

THE USE OF TASK ANALYSIS TO IMPROVE SELF – HELP SKILLS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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Abstract

Children with disabilities in the 21st century are seen as children who can become better members of the society. They can learn. They can interact productively with their peers who do not have disabilities. They can participate more fully in all aspects of society. Caregivers of children with disabilities are now seen as partners in ensuring that many options: educational, recreational, and vocational are available to these children whose intellectual or emotional disabilities have given them labels such as delayed, mentally retarded, intellectually disabled, learning disabled, pervasive developmental disorder, or autistic. Parents as the primary caregivers of their children's are the first and most influential teachers that continue to teach these children in ways that have proven effective over the years. Their teaching covers basic skills of paying attention and following direction; self-help skills of eating, dressing, and grooming; toilet training; play skills; advanced self-care skills; homecare skills; and functional academic skills.

Progressive legislation has mandated free appropriate public schooling for children with special needs and the resource available to caregivers have increased considerably along with increased responsibilities for schools. However, when a child has a special need, the specific responsibilities are not usually as clear cut, but they are no less important if the child is to achieve maximal independence.

Keywords: Task analysis, self – help skills, children with special educational needs

Introduction

Education aims to develop the knowledge and skills of the pupils to function effectively, act responsively and contribute to the society. It prepares individuals to meet the challenges of the society. It is concerned with the well-being of pupils in the preparation for a productive and meaningful life, in which individual potential is realized and freedom is guaranteed (Wuest, 1999). Pupils then should have equal opportunities to develop their abilities. Their education should prepare them to become contributing members to the economic and civic development of their respective communities (Winnick, 2004). However, the learning opportunities of students may not always be equal in terms of providing ways to develop their potentials, which would enable them to become effective members of the society. This is the case of students with disabilities who may not become active participants in a general education classroom because of the nature of their disabilities. Even then, the challenge to educators is to provide quality special education that will provide the opportunities for independent living.

The needs of students with disabilities vary according to the nature of their disabilities. Usually, students with severe needs for life-based curriculum which features independent living are those with intellectual disabilities. Children with intellectual disabilities should be taught to care for themselves most especially in the early stage of development to prepare them for a more challenging role in the society. The adaptive behavior of a child with intellectual disabilities generally covers communication, home- living, self-direction, self-care, social skills, health and safety, leisure, functional academic and work (Cegelka, and Prehm, 1992).

Self-help skill is a primary learning task each individual is expected to acquire. Self-help skills assist individuals to live happier and more productive lives when they are able to manage themselves alone. It is one learning area that teachers often neglect, but is very vital for an individual with a disability. Self-help skills are those skills necessary for achieving independence in many aspects of life. Teaching these skills will help a child become less dependent on those around him in his daily life. Just like any other areas of development, self-help must be equally given importance. Learning areas like self-help/adaptive skill are activities of daily living which pertain to the care of self-such as the following: a) feeding b) dressing c) toileting d) grooming and hygiene (Rosas and Consolacion, 1995).

As always as regarded undoubtedly, the regular teacher takes the most important role in developing the skills of these children to achieve their maximum potential. The researcher taught facilitated learning activities that promote physical wellness and provide appropriate self-help activities for children with special needs. Further, it may serve as reference materials for regular education teachers who are interested in conducting research on self-help skills for children with special needs

Method

This study utilized a descriptive study design.

Research Locale

This study was conducted at the Balanga Elementary School – SPED Center in Balanga City. It caters to the needs of individuals with disabilities and aspires to develop the full potentials of exceptional children and offers inclusion, and mainstreaming program.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were the students of children with intellectual needs enrolled in Balanga Elementary School – SPED Center.

Research Instruments

Pretest was used to gather the data from the samples of children with intellectual disabilities. Daily living skills were determined through interview with the parents and primary caregiver and actual observation of the student during the pretest.

This study was also identify the effectiveness of task analysis in the execution of daily living skills of children with intellectual disabilities through data collected from the posttest after the task analysis.

The six participants in this study were referred to as Child A, Child B, Child C, Child D, Child E and Child F (3 males and 3 females).

To describe the learner's performance on each step, the researcher used five level of skills: Skills Introduced (SI) where the skills are newly introduced to the child, Emerging Skills (E), where the child has it, but with little deviation, Progressing Skills (P) where the skills are progressing towards improving, Improving skills (I) the skills are geared towards further mastery skills and Mastered skills (M) the skills are already mastered by the child. To determine how the child performance on each task, the researcher strategized of assistance, these are: Verbal cues, Minimal Assistance, Moderate Assistance, Maximal Assistance and Supervision.

Results

Table 1 - Comparison of Child A's Execution of Daily Living Skills Before and After Tasks Analysis

Daily Living Skills	Before Task Analysis	After Task Analysis
Hand washing	Emerging minimal Assistance	Improving Skills with verbal cues
Juice preparation	Skills Introduced with supervision	Progressing skills with moderate assistance
Sandwich preparation	Skills introduced with supervision	Progressing skill with moderate assistance
Tooth brushing	Emerging skills with supervision	Progressing skills with maximal supervision

Table 1 is interpreted as there is a marked improvement in juice preparation and sandwich preparation. This indicates that task analysis facilitated the improvement of child A performance from introduction of schools with supervision to progressing with moderate assistance.

