

GoConqr Online Learning Report

2017



Key Regional Variances

US

The most variety in e-learning tools

UK

strong focus on science based subjects

Germany

Top viewers
(72% view other peoples resources)

U.A.E.

Highest mobile usage
(77%)

Brazil

The most numerous in study groups
(+30% are members of a group)

Colombia

Top creators
(93% create thier own resources)

Australia

The most active in Study groups
(22% contribute regularly)

Summary

Welcome to the 2017 GoConqr Online Learning Landscape Report.

The following report analyses online learning behaviour around the globe from a sample size of over 2.5 million students and teachers.

The data has been generated from usage on [GoConqr](#), an online social learning platform. The data referred to and the analysis of the findings are interpretations from the GoConqr team based on the knowledge gained from years of providing digital learning solutions.

The aim of this report is to uncover interesting usage patterns that are happening across the globe and to share with a view to understanding the impact of online learning and the challenges that still need to be addressed.

Key Findings

Some of the most outstanding findings we found in this report are:

- Despite the prevalence of social networking, online study tends to be a solitary activity: **79% of people choose not to study collaboratively when they are online.**
- Students are using online platforms as an **additional source to help with difficult subjects**
Students from non-native English speaking countries are more likely to use online tools for language learning than native English speakers are.
- Learning is lower down the list of priorities for users of mobile devices. **Using mobile devices for education is quite low** compared to other activities
- There is a strong **trend towards visually engaging material**, an area in which the offline world simply cannot compete with the online one.

Apart from those global trends, we also find noticeable differences between countries and regions.

In that regard, we believe technological tools are not the sole determinant of learning behaviour online – patterns of regional variation suggest that the impact of technology is mediated by cultural factors such as teaching style and systemic factors such as curriculum.

However the most interesting conclusion that may be taken from our study is that habits and behaviours in the traditional classroom are being replicated online. There appears to be a reluctance to take advantage of the potential that online learning can bring in changing the traditional learning model.

Introduction

ABOUT GOCONQR

GoConqr is a social learning platform that is encouraging members to create, discover, share and learn.

With over 3 million members from every corner of the globe, GoConqr provides tools, content and communities to create an engaging and personalised learning experience.

Founded 2012 with a goal of using technology to enhance the learning experience, GoConqr recently won the Best in Education & e-Learning Category at the Eir Spider awards.

Learn more at www.goconqr.com

Studies conducted by the OECD¹ show an indisputable trend: the time spent online in school and outside of school by students is growing year after year as is the overall usage of technology by educators.

However, those studies fail to give answer to deeper questions.

What does online learning actually look like?

Do people around the world approach online learning differently?

In this report, we attempt to shed some light on the questions by looking at user behaviour on the GoConqr platform.

To get a true understanding of the behaviours, motivations and preferences of online learners, we analysed the data under the following headings:

- Collaborative Learning
- Mobile Learning
- Subjects
- Active Learning
- Learning and Teaching Styles

The organisation of this report reflects these concerns. We were also interested in observing cross country and regional differences in study behaviour. Regional spotlight sections in the report highlight findings of particular significance.

Methodology

First of all, it is important to note that we take the privacy of our users very seriously. Therefore, we have only used aggregate data for this research.

For the information on the report, we collected and analysed the behaviour of 2.5 million GoConqr users from over 160 countries in the year 2016.

Out of those 2.5 million users, over 95% of them signed up as either teachers or students ranging from Secondary level up to Postgraduate level.

This provides us with a significant population to examine trends in online study and learning.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is a general term to refer to methods that encourage students to work together to explore a significant question or create a meaningful project.

A five-minute small group exercise to break up the classroom pace, or students from different schools working together online on a term-long research project are both examples of collaborative learning.

Collaborative Learning has become a buzzword in a world dominated by social media. But how collaborative is online learning?

We measured how many users actively join study groups within GoConqr as an estimate of how interested they are in working with others while studying.

The result may come as a surprise: 21% people choose to join a study group. That means 79% people still prefer studying on their own even if they are using technology to do so.

At a glance

- 79% people choose not to study collaboratively even when they are online.
- Brazilian members are the most numerous in study groups while Australian members are the most active.

Key Findings

Brazilians top the world ranking for group collaboration as 30% of GoConqr members from Brazil are members of online study groups.

Digging into the data, we also find that British, American and Australian students have a similar likelihood of studying in groups (20%), which is slightly less than the average number of people studying in groups in countries like Germany or Spain.

