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Review on the Remote Education Program for Children with Complex Learning Profiles due to Covid-19 Pandemic



Department of Inclusive Education
Ministry of Education, Maldives
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Acknowledgement

We, the Department of Inclusive Education would like to express our sincere gratitude and acknowledgement to UNICEF Maldives, for their in depth guidance and support to our department in every way.

A special Thanks goes to the Inclusive Support Units of the schools who has given their valuable time and commitment to share the survey sheet to the parents. Our heartiest gratitude goes to the extraordinary team of Inclusive teachers of all the schools, for their enlightening spirit to conduct online classes and Telikilaases to continue education for the children with complex learning profiles.

We would like to thank the parents for contributing their valuable time to respond to this survey. Their constructive feedback has provided us with facts to develop our remote education platforms for future.



Significance of the study

First case of Covid-19 in the Maldives was announced on the 7th of March 2020. Since March 2020 Ministry of Education (MoE) announced a temporary closure of all schools as a precautionary measure. Subsequent lockdown of the entire country was in effective from April 15, 2020 due to the first case of community spread of Covid-19. Students have never been out of school for this long and as a result there is a fear of disengagement from learning and other related social issues.

Since the school closure, MoE joining hands with UNICEF rolled out introducing and supporting distance learning options for students to ensure continuity of education, helping parents and caregivers to access remote education resources while they stay home. The teachers and school administrators were trained to use a variety of online platforms including Telikilaas (lessons delivered through TV channel), online Google classroom and other means of distant education.

Accordingly, the Department of Inclusive Education (DoIE) joined hands with Inclusive Support units of the schools to continue the education for children with complex learning profiles, who are among the most vulnerable during this long closure of schools. Many families found themselves struggling to keep their children's education as well as behavioral tantrums on track, while they stayed in their homes.

As a result of the excellent support by the support units and teachers, DoIE is currently implementing regular IEP focused Telikilaas lessons and distant learning platforms for children with complex learning profiles. In addition to this, supporting parents and caregivers with mental health support and parenting skills through the Inclusive support units of schools.



Findings

To evaluate the impact of online learning platforms and generate feedback from the parents, DoIE has conducted an online survey for parents. This report provides the responses received from the study. The survey was conducted using a Google sheet reaching to parents of schools from four main cities. Namely, all the schools of Greater Male' area, Addu city, Faumulah city and Kulhudhuffushi city participated in the survey. Total 579 responses were generated from a five days review. The responses of the study are analyzed below.

Demographic profiles

Student's demographic information collected was name, gender and age. Figure 1 shows representation of gender from the responses, showing a figure of 443 (76.5%) boys and 136 (23.5%) girls.

