

Inculcating basic self-advocacy skills at the primary school level

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Abstract

Self-advocacy can be defined as “the ability to speak up for what we want and need” (Schreiner 2007). It is important to teach this skill in the class at an early age to help children overcome their fears as well as gain self-esteem and confidence when speaking up. Learning to speak up or asking for help is another way forward step in developing self-advocacy skills. A common concern raised by educators in secondary school is that students do not speak up or ask for help when faced with difficulties. Studies have also suggested that people with intellectual disability typically have poor ‘initiation in conversation skills’ (American Psychiatric Association 2013), due to their limited language abilities. It is particularly difficult for students with intellectual disability to acquire self-advocacy skills without explicit instruction. Experiential learning has been proven in many studies to be an effective approach for teaching self-advocacy skills (Cantor, 1995) Objectives: The aim of the project was to find out achievement of self-advocacy skills in the class when student needs it. Methodology: Results: Data were collected from all primary 6 classes (n=70). Collected data were analysed using appropriate statistical measures. Result show improvement in their skill level for all classes, based on pre and post-training scores on the checklist measures. Statistical analysis indicates a significant result for one class (n=12). However, results for other classes are not statistically significant. Conclusion: Findings suggest more of this type of collaborative approach may be necessary for students’ learning and skill practice in the class. It is also necessary to further practice to be done to facilitate generalization of skills to functional usage. ‘Fun’ experiential learning activities are a good way to engage and teach students with intellectual disabilities.

Keywords: Intellectual disability, self-advocacy, requesting for help, primary school, group speech therapy programme