استخدام التكنولوجيا في تعليم رياض الأطفال

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الخلاصة

لقد وجدت اختلافا كبيرا في أنماط التعليم بين المملكة العربية السعودية والولايات المتحدة، في المملكة العربية السعودية، تعلمت عن طريق التعليم المباشر، يعتمد هذا النوع من التعلم على قدرة المعلم على شرح المعلومات للطلاب، حيث أن الطلاب يجلسون ويصغون فقط، لذلك، لا توجد مناقشة أو حرية للطلاب للتعبير عن أفكارهم، ومع ذلك، في الولايات المتحدة حيث تدرس ابنتي، يشارك الطلاب بنشاط في عملية التعلم الخاصة بهم، هنا يشتمل أسلوب التدريس على كل من تفكير الطالب الناقد وتقييم المعلم في الوقت نفسه. الغرض من مشروعي هو تحديد كيفية استخدام التكنولوجيا في تعليم اللغة في مرحلة الطفولة المبكرة، أود أن أطبق طرق تعليمية فعالة لدمج التكنولوجيا في تعليم اللغة فى الطفولة المبكرة، سأستخدم طرق التدريس الفعالة هذه عندما أعود إلى بلدي، انها تساعد الطلاب على تحسين قدرتهم على فهم الدرس، كما أنه يزيد من مهاراتهم المعرفية والاجتماعية والتقنية. تكمن المشكلة في تحديد كيفية دمج التكنولوجيا في تعليم اللغة فى الطفولة المبكرة؛ سأركز على كيف يمكن للمعلمين إعداد أنفسهم لاستخدام التكنولوجيا في تعليم اللغة فى الطفولة المبكرة، وما هي الطرق الفعالة لاستخدام التكنولوجيا في تعليم اللغة فى الطفولة المبكرة؟

Using Technology in Early Childhood Instruction

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ABSTRACT

I found a big difference in the patterns of education between Saudi Arabia and the United States. In Saudi Arabia, I learned by direct instruction. This type of learning relies on the teacher's ability to explain the information to the students, since the students just sit and listen. Therefore, there is no discussion or freedom for students to express their ideas. However, in the United States where my daughter is studying, students are actively involved in their learning process. Here, the teaching style involves both the student's critical thinking and the teacher's assessment at the same time. The purpose of my project is to identify how to use technology in early childhood language instruction. I would like to apply effective teaching ways to integrate technology in early childhood language instruction. I will utilize these effective teaching ways when I go back to my country. It helps students to improve their ability in understanding the lesson. Also, it increases their cognitive, social, and technology skills. The problem is to determine how to integrate technology in early childhood language instruction; I will focus on how can teachers prepare themselves to use technology in early childhood language instruction, and what are the effective ways to use technology in early childhood language instruction?

Introduction

In my country, Saudi Arabia, we have a saying: "Learning in early age is as carving in a stone." I believe that education is one of the most important ways to help improve each generation's knowledge and skills, which as a result, develops the whole country. Since technology has entered many domains in the world, such as in science, education, and communication, I would like to apply technology as a tool of teaching to improve and facilitate my way of teaching.

When I came to the United State to earn my Master's degree, I saw that there are some differences in teaching strategies. Actually, that made me care and become curious to learn and search more about how early childhood instructors can use technology to assist students' learning. Saudi Arabia should change their educational system to help people have a more current and diverse education.

I found a big difference in the patterns of education between Saudi Arabia and the United States. In Saudi Arabia, I learned by direct instruction. This type of learning relies on the teacher's ability to explain the information to the students, since the students just sit and listen. Therefore, there is no discussion or freedom for students to express their ideas. However, in the United States where my daughter is studying, students are actively involved in their learning process. Here, the teaching style involves both the student's critical thinking and the teacher's assessment at the same time. In addition, most teachers and students enjoy this type of learning style because they are learning from each other. It builds community in the classroom, which encourages the students to learn. I wish I could have had the opportunity to study in the United States' school when I was growing up.

