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| EFFECTIVE USE OF COMPUTERS FOR LEARNERS
WITH VERY HIGH NEEDS:

Teachers' beliefs and experiences.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Education (Special Education)

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Suchitra Umapathy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the effective use of computers by learners with very high needs. A mixed methodology approach (i.e. quantitative and qualitative) would examine teachers' attitude towards computers, the barriers they faced , training ,their beliefs and perceptions as possible correlates of their level of technology use. Perspectives of special education teachers' would clarify the issues surrounding the integration of computers into the classroom and curriculum.

The convenience sample used in the quantitative analysis of this study consisted of special education teachers employed in special schools in New Zealand. Each teacher filled out a survey which sought to explore their attitude towards the computer, their training, learners' needs and their perception. The qualitative analysis used a purposeful sample of 13 special education teachers who had previously filled out the survey. Results showed that majority of the sampled special education teachers used computers in class either individually or with the children to master skills just taught, help children express themselves, and to practice skills not learned well. In addition, teachers who reported higher levels of self efficacy were more likely to use the computer. The Majority of the interviewees thought that using computers with these children was beneficial; however, they also felt that it depended on learners' ability and level. Those teachers who did not feel so positive about using computers in the classroom were apprehensive towards using the technology. The lack of training did not significantly relate to teachers' computer use with children. Furthermore, technical issues prevented teachers from fully utilizing all aspects of computers. Despite this, the teachers used those computer programs that functioned properly.

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