Figure 1: percentage of gender distribution of students

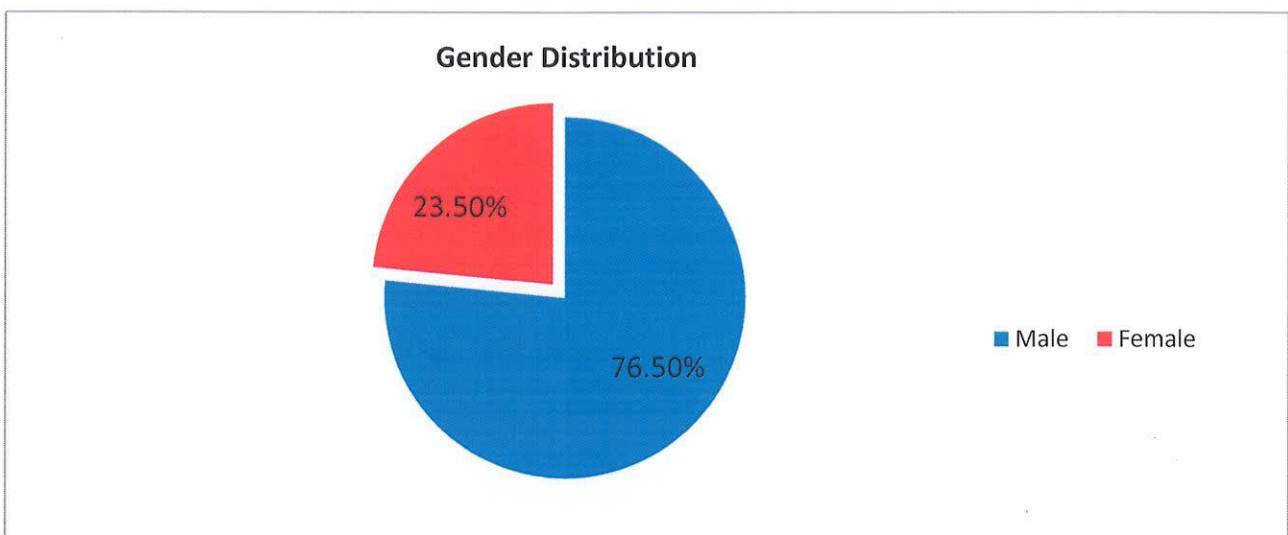
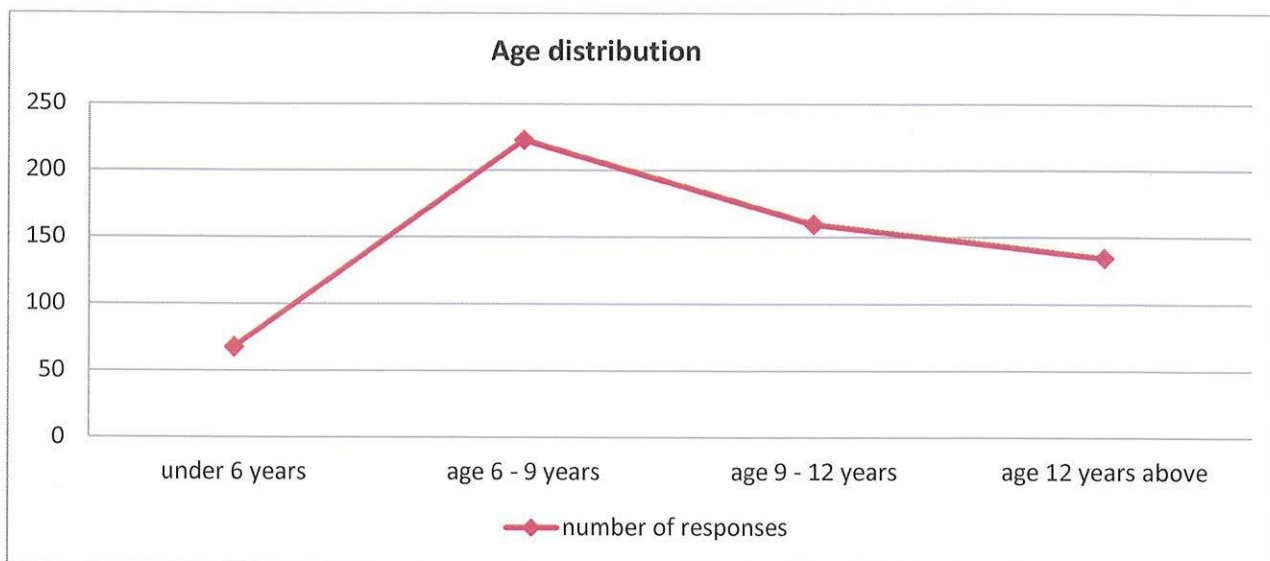


