

BOOK REVIEW



Reviewed by

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Technology in Adult Basic Education: How Does Technology Impact on the Self-beliefs of Adult Basic Education Learners

By Uchenna June Nwosu

LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing GmbH @ Co. KG, Saarbrucken, Germany. 2012

Paperback book. 212 pages. Price: \$89.10

“With the rise of the use of technology in education, it is important to investigate and describe how computer technology impacts on the beliefs of capabilities that adult basic education learners hold of themselves.”

Adult learners often return to their education at a later date to fulfill a missing piece in their lives. They may do so to seek employment, to change career fields, or for personal growth. Oftentimes these students have negative previous experiences with classroom learning, and these past interactions with traditionally framed education continued to affect a learner's perception of self and one's future possibilities. *Technology in Adult Basic Education: How Does Technology Impact on the Self-beliefs of Adult Basic Education Learners* investigated the connection between technology use and building positive self-esteem. Computer use can be influential in changing the self-beliefs of students through supporting the obtainment of academic and life goals.

The book was a published master's thesis, which provided original research on the use of computer technology in adult basic education. The framework was well established from the beginning, the author described her methodology in conducting research, and rationale for using her approaches. The research was both qualitative and quantitative, a mixed methods approach. Four training centers North West of Ireland provided 85 adult basic education students and three adult basic education tutors for the study. The students

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were identified as having low literacy, numeracy, and computer skills, and were engaged in classes to address these academic needs. Students were diverse in age, gender, and employment status. Two groups were included in this study, those who were not utilizing computer technology in their basic education classes, and those who were using computer technology in their studies.

Students not using computer technology in adult basic education were surveyed to identify the level of beliefs regarding their ability to be successful in their lives and the course. Questions also measured beliefs in levels of confidence with communication skills, working with others, and using computers. More than half of the respondents reported feeling confident about achieving in the course and setting goals; they also shared wanting to believe more in themselves very often. Results identified that this group of students also desired to acquire knowledge with other learners, and would like to learn independently with the aid of a computer.

A second group of learners, who were using technology in their adult education classes, were surveyed and interviewed (both individual and group interviews). Data revealed that most students enjoyed learning with a computer, especially using the Internet for research, communication, and staying current with the news. The majority of students expressed a willingness to learn with a computer and felt enjoyment in using a computer to help them learn better. Learners also indicated increased self-confidence in their educational capabilities and in life due to learning with a computer.

Results indicated students learning with technology possessed higher self-beliefs than students who did not use computer technology in their learning. The research also uncovered that a student with a disability felt protected from discrimination when engaged in learning, and felt empowered with computer use. In addition, the study brought attention to how female students often have less confidence in using technology than male students.

Technology in Adult Basic Education can be utilized to develop understanding of the characteristics of adult basic education students, and how self-esteem affects their learning. The study clearly showed how the use of technology in the classroom can benefit the self-esteem of students, ultimately helping students become successful academically and in other areas of life. Teachers in adult basic education will gain insight in the role instructors can play in facilitating positive experiences for students in their use of computer technology.

The book encouraged me to reflect on how adult students are introduced to technology in the classroom, and the essential

role of the teacher in facilitating a positive learning experience for students in their use of computers. It helped to foster a deeper appreciation of the obstacles adult students encounter in returning to class, and explained how the use of technology can provide a safe environment for students to make mistakes and reconstruct beliefs about themselves and their ability to succeed.

The book clearly established the significance of positive self-esteem in helping students achieve academic and life goals. Nwosu encouraged teachers to design and present information that encouraged the development of positive self-esteem; specifically, through the use of computer technology that allows students to learn new skills with a sense of security, free from humiliation by peers. The use of technology to increase the social support systems of students via Internet and email, also, increased student self-esteem by decreasing social isolation and makes technology use personally relevant.

In adult basic education, we aspire to help students improve their lives. Students may start from the bottom and rise to greatness with support and encouragement. As Mary Kay Ash reminds us, “Don’t limit yourself. Many people limit themselves to what they think they can do. You can go as far as your mind lets you. What you believe, remember, you can achieve” (Harroch, 2014). Ash was referring to her experiences in starting over and the significance of self-esteem. It applies equally well to computer technology, which can be one of the many tools teachers utilize to help students experience more success in learning; building the confidence necessary for achievement.

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