Assessing an integrated technological support response to a cohort of distance education students in a developing context

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Unit for Distance Education

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Make today matter

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Agenda for today

- Background & context of the study
- Study aim & research question
- Research design & methodology
- Conceptual framework
- Findings
- Conclusion: Scientific significance

Background & context of the study
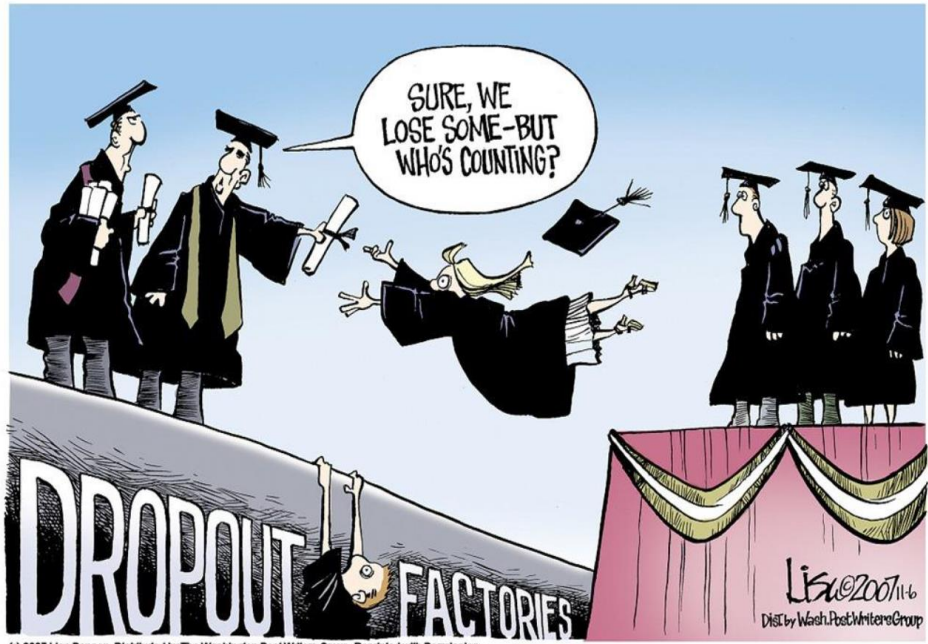
Teacher professional development (TPD) & DE

Semi-rural classroom

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The Revolving Door Syndrome

Black Hole: Attrition in distance education

The digital divide & COVID-19

Aim of the study: 3-fold

To report on

a) the findings from a developed e-readiness survey validated from the review of relevant Unit for Distance Education's (UDE) documents and literature;

b) how the findings assisted the Unit in preparing for the virtual orientation attended by students and their assessment of the session; and

c) an emerging trend from the support the Unit has provided.

Research question

What was the e-readiness of a cohort of distance education students; to what extent has the feedback on this assisted the Unit for Distance Education (UDE) in supporting them; and what is the emerging impact of the support on performance rates?

Research Design & Methodology

- Research Design: mixed-methods
- Participants
- ❖ School principals from Limpopo (a semi-rural area) – ADSLM
- Population: 224 (1st Cohort of prospective students)
- Sampling technique
- ❖ Total population sampling
- ❖ Convenience and purposive sampling (135 participants)
- Instruments: Relevant institutional documents, literature, a survey & an interview
- Data analysis: Descriptive statistics, documents review & thematic analysis

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Conceptual Framework
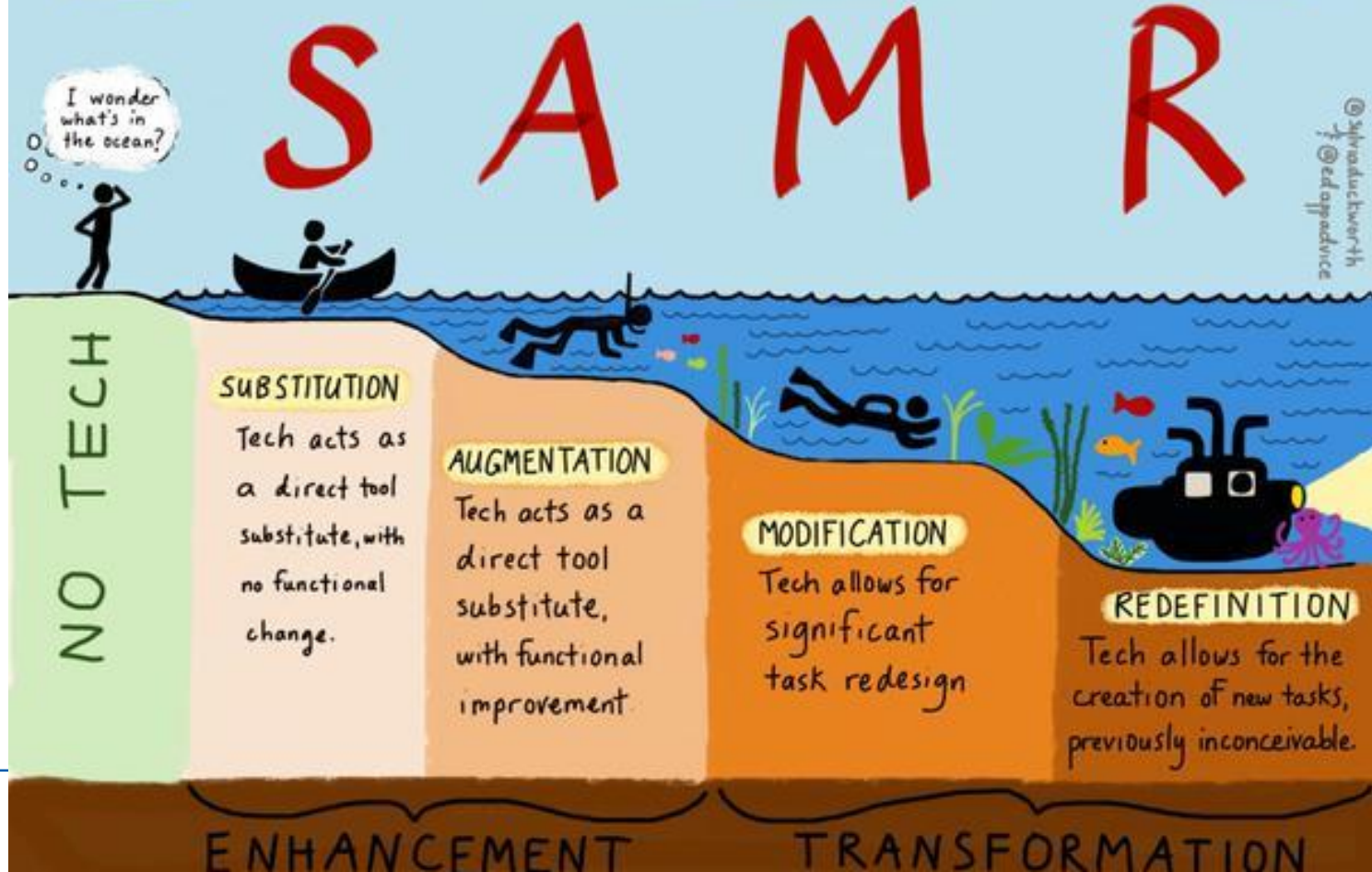
Feedback and strategies	**Where does it fit in the model?**
Learning material & other supporting documents moved online	Substitution level
Support strategies	Modification level
Assessments	Augmentation level
Short contact sessions	Augmentation level

