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Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation*

FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES IN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS



**FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUDING
STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL
NEEDS AND DISABILITIES IN UPPER
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

This document was developed and published with the support of the European Union and the Council of Europe through the joint European Union and Council of Europe Project “Building Capacity for Inclusion in Education – INCLUDE”.
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Foreword by the Minister of Education



Dear students,

Dear teachers and parents,

On behalf of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation of the Republic of Kosovo, I am pleased to present you with the Framework for the inclusion of students with special educational needs in the upper secondary education. This document is the result of the commitment and hard work of local and international education experts and aims to increase the inclusion of students with special educational needs in upper secondary education. The Framework plays an essential role in providing equal opportunities for all students with disabilities, as it creates opportunities for upper secondary schools to be prepared to provide access to quality education for all students.

The Framework for the inclusion of students with special educational needs in upper secondary schools provides information on the current situation of students in this age group, the legislation in force, the inclusion of students with special needs, the responsibilities of all actors and the support services provided at central, municipal and school level. At the same time, the Framework identifies the challenges faced by students with special educational needs in upper secondary education and provides models for addressing them.

Teachers, instructors and assistants play a fundamental role in ensuring the participation and success of students in schools. This document helps them to recognise and address the additional and specific needs of students with special educational needs so that they can be trained for the job market and for life.

The guidelines provided in this document will help students with special educational needs to gain knowledge and competencies in accordance with opportunities and their potentials to be competitive with peers in the job market. Successful implementation of the Framework for the inclusion of students with special educational needs in upper secondary schools will enable better inclusion, more active participation and more dynamic development of the potential of these students.

I invite all actors in this field in education to work together in implementing this document in practice, because only by cooperating and coordinating can they manage to address and eliminate the barriers of this journey for students with special needs. I assure you that you will have my support and commitment as well as that of all the colleagues in the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, to implement successfully this framework and other subsequent documents that help inclusion in education.

Sincerely,

Arberie Nagavci,
Minister

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Arberie Nagavci". The signature is written in a cursive style.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|----------------|--|
| ADD | Attention Deficit Disorder |
| ADHD | Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder |
| AI | Administrative Instruction |
| ASD | Autism spectrum disorder |
| DVET | Division of Vocational Education and Training |
| EMIS | Education Management and Information System |
| IEP | Individualised Educational Plan |
| INCLUDE | Building Capacity for Inclusive Education project |
| KCF | Kosovo Curriculum Framework |
| KESP | Kosovo Education Strategic Plan |
| MED | Municipality Education Directorate |
| MESTI | Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation |
| NQA | National Qualification Authority |
| RC | Resource Centre |
| SEN | Special Educational Need |
| UN | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNESCO | United Nations Education |
| VET | Vocational Education and Training |
| WG | Working Group |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This guideline for including students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in upper secondary schools in Kosovo is prepared by the working (WG) established by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) and the Council of Europe consultants Marja Matero and Gazmend Tahiraj with the support of the joint EU/CoE project Building Capacity for Inclusive Education (INCLUDE) funded by the European Union and Council of Europe.

MESTI has continuously developed inclusive education policies for the pre-university education system where also children / students with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities have equal opportunities for access and participation in mainstream school.

The implementation of inclusive practices has so far been mainly focused on pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education. It is important that after completing the lower secondary education, students with SEN and disabilities can continue their studies in mainstream upper secondary school and get supported in school and their studies. This guideline focuses on empowering mainstream upper secondary schools to be better prepared for providing access and quality education for students with SEN and disabilities.

The guideline provides information on the legal justification for including students with SEN and disabilities, and challenges in upper secondary schools to accommodate students with SEN and disabilities. The guideline provides information on the support services at national, municipal and school level function, and presents the responsibilities of different actors working for the support services.

Teachers play an important role in making participation and success in studies possible for all students. Students with SEN and disabilities have additional individual educational needs and teachers in mainstream schools need to be aware of this. It is vital that teachers are trained and supported to make necessary accommodations to learning and modify curricula when necessary for students with SEN and disabilities. The guideline provides information about special educational needs and disabilities, and it guides schools and teachers on how to support students with SEN and disabilities in mainstream classrooms.

1. Introduction

According to the legislation in force in Kosovo, schools and other training institutions must respect the principle of inclusive education by accommodating all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, linguistic or other conditions; and offer relevant support based on pupils' individual needs.

The Ministry of Education Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) has developed inclusive practices and support services for students with SEN and disabilities. These practices have been mainly implemented with students at pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education. There is no data of what happens to the students with SEN and disabilities after completing lower secondary education. Some of them continue their studies in vocational profiles in Resource Centres, some do not continue their studies, and some choose general upper secondary education. There is no reliable information on how these students in general upper secondary schools have been supported.

