

# The importance of education education essay

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## **ABSTRACT**

School principals are considered important agents of change mainly due to their position in school and, therefore, their attitudes towards computers play an important role in the successful adoption of information and communications technology (Pelgrum & Plomp, 1991). Without the support of school principals, the educational potential of ICT may not be realized. According to John Schiller (1993), principals are required to assume a major responsibility to initiate and implement school change through the use of ICT and thus can facilitate complex decisions to integrate it into teaching, learning and school administration. However, there is little research available about the perceptions of principals and their experiences about adoption of ICT (Schiller, 2003). The sole researcher of this study, therefore, considered it important to explore and ascertain principals' attitudes towards the use of ICT in schools. This qualitative study is designed to investigate the adoption of information and communications technology (ICT) by considering the lived experiences of principals in three carefully and purposively selected ICT-enriched secondary schools in Lahore. Although this study focused on principals of ICT-enriched secondary schools, the practical insight of this study's participants has potential to guide other educational leaders to ensure that ICT becomes a tool for enhancing learning, teaching, and school administration. This multi-site case study explored the likelihood of computer technology adoption in Lahore among secondary school principals. My research objective was to gain an understanding of Lahore secondary school principals' perceptions and lived experiences about adoption of ICT. The study focused on three purposively selected Lahore secondary school

principals. Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews. The interviews addressed why principals rejected or adopted computers and how they intended to enhance computer use in the school. Narratives were presented for each school based on the themes which emerged from the interviews. It can be concluded that principals must support and adopt ICT themselves if they expect the staff to adapt and use technology without resistance.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION / PROBLEM CONTEXT**

This study examined information and communication technology (ICT) adoption readiness, more specifically computer technology, among principals in Lahore secondary schools. My own experience and observations of the current practice motivate me to explore practicing principals' perceptions and experiences of their leadership role. At this point it warrants elaborating on my experience and observations regarding the school principals' role in ICT adoption (Ben Boys)..... explain your experiences.....

### **Purpose of the Study**

Educational attainments in Pakistan are low with an adult literacy rate of only 54% and strong gender disparity. Enrolment rates for secondary education is also remarkably low, and only 2.9% of the relevant age group enters the University system. The government realizes several key constraints in the current education system including weak governance of the system, low resource commitment, and the lack of a uniform national education system resulting in uneven quality and parallel systems of education that are not available equally to all strata of society. As for the ICT sector Pakistan like other developing countries in the region has witnessed

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significant growth. It has a comparatively high internet usage rate, therefore in terms of infrastructure, it was understood that low levels of electrification, posed a more significant challenge for integrating ICTs in the education space than low levels of connectivity. Mobile coverage is over 90% for the country; however PC penetration rate is significantly low. Recognizing the potential of ICT in the education space, Pakistan formulated the National Information and Communication Technology Strategy for Education (NICTE) through a consultative process in 2004-05. The policy framework recognizes the importance of ICT both as a subject and as an instructional aid. However since its inception in 2005, NCITE has not been the driving force behind any major initiative for introducing ICTs in the education sector. Initiatives pertaining to ICT in education are well established in the higher education sector through the Open and Distance Learning systems such as Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) and the Virtual University (VU) of Pakistan. At the school level, very few large scale ICT initiatives are ongoing especially in the public/government school systems. The experience of running large ODL systems can be leveraged to establishing open schooling for the K- 12 level.

## **Problem Statement**

Among the countries that are currently attempting to promote information technology adoption, is Pakistan. Pakistan has developed a National ICT Strategy (NICTE) for Education in Pakistan, which aims at turning the country into an information society or an "educated, informed nation" by the year 2020. The achievement of this goal of an informed nation implies the adoption, diffusion and use of information technology in the nation. As the vision document states, the adoption of information technology is paramount

to the achievement of the NICTE goals. Recognizing the potential of ICT in the education space, Pakistan formulated the National Information and Communication Technology Strategy for Education (NICTE) through a consultative process in 2004-05. The policy framework recognizes the importance of ICT both as a subject and as an instructional aid. Therefore research on the perceptions of IT adoption among school principals appears to be timely. IT adoption is a subject of worldwide discussion as evidenced by the extensive literature examining what factors influence its adoption failure or success. Flanagan & Jacobsen (2003) say that " Despite government spending on boxes and wires, technology integration in North American classrooms has ranged from uneven at best to nonexistent in some cases" (p. 125). Research from the African perspective (Akpan, 2000; Alemna, 1999; Heeks, 2002; Jain & Mutula, 2001; Jimba, 2000; Odedra et al, 1993; Onyango, 2000; Thapisa & Birabwa, 1998; United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2001) and the international perspective (Baskerville & Pries-Heje, 2001; Comin & Hobjin, 2004; Karahanna & Straub, 1998; Kukafka, et al, 2003; Legris, et al, 2003; Rogers 1995; Russell, 2004) has dealt with the causes of failure to adopt and use information technology successfully. In the case of Pakistan, information technology is a relatively new concept, and therefore adoption must precede use. As the above authors have noted, IT adoption and use has not been easily accomplished. Therefore, it is important that Pakistan's readiness to fulfill its objective of achieving an educated and informed nation as outlined in NICTE be examined and assessed. Adoption of computers in the secondary schools is one indicator of readiness that can be measured early in the course of implementation of the said objective. Our leaders are deeply committed to advancing the

