

Polycom Education Survey - research report

Introduction

The use of technology in schools and universities – both as a learning and life preparation tool for students and an administrative tool for teachers and staff – is becoming increasingly necessary for educational institutions to compete. Video collaboration and content sharing engages students and helps them to learn better and faster by enabling them to connect with fellow students and experts from all over the globe, to study from any location, and to collaborate without travel. Likewise, teachers can extend their reach beyond classroom walls and leverage experts and specialists from anywhere to bring them virtually into the teaching environment. This helps schools and universities better prepare students for a global business world by exposing them to remote visual collaboration experiences.

The survey

Polycom wanted to better understand the views of European teachers on the use of video conferencing in education. In particular it aimed to discover the following:

- The methods of communication used in educational establishments and whether teachers are satisfied with the methods at their disposal
- The prevalence of video conferencing
- How video conferencing is primarily used by teachers
- Perceived benefits of video conferencing and the skills it can develop for students
- Barriers to technology adoption.

Methodology

500 teachers were surveyed overall across Europe, 100 each in the UK, France, Germany, Russia and the Nordics.

Teachers in primary schools, secondary schools, further education colleges and universities were surveyed. The teachers were asked to complete an online questionnaire and these were completed in July 2011.

Executive Summary

Methods of Communication

The survey found video conferencing to be regarded as an important method of communication by educators at all levels. University teachers said it was their preferred method of communication, while for school teachers it was second only to face-to-face interaction.

Communication signals such as facial expressions, body language and tone of voice can often be as important in successful interaction as words themselves, so it is natural that educators would prefer methods of communication that incorporate all these techniques. The school environment is generally built around a single classroom, where the teacher and students are in the same place, meaning face-to-face interaction is still the favourite method of communication. However, by using

video conferencing, teachers would be able to replicate this 'face-to-face' experience while enabling students to collaborate with peers at other schools, learn from off-site experts or participate in virtual field trips. Such potential means video conferencing is an attractive technology for school teachers.

At university and college level, student groups and subject experts are more likely to be scattered across different locations, making the use of video conferencing even more appealing. Indeed, among university and college teachers, video conferencing was ranked as the ideal method of communication with students and colleagues.

However, the current state of play in schools and universities does not reflect this preference, as video conferencing was found to be the least-used communication method by both groups.

Uses of Video Conferencing

The most popular use for video conferencing among school teachers was found to be collaborative working (such as participating in projects with peers outside one's own class). Many also use the technology to support virtual fieldtrips. These sorts of uses can be seen as ways of expanding the scope of learners' educational experience and widening their horizons beyond the classroom.

University and college teachers were found to focus their use of the technology in different areas. The most popular use was for teaching home-based students (e.g. enabling them to participate in lectures and/or study groups and tutorials remotely), closely followed by enabling students to catch up on a missed class. In contrast with the scope-widening focus of school-level video conferencing use, these practices can be seen as expanding the reach of a tutor or institution – enabling them to interact with more students effectively.

The Benefits of Video Conferencing

Most respondents at all levels thought that the use of technologies like video conferencing would enrich the learning experience for their students, with the most important benefits being to increase motivation and engagement among learners.

School teachers believe that key benefits of using these technologies for their own students would be improved access to learning materials and an opportunity to build and enhance core skills for use in later education and the workplace.

Meanwhile, university and college teachers agree that improving access to learning materials would be a key benefit for their students of using video conferencing and other technologies. However, this group also sees the extension of educational services (e.g. to remote or home-working students) as a second important advantage.

Barriers to Adoption

The majority of all respondents expect the use of video conferencing in education to increase over the next five years. However, certain challenges do need to be overcome in order to achieve this, and by far the most pressing of these, according to the survey respondents, is cost. This is currently being addressed by Polycom, which has announced its Polycom RealPresence Education Bundle to help schools get started sooner with video conferencing.

Key findings from the survey

- Video conferencing is currently the least-used method of communication in schools and universities. When asked about ideal methods of communication, this jumped to second in schools and first in universities
- 61% of universities currently have video conferencing installed compared with just 20% of schools
- Over two thirds (68%) of teachers think their school/university would benefit from further investment in video conferencing
- Key benefits for students include increased motivation and engagement and improvement of core skills
- The main uses of video conferencing in schools are for collaborative working and virtual field trips. The main uses in universities are teaching home-based students and access to subject matter experts
- The main reason that schools and universities have not yet implemented video conferencing is cost (according to 70% of school teachers, 52% of university tutors)
- 85% of teachers think the use of video conferencing will increase over the next five years.

