

Engaging Students with Special Education Needs through Technology-Enhanced Interactive Activities in Class

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Abstract : Students with Special Education Needs (SEN) face many challenges in learning. Various challenges include difficulty in handwriting, slow understanding and assimilation, difficulty in paying attention during class, and lack of communication skills. To engage students with Special Education Needs in class with general students, Blackboard Collaborate is used as a teaching and learning tool to deliver a lecture with interactive activities. Blackboard Collaborate provides a good platform to create and enhance active, collaborative and interactive learning experience whereby the SEN students can easily interact with their general peers and the instructor by using the features of drawing on a virtual whiteboard, file sharing, classroom chatter, breakout room, hand-raising feature, polling, etc. By integrating a blended learning approach with Blackboard Collaborate, the students with Special Education Needs could engage in interactive activities with ease in class. Our research aims at exploring and discovering the use of Blackboard Collaborate for inclusive education based on a qualitative design with in-depth interviews. Being served in a general education environment, three university students with different kinds of learning disabilities have participated in our study. All participants agreed that functions provided by Blackboard Collaborate have enhanced their learning experiences and helped them learn better. Their academic performances also showed that SEN students could perform well with the help of technology. This research studies different aspects of using Blackboard Collaborate to create an inclusive learning environment for SEN students.

Keywords : blackboard collaborate, enhanced learning experience, inclusive education, special education needs

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