A NEXUS BETWEEN STUDENTS' HABITUS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PEDAGOGIC INTEGRATION OF ICTs IN A UNIVERSITY TVET CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

The use of technology in the workplace has increased employers' expectations of their employees. Therefore, it is crucial to have training programmes that focus on developing various skills. However, to produce well-rounded and skilled Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) trainers, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) skill development cannot be overlooked. The economy's procedural dispositions, such as technical innovation, soft skills, and pedagogy, are integral to ICT skill development. This study focused on the impact of students' habitus on ICT integration in the classroom, as per Bourdieu's concept of habitus. The comprehension of students' perceptions of ICT integration, formed by their past and present experiences, directly affects the quality of teaching and learning with digital tools. The study utilised open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and written reflections to evaluate the habitus of a specific group of TVET students. The sample was purposively chosen from former and current TVET Trainer Diploma students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) between 2020 and 2023. The thematic content analysis revealed similar themes across all three data collection sets. The findings showed that participants were open to using technology for teaching and learning and that ICT skill development improved the quality of their learning. However, participants had varying levels of ICT skills at the beginning of their study programme, ranging from non-existent to average competence. Participants with limited ICT skills expressed negative emotions such as shame, fear, and nervousness when it was anticipated they knew how to use online learning platforms. Emotions directly affect students' classroom performance. The students' habitus revealed diverse levels of ICT skills, developed by the quality of education before joining the university. Therefore, while it is crucial to develop ICT skills, providing instruction on using digital learning tools before incorporating them into teaching and learning is equally important.

Keywords: ICT integration, TVET, habitus, emotions

INTRODUCTION

The Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) is tasked to produce the well-rounded cultural capital of a skilled TVET trainer in its students. TVET is expected to produce a workforce that is self-reliant and positioned for success. TVET is a "source of skills, knowledge and technical needs to drive productivity in knowledge-based and transitional societies for the twenty-first century", (HPP I, 2016, p.44). TVET becomes the space where skills are developed to help students meet the changing expectations of the world of work. "Overall, TVET facilitates the acquisition of a wide range of skills in demand by the labour market" (Okolie et al., 2020, p.2). Integrating ICTs in teaching and learning enhances TVET's ability to prepare students for the workforce.

As technology becomes more prevalent in the workforce, employees must possess a wider range of skills to meet the demands of a changing world of work. These technological advancements have impacted the qualifications necessary for employability, thus affecting education and training. With technology constantly evolving, trainers in TVET programmes must keep up with the latest ICTs to develop cutting-edge skills. Research showed the tacit effects of technology on the world of work, amongst others automation and access to information have changed the role of workers, (Zuboff, 1988), and the major reduction in the number of workers per task (Rifkin, 1995). Huws (2014, p.17) speaks about a "sea change in the character of work" caused by technologies. In their study, Douse and Uys (2019) espoused the mandatory need for digital literacy and workers continuously upskilling or reskilling to maintain their jobs. Students should be equipped with the necessary technological skills for the technological world of work, improving their chances for employment. However, do students see a need for ICT skill development?