Another important aspect to understand collaboration is the activity of people once they join a group. We measured that by looking at the amount of users sharing resources within groups.

SPOTLIGHT ON BRAZIL

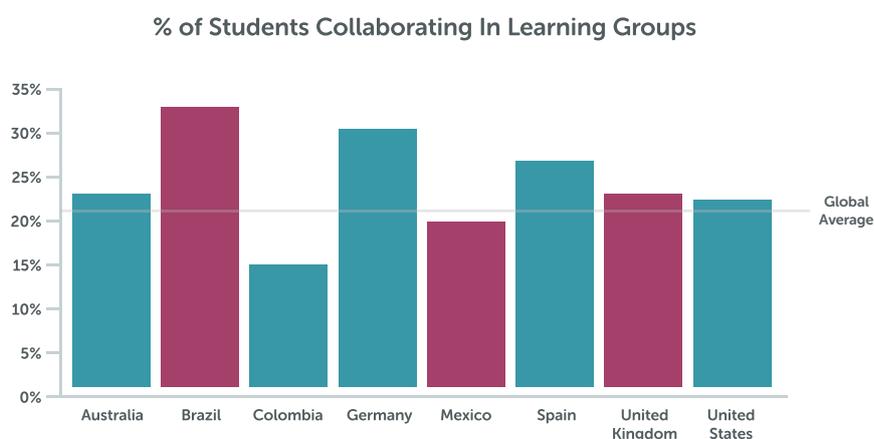
30% of students are members of online study groups.

The topics of the most popular groups include Combined Science, English and History. Exam-based groups (Vestibular, ENEM, Concursos Publicos) are also pretty popular as students seek help within the community.

Out of the people who study collaboratively in Brazil, 15% contribute regularly while the rest are passive (ie, viewing but not contributing). Brazil also stands out for high participation in resource ratings - a mechanism to provide feedback to other learners.

Collaborative Learning^{cont.}

In this respect, Australian students are ahead of the rest of the world with 22% of students that are part of a group contributing regularly.



Implications

The most surprising finding in this area is that, despite the fact that students are incorporating technology into their learning journey, the majority of them choose to do so in an individualistic way.

Might this be a legacy of traditional learning methodologies?

We certainly think so. Studies² point to a number of advantages associated with collaborative learning, including social, psychological, and academic benefits.

Traditionally the classroom provided a space for collaborative learning, however there was no collaborative learning space outside of the school.

First generation social networks were built around friendships and were not regarded as spaces for educational (or professional) connection and collaboration.

Now technology has provided more opportunities for professional and educational networking. While solitary study remains the norm for now, the steady increase in group activity (the percentage of visits to study groups as a percentage of total visits to GoConqr went up by 38% from April to October 2016) suggests that a cultural shift is underway where the power of social networks for education, and not just entertainment, is being recognised.

Mobile Learning

Mobile devices are omnipresent. They have changed how we shop, read the news, watch sports, and date.

They are also changing how we learn. Increasingly people are moving from books and laptops to interactive apps that allow them to learn on the go.

SPOTLIGHT ON UAE

There is only one country where mobile sessions already exceeds the number of desktop sessions, the United Arab Emirates.

This fact is particularly eye-catching if we compare it with the rest of the countries. In fact, students from the UAE are 4 times more likely to study from their phones than British students, 6 times more likely than American students and 8 times more likely than Australian & Colombian students, two of the countries with the least mobile sessions compared to desktop sessions.

At a glance

- The education world is also going mobile with large increases in students accessing content via mobile devices
- According to our internal data, the UAE leads the world in mobile learning, far ahead the rest of the countries
- Prevalence of mobile (phone) learning on a national level appears to be positively correlated with later mobile phone market penetration

Key Findings

Unsurprisingly, we are seeing a big trend when it comes to mobile learning. Year after year, the numbers of users accessing content via mobile devices is growing at a much higher rate than desktop usage. However, when we step back and look at general mobile usage for all activities, learning still lags. The growth rate for mobile learning is not as accelerated as the general mobile web usage trends. For instance, the percentage of users who access GoConqr via a mobile device accounted for 30% of all traffic in 2016. When we compare this to global mobile usage stats of 45% of all web traffic (source Statcounter 2017) we can see that learning on devices is still not as prevalent as general browsing. This data suggests that learning is lower down the list of priorities for users of mobile devices.

