitating accessible use of online technologies through e-learning...
[has the potentiality to support] entry into education to those for whom*

geographical or physical impediments limit traditional face to face participation. [And] as tools which potentially enhance students' technological literacy, e-learning may be viewed as equipping them with the skills critical to flexible labour market participation in the information age."

Most politicians are concerned with the digital divide. The matter is not simply financial, but also due to other combinations referred to as the 6 Cs, namely connectivity, convenience, cost, cash, confidence and culture – the so called 'digital divide' (Darlington R. 2002). The consequence of this is that the advantaged will become more advantaged (Barraket 2001, p.91). Citizens in the low socio-economic levels should not be marginalized from access. Various efforts have been made by the Maltese government to minimize this problem and reach those who are excluded (Forsyth *et. al.* 2004, p.164). It is however necessary to explore what can be done further. As suggested by Clarke (2004), ICT has become so critically important that citizens may find themselves in a disadvantaged situation when trying to cope with the non-traditional society. On the same lines, the enGauge 21st Century Skills (2003) specifically warns that educators cannot continue teaching using only traditional means as students will graduate for 'yesterday' and not for tomorrow. This implies that teaching in evening classes must be restructured to ensure that teaching methods in such classes will become increasingly relevant.

Today's technology ensures that lifelong learning be accessible by all. Such access can be provided through e-learning provided through "virtual universities, consortia and digital universities, which aspire to share learning resources, increase the quantity and quality of educational services, and explore new markets, particularly in the field of lifelong

learning” (Koper et. al. 2005). The advantage of ICT is that it may encourage participants to continue learning. It may be the contributing factor, but “to be effective it requires understanding how learners are accessing and using ICT” (Webb, 2005).

Although practitioners’ perceptions need to be addressed, most use ICT either for personal affairs or as an aid to prepare instructional materials. Teachers have to adopt and adapt to the changes of society (Roylan 2004, p.111). Educators would not resist to be trained in e-learning as it is “a key element in embedding ICT and e-learning in any area of the curriculum” (BECTA, 2006). All this does not imply that the traditional type of teaching is to be abandoned. On the contrary ICT can be considered as an added asset to deliver lessons in a beneficial approach. One has to understand that e-learning does not mean just teaching to surf or researching on the net, as *any* means of using ICT programs, like word processors and spreadsheets can be used to boost teaching. Both the practitioner and the students have to integrate technology within their learning and teaching and make it part of their everyday life. It is inevitable as it has become part of us (Jæger 2004, p.10) and includes a wide range of technology-mediated activities ranging from sending e-mails to e-banking and editing photos.

Undoubtedly, enthusiasm has to be aided by DFSAE in providing the necessary technologies within classes. If the policymakers believe that ICT is essential, they have to ensure that classes, especially those used in vocational courses, be equipped with basic digital facilities such as data projectors, interactive whiteboards and networked computers equipped with common software applications.

Need for digital choice

Most people, especially elder ones, refrain from attempting to integrate within the 'digital society' as what is being taught does not meet their particular needs. Jæger (2004, p.1) affirms that while the majority of elderly people are still lagging behind the rest of the digital society, others are not afraid of the new technologies. ICT is used as a means to encourage old people to type instead of writing as word processors provide automatic spell checking that minimizes their errors, thus acting as a motivator. This leads to further investigation regarding what other needs could be addressed.

Age creates yet another source of digital divide. Research conducted by Selwyn and Gorard (2004) revealed that elderly people like to learn ICT in an informal manner. Formal ICT courses such as ECDL are not popular with them. As the report states, these people are learning procedures they will never put into practice, as need will never arise. ICT course content should be made relevant to their specific needs and communicated to them in an informal way. Selwyn and Gorard (2004) state that engagement of more adult participants "in ICT-based adult learning" depends upon "concentrate[ing] on making learning relevant to people's lives rather than assuming that such a drive already exists" (p8). The findings also suggest that old people wish to learn about computers *per se* and how to use them in conjunction with other activities such as home works and Internet researching. Whilst this is the perspective of the older generation, one has to adjust the perspective for the middle-aged and especially more so for the younger generations as these tend to be more engaged with computers.

Need for digital change

If applied correctly, ICT can catalyse the engagement of young adults and the middle aged to other domains of learning or content areas. Clarke (2004) confirms that “ICT is increasingly being used to support and deliver learning, and ICT as a subject has grown substantially.” ICT skills have become so important that they are considered as being equivalent to literacy, numeracy and language. With the continuous evolution of technology, it is of crucial importance especially to the middle aged to take ICT seriously in order to keep abreast with the dynamic environment and reduce the risk of becoming emarginated and excluded. Barraket (2004, p91) strengthens this argument by stating that ICT is highly affecting the way we learn.

“... technological advancement has contributed significantly to increasing complexity of global economies and societies, which is reflected in the rise of lifelong learning discourses with which universities are engaged. More specifically, the ever-expanding array of ICT available within the university sector has generated new management and pedagogical imperatives for higher education in the information age.” – Barraket (2004, p91)

Needless to say, lifelong learning returners and new entrants will have to fit within the new system which mostly caters for young adults to help advance to the next stages (Merrill *et. al.* 2004, p.161). Even elderly people are taking ICT seriously. And we have to be careful not to let those who remained on the wrong side to act as barriers and obstacles to progress, to the detriment of the wider society. It is up to them to join the rest of the digital society. It is the responsibility of everyone to benefit from the advantages of IT. Now that

the first step in providing computer literacy has become quite mature, Maltese society has to consider the next stages. Failure to do so risks the development of another digital divide.

Empirical Research Questions

The above mentioned main research question gives rise to three subsidiary empirical questions that will guide this investigation:

1. What is the position of adult learners attending vocational evening classes in Malta regarding the 'digital change' and digital divide?
2. Are these adult learners ready to master the use of ICT tools to improve their opportunities with respect to lifelong learning?
3. Given a choice, would evening classes participants (and teachers) in Malta prefer to further their studies using ICT or other more traditional methods?

Qualitative and quantitative methods will be used to provide answers to these questions. The empirical tools to be used: Two surveys were administered to teachers and evening classes participants enrolled during 2008-09; Interviews were carried out with ex-evening classes students and two focus groups were organized, some following instructional methods while others involved in technology-enhanced approach. These methods provide a triangulated approach that definitely gives more credibility to the overall methodology by reducing subjectivity and other biases in procedures, data collection and interpretation.

Hopefully, the results will provide empirical evidence for policy-makers and tutors to develop relevant policies and pedagogical approaches that address the needs of adult learners and their readiness to embark on TeL initiatives that may open up new horizons towards the digital age.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

In an attempt to get a more holistic picture of the situation involving adult learners attending evening classes, it was decided to gather data by deploying different methodologies. This would in turn enlighten the standpoint of the participant's perspective as to the digital divide, digital change or digital choice (refer to Chapter 2), where data was gathered through quantitative and qualitative means.

Sample

Quantitative data was obtained through two surveys one conducted with 26 teachers and the other with 229 evening classes candidates (refer to appendix B for a sample of these two questionnaires). The Education Division was contacted for information about the population that applied for the 2008-09 adult courses, estimated to be around 8000 (as per information gathered for 2006-07). The data was then stratified into two categories: those enrolled for a vocational course and those enrolled for other type of courses.

Quantitative Research

Sources about the candidate's questionnaire

The questions that influenced me to go for the candidates' questionnaire, specifically from B1 through B5 and B22 through B24, were adopted from two surveys carried out locally in Malta by the NSO (Malta National Statistics Office); one for a news release entitled Information Society (16/11/2006) and the other one entitled Education (11/12/2006). Questions were focused on one sector, which is the evening classes, in contrast with NSO's approach of going for the entire national population. Questions B20 and B21 were taken from a survey conducted by Veenhof (August 2006) and reported upon in the document 'The Internet: Is It Changing the Way Canadians Spend Their Time?'

It is interesting to note that as for question B20, according to this report those who report using the internet from 0 to 5 minutes are short time users, those who report for the second category, that is from 5 minutes to 1 hour, are moderate internet users, whilst the third category, that is those who exceed 1 hour are heavy users. Veenhof refers to those internet users who look at such usage either as 'time displacer' or 'time enhancers'. 'Time enhancers' are those people who are using the internet to purchase online, pay bills and above all to learn (p8). The more people go up through the continuum from least users to heavy users they tend to spend less time doing chores, work less, sleep less, and watch less TV. The only factor that was not affected was that these people still rely on printed material (p7). She also found that heavy users tend to be males and younger users (p9).

Questions in section B, extending from B6 through B19 were all extracted from 'Learning online', a book authored by McVay Lynch (August 2006, Table 1.1 Student self-

evaluation checklist, page 18). This survey was designed to assist the student in rating his/her current readiness to pursue online education courses.

Sources about the teacher's questionnaire

In the case of the teacher's questionnaire, the ICT and e-learning in FE survey 2006 was a key factor that influenced the adaption of McVay Lynch research instrument for this investigation, particularly quoting BECTA's ICT Research report:

“Staff competency has grown up.... Very competent or advanced in using ICT with learners.... This could be seen as a key element in embedding ICT and e-learning in any subject....” (p3).

Sue Webb (2006) looks at technology as a means to provide support to those who may be excluded from lifelong learning. However, she states that ICT alone is not enough to create access to any other subject or course, but it may be a key factor to reduce exclusion and thus help the minority. It is a good idea to induce people to make more use of ICT to increase the chance of continuing education through modern means. Therefore, according to Webb, a variety of educational approaches provide more flexibility which in turn widens access to the evening classes students (2006, p482). So, according to Webb, ICT may affect lifelong learning as it may be considered as an advantage to those who would like to continue education but cannot do otherwise. However, at the same time Webb argues that “Technology alone seems unlikely to widen participation [for lifelong learning]” (p483). So in her view it should be backed up both with traditional means and with technological means. A study done by Clark on an active female online teacher practitioner in his ‘Real lessons from imaginary teachers’ states that the online teacher's

images changed constantly under different circumstances, but this was not a complete picture of her representative as a real teacher (2005, p234). So, the teacher's moods may change even more when s/he is online then when deploying traditional teaching methods. Based on those notions, the questions developed for the teacher's questionnaire were specifically designed to observe the teacher's viewpoint as to which methods of best practices do they prefer and as to whether they are already using technology to enhance their teaching.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative data was collected through face-to-face structured interviews and through two semi-structured focus groups. Interviews were carried out with 14 evening course participants who either dropped out of the course or were very irregular in their attendance. Interview questions focused on obtaining information to identify the causes that constrained participants to stop attending or were irregular in attending evening classes and whether they would be interested in continuing their course if they were offered online distance learning. Additionally, two focus groups were set up with evening classes participants who were exposed for the first time to online distance learning was conducted. The aim was to understand adult learners' reaction to learn through technology and to observe their readiness towards ODL/VLE. As such, the study serves as a prototype for a more detailed study in an attempt to provide wider access to adult learning at home through technology.

Face-to-face (FTF) interviews were conducted first, as these in-depth conversations would provide the necessary background needed for preparation of the quantitative tools and subsequently to the focus groups. The survey questionnaire (Appendix B) was distributed to a random sample of attendees, with sample size based on the 2008-09 cohort of vocational participants. Relative calculations are as per Survey System⁵ sample size calculator website and Cohen and Manion (2000, 5th Ed., p. 94). An optional online questionnaire was also developed which was sent via email.

The approximate total population enrollment for 2008-09:	8000
Confidence level:	95%
Assuming a confidence interval of about:	6.5
Typical returned calculated sample size:	221

Participants for the FTF in-depth structured interviews and semi-structured focus groups were randomly selected. According to Darlington and Scott (2002, pp. 48 – 73) no such interview may be wholly unstructured. An element of structuring is necessary as this helps keep focus on the research question and also facilitate for data reduction. Even the place of the FTF interview or focus group was deliberately pre-established. In all forms of qualitative measures, physical gestures and facial expressions (body language) were observed (Devito, 2003, p. 136) and commented upon.

⁵ <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>

After gathering all data, qualitative information was transcribed and entered into Nu*dist. In the case of the quantitative data, SPSS was utilized for statistics, with the application of the necessary tools to analyze the data. The analysis section is followed by a discussion and conclusion that is corroborated through literature and conclusions from relevant investigations.

Ethical Considerations

All participants were introduced to this investigation through an elaborate discussion of the background and underlying principles of the research scenario. Reference was continually made to researcher's area of specialization and research interests.

Individual privacy will be safeguarded through appropriate design in both survey and interviewing questions. Any personal information contributed by participants will not be disclosed. A copy of the survey and interviewing questions were submitted for evaluation by the Ethics department of the University of Malta before initiation of the investigation. The methodology and related instruments were presented to the Evening Classes Department with the aim of the obtaining the department's clearance.

The survey was piloted on a small number of candidates to determine the construct validity of the questions. After effecting a number of adjustments, the questionnaire was distributed to all participants.

The objective of the lesson observation was to understand through ‘reflection in action’ and ‘reflection on action’ the issues of the digital divide, the digital change and digital choice vis-à-vis lifelong learning. Other themes that had no direct relation to this were strictly screened. No photographs of participants were taken during these sessions. However, photographs of the physical environment and related digital technology were taken to enhance reader’s comprehension of the findings and subsequent discussion.

A digital audio recorder was used, after obtaining subjects’ consent. The objective was to carry out the interview in a more efficient way and for enhancing comprehension of the finer issues during playback. This provides further relevant information for this research study. All participants were given a personal guarantee regarding the privacy of any data and surveys. Subjects were assured that none of the results whether in hard copy, electronic version or audio format will be disclosed through any other medium other than this dissertation. Furthermore, use of the material gathered will be strictly limited to the intentions declared in the dissertation as reproduced within this proposal.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Results

Preamble

This chapter is divided into three parts. Part 1 being a F2F in depth study to ex-evening classes students, Part 2 being a quantitative study based on two surveys and Part 3 comprises analysis of data obtained from a focus group carried out on adult evening course participants who experienced online learning.

Part 1: In-depth interviewing

Introduction

The discussion in Part 1 attempts to understand why certain evening classes candidates drop their course after the first few months, a phenomenon that is quite common but often goes unnoticed. Additionally, a better understanding of participants' perception and attitude towards traditional learning vis-à-vis technology-enhanced modes will be obtained. This study served to reveal some not-so-obvious underlying issues. Consequently, this was essential to be done from the outset as it could orient the rest of this research work.

Data Collection

During summer 2008 vocational evening classes attendance sheets at the Education Division Adult learning section were analyzed to identify those ex-candidates who had

either stopped attending the evening classes after a short while or were irregular in their attendance. With the assistance of the Division's staff, 124 ex-candidates were identified, of which 85 were females and 39 were males. Then, with the consent of this department, a circular letter (see appendix) was drafted inviting the persons to contact author or the department's officer in charge. Those who voluntarily accepted were invited for a short face-to-face (FTF) semi-structured interview. In the circular a three week deadline was stipulated so as to give enough chance for these people to get in contact. There were 14 respondents who accepted to contribute for this in-depth FTF interview. Most of them got in touch soon after they received the letter. A schedule of 45-minute sessions was developed. These were spread over four days. On average interviews had a duration of 25 to 40 minutes. The venue was a central state school Maria Regina Girls Junior Lyceum, Blata-I-Bajda, Malta.

Responses reported in the main text of Part I cover the more salient points that were raised during the discussions. A concluding list of results was developed based on the entire set of responses.

Profiles of the interviewees

- Interview 1: Male - Mature three shift nurse
- Interview 2: Female – Mature housewife
- Interview 3: Male - Young farmer
- Interview 4: Male - Student about to start a course at Malta University
- Interview 5: Male - Tile Layer
- Interview 6: Female - Young housewife
- Interview 7: Female - Beautician
- Interview 8: Female - third age housewife
- Interview 9: Male - Financial controller
- Interview 10: Female - Mature housewife

- Interview 11: Female - Mature morning duty nurse
- Interview 12: Male - retired chef
- Interview 13: Male – Pizza cook
- Interview 14: Female - Tour leader

They were almost all IT conversant except for interviewees 3, 5, 8 and 12.