This article is part of a wider study on how student trainers' habitus and cultural capital impact their ICT skill development and positions in the TVET field. Four sub-research questions were created to investigate this phenomenon. However, this article focused only on the first objective; determining how the perceptions of student trainers on ICT integration are related to their habitus. Bourdieu's concept of habitus provides the opportunity to study the perceptions of students on ICT integration for teaching and learning. This study investigated what the habitus of first-year and second-year TVET Trainer programme students had to reveal about the use of technology in teaching and learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Bourdieu (1990), students use their past experiences with technology, be it good or bad, to help them cope with the current use. The comprehension of students' perceptions of ICT integration, formed by their past and present experiences, directly affects the quality of teaching and learning with digital tools. "The *habitus*, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices- more history in accordance with schemes generated by history" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 54). How technology was used and accessed in the past has a significant impact on how students view its role in academic performance. Students who are familiar with technology are more likely to use it effectively for learning, while those without prior experience may struggle to incorporate it into their studies. The consistent use of technology can develop the necessary skills for independent, and autonomous use, creating a new history of successful integration. Personal experiences also play a role in how students approach the use of technology, as past experiences can inform current decision-making. Studying the students' habitus should then reveal the type of technological history they have. This can be useful information for lecturers who use technology as a teaching and learning tool. "For new technology usage in education, the teachers (lecturers) are the link between the students and technology" (Juutinen et al., 2011, p.105). Lecturers who are not mindful of their role in the online learning process can add to the frustration of online learning for students and themselves. The success of Warren's (2016) use of technology as a teaching and learning tool, can be attributed to her willingness to improve her skills, "I aimed to support them gaining skills in …" (p.310). If the use of technology is introduced correctly, mindful of what the students' habitus reveals, it can lead to positive academic performance.

Some researchers opposed the credibility of studying the habitus for evidence of educational inequalities since it is inadequate (Nash, 1990) and "theoretically incoherent and has no clear use for empirical researchers" (Sullivan, 2002, p. 144). In response to his critics, Bourdieu stated "Habitus is not the fate that some people read into it. Being the product of history, it is an *open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.133).

However, there is support for Bourdieu's habitus as highlighted in the following quote: "habitus has gained prominence as both a research lens and a research instrument useful to enter individuals' trajectories and 'histories' of practices" (Costa et al., 2019, p.19). Studying the habitus allowed for insight into how the student trainers' digital competencies were shaped and how it influenced ICT integration and skill development. It helped to understand why student trainers think and act in a particular manner in online learning environments. It was essential to determine if student

trainers perceive ICT skill development as a subject that needs to be ticked off on a list and how predisposed histories or interactions with technology have shaped the use of the tool for teaching and learning. The habitus helped to reveal how this group of students judged the worth of ICTs and how their reactions to its use in class impacted the integration of ICTs.

METHODS

This study investigated the attitudes of TVET student trainers towards integrating ICTs into teaching and learning. This study only surveyed TVET student trainers, who will teach at VTCs. A qualitative research strategy was used, employing a case study design to gather detailed information about the perceptions of TVET student trainers regarding the use of technology in teaching and learning. Through this approach, the study gained insight into how TVET student trainers adapted to the adoption of ICTs in their training and how they planned to incorporate it into practice. The case study focused on the habitus of TVET student trainers for investigation and to facilitate guided data collection and analysis. To gather a wide range of perspectives, various data collection instruments were used, with all questions aligned with the research question.

To ensure comprehensive information and triangulation confirmation, multiple tools were established to encourage participation. The data collection process involved a questionnaire, a brief written reflection, and semi-structured interviews. The process was conducted in two stages: the first stage occurred during the final year students' last semester, from October to November 2022, while the second stage occurred during the first-year students' first semester, from February to March 2023. To maintain objectivity, all teaching-related interactions with the study participants were avoided. During the first stage of data collection, which took place between October and November 2022, the second-year students were preparing for examinations. To ensure access to this group before they departed from NUST, all data collection efforts were focused on this group. Google Forms was utilised to create the data collection instruments, with links being distributed to the second-year class representatives and the departmental secretary for dispersal among distance, full-time, and part-time students. Interested students contacted the researcher via SMS. The researcher then sent the participant information sheet and consent forms via WhatsApp or email as requested. For those wishing to meet face-to-face on campus, meetings were arranged at their convenience.

The second phase of data collection commenced at the beginning of the New Year, focusing on the first-year and second-year students of 2023. The links to data instruments were sent to the departmental secretary and the class representatives of

all students on distance, full-time and part-time modes. Interested students, contacted the researcher via SMS. The participant information sheet and consent form were sent to these respective participants via WhatsApp and email. The necessary arrangements were made to meet the participants at their earliest convenience.

