How essential are basic computer skills for adults education essay

Technology is all around and growing rapidly each day. New technology equipment is being introduced into this ever – advancing computer driven society and bringing about a new language and method of communication. (Quote needed) One simply has to look around, to see the high volume of equipment that has now been computerised. For instance, personal road maps has now been transferred into a personal Satellite Navigation System, making journeys to unknown destinations less of a challenge and places of interests easier to find through the use of 3D realistic coloured images. The installation of Interactive Pay-As-You-Go train ticket machines now enabled travellers to pre-ordered, purchase and collect train tickets more conveniently cutting down on unnecessary waiting time. Furthermore, Mobile phones have become smarter, with wireless technology it is now common to see vast amount of people checking their email or searching for information on the move.

In this digital society it is difficult to imaging the world without the use of ICT. All of the technology equipment has had a major influence on the way individual's converse, gain knowledge and work. One thing the technology relies on is user knowing and have some form of basic computer skill to access and retrieve the information required

These changes have undoubtedly contributed to the government's decision to declare ICT a new Skill for Life alongside literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages.

The computer is now said to be an essential tool that all workers must be familiar with in order to complete their daily tasks. (Quote needed) Whatever

the job; teacher, lawyer, or salesperson; computer skills are mandatory in order for them to succeed. One also needs to possess certain computer skills in order to complete basic every day skills in today's society day. Schools have now introduced internal websites called Intranets where they place important day-to- day material relating to issues which need to be accessed each day by all members of staff.

It is extremely important that a person be skilful and knowledgeable in the area of computers and technology. (Quote needed). It is very difficult to be successful in today's job market and high tech lifestyle if you do not have these skills.

Research question

This study examines the key question: " How essential are basic computer skills for adults today?"

The research focuses teaching assistants (TA) working in Secondary and Further Education establishments and their Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills during and away from their place of work.

Aims of the study

The main reason for this study is to:

Determine how essential basic computer skills are for adults today.

Evaluate Teaching Assistants (TAs) use of Information Communication Technology (ICT).

Objectives of the study

To achieve the overall aims the research seeks to address the following objectives:

To discover what is meant by the terms ' Basic computer skills' for adults in this digital world.

To find out if basic computer skills are as important as basic Maths and English skills for adult learners.

To measure TAs' basic knowledge and understanding of the different software application within schools or home.

To identify if TAs can be effective in supporting students in an educational environment without having basic knowledge and understanding of the software applications used in ICT lessons.

To examine the level of ICT training TAs have or not received and see how the level of training affects to their attitudes towards ICT.

To identify if gender and/or age has an effect on TAs' computer usage.

Find out what is expected of TAs from the Head of Department in ICT and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO).

Five educational establishments, three secondary and two further educational colleges, participated in the study. A combination of questions and interviews with TAs, teachers of ICT and a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) enabled a close examination of the ICT skills required

and used within these establishments from which understandings about the possible adults' ICT skills in a learning environment could be gathered.

Background

Information Communication Technology

The terms Information Communication Technology (ICT) is seen as an item for consumption that store, retrieve, manipulate, broadcast or receive information electronically in a digital form. Over the years there have been many studies relating to the increasing use of ICT and the way in which this has changed people live learn and work today. (Quote needed). ICT can sometimes be taken for granted.

Thousands of people arrange their own international holidays using the World Wide Web and manage their finances online. You can also choose to study through technology when, where and how you prefer.

In addition to these visible changes, technology has penetrated many familiar aspects of daily life.

Digital television and radio, for example, has brought technology directly into the living room. These changes have undoubtedly contributed to the government's decision to declare ICT a new Skill for Life alongside literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages.

Many jobs today require so kind of computer skill, from entering text on a page to retrieving email messages. ICT can be seen as the essential building block of modern society and looked at as part of the core of education, alongside reading, writing and Maths for both adults and young people. It is

difficult and maybe even impossible to imagine future learning environments that are not supported, in one way or another, by ICT.

Information and communication technology (ICT) has become, within a very short time, one of the basic building blocks of modern society. Many countries now regard understanding ICT and mastering the basic skills and concepts of ICT as part of the core of education. This is look alongside reading, writing and numeracy.

provided human participation

With an increase on

It is difficult to imagine

It has had a major influence on the way we live, work and learn. Already According to 60% of existing and 90% of new jobs require some ICT skills.

In addition to these visible changes, technology has penetrated many familiar aspects of daily life.