Results

Methods of communication

Current and preferred methods of communication for teachers across Europe

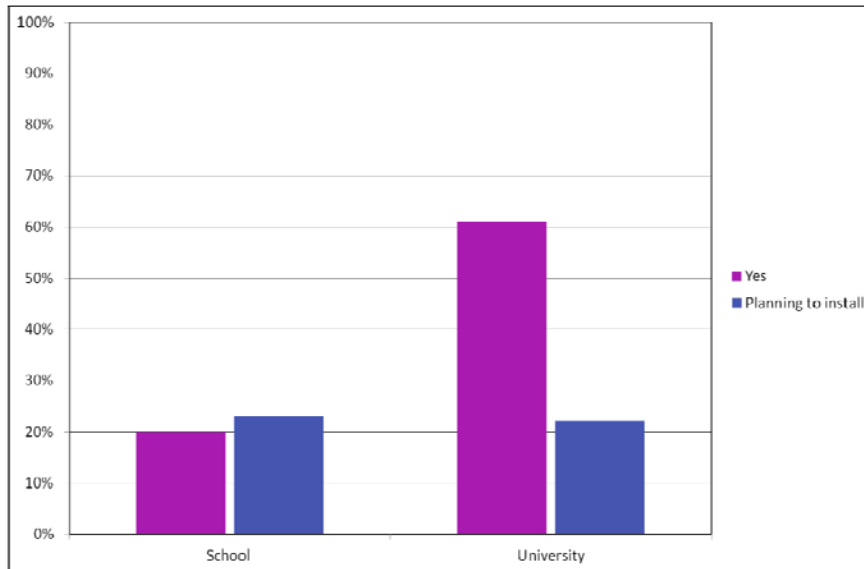
	Current method	Preferred method
1	Face-to-face	Face-to-face
2	Phone	Video conferencing
3	Email	Email
4	Post	Phone
5	Text	Post
6	Social Networking	Text
7	Video conferencing	Social Networking

Teachers were asked about seven popular forms of communication and asked which methods they currently used for communication with students, parents and other teachers. Of these methods, video conferencing was the one least frequently used. However, when teachers were asked what their *ideal* form of communication was, teachers rated it in second place, just behind face-to-face communication.

University tutors were even more enthusiastic about video conferencing, rating it as their ideal form of communication, even more popular than face-to-face.

Results across the countries surveyed were similar, although teachers in the UK and the Nordics preferred face-to-face and email communication to video conferencing. In Russia however, video conferencing was the ideal form of communication.

Prevalence of video conferencing in education

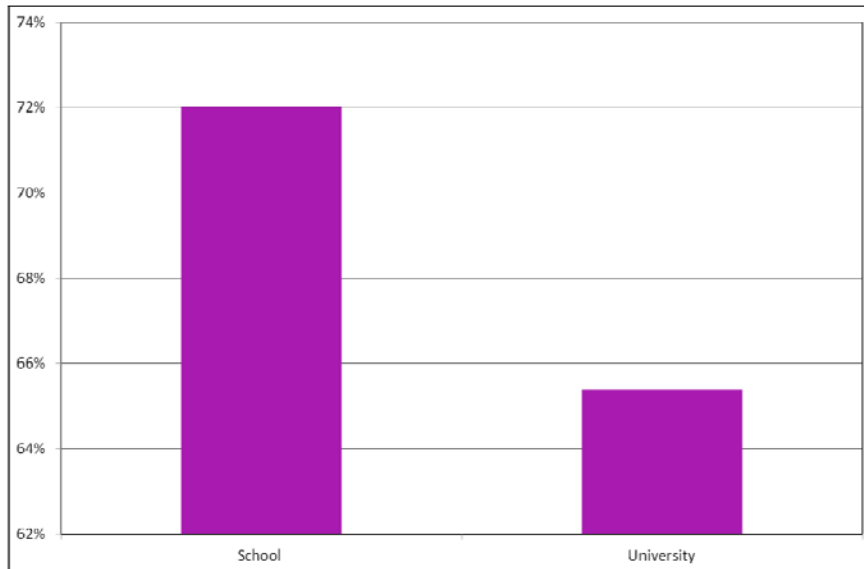


Overall 29% of teachers in Europe stated that they have access to video conferencing facilities in their establishment. A further quarter (25%) are planning to install it.

This figure varied widely between types of establishment: only one in five (20%) schools currently have facilities, but this jumps to 61% of universities.

