THE POTENTIAL OF TABLETS IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION: EXPLORATORY STUDY OF LEBANESE STAKEHOLDERS’ PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Nowadays, considering the remarkable advancements of information technology (IT) and its wide deployment in nearly all fields and sectors, including the education sector, it is essential to explore how educational institutions perceive the idea of embedding IT into their curricula. The use of a vast array of IT devices is fast widespread among children in Lebanon, so much that we can describe the new generation as smart. The new generation uses the information and communication technology (ICT) to a big extent. As students in Lebanon gain the chance to use the new technology more, especially tablets (including iPads) for education purposes, their passion for attending classes and gaining knowledge might increase. Thus, there is a need to enhance today’s teaching styles using new learning technologies. Integrating this kind of information technology (tablets) into the learning process among school students has become an important area to examine and explore. Nevertheless, the importance of this process is subject to debate amongst educators in the schools operating in Lebanon. While some support the idea of integration, opponents claim that tablets’ costs outweigh their benefits. Questions such as: “How do teachers, students, and parents perceive the technology?” and “What are the factors that might influence the teachers’ perceived usefulness of the device?” need to be answered. This study aims at examining the perception of teachers, students, and parents about the use of Tablets at a school operating in Lebanon. This study is considered a part of a larger study aiming at conducting an experimental design to assess the impact of tablet use on the performance of students and to check whether this technology integration in teaching results in significant differences in the students’ learning outcomes. A conceptual model was developed based on a theoretical framework combining the Gamification in education Theory (Pelling, 2011) and the Theoretical Extension of the Technology Acceptance Model (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000). Regression analysis was deployed, and results showed that teachers’ perceived usefulness of tablets in classrooms is determined by the level of perceived school support and their perceived computer self-efficacy. Results also showed that students’ satisfaction is influenced by the device characteristics as well as their perceived fun and engagement.

Keywords: Tablets, Information Technology, Education, IT in Education, Device Usefulness, Engagement, Extended TAM, Gamification in Education.