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TABLET TECHNOLOGY APPROACH TO DEVELOP SLOW LEARNERS – A STUDY

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Abstract: *The integration of tablet technology and educational apps has transformed the learning environment for children facing learning disabilities. A study focusing on slow learners, who encounter challenges comprehending intricate instructions and require additional time to catch up, sought to bridge this gap.The incorporation of multimodal features such as animation, audio, graphics, and vibrant colours through the user-friendly touch-screen interface of tablet technology and apps has proven highly beneficial for the education of slow learners. Tablets, when utilized with appropriate apps, serve as complementary learning tools, providing crucial support to enhance the overall learning experience for slow learners.The implementation of these apps in learning activities has demonstrated significant advantages for slow learners. Through observations and focus group discussions involving teachers and slow learners, it was noted that features like audio, graphics, and the tactile ability to touch and swipe the screen contributed to heightened motivation among slow learners. Upon completing learning activities, these students exhibited increased engagement, enjoyment, and excitement in task performance.Engaging in learning activities with tablet technology and apps has afforded slow learners the opportunity for personalized and relevant interaction, resulting in a positive impact on their learning experiences. The findings, derived from a six-week observation of a group of slow learners in a suburban school utilizing tablet technology, underscore the potential of these tools to facilitate and enhance their learning.The study strongly recommends guidelines for selecting and developing interactive apps on tablet technology. These guidelines aim to benefit teachers, parents, developers, and policymakers in narrowing the digital gap and promoting effective learning outcomes among slow learners.*

Keywords: *Slow Learners, Motivation, Innovative Approaches, Table Technology*

Introduction

Slow learners, a subgroup within the realm of learning disabilities (LD), face challenges in acquiring knowledge, characterized by mild cognitive disabilities and an inability to grasp concepts within the designated time for standard learning. Their cognitive limitations manifest in low intelligence quotient (IQ), information processing difficulties, poor short-term memory, short attention spans, and struggles with abstract thinking, hindering their expression of ideas.

Research by Chauhan (2011), Malik (2009), and Shaw (2010) defines slow learners as those with an IQ ranging from 76 to 89, slightly below the norm, coupled with limited problem-solving abilities. For instance, it takes them approximately a year longer than their peers to learn to read at the same grade level. Their challenges extend to reasoning and dealing with abstract concepts like language, numbers, and ideas.

The repercussions of these limitations are evident in their academic performance, often characterized as 'backward' in schools, emphasizing their restricted cognitive capacities (Reddy, Ramar, & Kusuma, 1997). Despite their unique learning behaviours and characteristics, slow learners should not be excluded from advancements in educational technology. The Malaysian Education Act 1996, reinforced by the Education Rules (Special Education) 1997, acknowledges the need for tailored options within the national education system for special needs students. Teachers are granted flexibility to modify methods, approaches, and teaching aids to suit the individual needs of these students for a higher quality education.

While research suggests that technology can enhance learning for students with disabilities, including slow learners (Li et al., 2009; Patchan & Puranik, 2016; Sung et al., 2016; Urdan& Schoenfelder, 2006), there is a notable gap in exploring the empirical side of tablet technology's application in learning. Teachers integrating technology must be ready for this complex process (Monroe-Ossi et al., 2013).

The research aims to investigate the use of tablet technology as an alternative educational tool to motivate slow learners. Initial observations and interviews at a school revealed a traditional learning approach for slow learners, lacking technology integration. Teachers reported low motivation among these students due to the monotony of learning methods. Introducing tablet technology and selected applications demonstrated increased attention and excitement among slow learners.

The challenge lies in harnessing the potential of tablet technology and apps to enhance motivation and attention for slow learners. Identifying suitable apps tailored to their needs is crucial for understanding the impact of tablet technology on their learning motivation. The research ultimately seeks to improve learning methods for slow learners and explore the motivational benefits of incorporating tablet technology into their education.

Tablet Techonology For Learning Disabilities: Slow Lerners

Tablet technology, characterized by its mobile swipe-touch capabilities, has garnered significant interest across diverse groups due to its intuitive and child-friendly interface. This study aims to assist individuals with learning disabilities, particularly slow learners, by harnessing the motivational potential of tablet technology and exposing them to the latest advancements utilized by various industries.

The tablet's user-friendly interface, featuring touch and swipe interactions with on-screen icons, facilitates a dynamic learning experience (Monroe-Ossi et al., 2013; Goodwin, 2012). The intention is to familiarize slow learners with mobile technology, leveraging research suggesting that the deployment of such technology can offer positive exposure and enhance learning capacities (Goodwin, 2012; Lovato & Waxman, 2016).