To gain a better understanding of the educational background and current situation of TVET student trainees, a questionnaire was created to collect supplementary information alongside other data collection tools. A semi-structured interview was also conducted to provide students with a chance to express their views. Although a 40-minute time limit was suggested, it was not enforced as participation was voluntary and dependent on the participant's availability. The creation of the interview protocol was guided by Jacob and Furgerson's (2012) clear guidelines. The initial interview schedule consisted of six questions, which were later extended to seven to enable participants to ask questions or provide additional comments. Additionally, a reflection exercise was conducted to allow participants to reflect on their ICT experiences and answer a single question covering all four sub-research questions. The participants were free to determine the length of their responses.

This study investigated the responses of the group of TVET student trainers on integrating ICTs in teaching and learning. The study sample consists of qualified artisans studying at NUST to acquire pedagogical competence and other skills for work in Namibia's VTC facilities. The aim was to investigate how the past ICT skills development of TVET student trainers influenced their current use of technology for teaching and learning. This group consisted of three sets of students: those studying full-time part-time and in distance mode. This group was further divided into year levels 1 and 2 for the two-year TVET Trainer diploma programme.

In quantitative studies, probability sampling is the norm, which allows all members of the sample to have an equal chance of being chosen for the study. However, in this particular study, the focus was on a small group of diploma students at NUST (Fouché et al., 2022; Trochim et al., 2016), so non-probability sampling was chosen instead. The goal was to select a sample that had the most typical attributes of the population being studied (Fouché et al., 2022, p. 383), using purposive sampling. This method strategically selected relevant participants who could answer the research questions (Bryman, 2016, p.323). Specifically, the study aimed to understand how TVET student trainers' perceptions of ICT affect the integration and use of technology. Purposive sampling helped to achieve this goal by targeting the required population to collect the necessary data.
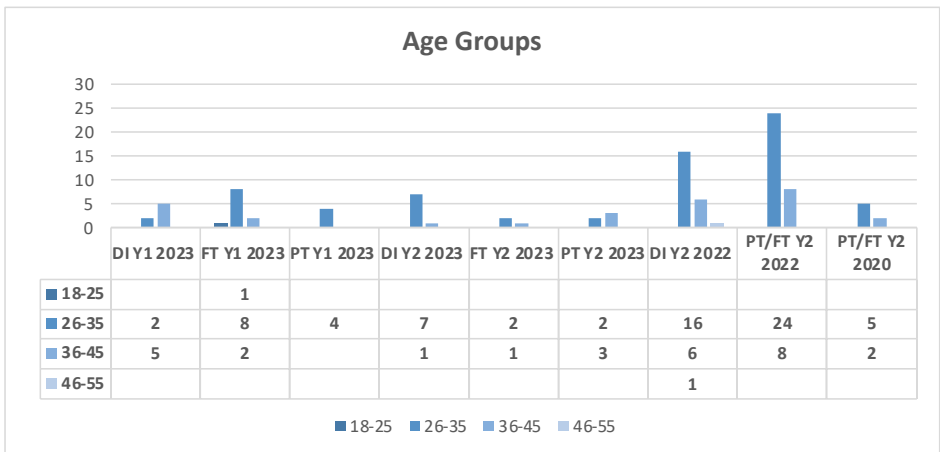
FINDINGS

This study had a total of 210 respondents, with 100 completing the online questionnaire on Google Forms, 22 participating in semi-structured interviews, and 88 completing short written reflections. The respondents were a mix of first and second-year students and included those studying via three modes of delivery namely distance, full-time, and part-time.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The survey collected basic demographic information to glean a picture of the type of TVET student trainers in this study. The results indicated that participants from 12 out of Namibia's 14 regions participated in the survey. Figure 1 displays the age distribution of the participants who took part in the survey.