In order to clarify the situation, the MESTI in collaboration with the INCLUDE project conducted a “needs assessment of the special educational needs in higher secondary education in Kosovo” in November 2020. The results of the assessment showed that most of the school principals and teachers of upper secondary schools have positive attitudes towards and willingness to provide access for students with SEN and disabilities. Results also showed that schools face the following challenges in including these students:

- conditions of the school (e.g. infrastructure) are poor and not suitable for students with disabilities,
- teachers have not been trained on how to meet the needs of students with SEN and disabilities,
- teachers are not trained on making accommodations and curriculum modifications to students,
- sufficient support services are lacking,
- adapted learning / teaching materials and equipment are lacking.

This guideline aims to empower schools to meet the special and individual needs of students by

- providing information about available support systems at national, municipal and school levels, and
- clarifying roles and responsibilities of different actors in supporting the student,
- providing guides on how to support the student with SEN and disability at school,
- providing teachers with information on how to meet the needs of students with SEN and disabilities in mainstream classroom.

The final beneficiaries of this guideline will be students with SEN and disabilities.

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The main purpose of the guideline is to improve provision of access and quality education for students with SEN and disabilities in mainstream upper secondary schools.

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2. Definitions of main concepts

Special educational needs and disabilities is a term that describes the difficulties and disabilities that can affect the ability to learn.

According to the Law on Pre-University Education (Article 39), a child has learning difficulties

- if the child has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of that age; or
- if the child has a disability which either prevents or hinders him or her from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of his or her age in educational and/or training institutions.

Disability can be defined in different ways. The medical model describes disability as a consequence of a health condition, disease or caused by injury that has significant and long-term impact on the life of a person. Disability is seen as a condition a person has and it should be prevented, treated or cured. **The social model** emphasises the role of physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers facing persons with disability in life. These barriers are limiting the activities of a person with disabilities more than the condition or impairment itself. **The functional model** defines disability as a consequence of a physical, medical or cognitive deficit. The disability itself makes limitations to the functioning of a person's daily life.

A Specific learning difficulty is a neurodevelopmental disorder which affects the learning and processing of information. Most common specific learning difficulties are difficulties in reading (dyslexia), writing (dysgraphia), mathematics (dyscalculia), fine motor skills (dyspraxia) and interpreting perceptions (visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic). They occur independently of intelligence and can have significant impact on education and learning, particularly if no support is provided to the student.

Most common reasons for special educational needs



Hearing impairment



Neurological disorders, e.g. ADD, ADHD



Visual impairment



Speech and language disorders



Physical impairment



Emotional and behavioural problems



Intellectual impairment



Specific learning difficulties



Autism spectrum

Accommodations refer to changes in how a student learns and they include changes made to the learning materials, the use of devices, and support process that will enable a student to accomplish tasks more efficiently.

Modifications refer to changes in what a student is expected to learn. Changes are made to the content of the curriculum and outcome of the course.

3. Inclusion in upper secondary education in Kosovo – legal framework

Upper secondary schools — have an obligation to provide access and quality education and make all necessary accommodations for students with SEN and disabilities. This obligation and legal framework are regulated by the Law No. 04/L032 on Pre-University Education (2011), and by the Law for Vocational Education and Training No. 04/L-138.

The Law on Pre-University Education defines inclusive education according to the provisions of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994), and the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons (2007).

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007), the right for education requires that

- Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;
- Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
- Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
- Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
- Effective individualised support measures are provided in environments that maximise academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

The principle of inclusive education is that:

- educational and/or training institutions should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, linguistic or other conditions and should promote integration and contact between children;
- relevant support should be offered based on pupils' individual needs; and
- separate educational settings or special schools are justified only where after expert assessment it is considered impractical to enrol a child in a regular municipal school or training institution.

(Law No. 04/L-032 on Pre-University Education, Article 40)

In addition, inclusion is the first key priority of the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (KESP) and its Action Plan 2017 and one of the key principals of the Kosovo Curriculum Framework (KCF) 2017. A number of Administrative instructions have been developed to support the implementation of the Laws and provide guidance for municipalities and schools including upper secondary schools.

