Assistive technology: effects of training on education assistants' perceptions of themselves as users and facilitators of assistive technology and consequent transfer of skills to the classroom environment

Dianne J. Chambers
University of Notre Dame Australia

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APPENDIX 1

Assistive Technology Initial Questionnaire

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Age:  □ 18-25   □ 26-35   □ 36-45   □ 46-55   □ 56 +

Gender:  □ Female   □ Male

Number of years as an Education Assistant (Special Needs):

□ 0-1   □ 2-5   □ 6-10   □ 11-15   □ 16+

Primary disabilities of students you provide services to (choose one):

□ Learning disability/difficulty   □ Physical   □ Intellectual   □ Autism
□ Communication   □ Vision/Hearing   □ Other (please specify)______________________

Please select the appropriate response from those below:

□ I was requested by a principal or teacher to attend this training

□ I asked to attend the training

Have you had any other formal training in Assistive Technology?  IF yes, please state the type and duration:  □ YES   □ NO

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What educational experiences have you had? (i.e. Certificate IV).

☐ Completed to Year 10  ☐ Completed year 11 & 12  ☐ Education Assistant Course

☐ Other (please specify) ______________________________________________

Describe your ongoing educational professional development commitment over the past 3 years. (i.e. seminars, workshops attended, etc).

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<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. How would you rate your confidence in using assistive technology for educational purposes?</td>
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<td>2. How would you rate your skills in using assistive technology for educational purposes?</td>
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<td>5. How would you rate your ability to transfer the information learnt in the training to the classroom?</td>
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Please describe what training you would like that is relevant to your needs:

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Please describe what training you would like that is relevant to the needs of the students with special needs with whom you work:

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION AND ASSISTANCE!
1. Please complete the labels for this diagram.
2. Insert the CD Rom into the correct drive and run the program. Change the volume and speed of the program.

3. Create a new Word document and type three sentences about yourself. Save the document and print it in landscape.

4. Using the help feature in Microsoft Word, find out how to make the text larger.

   Open a new PowerPoint slide. Using the help feature find out how to add a sound to your presentation.

   Open Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox (web browsers). Go to www.do2learn.com and then to http://www.songsforteaching.com/friendshipsongs.htm

   Use a search engine to look for assistive technology devices.

5. Modify the size of the text in your word document and change the volume of the speakers. Identify 3 different forms of assistive technology that you are aware of.

6. Close the Word and PowerPoint documents that are open. Log off as the user and shut down the computer.

SECTION 2: PLANNING

7. Describe two (2) features of assistive technology that make it useful for the following students:

   a) A cane for a student who is visually impaired
   b) Text-to-speech function for a student with a learning disability
   c) Switches for a student who has cerebral palsy

8. Read the following vignette and a) identify the student's needs and b) suggest two (2) types of assistive technology that may be useful:

   Jack is in Year 3. He has been diagnosed with a Global Developmental Delay and Cerebral Palsy. Jack is able to stand independently for periods of up to 15 minutes. He is working at a year 1 academic level for reading, writing and maths. Jack can become easily distracted by activities going on around him.
His needs are: Two (2) useful types of Assistive Technology may be:

9. What would you do if you were helping a student who used a voice output device and the device failed to work? How could you assist a student with vision impairment to access a worksheet if they had left their magnifying lens at home? When a computer does not work and a student who requires it to complete their work has to write an essay, what would you do?

SECTION 3: ASSESSMENT

10. Name three (3) ways of determining whether assistive technology was assisting a student with special needs.

11. How would you monitor the use of assistive technology in the classroom?
   
   How would you identify changes or modifications to the assistive technology that may be required for a student with a special need?
   
   Who would be involved in making changes to the assistive technology used by the student with special needs?

SECTION 4: PRACTICE AND COLLABORATION

12. Who would you work with in order to ensure that the assistive technology was appropriate for the student? Who, apart from yourself, would be involved with implementing the use of assistive technology in the classroom? Is it your role to instruct others in the use of the assistive technology? Why/Why not?