Figure2: Age distribution of Responses

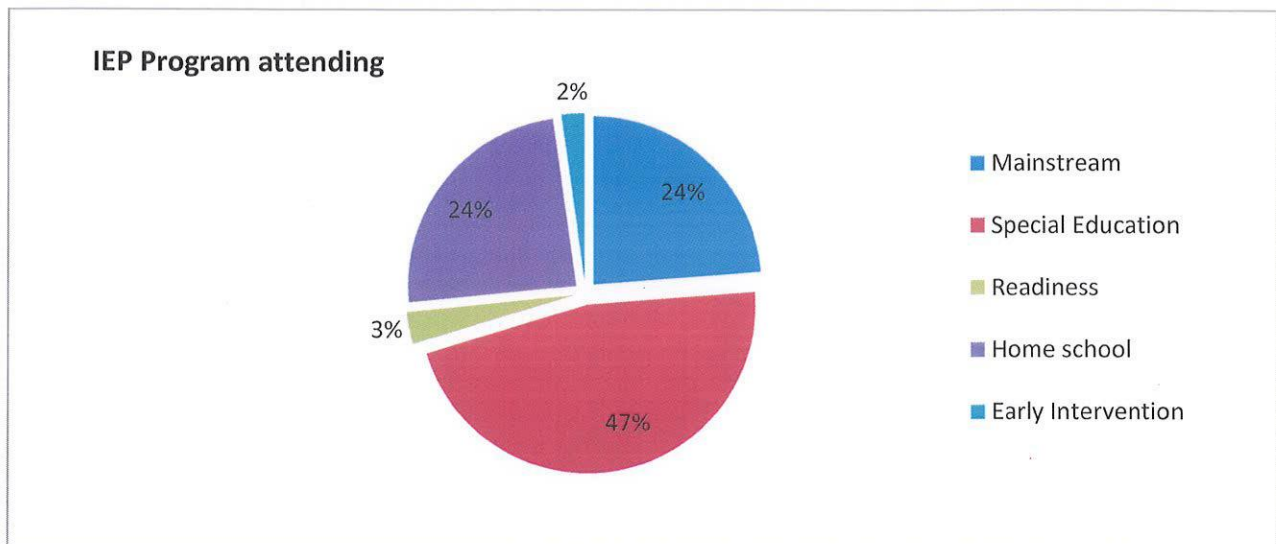


The Age distribution chart shows that most of the students fall on the ages between 6 to 9 years. And a few participants were under 6 year olds. As a result most of the children recorded in this study fall in key stage 1 and 2.

Figure 3 below represents the IEP programs students are currently attending. According to parents' responses, 296 (46.5%) students are in Special Education programs, whereas 141 (24.4%) students are Homeschooled. While 138 (23.8%) students are in Mainstream, and 18 (3.1%) students belong to Readiness programs. Only 13 (2.2%) students were found to be in the Early Intervention program. The result with a smaller amount of early intervention can be because the schools selected for the survey from Male' area do not include preschools.



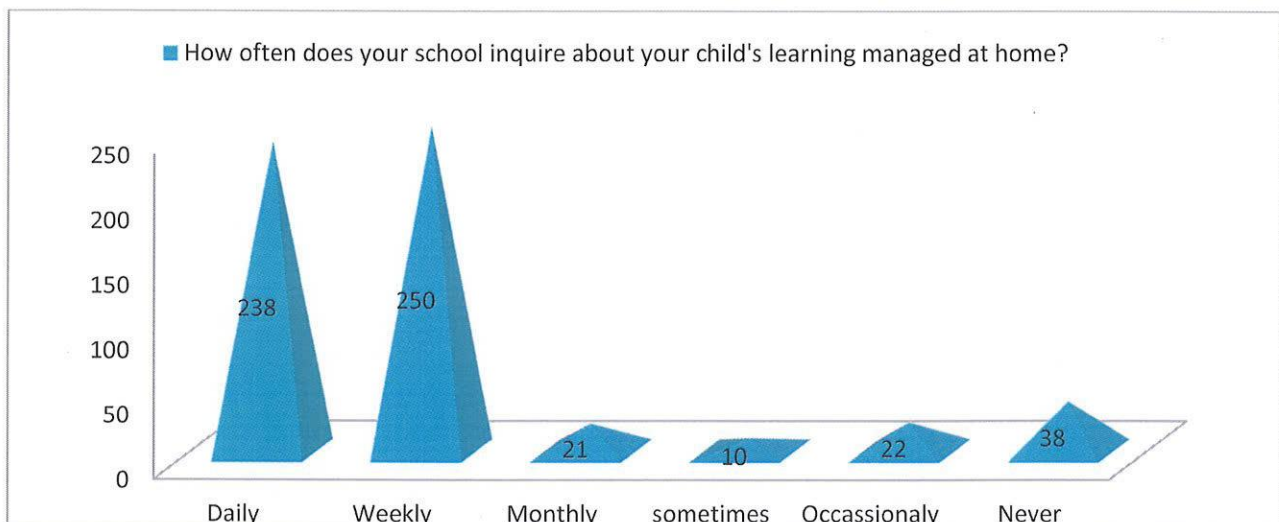
Figure 3: IEP programs students attending