Reasons for dropping the course

- **Interview 1:** “I had to stop from the course, as I was going to start reading for a diploma in nursing. Following both courses would have resulted in clashes.
- **Interview 2:** After three months I regrettably had to stop attending due to health reasons which inhibited me from pursuing this and similar activities.
- **Interview 7:** Teacher attention was minimal, making me lose interest as it was becoming difficult for me to follow the lectures. The lecture was often disrupted. I felt out of place due to the fact that all other students were much older. While the other students were quite well versed in the topic, having studied it when they were at school, I was not at a similar advantaged. What was lacking was individual attention.
- **Interview 9:** I dropped due to changing family situations. Even before commencing the course, it was hard finding the right balance between work, study and family. Eventually, I had to opt out.
- **Interview 13:** I had to consider opportunity costs – attending lectures was affecting my income through loss of part-time work. As the course developed, we were being joined by a number of disabled persons and foreigners, prevented me from gaining sufficient benefit through attendance.

- **Interview 14:** I had to stop due work conflicts. My job requires constant travelling.

Propensity to try ODL/TeL

- **Interview 1:** "... Had the course been online, having time flexibility and location convenience would have allowed me to follow a course, knowing well that it will not clash with my work commitments. I would have completed such a course as I would have simultaneously held on to my work and main diploma study."
- **Interview 2:** I have never experienced online learning, but I do not think I would find difficulty following it.
- **Interview 6:** Online lessons and notes would not suit me. In a physical classroom, interaction between students and teacher is very natural.
- **Interview 7:** Online lecturing will probably be cumbersome – I would not mind following such a lecture, but I still feel direct interaction is superlative. I still must admit that online lecturing can be convenient in that one can follow it comfortably from home.
- **Interview 10:** Yes, since I consider myself as a self-disciplined person I would not find any problem to apply for an online course.
- **Interview 11:** Yes I would follow online courses. I am currently following a course (work related) that involves accessing a number of websites and carrying out online research. These courses are a kind of hybrid – with lectures being class-based during which students are referred to related websites. I believe that online research helps in that one is automatically kept updated through access of the most contemporary material –

facilitating life long learning. I will be starting a work-related online course soon. In addition, we often follow courses based on computer presentations. These are repeated a number of times, making it easier for attendees to attend those sessions that do not clash with work commitments.

- **Interview 13:** Online lecturing suits bests today's lifestyle. It offers time and location convenience and flexibility. Two-way interaction can still be achieved via email. Revising lectures would also be much easier.
- **Interview 14:** Online sites should contain clear instructions and be backed up by lecturer support. I have followed such a course successfully. The only snag was that exams were held (physically) abroad. I experienced good quality interaction, with homework being within 24 hours. The course was supported by third party sites containing supplementary material. Had I opted for it, I could have installed an audio chat program, enabling me to discuss problems with lecturers directly. However, in such cases, one has to keep in mind time slots allowed by lecturers and/or due to time differences between countries. Had the course I stopped attending been held in a similar fashion, I would have been able to follow it as it would not have conflicted with my job. I may need coaxing to follow any courses that are IT or maths related in content.

Ideal timing for lesson

- **Interview 1:** Preferably at night (on off-duty nights). With the children asleep, there will be less distraction. I am already used to studying at night.
- **Interview 4:** Daytime I go to school and study, so I'd prefer to sleep at night. I mean I would have dedicated enough time during the day so I leave

the night to get rest. But if such courses are on the net, it would be easier for the student to take the laptop at school or go in the school library and use the computer facilities, save the lessons on your MP4 ... and you'll listen to them during your free lessons.

- **Interview 6:** I would opt for mornings, when the children are at school. Studying at night will impinge negatively on my daytime duties at home. I already find it problematic attending evening classes as at the time I need to see to my family's needs.
- **Interview 7:** In the evenings as I do not have enough time in the mornings due to my job. Night study is not a choice for me.
- **Interview 9:** When having some free time or night time when the kids are asleep. I dedicate most of the evenings to help my daughter with her HW. Doing a course online would gain me time for other commitments. Travel problems would also be avoided.
- **Interview 11:** If you can't go out or would like to follow the course during irregular hours, an online course is ideal. I am used to studying late at night – it helps concentration.
- **Interview 13:** Whenever is convenient, even during days/times when pursuing other activities would be difficult. Such a solution will be popular locally.

Non-traditional versus Traditional methods

- **Interview 1:** Physical lectures may clash with work commitments. I would rather more likely to go *completely on line*.
- **Interview 9:** I find non-traditional teaching very convenient. Both methods should co-exist. While the main lecture should be held in class, an online or offline version should be available for revision.
- **Interview 10:** I do not think I have any real preference. However, I do appreciate that online is more convenient and flexible. A mixture of both methods is possibly the ideal. I would use traditional teaching to clarify problems I would have encountered while perusing online content. I believe both languages and spatial subjects can be followed online.
- **Interview 11:** Physical contact is a must, at least initially, so as to gain familiarity with the other students. Although ‘meeting’ people over cyberspace is an alternative, there is still the lack of the ‘touch and feel’. I still feel that, if need be, I can do without this ‘familiarisation’ since what is in question is furthering knowledge. On certain occasions, lectures degenerated into social meetings. I discontinued attendance in one such instance.
- **Interview 13:** A mix of both methods would be the best solution. Online lectures would be backed up by physical ones dedicated to problems discussion. More pressing problems can possibly be sorted out via telephone or email.
- **Interview 14:** Feedback during traditional lectures is more effective and immediate. On the other hand, online courses can be shorter in duration. A blend of both methods would probably be the ideal solution.

Willingness to continue the course

- **Interview 1:** Yes. However, time limitations and conflicts with work commitments are still pertinent.
- **Interview 11:** Yes I would continue it if it was online.
- **Interview 13:** Yes, had there not been an influx of students that disrupted lecturing, I would have continued attending, even if it meant losing income through my part-time job.
- **Interview 14:** Yes, but I have limitations due to my job.

Self-learning capability

- **Interview 1:** If I self-manage, as long as the learning path is clearly defined. Once I have the material I am willing to do it.
- **Interview 6:** I think I need that push to move on.
- **Interview 7:** I feel I can manage on my own, although this may be subject dependent.
- **Interview 9:** I can work on my own. I can motivate myself. The more structured the course, the more I will be able to move on without supervision. Admittedly, having someone around to keep the drive is beneficial, as this will provide the coaching element, rather than simply the assimilation of knowledge.
- **Interview 10:** I would immediately become independent if someone shows me how to use it.
- **Interview 11:** Whenever I have to learn on my own, I can do it – I have sufficient will power to self-manage. However, self-motivation is a function of the level of interest in the topic being studied.

- **Interview 13:** As long as the course starts from basics, I would have no problem following it on my own. I have already managed to learn by myself in the past.
- **Interview 14:** Yes I am quite able to work on my own. But motivation is subject-dependent. If the subject is one that is critically important, then motivation level will be highest.

Perception: Social communication

- **Interview 1:** Interacting online helps widen communication. In this manner, I do not feel shy as when interacting face-to-face.
- **Interview 2:** You will increase social interaction.
- **Interview 4:** I would feel detached from social contact. I would miss the traditional type of schooling.
- **Interview 6:** Online communication is a barrier to social interaction. In traditional learning, there are breaks during which one mingles with the rest of the group. Technology may increase communication but I prefer face-to-face interaction.
- **Interview 7:** It will slightly diminish social contact, although it is also true that you can make more friends with people you don't know easily.
- **Interview 9:** Online communication is a barrier to social interaction. However, we are dealing with learning here, not with interaction.
- **Interview 11:** Yes it affects me, but if I really need the subject I won't take care of this.

- **Interview 10:** I don't think this will detach me from society and I don't feel that this might affect me. I mean, I don't feel myself the need to communicate with others in person.
- **Interview 13:** Online courses will impinge on social communication. However, communication spread will widen beyond the walls of the physical class.
- **Interview 14:** Online courses reduce social contact, hence my preference for traditional tuition. Ideally, both methods would run in parallel, giving more choice and convenience to students. Possibly, hybrid courses would also be a solution for all.

Perception: In depth understanding

- **Interview 1:** Online research is an excellent follow-up tool, assuming reliability of sites looked up. Online learning facilitates repeat of lectures, as it does away with class interruptions necessary in such situations in traditional tuition.
- **Interview 2:** In cases of difficulty one can easily refer to other sources through a search engine, thus expanding knowledge.
- **Interview 3:** I have to try before I say this.
- **Interview 6:** Depending on the subject. Online material can lead to information overload. Interpretation may be necessary for some topics such as Maths or IT. Possibly literature and language may be easier.
- **Interview 7:** I have found that online research prior to attending traditional tuition can be beneficial as it will allow the student an easier comprehension of the subject matter.

- **Interview 9:** Good links are a must in online sites, enabling referencing through third parties. Such links will facilitate researching.
- **Interview 10:** Yes I would delve further into the subject as in class you won't have the facility at that specific time to search and understand better what is taught. So I would search there and then without waiting to go home or distracting the class.
- **Interview 11:** I use the Internet regularly for news and current affairs. I also did much research when I was following studies.
- **Interview 13:** I visit sites directly or search for them using a search engine.
- **Interview 14:** If the online program is designed properly, I think everybody can learn through it. A 'Frequently Asked Questions' approach will undoubtedly solve the majority of students' problems. I consider this a good manner of communication.

Part 1: Summary

- IT Conversant:
 - 10 IT conversant
 - 4 not conversant
- Reasons for dropping the course:

some stated more than one reason

 - work conflict (3)
 - course clashes (2)
 - health reasons (2)
 - mixed ability groups (2)
 - bad time management (2)
 - lack of individual attention (2)

- concentrated on one subject (2)
 - course was too easy for me (2)
 - changing family situation (1)
 - opportunity cost (1)
 - family problems (1)
 - time constraint (1)
- Propensity to try ODL/TEL:
 - 8 interviewees were disposed to try ODL/TEL
 - 6 were not.
- Ideal timing for lesson:
 - During the nights (5)
 - During the mornings (2)
 - During the afternoon (1)
 - During the evenings (3)
 - Whenever is convenient during the day (3)
 - Don't know (1)
- Non-traditional versus Traditional methods:
 - Non-Traditional (2)
 - Traditional (3)
 - Blended (7)
 - Don't know (2)
- Willingness to continue the course
 - Yes (11)
 - No (3)
- Self-learning capability:
 - Self-manage (8)
 - Need some initial assistance (2)

- Need continuous assistance (4)

- Perception: Social communication
 - Yes - widens social communication (6)
 - No - social barrier (3)
 - Neutral effect (3)
 - Don't know (2)

- Perception: In depth understanding:
 - Agree: (11)
 - Don't agree: (1)
 - Don't know: (2)

Part 2: Quantitative data analysis

Introduction

This section discusses statistical analysis of data acquired from two separate questionnaires, which have a converging scope. One questionnaire was conducted with evening classes candidates and the other with evening classes teachers. The main aim of this survey was to gauge the perception and readiness of adult learners or teachers towards teaching and learning evening classes through online means. It also includes results of ICT usage in January 2009 within this sector of adult education.

Data Collection

The investigation was carried out at the main evening classes centre in Maria Regina School, Hamrun, Malta. In a typical week, around 1919 students attend evening classes held in this centre. The questionnaire was distributed in January, as the students, especially new ones, will have already acclimatized to the methods used. Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire, a consent form was given to be signed by those who would be accepted to participate in the investigation. Over 400 questionnaire copies were distributed. Some classes decided to fill it instantly, while others who felt pressed by coursework and studies were given the possibility to fill it at home and submit it the following week. Overall 229 questionnaires were returned, that is a return of 57.25%. In addition, during the data input stage using the statistical program SPSS (V16), 12 questionnaires had to be discarded as they were either incomplete or not done properly.

The same methodology was used with teachers including signing of the consent following by the completion of the questionnaire. Teachers, who permitted their adult learners to fill the participant questionnaire in class, did likewise. Teachers who had difficulties with this data collection exercise were given the option to fill their questionnaire at home and let their adult students do the same and return completed forms the following week.

Results for Adult learners

A set of preliminary questions were set to the evening classes candidates so as to get an idea of:

A1. The number of courses per week they are currently attending;

A2. Any situations involving difficulties in delivery of lesson during the first 3 months of their course. Three indicators were used to evaluate the following situations: more than once, once or none, for which

- experienced a situation where they knew the lesson and preferred if they could to skip the topic;
- have ever experienced a situation where they preferred the instructor to slow down his/her teaching, but were afraid to do so; and
- have ever wanted to repeat the lesson, but were shy to ask their teacher.

A1. Number of course/s per week currently attending:

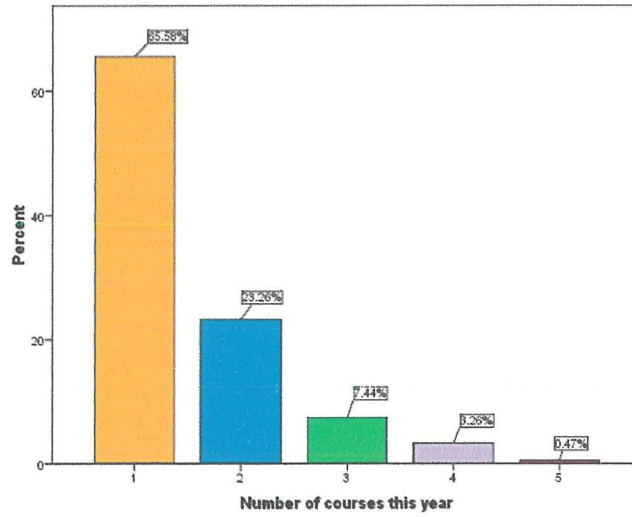


Figure 1 - Number of courses currently attending

Over 65.58% of the students attend one course only, 23.26% attend two courses, whilst the rest attend three or more courses per week.

A2 – A4. Situations with difficulties during the first 3 months

A2. Situation/s where the student knew the lesson and would have preferred skipping the topic;

A3. Situation/s where the student preferred the instructor to slow down his/her teaching speed, but was afraid to do ask; and

A4. Situation/s where the student wanted to repeat the lesson, but was shy to ask his/her teacher.

Response:	Skip already known lessons	Slow down lessons	Shy to ask questions
Never occurred to me	62.4%	59.4%	66.0%
Yes, more than once	23.5%	16.5%	17.9%
Yes, but only just once	14.1%	24.1%	16.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Table 1 - Students' preferences in skipping known lessons, slowing down lessons and being shy to ask questions in class.

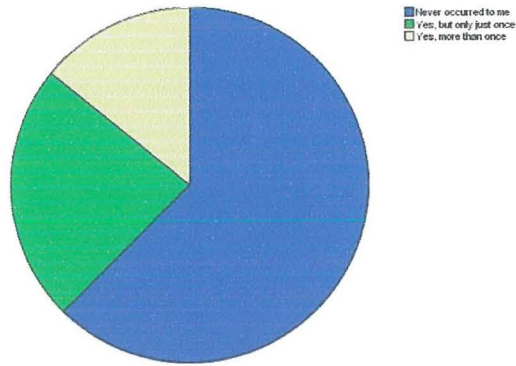


Figure 2 - Prefer to skip already known lessons/topics

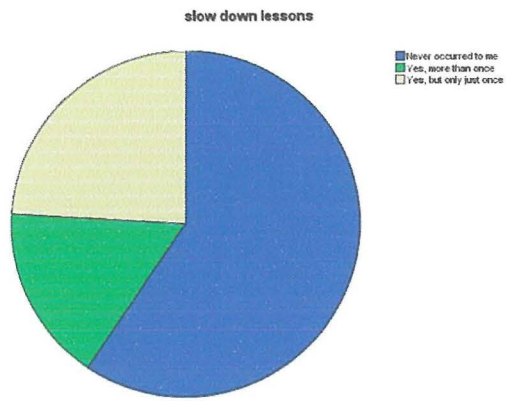


Figure 3 - Prefer to slow down lessons for better understanding.

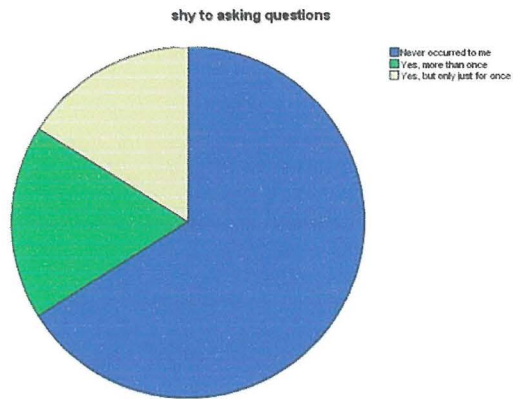


Figure 4 - Student being shy to ask questions.