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educational prospects of our people. Due to their vision and foresight, our country is making great strides in improving education for all. A clearly defined mission and goals lead the way. The Ministry of Education's (MoE) National Education Policy, National Plan of Education, and Education Sector Reforms Action Plan chart an exciting course for the future. These efforts created a solid foundation for change, growth, and momentum. Around the globe, countries are using innovative tools to enhance education. All of these tools can enrich teaching and learning, improve access to and quality of education, and prepare young people for rewarding careers in the globally competitive job market of the 21st century. In December 2004, the MoE launched a critical initiative to help Pakistan harness ICT as part of its ongoing work to improve education at the primary, secondary, and vocational levels. It called upon our country's educators and technologists to join forces to produce a framework for how to move forward. Together, this representative group studied the potential use of ICT. A strong spirit of collaboration and dedication to improve schooling in Pakistan guided their process. Their united efforts produced the National Information and Communications Technology Strategy for Education (NICTE) in Pakistan. This research asked the question: Given that information technology, more specifically computer infrastructure, is in place in Lahore's private secondary schools, do the principals of these schools intend to support adoption and use by themselves, the teachers, and the students? Since education is the most obvious means through which adoption and use can be positively influenced, early adoption and use by secondary school principals is likely to be a strong predictor of success or failure. This study will add to the existing research on information technology adoption in general, and to that on <https://assignbuster.com/the-importance-of-education-education-essay/>

Lahore, Pakistan and developing countries in general, as discussed in the next section.

## **Significance of the Study**

### **Methodology**

This research is conducted according to the phenomenological research genre within the context of the interpretivist research paradigm. Interpretive approach focuses on the experience of the research participant. The interpretive approach views the social world as being of a " much softer, personal and humanly-created kind ... which selects from ... recent and emerging techniques – accounts, participant observation, and personal constructs ... " (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 7). Since phenomenology in particular is a " descriptive philosophy of experience" (Osborne, 1992: 153), I believe it is likely to serve my goal which is to gain an understanding of Lahore's secondary school principals' perceptions and experiences about technology adoption. The only ' reality' open to my investigation here is that which is constructed by the principals themselves intentionally, looking through their own world (their lebenswelt) and giving social meaning to it. Therefore, I am to enter their lebenswelt (lived world, experience) to understand how these principals individually perceive and experience their lebenswelt. Phenomenology as a research approach and methodology does, in my view, significantly help to inform this research, since it encourages a conceptual naivety on the part of the researcher, thereby focusing the research process on the data themselves (Van der Mescht, 1996). All assumptions about causes and effects, preconceived assumptions and expectations, including my personal bias, and any other variables

incompatible with the fundamentals of the paradigm and genre used in this research, will be bracketed, as far as this is possible. My research goal is to gain an understanding of Lahore secondary school principals' perceptions and experiences about technology adoption. (Ben Boys) This study used a qualitative research design in order to answer the research questions posed. Qualitative research emphasizes viewing phenomenon holistically in its natural setting in order to better understand the participants' perspective as well as the context in which they form that perspective (Maxwell, 1996). Qualitative inquiry supports the general approach to this study which was to develop a deeper understanding of how school leaders respond to the adoption of technology in order to improve teaching, learning and administration. The goal of qualitative research is to generate results that are understandable and experientially credible that could conceivably help improve existing practice rather than to simply assess the value of a program (Maxwell, 1996). A qualitative inquiry was the appropriate research paradigm for this study in view of the fact that this study did not focus on measuring the educational technology program that is in place at the selected sites but desired to better understand those practices which may contribute to successful implementation of educational technology integration. Case study is the type of design best suited for this research because case studies are the preferred strategy when how or why questions are being asked, when the investigator has little control over events, and the focus is on contemporary events (Yin, 1994). Yin advises that "Analytic conclusions independently arising from two cases, as with two experiments, will be more powerful than those coming from a single case alone" (Yin, 2004, p. 53) and the approach that this study used was that of a multi-site

