

# Levels of Aspiration to Use Digital Tools and Performance in an Educational Technology Course

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined pre-service teachers' level of aspiration to use educational technology experience, and level of aspiration to use digital tools to engage learners in class activities and their performance in an educational technology course. The study adopted the research survey design and was carried out with 261 pre-service teachers. The results revealed that the level of aspiration to use experience from educational technology course and digital tool training was high. The result showed a significant positive relationship of  $R = 0.03$  between pre-service teachers' level of aspiration to use educational technology experience and their performance. Also, there was a positive relationship of  $R = 0.66$  between prospective teachers' level of aspiration to use digital tools and their performance. It was, therefore, recommended that pre-service teachers need to be encouraged with adequate instructional facilities to have positive aspiration to use technology now and in the future.

## KEYWORDS

21st Century Learners, Educational Technology Experience, Instructional Package, Practical Groups, Pre-Service Teachers, Teacher Education, Teacher Education Curriculum, Teacher Education Programme

## INTRODUCTION

The main aim of teacher education programmes across the globe is to equip prospective teachers with requisite skills and competences to function effectively in future classroom environments. The modern classroom settings are increasingly becoming technology-based and the use of digital tools is at the threshold of becoming a strategic medium to engage 21<sup>st</sup> century learners, who live in media-saturated environments. Educational technology courses are incorporated in teacher education curriculum in order to ensure that pre-service teachers are well-equipped with relevant skills to function effectively in media-based classroom environments. Apparently, teacher education programmes need to emphasise training in using digital tools in instructional delivery and deployment of experience garnered from educational technology courses to solve educational problems now and in the future. Afshari, Abu Bakar, Su Luan, Abu Samah, and Say Fooi (2009) affirmed that at the point when technology was initially introduced into teacher training programmes, stakeholders focused the process of teaching

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about technology instead of training pre-service teachers to teach with technological tools. One strategic factor that could hinder the full realisation of the objectives of educational technology courses in teacher education programme is the prospective teachers' level of aspiration. Therefore, this study was carried out to examine pre-service teachers' level of aspiration to use educational technology experience, level of aspiration to use digital tools to engage learners in class activities and their performance in an educational technology course.

## BACKGROUND

Teacher education curriculum needs to incorporate appropriate instructional contents that would place students on a sound pedagogical pedestal, to cope with the ever-increasing challenges of the modern schooling system. Thus, teacher training institutions are rising up to the challenge by integrating educational technology courses into the curriculum, with a view to equipping pre-service teachers with technology toolkits to engage learners in classroom activities. Educational technology courses are designed to ensure that pre-service teachers are not only taught with technology, but also acquire skills to package instructional content with the use of digital tools.

It is widely recognised that pre-service teachers across the world need to be equipped with relevant technology skills and competences, which are now regarded as strategic components of any teacher education programme. Prospective teachers are expected to be trained on how to use digital tools in instructional delivery process, with a view to ensuring that new generation of teachers are able to meet increasing educational challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Batane & Ngwako, 2017). Not only must these pre-service teachers acquire competences in technology use, it is also important that they learn how to use different digital tools to develop interactive and engaging instructional contents to enhance classroom activities at different levels of education. To accomplish this, stakeholders in teacher education programme need to incorporate a robust educational technology content that would create interactive teaching-learning environments for future generation teachers and their students.

Over the years, many studies had focused on the need to train prospective teachers on how to use technology and factors that hinder teacher technology preparation programmes in colleges of education and universities across the world. Murley, Jukes, and Stobaugh, (2013) affirm that most studies on pre-service teachers' use of technology have concentrated on examining the impact of educational technology courses on pre-service teachers' use of technology in their future classroom practices.

## MAIN FOCUS OF THE ARTICLE

Studies reveal that an important factor influencing new teachers' adoption of computer and other digital tools in teaching-learning process is the quality of pre-service teachers' technology experiences included in their teacher education programmes (Agyei & Voogt, 2011). However, it remains unclear whether the experience students gained from educational technology courses and the skills in using digital tools have any impact on their performance in the course and future technology use. According to researchers, a gap exists between what pre-service teachers experience in their educational technology courses and how technology is utilised in real classroom setting to engage learners (Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Glazewski, Newby & Ertmer, 2010). Hence, there is a need to examine the relationship between the experience gained in educational technology classroom instruction and performance of prospective teachers in the course.

## Issues, Controversies, Problems

Martin and Loomis (2014) assert that it is not sufficient that teachers simply know how to turn on a computer or computer-related device; it is imperative that they acquire relevant skills to package instructional content and understand the appropriate time to use technology to facilitate classroom

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