

Using Technology to Improve Migrant Adult Education Instruction

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Abstract:

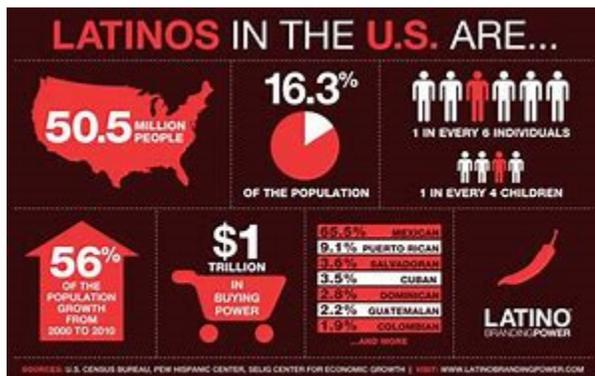
The GED (General Educational Development or General Equivalency Diploma) changed in 2014 to be computer based. Since then there has been a growing need for more educational technology in the GED/HEP classrooms. While several computer-based programs for the English GED exist, there have been few available for the Spanish GED. Since majority of HEP participants are Spanish Speakers, there is a greater need for Spanish computer-based programs in the HEP classroom. This presentation will focus on the need of Spanish computer-based programs in the HEP classroom to prepare the students for the GED exam.

Description

The roundtable session focuses on the needs of migrant adult educational programs. These programs are the HEP (High School Equivalency) programs which are funded through the Department of Education: Office of Migrant Education to educate migrant and seasonal farm workers. Since most of this population needs bilingual (English and Spanish) instruction, there is a need to incorporate more Educational Technology bilingually into the HEP classroom. The session will include a discussion of the bilingual tools and technologies available.

Disclaimer

For the purpose of this study the Hispanic and Latino (a) population will be referred to as Latinx.



Abbreviations Frequently Used in this Study

HEP: High School Equivalency Program
GED: General Education Development/Diploma
OME: Office of Migrant Education

History of GED and Latinx

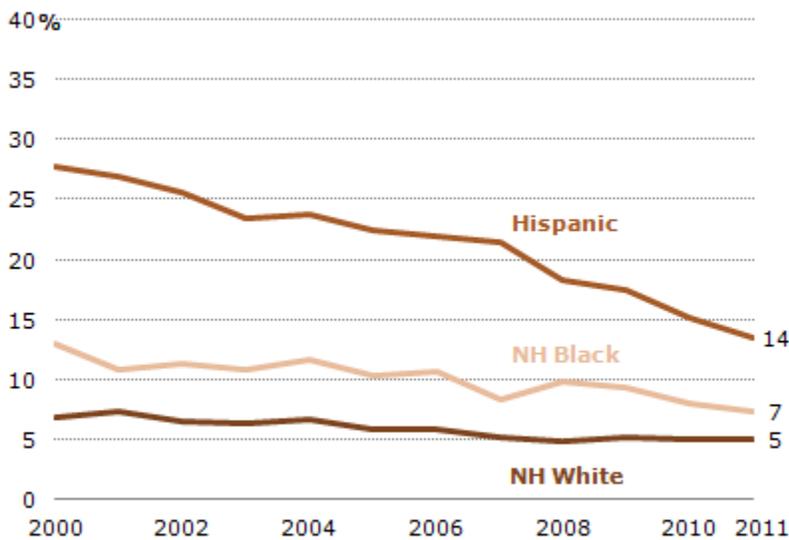
The GED test was officially created in 1942 which measured English language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science. There were three more versions of the GED exam, 1978, 1988, and 2002 series which kept the original content from the 1942 exam with increased levels of proficiency of the assessments (GED Testing

