

Evaluating an AAC Training Program for Special Education Teachers Based in a Developing Country

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There is limited research conducted on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) in developing countries (Srinivasan, Mathew, & Lloyd, 2011). We have only a limited understanding of how best to support the development of knowledge and skills of individuals who provide AAC support in developing countries with low resource settings. Research has documented that providing AAC training to communication partners can equip them with strategies that can facilitate increasing both the frequency and quality of communication interactions with children who have Complex Communication Needs (CCN). The current study evaluated the effectiveness of implementing training best practices identified by Muttiah et al. (2014) for special educators in Sri Lanka. The training was based on principles of adult learning. A one-group interrupted time series design was utilized with nine teacher-children dyads to measure the effectiveness of the AAC training. The special education teachers were taught to promote interactions with children who have CCN by providing evocative communication opportunities that included asking an open-ended question, comment or choice, providing a means for the child to respond, and waiting five seconds or more for a response. Results of the study indicated that teachers provided an increased number of evocative communication opportunities following the training. An increase was also seen in the number of communication turns that were taken by children with CCN. The results of this study provide preliminary evidence for a training framework that could be implemented in developing countries and other low-resource communities. The training content and format identified in this study can serve as a guide for others planning trainings in similar contexts. In addition, this study adds to the limited research base on AAC in developing countries.