Survey responses

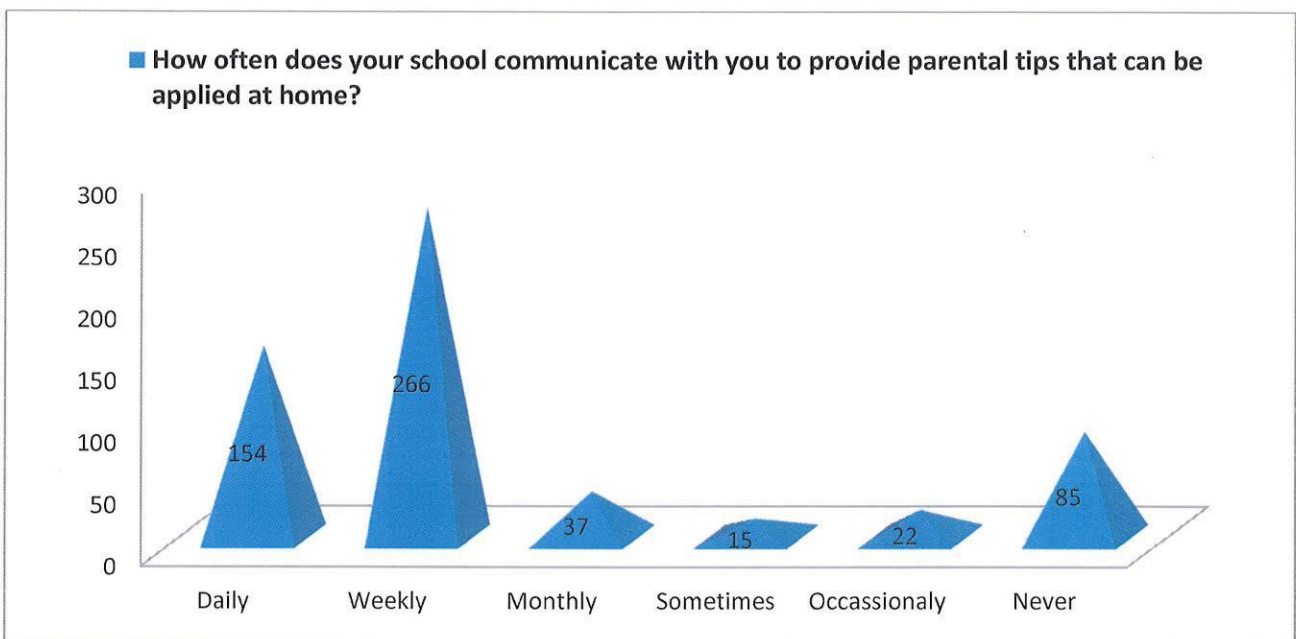
Question #1: How often does your school inquire about your child's learning managed at home? For this question, 250 (43%) of the parents responded *weekly*, 238 (41.1%) said *daily* and 38 (6.6%) of parents responded *never*. The other few percent responded as *occasionally* or *sometimes*.

Figure 4: school inquiry on child's learning managed at home



Question #2: How often does your school communicate with you to provide parental tips that can be applied at home? For this question, 266 (45.9%) of the participants said they were communicated by school *weekly* and 154 (26.6%) agreed they were checked on *daily* by the teachers. And 85 (14.7%) of the parents responded that they were *never* reached by the child's school.

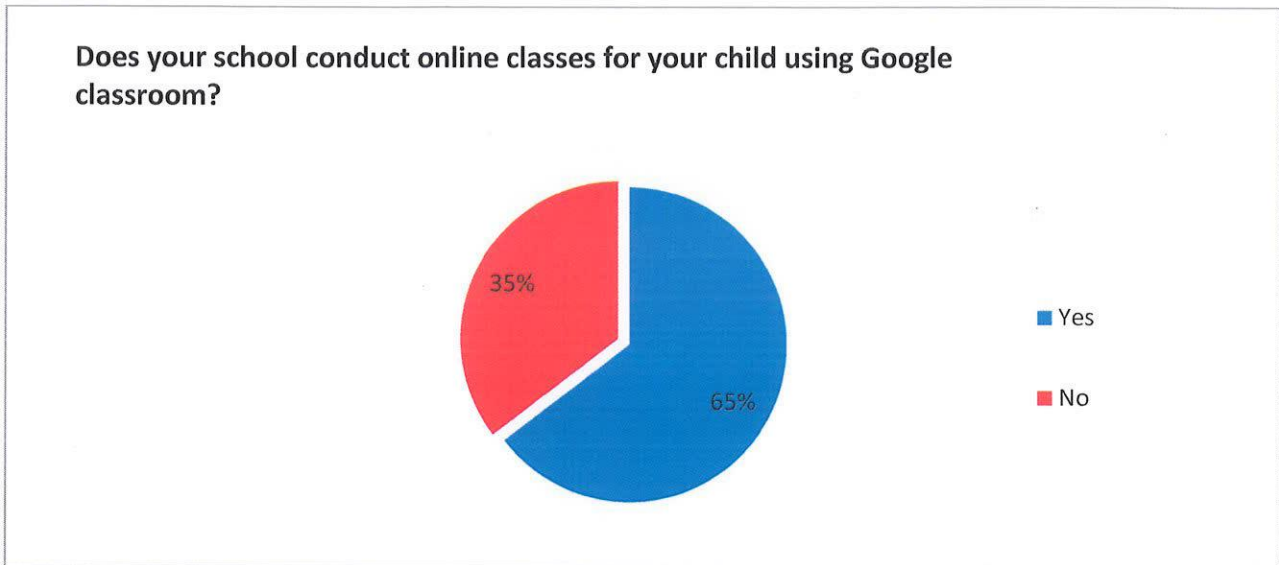
Figure 5: How often does your school communicate with you to provide parental tips that can be applied at home?