4. Challenges in upper secondary schools to meet the needs of students with SEN and disabilities

According to the results of the “needs assessment of the special educational needs in higher secondary education in Kosovo” conducted by the INCLUDE project in November 2020, challenges in upper secondary schools in including students with SEN and disabilities are as follows:

- conditions of the school (e.g. infrastructure) are poor and not suitable for students with disabilities,
- teachers have not been trained on how to meet the needs of students with SEN and disabilities in their mainstream classrooms,
- teachers are not trained on making accommodations and modifications to the curriculum,
- sufficient support services are lacking,
- adapted learning / teaching materials and equipment are lacking.

These challenges are dealt within the following chapters.

The education provision in the general higher secondary schools is based on the New Curriculum Framework for Pre-University Education (KCF). It defines the learning and the development of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes by taking into consideration the need to prepare young people to take responsibility for their own lives, to participate in society as active and competent citizens, and to engage successfully in competition on the labour market. Therefore, students will be exposed to a more challenging process of knowledge acquisition and the development of their intellectual, emotional, and physical potential. This may cause challenges and barriers for some students with SEN needs and disabilities.

The aim of general higher secondary education is to prepare students for university education. The learning outcomes are defined in the KCF core curriculum, and standards demand relatively high cognitive skills from students. At the end of their studies, students demonstrate their knowledge in national Matura exams, and therefore, in general upper secondary education, space for curriculum modifications is very limited.

However, various accommodations facilitate and support most students with SEN and disabilities to be as successful as any other student in their studies. The only exception are students with intellectual disabilities since they have wide-ranging difficulties in learning new things due to poor cognitive skills and an inability of abstract thinking. It is highly recommended that students with intellectual disabilities are guided to select VET profiles suitable for their abilities.

Vocational higher secondary education aims to prepare for the labour market. The principals for the vocational education and training set in the Law for Vocational Education and Training (2013) are: 1) inclusion; 2) access, transfer and progress; 3) theoretical learning and professional practice; 4) current and future needs of the economy; and 5) supporting career development as an integrated part of lifelong learning. The VET qualifications are based on the requirements of Kosovo Curriculum Framework, the VET core curriculum and the National Qualifications Framework (KESP 2017-2021, p. 80).

Some of the disabilities may cause limitations to perform tasks at work. Therefore, when selecting the profile in vocational education, a student with SEN and disabilities should be provided with career orientation counselling (see Chapter 5.3.3.) to make sure that the selected profile is suitable for the student.

Example from the vocational education in Finland

- Applicant's state of health or ability to function must not be an obstacle to admission but the safety requirements related to the qualification to perform practical tasks at work must be met.
- Health requirements are provided by the Finnish National Agency for Education and available on the internet.
- The training provider must inform the applicant of the medical requirements and other conditions attached to the qualification.
- E.g.1: Health requirements for qualification in the social and welfare field include barriers to admission: psychosis, depression, a physical condition or disability that prevents to do the practical work, alcohol or drug abuse, for qualification leading to the work with children and young people no criminal record is allowed;
- E.g.2: Health requirements for qualification in forestry; expertise in forest machine transport include barriers to admission: insulin-treated diabetes, epilepsy or other diseases and disorders of the balance system, visual or hearing impairment that cannot be corrected by assistive devices, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease limiting physical endurance and coping with outdoor work, musculoskeletal disease, mental disorder, problem drug use or substance abuse.
- Career counsellors have an important role in guiding grade 9 students to select suitable paths for further education and further during VET studies

Recommendations

- Minimum health requirements for admission should be set for each VET profile when needed. This is to avoid a situation when a student with SEN and disability is not able to meet the safety requirements to perform practical tasks at work.
- Based on the individual abilities and performance of a student, VET teachers can then modify which modules should be completed or modified.
- Students with SEN and disabilities who cannot complete all parts of the qualifications, should receive a certificate stating and describing the parts of the qualification completed. This may help them to get a job, and work if not as fully qualified professional but for example in assisting duties.
- If students are unable to continue or complete their studies, the education provider will in collaboration with the student, parents and school support team find suitable studies for them.
- The education programme can be modified so that students with SEN and disabilities could achieve goals as close as possible to other students.
- The education provider is responsible for designing modified assessment criteria for students and those creating the criteria need to be well aware of the core skills and competences in each profession and the way students are able to achieve them. The primary principle is to help the student with SEN and disability to achieve the same learning goals as everyone else.
- If the student despite all the extra support received, does not achieve the accepted criteria level, learning goals and assessment criteria may also then be modified. When such students graduate, they will receive a certificate for their studies, and modified goals will be recorded in the IEP of the student.

5. Support services for students with SEN and disabilities in mainstream upper secondary schools in Kosovo

The inclusion of students with SEN and disabilities requires that relevant support based on students' individual needs is offered to the student (Law No.04/L –032). In Kosovo, support services function at three levels: national, municipal and school. The figure 1 gives an overview of the existing support services for meeting the special educational needs of students in pre-university education in Kosovo.