62.4% of students reported that 'skipping known lessons' 'never occurred to them'. 23.5% reported skipping known lessons more than once. 59.4% reported that 'slowing down lessons' never occurred to them, while 24.1% reported this just once. The majority also reported that they were never shy to ask questions with only 17.9% reported being shy more than once.

B1. Do you have a computer at home?

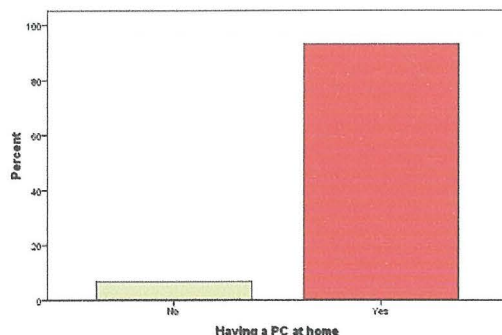


Figure 5 - Adult learners having a PC at home

93.1% reported having a computer at home, while 6.9% reported they did not own one.

Below is response of respondents who answered in the affirmative (93.1%) to the question of whether they have a PC at home.

⇒ B4 and B5 did not give any statistically significant relationship. This implies that there is no difference between the groups.

B2. On average, how often have you used a computer to browse internet in the last 3 months?

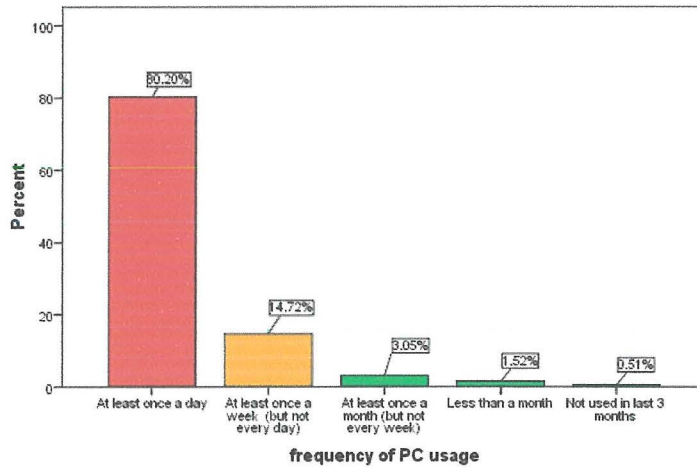


Figure 6 - Frequency of computer usage during the last three months

80.2% reported using computer to browse Internet at least once a day, while 14.72% stated using the Internet usage at least once-a-week.

B3. Do you have internet at home?

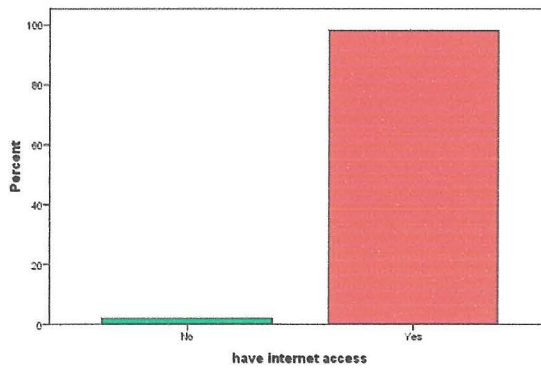


Figure 7 - Student having internet access

98% of adult learners attending evening classes have internet access at home.

B6 – B19 Readiness for online learning

The major factors that attribute to readiness were based primarily on (participant):

- ability to access the internet;
- willingness to communicate with students and tutor;
- self-directedness and self-discipline to reach the assigned targets; and
- perception that online education is similar to traditional means.

The frequency, mean, standard deviation and skewness were calculated and these are shown in Table 2. The gross skewness obtained is within ± 1.5 . The limited distribution of responses demands the use of parametric techniques in analysing this range of attributes.

Comparing online readiness with Age

The factors attributable to online readiness (Questions B6 – B19) were adopted from a self-evaluation checklist written by McVay Lynch (2006) from her book entitled *Learning Online* (p18).

Table 4 summarizes the results for the One-Way ANOVA for the interaction between age and online readiness. Communication with others was the only attribute which was highly significant ($p=0.002$). Younger adult learners communicate more online with others as compared to middle-aged or older learners. Middle aged learners communicate more than the older group. The other attributes of this table were not statistically significant but they were deemed (by the author) to be indicative. In this case no significance indicates that all age

groups show same tendency to set time aside. So the experience can be used the same with everyone. Hence all groups seemingly feel comfortable with online written communication.

B6 – B19	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness
able to access the internet as needed for studying	93.6%	3.02	1.000	-.495
communicate with others	93.1%	2.97	1.064	-.555
active communication with instr & studs	92.6%	2.48	1.156	.035
able to set aside some time per week to study	91.1%	2.46	.934	.067
online is not of equal quality to traditional learning	92.1%	1.88	.845	.836
use of past knowledge for new learning	93.1%	2.79	.839	-.021
comfort with online written communication	92.1%	2.66	.935	-.197
self-directed learning	92.1%	2.46	.858	.057
Reviewing helps for new learning	91.6%	3.03	.783	-.391
self-discipline	94.6%	2.45	.862	.081
time management	92.1%	2.62	.906	-.093
enjoy learning by oneself /w low support / interaction	92.1%	2.18	.916	.323
set goals and have high degree of initiative	89.6%	2.54	.827	-.086
responsibility	92.6%	2.98	.944	-.576

Table 2 - Online Readiness (B6 - B19) in terms of Frequency, Means, SD and Skewness

Group Statistics

Education in two groups		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
able to access the internet as needed for studying	Compulsory Basic Education	81	2.73	1.037	.115
	Optional Higher Education	101	3.29	.920	.092
communicate with others	Compulsory Basic Education	82	2.84	1.105	.122
	Optional Higher Education	99	3.11	.999	.100
active communication with instr & studs	Compulsory Basic Education	81	2.35	1.153	.128
	Optional Higher Education	99	2.63	1.157	.116
able to set aside some time per week to study	Compulsory Basic Education	80	2.34	.885	.099
	Optional Higher Education	97	2.57	.989	.100
online is not of equal quality to traditional learning	Compulsory Basic Education	81	1.85	.868	.096
	Optional Higher Education	98	1.94	.835	.084
use of past knowledge for new learning	Compulsory Basic Education	82	2.61	.813	.090
	Optional Higher Education	100	2.92	.837	.084
comfort with online written communication	Compulsory Basic Education	81	2.42	.960	.107
	Optional Higher Education	98	2.90	.855	.086
self-directed learning	Compulsory Basic Education	81	2.36	.841	.093
	Optional Higher Education	98	2.54	.875	.088
Reviewing helps for new learning	Compulsory Basic Education	81	3.00	.791	.088
	Optional Higher Education	98	3.05	.751	.076
self-discipline	Compulsory Basic Education	83	2.41	.938	.103
	Optional Higher Education	101	2.46	.781	.078
time management	Compulsory Basic Education	81	2.58	.973	.108
	Optional Higher Education	98	2.67	.847	.086
enjoy learning by oneself /w low support / interaction	Compulsory Basic Education	81	2.05	.934	.104
	Optional Higher Education	98	2.30	.876	.088
set goals and have high degree of initiative	Compulsory Basic Education	79	2.37	.803	.090
	Optional Higher Education	96	2.67	.816	.083
responsibility	Compulsory Basic Education	81	2.86	.945	.105
	Optional Higher Education	99	3.09	.905	.091

Table 3 - B6 – B19 x Education – Independent Samples T-test (Means)

In table 3 above, compulsory basic education and optional higher education refers to adult learner's educational level. These attributes were used to observe who is more prone to go for online education between two different levels of education. In the case of table 4 overleaf, three different age groups, namely young, middle and advanced age ranges were used to observe whether there is any difference in age ranges when contrasted with the online readiness attributes.

B6 – B19	Age			F (df) Value	P Value	$\bar{X}_1 \sim \bar{X}_2$	$\bar{X}_1 \sim \bar{X}_3$	$\bar{X}_2 \sim \bar{X}_3$
	\bar{X}_1 Young	\bar{X}_2 Middle	\bar{X}_3 Adv					
able to access the internet as needed for studying	3.133	3.021	2.462	2	.067	.112	.672	.559
communicate with others	3.108	2.854	2.000	2	.002	.254	1.108	.854
active communication with instr & studs	2.542	2.500	1.909	2	.223	.042	.633	.591
able to set aside some time per week to study	2.521	2.413	2.091	2	.320	.108	.430	.322
online is not of equal quality to traditional learning	1.909	1.870	1.545	2	.403	.040	.364	.324
use of past knowledge for new learning	2.769	2.750	2.818	2	.970	.019	-.050	-.068
comfort with online written communication	2.681	2.562	2.636	2	.762	.118	.044	-.074
self-directed learning	2.445	2.521	2.000	2	.189	-.075	.445	.521
Reviewing helps for new learning	2.983	3.064	2.900	2	.769	-.080	.083	.164
self-discipline	2.475	2.367	2.286	2	.611	.108	.189	.082
time management	2.602	2.702	2.462	2	.660	-.100	.140	.241
enjoy learning by oneself /w low support / interaction	2.176	2.239	2.000	2	.698	-.063	.176	.239
set goals and have high degree of initiative	2.534	2.568	2.182	2	.371	-.034	.352	.386
responsibility	2.966	3.021	3.000	2	.943	-.054	-.034	.021

Table 4 - Online Readiness (B6 – B19) by Age – Using the One-Way ANOVA

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
able to access the internet as needed for studying	Equal variances assumed	.002	.966	1.160	183	.247	.184	.159	-.129	.498
	Equal variances not assumed			1.156	112.431	.250	.184	.159	-.132	.500
communicate with others	Equal variances assumed	1.214	.272	1.074	182	.284	.180	.167	-.150	.509
	Equal variances not assumed			1.106	129.618	.271	.180	.162	-.142	.501
active communication with instr & studs	Equal variances assumed	.608	.437	1.451	181	.148	.266	.183	-.096	.627
	Equal variances not assumed			1.474	118.829	.143	.266	.180	-.091	.623
able to set aside some time per week to study	Equal variances assumed	.013	.911	1.460	178	.146	.217	.148	-.076	.509
	Equal variances not assumed			1.457	117.450	.148	.217	.149	-.078	.511
online is not of equal quality to traditional learning	Equal variances assumed	.157	.692	-.014	180	.989	-.002	.134	-.267	.263
	Equal variances not assumed			-.014	122.449	.988	-.002	.132	-.264	.260
use of past knowledge for new learning	Equal variances assumed	3.533	.062	1.048	182	.296	.137	.131	-.121	.395
	Equal variances not assumed			1.081	130.009	.282	.137	.127	-.114	.388
comfort with online written communication	Equal variances assumed	2.331	.129	1.412	180	.160	.208	.147	-.083	.499
	Equal variances not assumed			1.434	125.648	.154	.208	.145	-.079	.496
self-directed learning	Equal variances assumed	.089	.765	.638	180	.524	.087	.136	-.181	.355
	Equal variances not assumed			.644	123.503	.521	.087	.135	-.180	.353
Reviewing helps for new learning	Equal variances assumed	.007	.934	1.487	179	.139	.183	.123	-.060	.426
	Equal variances not assumed			1.518	124.443	.132	.183	.120	-.056	.421
self-discipline	Equal variances assumed	2.981	.086	.712	185	.478	.095	.133	-.168	.358
	Equal variances not assumed			.676	104.305	.501	.095	.141	-.184	.374
time management	Equal variances assumed	.376	.541	-.054	180	.957	-.008	.144	-.292	.277
	Equal variances not assumed			-.052	108.495	.958	-.008	.147	-.300	.284
enjoy learning by oneself /w low support / interaction	Equal variances assumed	4.738	.031	.687	180	.493	.099	.144	-.186	.384
	Equal variances not assumed			.743	140.467	.459	.099	.133	-.164	.363
set goals and have high degree of initiative	Equal variances assumed	.695	.405	-.064	175	.949	-.008	.133	-.271	.254
	Equal variances not assumed			-.062	108.522	.951	-.008	.137	-.279	.262
responsibility	Equal variances assumed	2.523	.114	-.065	181	.948	-.010	.150	-.306	.286
	Equal variances not assumed			-.068	131.398	.946	-.010	.142	-.291	.271

Table 5 - Online Readiness (B6 – B19) by Gender – Using the Independent Samples T-test

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
able to access the internet as needed for studying	Equal variances assumed	2.479	.117	-3.847	180	.000	-.559	.145	-.845	-.272
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.797	161.439	.000	-.559	.147	-.849	-.268
communicate with others	Equal variances assumed	3.197	.075	-1.723	179	.087	-.270	.157	-.579	.039
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.706	165.185	.090	-.270	.158	-.582	.042
active communication with instr & studs	Equal variances assumed	.030	.864	-1.621	178	.107	-.281	.173	-.622	.061
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.622	171.244	.107	-.281	.173	-.622	.061
able to set aside some time per week to study	Equal variances assumed	2.294	.132	-1.611	175	.109	-.230	.142	-.511	.052
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.628	173.793	.105	-.230	.141	-.508	.049
online is not of equal quality to traditional learning	Equal variances assumed	.869	.353	-.681	177	.497	-.087	.128	-.339	.165
	Equal variances not assumed			-.679	168.115	.498	-.087	.128	-.340	.166
use of past knowledge for new learning	Equal variances assumed	.664	.416	-2.520	180	.013	-.310	.123	-.553	-.067
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.528	174.909	.012	-.310	.123	-.552	-.068
comfort with online written communication	Equal variances assumed	4.493	.035	-3.522	177	.001	-.478	.136	-.746	-.210
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.484	161.936	.001	-.478	.137	-.749	-.207
self-directed learning	Equal variances assumed	.415	.520	-1.415	177	.159	-.183	.129	-.438	.072
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.421	172.995	.157	-.183	.129	-.437	.071
Reviewing helps for new learning	Equal variances assumed	.104	.748	-.442	177	.659	-.051	.116	-.279	.177
	Equal variances not assumed			-.440	167.177	.661	-.051	.116	-.280	.178
self-discipline	Equal variances assumed	3.864	.051	-.362	182	.718	-.046	.127	-.296	.204
	Equal variances not assumed			-.355	159.670	.723	-.046	.129	-.301	.209
time management	Equal variances assumed	2.829	.094	-.685	177	.494	-.093	.136	-.362	.175
	Equal variances not assumed			-.676	159.853	.500	-.093	.138	-.365	.179
enjoy learning by oneself /w low support / interaction	Equal variances assumed	.004	.947	-1.819	177	.071	-.247	.136	-.514	.021
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.808	166.156	.072	-.247	.136	-.516	.023
set goals and have high degree of initiative	Equal variances assumed	.000	.999	-2.433	173	.016	-.300	.123	-.543	-.057
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.437	167.551	.016	-.300	.123	-.542	-.057
responsibility	Equal variances assumed	.751	.387	-1.639	178	.103	-.227	.138	-.500	.046
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.632	167.848	.105	-.227	.139	-.501	.048

Table 6 - B6 – B19 by Education – Independent Samples T-test

- **Comparing online readiness with gender**

The Independent-Samples T Test was used to explore any interaction between online readiness and gender. There was no significant difference in terms of the online readiness with gender, see table 5. This implies that there was no difference in the population in terms of gender with the readiness attributes in table 5.

- **Comparing online readiness with Education**

The Independent-Samples T Test was used to explore whether there was any difference in educational level with the readiness instrument, see table 6. Those attributes which resulted to be significant were listed in Table 7. The independent sample T Test was used with the online readiness factors and the level of education in order to compare online readiness with level of education. Table 7 gives those factors which showed statistical significance.

Those having optional higher education feel much more confident in using the internet to search for information as part of their studying, are able to use their past knowledge to aid them to further develop their educational abilities, feel more confident with online written communication and they feel more self-directed when compared to those having compulsory basic education.