Video conferencing is most prevalent in Russian education: nearly half of teachers (45%) reported having access. Only 19% of German establishments currently have video conferencing, although a further quarter (25%) are planning to install it.

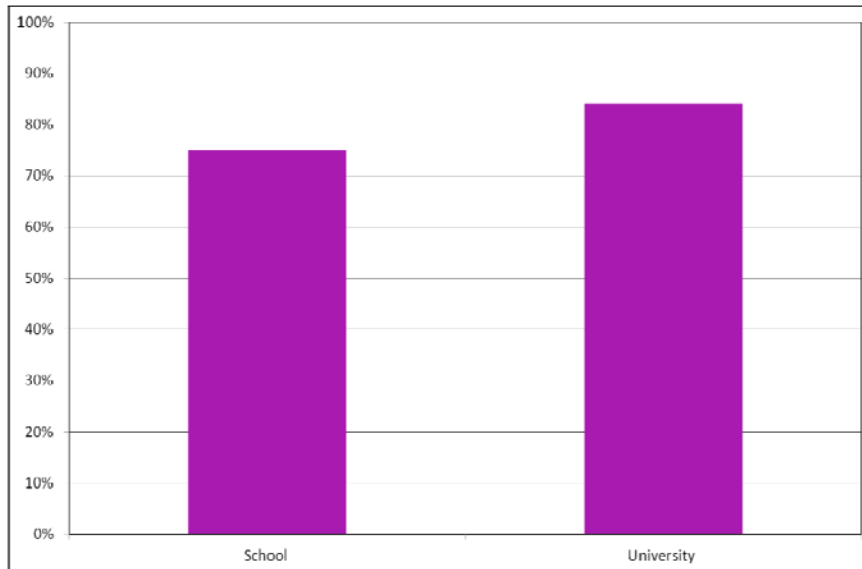
Investment in video conferencing



Over two thirds (68%) of the teachers surveyed believe that their establishment would benefit from more investment in video conferencing. School teachers in particular would like to see an increase in investment (72%), perhaps due to a lower level of investment in the technology at present.

Teachers from Russia are particularly keen on further spending in video conferencing, with 87% desiring an increase.

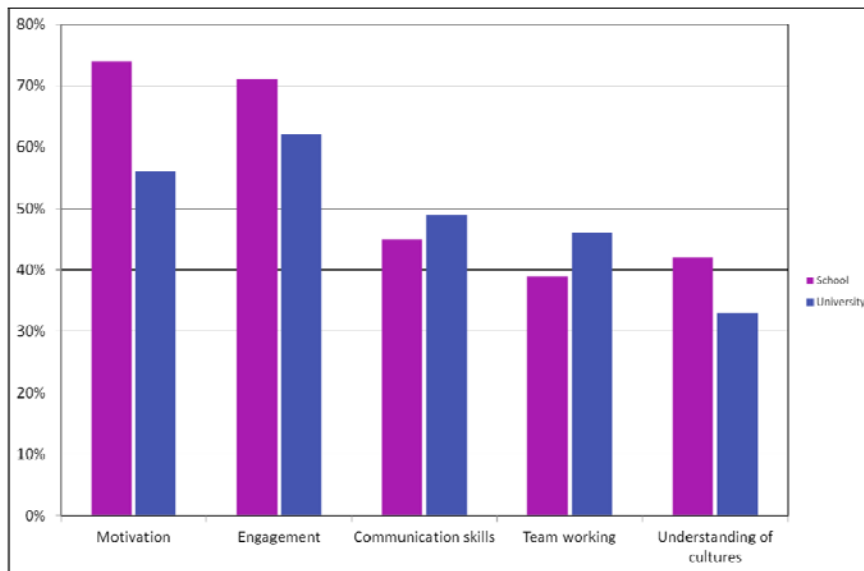
Learning enrichment



Across EMEA as a whole, over three quarters (77%) of teachers believe that the use of technologies like video conferencing helps enrich learning for students, due to the wide range of uses it offers. This rose to a high 84% for teachers in universities.

Russian teachers are the most convinced of the benefits to learning of video conferencing, with almost all (99%) stating it enriches learning. German teachers were less convinced, with 58% believing this.