In this project, my instructional goal is to change the teaching method by using technology, particularly a Smart Board and computer for kindergarten students in Saudi Arabia. The unit I chose to teach is about plants, in a two-week unit: the first week is based on the *Oak Trees* story, and the second week is about *Seed Secrets* story. I will use technology, including Smart Board, PowerPoint, and overhead projector to encourage students and help them learn successfully.

Significance of this Study

Technology has positive and negative impacts in the classroom. Because of the challenges, teachers hesitate to use technology. However, technology is quickly becoming popular in our lives these days. Teachers should open their minds about this and try to make a connection between their students' lives and find a way to teach that will make learning interesting.

Using technology in the classroom provides a bridge in which students bring from home a greater understanding of technology such as knowing how to use a cell phone, a mouse, and much more. Technology is the inspirational tool our students need in this day and age.

Research Questions

1.   How can teachers prepare themselves to use technology in early childhood language instruction?

2.   What are the effective ways to use technology in early childhood language instruction?

Many studies show that there are effective ways to use technology in early childhood settings. In order to be effective, early childhood teachers need good technical skills on how to use the technology they have in order to establish a productive environment. Teachers should prepare the useful lessons to practice it and develop their technical skills to establish a good environment for students to learn in. Groth, Dunlap, and Kidd (2007) used three case studies as an example to show how "Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology (PT3)" grants can be used to prepare teachers to use technology in literacy methods courses. The results show that with support, the interns in the study learned to be comfortable when integrating technology in their lesson plans. As a result of the PT3 program these interns found new ways to enhance reading, writing, and language development through the use of technology. They were exposed to new software programs and they learned how to apply it in their lessons. The case studies showed that effective training for teachers provided an environment that encouraged exploration and reduced the fear of failure.

Theoretical

Early childhood teachers need time to practice their technology skills. They can provide support for learning from each other. It is good for teachers to exchange their ideas with other teachers by networking. It would help them to learn from each other. Finegan and Austin (2002) stated that it is imperative for teachers to receive time in order to experiment with technology. Not only that, but they must also share their discoveries with other teachers. This sharing of ideas provides inspiration and confidence.

Researchers are finding that technology is a beneficial tool in early childhood language instruction. First of all, technology helps students to communicate with each other in the learning environment. Therefore, they can learn from each other and exchange their information that could help them to understand the subject well. Yelland (2005) noted that there is an increase of communication occurring in computer centers, as compared with other classroom centers.

Secondly, technology has the power to improve cognitive skills and fine motor skills. Yelland (2005) stated that students who have access to computers have a higher level of cognitive development than those with no access. He believes that the computer requires the use of eye and hand control in a way that would develop fine motor skills in the students.

Technology has a strong impact on increasing reading skills. Green, Clancy, and Challoo (2012) note that technology improves the reading level by building vocabulary, which makes students strong readers. Other benefits include providing phonemic awareness practice as well as supporting phonics instruction. By using electronic books, students can read smoothly and with comprehension.

Through the use of technology, children learn technology skills, while enhancing social and cognitive development. The study by McCarrick and Xiaoming (2007) examined the existing empirical studies from 1985-2004 on the impact of computer use on preschool children's social, cognitive, language development, and motivation. This study included adequate pragmatic research to support findings. Because the research included studies from multiple sources there was not a specific subject listed. The studies included children from age three through kindergarten. This study was a meta-analysis, which compared negative and positive positions on the use of computers in early childhood. This research was based on early

childhood social, cognitive, and language development, and level of motivation. McCarrick and Xiaoming (2007) looked up the articles and tried to find the best match with interest about the impact of using computers in early childhood. In addition, when using computers, they discovered that there is more social interaction among peers than with their teacher. Also, children who use computers have a higher level of skills than who do not have access to computers.

Using an iPad in the classroom is an effective strategy to apply technology in early childhood literacy instruction. Omiteru (2012) said "The Apple iPad is a tablet created by Apple in 2010, and may be classified as a mobile device because of its features, size and internet capabilities" (p. 736). Additionally, he believes that the iPad is a multipurpose tool because it has many utilities and multimedia parts. It provides many useful icons such as a camera, games, picture viewer, email, and personal documents which teachers can use in the classroom to make the lesson more interesting and interactive. The iPad is now a famous mobile device that people around the world are familiar with.

