Preliminary Study on Teachers' Use of the iPad in Bachelor of Education Program at a Private University in Malaysia

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(Editor's note: See full text for reference citations.)

In March 2011, 97 teachers registered at a private Malaysian university where each of them was given a 1st generation iPad tablet to assist them in their studies. The university practices blended learning, which combines face-to-face interaction with online learning using mobile technologies. At that moment, it is the only university that provides iPad tablets to teachers in the Teacher Education Graduating program.

The goal of this study is to assess the status of iPad use in teaching and learning. Thus, the objectives of this study are:

1. To examine frequency of iPad use in teaching and learning.
2. To identify specific features (both positive and negative) of iPad that influence teaching and learning processes.
3. To identify limitations or problems using iPad.
4. To evaluate how well iPad features addressed teaching and learning compared to traditional personal computers.
5. To suggest ways of improving tablet learning in teaching and learning.

Based on the results of the survey, teachers reported that using the iPad help them 1) to

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Tablet Technologies and Education

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In the last decade, education has taken on a new rhythm in the lives of students and society. No longer is learning done at specific hours of the day in specific locations (generally schools and universities). Now education is something that occurs whenever a learner has a question or wonders about something and possesses a device to help him or her answer the query. Mobile learning is the present-day form in which education occurs....

Due to their multitude of usability options, tablet technologies lend themselves to a myriad of learning modalities – visual, tactile, and auditory. The various makes, models, sizes and price ranges make the technology widely affordable and accessible for user needs. Unlike desktop computers or laptops, they adapt well to the needs of many different types of learners. The visual learner benefits from the wide range of applications on a tablet that has graphical user interfaces (GUIs) which represent ways of navigating a software, creating multimedia projects, and demonstrating understanding of concepts. Auditory learners find the sound options advantageous because text can be read, visual representations described, and of course, music and video are also included as features....Tablets are not operated via mouse or track pad, but rather contact is made right on the screen itself, by the fingertips of the user. This feature is help-ful for tactile learners who might have trouble remembering visual or auditory facts, processes, and instructions. By using their hands to proceed through websites, software and applications containing needed information, tactile learners possess a greater chance of being able to process and retain whatever it is that they need to learn.

Tablet technologies may well usher in a new way of teaching and learning. Less expensive than desktops and laptops, tablets are also more portable and provide easier access to applications such as email and Internet searching....

In his writing about technological innovations and education, Thiruvathukal states that, "If we don't change, others will change us and render us obsolete or, worse, irrelevant." It will do harm to students, teachers, and the educational process in general if pedagogy does not keep pace with technology. This challenge is even more urgent than in previous eras due to the nature and preferences of the students who are currently in schools.

AECT Mission
The mission of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology is to provide international leadership by promoting scholarship and best practices in the creation, use, and management of technologies for effective teaching and learning in a wide range of settings.

Goals:
  • Define the disciplines and professional activities that comprise the field of educational communications and technology.
  • Serve and represent professionals in the field and support professional growth.
  • Advance scholarship and practice that contribute to and enlarge the knowledge base of the field.
  • Promote policies that ensure the humane and ethical use of educational communications and technology at all levels, from the personal through the international.

Preliminary Study…continued from page 1

access learning materials using Dropbox and LMS; 2) to interact and collaborate with friends through online forums; and 3) to access email. They also frequently use the iPad at home and while waiting…. From the interview, the teachers prefer to use the iPad over laptop for teaching and learning and may recommend others to use it. However, 73% of the respondents reported that iPad could not replace laptop. This is true as each learning device is designed to perform different functions. IPad is mainly designed for users to easily browse the Internet through good touch screen capabilities. This is good for learning but not for creating content for teaching. Furthermore, the iPad is overly dependent on the Internet for its content. It is also limited to the iOS operating system and some applications cannot be projected to a larger screen for large group presentation, at least in the context of this study since the participating teachers were only given 1st generation iPads. This is remedied with the subsequent release of iPad 2 and the new iPad (3rd generation), which features "mirroring" and "AirPlay" capabilities that makes it a good presentation (or teaching) tool. Teachers also reported that to encourage the use of iPad, more learning materials need to be uploaded.

