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The Usage of Technology in Nicaraguan Education Behind the Darkness of COVID-19

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-Despite the negative effects of COVID 19 in Nicaragua, there was a silver lining in the implementation of technology in the Nicaraguan Education.-

“Disaster gave me two things: a moment to react and a decision to overcome” (Michael Dooley, 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic has definitely caused so much pain in everyone’s hearts. It has torn families apart, led economies to collapse in certain countries and despite so much effort from all countries it continues to spread rapidly. Besides, a vaccination to fight it is quite hard to come soon to third world countries like Nicaragua. This research mainly focuses on how much technology has been implemented in Nicaraguan education after and during the pandemic. Its purpose is to see the silver lining of such pandemic, and how students’ learning and teachers’ teaching experience have improved in the times where 21st centuries skills are crucial for the future.

RESEARCH METHODS

- Survey with 11 closed-ended questions to collect data.
- 2 focus groups where 3 questions were discussed.

All of these were targeted to a sample of 40 Nicaraguan teachers in the different fields of the education community, schools, universities and English Academies.

FINDINGS

Before the COVID-19 pandemic 42 % of teachers made use of Edmodo, 33% google classroom and a vast minority MyEnglishLab from Pearson, Moodle and others (figure 1). Besides, figure 2 shows that 45% of the teachers only made of them once a week and 12.1 % never, and figure 3 shows that 63% of teachers considered that online learning was about sending links, supporting materials with no follow up at all. Based on this, the implementation of technology was low.