Figure 1

Survey participants' age distribution

Age Groups

	DI Y1 2023	FT Y1 2023	PT Y1 2023	DI Y2 2023	FT Y2 2023	PT Y2 2023	DI Y2 2022	PT/FT Y2 2022	PT/FT Y2 2020
18-25		1							
26-35	2	8	4	7	2	2	16	24	5
36-45	5	2		1	1	3	6	8	2
46-55							1		

*Legend: 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55*

The questionnaire comprised nine questions, with the principal objective of gauging the students' attitudes towards the integration of technology into their studies. The first question sought their opinion on the usage of technology for educational purposes, with five response categories, including a neutral option. A significant majority of the respondents (66%) strongly concurred that technology ought to be leveraged in teaching and learning. Next, the respondents were asked to rate the significance of online learning as a teaching tool and 45% rated it as immensely important. Half of the first-year respondents indicated that online learning was moderately not important as a teaching and learning tool.

The third question centred on the feelings of the respondents about online learning. Most of the respondents (66%) expressed an interest in online learning.

Figure 2

Feelings about the use of online learning
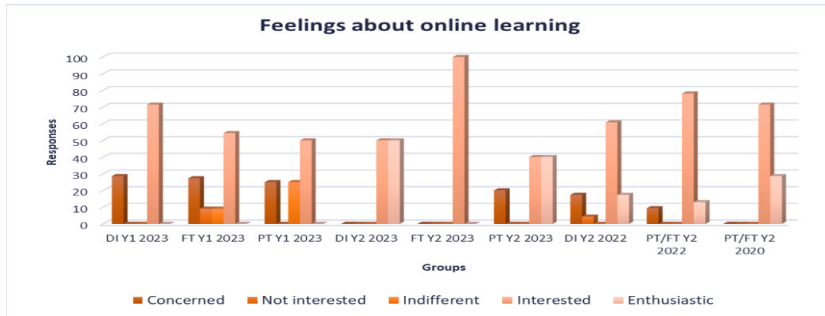
However, the question presented five options with the two extremes; 'concerned' and 'enthusiastic'. Out of 100 respondents, 14 were concerned and 16 were enthusiastic about online learning. Of the 14 participants who were concerned, six belonged to the first-year group of participants.

Figure 3 also reveals that 50% of the concerned group of six students, were from the second-year group of participants. This was the group of students that started their studies using the online mode for the first year of study and returned to face-to-face and blended mode of teaching in the second year of their studies.

Figure 3- *Concerned about the use of online learning*

Figure 4 illustrates the responses from the group of second-year students on how comfortable they were with the use of technology in teaching and learning. These

respondents are part of a group of students who were mainly exposed to online learning and expressed concerns about its use.

Figure 4- *Second-year concerned group's level of comfort with technology*
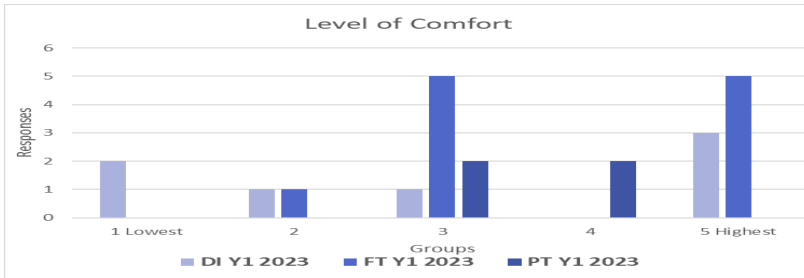
In the fifth question, 47% of the respondents reported feeling highly comfortable using technology for learning. Furthermore, the majority (86%) agreed that technology could improve their learning effectiveness, and 90% expressed a desire to learn using technology. Lastly, 92% of the respondents reported actively seeking access to technology for completing their assignments. Out of the respondents, 83% recognised that having technology skills can increase one's chances of getting employed. However, 7 out of the 17 remaining respondents disagreed, stating that computer skills do not necessarily lead to better employment opportunities. The remaining 10 acknowledged that there might be a link between ICT skills and employability.

Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews were scheduled for a total of 22 students, a mix of first-year and second-year participants took part in the semi-structured interviews, which consisted of seven questions aligned to the sub-research questions in the wider study. Two of these questions were related to the respondents' habitus. The first question, enquired about their level of comfort when using computers for learning. Only 10 out of the 22 respondents reported feeling comfortable using computers. The other 12 responses varied **[transcribed verbatim].**

INQ11   *Will be my first time to use computers for learning, so I'm not comfortable*

INQ12   *I don't have access to computers*

INQ13   *It's a big challenge for me. I have little almost no skills*

INQ14   *I didn't even know where to touch on the computer*

INQ15   *I never knew anything about the computer. I was not comfortable with using a computer. I grew up in the village. Saw a computer at school library but we were not allowed to touch these computers*

The second question asked how respondents felt about using technology during teaching and learning. Nine respondents answered positively**[transcribed verbatim].**

INQ2 1   *feel good, have a smartphone*

INQ2 2   determine to try to cope, I'm comfortable say 6 out of 10

INQ2 3   *felt proud having to learn how to use a computer*

INQ2 4   *felt like I was expanding my knowledge*

The remaining 13 respondents provided similar feedback but leaned towards a negative experience with the use of technology for teaching and learning.

INQ2 5   *also shame for lack of ICT skills*

INQ2 6   *felt left out*

INQ2 7   *paid someone to install MS Teams for me*

INQ 8   *I was feel bad so much*

INQ 9   *The fear was dead like to think like will I make it?*

The reflection

The reflection consisted of one question that had keywords to link to the sub-research questions. Respondents had to give input on the significance of ICTs in teaching and learning. Respondents could decide how much information they wanted to list. One statement from each of the 9 groups is listed to provide insight into the type of responses. Groups were based on the year of study, be it first or second year and the mode of study, and on the modes, full-time, part-time or distance. Responses one to six (1-6) represent evidence from the second-year participating group and responses seven to nine (7-9) are those of the first-year participants. The responses are recorded as per the online responses **[transcribed verbatim].**

RP2020 1 *learnt how to integrate traditional way of teaching it digital*

RP2022 2 *did not struggle with my academics much during COVID-19*

RP2022 3 *now able to do my distance learning through online*

RP2022 4 brought us as students together where we discuss and talk together

RP2023 5 *minimise cost and save time*

RP2023 6 *in class time engagement with colleagues from home*

RP2023 7 *the country is growing we need more about technology*

RP2023 8 *I don't know anything about ICT and I'm eagerly to learn.*

RP2023 9 *better use of laptops*

DISCUSSION

The focus of the study was to determine how the perceptions of student trainers on ICT integration are related to their habitus. Bourdieu's concept of habitus provided the opportunity to study the perceptions of students on ICT integration in teaching and learning. The habitus refers to the dispositions that are structured by the experiences of the students while using technology in teaching and learning [Bourdieu, 1991]. This study set out to answer the research question- what does the habitus of student trainers reveal about their prevalent attitudes towards ICT integration in teaching and skill development? The study sourced data through a semi-structured interview, an online questionnaire that had both open-ended and closed questions and a short written reflection on the use of ICTs in teaching and learning.

The responses showed that students are not opposed to the use of technology in teaching and learning. A large majority [66%] strongly agreed that technology should be used in education. This was also supported in the semi-structured interview responses, revealing a willingness to use technology.

The responses showed that the participants in this study were able to identify the advantages of developing ICT skills in teaching and learning. The question on online learning had five viable options ranging from 'extremely important' to 'not important at all.' Most participants indicated that online learning was an important teaching tool. This was also supported by the responses in the reflections. Participants saw the benefit of online learning as a cost and time-saving mechanism. The benefits were evident in the time and allocation of transport costs to the university. Henritius et al., [2019] also recognised that universities need to transform teaching styles to accommodate a generation that grew up with technology. The data showed that 92% of participants want to learn with the aid of technology. These views were echoed in the reflections, with participants realising that they might not have the necessary skills yet, but are still eager, to develop the required technological skill. The responses in the questionnaires, reflections and semi-structured interviews supported the use of technology in teaching and learning.