SECTION 5: SPECIFIC TECHNOLOGIES

You will be asked to use a variety of assistive technologies. Please do not worry if you are unfamiliar with them.

Thank you for completing the skills and knowledge assessment.
## APPENDIX 3
### Assistive Technology Questionnaire Post training

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

As a result of training:

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<th>Question</th>
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<td>5. How would you rate the training provided for usefulness in your classroom situation?</td>
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<td>6. How would you rate your ability to transfer the information learnt in the training to the classroom?</td>
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**Was the training was relevant to your needs? If so, how?**

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Was the training relevant to the students with special needs with whom you work? If so, how?

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Have your perceptions of personal competency in the area of assistive technology changed as a result of the training? If so, how?

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Do you feel better prepared to teach a student with a disability to effectively use assistive technology to the fullest extent possible? Why?

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Are there any areas related to Assistive Technology that you feel should have been addressed more thoroughly?

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Please discuss whether the skills covered in the training package will be used in the classroom in which you are situated. If so, how?

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Are you willing to participate in a small focus group to discuss further aspects of the training in assistive technology? The session should not run for longer than 1 hour.

☐ YES ☐ NO

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION AND ASSISTANCE!
Small group focus interview 1

1. Introduce all parties

2. Provide description of purpose of the Focus Group Interview
   a. Education Assistant perspective
   b. Identify potential useful training practices
   c. Identify feelings of efficacy

3. Formal questions to be asked of participants:
   a. Do you feel prepared to teach students with special needs using available assistive technology?
   b. Has the training changed these feelings of efficacy for better or worse?
   c. Do you feel that the training was suitable for varied situations and participants?
   d. Are the skills learnt in the training situation able to be implemented in the classroom? If not, why not?
   e. Have you increased the use of assistive technology in the classroom as a result of the training?
   f. What are the teachers’ responses to the increased level of knowledge of the Education Assistants?
   g. Do you feel that the students you work with have benefited from the training that you have received?

4. Questions that are drawn from responses to the questionnaire:
   a. Further exploration of feelings of efficacy?
   b. What aspects will be utilised in the classroom?
   c. Any further needs identified after the training?
   d. Why not sought out opportunities?

5. Open forum
# APPENDIX 5

## Assistive Technology Questionnaire Maintenance

Name: ___________________________  
Date: ___________________________

As a result of training:

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With reference to the Assistive Technology training that you completed with Dianne Chambers:

Did you use what you had learnt in training in assistive technology in the classroom? If so, how?

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Was the training relevant to your long term needs? If so, how?

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If your perceptions of personal competency in the area of assistive technology changed as a result of the training, do you still feel this is so? If so, how?

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Do you still feel prepared to teach a student with a disability to effectively use assistive technology? Why?

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Are there any areas related to Assistive Technology that you feel should have been addressed more thoroughly, now that you have had time to consolidate your learning?

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Are there any general comments you would like to make?

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Are you willing to participate in small focus groups to discuss further aspects of the training in assistive technology after 10 weeks in action?! The session should not run for longer than 1 hour.

☐ YES  ☐ NO

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION AND ASSISTANCE!
Small group focus session 2 - Maintenance

1. Introduce all parties

2. Provide description of purpose of the small group sessions
   a. Education Assistant perspective
   b. Identify potential useful training practices
   c. Identify feelings of efficacy post training

3. Formal questions to be asked of participants:
   a. Do you still feel prepared to teach students with special needs using the available assistive technology?
   b. After the 10 week period do you feel the training has affected your feelings of efficacy for better or worse?
   c. Have you increased the use of assistive technology in the classroom as a result of the training?
   d. Were the skills learnt in the training situation able to be implemented in the classroom? If not, why not?
   e. What were some of the barriers to implementation and how do you think these could have been overcome?
   f. Do you feel that the students you work with have benefited from the training that you have received?
   g. What are your feelings about pursuing extra training in the future?

