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STUDENT TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY

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***Abstract**: The digital transformation that we face every day requires new skill sets. Digital technologies are offering new ways of learning and teaching. The aim of the study is to describe and analyze perceptions of student teachers about their skills in using technology. The study takes over to answer the questions: (1) What are the attitudes of student teachers versus technology? (2) What are student teachers' perceptions on their ability to use technology? (3) What are student teachers' perceptions about technology integration in teaching? The sample in this study consisted of 96 randomly selected third-years' study students enrolled in the educational program "Teacher for Primary Education". The questionnaire was used for the collection of data, where the answer for each of the alternatives is measured with the Likert scale. Findings showed that most of the student teachers have started to use the computer after the age of 15 years, i.e. at a relatively advanced age. Most of them have a smart phone, while a small part is equipped with laptop or I-pad. Regarding perceptions of the skills in technology, student teachers perceive different levels of skills depending on the complexity of tasks. Most of the students say that in the study program "Teacher for Primary Education" they face the integration of technology into teaching.*

***Keywords**: students' teacher, skills, technology, teaching*

INTRODUCTION

Technological developments have positively impacted education and have had a major impact on all aspects of modern life over the last twenty years. The teaching and learning process has been improved through changes and impacts from technology integration. According to Moeller & Reitzes (2011), technology provides an invaluable way to provide more personalized learning in a cost effective manner. It provides continuous and high-level feedback to teachers and students, helping the learning process. It can improve academic achievements, civic engagement, leadership skills, and personal/social development.

Teachers are part of society, but there are models for the next generation. Like every citizen, they should be able to take an active part in a digital society, so it is important for them to be equipped with digital competence to participate in society personally and professionally. As professionals in addition to the general digital competencies for life and work, we can use specific digital competence to effectively use digital technologies for teaching (Redecker, 2017).

In the Crosscutting Strategy "Albania's Digital Agenda 2015-2020" it is noted that with all the investments made, the use of ICT in educational institutions is limited. Among ICT issues in education are mentioned: (1) Report number of computers in

use for students; (2) Students can only receive information in computer laboratories, but not in other school environments such as, for example, libraries; (3) In more than ⅓ of schools, pupils have limited access to online information; (4) Completely absent digital content in the mother tongue; only content from Internet is used, which differs from the source used; (5) The risk of exposure to inappropriate contents is displayed.

The *aim of the study* is to describe and analyze perceptions of student teachers on their skills in using technology. The study takes over to answer the questions: (a) What are the attitudes of student teachers versus technology? (b) What are student teachers' perceptions about their ability to use technology? (c) What are student teachers' perceptions about technology integration in teaching?

METHODOLOGY

Participants: The population that served for the selection of the sample of this study was students enrolled in the study program "Teacher for Primary Education". The sample in this study consisted of 96 randomly selected students from third-years' students enrolled in this study program.

Instruments: The questionnaire consists of sections: (1) Attitudes of student teachers versus technology (i.e. the need for technology); (2) Perceptions on ability to use technology; (3) Perceptions about technology integration in teaching. Item like: I feel comfortable using technology, the participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale (from strongly agree equal 1 to strongly disagree equal 5).

RESULTS

The attitudes of students' teachers versus technology (i.e. the need for technology).

Regarding the time when students started using a computer, nearly 50% started to use the computer after the age of 15; 36% of students started to use computer in the 9-12 grade and 21% after the 12^{th} grade.

Regarding the technological equipment that students own, it turned out that 96% of students have Internet access with a smart phone, while 9% is equipped with I-pad, 27% with laptops and 39% with personal computer. Students own more than one technological device: smart phone, I-pad, laptop or personal computer.

Regarding the reasons, why students use the computer resulted that nearly 42% use computer for social activities, 27% for fun, 22% for learning activities, while a significant portion 1% of them use it for purchase.

Regarding attitudes towards technology showed that:

- computers are very reliable for 30% of students per teacher, while for 25% of them are few and for 21% of them are partially reliable;
- almost 45% of students feel very comfortable using technology, while 18% feel less comfortable and 21% of them feel comfortable using technology;
- 30% of students are very interested in technology and computers and the rest of them are not at all (18%), few (19%), partially (21%) and extremely (12%);
- almost ⅓ of students are extremely (33%), many (31%) and partially (37%) interested in new technologies;
- most of students feel that technologies can help them learn extremely (58%) and quite much (27%).

Perception of student teachers about the ability to use technology.

Regarding perceptions about ability to use technology resulted that:

- students have experienced experts (27%), 21% advanced and 25% moderate regarding their ability to find information from Web searches;
- 40% of students have no experience in setting up a video conference, while 27% of them feel advanced and 24% moderate in this skill;
- 48% of students feel advanced in their ability to process text (MS Word), while in an approximately equal 18% of them are initial and expert in this skill;
- almost ⅓ of students perceive that they have advanced skills in the use of electronic mail (MS Excel), while 27% have no experience and 22% feel like experts;
- 33% of students do not have experience, 25% are beginners, 18% moderate and 24% advanced in publishing papers (newspaper writing);
- 39% of students feel advanced in using MS Power Point Presentations, 24% experts and 21% moderate;
- 24% of students feel they have initial skills, 25% moderate, and 27% advanced in using graphic design applications;
- almost half of students feel they are beginners in creating animations, and only 3% of them feel like experts.

Perceptions about technology integration in teaching:

- 45% of students think that faculty supports technology integration in teaching;
- 30% of students emphasize that pedagogue create many opportunities for them to observe experienced teachers, who integrate technology into their teaching, while 20% think that partly create opportunities and 30% nothing;
- 30% of students point out that the pedagogue creates many opportunities for them to practice technology teaching in Professional Practice, while 18% think they partially create opportunities and 27% less.

CONCLUSIONS

Findings have showed that most of students have started to use the computer after the age of 15, i.e. a relatively advanced age. Most of them have a smart phone, while a small part is equipped with laptop, personal computer or I-pad. Regarding skills perceptions in technology, students perceive different levels of skills depending on the complexity of tasks. Most of students say that in the study program "Teacher for Primary Education" they face the integration of technology into teaching. We advise to organize trainings for the digital competence strengthening.

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