Attribute	p	Level of Education
able to access the internet as needed for studying.	0.000	Those having Optional Higher Education reported significantly higher in these four attributes than those having Compulsory Basic Education.
use of past knowledge for new learning	0.013	
comfort with online written communication	0.001	
set goals and have high degree of initiative	0.016	

Table 7 - Comparing online readiness with education

B20. Time spent on the Internet

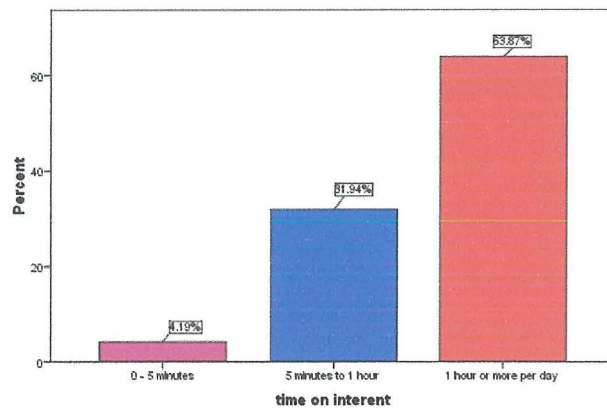


Figure 8 - Average time spent on the internet

4.19% responded that they spent minimal time accessing the Internet, 31.94% stated they spent between 5 minutes to 1 hour (daily) and 63.87% reported spending more than 1 hour on the net per day.

B22. Would you accept to follow evening classes at home through an electronic website?

Participants were asked about their preferred pedagogical strategy identifying one from a range that varied from a totally on-line course to one based on instruction in class.

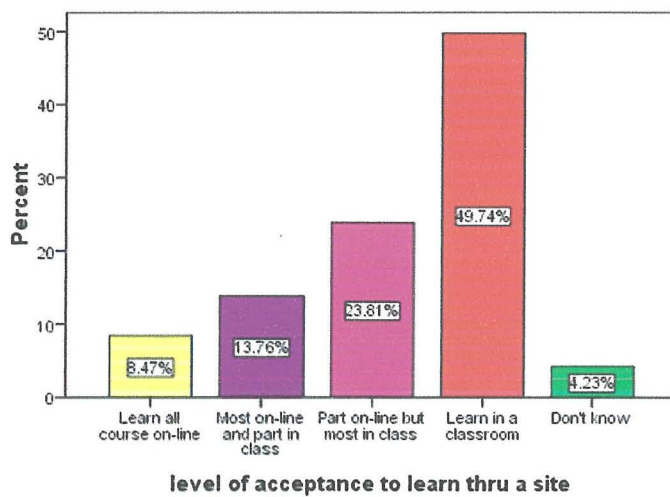


Figure 9 - Level of acceptance to learn evening courses through an on-line site

49.74% reported their preference to learn in a traditional classroom environment, 23.81% stated they were ready to have part of the lessons online but would prefer to have the main part in class, 13.76% would have preferred having most of the lesson online and only a smaller part in class, whilst only 8.47% opted for an entirely online course.

B23. What would you prefer to have on-line:

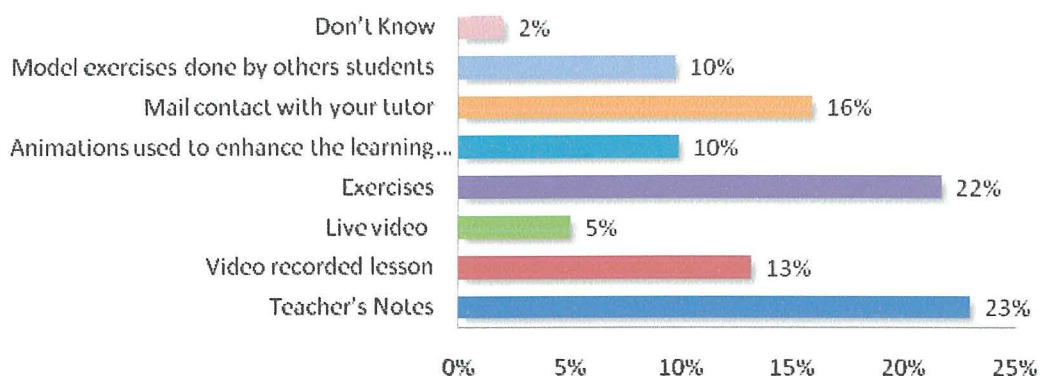


Figure 10 - Preferences of instructional resource to be available on-line

Teacher's notes (23%) was the most preferred instructional resource to be made available on-line by tutor. This was followed by exercises (22%), tutor's email (16%) and video recorded sessions (13%).

B24. Share good work with others on the website

Participants were asked whether they feel confident enough to exhibit their efforts with respect to written material that would have been certified as valid with the other students as an instance of good work. The interaction being examined here is based on three factors, being affirmative, negative and neutral (do not know) whether such work is to be shared.

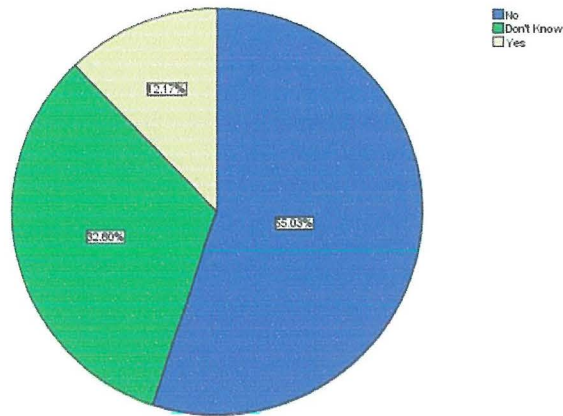


Figure 11 - Acceptance of sharing good work online

The majority (55%) stated they would find no difficulties in sharing their good work online, 32.8% were unsure, whilst 12.2% were against the idea.

D7. Number of missed lessons

Participants were asked about the number of lessons they have missed during the first three months of their course identifying response from a range that varied from nil to more than 4 lessons missed.

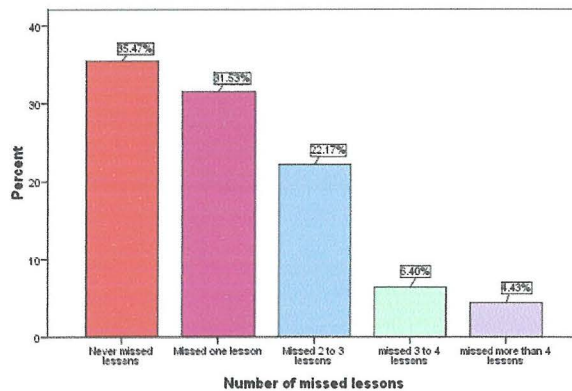


Figure 12 - Number of missed lessons during the first 3 months

35.47% students reported never missing lessons, 31.53% reported of having missed one lesson, and 22.17% missed 2 to 3 lessons.

D8. Reason for missing lessons

The sample was filtered from those who never failed to miss any lessons as reported in the above analysis.

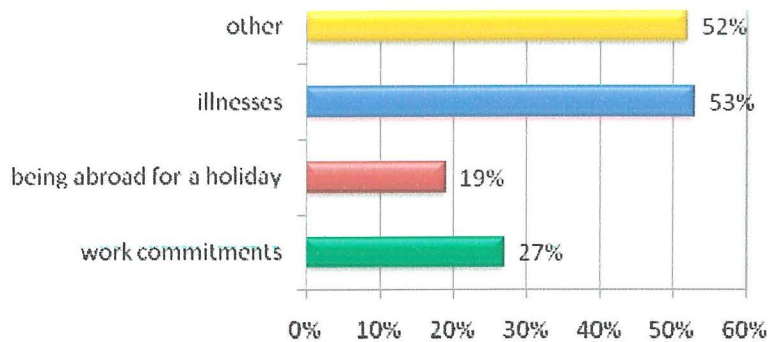


Figure 13 - Reasons for missing lessons during the first 3 months

The most common cause for missing lessons was health related (53%), followed by other situations (52%). Work commitments (27%) came next with holiday absence accounting for the final 19%.

Candidates not having a computer at home

Those participants not having a computer at home were asked whether they had had any IT training during the period ranging from the previous 12 months to more than 1 year prior to the interview date to not having had any training at all.

Only 6.9% (N=15) candidates, responded not having a computer and internet at home. This indicates that the digital divide within those attending the Maltese evening classes is very low. Since the percentage was very small, the analysis was preferred to be done in counts rather than as in percentages. Digital divide can also be considered as ownership of old PCs or PCs still using very old versions of software applications.

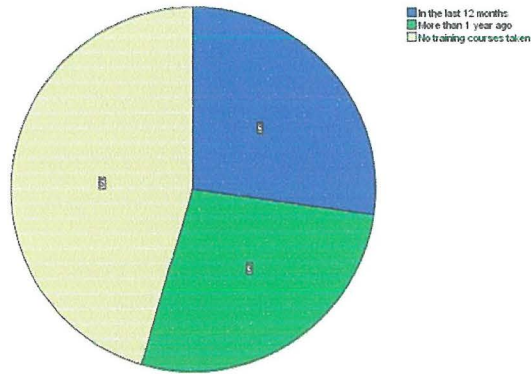


Figure 14 - IT training among those candidates not having a PC.

5 candidates out of 11 reported never attended to any IT training. 3 candidates state that they received training in the last 12 months and while the other 3 reported of having received IT training more than a year ago.

Acceptance to learn through a website

Participants not having a PC at home were asked whether they would eventually prefer to practice learning (courses) through online methods based on three factors namely being yes, no or do not know.

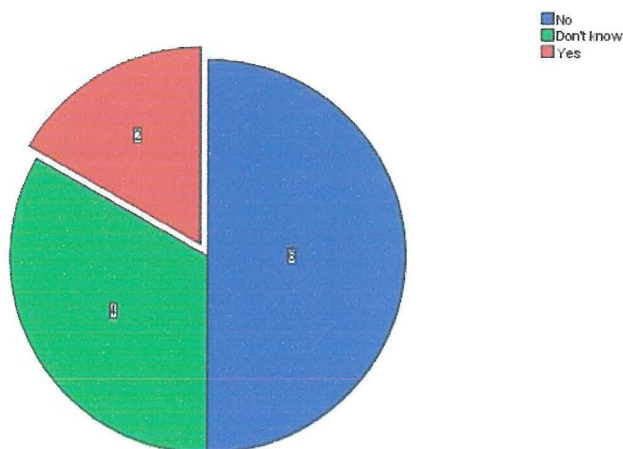


Figure 15 - Acceptance to learn online among candidates not having a PC at home

Half of the respondents are not interested to learn online. 4 out of 12 were uncertain and 2 although not having a PC at home were interested to learn online.

Participants not having a PC at home were asked about their preferred pedagogical strategy identifying one from a spectrum that varied from a totally on-line course to one based on instruction in class.

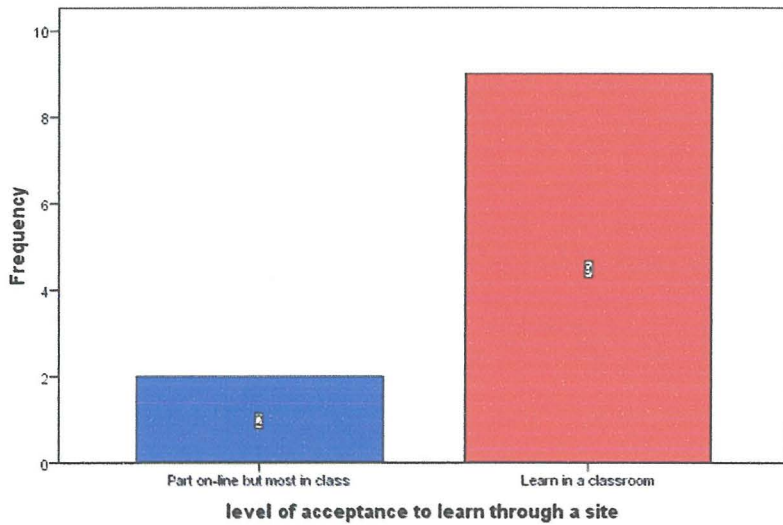


Figure 16 - Level of acceptance to learn through a site among those not having a PC

9 out of 11 of those not having a PC at home and who responded to this question reported their preference to learn lessons in a traditional classroom, while 2 candidates preferred having part of the lesson online and mostly in class.

Online preferences amongst those not having a PC

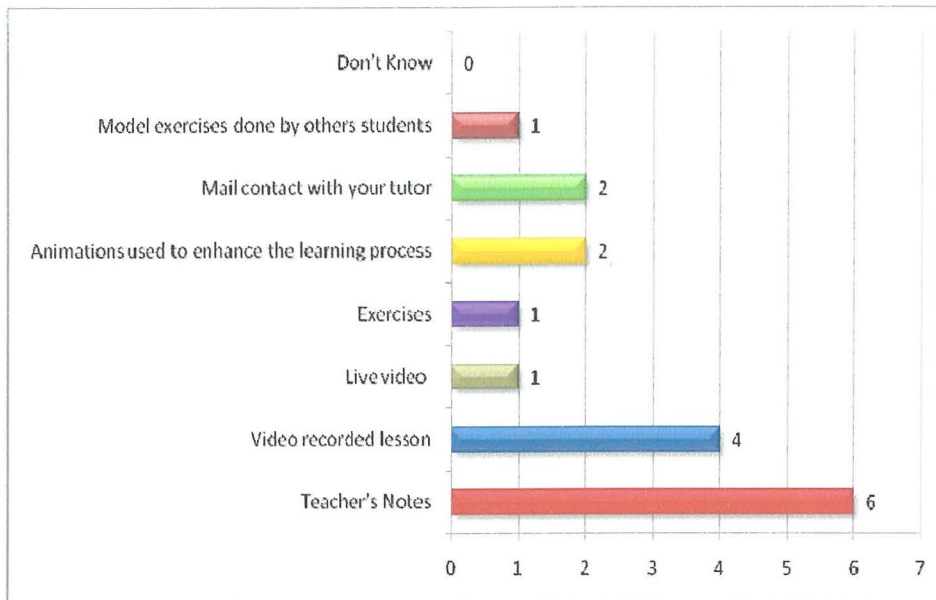


Figure 17 - Online preferences amongst those not having a PC

6 out of 15 adult learners prefer having the teacher's notes online, 4 prefer having lessons recorded and broadcasted online. The same number (4) of adult learners preferred email contact with their teacher and animated lessons.

Acceptance of sharing good work online among those not having a PC

Those participants not having a PC at home were asked whether they would prefer to share their good work online with other students. Objective of the response was to identify those who were in favour, others who were not and those who did not express an opinion on the issue.

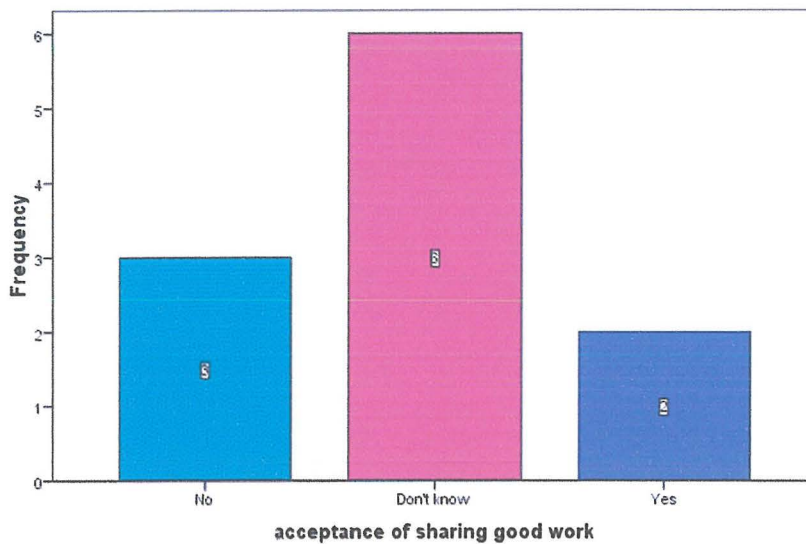


Figure 18 - Acceptance of sharing good work online as a model to others among those not having a PC

4 out of 15 candidates did not respond to this question. 6 were uncertain, 3 stated they would not like to share quality work with others. Only 2 find no problem to share their good work online.

Evening classes Teachers – Findings

Since only 26 teachers answered the questionnaire a number of responses fall below accepted level of statistically significant thus limiting extrapolation on the greater (teacher) population. However, author is of the opinion that results represent a good approximation of real life. To minimise the possibility of extrapolation of results, observations are being reported in counts.

