



FABLE IO - The Knowledge Bank

D1.1 The Survey Report

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As a reminder, the specific objective of FABLE IO1: The survey report is:

To examine the needs and expectations of students, faculty, and administrative staff regarding online and blended learning.

Document purpose

This document has the purpose of summarising the results of the survey taken by the target group (students, faculty, and administrative staff) in order to understand their needs and what they expect regarding online and blended learning.



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Introduction

In the last decades, digital learning was on the rise, however with a sceptical view from all sides from higher education teaching staff to administrative staff to students.

With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, online learning became the only way of teachers and students coming together. We will never be back at the pre-Covid situation; therefore, we should reflect on online learning methods to make it an innovative, beneficial, and sustainable way of teaching and learning. In this context, blended learning has emerged, using the best of both worlds, online and offline by creating courses with face-to-face teaching, live video conferencing, or online self-training, for instance. The combination of online synchronous and asynchronous sessions with the use of physical classrooms is an attractive learning environment. Hence, it is crucial to consider advantages and disadvantages to create a well-suited experience.

The aim of this project is to help higher education teachers to implement blended learning, while fully exploiting the benefits offered by this approach.

Spanning over two years, four packages were created. This report deals with the first part of package IO1 and the objective is to create a knowledge bank, to better identify the needs and expectations of students on the one hand, professors, educators, and administrative staff on the other hand, regarding online learning and trainings, reaching to the opinions towards blended learning.

Structure of IO1

IO1 is structured into two complementing parts. First, an online survey is created by the German Münster University of Applied Sciences (FHM) team and then spread from all partners in order to get European representative results. Students, faculty, and administrative staff are the targets in this survey to examine their needs and expectations regarding online and blended learning. Furthermore, the survey is complemented with in-depth interviews with faculty and administrative staff to deepen the knowledge and additionally to investigate experiences and best practices, which will be the content of the second report.

SURVEY PROCESS

For the survey creation, a thorough literature review was conducted with 15 peer-reviewed articles and the most relevant challenges and expectations were filtered in order to build on it in the survey and learn from the experience during Covid-19 times. Afterwards, the FHM research team designed questions and gathered feedback with FHM experts. Moreover, the draft questionnaire was sent to all FABLE partners and changes were incorporated and double-checked within FHM. The different questionnaires were adapted to the target group, in order to

get specific findings according to the different perspectives. Originally, the questionnaire was prepared in English, however, the project partners translated the questions also into their national language. Finally, the final survey was spread, and data was collected in the period of one month (03/06/21 to 06/07/21) in the countries: France, Spain, Germany, Finland, and Hungary with students, administrative staff, and faculty, resulting in a total of 406 responses, of which 179 were students, 153 were faculty, and 74 were administrative staff.

Survey findings

Detailed presentations of the data from the survey are available as a power point presentation, a pdf document and as individual reports and were shared with all partners.

In this report, the results are shortly summarized in the following section.

The majority of respondents in the survey were Students (44%) and most of them were studying in a bachelor program with engineering (54%) or business (38%). Therefore, the findings are especially applicable for those both study areas. Most of those students had 100% face-to-face lectures before Covid-19 and this changed during the pandemic, as most of them then had 100% online studies.

Their response reveals that social challenges dominate over technological ones. Students do not have a big problem with technology and in how to handle the online environment apparently. Most students did not find the use of multiple interfaces for learning problematic. Also, it was easy to organise different online materials and resources for the majority of students.

However, the social aspect, time management, motivation, and procrastination were challenges students dealt with. Developing an online social presence was challenging for the participating students. Moreover, they indicated that they procrastinated more online than in face-to-face lectures and felt unmotivated. For time management, the result was more mixed, for some students it is more time consuming to learn online, but for some others not. The low interaction with lecturers and peers was the element which most hindered the student's studies.

Furthermore, when it comes to the benefits, the most relevant benefit is flexibility according to the students participating in the survey.

Finally, students prefer synchronous delivery according to our survey and actually have a slight positive satisfaction level overall.

For faculty, most respondents were from engineering (38%) and business areas (25%), and it can be derived that pedagogical challenges dominate over technological ones as well, so lecturers tend to have not much problem with technology, it is more about the pedagogical aspect. In their point of view, adopting to new learning technologies is not an issue, however, the creation of online content and maintaining students engaged represent a problem. Also, the results reveal that online teaching is more time consuming than "offline".

Just as in the case of students, flexibility is the most relevant benefit for them as well and the low engagement the most relevant challenge. There is still scepticism over the effectiveness of online learning, however the overall satisfaction level is also slightly positive.

The administrative staff, being the one responsible for the student's and lecturer's online equipment and development, it is no surprise that they suffer from challenges such as the provision of the right platform, software selection, tools availability, etc. but the most significant challenge is the provision of adequate training for students and faculty. In addition, implementation cost is a significant factor when it comes to the online environment. However, respondents cannot agree whether online learning is more cost effective compared to traditional learning. Apart from benefits such as covering of more material, freeing lecture time, self-depending learning, they also think that flexibility is the most relevant benefit.

Conclusion

To conclude, the objective of IO1 was to create a knowledge bank, to better identify needs and expectations of students, faculty, and administrative staff regarding online and blended learning.

Therefore, a survey and interviews were conducted. The survey reveals a slightly positive satisfaction level overall for all groups who participated with online learning. As the results were conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, all the participants were having online courses, therefore, the experience could be manifested with the help of this survey. We could hold up for the most relevant challenges, which need be addressed first in order to use the advantages of the online world. Also, the most crucial benefit could be identified on which it should be built on, namely the flexibility. The results show that for students and faculty, social challenges dominate, and building relationships, as well as the pedagogical challenges are controlling lecturers' problems. Definitely, a need for solutions for those issues could be identified. The most important benefit for all is flexibility and the most important challenge the low interaction. Administrative staff must fight with the training for students and faculty, hence we can see this loop here, as students miss the motivation and the interaction, but for lecturers it is a big challenge to engage students and the administrative staff have the problem to train both stakeholders. Everything comes together and is interdependent. The identified prioritized challenges and benefits, resulting in the needs could be further emphasized and explored with the help of the interviews, also in order to get to know best practices and expectations to build on.