The iPad is an emerging teaching and learning tool because of its technical features and pedagogy. It has many applications and learning materials available freely in the Internet, particularly the application iTunes U, some free interactive textbooks and magazines and news applications such as Zite and Flipboard. A survey done by Walsh revealed that Evernote, Dropbox, iBook and Zite are among the top fifteen applications used by teachers in education-related work. The screen enables users to draw diagrams using many applications such as Adobe Ideas and iThought as well as making mind maps using Mindmaps. As mentioned above, newer iPads (such as the 2nd and 3rd generation iPads) have better features for teaching and learning. They are equipped with a more powerful processor and digital cameras (for shooting still pictures and videos) making it easier for teachers to create content for teaching. Applications can also be projected to a bigger screen for classroom presentations and discussions using a VGA iPad cable. It is predicted that the mobile learning tablet will be the future of instructional and learning technologies.

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Jacksonville, Florida, to Host International Convention

This November 4-8, join your colleagues, students, and friends in sunny coastal Jacksonville, Florida, for the AECT International Convention on the theme: "Learning, Design, and Technology." The convention promises to be a world-class professional event with workshops and presentations on many facets of the professions represented within the AECT membership. Professors, bring your grad students! This is learning par excellence.

Jacksonville is an exciting city on the north Florida coast. Looking out to the great Atlantic Ocean, it's actually the largest city in Florida and boasts the state's third largest seaport. It's also the home of the University of North Florida.

Conference themes are:

- Applications of new and emerging technologies within learning contexts
- Trends in design-based research
- Designing learning environments
- Applications of learning analytics
- MOOCs and LOOCs
- Rigorous applications of research methods
- Influence of culture on learning/learning on culture

Issues in Focus

Clichés About Culture Cause Problems

Many people, especially among the general public, including education policy makers, are only naively aware of the effects of students' home cultures on learning, whether the students are in preschool or grad school.

In the past, cultural studies in education often have focused on racial distinctions. In the United States this focus has frequently turned on black-white differences. In 1986, for example, Hale-Benson averred:

> Black children have to be prepared to imitate the "hip," "cool" behavior of the culture in which they live and at the same time take on those behaviors that are necessary to be upwardly mobile.

Such notions have credence, but many other factors must be taken into consideration when linking culture to learning, and the research in this area continues to evolve.

There is danger in reducing cultural linkages to clichés á la "black children struggle with standard English" or "Asian children excel in math." Such clichés are as often class based as cultural, and they tend to exist at least superficially in most countries with minority populations.

The problem is that education policy too often is shaped by groups and individuals who are responding to cultural clichés rather than to authentic research about intersections of culture and learning.

In the national test mania currently dominating U.S. education, an example of the exploitation of cultural clichés is the comparison of scores on PISA (Program for International Student Assessment).

For a number of years, Finland was the darling of U.S. education policy makers who took American school improvement efforts to task because U.S. schools fared poorly by comparison to Finland—and a lot of other countries.

Some defenders of U.S. public education pointed to cultural differences to explain why student achievement differed in the two countries. That was a straw to be grasped, and they certainly were not alone in doing so.

Others embraced the notion that the Finnish approach to education simply stood in contrast to the U.S. approach—in other words, school culture, not national culture was the factor. Still only part of the answer.

And then Finland slipped in the international rankings.

So now policy makers are asking, among other questions, what changed about Finnish society and culture? Again, only part of the answer at best.

Some observers, such as Finland's Pasi Sahlberg, a leading expert on school reform, argue that Finland should not do what other countries, for instance the United States, have done in the face of low scores. "Common solutions have included market-based reforms, such as increasing competition between schools, standardization of teaching and learning, tougher test-based accountability and privatization of public schools" (Strauss 2013).

Such travails illustrate why intersections of culture and learning merit continued, indeed expanded, research consideration.

This topic is part of one strand in the 2014 AECT International Convention.

Hale-Benson, J. E. (1986). *Black Children: Their Roots, Culture, and Learning Styles*. Rev. ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Strauss, V. (2013, December 3). Are Finland's vaunted schools slipping? *Washington Post*.