MENA INSIGHTS REPORT 2021

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Welcome to the MENA Insights Index report for 2021

The MENA PD Academy by Macmillan Education team would like to thank everyone who responded to our 2021 Survey over the past few weeks.

In December 2020 **Macmillan Education** released our Insights Index White Paper about distance teaching, based upon a survey done in July 2020 at the height of lockdowns and educational disruption across the world. At the time we surveyed 2700 teachers from 117 countries and you can see the final report [here](#).

However, the MENA PD Academy team felt like we needed to dig deeper into the perspectives of teachers from MENA, and then draw upon these local, contextualised viewpoints as we create and develop our professional development plans and activities for 2021 across the region.

We hope you find our report insightful. If you missed our survey and want to provide feedback or suggestions please feel free to reach out to us at:

pdacademy.mena@macmillaneducation.com

About the respondents

We received RESPONSES FROM ALMOST ALL COUNTRIES ACROSS MENA, with the majority coming from Morocco, Oman and Saudi Arabia.

The majority of respondents were teaching either at the PRIMARY OR SECONDARY level, although we had responses from every sector.
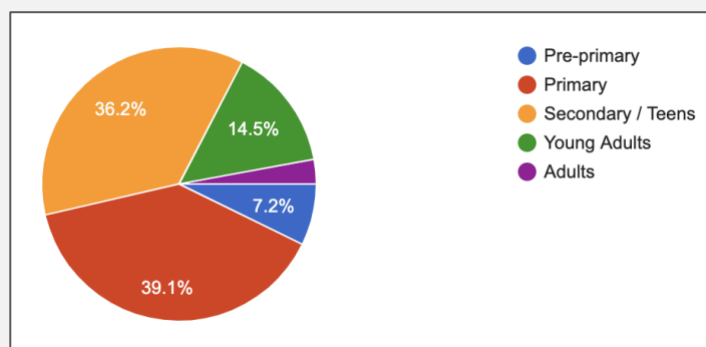

From Fall 2020 to Spring 2021

We know that 2020 CREATED MANY CHALLENGES FOR TEACHERS as schools closed and the majority of learning moved online. Across the region situations have changed at varying rates and trajectories, and we were keen to learn how teachers felt their teaching situations might change as we moved into the New Year. While it seems unlikely that the MENA PD Academy team will be able to travel around the region like before any time soon, this insight can still help us in our PD plans and how we approach supporting teachers in the region with the most up-to-date knowledge about how and where they are actually teaching.

FALL 2020
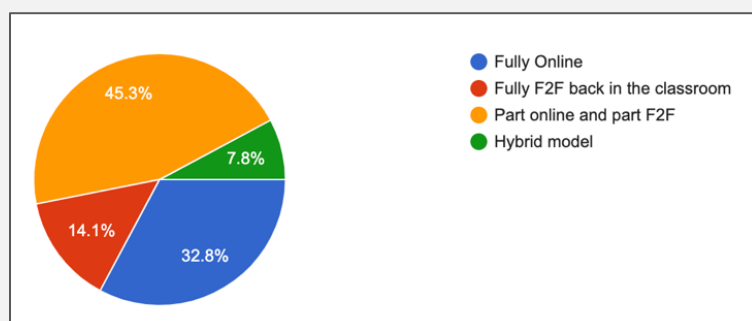
SPRING 2021
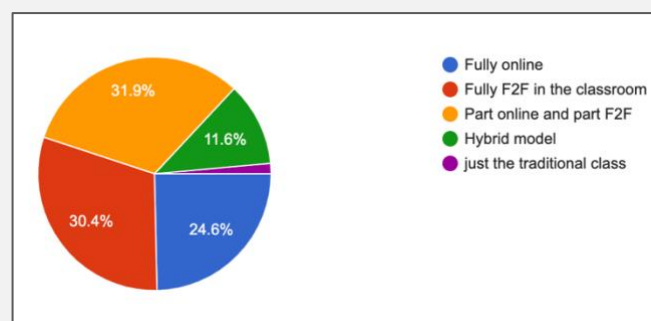
As we can see from the two charts, as we moved from 2020 into 2021 there are many teachers expecting to slowly move back towards full-time F2F teaching, or at least less expected to be teaching online full time.