For the first part of the questionnaire, teachers were asked about:

- the number of occurrences they found difficulty to skip a topic as the majority (but not all) of the class were already familiar with it;
- Frequency of teachers having experienced situations where they wished to slow down but could not due to students' resistance; and
- frequency of teacher having experienced situations where they wanted to repeat the lesson but could not due to student dissent.

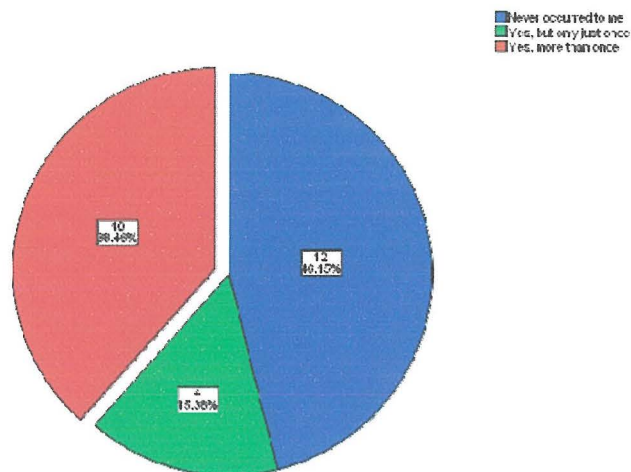


Figure 19 - Occurrences of teacher having the difficulty to skip a topic as the majority of class were familiar with the topic but could not due to a few who were not.

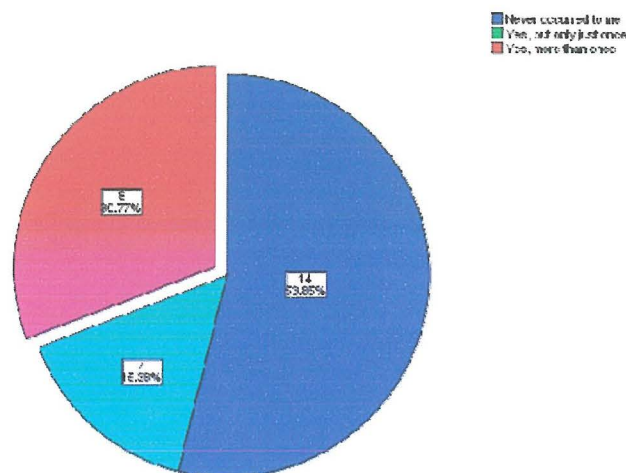


Figure 20 - Frequency of teachers having experienced situations where they wished to slow down but could not due to students' resistance

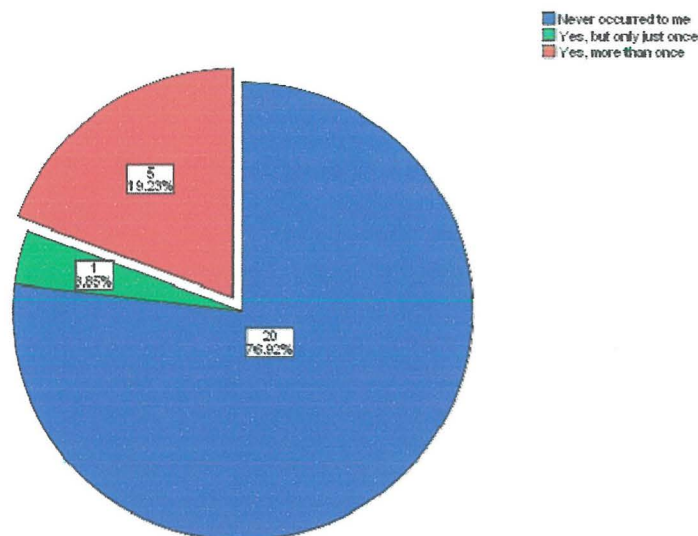


Figure 21 - Frequency of teacher having experienced situations where they wanted to repeat the lesson but could not due to student dissent

This indicates that 10 out of 26 evening classes teachers reported finding difficulty to skip topics as necessary due to time restriction of the evening classes scholastic year. 8 teachers reported finding difficulty to slow down their lessons making it frustrating for the teacher to find a balance between those who would have liked him/her to quicken the lesson and yet others who would have liked to slow down. 5 out of 26 teachers reported frequently finding difficulty in repeating the lesson to some evening classes students due to some students who would have complained as they would have lost time and not have completed the syllabus.

Level of acceptance to teach evening classes online

Teachers were asked about their preferred pedagogical strategy identifying one from a range that varied from a totally on-line course to one based on instruction in class.

The figures in each column represents the number of respondents out of 26 teachers.

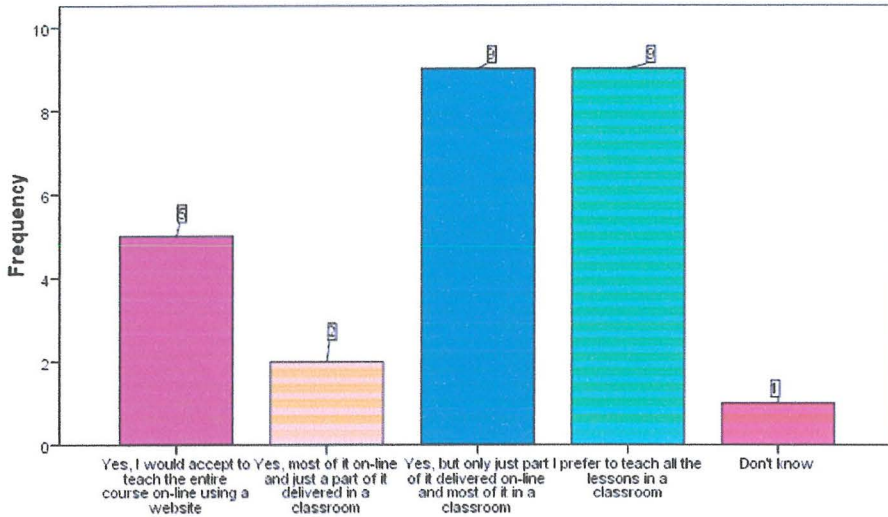


Figure 22 - Level of acceptance to teach evening classes through the Internet

Quite interestingly, 9 teachers out of 26 agreed to teach part of the course online, with the major part remaining taught conventionally in a traditional classroom. Other 9 teachers preferred teaching the entire course in a traditional classroom. 5 teachers preferred teaching the entire course online.

Teacher's use of their PC/laptop

Teachers were asked to indicate through a grading process, their preference regarding the most common usage for the PC they use.

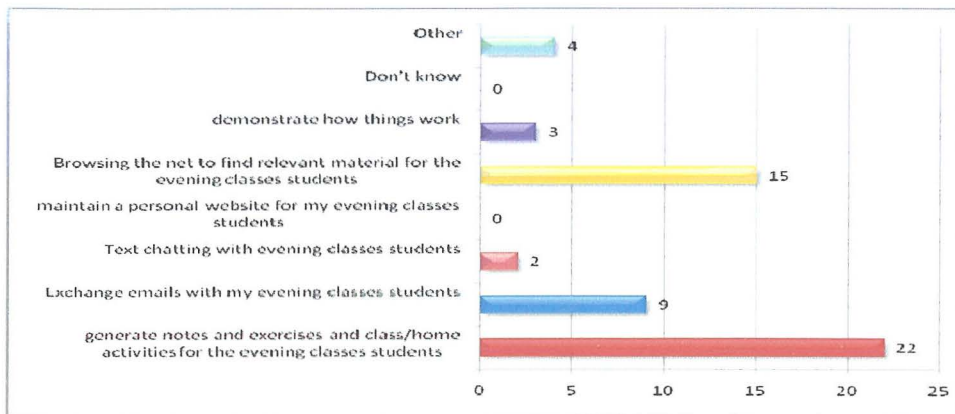


Figure 23 - Teacher's use of their PC/laptop with relevance to evening classes

22 out of 26 teachers stated that they used their PC/laptop to create notes and exercises for their evening classes students, followed by 15 who stated that they use internet to acquire relevant information for the subject they teach.

Teacher's preference on content made available online

Teachers were asked to state their preference with respect to the nature of content to be put online to facilitate accessibility for their evening classes students, such as model worked exercises, sharing their mail with students, putting animated material online, exercises, asynchronous or synchronous videos and notes. Respondents had the option to refuse all of the pre-offered choices.

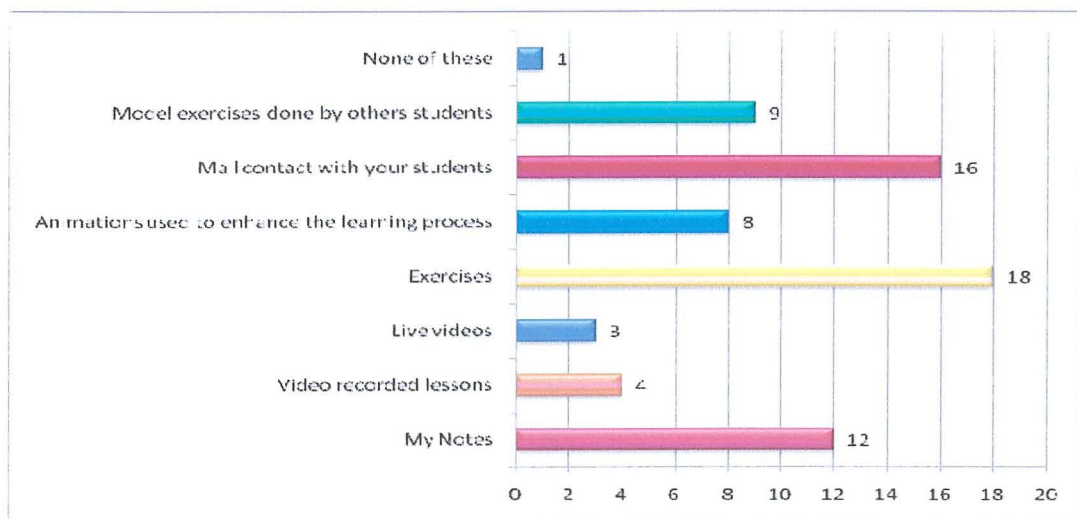


Figure 24 - Teacher's preferred online content

18 teachers out of 26 prefer making exercises available online, followed by 16 teachers who prefer giving email contact to their students and 12 teachers putting their notes online.

Conclusion

The following section summarizes finding from the different components of this investigation comprising salient statistical outcomes of the student and teacher responses:

Questions set to all students:

Students' response as for their first 3 month experience of their evening classes course:

65.8% attend one evening classes course.

62.4% prefer to skip already known topics.

59.4% had situations where they preferred the teacher to slow down the lesson.

66% were shy to ask questions.

93.1% have a PC at home.

80.2% of the sample access the internet daily and 14.72% access the internet once a week.

98% have internet access from home.

Responses from students having a PC at home:

Comparing online readiness with age:

A significant difference was noted on communication with others, in the sense that younger adult learners communicate more online with others as compared to middle-aged or more advanced learners. Middle aged learners communicate more than the older group. As to the other attributes (B6 to B19) all groups are comfortable with online written communication.

Comparing online readiness with gender:

There was no difference in the gender groups, this means that all groups agree in the same way as to all attributes (B6 to B19).

Comparing online readiness with education:

Those having optional higher education feel more confident with online education than those having compulsory basic education.

Frequency of Internet access:

63.87% of the students reported accessing the internet for more than 1 hour daily.

Level of acceptance of learning online:

49.74% prefer to learn in a traditional classroom, 23.1% prefer to have part of the lesson online and mostly in a classroom, 13.76% prefer most of the lesson to be online, while 8.47% prefer to have the lesson entirely online.

Online educative material preferences:

The students' preferred on-line learning resource was the teacher's notes, followed by exercises, the tutor's email, and asynchronous video recorded lessons.

Sharing good work online:

55% of the students do not find any objections to share their good work with others.

Students' frequency of missing lessons:

35.47% never missed lessons, 31.53% missed 1 lesson, while 22.17% missed 2 to 3 lessons. The main reason for missing lessons was primarily illness-related.

Responses from students not having a PC at home:

- 5/11 students never underwent any IT training, 3 participated such training within the previous twelve month period, and 3 had attended training more than a year prior to the interview
- 6/12 were interested to learn through a website, 4 were uncertain, while 2 were not interested at all.
- Main preference for online material was for teachers' notes.
- 9/11 prefer to learn in a classroom.

- Although not having a PC they indicated their preference to have (online) in the main the teacher's notes followed by asynchronous video recorded lessons.

Responses from evening classes teacher (26 participants):

Teachers' response in connection with their first 3 month experience of the prevailing year's evening classes:

- 12 teachers never found any problem to skip a topic, 4 experienced this once, while 10 experienced this problem more than once.
- 14 teachers never found any problem to slow down their lessons, 4 experienced this problem once, while 8 did so more than once.
- 20 never had the experience to repeat the lesson, 1 only once, while 5 encountered this problem more than once.

Level of acceptance to teach online:

- 9 agreed to teach part of the lesson online, 9 preferred to remain teaching in a classroom, while 5 preferred to teach the course entirely online.

Teacher's use of a PC:

- Most common use of a PC by teachers was to generate notes. This was followed by browsing the internet to find relevant material for their evening classes students.

Teacher's preference on content made available online:

- Teachers' main preference was for exercises. This was followed by their email contact and their notes.

Part 3 - Piloting TeL with evening classes students

Introduction

The purpose of this action research is to introduce, in blended mode, some of my Evening Classes ECDL lessons and other lessons, like the use of the tools provided by the Google Environment, through TeL means among the usual traditional teaching. Further empirical evidence about this approach was obtained through lesson observations and two focus groups organized in parallel with the other data collecting techniques.

Data Collection

A blended approach was adopted from the beginning of the course in October 2008 till February, 2009. About one lesson per month of the core course was done at home through Skype audio/video/chat and Gmail chat as synchronous activities. A discussion group, online tests and other extra exercises were done asynchronously.

Two groups were involved in this study, each consisting of 9 students who were given a consent form and accepted to participate. The table 8 gives the personal profile of the participants using fictitious names

Group 1:

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Status	Kids	Employed	Remarks
Ashley	F	Middle	Single Mother	1	Yes	
Raya		Middle	Married	1	No	Daisy's parents
Pascal	Yes					
Daisy	F	Young	Single		No	
Rachana			Married	1	No	
Sabrina			Single		Part-time	
Dominic	M	Old	Married	2	Yes	Not having a PC
Jacob					Retired	
Sabrina	F	Middle		6	No	

Group 2:

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Status	Kids	Employed	Remarks
Miguel	M	Middle	Married	2	Yes	
Milo				2	Yes	Couple
Melina				No		
Candy	F	Young	Single		Yes	
Carla						
Rafael	M					
Ian						
Abigail	F			No		
Anna						

Table 8 - Participants' brief profile

Table 9 shows the online participation level.

Group 1	Participated	Group 2	Participated
Ashley	Regularly	Miguel	Regularly
Pascal			
Jacob			
Rachana			
Dominic			
Sabrina	Rarely	Abigail	Rarely
Sandra			
Raya	Never	Rafael	
Daisy			
		Milo	
		Melina	
		Anna	Never

Table 9 - Participation level

Group 1 was formed by all except Jacob (as he was not present during the focus group) and group 2 by Milo, Melina, Rafael and Candy.

Did you enjoy the online lessons?

Group 1

Ashley: It was fun, I like this kind of teaching. I could get my kid at the same time.

Pascal: The fact of being near the kitchen I consider it as a perfect idea.

Domenic: It was a new interesting experience. Since you don't have to get out, I find it comfortable as long as you don't have someone who disturbs you.

Rachana: I like to learn here in class. I cannot bare the idea of having online schools! You may not understand some parts of the exercise.

Raya: I consider it as a challenge and I really like it, although I occasionally stall due to difficulties. Otherwise I won't consume what I am learning. So, when I stall, I strive to understand so as to be able to continue.

Group 2

Man: You can do the exercises any time you want, even while cooking.

Rafael: You can do it at your own convenience

Candy: There is no overhead time involved.

Marie: I feel much comfortable to come here learning at school. I feel more at ease then being at home because if I have got a question I can ask it directly to you.

Which type of courses would you prefer to have online, numeracy ones or courses of language type?