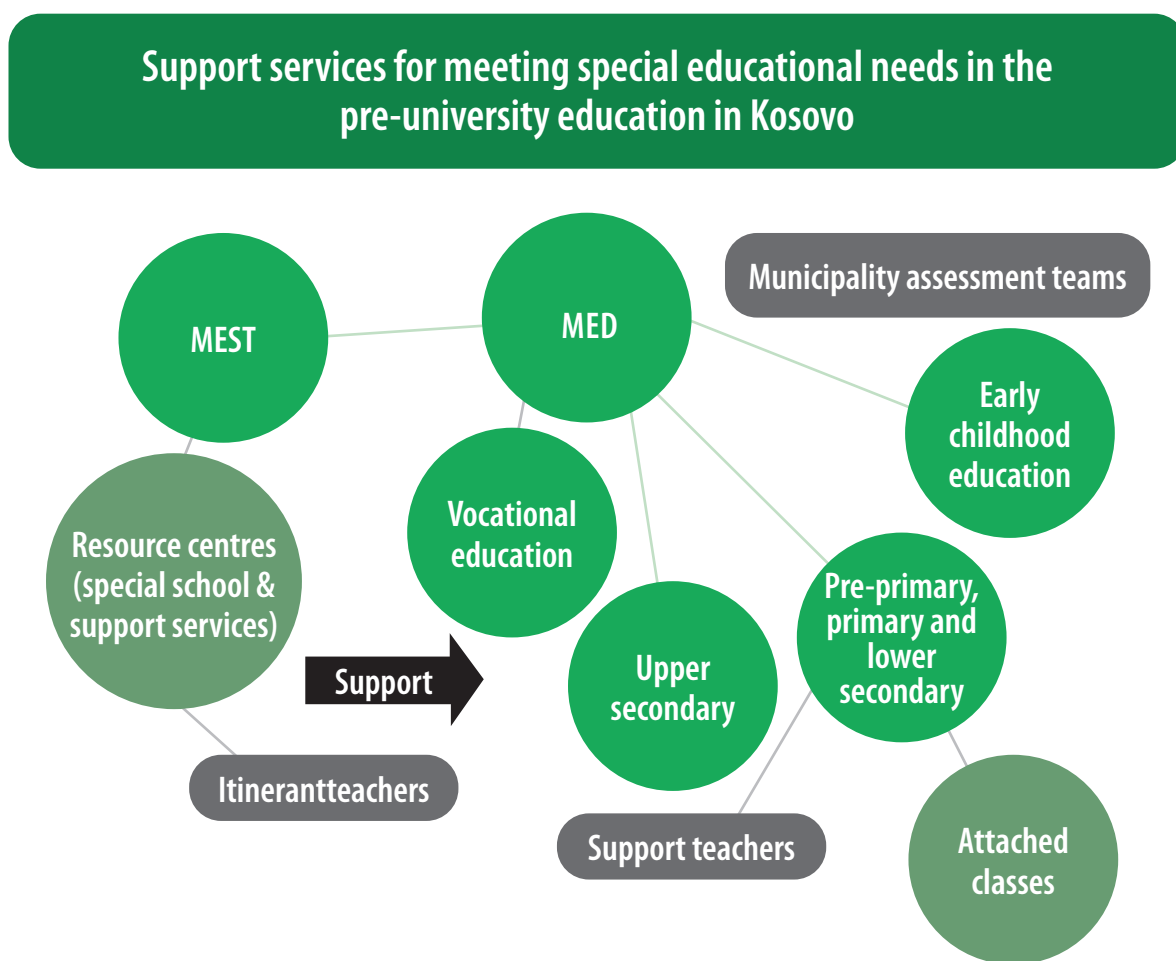


FIGURE 1 Support services (Roadmap on diversity and inclusion for the pre-university education in Kosovo, 2017)

Support services for students with SEN and disabilities outlining the roles and duties of different actors are presented in the following chapters.

5.1. Support at the central level

According to the Law on Pre-University, it is the responsibility of the Ministry to ensure comprehensive policies for the inclusion of persons with special needs. The Ministry shall provide technical assistance for municipalities in ensuring the adequacy of school buildings and equipment in accordance with international standards on health and safety and protection of the environment, accessibility for pupils and staff with physical disabilities, and assistive equipment to support inclusive education. (Law No.04/L –032.)