"teachers expect to slowly move back into F2F teaching in 2021"

With the new strain presenting itself over the festive season - and raising case numbers across the region - it's unclear whether this will happen, but with hope (and the vaccination programmes coming into effect) this will hopefully become more of a reality as the year progresses.

2020: Challenging or Conducive?

Keeping standards up with less teaching hours

Mixing online and F2F teaching

Classroom management and interaction

Speaking and getting them to express themselves

While there has been much general discussion about the difficulties that teachers have faced during 2020, we wanted to get a deeper understanding of these challenges they have faced, but also if and where recent changes may have in fact potentially been preferrable or led to unforeseen new and/or exciting outcomes. After all, it cannot have been 'doom and gloom' for everyone and if there are even the slightest glimmers of positivity hidden out there, we believe it is our responsibility to find and examine them.

Engaging students and Motivation

Materials are abundant

Flipped classroom

Teaching listening

Gamified learning

Flexibility in time table

Challenging students and supporting additional needs

If you have been following our activities until now you may have noticed that a major part of our PD objectives for the MENA region has been to research, highlight and promote inclusive education in a positive way (If you haven't seen our INCLUSIVITY IN MENA webinar yet, you can watch it [here](#)).

A key element for creating more inclusive environments is to understand the way teachers differentiate for students of varying levels of ability and/or interests.

> *"in an effort to just 'get through this', we potentially run the risk of pitching to the perceived 'average'"*

One of the dangers of a reactive system is that in an effort to simply "*get through this*" we potentially run the risk of pitching to the perceived 'average', and (understandably) struggle to differentiate for the full spectrum of needs that our students inevitably have. So, we sought through the survey to find out what exactly teachers have been doing to either challenge their stronger students or support their students with additional needs, or if they have been struggling generally with this aspect of teaching recently.

