The factors that contribute to the effective use of ipads with pmld pupils.

Business, Company

Description

I wish to lead an investigation into how pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) can be aided by the use of moderntechnology. People affected by PMLD will often have a difficulty withcommunicationand may also experience physical, sensory or mentalhealthdisabilities. The combination of several issues leads to an increased need for medical and social care and a decreased ability to learn by normal methodologies. (Porter, Ouvry, Morgan & Downs, 2001). My argument is that by implementing technology we can provide PMLD pupils with a more engaging learningenvironment. I will focus specifically on how the Apple iPad can be used to support thelearning experienceof those with difficulties. I will address two main questions through my research: firstly, how far does the use of Apple iPads go to enhance the learning of pupils with PMLDAnd secondly what factors contribute to the effective use of iPads with PMLD pupils?

I believethat the best method to conduct this investigation is through action research, involving a practical approach to social inquiry (Waters-Adams, 2006). This will entail data collection, data analysis and fieldwork, which will allow a personal approach towards the study giving it a means to evolve and improve along with changes in the data. (Reason & Bradbury, 2002). Data collection will be underpinned by the concepts of reliability and validity in order to ensure accuracy and fair representation of results. I plan to utilise questionnaires and online surveys, distributed to teachers, parents and pupils, alongside interviews and personalobservationof iPads in use within

classrooms. Observations will be limited to four carefully chosen pupils and questionnaires will be conducted by the snowballing technique.

Action research can be difficult to conduct alongside other commitments, which is why I have developed a timetable as suggested by Mills (2006).

Phase 1 (July 2012): Develop research questions.

Phase 2 (August 2012): Conducted critical review of relevant literature.

Phase 3 (September 2012): Conduct classroom observation. Disseminate questionnaire to second school.

Phase 4 (October 2012): Conduct semi-structured interviews with teachers.

Phase 5 (November – December 2012): Data collation and analysis

Phase 6 (Early 2013): Review, question and action. Disseminate research findings to interested parties.

There will be several issues with this study and the implementation of these teaching methods. For instance it is important to individually assess the needs and strengths of each pupil in order to provide them with a personalised experience which meets their needs (Handy, 2000). If the technology is used without first assessing the needs of the pupil then it may be of little benefit, and it is important that the teachers understand the aims and logic behind these teaching methods so they can implement them correctly and assess any development and success (Florian and Hegarty, 2004). These potential issues will be factored in to all research.

Rationale

Despite the rapid advances in the field of specialeducationover the last few decades children with PMLD have continued to present a challenge to teachers and teaching methods. In the 1980's teachers developed the intensive interaction methods of trying to improve the communication skills of those with disabilities and learning difficulties, which has proven to be effective in some cases. (Lovell, 1998). The use of iPads build on these methods by providing an interactive experience which will engage the pupils. If this is successful the Apple iPad can provide a one-to-one learning experience while minimising the number of carers required, promoting a more productive teaching method (Davis and Florian, 2004). This could go a long way to revolutionising how those with disabilities and learning difficulties are taught and could not only improve the educational system but also the individual lives of those affected.

Technology is already implemented in some specialist schools as a tool for teaching. It is believed that Information Communication Technology can be used to support specialised needs in mainstream as well as specialist environments (Condie, Munro, Seagraves & Kenesson, 2007). Ofsted have also reported that technology has been used effectively to overcome learning barriers (Ofsted 2005; 2004a) and a project to provide technology aids to pupils was well received by both parents and pupils alike (Wright et al., 2004). The personalised environment provided by educational technology will improve the pupil's quality of life and take demand away from the education system.

Literature Review

I will lead my research by conducting a full and detailed literature review into the previous and current studies surrounding this topic. This will include analysis of Census data and Ofsted reports regarding PMLD children and the use of technology in classrooms. Existing reports and articles will also be reviewed to determine how successful studies have been so far. For instance several studies have been conducted into the importance of visual and interactive learning environments. A study by Sparrowhawk and Heald (2007) suggested that educational software should be colourful, interactive, accompanied by sound and provide the pupil with a challenge as well as constant feedback, in order to stimulate the mind and interest. Foyle (2012) supports this theory by stating that pupils are most motivated when supplied with sound, musicand a reward system. Flo Longhorn and Penny Lacey also advocate a sensory approach to learning after working with PMLD pupils for over ten years. I expect my examination of the field to further support the theory that iPads will improve the learning of pupils with disabilities.

Conclusion

As pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties have impairment in communication and cannot function in what would be considered a ' normal' learning environment, steps must be taken to improve their learning experience. Studies have proven that support can be successfully provided through the implementation of technology in order to provide an individual experience based on the pupil's needs. This gives the pupils a safe method

of communicating with the world around them. The Apple iPad has the greatest potential to meet the requirements of PMLD pupils due to its interactive, portable and user-friendly nature.

References

Condie, R., Munro, B., Seagraves, L. & Kenesson, S. (2007). The impact of ICT in schools – a landscape review. Becta.

Davis, P. & Florian, L. (2004). Teaching strategies and approaches for pupils with special educational needs: A scoping study. Department for Education and Skills. Available at http://www. education. gov. uk/complexneeds/modules/Module-1. 1-Understanding-the-child-development-anddifficulties/All/downloads/m01p010c/II. teaching_strategies %20including_aspects _of_II. pdf. (Accessed 03. 08 2012).

Florian, L. & Hegarty, J. (2004). ICT and Special Educational Needs (Learning Teaching With ICT). 1st Edition. Open University Press.

Foyle, A. (2012). Switched on to education. SEN Magazine Online, January 2012. Available at: http://www. senmagazine. co. uk/articles/378-switched-on-to-education-the-use-of-ict-in-sen. html (accessed 29. 08. 2012)

Lacey, P. (2011) . Online Available at: http://www. senmagazine. co. uk/articles/396-designing-a-curriculum-for-pmld-a-profound-challenge. html (accessed 29. 08. 2012).

Longhorn, F. (1998). A Sensory Curriculum for Very Special People. London: Souvenir Press Ltd.

Lovell, D. M., Jones, R. S. P. and Ephraim, G. (1998) ' The effect of Intensive Interaction on the sociability of a man with severe intellectual disabilities', International Journal of Practical Approaches to Disability. Vol. 22, Nos 2/3, 3-9

Mills, G. E. (2006). Action Research: A Guide for theTeacherResearcher (3rd Edition). Prentice Hall.

Ofsted (2004a), Report: ICT in schools – the impact of government initiatives: School Portraits – Eggbuckland Community College. London: Ofsted

Ofsted (2005,) Embedding ICT in schools – a dual evaluation exercise. London: Ofsted.

Porter, Ouvry, Morgan, Downs, ' Interpreting the communication of people with profound and multiple learning difficulties', British Journal of Learning Disabilities, Volume 29, Issue 1, pages 12–16, March 2001

Reason, P. & Bradbury, H., (2002). The SAGE Handbook of Action Research. Participative Inquiry and Practice. 1st Edition. London: Sage

Sparrowhawk, A. & Heald, Y. (2007). How to Use ICT Effectively With Children With Special Educational Needs. Edition. Learning Development Aids.

Waters-Adams, S. (2006). Action Research in Education. Faculty of Education Plymouth.

Wright, J, Clarke, M, Donlan, C, Lister, C, Weatherly, H, Newton, C, Cherguit, J and Newton, E (2004). Evaluation of the Communication Aids Project (CAP).

London. Available at: DfES. http://www. dfes. gov.

uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR580. pdf (accessed 14. 08. 2012).