The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation – (MESTI) is responsible for:

- Developing policies for inclusive education, with special emphasis on children with SEN;
- Management of staff working with children with SEN in Resource Centres;
- Coordination and planning of activities in the field of inclusive education with institutions, municipalities and local and international organisations;
- Monitoring of the quality of education process provided to the students with SEN and disabilities at all levels of pre-university education.

5.1.1. Resource Centres

Resource centres are former special schools which have been transformed to function not only as special schools but also as resource centres to provide support services to students with SEN and disabilities and their teachers in mainstream schools at all pre-university education levels. The services of five existing resource centres cover the whole country.

The resource centres have three main functions:

- 1) To provide support to mainstream schools;
- 2) To produce specific teaching and learning materials for use by mainstream schools with students with SEN in mainstream schools; and
- 3) To provide training for teachers in mainstream schools.

Duties of support services:

- Development, compiling and distribution of support materials for students with SEN and disabilities in mainstream schools;
- Organising accredited courses for teachers with students with SEN and disabilities;
- Co-operation with municipality assessment teams regarding the placement of and support for students with SEN and disabilities;
- Services of an itinerant teacher.

Itinerant teachers are staff members of RCs and have an important role in providing support to mainstream schools. They visit schools all around Kosovo in order to

- provide support in developing IEPs of students;
- provide advice for teachers in regular schools to teach students with SEN and disabilities;
- provide teaching equipment for students with SEN and disabilities;
- identify the training needs of teachers in mainstream schools;
- identify the needs of didactic materials in mainstream schools.

Resource centres as training providers

The MESTI has authorised RCs to provide accredited training courses for teachers with students with SEN and disabilities. These training programmes change frequently based on the needs of teachers.

Recommendations:

- The number of itinerant teachers needs to be increased.
- Itinerant teachers need to be prepared to serve mainstream upper secondary schools and familiarise themselves with various VET profiles.
- The number of staff members in RCs working for support services need to be increased.
- Funds for training need to be increased.
- The provision of training to mainstream upper secondary schools on topics related to IEP, material production, and meeting the needs of SEN and disabilities in mainstream classrooms need to be increased.

5.2. Support at the municipal level

The Law on Pre-University Education requires municipalities to provide inclusive education for all students including students with SEN and disabilities as described in the Chapter 3. At municipal level support services for students with SEN and disability consists of services of the municipality assessment team that is coordinated by the Municipal Education Directorate – MED.

Recommendation:

- Each upper secondary school will have a support teacher, a school psychologist and a career orientation counsellor and assistant for students with SEN.
- In case this is not possible, it is highly recommended that the Municipality Education Directorates employ each of these professionals to provide services for two schools instead of one.

Responsibilities of these professionals are presented in the chapter 5.3. “Support services at the school level”.

Municipal education directorates implement MESTI policies including the education of students with SEN and disabilities. They coordinate and plan activities of municipal assessment teams; assist in increasing the participation of students with SEN and disabilities at all levels of pre-university education; and support the organisation of education of children/students with SEN and disabilities in their respective municipalities.

In addition, MEDs have the following responsibilities:

- To collaborate with resource centres and other institutions to create conditions for inclusive education;
- To plan and coordinate professional training on inclusive education for teachers;
- To supervise and coordinate the work of teachers working with students with SEN;
- To plan and coordinate the process of identification of children with SEN and disabilities;
- To cooperate with schools in order to make needs analyses of students with SEN and disabilities;
- To connect the school, teacher and students with SEN with the support services of resource centres (see Chapter 5.1);
- To coordinate and mobilise resources needed for students with SEN and disabilities in upper secondary schools;
- To collaborate with upper secondary schools to allocate and use efficiently human and financial resources;
- To take care of organising appropriate transport to school for children with SEN and disabilities;
- To support upper secondary schools in developing Support Plans for students with SEN and disabilities.

A support plan can be prepared for a school year or for a shorter period of time depending on the needs of the student. It can be drafted:

- in collaboration with the chosen RC and upper secondary school with the student with SEN and disabilities; or
- in collaboration with the existing support staff (psychologist, support teacher, assistant of students with SEN) in upper secondary schools; or
- by the school support team consisting of psychologist, pedagogue, support teacher, assistant of students with SEN and career orientation counsellor.

In addition, the MED can support schools by making suggestions and sharing ideas on how to improve the conditions and environment of the school to make it more accessible and student-friendly. This could mean improving physical conditions of the school by for example building ramps, paying attention to proper lighting, clean and accessible toilets and other physical conditions in the school.

