

Chapter 12

Development of Avatar-Based Models and Tools for People With Intellectual Disabilities: As an Innovation System in Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

The chapter is about development of consciousness, emotion, motivation, and level of aspiration, with the ways that people react to the psychological, traumatic experience caused by the gradual realization of incapacity. Some people with an intellectual disability are capable of learning together with normally-developing peers if provided with special support; however, there are others who will need an individual education program adapted to their capabilities. The most important focus in working with such students is the individual approach with regard to the specific mentality and health of each person. Such an approach can be achieved through instructional methods like avatar-based learning as the improved development of project-based learning.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers who may have a student with an intellectual or cognitive disability in their general education classroom need to be aware of several things in order to assist the pupil in being successful. First, the general education teacher needs to understand that these students can learn the general education curriculum; however, it may take them longer than their grade-level peers to grasp a concept. Second, when teaching a student with this type of disability, the educator should be as concrete in the lesson as possible because abstract concepts are difficult for these students to understand. Also, breaking down the concepts into smaller increments, or chunking the material, will benefit the student greatly. Fourth, often students with an intellectual disability can only understand one- and two-step directions. Giving the student a small task to accomplish before moving on to the next one is good teaching practice for

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any teacher. Finally, teachers should provide the student with lots of sincere, positive affirmations. Do not simply tell the student that he or she is doing a good job but also include in what way they are doing a good job (e.g., “You are doing a good job at counting coins”). This will assist students with their self-esteem and encourage independence.

Presumably, it is much more difficult to implement inclusive education when teaching students with intellectual disabilities. However, providing individual education to one or several students with intellectual development disorders in a group with normally developing students has some advantages. There is no need to set up a separate group of intellectually challenged students; those students have a better chance to adapt to life and work among normally developing people, and they will have a wider choice of jobs. However, this mode of learning assumes that the intellectually challenged pupils have an adequate level of general educational preparation and effective communication skills.

Education of students with intellectual development disorders requires special psychological assistance at all grade levels. To update curricula and programs with regard to psychophysical and cognitive features of students with intellectual disabilities and with regard to their abilities and capabilities, it is necessary to considerably reduce the range and depth of the study material and to simplify its structure. Students with intellectual development disorders should be given much narrower curriculum knowledge and skills, and perhaps a number of concepts should be entirely excluded. Therefore, it is necessary to develop an individualized educational program and to modify the curriculum.

Students with intellectual disabilities practice concrete thinking, and the teaching material that is not associated with their personal experience does not interest them, whereas things relating to their activities in everyday life are grasped more easily. In addition, students with intellectual development disorders have a relatively low level of consciousness and evaluation of their own behavior, which manifests itself in inadequate actions and negative personal qualities (e.g., they do not keep appropriate distances away from people, they demonstrate unreasonable claims to surrounding people, they exhibit foolishness, shyness, etc.). Students with intellectual disabilities need constant support to reassure them that they are doing a suitable job on a task.

When students with intellectual disabilities find themselves in a new group, they may experience considerable adaptation difficulties. At times, they may feel stress caused by the change in sociocultural and communicative environment, social status, requirements to learning, and individual psychological issues. Thus, it is essential to provide support both physically and emotionally to decrease inevitable emotional pressure, establish productive and emotionally positive interpersonal contacts, promote personal development and normalization of self-assessment, and encourage adequate identity in the student with intellectual disabilities. To overcome the student's isolation, teachers should speak with parents, other students and teachers, and the student him or herself to offer trainings and promote teamwork.

Students' behaviors can be improved by participating in games, role-playing, and trainings. Teachers should seek to employ methods to help students learn how to navigate social situations and academic challenges. Gradually, students develop communicative skills based on qualities such as self-respect, perseverance, and improved self-control and at the same time develop modesty, motives, and values.

The development of self-control for students with an intellectual disability occurs in several stages. In the first stage, students should learn to understand and accept the teacher's control. To achieve that, the teacher should:

- Acquaint pupils with norms and criteria used to assess their knowledge and skills.
- Explain why the student gets a certain grade, depending on assessment criteria.

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