



Journal of Adult Education

Volume 40, Number 1, 2011



Techniques

Using the ICOT Instrument to Improve Instructional Technology Usage in the ABE Classroom

Brannon W. Lentz

Abstract

The International Society for Technology (ISTE) in Education promotes the use of a specific tool--the ISTE Classroom Observation Tool (ICOT)--to measure and improve the use of instructional technologies in Adult Basic Education (ABE) classrooms. The purpose of this article is to describe an application process for the use of the ICOT instrument in an ABE classroom in Alabama. It is asserted that most ABE programs across America are slow to incorporate instructional technologies into their curricula.

Introduction

Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs are often some of the last groups in academia to integrate instructional technologies into their curricula. While the reasons appear somewhat understandable (i.e., lack of funding, minimal professional development, and limited resources), the fact remains that ABE learners, like all learners, need to experience the benefits of instruction beyond workbooks and lecture methods. While ABE publishers are beginning to market more instructional technology products, ABE program directors and instructors appear unsure of which products would

ideally benefit their programs. Therefore, ABE programs are ill-prepared to recommend such instructional technologies to their funding agents for purchase and implementation.

There is a need for ABE practitioners to “critically assess the performance of the array of technology-related practices, the quality of learning that they support, and the assistance and training needed to sustain them” (Carter & Fitzel, 2003, p. 2). Learners must be technologically savvy if they wish to compete with traditional high school diploma recipients (Kortlik & Redmann, 2005).

Brannon W. Lentz is an instructor in the Adult Education Program at Northwest-Shoals Community College in Muscle Shoals, Alabama.

The ISTE ICOT Observation Tool

The ISTE Classroom Observation Tool (ICOT), created by the International Society for Technology in Education is a web-based application used by researchers, administrators, and teachers for classroom technology usage review. The application, which is free to users, allows for a consistent observation of what is happening in a classroom. The application allows program personnel to document whether certain technological standards are being utilized. The application acts as a starting point for intervention strategies to ensure compliance and/or improvement (International Society for Technology in Education, 2009).

The Observation

I conducted an observation within an ABE classroom serving individuals wishing to earn a General Education Development (GED) high school equivalency. The classroom, which was typical of ABE programs, was open to any learner, age 17 or older who was not currently enrolled in a K-12 school. The age of the learners ranged between the ages of 18-30 years. Some students worked independently at six-foot tables while other students worked at 5 of 10 available student computer workstations. One female and one male class instructor were present. One female aide was also present. One instructor assisted several students with one-on-one workbook assignments while the other assisted with computer-learning programs usage. The aide conducted bookkeeping at a desk in the back of the room.

I was shown the different instructional technologies that were being used to evaluate and remediate learners within the classroom and was allowed to walk among

students and observe while the students were working with the instructional technologies. Most of the applications seemed to be somewhat beneficial even though they appeared antiquated. I did find that most of the students seemed more comfortable with use of the instructional technologies than the instructional staff were.

The ICOT is based on instructional technology standards recognized by the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) teacher standards. The following were utilized as shown in Table 1.

Conclusion

ABE practitioners require increased professional development for implementing instructional technologies. Furthermore, the technologies that are available need to be better correlated with ABE and GED curriculum. The ICOT tool can be used to document, critique, and recommend for purchase those instructional technologies relevant to today's ABE learner.

References

- Carter, J., & Fitzel, J. (2003). *Technology in today's ABE classroom*. Boston, MA: World Education.
- International Society for Technology in Education. (2009). *ISTE classroom observation tool*. Eugene, OR: ISTE. Retrieved September 20, 2009, from <http://www.iste.org/icot>
- Kotrlik, J., & Redmann, D. (2005). Extent of technology integration by adult basic education teachers. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 55(3), 200-219.

Table 1: ICOT Standards Based On the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS)

Standard Number	Description
1A.3.	Content-specific tools
1A.9.	Appropriate technology selected
2A.1.	Developmentally appropriate learning activities
2A.2.	Technology-enhanced instructional strategies
3A.1.	Learning experiences address content standards
3A.2.	Learning experiences address student technology standards
3B.1.	Technology supports learner-centered strategies
3C.1.	Technology applied to develop students' higher order skills
3D.2.	Technology integrated as a teacher tool
3D.3.	Technology integrated as a student tool
4A.1.	Student learning of subject matter assessed with technology
6D.1.	Safe and healthy use of technology promoted
6E.1.	Equitable access to technology for all students