Group 1	Numeracy	Language
Ashley	Yes	Yes
Pascal		
Dominic		
Raya		
Sabrina	No	No
Rachana		
Sandra		
Daisy	Don't know	Don't know

Group 2	Numeracy	Language
Candy	Yes	Yes
Rafael	Yes	Yes
Milo	Don't know	Don't know
Melina	Don't know	Don't know

Table 10 - Numeracy or language preference of online education

Table 10 shows that 6 (3 males and 3 females) out of 12 students feel more comfortable if they take numeracy on-line education. On the other hand females seem to more predominantly prefer languages to be taught on-line. Out of a total of 8, 5 were females and 3 males. However, one must not exclude that here more female students were in the focus group than males.

Advantages of online lessons

When asked about the advantages of online lessons, Rachana said:

What I really like is that I can send you my homework and then I receive the feedback immediately. The fascinating thing is that one can do homework by taking time (clarify!) and do it at any time before the next lecturing session is held. Otherwise, one would have

to wait a whole week when doing homework the traditional way. Having the means to communicate for any problem with you is a great advantage.

Milo said:

... Shyness will keep the student from posing questions due to the presence of his colleagues. It's quite different when you ask in class, "Any questions?"... No one will react ...online, the communication barrier is removed.

And Candy said:

I consider it as a bonus that I learned these things ...We won't lag behind our children! ... You need to remain updated.

Both focus groups agreed that if the course is only available online, then they will accept to go for it.

Being disrupted as a disadvantage at home

Group 1	Disrupted
Ashley	Sometimes
Pascal	No
Raya	
Dominic	
Daisy	
Sabrina	Yes
Rachana	
Sandra	

Group 2	Disrupted
Candy	No
Rafael	
Milo	Yes
Melina	

Table 11 - Perspective regarding the possibility of disruption while pursuing online education

The major problem of women was that of being disrupted by their kids or other persons around. Those being disrupted preferred to do their tasks during nights and week-ends. The others who answered positive keep concentrated on their tasks as if they are in class.

What would you like to have online?

Group 1	Model Exercises	Notes	Activity Sheets	Tutor Email
Ashley		Yes	Yes	Yes
Pascal	Yes	Yes		
Raya	Yes	Yes		
Dominic	Yes			
Daisy				
Sabrina	Yes	Yes		
Rachana				
Sandra				

Group 2	Model Exercises	Notes	Exercises	Tutor Email
Candy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rafael		Yes	Yes	
Milo				
Melina				

Table 12 - Preference of online content and of having tutor's email

This shows that student participants showed preference for having email exchanges with the tutor, followed by online notes.

Ideal type of communication adopted online

Group 1	Chatting	Voice/camera	Online discussions	Group	Individual
Ashley		Yes		Yes	Yes
Pascal		Yes		Yes	Yes
Raya	Yes				Yes
Dominic	Yes	Yes		Yes	
Daisy					
Sabrina					
Rachana		Yes	Yes		
Sandra					

Group 2	Chatting	Voice/camera	Online discussions	Group	Individual
Candy		Yes		Yes	Yes
Rafael					
Milo		Yes		Yes	
Melina					

Table 13 - Preference of electronic communication

This shows that the voice/camera was the preferred medium of communication. Group communication is slightly more preferred than individual communication. On the other hand chatting and online discussions seem to be less preferred as these may hinder productivity. It is pertinent to note that online discussion, although not preferred as a means of communication, it may be critical for collaborative group work.

Do you find online learning challenging?

Group 1	Challenge	Remarks
Ashley	No	
Pascal		
Raya	Yes	
Sabrina		
Rachana		At the beginning
Dominic		
Daisy	Not answered	
Sandra		
Group 2		
Candy	Yes	At the beginning I was skeptic. Need your own initiative.
Rafael		Get more involved; Need someone to push you
Milo		Feel not confident enough
Melina		Training is a must before going online

Table 14 - Level of online learning as being challenging or not

8 evening classes students out of 12 stated that they felt on-line learning as being challenging.

Which is preferred mix between traditional and online learning?

Group 1	Traditional	More traditional and less online	Less traditional and more online	Non-Traditional	The subject may affect you
Ashley		Yes			No
Pascal			Yes		No
Raya		Yes			Yes
Dominic			Yes		No
Daisy		Yes			No
Sabrina		Yes			No
Rachana		Yes			Yes
Sandra		Yes			Yes
Group 2					
Candy			Yes		Yes
Rafael		Yes			Yes
Milo		Yes			Yes
Melina		Yes			Yes

Table 15 - Choice mix between traditional and non-traditional learning methodologies

The preferred mix between traditional and non-traditional learning methodologies, as shown in Table 15, tends to favour the traditional over the online approach.

Have you found the discussion group useful?

Candy: ...when I had a problem at anytime I made use of the [discussion group]. I could ask a question which could be vital to both groups.... One can access it and follow everybody's input, sort of having an archive.

What do you think about the ECDL online tests?

Candy: These are beneficial to students, as they can do them at home, at their convenience. If I don't know exactly how to answer them, I have got the time and chance to search through the notes.

General feedback to enhance my online teaching

- To split the three hour online direct communication session into two. (One should also consider the possibility of splitting the allocated time even further, into, say, six half-hour sessions. Such sessions would take place during the entire week, to enhance the constant availability properties of online technologies and to increase the students' convenience level.
- Sending exercises earlier so that problems can be sorted out before the given timeframe and have enough time for printing.

Chapter 5

Discussion of Findings

Introduction

Clearly, the response gained from the survey showed that the acceptance as to whether the Maltese students enrolled for evening classes are not willing to participate in online evening classes remains quite substantial at 49.74%. However, the dominant perception of the persons involved is that there is no complete substitute to the traditional school (see Table 9). This is mainly attributable to the fact that participants prefer physical presence and thus direct contact with their classmates and teachers. In effect, this falls in line with e-technology concepts that make the electronic service delivery channel a medium parallel, and not in conflict, with the traditional service channels. Conversely, 23.81% of the sample reported their willingness to learn mostly in class and partly online. A further 13.76% are more in favour of having the lesson online and only 8.47% are willing to take the whole course online. This gives an indication that while students are more inclined to learn in class, they are willing to experience online learning.

In the main, the preferred on-line learning resources are teacher's notes (23%), exercises (22%), teacher's mail contact (16%) and video recorded lessons (13%).

Major Findings

Quite interestingly 8 out of 14 of those ex-candidates who dropped the course reported that they are more willing to take online courses. However, 6 of these ex-candidates would rather prefer to have blended learning. In contrast to the survey done with those who attended lessons regularly these (ex-candidates) showed the need for outreach initiatives. Such initiatives would facilitate widened access, attracting more participants to continue their education in spite of any physical obstacles. Moreover, 5 out of 14 ex-candidates reported that they are more comfortable to learn during nights and only 3 prefer learning during the evenings. This indicates the need of flexibility and autonomy provision, both of which could be achieved through online means to provide this kind of broader access to learning. This is epitomized in Raphael's (a participant in one focus group), "You can do [your self-directed learning] at your own convenience." Promoting self-directed learning or better being an active self-organised learner is an important element of constructivist learning theory. Such theory would aid the learner not to produce a copy of what s/he is exposed to, but to be creative in developing his/her current abilities in an active manner. This implies that the student would assimilate what s/he has learnt from different sources found online and uses this knowledge as a foundation to construct new ideas (Mosel, 2005, p3). The way one would develop oneself would be the fruit of others who took time publishing their good work online. So, if the evening classes learners share their work one may imagine how much information they will eventually assimilate. Encouragingly, 55% of the evening classes sample feels confident to share their work with others. There is already a need for sharing knowledge, so what remains is the deployment of an appropriate platform that can handle this request, such as a wiki, blog, fora or chats created on the Maltese government network.

ICT can be used as a tool to minimize exclusion by giving more access to adult learners (Webb 2006 p482). Moreover, as stated by Lewin et al (2003, p23) adults, like children, can be using technology to enhance their learning from home. This will highly strengthen access by providing it through a virtual learning environment, which goes beyond than just typing a letter using a word processor (Clarke 2004, p26). So, this calls for a change from the simplistic approaches in using ICT to more authentic and complex representations of the learning process. It is time to climb another rung up the ladder, and move on a further step to apply these basics to aid in augmenting the adult's learning. In turn the student will be motivated through these extrinsic factors and as Koper et al (2005 p73) states "[i]t envisions a learner-centered, learner controlled model of distributed lifelong learning." Similarly, taking into consideration the type of course enrollment, 11 out of 15 from the F2F interviewees agreed that they are quite confident of being self-directing and thus can understand on their own.

So, what are the main barriers hindering Maltese adult learners from taking the leap forward in e-learning? Unmistakably the reasons given were centred on cultural resistance which is deeply ingrained with mediocre traditional old-fashioned learning approaches. So, the problem here is not one limited to the field of education but is a cultural issue. It is deep-rooted, within the pre-digital generation who perceives computers and technology either as a black box full of mysteries, or as a toy, good enough only for children's play. This statement is supported by Clarke (2004, p26-27)

“Although many adults have taken part in ICT education and training programmes, it is widely accepted that many adults do not identify ICT as relevant to their lives.... A key factor in motivating any learner is to demonstrate that the subject is relevant to them, that it will meet their needs.”

Another reason may be attributable to our small state where the evening classes centres are in close proximity to adult learners' residences. This resistance to change and accepting the world's current trends in learning and training will eventually exclude or marginalize us. Politicians should not be the only agents who endeavor to narrow this gap. Policy-makers have to do their part in order to break this impediment and narrow this divide. Providing the bare basics, by way of hardware and infrastructure, namely access to the cyber world, does not translate into an automatic elimination of the digital divide. The issue today stands more on computer readiness rather than about computer literacy. People, particularly the older generation, lack the necessary confidence to explore and adopt (and adapt themselves) to new ways of learning. They feel more comfortable using older technologies such as personal visits and the telephone. They look on PC technology with a mix of the fear and antagonism that the unknown brings up in the human being.

Likewise, Gorard et. al. (2003, p293) state that ICT is not being used to its full potential. ICT is not having its full beneficial impact that many politicians and educationalists would have us believe. The fact that 93.1% (see fig. 5.05) of the evening classes have a computer at home and use it does not mean that they are using it effectively.

“Indeed, ICT skills courses could be seen as the typing and secretarial courses of the 2000s but the fact remains that such provision has replaced and not augmented other types of provision ... We ... need to be realistic on what ICT can and cannot be expected to achieve if we are to harness its educational potential.”

Gorard et al (2003, p293/4)

Similarly, this is what in actual fact is happening to the Maltese evening classes candidates. They think that because they know how to fetch some information on the net suffices. This is a critically limiting delusion. Our society has to bear in mind that technology is bringing radical change in society and this is really inevitable. This radical change may influence the way we teach at schools with the aim to improve the dissemination of teaching and learning. Consequently, we have to compete with the other countries that have for long years now managed to harness the power of this kind of teaching and learning. So, it is pointless to resist, the consequences are already putting us at a disadvantage.

However, I categorically do not agree with what Gorard et al (2003, p293/4) argue when they state “Widening participation through the internet is far more complicated than one can expect.” In reality, when I exposed my evening classes students to an experimental blended program, ranging from a completely online situation to a half by half, the majority identified with this kind of learning with ease and great enthusiasm. Of course not all students were motivated in the same manner. In fact, some found online teaching as somewhat difficult to manage or showed their resistance by not participating at all. Conversely, this investigation found that the rate of learning by the greater part was

increased quite significantly when compared to those groups where traditional methods were deployed. And this goes somewhat near to what Selwyn and Gorard (2003, p174) state when they say that “ICT-based educational provision will encourage wider participation.” However, this would vary from one age group to another. That is the youngest and the middle tended to participate more than the old generation.

After this exposure of online teaching, the participants’ most significant feature was that ideally evening classes should be blended to somewhere near half by half. These students saw and appreciated the potential use of technology in their home and could extend access to their learning and enrich opportunities for themselves, through their engagement in a virtual school and communicating using various channels. Once these candidates gained some experience, they offered little resistance as to accept evening classes in a blended mode. Only those few who were relatively older resisted adapting to this program. Older adults are more bound to the traditional schooling. They seem to be more skeptical about having any kind of online learning in an ‘evening classes’ environment. This program tried to put the participants at the centre, by empowering them and thus giving them more control over what they were learning and doing. It also involved sharing of good practice and common problems amongst each other.

In essence, technology within the evening classes, must be recognised and accepted as a catalyst for change in this sector, in much the same way as it has been in industry, according to BECTA, a government-linked body promoting the use of IT in education⁶.

⁶ BECTA – March, 2007, How can ICT support workforce remodelling?

In fact, a significant number of participants in this investigation appreciated it so much that they could ultimately comprehend how a typical online program might be carried out and that they are ready for such courses. Also, they got an insight into what their children may experience when exposed to such kind of courses.

Candy: "I consider it as a bonus that I learned these things ... We won't lag behind our children! ... You need to remain updated."

She ended with a remarkable note stating the important need for life-long learning. She attributes two advantages to this – (a) upgrading her knowledge and (b) she will automatically narrow the generation gap between herself and her future offspring, who will be born in the digital era.

Four attributes for the readiness to online teaching (see full details in Table 6 and a summarized version in Table 7) compared with Educational level of participants. Those having (Optional) Higher Education reporting significantly higher readiness than those in (Compulsory) Basic Education to access the internet as needed for studying ($p = 0.000$), use of past knowledge for new learning ($p = 0.013$), comfort with online written computer-mediated communication ($p = 0.001$), and setting goals and having high degree of initiative ($p = 0.016$). These attributes indicate that there is a divide between those who are academically self-developed in education and those who are not. This divide is not a question as being a difference in economic status as indicated by many researchers like Parayil (2005, p41-45), Cecchini et al. (2003, p73-84) and Hoff (2004). It is definitely not arising from the rich - poor gap or those who have and those who do not have. The majority of adult learners today have the necessary tools and opportunities to access the

internet. The problem, therefore, is the propensity and the right attitude to use the technology in the right way, in this case specifically for educational purposes linked to life long learning.

Referring to Table 3, statistics show that in all circumstances those who are more ready to learn online are those students who have further continued their education. Based on these set of readiness questions, age did not result to be significant except for the 'able to communicate with others' attribute ($p = 0.002$), where the young adults are able to communicate through the technology more than their counterparts and the middle ones more than the older generation (see Table 4). And communication is the key criterion when going online. Youngsters are born in a world which depends entirely on technology and so are more susceptible to accept learning in this way. This is evidently an indication of the need to go online and giving access to outreach this digital generation. According to Hoff (2004, p2-3) youngsters make use of ICT more than older ones and age may impinge on ICT usage level. The other counterparts have to adapt to mastering the ultimate key to the e-learning world. The adoption of technology-enhanced learning is directly attributable to communication. Negative voices argue that the use of computer-mediated communication will further isolate people from F2F communication. Proponents like Webb (2006, p493) assert that it is better to learn F2F rather than through a machine as this may exclude certain people. Contrary to this statement, ICT will engage these students to the world, as Milo said in one of the focus group, "...[once being] online, the communication barrier is removed". 6 out of 14 of those who participated in the F2F interviews believe that ICT can widen social communication. Researchers Snyder et al (2002 p368) found rather a neutral position of both extremes, in the sense that the optimum way of communication should involve a multimodal dimension, a blend of various

communications especially keeping the traditional F2F communication and through other technological means. In this manner, internet technologies can provide communication tools mimicking verbal interaction and more 'electronic' versions of interaction such as fora, wikis, blogs and chats.

The response given by teachers (see Fig 5.19 to 5.21) reported in some circumstances a sense of restriction and frustration brought about by being flexible in the way they deliver their lessons. The reason for this is without any doubt attributable to the traditional style of teaching that assume a generic ideal learner model which is not catering and centering on the individual's needs, especially when considering the diversity in the students' abilities and learning needs.

Although the 26 teachers know how to find their way about using a computer, it shows that 18 of the teachers are partially ready to cooperate in e-learning programs (see fig 5.22). Teachers, too seems to lack self-confidence to use technology efficiently and effectively, for the benefit of their community. Unfortunately, 8 of the teachers interviewed are not computer oriented and so would 'resist' any drive towards e-learning. Unless one's heart is in it and one is ready to deal with problems in a proactive manner, e-learning and any other computer-based project will NEVER take off. Addressing adult learners' perceptions, attitudes and belief systems about technology is the parting point for any innovation in adult learning. So the push has to start from those who are directly in contact with their students, driving them towards a positive direction of feeling at ease deploying PC technology and making use of it in a natural manner to promote their own advancement and more importantly that of their students.