4. Questions that are drawn from responses to the questionnaire (to be determined after questionnaire has been completed):
   a. Further exploration of feelings of efficacy?
   b. What aspects were utilised in the classroom/most relevant for you?
   c. Is there any specific AT that you would like to know more about?
   d. What could be done to enhance the use of AT in your classroom?
   e. Are there any ways to ensure a good working relationship between teachers and EASN – particularly in regards to AT?

5. Open forum
# APPENDIX 7

## Assistive Technology Application in the Classroom

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<th>Name:</th>
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<td>Year levels worked with:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brief description of the needs of the students: (i.e. physical difficulties-writing, painting, physical education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas in which I need to provide assistance:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Types of Assistive Technology that may be useful:

Sessions or times when the AT may be used:

People I need to liaise with:
Further training that I may need:

Other relevant information:

Date:

Review date:

**TECH** - For considering student’s needs

• Target the students’ needs and the learning outcome.
• Examine the technology choices, then decide what to use.
• Create opportunities to integrate technology with other instructional activities.
• Handle the implementation, and monitor the impact on the student’s learning  
  (King-Sears & Evmenova, 2007)
2nd July 2008

Mrs Dianne Chambers
45 Piesley Promenade
Canning Vale WA 6155

Dear Dianne,

I am writing to you in regard to your Application for Ethical Clearance for your proposed research project to be undertaken for the research component of your course at the University of Notre Dame Australia.

The title of this project is: "Assistive Technology: Effects of Training on Education Assistants and Consequent Outcome Improvements for Children with Special Needs"

I am pleased to advise that your proposal has been reviewed by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee and approval has been granted for this proposed study subject to the following conditions:

1. Applicant is requested to advise the Research Office in writing the process intended for obtaining consent. This advice will be tabled at the next meeting of the HREC (2nd September 2008) for ratification. It is suggested that the researchers will need to carefully consider the capacity of children to give meaningful consent and provide a plan for how this vulnerability will be addressed if encountered.

2. Applicant to expand the information sheet to include reference to use of video/audio taping.

3. Applicant to give consideration to reducing the complexity of the language in the information sheet.

Should the design of the study, the choice of instrument, or its manner of administration be altered in any significant way as the study progresses, you will be required to provide an update of your clearance application for fresh consideration by the University.

On behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee, I wish you well with what promises to be a most interesting and valuable study.

Yours sincerely,

Lorraine Mayhew
Executive Officer, Human Research Ethic Committee
Research Office

cc. Associate Professor Richard Berlach
Dear Ms Chambers

Thank you for your completed application received 26 June 2008 to conduct research on Department of Education and Training sites.

The focus and outcomes of your research project titled, Assistive technology: Effects of training on Education Assistants and consequent outcome improvements for children with special needs, are of interest to the Department, and I give permission for you to approach site managers to invite their participation. However, it is a condition of approval that the results of this study are forwarded to the Department upon conclusion.

Consistent with Department policy, participation in your research project will be the decision of the particular schools invited to participate and the individual staff members.

Responsibility for quality control of ethics and methodology of the proposed research resides with the institution supervising the research. The Department notes a copy of a letter confirming that you have received ethical approval of your research protocol from the Notre Dame University Australia Human Research Ethics Committee.

Any proposed changes to the research project will need to be submitted for Department approval prior to implementation.

Please contact Warren Brown, Policy Analyst, on 9264 5344 or researchandpolicy@det.wa.edu.au if you have further enquiries.

Very best wishes for the successful completion of your project.

Yours sincerely

NORMA JEFFERY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
POLICY, PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

27 June 2008

151 Royal Street, East Perth, Western Australia 6004
Dear Site Manager,

My name is Dianne Chambers. I am a student at The University of Notre Dame Australia and am enrolled in a Doctor of Philosophy. As part of my course I need to complete a research project. I would like to invite your school to take part in the project. I am interested in the views of Education Assistants (Special Needs) in relation to assistive technology use in the classroom.