While for several teachers it was clear that they "*JUST DIDN'T HAVE TIME FOR THAT*", the approach to students deemed to be stronger, for many teachers, had a significant emphasis on "more": extra tasks, harder or more challenging tasks, more activities, more technology, more worksheets, more content, more challenging questions, etc. Of course, we need to dig a little deeper here and get under the mindset of just doing 'more' to find out if this does in fact brings the positive outcomes intended, or, whether it creates other unintended dynamics and consequences? There were other responses that suggested teachers engaged in activities with stronger students such as promoting more independence (although the survey lacked the depth to make it clear how respondents did this), connecting with students in other parts of the world, and engaging students in theme-based projects on current issues, which may provide A PLATFORM UPON WHICH STUDENTS CAN INVESTIGATE, USE AND DEVELOP HIGHER LANGUAGE SKILLS AND LEVELS OF CONFIDENCE.
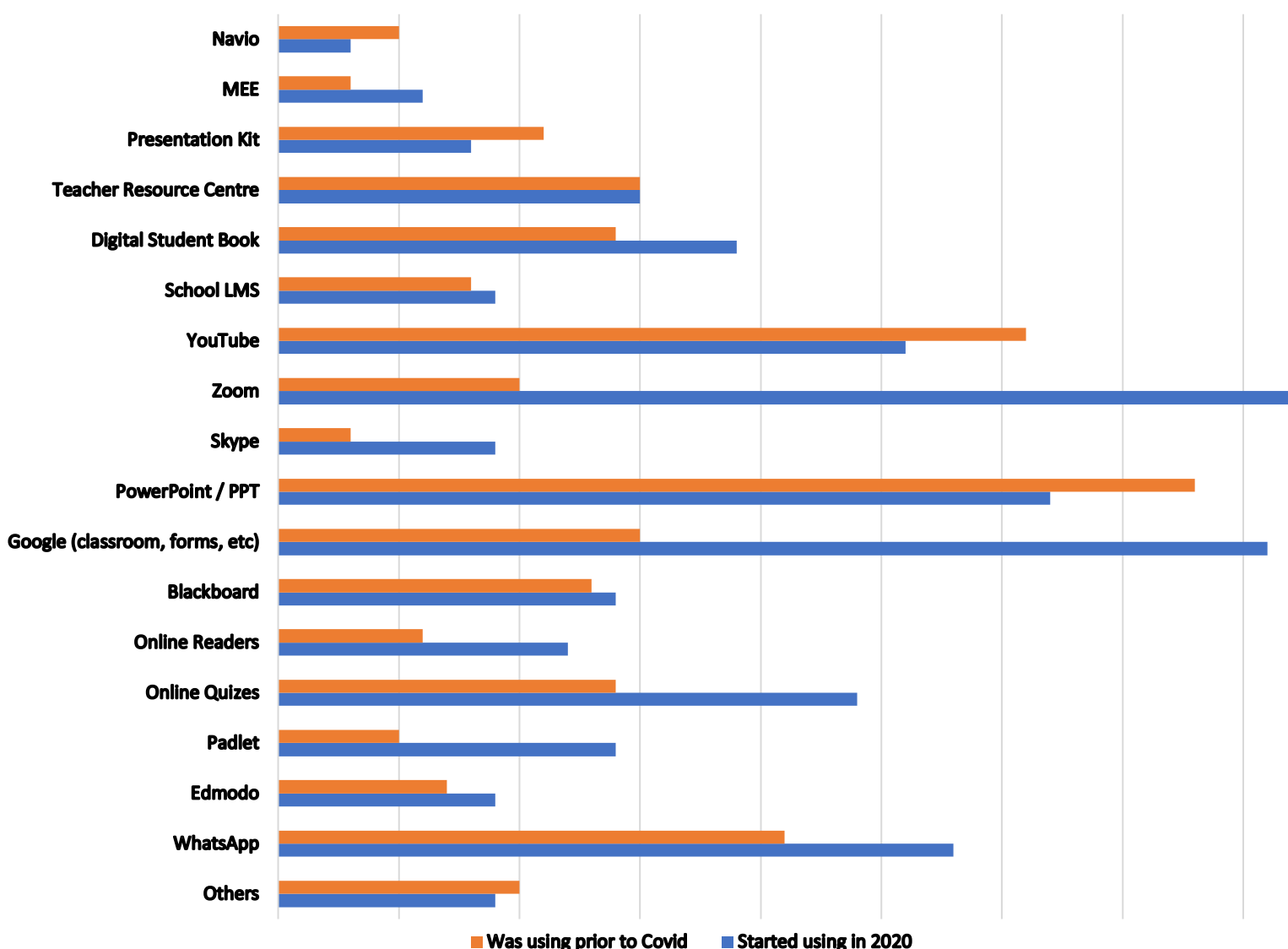
"Digging deeper into how teachers support students with additional needs is of vital importance"

Again, a notion of "more" played out strongly in responses: more homework, more handouts, more activities, more videos for further understanding, more sessions, and even more explaining, for example. However, there was also an emphasis on more emotional support and being available for students, which was crucial to student wellbeing through what was also an extremely challenging time for them.

Digital

I think there is little doubt in any one's mind about the role that digital played in 2020. But we hope to understand these changes even more through our survey…

Chart legend: ■ Was using prior to Covid ■ Started using in 2020

Categories (top to bottom): Navio, MEE, Presentation Kit, Teacher Resource Centre, Digital Student Book, School LMS, YouTube, Zoom, Skype, PowerPoint / PPT, Google (classroom, forms, etc), Blackboard, Online Readers, Online Quizes, Padlet, Edmodo, WhatsApp, Others

Firstly, we felt that what has been lacking in discussions around digital usage has been a real understanding about:

WHAT TECHNOLOGY TEACHERS WERE IN FACT USING WITH STUDENTS PRE-COVID, AND WHAT THEY HAVE HAD (OR CHOSEN) TO LEARN TO USE IN 2020?

