Survey Research Proposal

EDTC 809 Assessment and Evaluation

New Jersey City University

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**Give a brief description of your study**

In an article on Assistive Technology(AT) Benefits for Students with Disabilities (1998) the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997)is credited with bolstering (AT) use for students with disabilities. The article reports the federal definition of assistive technology is **“**any piece of equipment or product system whether acquired commercially off the shelf modified or customized that is used to increase maintain or improve the functional capabilities of children with disabilities.” In this study the impact on students of the use of Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) devices will be researched. Augmented Alternative Communication is used for students that are non-speaking or when natural speech is not meeting their communication needs. In these cases strategies augment their current communication, specifically text to speech programs and augmented alternative communication devices will be researched. Websites such as Autism Speaks have indicated that 1 in every 3 individuals who has autism is nonverbal today. With that, in recent years more and more schools have been embracing educational technology such as text to speech programs and picture to speech programs where sign language was the only alternative previously.

**Who will be the participants, how will you select them, how will you contact them, do you see any potential issues?**

This is a purposeful survey seeking participation from persons who are knowledgeable in the field. ASAH is a NJ non profit that services 145 schools for special education of the handicapped. I keynoted for ASAH annual conference in 2015. I intend to use that connection to enlist their assistance in helping me find appropriate schools for my survey.

ASAH will be approached to provide a listing of schools which service non verbal students with autism - approximately half). Once that list is available an email will be sent to the school administrator requesting the Speech Language Specialist/teacher of the the handicapped, in each of these schoolsrequesting their participation in the qualitative study. The speech language coordinator in NJ is a licensed advance teaching certification, and the SLC will be responsible for filling out the survey with the students teachers and returning them. It is anticipated that due to the current lack of research in a real world context , at the school level, and possibly the need for additional technology training in AAC the participants will welcome participating as a means to document the current state of the field and the results possibly be used to generate more funding for programs and training. An IRB will be needed to be approved prior to contacting any of the participants however a list of the schools servicing non verbal autistic programs can be obtained from ASAH or their member websites directory which is currently online.

**What are your research questions?**

Creswell defines the central questions are broad questions that allow a central phenomenon to be addressed. in this study the use of AAC and its value to students is explored. The interview style will consist of closed and opened questions. The closed questions will be demographic in nature consisting of the background of the respondent. The open-ended interview focused on 3 central questions with a sub-question for each. The questions are listed below.

**Central Question 1:** How do teachers use AAC in the classroom to benefit nonverbal children with autism?

**Sub-Question:** How has PECS and/or IPads specifically impact your students?

**Central Question 2:** What is a key indicator for success for nonverbal children with autism in classrooms when it comes to AAC?

**Sub-Question**: What is something you think can be improved involving AAC in the classrooms?

**Central Question 3:** How will AAC benefit nonverbal children with autism?

**Sub-Question:** When assessing further research on AAC, what are some areas that need to be discussed.

**What is the need of this study?**

Studies have indicated that of the 25% of all persons with autism those with nonverbal autism 40% of the time have average to above average intelligence. An example can be provided in Carly Fleischmann (2012), a nonverbal young woman on the autism spectrum who can communicate via an IPad through a text to speech program. While presenting on the topic she indicates that “Just because you can’t speak doesn’t mean you don’t have something to say.” Autism Speaks Technology Kit emphasizes communication is a basic human right, communication should extend beyond conveying basic wants and needs, and individuals should be able to independently express all aspects of their personality. Although many reviews of literature have been conducted in this field there is still a gap in real world context. This study will address this by examining nonverbal disabled students programs in New Jersey.

**Will your research be quantitative or qualitative?**

The study will be qualitative. Kvale defines qualitative research interviews as seeking to describe and the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say (1996). With these open ended questions we can figure out the participant’s experiences in greater detail than done through quantitative research interviews. We can develop themes and subthemes from the responses Since this survey relies on real life experience of AAC in the classroom setting it has no right or wrong answer which would lend itself to a quantitative study but rather captures the real life experience of the students and can be grounded in a disability philosophical framework where the results are designed at improving the lives of those with communication disorders.

**6. Give a brief description of the types of questions you will ask.**

The questions will be asked in a survey format consisting of closed ended and open ended questions:

Each of the respondents will be asked closed ended questions consisting of:

* Demographic information including Licensing and certification of SLC/teacher
* Amount of training on AAC devices
* The age range and disability of the students in your class

The qualitative questions are open ended questions consisting of:

* How do teachers use AAC in the classroom to benefit nonverbal children with autism?
* How has PECS and/or IPads specifically impacted your students?
* What is a key indicator for success for nonverbal children with autism in classrooms when it comes to AAC?
* What is something you think can be improved involving AAC in the classrooms?
* How will AAC benefit nonverbal children with autism?
* When assessing further research on AAC, what are some areas that need to be discussed.

Other questions as suggested by the instructor per his review of this proposal.

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