5.2.1. Municipality assessment teams

Each municipality, alone or in cooperation with another municipality, shall establish a professional assessment and support team for special educational needs to provide external support to educational and training institutions to provide counselling and guidance to teachers, pupils and parents. (The Law on Pre-university Education, Article 41.)

Students from upper secondary education are entitled when needed to the services of the municipal assessment team.

The aims of the assessment are:

- to assess the abilities, interests and needs of the student;
- to give recommendations on teaching methods, aids, and other accommodations necessary for the student's learning and well-being;
- to define needs for special equipment required for learning; and
- to give recommendations on the placement of the student.

A request for professional assessment may be initiated by a parent, a school principal with the request of a teacher, MED, medical experts, and the director of Municipal Centre for Social Work. The request for assessment must be delivered to MED.

The administrative Instruction 16/2017 determines procedures by which the pedagogical assessment of children/students with special educational needs is conducted and the way-assessment teams are functioning.

The composition of the assessment team consists of the following permanent members:

- A municipal inclusive education officer who is also the Team Coordinator;
- A psychologist;
- A pedagogue/special pedagogue;
- A social worker;
- A support teacher or itinerant teacher;
- Other staff based on the needs and the type of the disability of the student;
- Other members invited by the team based on the needs; and
- The class teacher / class supervisor (teacher)

In addition, other experts can be invited to the assessment team based on the individual needs and characteristics of the student, e.g. student's teacher and / or other experts.

The parent must be present and consulted during the whole period of the assessment.

The competences of the assessment team include for example the following:

- To conduct the pedagogical assessment;
- To determine the educational institution where the student will attend;
- To decide about the type of teaching to be offered for the student;
- To decide about assistive devices and equipment needed for the student;
- To decide about rehabilitation services for the student;
- To decide about appropriate transportation needed for the student.

All students who have received a decision on the special needs education by the assessment team should have to have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Assessment teams can give recommendations for the content of the IEP. The primary goal of the assessment is to identify the needs and provide resources for support.

Even though, municipal assessment teams have not so far been much involved in the assessment of students in upper secondary education, their mandate is to serve all levels of the pre-university education.

The assessment teams should support students with SEN and disabilities in upper secondary schools by

- giving recommendations for drafting an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for the student with SEN and disability,
- giving recommendations about the methods of teaching to be offered for the student with SEN and disability,
- deciding about assistive devices and equipment needed for the student,

- deciding about the rehabilitation services needed for the child in upper secondary school,
- giving recommendations for the type of support and safety measures needed for the child when doing the practice period during vocational training.
- giving recommendations for students with SEN and disabilities for choosing different possible profiles.

5.3. Support at the school level

Teaching students with SEN and disabilities in mainstream upper secondary school requires that schools have adequate support services and personnel to meet the needs of students. This chapter presents the essential services of the support students with SEN and disabilities can get in upper secondary school. These include services of support teachers, psychologists, career orientation counsellors, support teams, assistants for students with SEN, support during practical work and usage of Individualised Educational Plans.

5.3.1. A support teacher

The support teacher is an education professional that is working in mainstream schools and is responsible for providing support to the education of students with SEN and disabilities. The support teacher is not responsible for teaching a certain subject, but he/she is responsible for supporting all students experiencing barriers in learning caused by SEN, a disability or any other condition.

Duties of support teachers in mainstream primary and lower secondary schools consist of the following:

- To identify and support students with SEN and disabilities;
- To plan and organise co-teaching with teachers teaching in mainstream classes where there are students with SEN and disabilities;
- To work individually with a student with SEN and disability;
- To develop individual education plan in cooperation with other support staff and the student;
- To advise and assist mainstream teachers on how to work with students with SEN and disabilities;
- In collaboration with mainstream teachers, to develop alternative teaching materials for the use of students with SEN and disabilities.

Duties of support teachers in upper secondary schools contain the following:

- To provide support in drafting of IEP for students with SEN and disabilities;
- To advise and support other VET teachers in how to teach students with SEN and disabilities in VET schools;
- To support students with SEN and disabilities in reaching the goals of the curriculum and modified goals based on IEP;
- To support VET teachers in modifying tasks in certain modules based on the specific needs of students with SEN and disabilities;
- To modify and produce alternative learning materials to be used for students with SEN and disabilities;
- To carefully plan jointly with a work instructor or responsible teacher for the work practice for students with SEN and disabilities based on their needs and abilities;
- To support students with SEN and disabilities during their work practice in VET schools;
- To take care about physical and psychological security for the students with SEN and disabilities during their work practice.

