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Distance education applications in concept acquisition for disabled individuals/ special education for handicapped

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Abstract

Distance education has become developing and becoming widespread application all around the world, for the individuals, expecting different conditions and expectations as an option for education. Reaching the speed of sharing and cycle of knowledge is the objective of the basis of all education technologies presented until today.

That is because of the fact that distance education is providing education to large mass with a quite flexible approach for individuals who are in different conditions in the form of that they can benefit from. The most important and conspicuous objective of distance education is making it possible to access the knowledge that is needed with a small amount of money and without time and space limitations for those who is a part of society that need special education by means of distance education which is a system in web-based learning. It is revealed that; especially because of the problems in understanding and interpretation of themselves and their environments due to their disabilities; people, with mental disabilities, deaf and having difficulties in learning, can be successful and benefit from education technologies in distance education by individually or in a group while during the process of concept acquisition. The main objective of this study is; presenting the opinions and researches about the subject by drawing attention to distance education applications in concept acquisition for special education for handicapped. This is a descriptive study which is consisting of literature review, and comments.

Keywords: Distance education; concept acquisition; special education for handicapped.

1. Introduction

One of the main conditions of being in a modern world is; providing equal standards in education for the individuals who are bigger than the underestimated quantities in society and preparing them better conditions in life from the beginning of their early childhood. According to the findings of Ministry of Education in 2007-2008; most of the individuals, need special education, is consisting of firstly, deaf, and mental or orthopedically handicapped people. According to Celik (2007); for these people prior to their pre-school period, if they learn concepts and skills as a precondition attribute for preparation to elementary education; they can learn the basic academic skills that they get during elementary education period easily with their developer peers. Children when they start to primary school

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they are learning the basic concept such as colour, size, quantity, shape, quality, ground direction and act, they also consolidate these features by experience in and outside the classroom. These basic concepts, required by primary education, can be gained by deaf, mental and etc. handicapped individuals by means of pre-school education programs (Varol, 1992). Yet, handicapped people cannot learn the basic concepts as a result of their experiences, with their developer peers in the level of normal skill and knowledge. This situation motivates families and special education teachers to investigate different methods, to search and struggle about providing these children to be least affected. Distance education application is ranked among the salient applications in the point of time, space and showing flexibility, especially for the people affected by disability. It can be said that; this is because of the fact that; distance education is providing an education opportunity with a flexible approach to large mass and this education is in the style of handicapped individuals can benefit. The conspicuous objective of distance education making it possible to access the knowledge that is needed with a small amount of money and without time and space limitations for those who is a part of society that need special education by means of distance education which is a system in web-based learning.

What is Concept?

Concept is defined as, in general, having a meaning in human mind and representing common traits of different phenomenon and subjects that can change into verse form, in another word; it is a whole shoot of related stimulus which leads to react (Ekergil, 2000). According to Celik (2007); concepts are defined as a set of stimulus which cause common reaction in individuals, is used for grouping the similar object, human being, event, idea, and processes.

1.1. How do handicapped children learn concepts?

Before children learn all of the features of concepts, they learn to recognize the objects and phenomenon that they confront, to match objects with similar features and to distinguish them from other objects. According to Sari (2007); concept acquisition starts from the beginning of individuals' lives and continue lifelong. Learnt concepts increase and become complicated as growing up. Especially the limitation in disabled children's lives, the complexity in concept acquisition is definitively appeared. While normal children are learning concepts with their families and without studying systematically, it is difficult for handicapped children to learn concepts without studying systemically in daily life. Among the reasons of this difficulty; the families of the disabled children are helping them more than they need, and doing things instead of children although they can have the ability to do, or the families give away to despair, denying the situation at the same time they are not helping their children by ignoring their disabilities. For this reason; disabled children should be taught the concepts systemically in a special prepared atmosphere distinctively (Varol, 1992). In recent years, internet has affected deeply the education models and programs; as a result it makes distance education in an indispensable position without time and place limitations (Topaloğlu et. al, 2008). Distance education applications are representing an irrevocable opportunity for the families, whose education has been abandoned because of the liabilities about family and works, hence for the children of these families. For this reason; distance education is fairly preferred because of representing several different education opportunities and it's flexibility in terms of time, space for the disabled individuals with the guidance of their families (Chyung, Winiecki & Fenner, 1998). Within the concept of education; we come across with the applications of interactive TV or web-based education and technology based distance education as an alternative for the mental disabled individuals' families and the special education teachers, teaching in the countryside (Spooner, Spooner, Algozzine & Jordan, 1998; Ludlow, 1995).

3. Results

Nowadays; the technologies, which has become a part of our lives, should not only be a habit of consuming, but also it should be in an endeavour of serving to people. For this reason; the technological developments that are chosen by individuals, should serve for the use of humans. Especially, by the development of internet, the society should benefit from the challenge of presenting information. With this opportunity; the society must be in the level of different technological developments. In order to do our works and solve our problems, we should not only pay attention of technological developments, but also we should use information technologies in our daily lives. Whatever field it is, we need to use the technology. And the families should provide their children to have the opportunity of using these technologies (Okur, 2006). If we take into account of opportunities in education, distance education is a must of current technologies in terms of; teaching on time to people, without time and space limitations, the increase in teaching environmental resources and the decrease of differences between computerized environment and traditional environment and the speed of information retrieval. We are living in a technological society that we can access to information by using the internet, computer, and printing. There are some ways for the families, individuals who need special education, and educators to join in information societies. These ways are the materials such as computers, communication printed materials (Bryant & Bryant, 2003). Internet technologies are performing to gather and inform the families, teachers and individuals, who need special education. After this process; family education appears as a research resource on web-based family education for students and teachers (Male, 2003). The shortage in using the informatics technologies in the field of special education is attracting the attention. The duty of informatics experts and special education experts is benefitting from the technological developments that are felt in every part of our lives. When it is mentioned about the use of technology in education it is meant that; the families of the individuals that need special education, the special education experts and the education of mentioned individuals. As long as the technology is coming into our lives; individuals should benefit from provided opportunities and the teachers should use these technologies in education (Okur, 2006). In special education, virtual environment can be used for individuals who need special education. Within this scope; web sites on several subjects, web portals, and course contents can be provided to be used in or outside the classroom. If we look at the similar studies; moodle.trakya.edu.tr (e-learning for mental handicapped), engelimityok.com (web portal for the families of individuals who need special education) ozelegitimuygulama.com (web portal for the families of disabled individuals), webct.anadolu.edu.tr (web-based learning for the fathers of mental disabled children) are some examples of web-based education. It is expressed that; technology based education is lightening the family's responsibilities. In a general perspective; parents who want to contribute to their children's education can have the opportunity of getting new ideas with their child by the help of technology without time and space limitations. Web-based education opportunities provide more effective and permanent learning at the same time it has an important potential in the process of learning. For the normal individuals; reducing the complexity of environment knowing the objects, planning and implementing the events learning the concepts in the way of providing to increase the speed of learning and thinking is very important at the same time; concept acquisition is important as well for the individuals, who need special education in a vital way. Permanent and efficient concept education is provided for the individuals who need special education to consolidate and humour them into social life by the help of technology. In this context; one of the resources of benefitting from technological opportunities with the help of computer based distance education.

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