Recommendations

TeL is an approach that should be promoted in the Maltese evening classes as most of the candidates are computer literate and do make use of the internet. It should be considered as an integral component of the learning environment deeply influencing the teaching-learning process. However, it should go beyond than just using the bare basics, but rather certain material generated by the teachers and likewise by the candidates should be put online and shared either through private or public means through a ODL. A typical example of this is the cLc (Connected Learning Communities) by UniServity⁷ at UK, where enhancing teaching and improving learning through this ODL platform is their prime mission. Typical tools used in this platform are Wikis, podcasting, videoconferencing, ePortfolios, self-assessment online quizzes, Forums and Blogs. These will empower the learners to do collaborative learning by constructively criticizing and correcting each other's work. These are just a few of the tools being imparted on this platform to infants, which might as well be customized to adult learners.

In addition, other combinations of technologies may be deployed in the classroom. In essence, a mix between traditional schooling and internet based off-school courses should be provided in order to increase the need for accessibility to all diverse situations. Subsequently, flexibility and affordability of education services will serve more Maltese people without any compromises. Opening a new avenue through eLearning will widen access to the Maltese people and possibly other foreign students may enroll in our educational services, yielding income into our economical system.

⁷ <http://www.uniservity.com/>

Our educational policy-makers should take this opportunity with enthusiasm. In order to make this project a success, they should decide to set up a common ODL platform. The teachers, as practitioners should be trained through a professional development program so as to get accustomed to the ODL system, to different possibilities offered by technology and at the same time they will lessen resistance to make use of it. The teachers then as one team should be given the opportunity to air their views as to what type of learning activity they would like to promote and what they would like to place on this platform so as to reach a common and seamless setup. Once this is done, public awareness should be raised. Furthermore, when this concept comes into practice the teachers concerned should be the ones who train and drive students to maximize the use of this platform.

A strategic plan should be considered. At the start this reform should ideally cater for two programs, one being kept as completely traditional and the other having a blend mode, being more lessons taught in class and some online. Eventually, when the system gears up other variants may evolve, such as midway courses or complete online programs. The idea of having a number of variants is essential so as to minimize any possibility of marginalizing certain people. Besides, this vision will open wider access to more participants in a democratic manner for continuing to learn without any physical barriers whatsoever. Even the evening classes school will benefit, in the sense that there will be very little logistical constraints in assigning scarce resources such as computer labs.

The bottom line is that, the benefits of ICT are endless, but effect may result only if our culture accepts the benefits acquired through such methods of teaching and learning. Until this occurs, we will be entrapped in another digital divide this time not amongst us, but with respect to other countries.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Introduction

The staggered, piloted and gradual deployment of ODL/TeL, in a manner as to seamlessly integrate with the more traditional educational tools and implements, as has happened in the more advanced European countries in the sector, can prove to be of immense benefit to all stakeholders and hence to society in general. The objective of this study was to observe the reaction of diverse students and teachers with respect to such deployment of technology in education. In short, the aim of the study was to explore a new way of:

1. widening access to adult learners who would otherwise be unable to follow desired courses;
2. upgrading evening classes to provide a better quality and academic status of the evening classes, regardless of where they may be delivered.

Contact time between the teacher and students during the course may vary according to the design of the course and the options one gives to learners. Those teachers who are accustomed to teach in a classroom will initially feel a little bit disorientated to teach in a virtual environment. This is quite normal and so to dampen this shock, the transition to ODL/TeL has to take place in gradual steps year after year on the basis of guidelines/benchmarks developed by ICT champion teachers. This is a critical success factor as the whole teaching staff will be exactly aware of what they are expected to

achieve to reach the ODL/TeL objective. Most of the adult learners seem to be quite ready to accept a certain volume of online material. To make this project a success, this has to be owned and stimulated by politicians, education policy-makers and ultimately by the teachers and learners themselves.

Objectives of dissertation

The objectives of this dissertation have been realised by answering and proposing workable solutions to the research questions as planned at the outset. Any data acquired was faithful to the prevailing real life situation and the exercise was aimed towards procuring benefit for Maltese society.

Self-evaluation

In retrospect, I believe that the study shed sufficient light on the situation prevailing in connection with the deployment of electronic means of service delivery in evening classes. This notwithstanding, there are a number of limitations, declared in the appropriate section below, that a reader should keep in view when perusing this material.

Apart from these limitations, the study in question posed the right questions to select key players. Various methods of data collection, qualitative and quantitative in nature, were utilized, to include F2F interviews, lesson observations, focus groups and questionnaires.

Confidence in the validity of the questions asked and topics addressed during data collection was obtained through pilot exercises, during which the initially-drafted material was amended following analysis of participant feedback.

Being a first approach to analyse the prevailing situation (where evening classes are concerned) and addressing issues and concerns, this study should be considered as a pioneer exercise. Future exercises will add value to findings being reported in this study, as longitudinal data would be made available. This would enable authorities and researchers to gauge the level of progress over time.

One would expect any such future exercises to use this study as a point of departure and to enter into more sophisticated deliberations concerning the subject matter.

Limitations response

Limitations of this study include the small number of teachers who participated for the survey. This may hinder certain e-learning aspects. In order to achieve greater representation of the actual population within a sampled study, the pool of participants would need to be increased. In addition, the inclusion of teachers of different subjects could have participated. This would have enriched the study through diversity.

One possibly significant bias was the fact that the evening classes population in the case of the focus groups was a subset of the real population, as this was chosen through students following IT-related courses.

In addition, although Education Division evening classes are held at other sites, the population for all primary research was taken to be those students attending courses at Maria Regina School (this being the main service provision centre for such evening classes).

Recommendations for future research

It would be interesting to investigate the issue of the digital divide/change/choice in a wider context through the soliciting of perceptions/experiences of those candidates who have already attended evening classes provided by both the education division and private institutions. These perceptions would provide interesting comparison and contrast with findings included in this study. Further study may take place on a nation-wide platform, thus providing a more holistic picture representative of the entire Maltese (and Gozitan) population and thus minimizing any bias that may have resulted through my 'localised' findings.

In contemplating possible future research based on this study, one would be well advised to consult the above-declared limitations, with the aim of ensuring that any such studies would address these issues and fine tune the research tool.

One manner of ensuring that future research will continue to add value to the study, it may be ideal for authorities to develop and implement a plan deploying internet-facilitated teaching in evening classes. One could avoid the 'big bang' approach by launching this project in the form of a pilot, choosing those students following IT-related courses.

Any future research would take this study's findings, opinions and recommendations in conjunction with practical results obtained through the pilot deployment of web-based teaching mechanisms, and hopefully come up with valid and tested recommendations that can assure a more smooth and stable deployment of the system across the entire Education Division-run evening classes.

Outcome of the exercise

Throughout the process of this investigation the relevance of this study topic was experienced continually, a number of times confirming the need to start addressing many of the identified underlying issues. It was found that the sector is finding difficulty in taking the plunge and deploying teaching methods other than the traditional methods which have been with us for a long number of years. There is great need for awareness raising within the educational sector (the service providers) with respect to more modern, efficient and effective teaching methodologies, tools and implements. It is also pertinent to note that the study has proved that, on the part of participating students, online readiness levels are high. This is a typical case of supply lagging behind the corresponding demand.

One would assume that any initiative to deploy electronic service delivery channels in education, as has happened in basically any field of business and leisure, will act as a catalyst amongst even those students who have been skeptical to date. Deployment and the initial successes it would invariably bring with it (assuming the deployment is well planned and executed) would serve as an 'appetizer' and help assure that ever more students make it over the digital divide.

Internet usage is, admittedly, widespread. However, it is one tool that, due to its inherent versatility, can provide countless aids to learning, working, and entertainment and in life in general. This notwithstanding the fact that the Net, as in all other fields of ICT, is not being exploited to the full. Again, one would assume that the problem lies with service provision, rather than with users.

Epilogue

I would like to express my gratitude to evening classes candidates who participated in this investigation. Their feedback provided me with a research experience that gave me thorough insight into the complexity of this teaching-learning context. They showed an extremely collaborative attitude that in itself confirms how much this type of teaching is really seen to be innovative, beneficial, effective and interesting. Some interviewees showed a positive orientation towards TeL and do not see why this should not be implemented. Likewise, I am also grateful for feedback provided by evening classes teachers. Such feedback, provided in a very forthcoming manner, proved to be a critical success factor.

The politicians and as well as the educational policy-makers have to be aware that simply by providing the Maltese people with the bare basics of using technology is no solution to eradicating the digital divide. There is yet more to be done to combat this divide, with all these new widgets on the net and new ways of communications. Not jumping onto the bandwagon of modern trends may well be driving us into a new nationwide divide.

Glossary of terms used

BECTA	British Educational Communications and Technology Agency
Channel E22	Channel Education 22 – Malta
cLc	Connected Learning Communities
DFSAE	Department of Further Studies and Adult Education
ECDL	European Computer Driving License
FTF / F2F	Face-to-Face Interviews
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
NMC	National Minimum Curriculum
NSO	Department of National Statistics Office – Malta
Nud*ist	Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching, and Theorizing
ODL	Open Distance Learning
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
Tel	Technology-enhanced learning
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

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Appendices

Appendix A

Face to Face interview invitation/consent form letter in English

Date: 11th August, 2008

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently finalizing my Masters in Educational Research under the supervision of the University of Malta and as part fulfillment of my course, I am collecting information on the perception of Maltese adult candidates attending in the evening classes on what do you think about using traditional as against e-learning as a learning tool in the digital age.

The scope of my research is based on students like you who were attending evening classes and for some reason stopped attending or were irregular with your attendance. So, in essence the scope of this study is to understand your particular reasons why it was a problem to attend regularly for your last year's evening classes sessions.

This will absolutely be of great benefit to you yourself or to anyone of your family who will eventually take evening classes courses. This service can only be enhanced only if you contribute for this study. So this is the chance to contact me for a short interview at Marija Regina Blata l-Bajda School on my telephone number ***** or contacting Mr. Genovese at the education division on telephone number 2598 2371 by not later than 31st August.

Guarantees. I will abide by the following conditions:

- a) Your real name will not be used in the study
- b) Only the supervisors and examiners will have access to the data
- c) You will remain free to quit the study at any point and for whatever reason. In the case you withdraw, all the information and records will be destroyed
- d) Deception in the data collection process will not be used
- e) Conclusions from the research will be communicated to you either verbally or in writing.

Thanks in advance for participating,

Yours Faithfully,

Saviour Grech

Face to Face interview invitation/consent form letter in Maltese

Data: 11 ta' Awwissu, 2008

Għaziz Sinjur/a,

Bhalissa jien qiegħed nistudja għall-Masters fl-Edukazzjoni, mħarreg mill-Universita ta' Malta, sabiex nispeċjalizza fuq riċerka dwar il-ħsieb tat-tagħlim tradizzjonali mqabbel ma tagħlim bil-facilita' elettronika bħala għodda għat-tagħlim fid-dinja digitali li qed ngħixu fiha llum.

L-iskop tar-riċerka tiegħi hija ibbażat fuq studenti bħalek li kienu jattendu għall-evening classes u għal xi raġuni ma baqgħux jattendu jew b'mod irregolari. Għalhekk l-iskop ta' din ir-riċerka hija sabiex inkun naf x'kienu dawn ir-raġunijiet partikolari li int sibtha ta' problema li ma bqajtx tattendi għat-tagħlim ipprovdut mill-evening classes.

Dan żgur jista' jkun ta' gid kemm għalik kif ukoll li dan jista' jidgawda minn xi hadd mill-familja tiegħek il-quddiem. Is-servizz jista' jitjeb biss jekk inti tikkontribwixxi. Għalhekk issa huwa ċ-ċans li taċċetta sabiex niltaqa' f'tit miegħek għall-laqgħa qasira fl-iskola ta' Marija Regina Blata l-Bajda billi tikkuntattjani fuq in-numru tat-telefon tiegħi li hu ***** jew is-Sur Genovese fid-divizjoni ta' l-edukazzjoni fuq numru tat-telefon 2598 2371 sa mhux aktar tard mill-31 ta' Awwissu.

Jekk kemm il-darba gentilment taċċetta, jien ser nassigurak li:

- a) l-identita' tiegħek mhux ser tigi identifikata
- b) Inti tkun tista' tieqaf minn dan l-istudju meta trid u għal kwalinke raġuni. F'kas li tirtira, l-informazzjoni kollha tigi imneħħijha minn dan l-istudju
- c) Mhux ser ikun hemm lok ta' nuqqas ta' dizonesta waqt l-ipproċessar tad-data
- d) Konkluzjonijiet dwar ir-riċerka ser jiġu kkomunikati lilek jew verbalment jew bil-kitba.

Grazzi bil-quddiem tal-partecipazzjoni tiegħek,
Għoddni tiegħek,

Saviour Grech

**CONSENT FORM
Student**

Name of Researcher: Saviour Grech

Address:

Phone Number:

Purpose of the Study: To comprehend the perception of Maltese evening classes adult candidates attending in the evening classes about what do they think about using traditional as against e-learning (which is considered as non-traditional) as a learning tool in the digital age.

Methods of Data Collection: Mixed methodology

Use made of the information: This information may be published

Guarantees. I will abide by the following conditions:

- f) Your real name will not be used in the study
- g) Only the supervisors and examiners will have access to the data
- h) You will remain free to quit the study at any point and for whatever reason. In the case you withdraw, all the information and records will be destroyed
- i) Deception in the data collection process will not be used
- j) Conclusions from the research will be communicated to you either verbally or in writing.

I agree to the conditions

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I agree to the conditions

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

**FORMOLA TA' KUNSES
Student**

L-isem tar-Riċerkatur: Saviour Grech

Address:

Numru tat-Telefon:

Skop ta' l-istudju: Sabiex nifhem il-ħsieb ta' l-istudenti adulti Maltin li qed jattendu fi ħdan it-tagħlim ta' fil-ghaxija dwar il-ħsieb tat-tagħlim tradizzjonali imqabbel ma tagħlim bil-facilita elettronika (li mhux tradizzjonali) bħala għodda għat-tagħlim fid-dinja digitali li qed ngħixu fiha illum.

Metodi tal-
għbir ta' data: Metodologija imħallta

Użu li ser isir mill-
informazzjoni: Din l-informazzjoni tista' tigi ippubblikata

Garanzija. Jien, Saviour Grech, ser inzomm dawn il-kondizzjonijiet miegħek:

- e) Ismek mhu ser jidher imkien fl-istudju
- f) Is-superjuri u l-ezaminaturi biss ser ikollhom aċċess għad-data li tingabar
- g) Inti tkun tista' tieqaf minn dan l-istudju meta trid u għal kwalinke raġuni. F'kas li tirtira, l-informazzjoni kollha tigi imneħħija minn dan l-istudju
- h) Mhux ser ikun hemm lok ta' nuqqas ta' dizonesta waqt l-ipproċessar tad-data
- i) Konkluzzjonijiet dwar ir-riċerka ser jigu ikkomunikati lilek jew verbalment jew bil-kitba.

Jien naqbel ma dawn il-kundizzjonijiet

Isem il-partecipant: _____

Firma: _____

Data: _____

Jien naqbel ma dawn il-kundizzjonijiet

Firma tar-riċerkatur: _____

Data: _____

CONSENT FORM
Teacher

Name of Researcher: Saviour Grech

Address:

Phone Number:

Purpose of the Study: To comprehend the perception of Maltese evening classes adult candidates attending in the evening classes about what do they think about using traditional as against e-learning (which is considered as non-traditional) as a learning tool in the digital age.

Methods of

Data Collection: Mixed methodology

Use made of the information:

This information may be published

Guarantees: I will abide by the following conditions:

- a) Your real name will not be used in the study
- b) Only the supervisors and examiners will have access to the data
- c) You will remain free to quit the study at any point and for whatever reason. In the case you withdraw, all the information and records will be destroyed
- d) Deception in the data collection process will not be used
- e) Conclusions from the research will be communicated to you either verbally or in writing.