So, we asked…

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Zoom usage has shot up in 2020. YouTube also remains popular, showing the increasing usage of video content in language learning in recent years. However, there has been a sharp increase in Google products (classroom, forms, slides, etc) and using online quiz applications as well. While PowerPoint was the most popular digital product (from this selection) pre-Covid (and even now it remains a favoured method for lesson delivery – showing people probably tried to adapt what they already knew and used it through a new delivery format), IT SEEMS THERE ARE PLENTY OF OTHER DIGITAL OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO TEACHERS NOW and this could shape the future of online learning over the coming years, not just from Google and Microsoft, but from other Edtech companies looking to capitalise on changes with the wider education system.

Of course, knowing what people use is only part of the equation, and part of our activities this year should be to find out exactly what teachers do with these platforms, and why? We have started to do this here, trying to investigate what challenges teachers in MENA faced with using – or moving to – these digital platforms, with responses from teachers in MENA suggesting such issues as:

Connection issues (electricity, internet, Apps)
Engagement and student attention
Transferring content from physical to digital
Learning new platforms

Assessment

While the primary concern for most teachers, as Covid struck the region, revolved around how to simply engage with students given school closures, as the year progressed, we noticed:

<p style="color:red; text-align:center">DISCUSSIONS WITH TEACHERS
STARTED TO SHIFT FROM TEACHING TO
THE ISSUE OF ASSESSMENT</p>

Teachers echoed this in their responses, appearing to be especially concerned about 'how exactly they would assess students without them actually being physically present in the school?' Of course, a huge worry for teachers is the issue of cheating and plagiarism, but also:

<p style="color:red; text-align:center">'TEACHERS WONDER HOW TO ENSURE FAIRNESS
AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY BETWEEN STUDENTS'</p>

Especially those doing the same test, as some will be doing it under supervision of the teacher in the classroom, while others are doing it online.
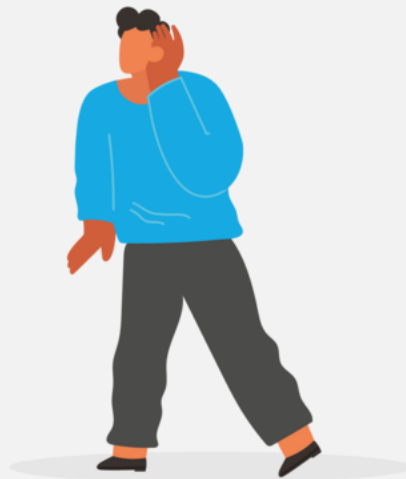
While we (or indeed maybe anyone at this point) may not have the answers to unfolding new scenarios, such as these particular issues above, we do understand that assessment is an area in which teachers would like professional development support in 2021, and one the MENA PD Academy team intends to focus on through our activities.

Professional Development

Our final area of enquiry concerned teacher's continuous professional development, and how our activities in 2021 can best support teacher development across MENA. We believe in making our activities as relevant and meaningful to those who they are intended to benefit: teachers.

The below word cloud shows the areas teachers feel are of importance for 2021, and we will try to focus as much as possible on these themes and design activities that are as meaningful as possible and translate to improvements in the classroom (whether that be a physical classroom or a digital environment).