Question #3: Does your school conduct online classes for your child using Google classroom? If yes, How often? Figure 6 below shows the responds for this question, where 374 (64.6%) parents approved that class were carried out online. From the responds returned with a *Yes*, 228 (39.4%) parents said the classes were conducted *daily*, while 156 (26.9%) of the parents ticked *weekly* and 137 (23.7%) responded to *never*. And the rest of the responses were ticked on *once in two weeks, recently began* and *sometimes*.



Figure 6: Does your school conduct online classes for your child using Google classroom?



Question #4: Does your child watch IEP based lessons on Telikilaas? Figure 7, represents the responses to this question. Where 70% of the parents said that their children does watch IEP based lessons from Telikilaas, and in fact many positive comments were given to this program by parents in this study.

Figure 7: Does your child watch IEP based lessons on Telikilaas

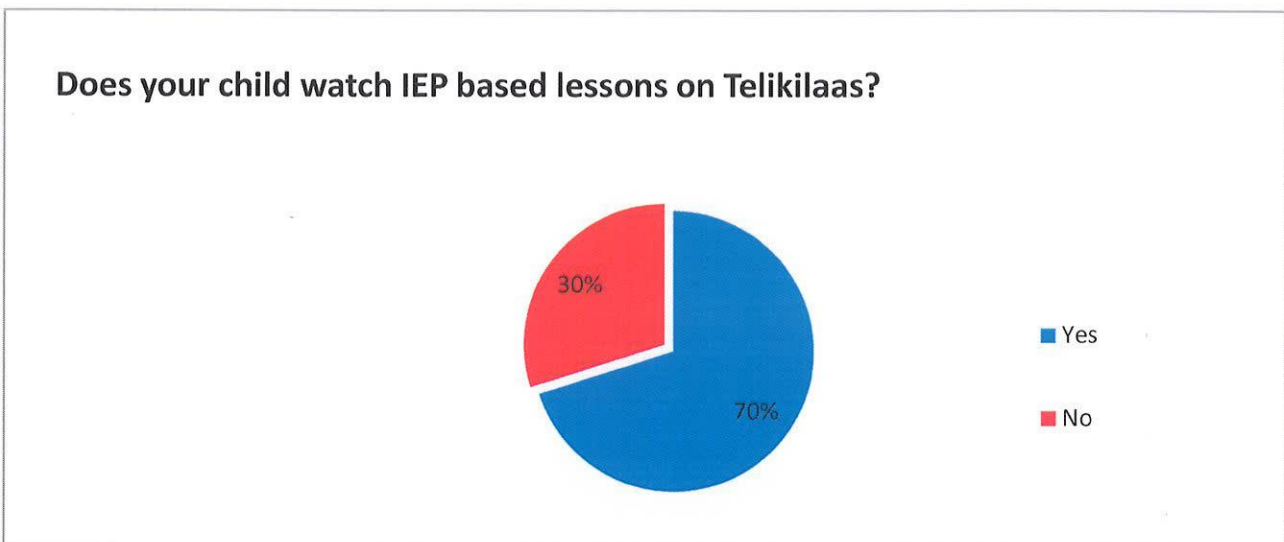
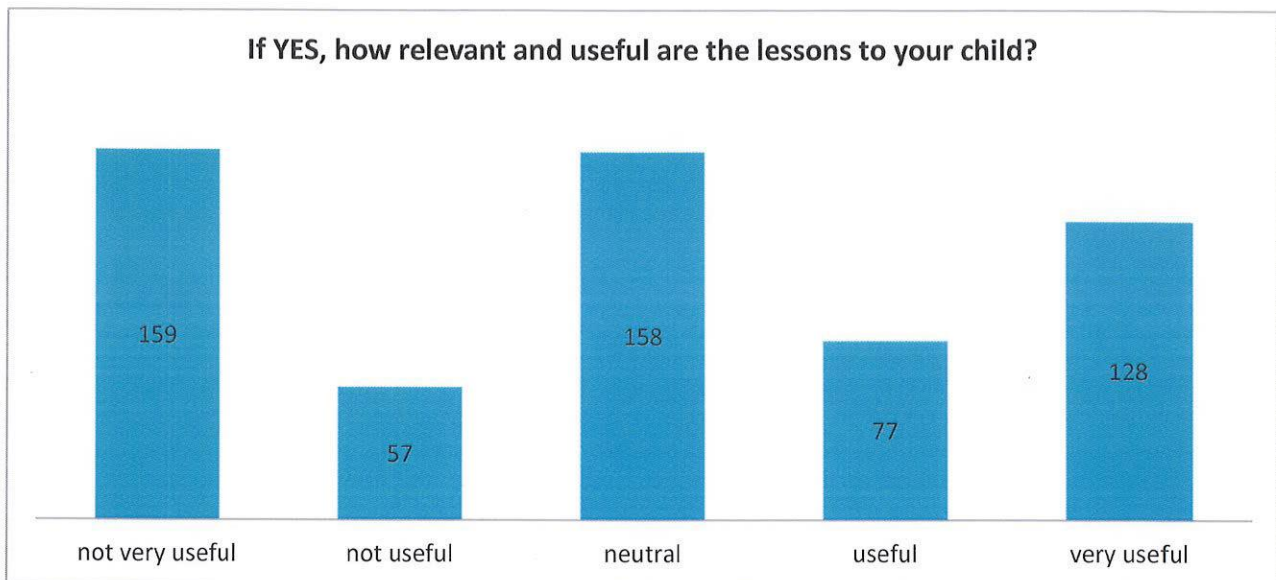


