

Students Competencies in the Use of Computer Assistive Technology at Akropong School for the Blind in the Eastern of Ghana

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Abstract : The use of computer assistive technology has captured the attention of individuals with visual impairment. Children with visual impairments who are tactual learners have one unique need which is quite different from all other disability groups. They depend on the use of computer assistive technology for reading, writing, receiving information and sending information as well. The objective of the study was to assess students' competencies in the use of computer assistive technology at Akropong School for the Blind in Ghana. This became necessary because little research has been conducted to document the competencies and challenges in the use of computer among students with visual impairments in Africa. A case study design with a mixed research strategy was adopted for the study. A purposive sampling technique was used to sample 35 students from Akropong School for the Blind in the eastern region of Ghana. The researcher gathered both quantitative and qualitative data to measure students' competencies in keyboarding skills and Job Access with Speech (JAWS), as well as the other challenges. The findings indicated that comparatively students' competency in keyboard skills was higher than JAWS application use. Thus students had reached higher stages in the conscious competencies matrix in the former than the latter. It was generally noted that challenges limiting effective use of students' competencies in computer assistive technology in the School were more personal than external influences. This was because most of the challenges were due to the individual response to the training and familiarity in developing their competencies in using computer assistive technology. Base on this it was recommended that efforts should be made to stock up the laboratory with additional computers. Directly in line with the first recommendation, it was further suggested that more practice time should be created for the students to maximize computer use. Also Licensed JAWS must be acquired by the school to advance students' competence in using computer assistive technology.

Keywords : computer assistive technology, job access with speech, keyboard, visual impairment

Conference Title : ICISE 2017 : International Conference on Inclusive and Special Education

Conference Location : Vancouver, Canada

Conference Dates : August 07-08, 2017