Students Educational Use of Technology Outside the Classroom

This study describes recent high school graduates perceptions about their use of technology for educational purposes outside the classroom. Graduates were asked a series of questions on how they used technology outside of the classroom. The questions focused on what technology resources helped academic achievement throughout their high school experience.

Statement of Problem

Today's high school students are considered the digital literate generation. Students born between the years 1981 and 2001 are labeled the Net Generation or Generation Y. They are also referred to as the "Millennials". (Emeagwali, 2011). Millennials have grown up surrounded by technology and are perceived to be technologically advanced. (Black, 2010). These students are constantly being entertained by some device or social media. (Stein, 2013). Technology has provided this generation with immediate, instant gratification. Therefore, the need is to know how students are using technology for educational purposes to enhance or improve their learning. This tech savvy generation has been surrounded by technology since birth; they know it well and use it constantly, and they expect it in the classroom. (Black, 2010). The question remains how are students using this technology outside the classroom for educational purposes? We know how students use technology culturally and socially, but how are they using technology to learn and achieve academically. What are the experiences students have with technology outside of the classroom for educational purposes? Do students engage with technology the same outside of the classroom as they do inside the classroom? These are the questions this investigator seeks to discover.

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of the study is to explore high school students' perceptions of how they use technology for educational purposes outside of the classroom. This study will focus on how students use technology and what educational technology resources they are using outside of the classroom to help them achieve academically.

Literature Review

High school students say they are bored on a daily basis in high school (Emeagwali, 2011; Stein, 2013). Interactive educational games, websites, virtual school, Ipads, Ipods, Iphone, androids, tablets, smart phones, and more have all been use to engage students and incorporate technology into the classroom. As teachers use more technology in the classroom, little is known about students perceptions as to how technology impacts overall student learning. (McCabe & Meuter, 2011). According to McCabe & Meuter, 2011, the true value of using technology in the classroom depends on course structure. Today's generation has had more experiences with technology than any of the prior generations; technology has become a staple in their lives. Teachers are using a variety of technology methods to accommodate today's generation, but are these strategies effective inside and outside the classroom? The reality is that not all students are at the same level regarding technology usage. Not all students have the same access to technology outside of the classroom. (Warschauer, 2010). Technology is a sociotechnical

network more than a tool. (Warschauer, 2010). As Warschauer (2012) pointed out inequalities still exist "even if it's provided for free and with the best of intentions, access to technology can increase existing inequalities."

Research Methodology

This study was conducted with recent high school graduates. Graduates participated in one face-to-face interview session. The face-to-face interview was conducted in an environment of the participants' choice. The investigator started the face-to-face interview with several open-ended questions. The participants were contacted for follow-up questions and final transcript approval. The participants for this study were recent high school graduates from Miami, FL. The participants are a heterogeneous population age ranging from 18 to 20 years old. All were English proficient and purposively chosen. All participants had to have used some type of technology outside of the classroom to meet to criteria. All recent graduates were invited to participate if they meet the specified criteria.

The records of this study will be kept confidential. The investigator will not include the name of any participant involved in the research. Each participant was given the option to create their own pseudonym. Research records will be kept in a locked file in the investigator's office. Only the researcher will have access to these records. Records will be kept indefinitely as it may be used for future research. Participant's granted permission for the interview to be recorded prior to the interview. Recording were used to check and maintain accuracy of participants' views and comments. A thematic analysis of the data was conducted to find emerging patterns and draw meaningful conclusions. The data was studied in detailed to identify themes. (Patton, 2002:452) As the researcher analyzed the data themes develop. The researcher coded the developing themes. Patton, 2002:463).

Findings and Results

The results detailed how students perceived using technology to achieve academically. The results showed commonality between the different types of technologies and the students' usage. The study described in this proposal concluded not just how student are using technology for educational purposes outside the classroom to learn, but what technologies they are using.

The interviews produced common themes, given among the genders. The male students enjoyed using technology more when it was technical i.e. working the digital cameras, videotaping and such. While the female student's preferred using technology when it was more for communicating and research. Both genders enjoyed using technology for collaborating and projects. And the female students preferred the writing assignments.

Students preferred the setting outside the classroom for technology use.

"I prefer working with technology outside of the classroom because in the classroom you are limited to only what the school district can provide for the schools and sometimes this software and hardware is outdated while at home or even in some libraries I have more access to better quality computers and more to different software programs." - Nick

The findings appear to suggest that these recent high school graduates, graduating in 2014 are better prepared to use technology. It appears their high school has increased the use of technology outside of the high school classrooms. These results support the need for students to use technology more than ever before; it appears students are being introduced to technology in the classroom and using it more outside of the classroom.

Implications

Both qualitative and quantitative research should be conducted to determine how students use technology in activities that engage academic outside the classroom setting. Teaching must now shift and move into the teaching of both emerged and emerging digital technology educational tools. Teacher must re-think how and what the future technology will look like and re-engage students/learners in meaningful ways that assist academic learning. Students must be empowered and encouraged to use technology to assist their academic learning.

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