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The examination of prospective teachers' information and communication technology usage and online communication self-efficacy levels in Turkey

Ömer DEMİR*

Halil YURDUGÜL*

**Hacettepe University, Faculty of Education, Computer Education and Instructional Technologies, Ankara, Turkey.*

Abstract

The concept of readiness to e-learning necessitates students possess a number of competencies, two of which are their ICT usage and online communication self-efficacy levels. Thus, in current research prospective teachers' ICT usage and communication self-efficacy levels with respect to some demographic variables were explored. 1693 volunteer prospective teachers constituted the sampling of the study. In present study, there were two scales, whose reliability coefficients are respectively .894, and 846. With regard to findings, it appeared that solely grade level has no statistically significant influence on prospective teacher' online communication self-efficacy levels. Further findings are discussed in the full paper.

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1. Introduction

It is an undeniable fact that the face of education is being changed by the rapid advancement of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Today, it has become almost impossible to envisage education without ICT. Hence, using computer, internet and other technological devices and/or capabilities effectively are of paramount importance for teachers with the goal of being able to keep up with current pedagogical approaches and incorporate

*Corresponding autor: Tel.: +90-312-297-71-76.
E-mail address: omerdemir@hacettepe.edu.tr

modern technologies into education successfully. Aside from ICT usage self-efficacy, online communication self-efficacy is another indispensable asset to which today's teachers must definitely possess. It goes without saying that along with the change of medium where communication takes place the way people communicate to each other also changes. Since learning has much to do with communication, the way people learn changes too. As well known, McLuhan and Fiore (2001) puts forward that medium influences people and the way they act a great deal. Palloff and Pratt (as cited in Hung et al., 2010) revealed that shy students engage in online environments more than non-shy ones do compared to traditional environments. What is more, in the famous debate between Kozma and Clark, Kozma (1994) asserted that medium affects our learning. In short, as there are a number of media involved in e-learning environments like content management or learning management systems, it could be expected that that relating medium might have some impact on people, the way they communicate, and consequently the way they teach and learn.

There is a benefit of giving definitions of concepts investigated in current study before further discussing these concepts in that in some studies these concepts might mean quite different things. The first concept handled in this study is ICT usage self-efficacy. There is use in giving definition of self-efficacy first in order to comprehend what ICT usage and online communication self-efficacy are. The concept of self-efficacy was first added to literature by Bandura (1977) in the social learning theory. Bandura defined self-efficacy as an individual's own perception regarding organizing required activities and his/her being able to complete them successfully in an attempt to show a certain performance. Subsequently, by making use of Bandura's definition, Akkoyunlu, Orhan and Umay (2005) defined it as an individual's believe in his/her abilities rather than these abilities themselves. In this regard, Hung, Chou, Chen, and Own (2010) defined internet self-efficacy as follows: It is an internet user's trust towards his/her own ability to use internet. Under the lights of all above definitions, we may define ICT self-efficacy in a similar way. It is an individual's own believe towards how much he/she is good at using internet, computer and other related ICT technologies. As far as online communication self-efficacy is concerned, it might be defined as an individual's own perception regarding how much they understand the language and the culture peculiar to e-learning environments and how well they can express themselves in these kind of environments.

Above defined concepts have been examined in the literature great many times especially in the scope of readiness to e-learning or online learning. In a model developed to measure students' readiness to e-learning, Akaslan and Law (2011b) covered the component of competency of technology, which is alike ICT usage self-efficacy. Likewise, Dray, Lowenthal, Miszkiewicz, Ruiz-Primo, and Marczyński (2011) encompassed a similar component in their model. Similarly, there are many other models pertaining to readiness to e-learning incorporating alike components in the literature (Hung et al., 2010; Mercado, 2008; Tubaishat and Lansari, 2011; Watkins, Leigh and Triner, 2004). On the other hand, there also appears to be a substantial body of research in which models concerning readiness to e-learning including online communication self-efficacy component or a similar one were proposed (Dray et al., 2011; Hung et al.; Watkins, Leigh and Triner, 2004).

Within the scope of present study, it was aimed to study prospective teachers' ICT usage and online communication self-efficacy levels with reference to some demographic variables such as gender, department, and grade level. Thus, it was determined how much prospective teachers trust themselves in both ICT usage and online communication. In this manner, it was ascertained with the combination of these two concepts how much ready they are for e-learning as teachers of the future even though readiness to e-learning is not limited to these two concepts, yet had to be limited due to space restrictions obligated in current study.

2. Method

2.1. Sampling and population

The sample of the study consisted of 1693 volunteer prospective teachers enrolled in any program at Faculty of Education of Hacettepe University, whereas the population of the study was Faculty of Education of Hacettepe University. The data were gathered during spring term of 2013-2014 academic year. Convenient sampling method was employed. The distribution, mean, and standard deviation of sample with regard to some demographic variables are illustrated in Table 2.

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