The title of the project is Assistive Technology: Effects of Training on Education Assistants and Consequent Outcome Improvements for Children with Special Needs. My research concerns training Education Assistants (Special Needs) in the area of assistive technology and examining the effects of this training. The purpose of the study is to investigate the views of education assistants as they see themselves as users and facilitators of assistive technology in the classroom and examine the transfer of skills learnt in training into a classroom setting. Your school is one of 30 schools in the Fremantle/Peel District that have been approached for this project.

I seek access to Education Assistants (Special Needs) and possibly one or two children with special needs, with whom the Education Assistants work. The Education Assistants (Special Needs) will be invited to participate in an eight-week training program (2 hours per week) in the area of assistive technology. This training will take place during school hours. After the training, participants will be requested to complete a questionnaire and a short skills test.

A small number of participants will be sought to form a focus group to discuss issues and comments brought up in the questionnaire responses. This information will be audio recorded. Information collected through the questionnaire and the focus groups will be strictly confidential. This confidence will only be broken in the instance of legal requirements such as court subpoenas, freedom of information requests or mandated reporting by some professionals. To protect the anonymity of participants in a project with a small sample size, a code will be ascribed to each of the participants to minimise the risk of identification. The protocol adopted by the University of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee for the protection of privacy will be adhered to and relevant sections of the Privacy Act are available at http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/.

A small number of students (5 in total out of 30 schools approached) will be sought to aid in determining the impact of the training on students. This will involve observation of the students using assistive technology before and after the Education Assistant has had training in assistive technology. Parental permission will be sought for the students to participate.

I will keep the schools involvement in the administration of the research procedures to a minimum. However, it will be necessary for the school to provide time (2 hours a week for 8 weeks) for the Education Assistants to attend the training sessions.
Site Manager Informed Consent Form

Assistive Technology: Effects of Training on Education Assistants and Consequent Outcome Improvements for Children with Special Needs

SITE MANAGER INFORMED CONSENT FORM

- I have read and understood the aims, procedures and risks of the project as described in the information sheet.

- For any questions I may have had, I have taken up the invitation to ask those questions, and I am satisfied with the answers I received.

- I am willing for this school to become involved in the research project, as described.

- I understand that the school is free to withdraw from participating in the project at any time within 5 years from project completion, without prejudice.

- I understand that all information gathered by the researcher will be treated as strictly confidential, except in instances of legal requirements such as court subpoenas, freedom of information requests, or mandated reporting by some professionals.

- I understand that the protocol adopted by the University Of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee for the protection of privacy will be adhered to and relevant sections of the Privacy Act are available at [http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/)

- I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided the school or other identifying information is not disclosed.

- I understand that a summary of the findings from the research will be made available to me upon its completion.

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<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT’S</th>
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<tr>
<td>FULL NAME:</td>
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<td>PARTICIPANT’S SIGNATURE:</td>
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<th>RESEARCHER’S FULL NAME:</th>
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If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it may be given to the researcher or, alternatively, to the Provost, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6955, phone (08) 9433 6941.
Dear Education Assistant (Special Needs),

My name is Dianne Chambers. I am a student at The University of Notre Dame Australia and am enrolled in a Doctor of Philosophy. As part of my course I need to complete a research project. I would like to invite you to take part in the project as I am interested in the views of Education Assistants (Special Needs) in relation to assistive technology use in the classroom.

The title of the project is *Assistive Technology: Effects of Training on Education Assistants and Consequent Outcome Improvements for Children with Special Needs*. My research concerns training Education Assistants (Special Needs) in the area of assistive technology and examining the effects of this training. The purpose of the study is to investigate the views of education assistants as they see themselves as users and facilitators of assistive technology in the classroom and examine the transferal of skills learnt in training into a classroom setting. Your school is one of 30 schools in the Fremantle/Peel District that have been approached for this project.