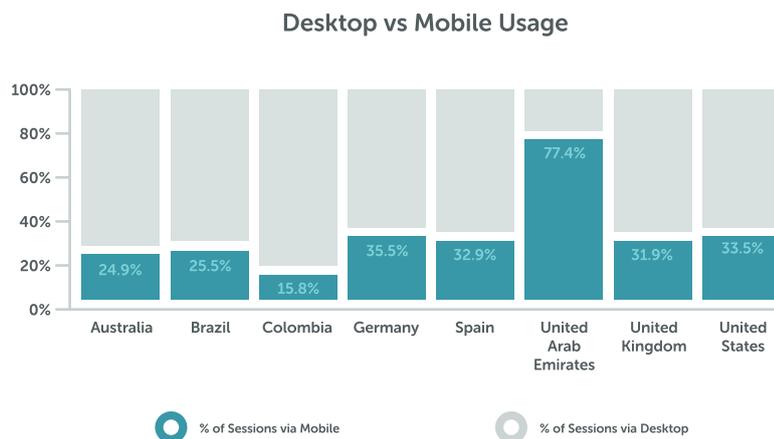
If we look at the devices, there are 6 visits via a mobile phones for every 1 visit via a tablet.

In education the split between main operating systems, Android and iOS, in education follows a similar pattern to general market share. Android dominates globally with over 70% of the mobile connections to GoConqr having an Android OS. There are countries where iOS has significant presence, - 48% of the mobile connections in the US and 65% of the mobile connections in the UK.

Mobile Learning^{cont.}

It is also interesting to compare the behaviour of mobile users versus desktop users. Desktop users spend on average 5 minutes and 44 seconds creating a resource while only a small proportion of mobile users create resources and, when they do, the resources are usually lighter, with an average creation time of 2 minutes and 45 seconds.

As the data reveals, mobile users prefer spending most of their time viewing content, which makes sense if we think about the nature of mobile devices.



Implications

A recent study³ shows that the UAE, along with other Middle East countries, lead the world in mobile device penetration, so the prevalence of mobile learning in the Middle East might not seem surprising.

However, the United States also ranks highly in terms of mobile device penetration, yet their stats for learning on mobile is rather poor.

This may be explained by the fact that the mobile phone market penetrated the United States earlier than the UAE when devices were not equipped to promote learning. Users did not expect to use them for content consumption as such, thinking of phones primarily as communication tools.

Popular Subjects

Within the platform, students and teachers are free to create any type of content on any subject.

As a result we have over 30,000 different subject labels captured. However it is possible to identify clear trends in what people are learning online.

At a glance:

- English is the most popular subject for non-English speaking countries.
- STEM subjects tend to be most popular online, especially in the UK.

Key Findings

There is considerable variation in the popularity of subjects studied. This does not just reflect the popularity of curricular defined subjects, but is likely due to the fact that the capabilities of online tools might be more suitable to learning certain subjects or topics. For instance, a student can study some subjects using the internet, taking advantage of its visual, interactive nature while using pen and paper to study other subjects.

It appears that people tend to go online to look for help to study the subjects they are having difficulties with. They seek to create and discover material that helps them understand complex concepts and problems.

Overall, the most common subjects across all countries studied are English, Maths and Biology.

A very interesting case is Spain. Spain has traditionally been a country with one the lowest level of English within Europe⁵. However, students are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of English as a foreign language and they are going online to improve their level. That trend is also present in other countries where English is not an official language.

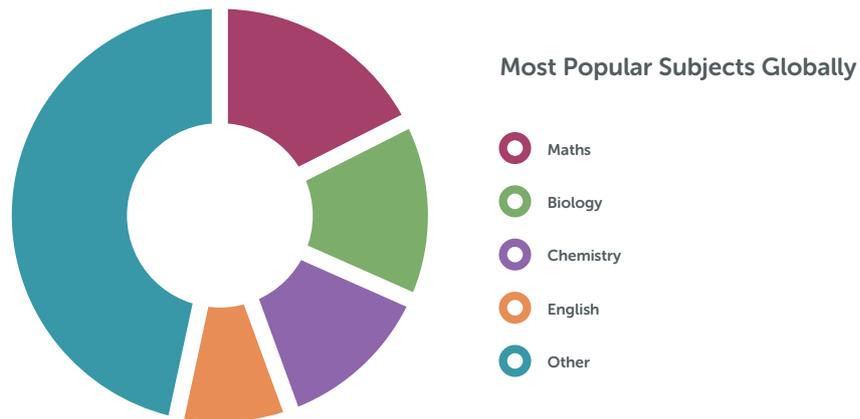
SPOTLIGHT ON UK

In the UK, the most popular subject is Maths⁴, which actually appears in the top 3 of most countries.