Figure 8: significance of the IEP based Telikilaas lessons



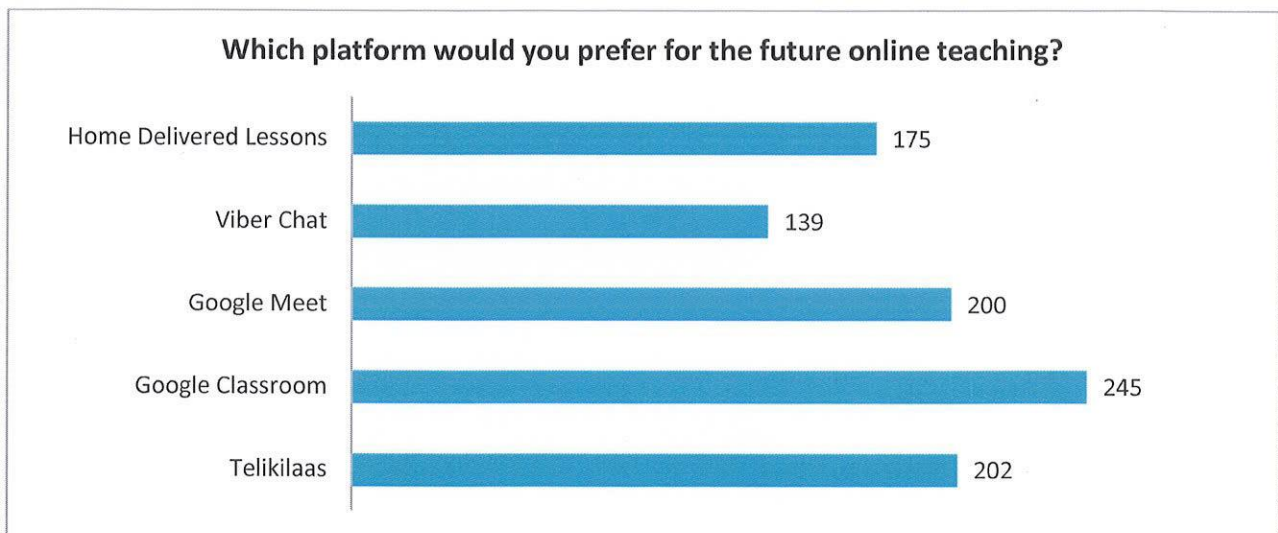
From a range of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'not very useful' to 5 is 'very useful', 128 (22.1%) of the parents agreed that the Telikilaas lessons were *very useful*. And 159 (27.5%) parents thought that the classes were *not very useful* to their child. From the collected comments from parents, many parents suggested that Telikilaas lessons interactions from teachers to be in both Dhivehi as well as English, as most students find English language more convenient.