Benefits of cutting-edge technology

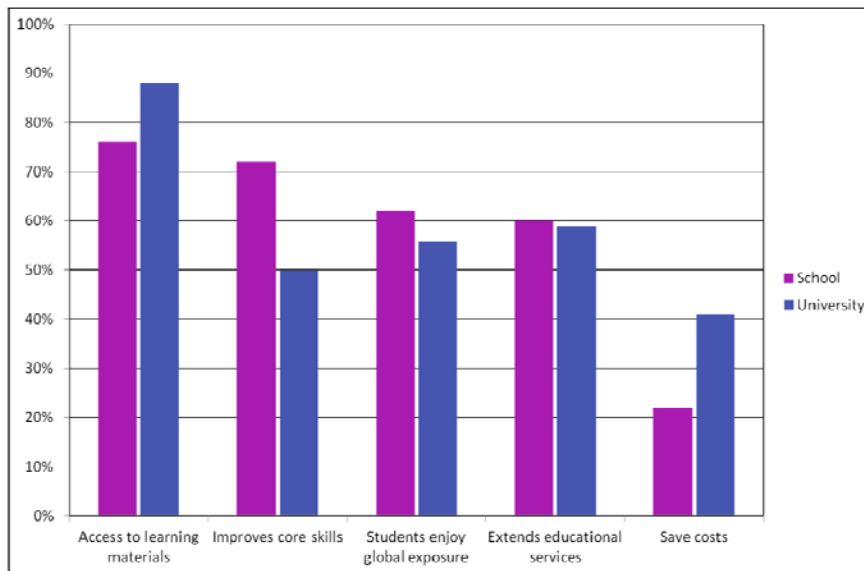


Teachers were asked about the benefits of cutting-edge technologies in the classroom for students. School teachers were particularly positive about its merits, with 74% responding that it improves motivation and 71% that it increases engagement. Teachers in universities were also positive about these benefits, although less so than school teachers. 62% mentioned an improvement in engagement and 56% in motivation amongst students.

Almost half (48%) of teachers overall also cited an improvement in communication skills as a key benefit.

Improvements in motivation and engagement were popular answers across all countries surveyed although over half of teachers in Germany cited team working as an additional benefit. 55% of teachers in Russia believed that the use of these types of technologies also improved students' understanding of cultures.

Benefits of video conferencing

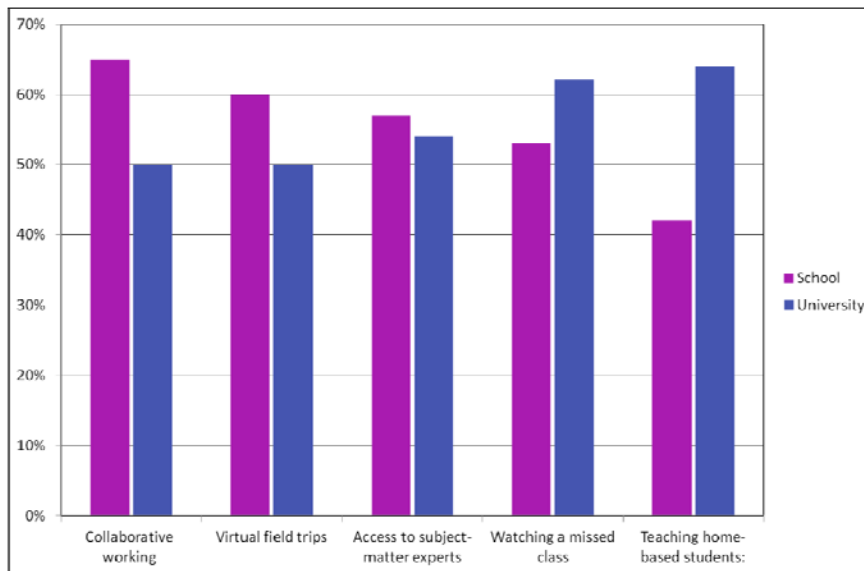


The majority of teachers are aware of the multitude of benefits that video conferencing provides students and educational establishments. University tutors in particular cited the increased access to learning materials (88%) and the fact that video conferencing enables universities to extend their educational services (59%).

School teachers, while also admitting that access to learning materials is a definite advantage (76%), particularly like the fact that video conferencing enables students to improve their core skills (72%).

Significantly more school teachers than university tutors thought that cost savings are a key benefit of video conferencing (41% compared with 22%).