Research indicates that the use of tablets and apps can significantly boost the motivation of students with learning disabilities. Kim, Park, and Coleman (2017) highlight that the portability and social acceptability of tablets contribute to the enjoyment and satisfaction of learning-disabled students. Similarly, Hassan and Mahmud (2015) demonstrate how tablet technology and apps enhance motivation, instilling confidence in slow learners to engage with tasks effectively.

Applying motivation elements proposed by Keller (1987), this research seeks to evaluate the motivational impact of tablet technology and apps on slow learners in the learning process. Schmidt (2016) suggests that tablets, particularly in one-to-one sessions, can be promising tools for both general and special education. Kim et al. (2017) emphasize the effectiveness of tablet technology in improving academic outcomes and fostering social interaction among students with disabilities.

In 2018, Qahmash highlighted the potential of mobile technology for various learning disabilities, such as mental retardation, autism, hearing impairment, and speaking disabilities. The abundance of apps available is considered a motivational factor, offering teachers opportunities to integrate them into the learning process for students with disabilities.

Chmiliar and Anton's (2015) research on eight learning disabilities students underscores the supportive role of tablet technology. The study reveals that while students benefit from using tablets and apps, they often require guidance and training to effectively navigate these tools. Simple functionality and ease of use were identified as crucial aspects that highly satisfied learning disabilities students.

Research consistently demonstrates that tablet technology increases motivation for student learning in a classroom setting. Tablets empower students by shifting control to them, creating a confident and happier learning environment (Shah, 2011). Moreover, the instant feedback provided by tablets is particularly beneficial for learners with attentional difficulties, a characteristic commonly observed in slow learners

(Quick, 2014). Overall, the integration of tablet technology introduces a new and positive learning atmosphere for slow learners.

Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to explore the utilization of tablet technology as a complementary educational tool to enhance motivation among slow learners in their learning process. The research seeks to:

1. Observe and assess the current learning methods employed for slow learners in the classroom environment.
2. Understand the appropriateness and suitability of integrating tablet technology into the learning experiences of slow learners.
3. Evaluate the motivation levels of slow learner students when utilizing tablets and apps as complementary educational tools in their learning.

The overarching goal is to gain insights into the effectiveness of tablet technology in motivating slow learners and enhancing their educational experiences.

Methodology

Research Design:

The study employs a qualitative research design, involving six weeks of classroom observation and informal discussions with teachers. This approach allows for a detailed exploration of how tablets and apps are used to enhance the motivation of slow learners in their learning environment.

Phases of the Study:

Contextual Study (Phase 1):

Initiated a comprehensive literature review to identify issues related to slow learners and their learning.

Data Collection (Phase 2):

Qualitative methods, including observation, discussion, field note-taking, and interviews, were used to collect data. Classroom observation involved ten mixed-level slow learners, selected by teachers, with two teachers participating in the study. Observations occurred once to twice per week for six weeks, using video recordings and notes. Informal discussions and interviews were conducted with slow learners' teachers.

Evaluation (Phase 3):

Data obtained were analysed to provide recommendations for future app development for slow learners. The discussion of results and implications contributes to the understanding of the issues and guides future improvements for slow learners' learning.

Procedures

During observations, traditional teaching was conducted for 40 minutes before introducing tablets and apps. The same app was consistently used, addressing topics aligned with traditional teaching. Slow learners performed two tasks, Task 1, and Task 2, with varying completion times based on individual abilities. Informal discussions with teachers explored their experiences using tablets and apps with slow learners and the impact on motivation.

Motivation Elements

The ARCS Motivational Model by Keller (1987) was applied to assess student learning motivation. The four key components – Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction – guided the evaluation. Teachers assessed motivation during both traditional and tablet-based learning using the Reduced Instructional Materials Motivation Survey (RIMMS). The RIMMS consists of 12 questions related to attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction, validated through previous research (Loorbach et al., 2015). The survey aimed to gauge motivation among slow learners based on the ARCS elements.

The Conceptual Framework

Researchers argue that mobile technology should be a fundamental skill in special needs education training (Dionne, 2013; Terrer-Perez, 2013). Dionne (2013) emphasizes the need for a framework guiding teachers in the use of mobile technology in special needs education. In this study, a conceptual framework has been proposed to assess and investigate the effectiveness of slow learners in both traditional learning and the use of tablets and apps.

Framework Overview

The conceptual framework illustrates the integration of tablet technology into traditional teaching and the concurrent measurement of motivation during the use of tablets and apps with slow learners. This framework is designed to align with and address the research objectives of the study.