Table 2 - Comparison of Child B's Execution of Daily Living Skills Before and After Task Analysis

Daily Living Skills	Before Task Analysis	After Task Analysis
Hand washing	Emerging with minimal assist	Progressing with minimal assist
Juice preparation	Emerging with minimal assist	Progressing with minimal assist
Sandwich preparation	Emerging with minimal assist	Progressing with minimal assist
Tooth brushing	Emerging with supervision	Emerging with max assistance

Table 2 is interpreted as there is a marked improvement in hand washing, juice preparation, and sandwich preparation. This indicates that task analysis facilitated the improvement of child B performance from emerging skills to progressing with minimal assistance.

Table 3 - Comparison of Child C's Execution of Daily Living Skills Before and After Task Analysis

Daily Living Skills	Before Task Analysis	After Task Analysis
Hand washing	Emerging with Moderate Assistance	Progressing with minimal assistance
Juice preparation	Emerging with minimal assistance	Progressing with minimal assistance
Sandwich preparation	Emerging with moderate assistance	Progressing with minimal assistance

Tooth brushing	Skills introduced with supervision	Progressing with moderate assistance
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Table 3 is interpreted as there is a marked improvement in hand washing and tooth brushing. It shows that task analysis facilitated the improvement of child C performance from introduction of skill with supervision to progressing with moderate assistance.

Table 4 - Comparison of Child D's Execution of Daily Living Skills Before and After Task Analysis

Daily Living Skills	Before Task Analysis	After Task Analysis
Hand washing	Emerging with minimal assist	Progressing with minimal assist
Juice preparation	Emerging with minimal assist	Progressing with minimal assist
Sandwich preparation	Emerging with minimal assist	Progressing with minimal assist
Tooth brushing	Emerging with supervision	Emerging with max assistance

Table 4 is interpreted as there is a marked improvement in hand washing and tooth brushing. The table tells that task analysis facilitated the improvement of child D performance from emerging with supervision to emerging with max assistance.

Table 5 - Comparison of Child E's Execution of Daily Living Skills Before and After Task Analysis

Daily Living Skills	Before Task Analysis	After Task Analysis
Hand washing	Emerging with Moderate Assistance	Progressing with minimal assistance
Juice preparation	Emerging with minimal assistance	Progressing with minimal assistance
Sandwich preparation	Emerging with moderate assistance	Progressing with minimal assistance
Tooth brushing	Skills introduced with supervision	Progressing with moderate assistance

Table 5 is interpreted as there is a marked improvement in hand washing and tooth brushing. This indicates that task analysis facilitated the improvement of child E performance from introduction of skills with supervision to progressing skills with moderate assistance.

Table 6 - Comparison of Child E's Execution of Daily Living Skills Before and After Task Analysis

Daily Living Skills	Before Task Analysis	After Task Analysis
Hand washing	Emerging with supervision	Improving with minimal assistance
Juice preparation	Emerging with Maximal Assistance	Progressing with Minimal Assistance
Sandwich preparation	Emerging with Maximal Assist	Progressing with Minimal Assistance
Tooth brushing	Skills introduced with Supervision	Improving with Moderate assistance

Table 6 is interpreted as there is a marked improvement in hand washing and tooth brushing. This indicates that task analysis facilitated the improvement of child F performance from supervision to moderate to moderate assistance.

Legend

Level of Skills	Level of Assistance
SI – skills introduced	V/C – verbal cues
E – emerging	Mi – minimal Assistance
P – Progressing skill	Mo – Moderate Assistance
I – Improving Skills	Mx – Maximal Assistance
M – Mastered Skills	S - Supervision

Findings and Discussion

Based on the result, the following findings were revealed:

Task analysis of daily living skills can increase the independent tasks of children with special needs particularly children with autism. It decreases deviation from steps in hand washing, sandwich preparation, juice preparation. It also decrease prompts from an adult. It also decreases the tendency of the students not to do the steps in task analysis when physically or verbally prompted.

The use of pictures or photographs increases the comprehension of a one-step command to the child with autism because photographs serve as physical cue to what must be accomplished. Photographs as visual support to task analysis can reduce off-task behavior of students with autism. They can provide effective reinforcement to finish the activities of daily living. They can provide cue on what to expect next in a sequence of steps. They also provide immediate feedback and validation of the task on hand.

Task analyses are effective in improving the execution in improving of the three daily living skills namely; hand washing, sandwich preparation, and juice preparation. But they are less effective in improving the execution of tooth brushing. This could be attributed to limitation of photographs. A photographs being one dimensional lacks depth and clarity showing the up and down motion nor the back and front strokes. The concept of 10 counts in brushing each area and surface of teeth was not clearly depicted in the photographs.

Conclusion and Recommendation

A vast amount of research has been completed within the occupational therapy's field, but the number of studies completed within the special education area is still few in number.

The use of Task Analysis improved their skills in self - help skills especially if the tasks were breaking down steps into simplest way.

The use pictures also contribute to the improvement of complex tasks. Using visual cues helps children with special educational needs succeed in performing the tasks. Multi – media assisted instructions could help also in performing self – help skills.

There was a remarkable improvement also in their behavior because children with special needs are structured.

Further researches on the effectiveness of task analysis on the acquisition of leisure skills, domestic skills and community integration skills may be conducted.

It would be worthwhile for the future researchers to gather further evidences on the benefits of task analysis in a large number of participants. The visual support employed in this study was limited to photographs. Visual support such as video modeling system could be employed to determine the independence execution of daily living skills.

Additionally, to increased reliability of the data gathering procedures, an independent observer aside from the researcher could be employed in video recording the students as they do the steps in task analysis could also be included.

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