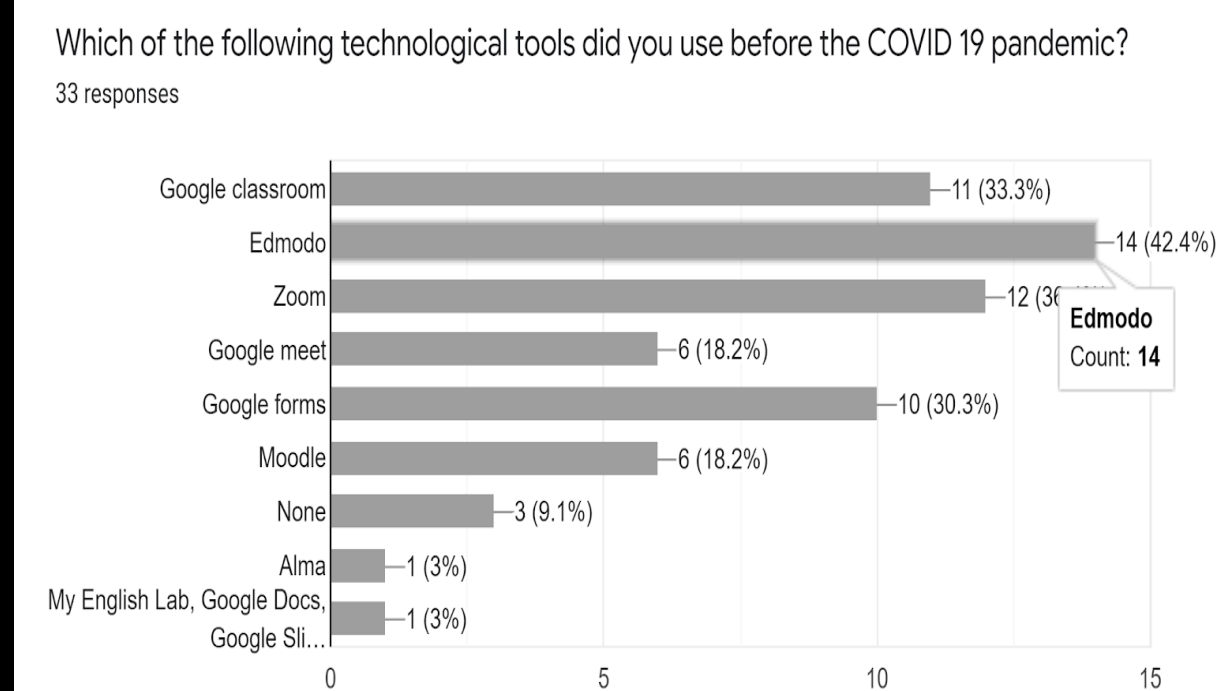


Figure 1

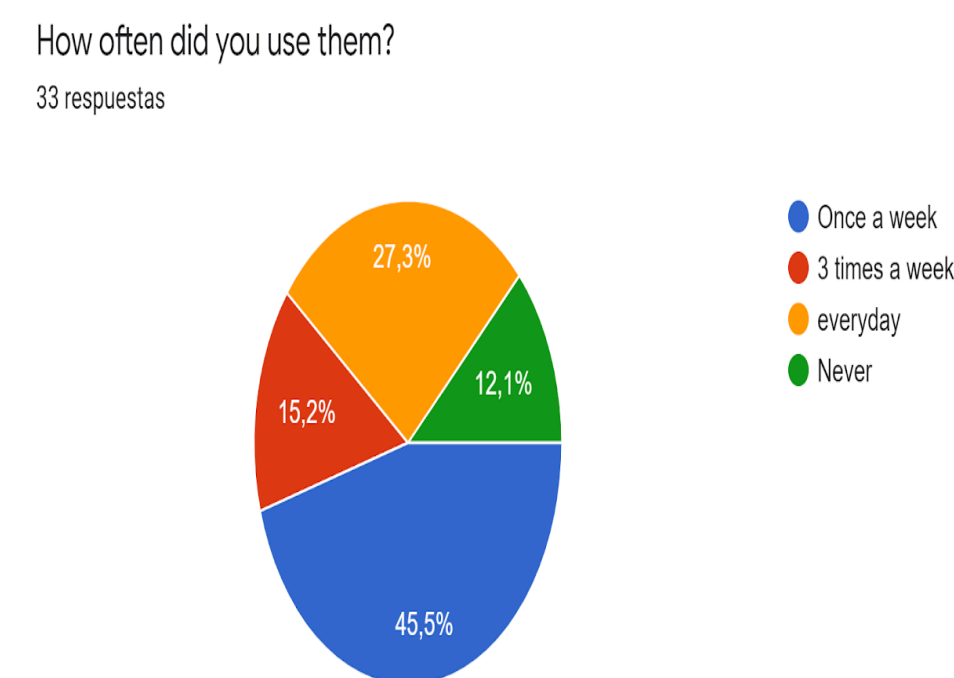


Figure 2

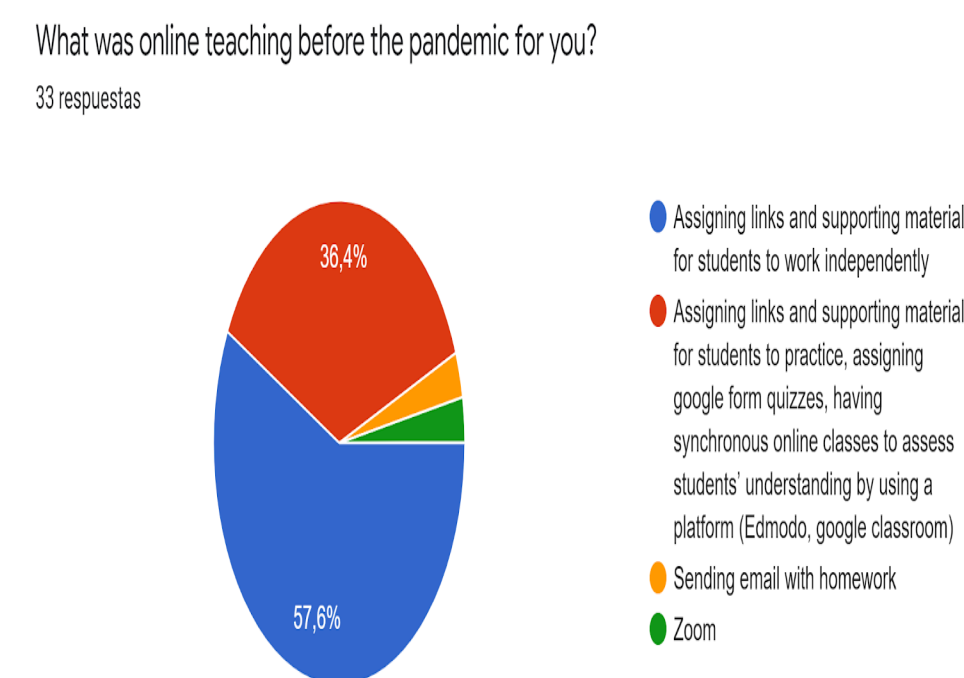


Figure 3

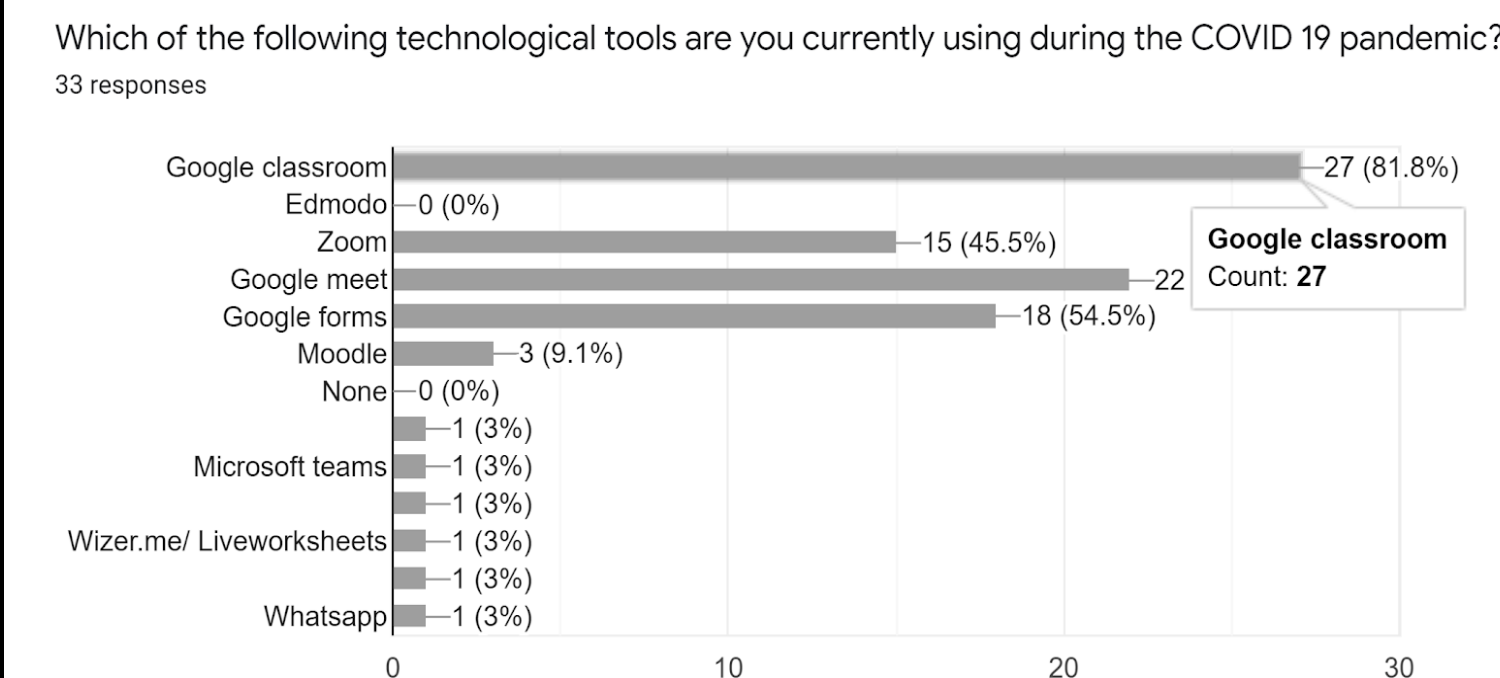


Figure 4

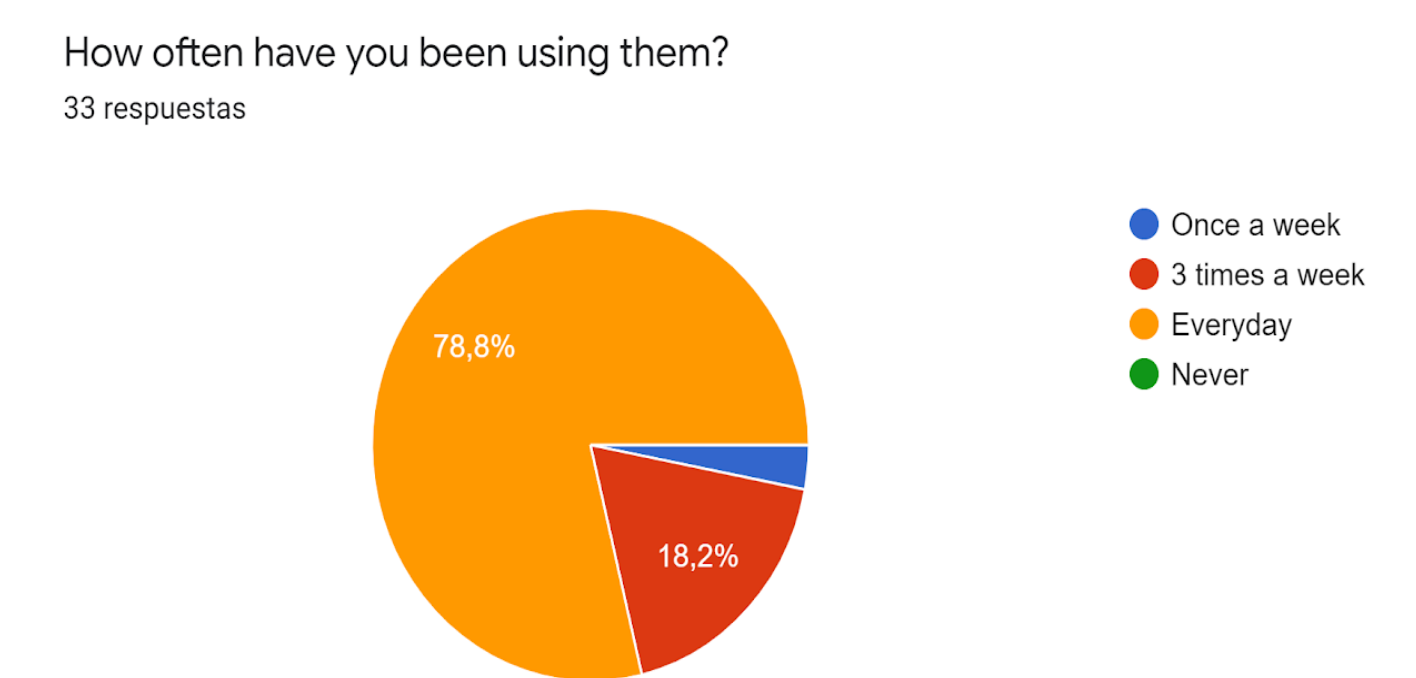


Figure 5

Since most educational institutions had to go fully online during the COVID 19 pandemic. Figure 4 shows that teachers have started implementing more technological tools such as 81% Google classroom, 66% Google meet and 45% Zoom whereas Edmodo and Moodle only cover 9%. This also shows that teachers are now engaging students in synchronous classes where interaction and follow up is greater. Besides, figure 5 highlights that 97 % of teachers are now making use of technology more than 3 days a week.

