


Chapter 3

Integration of the Tablet in a Spanish Early Childhood Education Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, we live in a society in which unprecedented technological progress that demands a rapid adaptation is taking place. The educational sector needs to adapt to the changing world in which we live. Many authors pointed out that the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has direct consequences in the field of education, starting from early childhood education, to learn how to cope with what some authors have called the “virtual world.” The aim of this work is to analyse, through a research project in a public Spanish early childhood education school, how the use of tablets influences different levels of educational reality (teachers, students, families, and management team). The main objective is to obtain a clear idea of the methodological change that is taking place in many early childhood education schools in Spain, moving from the traditional model to a model based on ICT, and whether this process is beneficial for pupils. A field study was conducted based on questionnaires to the different agents that make up the education system.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, we live in a society in which unprecedented technological progress is taking place and that demands rapid adaptation to these changes. The education sector does not escape this imperative and needs to adapt to the changing world in which we live. Many authors point out that the rapid development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has direct consequences in the field of education (Slutsky & DeShelter, 2017; Maciá & Garreta, 2018), as it is increasingly necessary to train students, starting from Early Childhood and continuing through Primary Education, to know how to function in what some authors have called the “virtual world”. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage pupils to develop the skills and knowledge for them to be able to cope in this new environment.

Although schools have long been considered one of the most conservative institutions in society due to their lack of adaptation to the environment as far as teaching methods are concerned, this chapter shows how to integrate the use of tablets within the school environment (González et al., 2019). For this purpose, the advantages, and disadvantages of the use of ICTs in the Early Childhood Education classroom will be analysed, focusing on the use of tablets. Some of the criticisms made by various authors of these gadgets will also be presented.

A field study will be conducted to analyse the impact of the use of tablets in a centre. Through a global approach, the opinions of the management team, teachers, pupils, and families are considered. Aspects such as the assessment of the use of ICTs in the classroom, teacher satisfaction with them, and the impact of the use of tablets on the development of pupils’ skills will also be studied. This study will be carried out using two instruments: questionnaires to the management team, teachers, pupils, and families (questionnaires for which we requested the corresponding permissions), and direct observation in the classroom.

On a practical level, the aim is to evaluate the implementation of ICTs in an Early Childhood Education school, as well as to analyse the degree of penetration of tablets in this school. We will also study the effects of tablets on the performance, productivity, and motivation of both pupils and teachers, reflecting on whether the use of these resources is positive for teachers and pupils, and whether they bring families closer to their children’s school reality. Therefore, the general objective of this chapter is to evaluate the direct influence of the use of tablets within the ICT resources environment in teaching at a specific Early Childhood Education centre.

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