Recommendations:

- Each upper secondary school and particularly VET school should have its own support teacher. (So far, support teachers have been employed only in primary and lower secondary schools in Kosovo. Since, most of the upper secondary schools in Kosovo already have and in future will have even more students with SEN and disabilities, support teachers are highly needed in upper secondary schools.)
- If this is not possible, the Municipality Education Directorate should employ one support teacher who would serve two schools in the municipality. This could be done through the requalification of teachers who are left without enough lesson hours.
- In VET schools, the teaching profile of the support teacher could be a subject VET teacher, or any other teaching staff with working experience in VET school. The future support teachers need to have experience and the motivation to work with students with SEN. -
- A training programme needs to be tailored for support teachers in VET schools.

5.3.2 A school psychologist

A school psychologist is a staff member employed in schools and considered as a non-teaching professional personnel (AI Nr. 34/2014). The duties and tasks of the school psychologists consist of the following:

- To contribute to the learning process and promote student's emotional, social and personal development;
- To assist and aid in the identification of students with learning disabilities, talented students and identify and provide different individual or group counselling sessions for students;
- To work with students in developing strategies for learning, social and personal development, self-monitoring, and other cognitive skills;
- To assist in preparation of the individual learning programmes of the students;
- To collaborate with teachers and other staff members in the school;
- To provide consultations for parents and teachers and other school personnel for the improvement of learning environment and health of the students;
- To give consultations on the implementation of best learning and teaching practices in cooperation with the school pedagogue;
- To provide information and training regarding the application of learning theories.

Recommendation:

- Given their importance for the well-functioning of the students, a fulltime psychologist should be employed in each upper secondary school.

5.3.3. A career orientation counsellor

The purpose of career orientation counsellor is to support students during their studies and ensure that they acquire the knowledge and skills required for moving on to further studies and employment.

The Law No. 04/L-138 on VET in Kosovo (2013) requires “supporting career development of students as an integrated part of lifelong learning”, and “guidance and career counselling should be an integral part of all programmes provided by VET institutions”.

In 2017, the career orientation vocation standard at level V was developed and verified, and it was also approved by the National Qualification Authority (NQA). The qualification is approved by the NQA and provided for the first group of 40 candidates.

Duties of career orientation counsellors include:

- Career Information: raising the awareness of students and graduates about different professions, career opportunities, job offers, labour market situations and trends, etc.; providing feedback on resumés and advising students about all aspects of the job/internship search process.
- Career development: preparation, organisation and delivery of short-term courses for students on various career-related topics.
- Employer recruitment: attracting employers to cooperate with the school and the career centre, through outreach, networking, teachers and alumni (former students) contacts. Encouraging employer involvement in career centre activities and programmes; promoting the internship and work-based learning opportunities offered by employers.

In Kosovo 15 career centres have been established. Thirteen of them are school based centres functioning inside VET schools. One career centre is functioning at the University of Pristina and one career centre is established by the Municipal Education Directorate of Pristina.

The career centres established in VET schools employ two career orientation counsellors: one responsible for career guidance and the other responsible for the interrelation with businesses.

The support from career orientation counsellors is very much needed for students with SEN and disabilities in VET schools. Career orientation counsellors support students with SEN and disabilities in choosing the appropriate profile, job search and in keeping students motivated during their studies.

The duties of career orientation counsellors in supporting students with SEN and disabilities consist of the following:

- Supporting the student with SEN to choose the right profile when enrolling in VET school by providing detailed information about certain profiles and the possibilities for employment after graduation;
- Support the IEP Team;
- Supporting students with SEN in reaching IEP goals;
- Supporting students with SEN in searching for a job after graduation.

Recommendation:

- Each VET school should have a career orientation counsellor who supports students with SEN and disabilities. The career orientation counsellors need tailored training on how to guide and support students with SEN.

5.3.4. Assistants for students with SEN

The assistant for students with SEN is a new profession in Kosovo. Experiences of assistants for children with SEN in primary and lower secondary schools have been excellent, and their services in mainstream upper secondary schools are highly needed as well. In VET schools, the role of an assistant during the work practice would be very important for the student with SEN to be successful.

The duties of assistants for students with SEN and disabilities vary depending on the individual needs of the student, the needs of the classroom and the wishes of the teacher.

The duties of the assistant for students with SEN may include the following:

- To provide technical help to the student with SEN and disabilities, the teacher and the whole class according to existing needs;
- To provide personal support to the students with SEN and disabilities;
- To assist in preparing learning materials needed for students with SEN;
- To make sure that equipment and assistive devices needed are in place and functioning;
- To assist students with SEN and disabilities in writing, reading, exercise, explanations, preparation of their school bag, mobility etc.;
- To assist the students with note taking, writing down learning units, key words, new concepts or actions in mathematics when necessary;
- When needed, to bring the student to school, to support the student while walking / using the wheelchair or unable to move by him/herself;
- To support in the implementation of practical work according to teacher's instruction and based on the student's needs.