Service, 2018). These exams were available in English, Spanish and French. In 2014, the GED changed drastically and created many challenges for adult education. The GED2014 exam was completely redesigned from paper-based test to computer-based test which included a new scoring system and a higher level of content in English language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science (GED Testing Service, 2018). The GED2014 is only offered in English and Spanish currently.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, it was a difficult time in education for the Latinx population because advancement was challenging for them (Arciniega, 2012). In the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, changes were made in the acceptance of the education of the Latinx population which resulted in more Latinx people as students, teachers, and department heads and included more acceptance than the previous decade (Arciniega, 2012). Since 1971, GED attainment continually increased due to minorities and economically disadvantaged backgrounds enrolling into adult educational programs (Maralani, 2011). Since the 1990s, there has been an abundance of advocacy for Latinx education and career advancements (Arciniega, 2012). More attention has been focused on the education of the Latinx population due to the immigration of many to the United States. The Department of Education focuses on improving high school and college graduations with an increasing focus on the Latinx educational issues (Orchowski, 2010). The United States Department of Education awards federal grants to assist migrant students in obtaining their GED, enrolling in post-secondary education, and addressing specific needs of the Latinx population (U.S. Department, 2012). The Office of Migrant Education in the Department of Education oversees these grant funds and the programs awarded.

As depicted in the chart below, the Hispanic (Latinx) population has higher dropout rates from school than blacks and whites.

Figure 6
Status High School Dropout Rates, 2000-2011
(Share of 16-to 24-year-olds who are not enrolled in school and have not completed high school)



Notes: White and black exclude the Hispanic portion of those groups.

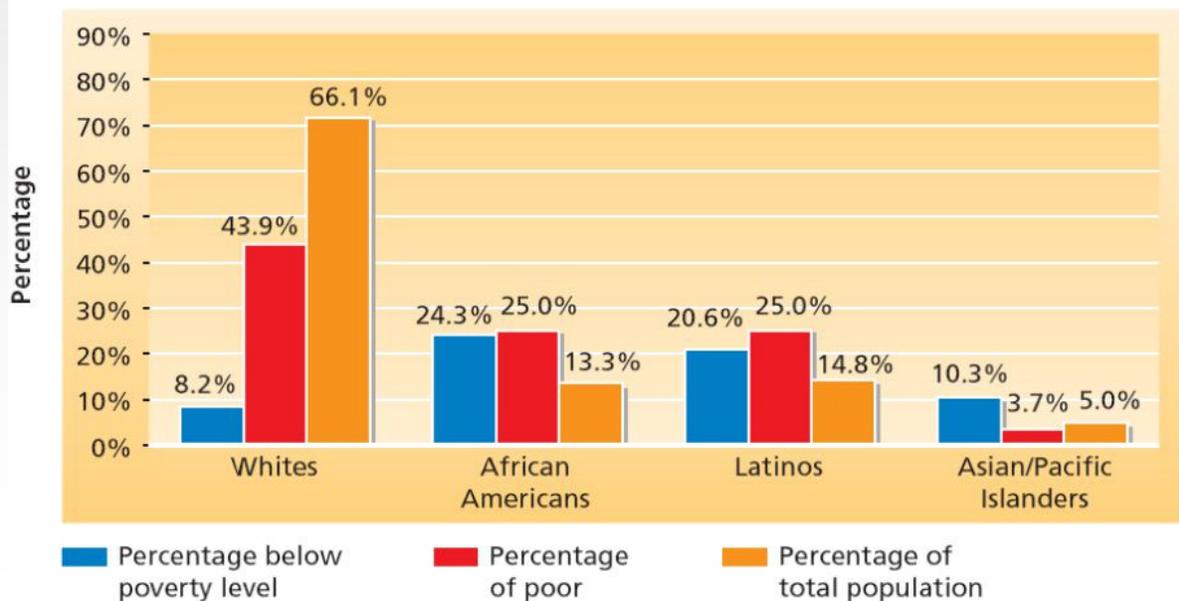
Source: National Center for Education Statistics *The Condition of Education 2012*, Table 116

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The distribution chart below shows the levels of poverty in the United States by race. The Latinx (Latinos) are the second to highest percentages who are below poverty level. These poverty levels can be improved on by obtaining an education; however, these students typically need additional help to obtain their education and entering post-secondary educational programs.