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case study design conducted in three independent schools. In-depth interviews and focus groups provided the primary data for analysis supported with archival data collected and this researcher's field notes. This multi-site case study collected data from purposefully selected and recruited participants at each independent school site. The objective was to explore the same phenomena and to examine evidence from different data sources and sites to build a "coherent justification for themes" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). The comparison of data gathered supported the triangulation process and enhanced internal validity. Specific independent schools were chosen according to the logic of purposeful sampling and the relevant data that the schools could provide. The schools chosen were considered to be "information-rich cases" (Wiersma, 2000, p. 285) and their selection was predicated on identified criteria. The criteria for inclusion were based on their status as independent schools and aspects of their educational technology program which are outlined in detail in Chapter Three. This multi-site case study used Glaser and Strauss's constant comparative method to analyze the data collected. Constant comparative method analysis consists of examining, categorizing, or otherwise recombining the qualitative evidence in order to address the purpose of the study (Yin, 2004) and it was conducted as an ongoing, nonlinear process. The results of the study are presented in the descriptive, narrative form frequently described as thick and rich (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Wiersma, 2000).

## **Chapter One Summary**

Chapter One provided a brief background of the topic and introduced the purpose of the study as well as providing an overview of the research questions and the methods and inquiry approach used to address those questions. The literature review in Chapter Two provides a discussion of the relevant theory and research that expands the readers understanding of this topic and presents the framework and context for this study.

## **Qualitative Study Design**

A qualitative design for data collection and analysis of interviews was used. The interviews were used for an in-depth analysis of the participants' perceptions towards adopting and using computer technology in order to address the why and how questions.

## **Interviews**

The purpose of qualitative inquiry is to study society from a close-up view in order to explain why events under observation happen in that setting and how patterns or theories emerge from the observation of the particular society. This study included in-depth follow up semi structured interviews with a purposive sample of ten (10) principals to further explore their responses to the survey questionnaire. Although the results from the interviews cannot be generalized to the whole population under the study, this method has the advantage of increasing interaction between the researcher and the interviewee, which can enhance the quality of data collected. The interviews were chosen for this study because these allow the participants to express themselves within some structure but at the same time having the latitude to expand on their explanations (Babbie, 2001).  
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According to Bill (1977) semi structured interviews can outperform a survey that is based on the same questions in terms of predictive efficiency (p. 19). Also participants can share their experiences beyond what the researcher had anticipated, thereby making the data richer (Creswell, 2002).

## **Research Questions**

This study sought to better understand how secondary school leadership adopted computer technology for use in their work in order to create and sustain an environment that supports the integration of educational technology into teaching and learning within the existing school culture. (multi-site case study)The case studies concentrated their focus on a series of research questions, addressing key policy concerns relating to the use of ICT, the factors that can be shown to encourage appropriate use, and the implications of ICT usage. The research questions can be summarized as follows: What use did the schools make of ICT? Schools may use ICT in different ways: the case studies examined how ICT was used within each school and their reported impact. What are the perceptions of the principals towards adopting computer technology in their schools? To what extent was ICT a catalyst for educational reform? Technology is often seen as an agent of educational reform, particularly in encouraging a student-centered approach to teaching and learning. The case study schools were asked to consider the extent to which ICT had been a catalyst for change. Which factors influence the adoption and use of ICT in schools? In many countries, ICT has been adopted at different rates in different schools and by different teachers. Factors that encourage the adoption of ICT are obviously of keen policy interest. The case studies examined the factors associated with the

adoption of the technology. Particular attention was given to the importance of infrastructure availability and teacher ICT skills. How do principals perceive the possible application of ICT in education? Concern has been expressed that ICT is not totally beneficial to education. What impact did ICT have on academic performance? Appropriate use of ICT has been argued to increase academic standards through provision of a wide range of resources and more engaging learning experiences. Others have suggested that ICT may lower academic standards either as a result of the inappropriate nature of the resources available, or by encouraging a "cut and paste" culture inimical to real learning. What are the actions school principals intend to take to support computer adoption in the school?

## **Definition of Terms**

## **Assumptions**

## **Structure of the thesis**

In Chapter Two I present .....

Chapter Three I present and discuss my chosen research methodology in terms of my research paradigm, research method, features of

phenomenology as a research approach and methodology. I explain how research was initiated, how research data was collected, and presented.

Finally, I briefly elaborate on ethical implications. In Chapter Four I discuss the presentation of data under the theme: Perceptions and experiences of

..... In Chapter Five I present the discussion of my main findings in terms of my research goal, research

questions, and the ..... The five main themes form the structure of this Chapter. In Chapter Six I present my conclusions by

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summarizing my main findings on the basis of the themes presented under Chapter Five, the potential value of my research study, and limitations of my research study.