Question #5: Which platform would you prefer for the future online teaching?

Figure 9 shows, from the given options for remote teachings platforms, most of the parents chose Google classroom most convenient. Secondly Telikilaas and then Google Meet. About 30% of the parents prefer home delivered lessons; this mode of teaching is carried out mostly in the atoll schools, where Covid-19 has not been spread.



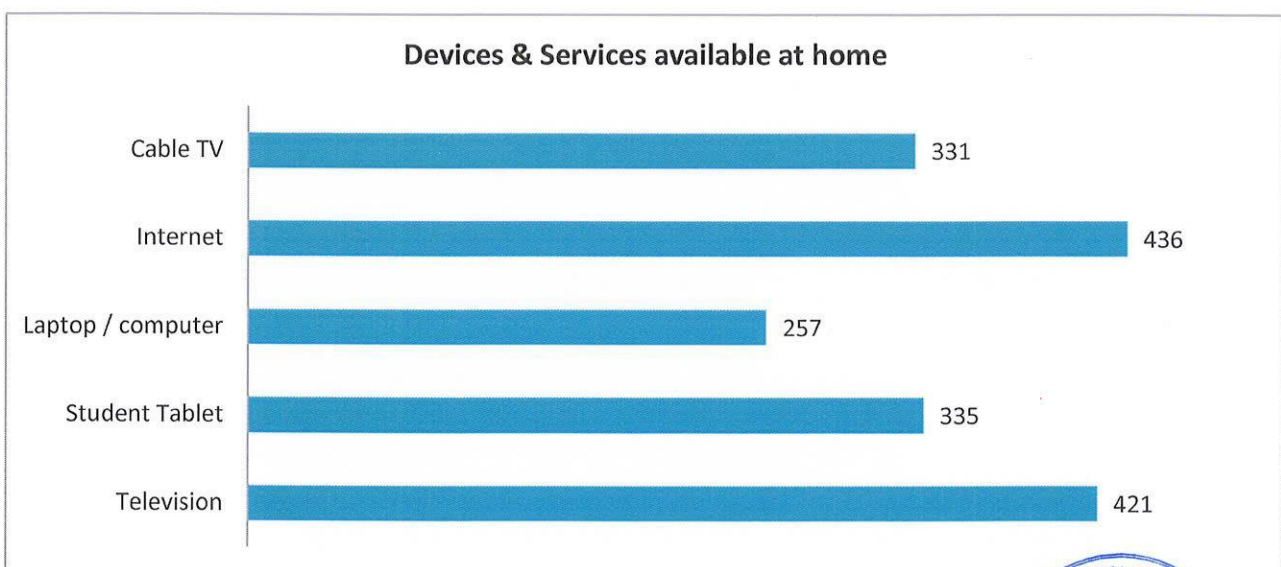
Figure 9: Remote teaching preferences



Question #6: Accessibility to remote resources at home.

At the end of the survey, a question was asked to inquire about the resources available at home. Figure 10 below shows that all students have access to more than one of these services and resources at home. However, many parents have raised concern over not getting the government distributed tablets to their children with complex learning profiles. DoIE has already done another inquiry from the school principals on this regard are currently working on distributing tablets to those students notified.

Figure 10: represents accessibility to remote resources at home



Conclusion

In conclusion, this initial assessment carried out to find the situation of the remote modes of Education introduced due to Covid-19 crisis, has given an insight about the programs carried out by the schools and provided constructive feedback from parents of children with complex learning difficulties. Most of the responses from parents were positive regards and acknowledgement towards the teachers and Ministry of Education, for providing convenient grounds continuing to reach out to their children during this hard time.

The findings from this survey will be used to continue and develop remote education programs for children with complex learning profiles. And the Department of Inclusive Education would like to acknowledge the parents who participated and contributed to this cause and hopes to continue the relationship with schools and parents in the future.