Online learning also made it possible for participants to cope with their studies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants valued the online platform fostering engagement with their peers. In her article on Reflective *teaching practice*, Warren [2016] found that student-centred technology can lead to technologically engaged active learning where students engage with each other and share the learning content on eLearning and MS Teams platforms. The reflection responses RP2022 4 and RP2023 6 highlighted the value TVET student trainers attached to peer engagement. It appears that students enjoyed the opportunities to work with each other online at their con-

venience. Henritius et al. (2019) found that "in virtual environments, student's emotions are influenced by interactions" (p.2). From the responses in this study student engagement had a positive effect on their learning with technology.

However, the data also revealed some concerns that need to be addressed when incorporating technology as a teaching and learning tool. According to the survey results, out of a total of 100 respondents, 14 individuals expressed concerns while 16 demonstrated enthusiasm towards utilising technology. Of the 14 concerned responses, seven were second-year students. In 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic forced educational institutions to use technology for teaching and learning, with the majority of institutions offering fully online programmes. According to Chikileva et al. (2023) and Henritius et al. (2019), the use of technology has a significant impact on teaching methods. Some study participants scored the lower levels in terms of their comfort with the use of technology in teaching and learning, with the highest level of comfort being five. It was disconcerting to note that there are still students who doubt their ICT skill competence to confidently operate in online learning environments. It is important to provide information on teaching tools before starting the course, regardless of the programme's study year.

Although many students are comfortable with online learning, a significant group still has low to medium levels of comfort with online learning environments. One would expect this group of students to have scored the highest level of comfort with the use of technology since it was their primary teaching aid during the pandemic. These findings suggest a varying degree of comfort with the use of technology in education and also highlight the importance of considering individual perspectives when implementing technological solutions. The majority of the participants were older than those students joining the university immediately after graduating from high school. Only one of the 100 participants in the survey was between 18 to 25 years old. The majority were between 26 and 45 years old. TVET student trainers, first must complete their trade certificate before they can join NUST to further their studies. As this age group did not grow up with technology, it is important to consider the level of their ICT skill competencies when using technology for teaching and learning.

The students' habitus also revealed that there are various levels of ICT skill competence amongst participants. For some, it relates to access to technology. It appears that access to technology is still a challenge for some students. The semi-structured interviews revealed that some students only engaged with a computer at university. Another referred to growing up in a village where the learners were not allowed to touch the computers at school. Another respondent did not know where to touch to start using the computer. Other participants revealed different levels of ICT competence. These indicators of lack of ICT skill histories should be noted when

using technology as a teaching and learning tool. The reflection responses of those participants who were at the end of their studies that is; RP2020 1, RP2022 2 and RP2022 3, illustrated the competence participants garnered after using technology for learning purposes. When asked how comfortable participants were to use ICTs for learning purposes, on a scale of one to five, with one being the lowest level of comfort and five the highest level of comfort, of the 100 participants, 47 selected the highest level of comfort. This is also affirmed by the results of the review by Henritius et al., (2019) where students who were familiar with the use of technology in their daily lives expected to use it for education too. This was supported in the survey result in which 92% of respondents indicated that they made an effort to get access to a computer to complete their assignments.

This study used the word "comfortable" to elicit the level of students' ability to use or want to use technology. In their review, Henritius et al., (2019) looked at 91 articles between 2002 and 2017 seeking a synthesis of studies that have addressed students' emotions and virtual learning simultaneously. They found that the most common word used across most of the studies was 'satisfaction.' Ch'ng (2019) found that 'satisfaction' and 'tense' were the most familiar words used to express emotions by his participants, a group of digital immigrants. Lecturers are encouraged to ask if their students are satisfied with the non-physical learning environment as it has a direct influence on their academic performance. The 14 participants who said that they were concerned about online learning, might not seem like a lot, however, if not addressed such groups can form bottlenecks. Their responses tied with the responses during the semi-structured interviews should be taken into consideration when developing an online course. Juutinen et al. (2011) warned that as the use of technology in teaching increases, so too is technophobia. When students fear the technology tool for learning, it will affect their academic performance.