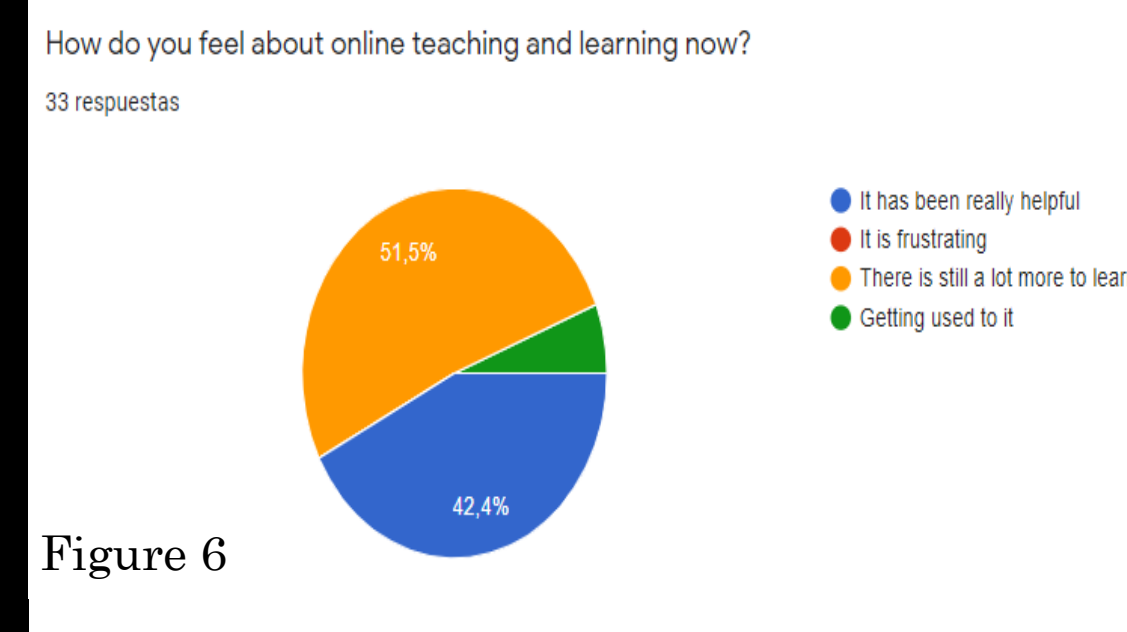


Figure 6

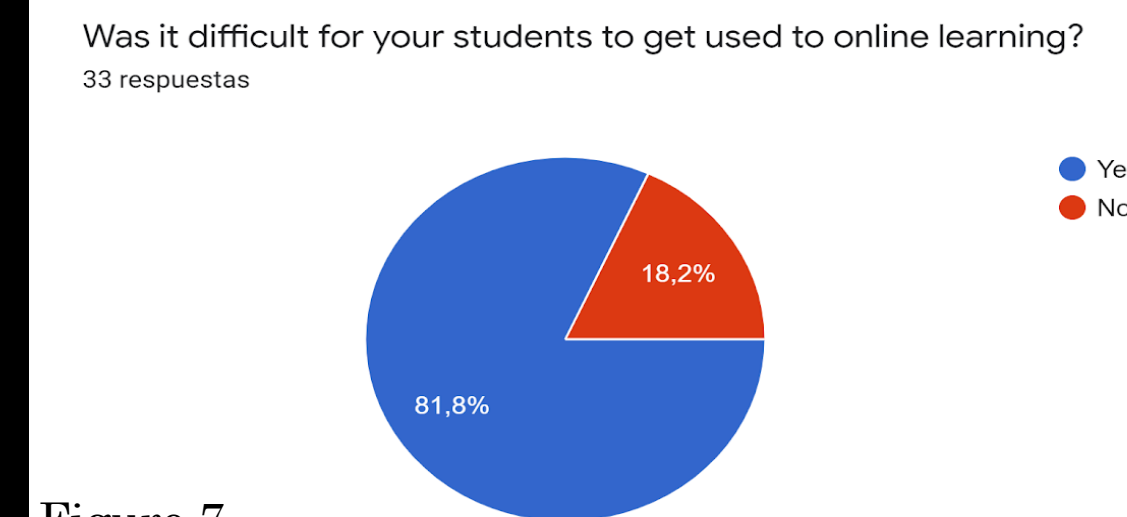


Figure 7

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Teachers considered that the success of online learning depends on the following:

- lesson planning
- strong syllabus
- how much training teachers receive
- encouraging students to become independent
- extrinsic and intrinsic motivation
- educated design of the course
- how motivated teachers are, so that students can get motivated too
- providing students with constant feedback
- teacher / students communication

Teachers agreed that the country was not ready for a switch from non online classes to fully online classes due to poor internet connection and the fact that students and teachers were not acquainted with this methodology. However, they agree that students’ learning will have a great positive impact. Regarding the difference between face to face teaching and online learning teaching, teachers considered that the gap has narrowed, and that online teaching is now as interactive as face to face classes.

1. Nicaraguan teachers had a misconception about online learning. It was perceived as passive learning and students were only expected to practice using links or reading passively with no student- teacher interaction.
2. The current pandemic situation forced Nicaraguan teachers and students to get familiar and implement technological tools in education. This was not an easy task, but now students and teachers feel comfortable using technology.
3. Teachers lacked preparing students with 21st century technological skills. Consequently, students and teachers had a hard time getting used to online learning. According to the US department of education “Technology ushers in fundamental structural changes that can be integral to achieving significant improvements in productivity. Used to support both teaching and learning ; expands course offerings, experiences, and learning materials; supports learning 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; builds 21st century skills; increases student engagement and motivation; and accelerates learning” (2010). Therefore, the current situation led to a positive change in the implementation of technology in the classroom that will allow teachers to promote the 21st century skills within classes.
4. When the COVID-19 pandemic is over, teachers will implement more technological tools to improve students’ learning. Therefore, Nicaraguan education will have a more globalized perspective toward education.
5. According to a group of researchers in the Netherlands Implementing technological tools in the classrooms allows students to develop skills to be able to use information in a more effective way, meaning that they will be able to select and organize information more accordingly to the assignments they are exposed to. Therefore, Nicaraguan education is on the right path.