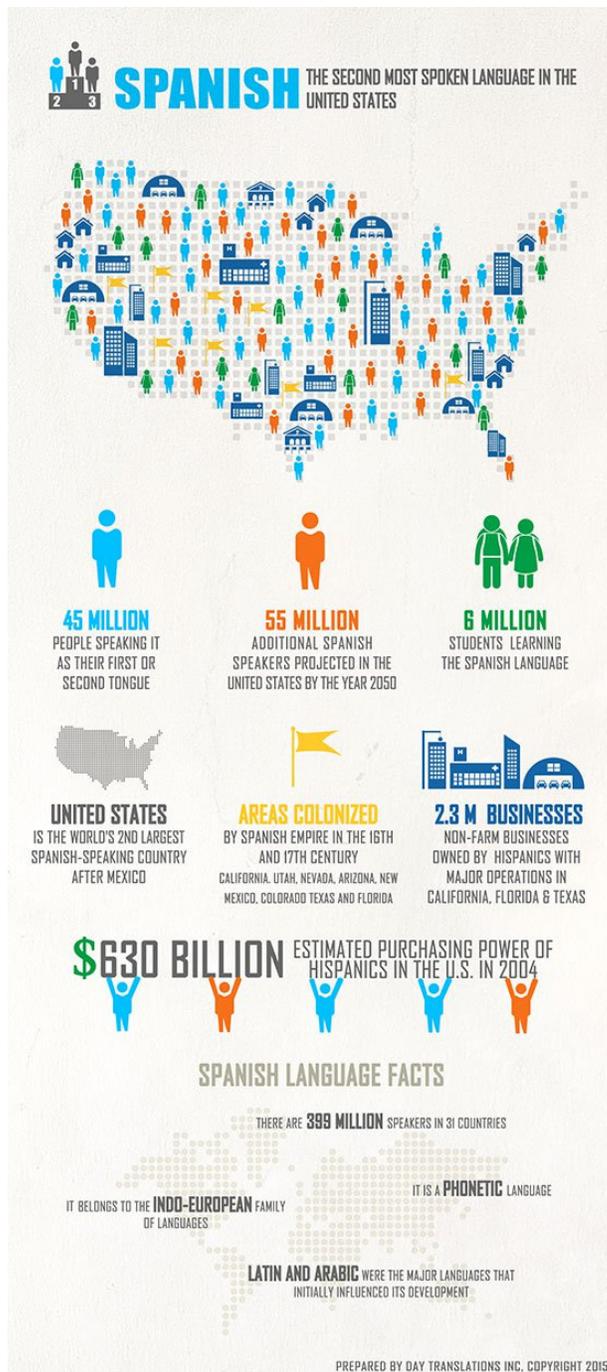
The Distribution of Poverty in the United States

What are the most important conclusions you would reach from this figure?



Need for Educational Technology in the HEP Classroom

While the need for bilingual (English and Spanish) GED educational technology is nationwide, this presentation is on the experiences of the HEP program at a community college in the Southeast. All of the HEP programs are funded through the Department of Education: Office of Migrant Education. The majority of the farm worker students in the United States that HEP serves, according to OME are of Hispanic (Latinx) backgrounds (Department of Education, 2017). The Office of Migrant Education encourages the HEP programs to continually search for ways to improve all aspects of the programs, especially instructionally. Since the change of the GED from paper-based to computer-based, the HEP program has searched for any resources to assist in the instruction and educational practices. Majority of the HEP students have low educational levels and little computer skills. By finding and utilizing educational technologies in the GED/HEP classrooms, students are able to become more comfortable with the computers and prepare for the GED exam. There have been several English GED programs created to help the students to prepare for the computer-based GED exam. The greatest need is for more Spanish GED computer-based programs to help prepare this population for the GED exam. There are a few computer-based programs available; however, not all of them have a good Spanish translation. These types of programs confuse the students as the Spanish translation is not perfect. Spanish is a need in the HEP programs as it is the second most spoken language in the United States as depicted in the statistics below.



In addition to the technology use in the classroom, the HEP programs are continually exploring new ways to address the barriers to education for the migrant/Latinx population. This population has many barriers to education. HEP helps the students to overcome these barriers to become successful in obtaining their education. This study explores the benefits of incorporating technology into the migrant adult education program to assist students in overcoming these barriers to education, which are cultural, language, health, socio-cultural, childcare, working long hours, poverty, basic needs, and low academic educational levels. The barriers and needs inhibit the migrant adult students from obtaining their GED if not addressed.