<div align="center">

AREAS OF CPD FOCUS THAT TEACHERS IN MENA FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN 2021

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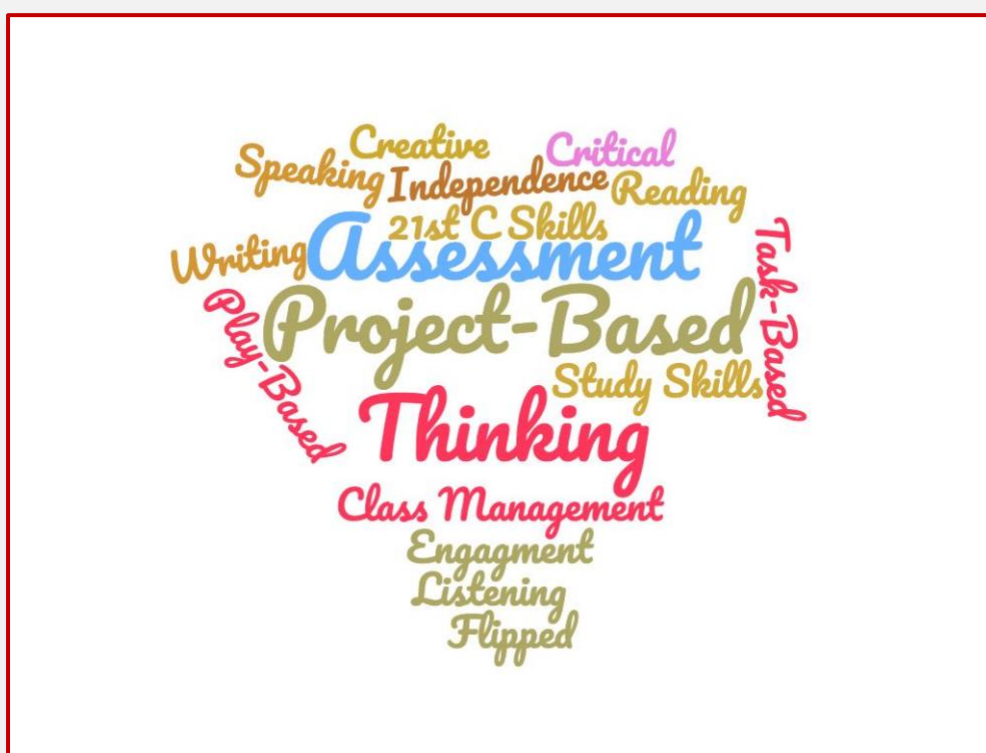
If you want to learn more about the MENA PD Academy's free PD opportunities that are available to English language teachers in MENA, please visit us at our new website:

www.menapdacademy.com

Final Comment

Education has been evolving at an increasing pace and educators have been facing unprecedented challenges: part of our mission to advance learning is to LISTEN to your experiences, LEARN about your needs, and ACT on this knowledge to provide you with the right solutions and tools that will inspire and support your students.

The MENA PD Academy team would once again like to thank everyone who completed our 'Looking Back – Looking Forward' survey, and wish you and your students health, safety, and every success in 2021. We ALWAYS love to hear from teachers, so please get in touch and let us know your thoughts on the above, or any other important issues to you and your students:

pdacademy.mena@macmillaneducation.com

If you want to know more about how **Macmillan Education** is guiding, supporting and inspiring English language teachers from all across the world please visit: www.macmillanenglish.com

If you would like to read the main **Macmillan Education Insights Index Report** you can find it here. Plus, the Insights programme is ongoing and we are continuously looking for teachers to be involved, so if you would like to enhance your professional development by collaborating with the creators of teaching materials to shape future solutions, please visit us.

JOIN THE PROGRAMME NOW!

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Nathan Waller is the lead teacher trainer for Macmillan Education in the MENA region. With a background in Child Development and Social and Cultural Anthropology, he has 15 years of experience in education, starting in Early Years education and Special Educational Needs support in the UK before teaching English in Oman, Egypt, Qatar and Vietnam. He also worked as a teacher trainer in Malaysia and an IELTS examiner in China, finally moving to Dubai in 2016 to work in educational publishing.

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