I agree to the conditions

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I agree to the conditions

Signature of researcher: _____ Date: _____

**FORMOLA TA' KUNSES
Ghalliem**

L-isem tar-Riceratur: Salvinu Grech

Address:

Numru tat-Telefon:

Skop ta' l-istudju: Sabiex nifhem il-ħsieb ta' l-istudenti adulti Maltin li qed jattendu fi hdan it-tagħlim ta' fil-ghaxija dwar il-ħsieb tat-tagħlim tradizzjonali imqabbel ma tagħlim bil-facilita elettronika (li mhux tradizzjonali) bħala għodda għat-tagħlim fid-dinja diġitali li qed nghixu fiha illum.

Metodi tal-
għbir ta' data: Metodologija imħallta

Uzu li ser isir mill-
informazzjoni: Din l-informazzjoni tista' tigi ippubblikata

Garanzija. Jien, Saviour Grech, ser inzomm dawn il-kondizzjonijiet miegħek:

- a) Ismek mhu ser jidher imkien fl-istudju
- b) Is-superjuri u l-eżaminaturi biss ser ikollhom access għad-data li tingabar
- c) Inti tkun tista' tieqaf minn dan l-istudju meta trid u għal kwalinke raġuni. F'kas li tirtira, l-informazzjoni kollha tigi imneħhija minn dan l-istudju
- d) Mhux ser ikun hemm lok ta' nuqqas ta' disonesta waqt l-iproċessar tad-data
- e) Konkluzzjonijiet dwar ir-riċerka ser jiġu ikkomunikati lilek jew verbalment jew bil-kitba.

Jien naqbel ma dawn il-kundizzjonijiet

Isem il-partecipant: _____

Firma: _____

Data: _____

Jien naqbel ma dawn il-kundizzjonijiet

Firma tar-riċerkatur: _____

Data: _____

CONSENT FORM
Head of Adult Courses Provider

I, _____ the head of the adult and evening classes department have been informed of the nature of the research which will be conducted by University of Malta, Saviour Grech of ***** telephone number *****, on the perception of Maltese adult candidates attending in the evening classes on what do they think about using traditional as against e-learning as a learning tool in the digital age.

I understand that:

- a) The research will involve a collection of data through mixed methodologies that is using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Face-to-face interviews, traditional and non-traditional focus groups will be used for the qualitative methodology; while statistics will be used for the quantitative perspective.
- b) The study will minimally interfere with the evening classes tuitions.
- c) Participants in the research are strictly voluntarily and they have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. The information collected on the individuals will be strictly confidential and will only be made available to my supervisors and examiners.
- d) This information may be published on JMERE (Journal of Maltese Education Research).
- e) Data arising out of this project will be used for thesis purposes only, but will be made available for future research in this area, while maintaining the anonymity of all participants.

I, hereby give consent for those informants who will be participating in this research project to be conducted by the above mentioned researcher.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

FORMOLA TA' KUNSES
Kap kontributur għat-tagħlim ta' l-adulti ta' fil-ghaxija

Jien, _____ il-kap tad-dipartiment tat-tagħlim ta' l-adulti ta' fil-ghaxija ġejt informat li ser issir riċerka li ser tiġi immexxija mill-Universita' ta' Malta minn Salvinu Grech, li joqgħod ***** nru tat-telefon *****, dwar il-ħsieb tat-tagħlim tradizzjonali imqabbel ma tagħlim bil-facilita elettronika (li mhux tradizzjonali) bhala għodda għat-tagħlim fid-dinja digitali li qed ngħixu fiha illum.

Jien nifhem li:

- a) Ir-riċerka ser tinvolvi data miġjuba minn metodologiji imħallta, li tagħmel użu kif minn kwantitattiv, kif ukoll kwalitattiva. Intervisti u laqgħat fi gruppi kemm tradizzjonali kif ukoll b'mod elettroniku ser jiġu użati għal kwalitattiv. Mentri għal kwantitattiv, id-data ser tingabar b'forma ta' kwestjonarji.
- b) L-istudju mhux ser ifixkel l-andament tat-tagħlim. Il-parteciċipanti f'din ir-riċerka huma strettament volontarji u għandhom id-dritt li jirtiraw mill-istudju fi kull stadju.
- c) L-informazzjoni fuq l-individwi huma strettament konfidenzjali u ser ikunu mogħtijin lis-superjuri u l-eżaminaturi tiegħi jekk biss ikun hemm il-bżonn.
- d) L-informazzjoni ta' din ir-riċerka tista' tiġi ippubblikata fuq il-JMER (il-gurnal tar-riċerka edukattiva Maltija).
- e) Id-data li toħrog minn dan il-proġett ser tintuza għat-tezi biss, imma tista' tintuza fil-futur għal riċerka ohra fl-istess ambitu, filwaqt li tinzamm l-anonimita assoluta tal-parteciċipanti kollha.

Jien, hawn taht qed niffirma ser nagħti il-kunsens tiegħi sabiex f'din ir-riċerka jieħdu sehem dawk il-parteciċipanti li ser tiġi immexxija mill-imsemmi riċerkatur hawn fuq.

Firma: _____

Data: _____

Appendix B

Candidate's Questionnaire

I am Saviour Grech, an MEd student attending an educational research program and as part fulfillment of my research project, I have designed a questionnaire to obtain information about whether Maltese evening classes candidates would like to pursue their lessons by means of a website in terms of facilitating their studies. Your feedback is highly valued for this study and it may be directly or indirectly beneficiary to you.

Participants in the research are strictly voluntarily and they have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. The information collected on individuals will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used solely for the declared purpose of my thesis.

Data response will be reported on solely in aggregate form, disabling the possibility of identifying individual response. This is being done in order to guarantee respondents' confidentiality and anonymity. In case you are interested to read my report of this study, you may do so downloading it directly through my site which is <http://schoolnet.gov.mt/saviour.grech> or send me an email to me at savgrec@gmail.com to let you know when it can be accessible.

Part A: Current Evening Classes Related Questions

- A1. Number of course/s per week currently attending:
- A2. During this evening classes year, have you ever experienced a situation where you knew the lesson and preferred if you could to skip the topic?
- ₂ Yes, more than once ₁ Yes, but only just once ₀ Never occurred to me
- A3. During this evening classes year, have you ever experienced a situation where you preferred the instructor to slow down his/her teaching, but were afraid to do so?
- ₂ Yes, more than once ₁ Yes, but only just once ₀ Never occurred to me
- A4. During this evening classes year, have you ever wanted to repeat the lesson, but where shy to ask your teacher?
- ₂ Yes, more than once ₁ Yes, but only just once ₀ Never occurred to me

Part B: ICT Use

- B1. Do you have a computer at home?

₁ Yes ₀ No

*If answered No go to **Part C** (page 4) otherwise proceed with the next question.*

- B2. Do you use this computer?

₁ Yes ₀ No

- B3. Where have you used a computer in the last 3 months? (You can tick more than one)

₁ At home
₂ At place of work (other than home)
₃ At place of education
₄ At other places

B4. On average, how often have you used a computer in the last 3 months?

- ₁ At least once a day
- ₂ At least once a week (but not every day)
- ₃ At least once a month (but not every week)
- ₄ Less than once a month
- ₅ Not used in last 3 months

B5. Do you have internet at home?

- ₁ Yes
- ₀ No

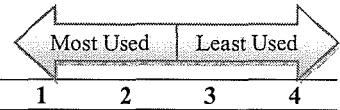
If you answered **No** go to **Part C** (page 4) otherwise proceed with the next question.

	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Most of the time</i>	<i>All of the time</i>
B6. I am able to easily access the internet as needed for my studies.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄
B7. I am comfortable communicating with others over the internet.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄
B8. I am willing to communicate actively with my classmates and instructors electronically.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄
B9. I am willing to set aside an amount of time each week to effectively engage in study.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄
B10. I feel that online learning is of at least equal quality to traditional classroom learning.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄
B11. I feel that using my background and experience in my studies will be beneficial to new learning.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄
B12. I am comfortable with online written communication.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄
B13. When it comes to learning and studying, I am a self-directed person.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄
B14. Reviewing what I have learned in a course helps me with new learning.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄
B15. In my studies I am self-disciplined and find it easy to set aside reading and homework time.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄
B16. I am able to manage my study time effectively and easily complete assignments on time.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄
B17. As a student, I enjoy working by myself with minimal support or interaction.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄
B18. In my studies I set goals and have a high degree of initiative.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄
B19. I believe I am the only one responsible for my studies.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄

B20. How much time do you use internet?

- ₁ 0 – 5 minutes
- ₂ 5 minutes to 1 hour
- ₃ 1 hour or more per day

B21. What do you use internet for? (Rank from most frequently used = 1 to least frequently used = 4)



- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| a) e-mailing | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |
| b) browsing the internet for recreational purposes | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |
| c) chat groups | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |
| d) learning | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |
| e) Reading/downloading online newspapers/news magazines/weather | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |
| f) Playing/downloading games and music | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |
| g) e-commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |
| h) finding sites related to my hobbies | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |
| i) other | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |

Mention: _____

B22. Would you accept to follow evening classes at home through an electronic website?

- ₁ Yes, I would accept to learn the entire course on-line using a website
- ₂ Yes, most of it on-line and just a part of it taught in a classroom
- ₃ Yes, but only just part of it taught on-line and most of it in a classroom
- ₄ I prefer to learn all lessons in a classroom
- ₅ Don't Know

B23. What would you prefer to have on-line:

You may tick more than one option

- ₁ Teacher's Notes
- ₂ Video recorded lesson
- ₃ Live video
- ₄ Exercises
- ₅ Animations used to enhance the learning process
- ₆ Mail contact with your tutor
- ₇ Model exercises done by others students
- ₈ Don't Know

B24. Would you find it a problem if you would share your good work with others on the website:

- ₂ Yes
- ₀ No
- ₁ Don't know



Part C: Not having a computer

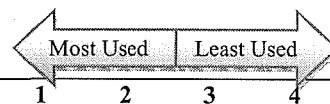
C1. Have you taken any training courses (of ½ day or longer) on any aspect of computer use?

NOTE: This includes any type of training course, including work-related courses lessons or courses undertaken privately.

- ₁ In the last 12 months
- ₂ More than 1 year ago
- ₃ No training courses taken

C2. If you had a computer with internet facility what would you use it for:

(Rank from most frequently used = 1 to least frequently used = 4)



- | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| a) e-mailing | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |
| b) browsing the internet for recreational purposes | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |
| c) chat groups | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |
| d) learning | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |
| e) Reading/downloading online newspapers/news magazines/weather | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |
| f) Playing/downloading games and music | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |
| g) e-commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |
| h) finding sites related to my hobbies | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |
| i) other | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ |

Mention: _____

C3. If you had a computer would you accept to learn evening classes through a website?

- ₂ Yes
- ₀ No
- ₁ Don't know

C4. Would you accept to follow evening classes at home through an electronic website?

- ₁ Yes, I would accept to learn the entire course on-line using a website
- ₂ Yes, most of it on-line and just a part of it taught in a classroom
- ₃ Yes, but only just part of it taught on-line and most of it in a classroom
- ₄ I prefer to learn all lessons in a classroom
- ₅ Don't know

C5. What would you prefer to have on-line: (You may tick more than one option)

- ₁ Teacher's Notes
- ₂ Video recorded lesson
- ₃ Live video
- ₄ Exercises
- ₅ Animations used to enhance the learning process
- ₆ Mail contact with your tutor
- ₇ Model exercises done by others students
- ₈ Don't know

C6. Would you find it a problem if you would share your good work with others on the website:

- ₂ Yes
- ₀ No
- ₁ Don't know

Part D: Background Information:

In any case which part above you has chosen, you are kindly requested to answer the following questions:

D1. Gender: ₁ Male ₂ Female

D2. Age: _____

D3. Tick the highest level of education attainment:

- ₁ Primary Education
- ₂ Secondary Education
- ₃ Sixth Form Education
- ₄ Tertiary Education

D4. Main activity in the 7 days prior to the survey:

- ₁ Working at a paid job or business (incl. vacation)
- ₂ Still Student, Going to School
- ₃ Household work/caring for child
- ₄ Retired
- ₅ Looking for paid work
- ₆ Other (incl. maternal/paternal leave and long-term illness)

D5. Do you work on shifts?

- ₁ Not working
- ₂ No shift job
- ₃ Yes, on a 2 shift basis
- ₄ Yes, on a 3 shift basis

D6. Do you have a part-time job during the evenings? (Please Tick the appropriate option)

- ₁ Yes (If Yes answer D6.1)
- ₀ No (If No answer D7)

D6.1 If yes, does the part-time job interfere with your evening classes lessons?

- ₁ Yes
- ₀ No

D7. How many lessons have you missed this year in all?

- ₁ No, never missed a single lesson
- ₂ Just Once
- ₃ 2 to 3 lessons
- ₄ 3 to 4 lessons
- ₅ More than 4 lessons

D8. If you missed lessons what was the kind of reason?

- ₁ work commitments
- ₂ being abroad for a holiday
- ₃ illnesses
- ₄ other

Thank you for your cooperation

Teacher's Questionnaire

I am Saviour Grech, an MEd student attending an educational research program and as part fulfillment of my research project, I have designed a questionnaire to obtain information about whether Maltese evening classes candidates would like to pursue their lessons by means of a website in terms of facilitating their studies. Your feedback is highly valued for this study and it may be directly or indirectly beneficiary to you.

Participants in the research are strictly voluntarily and they have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. The information collected on individuals will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used solely for the declared purpose of my thesis.

Data response will be reported on solely in aggregate form, disabling the possibility of identifying individual response. This is being done in order to guarantee respondents' confidentiality and anonymity. In case you are interested to read my report of this study, you may do so downloading it directly through my site which is <http://schoolnet.gov.mt/saviour.grech> or send me an email to me at savgrec@gmail.com to let you know when it can be accessible.

Part A: Current Evening Classes:

A1. During this evening classes year, have you ever experienced a situation where most of the students know a particular topic and because of the few you had to go through it?

₂ Yes, more than once ₁ Yes, but only just once ₀ Never occurred to me

A2. During this evening classes year, have you ever experienced a situation where you wanted to slow down because some students didn't understand but you couldn't as the others might complain?

₂ Yes, more than once ₁ Yes, but only just once ₀ Never occurred to me

A3. During this evening classes year, have you ever wanted to repeat the lesson because some students didn't understand but preferred not to as the other students might complain?

₂ Yes, more than once ₁ Yes, but only just once ₀ Never occurred to me

Part B: ICT Use:

B1. Do you have a computer at home?

₁ Yes ₀ No

B2. Is it a PC or a laptop?

₁ PC Only
₂ your own laptop
₃ laptop provided by the government

B3. Do you have internet at home?

₁ Yes ₀ No

B4. Why do you use this computer? (You may tick more than one option)

- ₁ generate notes and exercises and class/home activities for the evening classes students
- ₂ Exchange emails with my evening classes students
- ₃ Text chatting with evening classes students
- ₄ maintain a personal website for my evening classes students
- ₅ Browsing the net to find relevant material for the evening classes students
- ₆ demonstrate how things work
- ₇ Don't know
- ₈ Other

Mention: _____

B5. Would you accept to teach evening classes from home through an electronic website?

- ₁ Yes, I would accept to teach the entire course on-line using a website
- ₂ Yes, most of it on-line and just a part of it delivered in a classroom
- ₃ Yes, but only just part of it delivered on-line and most of it in a classroom
- ₄ I prefer to teach all lessons in a classroom
- ₅ Don't know

B6. If the website is a secured site, what would you prefer to have on-line: (You may tick more than one option)

- ₁ My Notes
- ₂ Video recorded lessons
- ₃ Live videos
- ₄ Exercises
- ₅ Animations used to enhance the learning process
- ₆ Mail contact with your students
- ₇ Model exercises done by others students
- ₈ None of these

Part C: IT Use

C1. Assume you had an interactive whiteboard in your evening classroom and you were instructed how to use it. Would you find it helpful for your lessons?

- ₁ Yes ₀ No

C2. Now that you have been provided with a laptop by the government, are you finding it useful for the evening classes?

- ₁ Yes ₀ No ₂ Don't have one

C3. Do you think that the laptop being provided by the government will affect the way you teach lessons to the evening classes candidates?

- ₁ Yes ₀ No ₇ Don't know
-

Part D: Brief Background Information:

D1. Gender: ₁ Male ₂ Female

D2. Your Age: _____

D3. Number of years covered teaching in the evening classes sector: _____

Part E: Any Comments?

Write down any comment that may feel relevant to explain any statement in any part of this questionnaire:

Thank you for your cooperation