Findings from e-readiness survey

RQ 1a: Findings: Age Brackets
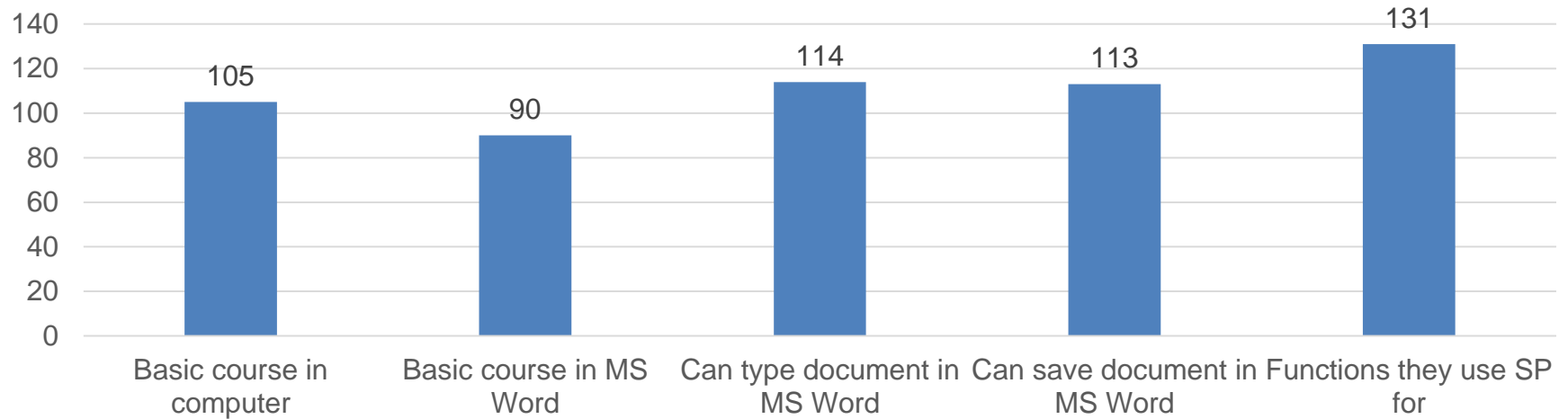
Age brackets	Number of respondents	%	Missing frequency
21 – 30	0	0%	
31 – 40	2	1.48%	
41 – 50	69	51.11%	
51 – 60	64	47.4%	
60+	0	0%	
Total	135	99.9%	0 (0%)

RQ 1a: Personal rating of computer skills

Rating	Frequencies	%
Novice	20	14.8%
Intermediate	85	62.9%
Advanced	30	22.2%
Total	135	100%

RQ 1a: Others

Bar chart showing counts for the following categories: Basic course in computer: 105; Basic course in MS Word: 90; Can type document in MS Word: 114; Can save document in MS Word: 113; Functions they use SP for: 131.

How the findings assisted the UDE (RQ 1b)

RQ 1b: How the findings assisted the UDE

❖ Evaluated student demographics and identified challenges

❖ Revealed the type and extent of support needed

- Virtual orientation
- Clickup catchup sessions
- How-2-guides
- UDE helpline
- Virtual and email support

❖ Participants found contact session very helpful

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An emerging trend in student performance (RQ 1c)

Finding 1c: An emerging trend in student performance

Old programme			New programme	
Module	**Oct 2016**	**Oct 2017**	**Module**	**Oct 2020**
Module 1	46.64%	47.56%	**Module 1**	68.62%
Module 2	57.16%	66. 21%	**Module 2**	51.19%
Module 3	46.70%	40. 03%	**Module 3**	67.70%
Module 4	45.78%	43.36%	**Module 4**	69.00%

* Further empirical research is needed.

Conclusion: Scientific significance

Conclusion: Scientific significance

- Monitoring the impact of the student support structures
- Build feedback into practice
- The value of the conceptual framework
- Effective student support can result in positive performance & eventual throughput rates
- Further empirical research is needed

Thank You

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