The HEP program provides academic assistance to the migrant adult education students. The migrant adult education students begin their educational journey by enrolling in an adult education program since most of them

were dropouts from the public school system (P-12). The HEP program serves the migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The program offers GED classes in English and Spanish. This assists the Latinx students in obtaining their GED in their native language. In addition, the migrant adult students need extra assistance when entering college. They need assistance in choosing a program they are eligible for (if the students are not United States Citizens, they cannot apply for state licensure, such as cosmetology or nursing). The Latinx students do not realize the power of education. They do not realize they can achieve their goals and desired careers.

The HEP programs assist in bridging the gaps between the barriers and the access to education for the migrant adult students. The HEP programs are continually searching for ways to assist the migrant adult students in being successful in obtaining their GED. J. Gonzalez a former migrant student, former HEP director, and current Chief Operating Officer for East Coast Migrant Head Start Project states HEP programs provide a needed service that addresses a critical need and is important in rural areas where access to resources for non-English speakers are limited (Personal Communication, November 5, 2017). HEP is able to assist with transportation and childcare, which are some of the greatest needs with migrant adult students. The migrant adult students need to have educators that understand their specific needs and are willing to assist them. The HEP programs work with their local migrant programs to assist the migrant adult students further. The migrant programs help the migrant family and focus on the children. By collaborating, the two programs are able to assist the migrant families in being successful by addressing the barriers to education.

OME focuses on improvements in the migrant adult education programs (HEP) to provide the Latinx population educational opportunities. The HEP programs focuses on the academic success of the Latinx students. The program's goal is to assist students in obtaining GED credentials and moving forward with their education and/or career. As addressed above, the HEP program is able to assist with the financial barriers by providing limited assistance. The program is searching for technologies to use to help address the barriers of education for the Latinx students.

Learning Theories and Motivation for Adult Learners

Andragogy educational philosophy was an educational approach created by Malcolm Knowles to be adult-centered since adult learners have different needs than children which was based on the humanistic learning theory (Elias & Merriam, 2005, p. 13). Knowles recognized the barriers to education for adults and the differences in learning as compared to children. Knowles identified five assumptions of adult learners in andragogy. These are self-concept, past learning experience, readiness to learn, practical reasons to learn, and driven by internal motivation (Elias & Merriam, 2005, pp. 133-134). Adult learners do have different learning needs than the traditional P-12 age groups. The Latinx adult learners require more attention in education due to the barriers of education and special needs as mentioned previously.

Technology in Education

Technology is the application of knowledge in a specific subject (Merriam-Webster, 2018). Technology in adult education can be used in various ways, such as online programs, YouTube videos, Google hangout, Internet, applications for tablets, applications for phones, laptops, and Chromebooks. Since the changes of the GED exam in 2014, there is a greater need for new methods of instruction and assistance for the students. The greatest challenge is the GED2014 changing to a computer-based exam. This results in students needing to be familiar with computers and online programs. Since the change of the GED to a computer-based format, there has been a decline in GED diploma attainments. According to the OME (2018), the GED diploma attainments were 74.5% in 2013, 2014 66.6%, and after the GED change it dropped to 48% in 2015. This was due to the test changing to a computer-based format with a slightly higher level of difficulty. This change of the GED in 2014 created a greater need for technology usage in the adult education classroom, including the HEP classrooms.

El Paso Community College is improving the access to education for Latinx students by creating educational classes with professors understanding the population, various learning options, and utilizing technology ("EPCC Serving," 2016). Technology has various usages and can assist in the instruction of the Latinx students. Online instruction in GED and ESL classes would be an option in incorporating technology into the HEP programs. The HEP program is sampling a variety of programs to assist the GED and ESL students who cannot attend class every day. The goal is to utilize available technology for the students to access study materials and lessons at home

when they are unable to attend class physically. Since this population works long hours on the farms, they are limited on the amount of time spent in the classroom. Finding online instructional programs for the adult educators to utilize would assist the migrant adult students in studying and completing homework at their home. This would be a great benefit for the students; however, there is a limited amount of Spanish online programs.

