

'Giving Voice': The Effectiveness of an Experiential Workshop to Increase the Knowledge and Use of Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC) Devices among Teachers

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Many children/ adults who use AAC need to develop the ability to socialize, answer yes/no questions, respond to a wide variety of questions, offer and request for assistance, and express views, feelings and attitudes (Glennen & DeCoste, 1998). Children/ adults who require access to AAC may be at risk of reduced social opportunities, isolation, psycho-social issues and poor quality of life (Hamm & Miranda, 2006). There is a need to address conceptual explanations of 'communication', 'disability' and 'AAC' and the over-reliance on speech therapy sessions within teacher-caregiver training to create communication opportunities for AAC users. This study was assessed the effectiveness of an experiential training workshop on AAC for teachers. The workshop was offered to 20 teachers from a Special School and 10 teachers from a Special Centre and it covered the right to communicate, modes of communication and communication devices available at present in the country and. Participants' interaction with children using AAC devices was observed within the classroom before and after the workshop and their knowledge and use of AAC measured through a questionnaire pre- and post-workshop. The results indicated a significant increase in awareness of the concept of AAC, the right to communicate and different modes and AAC devices available at present. There was also an increase in the interaction of participants with children using AAC devices in the classroom immediately following the workshop. The key qualitative finding is a clearer understanding of the right to communicate using any means available. Post-workshop follow-up is required to ascertain whether the knowledge and skills gained from the workshop are carried over into practice with time.