Objectives of the Framework

The developed Framework Aims to

- Identify and evaluate the impact of tablet technology on the motivation of slow learners within their educational settings.
- Explore how traditional learning can be enhanced by integrating tablet technology, thus adding value to the learning experience of slow learners.

Key Components of the Framework

The framework focuses on

- Traditional Learning: This represents the baseline or traditional approach to education for slow learners.

- Integration of Tablet Technology: The incorporation of tablet technology into the learning process, serving as an additional tool.
- Measurement of Motivation: This involves assessing the motivation levels of slow learners during both traditional learning and the use of tablet technology.

Rationale for the Framework

The objective is to observe and analyse how the motivation of slow learners evolves when technology, specifically tablet technology, is introduced into their learning environment. By comparing traditional learning with tablet-enhanced learning, the framework seeks to provide insights into the effectiveness of tablet technology as a motivational tool for slow learners. The conceptual framework acts as a guide for understanding and evaluating the dynamics between traditional learning and the integration of tablet technology for slow learners, with a specific focus on motivation. The intention is to ascertain the potential value and impact of tablet technology in enhancing the educational experiences of slow learners.

Results

Observations and evaluations were conducted on both traditional learning and the use of tablets and apps with the help of the Reduced Instructional Materials Motivation Survey (RIMMS). Two tasks, focusing on the topics of Fruits and Parts of Body, were assigned in both learning settings.

Task 1: Fruits

The interaction gestures for Task 1 were dragging and dropping during traditional learning and touch gestures when using tablets and apps. The RIMMS scores averaged across motivation elements, were higher for tablet-enhanced learning compared to traditional learning.

Attention (A)

- Traditional Learning: 3.57
- Tablet and Apps: 4.56

Relevance (R)

- Traditional Learning: 3.31
- Tablet and Apps: 4.47

Confidence (C)

- Traditional Learning: 2.89
- Tablet and Apps: 4.19

Satisfaction (S)

- Traditional Learning: 3.03
- Tablet and Apps: 4.30

Task 2: Parts of Body

The interaction method for Task 2 involved touching the correct word for the displayed picture on the app. While the scores for tablet-enhanced learning were slightly different, the overall trend showed an improvement in motivation.

Attention (A)

- Traditional Learning: 3.97
- Tablet and Apps: 4.24

Relevance (R)

- Traditional Learning: 4.07
- Tablet and Apps: 4.09

Confidence (C)

- Traditional Learning: 3.71
- Tablet and Apps: 4.09

Satisfaction (S)

- Traditional Learning: 3.83
- Tablet and Apps: 4.35

Observations and Comments

- The use of tablets and apps led to a noticeable boost in motivation across all elements for both tasks.
- Attention and Relevance showed significant improvement in tablet-enhanced learning.
- Confidence and Satisfaction increased, indicating that slow learners felt more confident and satisfied when using tablets and apps.
- Task difficulty influenced scores, with Task 3 (not specified in the text) receiving marginal scores, suggesting potential challenges for slow learners.

The results demonstrate a positive impact of tablet technology on the motivation of slow learners, with increased scores across key elements. The findings support the notion that integrating tablets and apps into traditional learning environments can enhance the overall learning experience for slow learners.

Discussion

Tablet technology and apps represent advanced and widely used technology in various aspects of daily life (Baloian, Pino, & Vargas, 2013; Burke & Hughes, 2018; Hassan & Mahmud, 2015; Oliemat, Ihmeideh, &Alkhawaldeh, 2018). The study aimed

to explore the impact of tablet technology and apps on the learning experience of slow learners, considering the motivation elements of Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction (ARCS).

Positive Effects of Tablet Technology and Apps

1. Enhanced Learning: The study results indicated that the slow learners' motivation was significantly enhanced with the introduction of tablet technology and apps. The interactive features, audio, graphics, and colours within the apps contributed to a more engaging learning experience.
2. Increased Independence and Confidence: Slow learners exhibited increased confidence and independence when using tablets and apps. They focused on completing tasks and were less hesitant to try activities on their own.
3. Enticing Learning Environment: The tablet's touchscreen interface, coupled with interactive features, provided a seamless and stress-free learning environment for slow learners. The intuitive touch screen allowed them to work independently, leading to a sense of satisfaction.
4. Positive Teacher Perception: Teachers expressed satisfaction with the use of tablet technology and apps, considering them as complementary learning tools. Tablets facilitated group work, and slow learners showed reduced dependence on teachers compared to traditional learning sessions.
5. User-Friendly Nature: The tablet's natural interaction and intuitive touchscreen facilitated the exploration of learning naturally. Slow learners could learn through trial and error, repeating activities with interest and engagement.

