Technology Experiences of Student Interns in a One to One Mobile Program

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ABSTRACT

This article describes how a group of student intern teachers (n = 51) in a one to one teacher education iPad program were asked to reflect using Experience Sampling Method (ESM) on their use of technology in the classroom during internship. Interns also completed summative reflections and class discussions. Data collected both in online and paper-based summative reflections were subjected to content analysis and triangulated with classroom discussions. The responses showed that interns tended toward teacher-focused uses of technology and were frustrated by their inability to use technology due to infrastructure or cooperating teacher beliefs and practices related to technology. Implications and plans for improved support is discussed.

KEYWORDS

One to One, Preservice, Teacher Education, Technology Integration

INTRODUCTION

Teacher education is still struggling to integrate technology in a meaningful way. The 2015 New Media Consortia Horizon report on K-12 learning reports that teachers are poorly prepared to integrate the newest technologies in meaningful ways and do not have the experience planning with technology for problem based learning, flipped learning, and inquiry based learning (Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2015). Part of this problem may be due to reduced ability to teach with technology during internship and overall lack of preparation during a teacher education program.

In most US programs, the culmination of teacher education is the student internship semester where interns are supported to assume the role of classroom teacher. This stage can be the first opportunity to make their own instructional decisions such as whether to use technology or not. This time is a whirlwind to an inexperienced teacher and often difficult for them to reflect on entire experience as a whole. To choose to use technology or not, interns may face a variety of barriers, characterized as first order (dealing with access and infrastructure) or second order barriers (dealing with beliefs about technology integration (Ertmer, 2005; Becker, 2000). Preservice teachers are often not afforded the opportunity to practice using technology until they are interning or even later. When they do encounter the opportunity to make instructional choices about technology, they often lack the practical experience make effective choices (Tondeur, van Braak, Sang, Voogt, Fisser, & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2012). Therefore, internship can be a critical time to focus on technology integration in teacher preparation.

Internship (aka student teaching) is an important part of teacher education whose aim is to prepare for successful entry into the teaching profession (Ratsoy et al., 1987). During their internship, preservice teachers experience the real classroom environment to gain new perspective, professional

DOI: 10.4018/IJMBL.2018040103

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capacities, and classroom skills. The experiences during the internship can have a positive impact on teacher education and teacher development (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Brooks, 2006, Hascher & Wepf, 2007). Hascher and Wepf (2007) determined that preservice students continue to learn about planning, teaching, assessment, and practice in the internship period, and they develop these skills amidst challenges and problems that they must solve and address through professional practice. These include problems with cooperating teachers (Bural & Avşaroğlu 2012), lack of resources (Karaca & Aral 2011; Bural & Avşaroğlu 2012), personal problems and problems with time and classroom management (Laruan, 2006).

The relationship between the intern and their cooperating teacher is key to the success of an internship experience and their future teaching career (Korth & Baum, 2011; Edwards, 2012). When encountering the realities of classroom life, interns may need immediate help (Sağlamel & Altan, 2015), which often comes from the cooperating teacher. Koç (2011) described nine functions of cooperating teachers including: (1) providing support on teaching; (2) providing orientation to the school/classroom; (3) providing moral support; (4) providing feedback on lesson planning and teaching performance; (5) providing guidance about resources for teaching; (6) evaluating; (7) self-preparing for the role; (8) providing feedback on the observation forms; and (9) providing written feedback. An intern who maintains a positive relationship with the cooperating teacher is more likely to obtain quality learning outcomes (Lu, 2013). Knowing this, if a cooperating teacher is fearful or reluctant to use technology, their intern will likely not be given access or opportunity to practice technology integration during internship.

**Barriers to Technology Use in Student Intern Semester**

The difficulties that preservice teachers face in learning how to use technology during internship is not a new problem. As early as 1996, in the National Educational Technology Plan, the Department of Education has called upon colleges of education to improve technology integration experiences (USDOE, 1996). The current National Educational Technology Plan (USDOE, 2016) takes it a step further when they say that no new teacher should require remediation by their new district to make meaningful use of technology to achieve state or national standards (USDOE, 2016). In December 2016, the Department of Education – Department of Educational Technology released a policy statement calling for improved technology integration in teacher education programs (USDOE, 2016b). Dexter & Reidel (2003) shared the assertion that colleges of education have a responsibility to prepare preservice teachers to use technology but admit it is difficult to manage. It is not only affected by access to computing technology but also their instructional supports available within the University and educational settings (Dexter & Reidel, 2003).

We also assert that the success of technology integration during a teacher education program and internship depends greatly on their relationship with and the cooperating teacher’s attitudes towards technology. In order for interns to learn how to support student-centered lessons with technology, they need knowledgeable mentor teachers and adequate access to technology to practice and develop those lessons (Grove, Strudler & Odell, 2004). Grove, Strudler, and Odell (2004) found that for successful technology integration by interns, that their mentors should be engaged in learning about new practices integrating technology with curriculum-based approaches to empower them to model and practice new teaching strategies.

**Purpose**

The way in which preservice teachers use technology during internship is a key step to changing how technology is used in schools. This paper reports on the attitudes and experiences of preservice teachers during their internship and their experiences using technology. We sought to explore the opportunities and barriers that they experience so that both teacher educators, and school administrators can address them and provide supports to improve the overall technology integration experience.
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