

Chapter 37

Technology Integration and the Teacher–Student Relationship

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ABSTRACT

A fundamental part of today's K-12 classroom is 21st-century instruction that infuses technology skills in all subjects to prepare for the digital world. As educators continue to integrate this technology into student learning, it is important to examine the value of the human relationships that develop with the teachers in concert with the technology as they interact with their students in this environment. This integration of technology has created a shift in the role of the teacher and have led researchers to examine how high-quality relationships that are caring, supportive, and reciprocal impact pedagogical approaches, student engagement and motivation, and academic success. This chapter examines the work of several studies that focused on the interplay of technology integration and the teacher-student relationship on the social, emotional, and academic success of students.

BACKGROUND

The research on technology as a tool for learning has not yet yielded significant results, but has rather emphasized supplementing rather than replacing the teacher when integrating technology into learning (Ferlazzo, 2015; Grisham & Wolsey, 2006; Lin & Jou, 2013; Reiser & Dempsey, 2012). For example, Lin and Jou (2013) maintained that education has changed because of technology and that the learning

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motivation of students can be stimulated when the learning process integrates information and communication technology into the learning process. Also, Reiser and Dempsey (2012) suggested that technology integration in the classroom has significantly increased student engagement, yet found that technology was still not used in the classroom as often as it should be. Furthermore, initiatives by the U.S. Department of Education in the field of Educational Technology focus more on the equity and accessibility of technology to close the digital divide, and only focus on strengthening relationships with the use of technology in their guiding principles for early learners (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

One of the most vital elements that contributes to academic success is the relationship that develops between the teacher and the student in the classroom (Cozolino, 2013; Danielson et al., 2010; Ferlazzo, 2015; Hughes, 2012; Reiser & Dempsey, 2012). Danielson et al. (2010) believed that “quality relationships in the learning environment, such as a teacher’s warm involvement, social support from classmates, and perceived autonomy, have been found to contribute to the fulfillment of students’ basic needs for autonomy and relatedness” (p. 249). More specifically, “perceived teacher support may help shape students’ views of themselves as competent and autonomous individuals and increase their feelings of relatedness” (Danielson et al., 2010, p. 249). Students must positively perceive this important relationship, rather than the didactic relationships that develop in the classroom, to contribute to the students’ social skills and academic competence (Danielson et al., 2010; Hughes, 2012).

INTRODUCTION

Regardless of the amount or particular kind of technology integrated into the classroom environment, the primary goal of educators is to prepare students for 21st-century skills and maintain conducive student learning experiences (Storz & Hoffman, 2013). Tallvid (2016) maintained that it is the teachers who realize the intentions for the use of technology in the classroom and are the “key actors in the process of integrating technology into the classroom” (p. 505). In addition, the teacher-student relationship is the foundation of learning and growth (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013). In fact, often these relationships are what enhance the learning process and impact the student the most (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013). Mendler (2001) posited, “there is no doubt that achievement is most apt to occur in a friendly, predictable classroom atmosphere guided by an enthusiastic teacher who ‘connects’ with students and encourages them to create, take risks, and share ideas” (p. 2). For this reason, a review of the current literature that takes a closer look at these very important relationships that ensue during the academic career of a student is crucial.

Classrooms around the world, although propelled by the pandemic to integrate technology without adequate preparedness, focus on 21st-century skills that integrate standards from the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) for which teachers are expected to empower students to succeed through teaching and learning, to inspire students to participate in the digital world, and to facilitate learning with technology to support student achievement (ISTE, 2017; Partnership for 21st Century Learning, n.d.). As educators integrate technology in the classroom to prepare students for 21st-century skills and the 21st-century workplace, it is critical to understand that the vital relationships that develop in the classroom, especially amid a pandemic, continue to be the foundation of the learning process. However, to better understand how to foster meaningful learning experiences by engaging students, it

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