Educational Policy Recommendations

1. Inclusion in Curriculum: The positive impact of tablet technology suggests the need for its inclusion in the learning disabilities educational syllabus. Integrating tablet technology into the curriculum would support teachers and policymakers in creating an inclusive learning environment.
2. Appropriate Strategies and Guidelines: The curriculum should include appropriate strategies and guidelines for incorporating tablet technology education into the learning experiences of slow learners. This ensures that teachers and students are comfortable, motivated, and understand how to effectively use the technology.
3. Inclusive Educational Apps: To further support tablet technology education, there is a need for the development and availability of suitable educational apps. These apps should be designed to meet the specific needs of slow learners and contribute to their overall learning progression.

Enhancing Learning Engagement For Slow Learners With Tablet Technology

Tablet technology emerges as a powerful interactive learning tool, particularly effective in capturing the attention and participation of slow learners. The intuitive design of tablets, marked by user-friendly interfaces, significantly contributes to the comfort and success of slow learners in using these devices. This intuitiveness becomes a guiding factor, making the tablet a suitable and easily navigable tool for the target audience.

1. Acceptance and Attitudes of Slow Learners: Understanding the acceptance and attitudes of slow learners towards tablet technology is crucial for the success of its integration into their learning environment. Tablets serve as instrumental learning tools, breaking down barriers and offering a more accessible learning experience. The assistive features embedded in tablet technology play a pivotal role in supporting the unique needs of slow learners (A. A. Gasparini & Culén, 2012; Winstead, n.d.).
2. Multimodal Features and Engagement: Tablet technology, with its multimodal features encompassing sounds, animations, text, and colours, significantly enhances the engagement of slow learners in multisensory ways. The multimedia capabilities, coupled with interactive apps, provide a multidimensional learning experience. The incorporation of audio, graphics, and touch/swipe functionalities generates excitement and enjoyment for slow learners during learning activities.
3. Benefits and Motivation: The use of tablet technology and apps brings about various benefits to slow learners, promoting increased attention, confidence, and overall enjoyment in the learning process. The advanced nature of tablet tools stimulates a new approach to learning for slow learners, encouraging them to explore and gain inspiration to improve their educational journey.
4. Building Confidence and Self-Initiative: Tablet technology contributes to the development of confidence among slow learners as they take the initiative to explore and navigate these devices. The excitement displayed by slow learners in analyzing tablet functionality and applications indicates a positive impact on their self-assurance in learning.
5. Teacher Perspectives: While teachers recognize the usefulness of technology in aiding slow learners, they emphasize the importance of ongoing support and guidance. Teachers play a crucial role in ensuring that slow learners have the confidence to independently perform learning activities using tablets and apps. Additionally, teachers suggest that each slow learner having their own tablet could enhance effectiveness, enabling more independent learning with teacher support.
6. Exposing Slow Learners to Technology: The introduction of tablet technology aims to expose slow learners to contemporary technological advancements. The goal is not to transform slow learners into fast learners but rather to

instil a sense of inclusion, fearlessness, and familiarity with technology in their daily lives. The study's focus is on nurturing a positive learning spirit among slow learners within the evolving landscape of technology.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study explored the integration of tablet technology as an educational tool to enhance motivation among slow learners, a subgroup within the realm of learning disabilities. Slow learners, characterized by mild cognitive disabilities, face challenges in traditional learning settings, and their unique needs often lead to lower motivation levels. The research investigated the impact of tablet technology on the motivation of slow learners and sought to address the gap in empirical studies regarding the application of tablets in the education of this specific group.

The research unfolded in several phases, including a contextual study, data collection through qualitative methods, and a comprehensive evaluation. The conceptual framework, guided by the ARCS Motivational Model, provided a structured approach to assess the motivation levels of slow learners during traditional learning and tablet-enhanced learning. The results demonstrated a positive impact of tablet technology on motivation, with increased scores across attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction elements.

The study highlighted the positive effects of tablet technology and apps on slow learners, including enhanced learning experiences, increased independence and confidence, an enticing learning environment, positive teacher perceptions, and the user-friendly nature of tablets. The findings suggested that tablet technology can be a powerful interactive learning tool for slow learners, providing a more accessible and engaging educational experience.

Educational policy recommendations were provided, emphasizing the need for the inclusion of tablet technology in the learning disabilities educational syllabus, appropriate strategies and guidelines for its incorporation, and the development of inclusive educational apps tailored to the needs of slow learners.

In summary, this research contributes valuable insights into the potential of tablet technology to enhance learning engagement for slow learners. By recognizing the positive impact on motivation and addressing the specific needs of this group, educators and policymakers can work towards creating more inclusive and effective learning environments for slow learners within the evolving landscape of educational technology.

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