By using the tools available, the HEP programs are able to address the barriers of the students' access to education. An online instructional program would help to address the childcare issue. Students would be able to complete majority of their studies at home and not worry about finding someone to take care of their child while in class. Technology could be incorporated into the classroom to access online resources on cultural awareness and learning about society. Also, by finding online resources and programs for the students to use at home, they are able to address some of the financial issues, such as transportation. Students are able to research their rights on working on the farms and domestic violence/abuse. In addition, students could research about preventative healthcare and learn how to better care for themselves and their families. Most of all, students could research educational opportunities and future careers with the Internet to help them decide on what they want for their future.

Challenges Incorporating Technology

Technology usage is becoming a need in adult education. The adult educational programs need to implement technology into the classroom to prepare students for future careers using computer skills. The issue with the incorporation of technology into the adult education classroom is the need for technological support for the adult education educators and staff (Gopalakrishnan, 2006). While some educators and staff are reluctant to change, the majority are willing to learn new technology to assist their students. To be successful, they need technological support. In addition, the students must be taken into consideration during this process of change. The biggest challenges found with incorporating technology in the migrant adult education programs were access to computers and the Internet. Several studies determined only 60% of families own computers and have Internet access and those who are considered minority and in poverty do not own a computer (Stern, 2006)

Continuing Case Study of the HEP Programs

The case study is continual at the institution. The task is to find a bilingual computer-based program to use in the GED/HEP classroom. This is a difficult task because the programs are expensive. Typically, an institution has to purchase a large number of seats to access the computer-based program to be able to use in the classroom. Another challenge in finding a good computer-based program for the GED/HEP classroom is to find one containing a proper Spanish translation for the Spanish-speaking students. Some topics to discuss in this presentation are:

- What types of educational technology programs are available for GED programs?
- Which educational technology programs are available bilingually (English and Spanish)?
- How do you gain access to sample the educational technology programs?
- How much time do you need to invest in sampling to determine the accuracy and importance of the program for use in the GED/HEP classroom?
- How much time do you need to invest in sampling to determine if the Spanish translation is thorough for the HEP classroom?
- Is it feasible to create your own educational technology programs for use in the GED/HEP classroom?

Fellow Educational Technology leaders and instructors can use their expertise to give insights on the issue. Having a roundtable presentation can open up a discussion. All opinions and suggestions are welcome. In this presentation, the participants will be asked for any suggestions on improving the GED/HEP instruction, especially for the Spanish speakers. All input from the Educational Technology leaders will be helpful in finding a solution to improving the educational practices in the GED/HEP classroom. Input from other educational leaders will be valued. An intellectual discussion on the case study and looking for suggestions to find a solution to the problem is key.

Conclusion

The number one objective of this presentation is to help students succeed. The goal in this presentation is to find a computer-based program that is available bilingually (English and Spanish) for the HEP students to access when outside of the classroom. Normal instruction will take place during the classes. The computer-based program is to be for additional study and for homework. GED/HEP students need more help outside of the classroom because most of these students are limited on attending classes due to working full-time jobs. The plan is to utilize a computer-based program to deliver extra tutorials, additional classwork, additional educational practice, timed testing practice, and improving computer skills. Each of these areas will assist the GED/HEP students in being more prepared and ultimately more successful in passing the GED exam to obtain their High School Equivalency Diploma. This will also prepare the student for their future career.

Desired outcomes are to find solutions to the barriers to education for the migrant students. Technology offers assistance in addressing the educational barriers of the students. While there are issues to incorporating technology into the GED classroom, they are manageable. The main issues are access to computers, Internet, and Wi-Fi. Additionally, there has been little research conducted on the benefits of incorporating technology into the migrant adult education or HEP programs to address the needs and the barriers of education for the Latinx population. This study will focus on investigating improvements to migrant adult education (HEP programs). The desired improvements are student focused. The migrant adult education HEP programs want to see all of their students succeed in their academic endeavors. By finding solutions to the barriers of education, the students are able to be more successful. Technology has the potential to help to resolve many of the barriers to education.

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