Chapter 10 Integrating iPad Technology in Learning Experiences: A Case Study of an iPad Pilot Project

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of user-friendly modern technology is significantly changing the traditional conduct of everyday life in all its manifestations, from health care and business to sport and all forms of entertainment, including social media. The education sector has been slow since the introduction of Internet communication and Web 2.0 technology to integrate new delivery platforms into how its courses are taught and learned. However, the introduction of tablet computers, specifically the game-changing iPad, has led to education institutions and the local governments that fund them being prepared to move from traditional teaching methods anchored in age-old practices to embrace the possibilities of major paradigmatic change enabled by technology. This chapter examines the introduction of iPad-based learning in 2012 in a private middle school in the Chinese city of Shanghai. The case study adds to the emergent literature in the field and shares the strengths, limitations and subsequent recommendations that arise from the project. Project outcomes reveal a benefit to be gained from a flexible, teacher- and student-driven integration of iPad technology as a tool in learning environments. The challenges and limitations incurred from such an approach are not insurmountable and are arguably worth the nuanced, context-appropriate integration of the technology that would arise.

INTRODUCTION

In the thirty minutes it might take a reader to review this chapter, almost 400,000 Apple applications for mobile computing will be downloaded (Apple, 2012), and 2,700 iPads will be sold (Blaine, 2012).

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It also stands to reason that during this time, close to 100% of educators will be worrying about how to keep up with technological advancements and integrate them into learning environments.

In January 2010, Apple Inc. launched a "magical and revolutionary device" (Apple Inc., 2012, para. 1) called the iPad, a mobile tablet computing device that is a cross between a smart phone and

laptop or, as Apple effuses, "a magical window where nothing comes between you and what you love" (ibid). By the end of its launch year, the iPad was listed as one of the 50 best inventions of the year by Time magazine (McCracken, 2010). While Apple's initial press release lauded the device's ability to connect user and content in a more intimate and intuitive way, the educational application of the technology was not expressly championed. Two years and three generations of the device later, the technology's foray into the hands of young people and the education realm is apparent. It is rare to ride a subway or sit on a plane and not see youth enthralled by the technology. It has inveigled its way into almost every aspect of work, play and everything in between. Apple has since declared the device "poised to change the learning landscape." This chapter seeks to explore the educational applications by investigating through case study research the integration of iPad technology into a learning environment by way of one school's pilot project. The focus is narrow and specific both in terms of context and time, but these aspects drive the rationale and objectives of the research.

While the interplay between technology and education has been explored for many years, the iPad technology was only two years old at the time of this study. Therefore, there is little in the way of solid research or a body of academic literature about the integration of iPad technology into the classroom, and even less in terms of the outcomes of integration. Therefore, a primary objective of this chapter is to add to the emerging literature base on iPad technology in classrooms. The researchers' second objective is to encourage by leadership the critical appraisal of the use of this technology in the classroom. It is through sharing that we can learn, and a rich and full learning experience must take into account the successes and failures. It would be easy to simply say 'of course, the iPad has undoubtedly enhanced my teaching and my students' learning.' In reality, the differences and nuances of methodology, learning, and even environments have a substantial impact on the hows and whys of project conceptualization and implementation. To this end, this case study is 'our story'. It is by no means a claim of best-practice, nor a handbook of what others must do. It is a story of something that happened, and through sharing with others it is possible to at best stimulate some ideas and at least give an understanding of what some practitioners out there are doing.

This observation of what is happening around educators drives the third objective. As educators, it can be both informative and inspirational to watch the progress in education. New developments and ideas cause educators to think and re-evaluate. Today, the role of technology is at the forefront of that thinking process. A learning environment without technology runs the risk of being left behind and becoming antiquated. There is an imperative to explore the development of technology and its infiltration into teaching and learning practices and experiences. This leads to our fourth objective, which is to add a perspective from another environment. As terms like global education and international-mindedness continue to appear in the discourse on education, it is necessary to color that discourse with a multitude of perspectives. The aim should be to not just look at what's different, but to look for comparative or universal pursuits which can unite educators and enhance the knowledge base of 21st century education.

BACKGROUND

Vested interests in government, education and the wider community have developed high expectations at this stage of the 21st century that the use of Web 2.0 technology in teaching will enable students to learn more effectively (International Society for Technology in Education, 2004). This mantra has been based on a collectively strong and communal belief in the powers of digital technology media to improve learning and that 14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/integrating-ipad-technology-learning-

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