The semi-structured interviews revealed in-depth responses on the use of technology in teaching and learning. Participants revealed negative emotions attached to the use of technology. Frustration is not a unique once-off experience in the life of a technology user, but if it is the norm, it can have adverse effects on the student's academic performance (Juutinen, 2011). The researcher was concerned when respondents revealed negative emotions and intense anxiety because of the use of technology. The study by Juutinen et al. (2011), found that "fear of technology plays a big role in e-learning studying … fear or anxiety towards computers or a new technology, make their e-learning career fairly difficult" (p.106). These negative emotions towards the use of technology cannot be ignored. Ch'ng (2019) warns that it is important to "investigate how emotions affect one's learning… and that emotions have been excluded from designing the learning material" (p.34-35). According to Bourdieu (1991), "Habitus is a set of *dispositions* which incline agents to act and

react in certain ways" (p.12). When engagement with technology results in positive experiences, it affords a positive learning outcome with the technology. Students will be inclined to want to use digital tools to enhance their learning. However, the opposite of this is because negative experiences are also possible with detrimental learning outcomes. The results from the first-year and second-year participants show that students have varied levels of ICT skills which should be considered when integrating online learning.

In her reflection, Warren (2019) purposively set out to improve her skill set to also offer the technical support her students would need and made sure to use the technology as a tool and not "a competitor for class time" (p.310-311). It was alarming that 23 participants indicated that they were neutral, and not sure how to express their confidence in the use of technology. The semi-structured interview revealed that less than half of the participants had indicated they were comfortable using technology for education purposes. Chikileva et al., (2023) state that "e-learning can be valuable in improving students' academic performance … if e-learning activities are well planned and adapted to the unique educational needs of university students"(p.9). The response from Warren's (2016) student evaluation revealed that planned and well-prepared online learning environments can yield interesting in-depth learning opportunities. Chikileva et al. (2023) stated that universities should play a greater role in equipping their teaching staff with "technical skills, pedagogical principles, and teaching strategies to develop effective e-learning environments" (p.10). The lecturers should rely on technical support from the university to develop the necessary technical competencies to enhance meaningful learning in online environments. "Educational technology has a key role to play … as one of the strategies for addressing teaching and learning concerns" (Jaffer et al., 2007, p.410), but its integration should also include the "teachers' repertoire of pedagogical resources" (Ndlovu & Moll, 2016, p.128). The provision of basic ICT training is insufficient if it doesn't teach effective technology integration in pedagogy. Lecturers should be familiar with available technologies and consider their impact on student learning when integrating them into teaching. Technology integration should facilitate the teaching and learning process, rather than hinder it for either the lecturer or student.

This study revealed that students with negative technology histories are fearful and nervous when they have to use technology as a learning tool. When ICTs are used as a teaching and learning tool, students are dependent on the lecturer to also consider their satisfaction and offer technical support. In such a scenario, the lecturer has to become the link between technology and the student (Juutinen et al., 2011,).

CONCLUSION

This study highlighted how students' habitus relates to their use of technology in teaching and learning. Similar to Warren (2016), the habitus of TVET student trainers revealed that they were enthusiastic about utilising technology for education purposes (Juutinen et al., 2011). However, it is important to note that not all students have the same level of comfort with technology. The TVET student trainers are older and have different levels of ICT skills. To ensure effective teaching and learning in virtual environments, educators should consider the emotional aspects of the experience (Ch'ng, 2019). They should also aim to satisfy their students with the platform they are using (Chikileva et al., 2023; Juutinen et al., 2011).

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