Chapter 13

The Processes of Appropriation of Technological Tools in the Classroom: Teachers’ Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to investigate how teachers perceive the usefulness of introducing technological tools (namely, iPad) for the learning/teaching process in a professional secondary school. More specifically, the authors intend to understand how the process of iPad appropriation is identified by the teachers as a learning tool. Through the analysis of focus groups involving different teachers belonging to the same school, the authors intend to detect teachers’ self-efficacy and beliefs concerning the appropriation of the use of the iPad in the classroom along a school year. The findings of the study highlight diverse facilitating and hindering elements in the process of teachers’ appropriation of such technological tool. The study opens further spaces to examine teachers’ and students’ perceptions in mastering new technological tools and in building new processes of teaching/learning.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last decades, teachers are confronted with the emergence of different pervasive technological tools during their pedagogical activities. Among various devices that are currently used in the classroom (i.e., netbooks, mobile phones, computers, and mp3 players), increasing attention in the field of technology of education is paid to the tablet, such as the iPad. This focus of interest concerns different learning levels, from preschool to tertiary education (Falloon, 2013; Kucirkova, Messer, Sheehy, & Panadero, 2014; Manches, 2011). These studies have the merit of opening spaces for reflecting about the use of different technological tools in the classroom. However, what is still lacking is a qualitative investigation of how the use of iPads is perceived in relation to the process of users’ appropriation in the classroom. This allows to analyze the teachers’ perceptions of iPad appropriation as supporting tool for their didactic activities. The authors’ goal is to conduct an analysis of what teachers think about these technological tools, and how they declare to use these technologies as resources for their teaching activities. This work should enhance the understanding of how to support teachers’ beliefs, in order to facilitate the integration of iPads in their professional settings. By exploring the perceptions connected to this process of appropriation, the authors also intend to improve the awareness of the aspects that facilitate and hinder the effective use of the iPad in the classroom. This may assist teachers to overcome barriers and to became successful “technology adopters” (Bingimlas, 2009).

THE USE OF IPADs AND SUBJECTIVE AND INTERACTIVE COMPONENTS OF TEACHERS’ APPROPRIATION

Different reasons are recognized as key factors in pushing people towards the use of digital and mobile technologies in educational settings (Cochrane, Narayan, & Oldfield, 2013). Firstly, technologies improve the access to course materials and allow to align with broader institutional and business goals (Kukulska-Hulme, 2005). Secondly, technological tools play a role in fostering learning about complex topics (Jacobson & Archodidou, 2000). Finally, they have the merit to provide learners with dynamic and nonlinear access to a wide range of information (i.e., text, graphic, audio, and video). In this vein, technological tools such as iPads are considered “post-PC” devices implying a “mobile complexity” (Murphy, 2011). In addition to the above-mentioned benefits, it is important to recognize some challenges that can emerge with respect to the traditional teaching and learning processes: Students’ distraction can increase; the management of the classroom can result more complex; difficulties in planning and managing the students’ work can emerge; a lack of knowledge and available resources can impact the possibility to develop new systems of education.

The introduction of the iPad as a learning tool has been promoted with great emphasis by several studies questioning the added value that this technological device entails in education. Research highlighted the benefits with respect to the emerging efforts in terms of adaptation and promotion of qualitative changes in the school community (Jones & Issroff, 2007). Different studies have documented various forms of teachers’ rejection or low-level use of new technological tools, despite the availability of devices in the classroom. Most of the traditional training courses for preservice (and in-service) teachers do not provide specific learning skills to manage an effective appropriation of new technologies (Llorens, Salanova, & Grau, 2002). In the authors’ view, many critical factors in the appropriation of the use of iPads in the classroom should be questioned and require a critical analysis. In fact, aspects such as the pedagogical