Uses of video conferencing

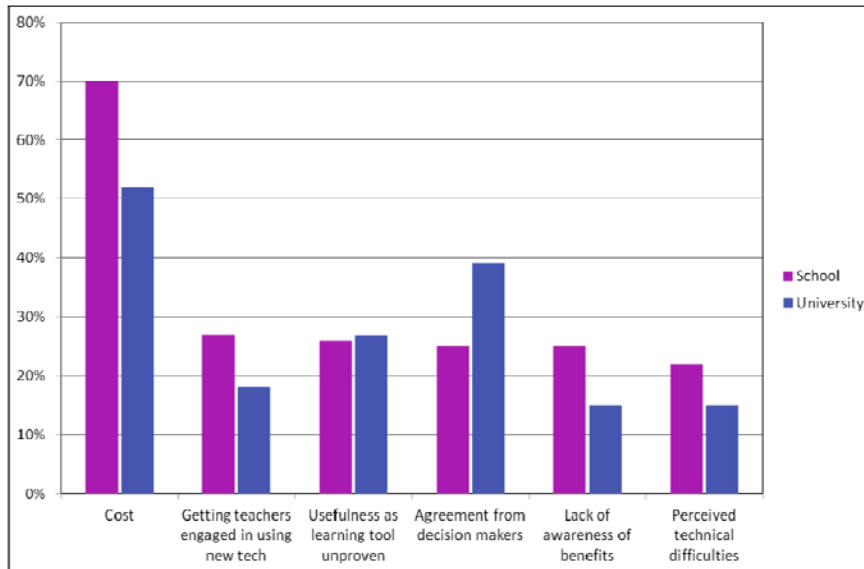


Primary uses of video conferencing varied between school and university teachers. The main use for school teachers was collaborative working (65%) – students working with peers e.g. from other schools. Virtual field trips were another important use (60%).

For university teachers, different primary uses emerged around the theme of extending the reach of their services. The most prevalent answer was teaching home-based students as video conferencing enables students to be taught without having to be physically present in the classroom. The second use cited was access to subject matter experts, enabling universities to create broader programmes.

There was some variance between the countries, with German teachers' top use being watching a missed class (82%). Teachers from the UK and the Nordics used video conferencing primarily for collaborative working (76% and 65% respectively) and those from France and Russia cited virtual field trips as their top use (63% and 67% respectively).

Barriers to implementation

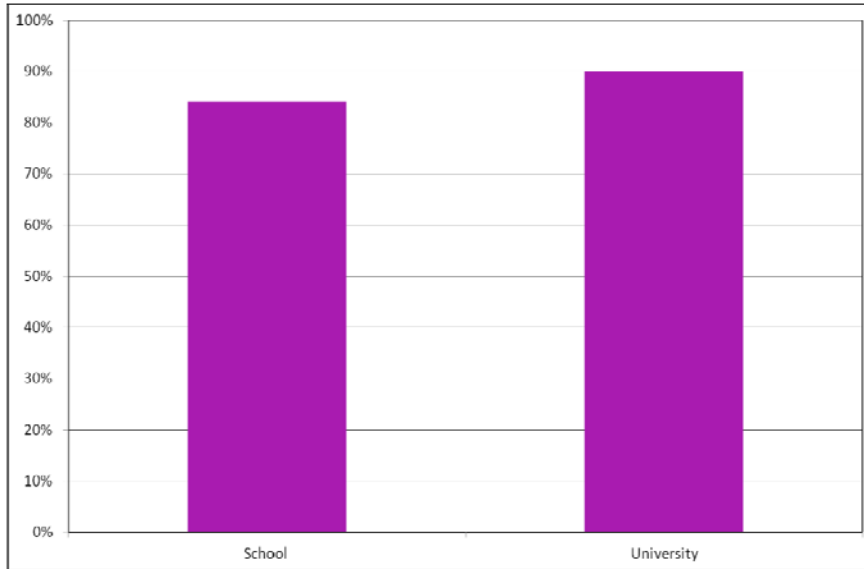


Teachers see cost as by far the biggest barrier to adoption, with over two thirds of teachers overall mentioning this was the reason their school/university has not implemented video conferencing. There were significant differences between types of teacher, with 70% of school teachers and 52% of university teachers admitting it is a barrier.

Getting agreement from senior decision makers is also a major issue for universities, with 39% of teachers citing this barrier.

Russian teachers were most concerned about the cost of video conferencing (71%) and German teachers the least (60%). Russian teachers also cited difficulty in getting agreement from senior decision makers (50%) and German teachers reported that its usefulness as a learning tool is unproven (43%).

Future outlook



The vast majority of teachers surveyed (85%) believe that use of video conferencing will increase over the next five years. Teachers in universities in particular are convinced of the increase (90%).

The largest number of teachers in Russia are expecting video conferencing use to increase (98%) while in Germany this drops to 76%.