It's no news that UK students struggle with Maths, so they are turning to the internet to solve this deficit.

After that, subjects like Biology, Chemistry and Physics emerge in the top positions, showing a strong preference towards science-based subjects

Popular Subjects^{cont.}



Implications

These examples suggest that students are taking ownership of their learning and finding ways to supplement in-school learning in the areas where the school system falls short.

With this in mind, we can see how digital learning will play a key role in fields such as computing, physics, mathematics, engineering and other STEM related areas. These fields were traditionally seen as extremely difficult and inaccessible for most students but online learning is opening doors and facilitating the learning process.

We expect to see remarkable growth in the number of students that decide to pursue STEM degrees which will have astonishing consequences for the progress of our society.

Without doubt, we have exciting times ahead.

Active Learning

Active learning can be loosely defined as any educational activity that involves students in a process of inquiry, discovery or interpretation so that they not only participate in learning activities but also reflect on what they are doing as part of a deeper learning experience.

An active learning strategy can take many forms in the classroom, but with greater access than ever to tech devices and internet connectivity, students are spending more of their time away from the classroom in an online environment⁶. This means that tech-based educational tools are well placed to engage students with learning, regardless of time or location. We consider active learning on GoConqr as creating your own learning resources rather than just passively consuming information.

At a glance:

- Students from Latin America - Colombia (93%), Mexico (86%), - show a greater preference for engaging with learning by creating their own study resources.
- Actively creating resources is not directly related with consuming content created by others as these two countries had low levels of resource consumption
- There is significant regional variation in use of GoConqr for active learning compared to the more traditional content consumption.

Key Findings

Exploring the differences between countries, we found that users from Latin American countries were significantly more likely than other users to create their own learning content on the platform.

However, when it comes to content consumption, the trend noticeably reverses that of creation.

Users in Latin American countries were less likely to spend time viewing other people's content.

Germany – the country where the lowest percentage of GoConqr users create content – is the country with the highest percentage of content viewers (72% of

SPOTLIGHT ON COLOMBIA

93% of Colombian users created original content on their own (more than any other country)

Mind maps are king.

In fact, Colombian students are 4 times more likely to create mind maps than any other resource type (flashcards, notes, slides, quizzes)

Mind maps are visual representations of information, often used for brainstorming essays, or consolidating revision on a topic.

Active Learning ^{cont.}

users view regularly content generated by other teachers and students).

Preference for Creating & Viewing on a Monthly Basis



Implications

This shows that, even when students are provided with the same tools, they interact with them in different ways. This likely depends on a number of factors including culture, learning styles or even educational methodologies.

Learning & Teaching Styles

The term learning style refers to the way in which a learner absorbs, processes, understands and retains information most effectively.

Though researchers have detailed numerous “learning models” over the past couple of decades, learning remains an essentially individual pursuit. This means that even within a class of similar students, personal preferences and study styles vary widely from person to person.

At a glance

- Generally speaking, students favour dynamic resources over traditional ones in a ratio of about 8/1.
- Online learning is fostering new methodologies and learning trends
- Learners in the US used the most varied mixture of tools

Key Findings

Regardless of the specific learning styles, there seems to be a strong trend towards active learning and visually engaging material, two areas in which the offline world simply cannot compete with the online one.

Among the content creation tools available to learners (see side panel), the most popular by a significant margin is the Mind Map tool.

In general we observed that students prefer interactive resources (mind maps, flashcards and quizzes) over more traditional ones such as notes and slides. The proportion is 8/1 when it comes to creating interactive vs static resources and even higher when it comes to searching for them in GoConqr.

Further evidence of this trend is found on Google where searches for mind maps went up by 50% in the last 5 years.

CREATION TOOLS

Flashcards: Displays shorter snippets of information. Used to help learn and memorise factual knowledge

Mind Maps: A highly visual study tool in which a central idea or theme is explored through its connections with a series of related ideas or topics.

Notes: More traditional text-based learning format that allows users to incorporate image, video and audio.

