

21st Century Computer Technology for the Training of Early Childhood Teachers: A Study of Second-Year Education Students Challenged with Building a Kindergarten Website

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Abstract : This research is the continuation of a process that began in 2010 with the goal of redesigning the training program for future early childhood teachers at the Ohalo College, to integrate technology and provide 21st-century skills. The article focuses on a study of the processes involved in developing a special educational unit which challenged students with the task of designing, planning and building an internet site for kindergartens. This project was part of their second-year studies in the early childhood track of an interdisciplinary course entitled 'Educating for the Future.' The goal: enabling students to gain experience in developing an internet site specifically for kindergartens, and gain familiarity with Google platforms, the acquisition and use of innovative skills and the integration of technology in pedagogy. Research questions examined how students handled the task of building an internet site. The study explored whether the guided process of building a site helped them develop proficiency in creativity, teamwork, evaluation and learning appropriate to the 21st century. The research tool was a questionnaire constructed by the researchers and distributed online to the students. Answers were collected from 50-course participants. Analysis of the participants' responses showed that, along with the significant experience and benefits that students gained from building a website for kindergarten, ambivalence was shown toward the use of new, unfamiliar and complex technology. This attitude was characterized by unease and initial emotional distress triggered by the departure from routine training to an island of uncertainty. A gradual change took place toward the adoption of innovation with the help of empathy, training, and guidance from the instructors, leading to the students' success in carrying out the task. Initial success led to further successes, resulting in a quality product and a feeling of personal competency among the students. A clear and extreme emotional shift was observed on the spectrum from a sense of difficulty and dissatisfaction to feelings of satisfaction, joy, competency and cognitive understanding of the importance of facing a challenge and succeeding. The findings of this study can contribute to increased understanding of the complex training process of future kindergarten teachers, coping with a changing world, and pedagogy that is supported by technology.

Keywords : early childhood teachers, educating for the future, emotions, kindergarten website

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