Some schools are integrating iPads into their classroom because it has many educational applications. One of the applications is digital storytelling. Reid and Ostashewski (2011) indicated that digital storytelling gives teachers an opportunity to improve students' reading skills. Digital storytelling has a positive impact in involving teachers and learners in the activity.

Another application is the use of digital interactive books. Hutchison, Beschorner, and Schmidt-Crawford (2012) discussed how these interactive applications help students by providing digital text with audio support, pictures, and word tracking. Furthermore, it is easy for students to discover the meaning of new words. It gives teachers the opportunity to establish new curriculum to prepare their students for the 21st century. Additionally, the iPad has many advantages to use it in literacy instruction. First, it is easier and faster to use than a computer. Secondly, it helps students to work as a group to solve problems. Finally, it is a simple tool for students to navigate on their own.

There are many studies that reveal the challenges of using technology in early childhood literacy instruction. One of the largest challenges in using a computer in the classroom is that usually there are not enough computers for everyone to have a turn. Bauer and Kenton (2005) noted that there is a limit to the number of computers that some schools can offer to their

students. Therefore, the students do not have adequate time to utilize the computer. Also, the limitation of time does not allow students to receive the whole benefit computers can offer. In addition, teachers play a big part in the application of technology in the classroom. Vodopiec (2011) mentions "How children connect to the world of media and how their media literacy will develop depends on the influence and example of adults and on how adults transfer their knowledge to children" (p. 71).

The other challenge is the nature of the family. Family beliefs about technology will influence how children will accept the uses of a computer. Levy (2009) notes that it is important for children to learn at home but it is more important for them to bring their knowledge to school. Moreover, Vodopiec (2011) mentions that family is a part of the challenge of using technology in the classroom because some parents do not accept the integration of media in their children's learning process and some other parents are poor, so they cannot offer computers for their children to use. These children face a hard time working with computers because they are behind the technical skills of other students.

Assessment and Evaluation Plan

I believe that assessment is a very important tool for teachers to use with students to measure their gain of knowledge and skills. Every teacher should have an assessment plan for the student to guide the teacher into moving from one lesson to the next. The result of the student's assessment would lead the teacher to choosing the best method in order to be aware of the student's needs and differences in learning abilities. In this way, the teacher can use it to evaluate her instructional strategies.

Bond (2013) talked about different strategies for teachers to apply reflective assessment. It encourages students and teachers to work together in the assessment process. It gives students and a teacher more opportunities to communicate about what they learned that would build community in the classroom. The author mentioned three methods of reflective assessment. First, teachers can ask students about what they have learned by writing a sentence or more by starting with "I learned… " Secondly, the teacher can ask students to think aloud about what they have learned and have conversations with other classmates. The third method he gave us is termed as a clear and an unclear window that means students will use a paper and divided into two parts. The first part is about what they have understood and the second part

is for what they do not understand. That would give the teacher a clear map to prepare for the future instruction.

Reflections

Education has the power to change our future. If a student has a good education the country will have a good economy. They can serve their community in the best way. I believe that education can shape our lives in positive ways. For example, through education I have learned many things such as different perspectives of education, different cultures, and how to respect them. By keeping an open mind I have learned how to express improvement to my country. Teaching in a way that allows for different learning style helps children grow to be successful in a modern world, so we will have an enlightened generation. Teaching is a difficult job and I am respectful of all my teachers because they work hard to help us learn and be successful. As one saying goes, "Doctors save lives but teachers make lives."

I believe that teachers have a big impact in the students' learning because they spend most of the day with teachers. Therefore, the teacher should be a good role model in the class because children will imitate her. For example, the children may like the perfume that the teacher wears. They want to copy their teacher and accept their teacher's advice. Also, if the students admire their teacher, they will be motivated to be on their best behavior and to do their best in learning. A good teacher should be aware of diversity in the classroom and respect that. In my opinion, the relationship between a student and their teacher is very important to what they are learning. In a good relationship, a child is eager to learn but in a bad relationship, that child will be resistant to teacher instruction.