Participants will take part in an eight week training program (2 hours per week) in the area of assistive technology. This training will take place during school hours. After the training, participants will be requested to complete a questionnaire and a short skills test. A small number of participants will be sought to form a focus group to discuss issues and comments brought up in the questionnaire responses. This information will be audio recorded. You will be offered a transcript of the focus group, and I would be grateful if you would comment on whether you believe we have captured your experience. Information collected through the questionnaire and the focus groups will be strictly confidential. This confidence will only be broken in the instance of legal requirements such as court subpoenas, freedom of information requests or mandated reporting by some professionals. To protect the anonymity of participants in a project with a small sample size, a code will be ascribed to each of the participants to minimise the risk of identification.

The protocol adopted by the University of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee for the protection of privacy will be adhered to and relevant sections of the *Privacy Act* are available at [http://www.hrmrc.gov.au/](http://www.hrmrc.gov.au/)

Before participating I will ask you to sign a consent form. Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the project at any time. If you wish to participate, the decision will need to be made by January 15, 2009 for you to be included in the project. Participants will be provided with support after the training in the form of email and phone contact from the researcher. Once a decision is made to participate, you can change your mind at any time within the minimum five year storage period of the research data (see below). All contributions made to the project will be destroyed unless explicitly agreed to by you. If the project has already been published at the time you decide to withdraw, your contribution that was used in the reporting cannot be withdrawn.
Data collected will be stored securely in the University’s School of Education for five years and can only be accessed by the researcher, Dianne Chambers. After a period of five years the data will be destroyed. This will be achieved by secure shredding of any data. Information that identifies anyone will be removed from the data and the results from the study will be made freely available to all participants approximately 6 months after completion of the training. This data will only be used for this project and will not be used in any extended or future research without first obtaining your consent.

This research will benefit you in your role as an Education Assistant (Special Needs) through the provision of increased knowledge and skills in this area. This will enable you to work more effectively with students who require teaching and learning adjustments to access the curriculum. There are no risks associated with your participation in this project.

The Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Notre Dame Australia has approved the study and it has met the policy requirements of the Department of Education and Training.

Dr Richard Berlach of the School of Education is supervising the project. If you have any queries regarding the research, please contact me directly or Dr Berlach by phone (08) 9433 0151 or by email at rberlach@nd.edu.au.

If you have had all questions about the project answered to your satisfaction, and are willing to become involved, please complete the Consent Form on the next page. This information letter is for you to keep.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Dianne Chambers
Tel: (08) 9433 0170
Email: dchambers2@nd.edu.au

If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it may be given to the researcher or, alternatively, to the Provost, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6959, phone (08) 9433 0941.

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EASN Consent Form

Assistive Technology: Effects of Training on Education Assistants and Consequent Outcome Improvements for Children with Special Needs

EDUCATION ASSISTANT (SPECIAL NEEDS) INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, [participant’s name] _____________________________ hereby agree to being a participant in the above research project.

- I have read and understood the aims, procedures and risks of the project as described in the Information Sheet.
- For any questions I may have had, I have taken up the invitation to ask those questions, and I am satisfied with the answers I received.
- I understand that I may withdraw from participating in the project at any time within 5 years from project completion, without prejudice.
- I understand that all information gathered by the researcher will be treated as strictly confidential, except in instances of legal requirements such as court subpoenas, freedom of information requests, or mandated reporting by some professionals.
- I understand that the protocol adopted by the University Of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee for the protection of privacy will be adhered to and relevant sections of the Privacy Act are available at [http://www.rhmrc.gov.au/](http://www.rhmrc.gov.au/)
- I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not disclosed.
- I understand that a summary of the findings from the research will be made available to me upon its completion.

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<th>PARTICIPANT’S SIGNATURE:</th>
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If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it may be given to the researcher or, alternatively, to the Provost, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6959, phone (08) 9433 0941.