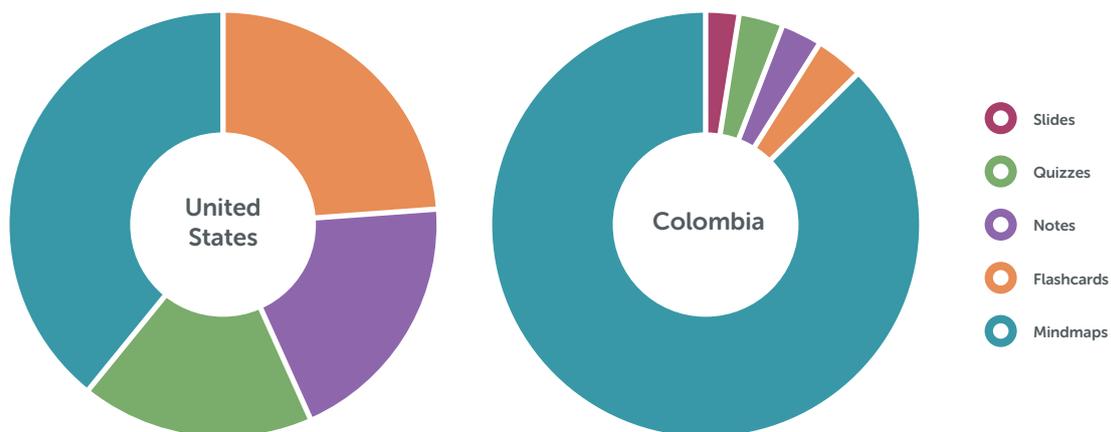
Slide Sets: Another text-based study tool that supports a rich variety of media for visual learning.

Quizzes: A tool that allows users to create a variety of quiz types.

Flowcharts: Our latest addition. Ideal to represent models and processes in a diagrammatic form. It boosts logical thinking.

Learning & Teaching Styles cont.

Use of Learning Tools



Implications

A recent survey conducted by Deloitte⁷ revealed that one of the greatest motivations for teachers using technology in the classroom is to increase student engagement.

By the same token, the survey also found that one of the top motivations for students was to have more fun while working on assignments.

The results above appear to support such motivations. Regardless of the specific learning styles, there seems to be a strong trend towards active learning and visually engaging material, two areas in which the offline world simply cannot compete with the online one.

Partially thanks to the creation of highly interactive resources, we are seeing an unprecedented proliferation of study techniques and teaching methods.

One of the consequences of more diverse strategies is a more personalized learning which, at the same time, leads to more engagement and better academic results⁸.

Educators must therefore continue to develop their understanding of these diverse learner preferences so that they can improve communication and deliver content that is both engaging and effective.

Questions for Future Research

As the first indepth analysis of a global social learning platform this report attempts to contribute to understanding online learning behavior. As the online learning landscape continues to evolve we conclude this report by proposing a few questions for the future that are prompted by the findings of this report:

Will social learning become the norm online in the future?

In the collaborative learning section, we saw that there is a gap between student behaviour inside and outside the classroom which is reflected online. Will increased awareness of collaborative tools lead to the extension of social learning beyond the school walls and school day? Or will after school study persist as a primarily solitary pursuit?

Will mobile learning replace or supplement desktop use?

The usage of mobile phones is not a passing fad. Big sites such as Google are already reporting more searches on mobile than on desktop. This isn't quite reflected yet in the digital learning world, however we do expect mobile sessions on GoConqr to surpass desktop sessions in a relatively short amount of time. Whether the desktop will become obsolete remains to be seen.

Will we continue seeing students studying some subjects both online and offline or will they all make the switch to learning online?

In the section about popular subjects, we discovered that not all subjects have the same popularity online. It appears that online learning benefits in the presentation of complex topics. Despite this fact, we think pen and paper will still play their role for certain subjects. We look forward to learning more about the distribution of subjects online over time.

Questions for Future Research cont.

Will the difference in online learning habits between countries disappear as a consequence of globalization?

In the active learning section, we saw big differences in usage and preferences between countries. However, as Internet usage spreads and the online habits converge, these differences may vanish over time. Will that affect learning styles as well?

What new methodologies can emerge thanks to the new technologies?

Given the speed of tech development, answering this question will probably require a lot of guess work.

From our point of view, two areas will see a big development in the future: personalized learning and the seamless integration between the online and the offline world.

Only time will give us the answers though..

External References

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