Digital television and radio, for example, has brought technology directly into the living room. These changes have undoubtedly contributed to the government's decision to declare ICT a new Skill for Life alongside literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages.

Furthermore, ICT is also playing an increasing important role in schools, with teacher expected to have the relative ICT skills to use computers more in

their teaching and students are expected to leave school with a GCSE grade in ICT.

Teaching Assistants

Different geographical areas and different educational professionals give a variety of names to a Teaching Assistant such as Learning Support Assistant (LSA), Classroom Assistant (CA), Support Staff (SS) and Special Needs Assistant (SNA). Primarily these titles refer to the same or similar job roles and the term Teaching Assistant is now used to cover a range of adults providing support in schools.

The modern day role of TAs has long been associated as " extra help" (Quote) in the classroom, from helping teachers to prepare materials to supporting students with their Maths and English. In pervious years TAs entered their employment with little or no formal qualification to support students in their curriculum subjects, their past experience of bring-up children was seen as adequate.

The idea for the dissertation title was inspired from the author's different job positions held within a state run Secondary School in the East Midlands. It is a smaller than average dual – specialism (Languages and Applied learning) 11-19 comprehensive with currently 929 on roll March 2010. The job positions held, at present are, a part-time qualified TA and part-time unqualified ICT teacher working towards becoming a full-time ICT teacher.

However, employing TAs is a popular means of addressing pupils' needs and for the past 15 years there has been rapid growth in the numbers of teaching

assistants working in mainstream schools in the UK. Howes A, Farrell P, Kaplan I, Moss S (2003). (Look for the number to quote) Initially a number of

Over the past 15 years there appears to be an increase in the

Since??? There have been number reasons for choosing these TAs Some have attended colleges and universities to achieve a recognised qualification (State these) for working with students and have also gained experience of using ICT to complete their studies and is able to transfer the skills they have learnt in a range of complex studies.

Now the teaching assistant (TA) has a structured career path, if they wish to take it, incorporating a multitude of different tasks with increasing levels of responsibility. This being to support students with a

Very little has been written about TAs and their use of ICT

Employing teaching assistants is a popular means of addressing pupils' needs and numbers have risen. TAs might cover for absent colleagues and higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) take on many of the responsibilities of the teacher. The spread of intervention programmes and the additional requirements of workforce reform have raised the TA from the periphery of the classroom to a central position

The knowledge of ICT grew after five years of computer evening classes and numerous computer qualifications completed, from basic computer skills to advanced levels in computers directed the move to a combined career which allowed for both qualifications to be bested used. This knowledge of ICT has allowed for a career excelled and was employed as a teaching assistant to

support students with Special Educational Needs (SENs) in a verity of lessons, ICT being the main supported subject.

The author has observed and the teachers working in the ICT department have become aware of that in this secondary school a large number of TAs shy away from ICT lessons and choose to support lessons in their preferred subject. For instance at the start of an ICT lesson one TA supporting a student quoted to the teacher " I don't know why I'm here, I'm not good at computers". Others have stated " They are useless at ICT and won't be any good in this lesson" and have known to repeat this statement to the students they are supporting, even stating " They don't want to support the subject". (Quote here)

Introduction to the problem

With the rapid adoption of ICT over the last ten or twenty years, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has recognized ICT as an important skill for students to develop and has now included it in the list of compulsory subjects within the National Curriculum Framework NCFfor Keystage 4. The term Keystage 4 refers to students legal is the legal term for the two years of school education which incorporate GCSEs,

The new secondary curriculum has a crucial role to play in enabling schools to raise standards and help all their learners meet the challenges of life in our fast-changing world. The aim is to develop a coherent 11-19 curriculum that builds on young people's experiences in the primary phase and that helps all young people to become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens.

Furthermore, students with Special Educational Needs (SENs) provision are frequently allocated TA support. The DfES (2004) describes SENs as a " child that has learning difficulties who calls for special educational provision to be made". They go on to state " the term provision can be environmental or a human resource". TAs provides support in Maths, English, Science and ICT lessons to help students can achieve the lesson objective(s) and help raise the student's target level in the subject.

The ICT department and the author have seen the effects of the problems some TAs have displayed. For example, very little interaction in some of the ICT lessons to and feel this negative attitude needs to be addressed as soon as possible. If left it can hinder the student's progress, make ICT teachers feel they are teaching the class as well as TAs and prevent TAs from progressing in this every changing ICT world.

