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Computer usage status of special education tutors in teaching how to read and write: the example of Nicosia province

Meltem Haksiz^{a*}, Mukaddes Sakalli Demirok^a

^aAtaturk Education Faculty, Near East University, P.O.BOX:99138, Nicosia, North Cyprus, Mersin 10, Turkey.

Abstract

In this research, it was targeted to analyze the computer usage status of special education tutors in teaching how to read and write. In the research, a descriptive model, the qualitative research method was used. The population of the research is consisted of 18 special education tutors working in special and formal education schools located in Nicosia Province of Northern Cyprus. An interview form for the research data, was prepared and the expert opinion was received. The data gathered, was subjected to the content analysis, and assembled under themes. According to the findings of the research, it was found out that; tutors faced problems when teaching how to read and write, they used the materials and the activities available on the internet for the solution of these problems, and that there were also tutors who did not to use these materials and activities. Moreover, it was also determined that the materials and the websites on the internet environment, were not suitable for every student, and that they were limited.

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1. Introduction

One of the most important issues that contributes to the individual's success in his/her education life, is teaching reading and writing. When the literature is analyzed; it is indicated that the quality of skills and habits to be earned by teaching reading and writing, will be essential for the individual in both primary education and in his/her future

* Meltem Haksiz. Tel.: +0-0392-223 6464.
E-mail address: meltem.haksiz@neu.edu.tr

education life and therefore, this will not only affect his/her success in the Turkish lesson, but in all his/her lessons, and it will also affect his/her future success significantly^{3 8 9 12 14}.

Despite the positive impact of reading success on the school and academic achievement, some children need support in learning how to read and write. Children with developmental disability (mental deficiency, hearing loss, visual disability etc.), children with reading disability, children who use a language or a dialect at home which different from the one that is spoken in the school, children who have a home environment that lacks of reading-writing activities, and children with oral language disorder, are under the risk of reading-writing failure¹⁹. It is indicated that, the removal of this risk depends both on the teachers using the methods that would increase the students' reading and writing success, and on receiving technological support. For instance; the teachers participating in Baydık and Kudret's study⁵, expressed that there were many CD-ROMs available that could be used in hand-writing and first reading teaching, that they used these a lot, and that they did not face many problems in hand-writing teaching. It is indicated that; alongside the CDs that the teachers needed in teaching (for instance: hand-writing teaching CDs), the interactive storybooks in CD-ROM formats, particularly support the early literacy development. It is expressed that; CD-ROMs improve the self-reliance of children, especially who have specific requirements, by making their active participation possible, and they also contribute to children's reading and writing success by increasing their writing motivations. Moreover, it is a well-known fact that, children do develop their social skills as they have the opportunity to use the storybooks with their friends¹⁷.

In addition to these, computers simplify the adaptation of educational materials or teaching in accordance with the children's characteristics. For instance: by means of computers, a teacher can easily reduce the number of words a text includes, or enlarge the type size, and also a student can follow a book by receiving voice or visual cues in order to turn the page⁶. Today, technology plays and effective and active role in every field of life. Technology renews itself day by day, and it can be used by the teachers in the manner that would meet the individuals' requirements in both daily life and educational and teaching environments^{1 2 11 23 22 13}. Moreover, this lesson environment that the teachers create by technology, should be supported with the use of internet⁴.

Different from other teaching tools, computers, one of the technological tools widely used in the educational and teaching environments, provide multilateral unique opportunities in terms of teaching and learning^{24 21 20}. The use of computers has also been started in special education fields, just like the other fields of education and training. Computer technology has considerably an important place in the education, as it increased the students' learning experiences and simplifies the learning of children who need special education. Technological innovations made in education, will create a learning environment that would meet the individuals' requirements who needs a special education, once the educationists and computers start to complete each other¹⁰.

The use of technology in special education, includes a wide section involving the families of the individuals with specific requirements, the subject matter experts of special education, and the individuals with specific requirements. While technology enters into our life each passing day, it is required to use these technologies also in the special education and to benefit from the opportunities provided by the technology¹⁵. In one of the studies analyzing the use of computers in the special education, it was determined that; the students earned the targeted reading skills during the teaching process conducted for the students with mental deficiencies, by the use of simultaneous cues via the computers¹⁶. In another research conducted, it was observed that; the reading comprehension activity carried out with a reading material prepared by power point presentation program, had a positive effect on students' reading comprehension skill⁷. The researchers who conducted the aforementioned research, expressed that; such a presentation enabled the visual presentation of the words, sentences and the text, and it might have also increased the mentally challenged students' participation in the lessons thanks to its strikingness.

In order to simplify the reading and writing process of their students, teachers might develop various materials in the computer environment. Especially today, the easy-to-use computer software enables the teachers to prepare materials and present them to their students in the learning and teaching environments, by enriching them with multiple environment objects (video, animation, audio, etc.)⁷. Just like on every field of teaching, the positive effect of the use of computer on particularly the reading and writing success of the students who have specific requirements, shows the importance of analyzing the computer usage status in teaching these students how to read and write. It is considered that; receiving the opinions of the teachers working with these students regarding their computer use, is of vital importance in order to determine the requirements and solutions and to determine the studies that will be carried out for increasing the teaching efficiency. This study was planned and carried out, starting from such requirement. The problem of this study, is the analysis of computer usage status in teaching the students with specific requirements how to read and write, depending on the special education tutors' opinions.

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