The challenge I will face is differentiated learning needs. This issue is one of the main current issues in my country. I believe that there should be a change in the patterns of education because in the past the student would learn by direct instruction. This type of instruction depends on the teacher's ability to explain the information to the students by requiring the students to sit and listen. Therefore, there is no discussion or freedom for students to express their ideas. However, now students should be involved in the learning process. The teaching style should be focused on the student and teacher working with each other. In addition, most

teachers and students would accept the new learning style because they would be learning from each other.   This builds community in the classroom, which encourages the students to learn. Moreover, most teachers are currently traditional in learning. I agree that each student has a different learning style, so a professional teacher should know about their students' styles in learning to help them to achieve their goals.

Discussion

First of all, I learned through observing the children's development and learning in three different ways such as the Reggio Emilio program, Montessori program, and constructivist programs. It was a useful experience because I am an international student, so I saw the difference between these programs, and it was the first time for me to observe a school in the USA. Actually, we do not have different programs in our country.

Another concept that helped clarify my thinking around the issues was the democratic process. The democratic system is one of the most important and successful systems in the world. The democratic system has impacted education negatively and positively. Some countries have absolute democratic processes in education such as the U.S. The teachers and students have much freedom in school. For example, teachers can use any textbook in their class. Also, teachers and students can wear any clothes in school. In other countries, such as Saudi Arabia, there are no democratic processes like this in education.

Diversity in the classroom was one of the concepts that helped clarify my thinking around the issues because I am an international student. I completely agree that is good for teachers to learn some facts about the students' background in order to support them better in their learning. It is not easy for students to learn a second language and a new culture or tradition. It is very important to make students like the English language because it is not the same as other curriculums.   I believe that this will allow them to learn English as a second language more quickly. Teachers should have more skills and knowledge about how to work with students from different cultures. It is important to learn about the values in order to respect people from diverse backgrounds. It is necessary to remember how difficult it can be to live in a new country. However, they can bring different ideas to this new country, which can help them to feel included and valued in their new surroundings. As a teacher, it is important to

trust children and facilitate their learning process to be successful in their life. As a result, diverse people can feel successful in the class.

During the time when I searched for this project, I read some different views about teachers' jobs. In fact, in many countries, people think that being a teacher is easy and that they get many vacations. They thought teachers just go to school and give students lessons. They do not know about what challenges they may face in school or out of school. However, being a teacher is a very hard job. Teachers must spend a lot of time researching the best way to teach in such a way as to improve the student's skills. In fact, teachers have a strong impact in developing a country because they influence future citizens such as doctors, engineers, and lawyers. They all learned from their teachers.

Today, the education in Saudi Arabia is in a stage of development. Developing education is one of the most important goals for the king of Saudi Arabia. Actually, the king of Saudi Arabia has cared about education since he became vice-president. Every one or two years, he opens a new university or institute. There were only seven universities before he became king. Today, Saudi Arabia has more than 21 public universities and several private universities. He spends a lot of money in education. In the first years when he became king, he made a huge program to send smart students to other countries that have good education programs. Today there are more than 100,000 Saudi students in the United States, and every year this number increases. This number is only in the United States. Actually, Saudi Arabia sent students to more than 10 countries. He gives the students who study outside his country everything such as a salary, insurance, and the cost of the university because he knows these students in the future will be responsible people. Thus, the best way to develop people is to give them a good education. One of the most important messages of classes in the United State is that learning does not have to be always focusing on adding more information to our knowledge. However, it could be about how to look about matters from different perspectives and understanding others; which facilitates the way we respect and understand each other as international students. Also, despite the fact that the main objective of this class was not focusing on sharing different cultures and methods' of teaching and learning around the world, I found that this class provided some great topics that enabled us to derive some great ideas that could fit in our schools' systems.

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