Exploring Head and Deputy Headteachers’ Attitude Towards Using Computers in Education

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ABSTRACT

Attitude plays a very significant role in acceptance of any idea or innovation. Research has established the significance of computers and the attitude of headteachers which can either be a hindering or a facilitating factor for computer integration in education. To explore this phenomenon in a Pakistani context, this study was conceptualised, while the subsidiary aim was also to explore the relationship between demographic characteristics of the participants and their attitude. A survey questionnaire was adopted to gather data with a sample of 185 headteachers to assess the four perceived factors’ impact; educational, social, training needs and self-confidence. The results show that the participants’ perceived attitude towards computers in education is positive while their perceived social impact of computers and their self-confidence found to be lower than the educational and training needs. Correlation analyses revealed significant associations between the headteachers’ attitude and the use of computers and prior training. In sub-scales model, prior training contributes to the training needs’ model while use of computer, contributed to the self-confidence model.

Keywords: Attitude, Computer Integration, Computers in School, Headteachers, Survey

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The newly emerging trends of information and communication technology (ICT), which are rapidly influencing many countries and nations, are strongly taking roots in Pakistan. A developing country with a population of approximately 160 million, it ranked 134th out of 177 countries on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2006). The ICT sector in Pakistan is growing, particularly from an educational perspective. Over the past years, there is a growing realization among policy-makers that computers hold great potential to the extent that the government is encouraging the use of computers in education.

Technology is the medium for teaching and learning and ICT has distinct advantages that transcend the classroom environment. However, Pakistan is yet behind others that have successfully developed ‘Knowledge Societies’. Technology-based teaching and learning can enhance teaching quality by supporting and reinforcing the innovative usage of technology integration with academics. The effective use of technology will help educators to access a wide range of materials. Administrators will
also benefit from ICT by using technology to access management resources and tools that can strengthen their decision making process (Dravis, 2003). To the best of my knowledge, there has been no published research that deals with Pakistani headteachers’ attitude towards the use of computers in school.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions are;

• What are the attitudes of the headteachers and deputy headteachers of government schools from Sindh and Baluchistan toward the use of computers in education?
• What are the demographic characteristics which contribute to the headteachers’ attitude towards computers?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is expected that the study is significant in the following ways:

1. This was the first study of its kind to be conducted in Pakistan. The study’s findings will be significant for the policy makers and curriculum planners to plan appropriate professional development programmes for the headteachers in future.
2. The findings of the study also contribute to the research literature on the attitudes of schools’ heads in Pakistan.
3. The tool which has been used in this study was part of a larger study conducted in several countries. By using the tool in this research, I have tested the reliability and validity of the tool for Pakistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term ‘attitude’ has been defined in a number of ways. According Abell and Lederman (2007) defines attitude as, “a general and enduring positive or negative feeling about some person, object or issue” (p. 78). In other words, attitude is how we think and whether we lean toward the positive or negative in our appraisal of something in particular. A positive attitude implies a way of thinking that is predominantly positive and optimistic. The opposite inclination, a negative attitude, is predominantly pessimistic.

Headteachers’ Attitudes Towards Computers

Headteachers’ attitudes toward computers influences the level of computer integration in schools. The relationship between the school leadership and the use of computer often plays an important role to encourage and facilitate the use of computers for administrative and managerial work as well as for instructional activities. Creemers (1994) refers to the concept of educational leadership, whereby school leaders can influence and improve what happens in the teaching/learning process. The extent to which school headteachers promote the use of computers in their schools probably depends on the degree to which they themselves consider the computer useful. Their views on this matter can be evident in a number of ways, such as how they incorporate computer into their own school tasks and the school policy measures that they effect to promote the incorporation of computer into their schools.

Pelgrum (1993) confirms that the correlation of the attitude for using computers in schools between teachers and headteachers is positive. van den Akker, Keursten, and Pelgrum (1992) concluded that school headteachers having positive attitude for the computers reported a higher frequency of stimulation of computer use by the school authorities than those who have less positive attitudes.

Support and training of personnel was helpful for teachers’ use of computers and motivated them to use more and deeply (Becker, 1994). Support from headteachers and administrators are very important, because of offering adequate training, hardware and software, and time to
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