Summary of the argument

Literature review

Introduction

Computer literacy

Computer literacy can be defined as the means or the capacity of a person to use computer applications. For example, a person who knows to use the machine to complete any task is known as a computer literate. (Quote needed) Computer literate often signifies little more than the ability to use a number of specific applications. These are usually Word, Internet Explorer and an Emailing programme for certain very well-defined simple tasks, largely by rote.

ICT in Education

ICT for adults

Basic computer skills for adults

Policies that brought about basic computer skills for adults

Teaching Assistant Professional Learning

Adult learners' Maths, English and basic ICT skills

Understanding different software application

The delivery of ICT to adults – teachers, friends and children

Methods used in the delivery of basic computer skills to adults – Classes, books, CD and YouTube videos

Percentage rate of adults up taking computer courses

How are teaching adult's computer skills

Methodology

Introduction

Research types

The research consisted of both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect specific data relating to TAs and ICT based around secondary schools. (Quote needed)The main type of quantitative method chosen was a self-completion questionnaire. The reasons for this were:

Firstly, a larger sample of TAs could be easily targeted through the schools.

Secondly, it allowed the TAs to freely answer a series of clear, structured questions on their own and within a relevant period of time. This prevented the author wasting time asking the same questions over and over again.

Thirdly, this structured approach also allowed for the data to be easily collected, examined and quantified. Therefore, once mathematical and scientific analysis was applied the conclusion of the results could be compared with other information and opinions that had previously been done.

Although questionnaires are one of the most popular methods for collecting relevant data, from a more realistic sample of people, they do have elements of risks. Questionnaires provide limited depth and validity (Quote needed) due to people's busy lifestyles. Respondents may result in ticking any boxes just to get the questionnaire done and this could prevent convincing data. With this in mind a qualitative method had to also be included.

Rejected methods

The Data Protection Act 1998 prevented the schools from disclosing TAs personal email addresses. As a result it was not possible to use an online questionnaire creator. This would have been the best and quickest method for collecting quantitative data since it makes it easy to conduct, manage and analyse research material. With this in mind the schools and anyone participating in the research had to be personally approached for their consent.

Structured interviews using the questionnaire sheet would not have been feasible. The author (interviewer) would have had to ask the same questions

in the same manner to the interviewees and this would take up too much time as a large amount of respondent needed to be asked. Furthermore, structured observations may give an in-depth overview of the issues that needs addressing by observing behaviour but it would not have been possible for the researcher be released for work to provide a reasonable amount of data.

Primary school TAs could not be used in this research. The reasons for this are, lessons within Key-stage 1-2 schools are generally teacher-lead and TAs are employed to give support to the whole school rather that a specific pupil useless they are employed to provide one-to-one support to a pupil who has SENs. Furthermore, TAs in primary schools may not come into contact with ICT lessons or equipment during the day of work unless it is to set-up the computers for the pupils use at the start of the day.

Quantitative instrument – Questionnaire

A self constructed questionnaire titled Computer usage of TAs was one of the instruments used to collect hard facts and the opinions for this study. The questionnaire contained fifteen (15) clear closed questions that sought to examine TAs' computer usage based on the following factors.

Access to a PCs at home and work

Number of days spent using a PC over a week

Time spent per day using on the PC

Confidence in using the M/S Office computer application's package

How easy the computer applications are to use

Computer application most used

Availability of computer applications at home and work

Computer application first learnt

ICT ability

Formal ICT training

Gender of TAs

Change to have free ICT training

These questions were selected because the author wanted to discover if there were patterns of behaviour relating to their ICT usage, ICT ability and their preferred software applications within the different schools, age groups and gender.

Five (5) secondary schools were targeted in this research and eighty (80) printed questionnaires were sent. However, there were only seventy questionnaires completed. These schools were selected because they are all run by Derbyshire's Local Education Authority (LEA) and they had both male and female TAs working in the establishment. Also the researcher worked in one of the school and wanted to see if there was a correlation between the TAs attitude and use of ICT.

Qualitative instrument – Interviews

Data

Questionnaire results

Interview findings

Data analysis

Questionnaire analysis

Presentation of questionnaire results

Interview findings – TAs and teachers

Description of interview findings

Summary of interview

Discussion

Relating to data analysis, aims and objectives and literature review

Limitations of methodology

Conclusion

Introduction

Summary

Limitation of the study

The author found many weaknesses when undertaking the research. Firstly,

the number of research material relating to TAs use of ICT was very limited.

Most of the literature available was related to TAs supporting Maths and

English lessons.

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