Recommendation:

- Assistants for students with SEN should be hired in upper secondary schools
- The number of assistants needed depends on the number of students with disabilities and the type of disabilities students have.

5.3.5. Support team

The support team consists of the support teacher, school psychologist, assistant for the children with special needs and the career orientation counsellor. The main task of the support team is to plan and provide support to students with SEN and disabilities in upper secondary schools.

Recommendation:

- In case of lack of funds and resources in the municipality to provide one support teacher and / or school psychologist for each school, it is recommended to appoint one support teacher / school psychologist for two schools.
- In order to provide a coordinated and efficient support to students with SEN and disabilities and their teachers, the establishment of support teams in each upper secondary school is recommended.

5.3.6. Support during the practical work in VET

Recommendations

- Work instructors in practical workplaces need to be trained to meet the needs of students with SEN and disabilities. The training should be practically orientated, individually conducted in the practical workplace and it should be tailored to the individual needs of the students with SEN and disabilities.
- The student with SEN together with the VET teacher and support teacher should guide the work instructor on what kind of support he/she needs.
- A teacher from the VET school needs to keep in touch with and provide continuous support to the student and working instructor through phone calls and visits to the workplace. The support should be indicated in the Individualised Educational Plan (IEP) of the student.

5.3.7. Individualised Educational Plan (IEP)

The Law on Pre-University Education (Article 41) determines that the content of tuition for pupils with special educational needs shall be set out in individual education plans (IEPs).

An IEP is a pedagogical document that contains description of student's special educational needs and how the support for the student should be organised. It contains e.g.

- student's identification and background information;
- student's levels of performance;
- student's strengths and challenges;
- student's abilities and needs;
- student's expected outcomes or goals in studies;
- teaching methods, materials, and strategies;
- support services needed;
- timelines for the review of the IEP.

The procedure for implementation and assessment of IEP is regulated in the Administrative Instruction No. 18/2013 on the use of Individual Education Plan with the following content:

- Definition of the IEP;
- Defines which students have the right for an IEP;
- Defines what an IEP must contain;
- Defines how an IEP must be reviewed and assessed;
- Defines how students with IEPs must be assessed;
- Identification and maintenance of the documentation;
- Monitoring of the use of IEPs.

Guidelines for individualised educational plans were published by MESTI in 2011 and an instrument for monitoring the IEP implementation has been developed. (https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/15078/pdf/plani_individual_i_arsimit.pdf)

The Individual education plan must be prepared for students who have been assessed by the municipality assessment team and received the decision for special needs education. In addition, all students with disabilities attending mainstream upper secondary school should have an IEP.

If due to the limitations caused by SEN and disability the student cannot reach the common goals and complete all modules, an IEP needs to be drafted. The IEP should contain modified goals according to the needs and abilities of the student, and also description of the ways and methods of assessment which differ from students without SEN.

The IEP in upper secondary schools should be drafted by a support team of the school. The team to prepare the IEP should consist of the responsible subject or VET teacher, instructor, school psychologist, support teacher and an assistant for special education needs (in the case there is an assistant). Parents of the student may also contribute to the developing of the IEP and must be informed about the IEP of their student. The composition of the IEP team can differ from one case to another depending on the availability of human resources in upper secondary school.

IEP training can be organised by resource centres and other accredited training providers.

5.3.7. Class size

The maximal number of students with SEN in a mainstream class in a VET school is three, and in the case, there is a student with SEN in the classroom, there should be two mainstream students less in the class. (AI Nr. 22/2013.)

6. Guide for schools and teachers on how to include and support students with SEN and disability in mainstream upper secondary schools in Kosovo

Inclusive education aims to offer equal opportunities for all students. The idea is that all students will learn and progress together in the same learning environment where individual needs of each student are met.

The inclusion of students with SEN and disabilities in upper secondary schools need to be well prepared. This requires that support mechanisms be built both outside and inside the school (described in previous chapters) and changes made inside the school in order to provide access to and meet the individual needs of a student with SEN and disabilities. Access does not only refer to the physical environment, it also refers to access to the curriculum.

Teachers have a key role in including students with SEN and disabilities and making their learning successful. Teachers need to be trained on and supported in meeting the diverse needs of students and managing the whole inclusive classroom.

This chapter describes

- what changes need to be done at school to welcome students with SEN and disabilities;
- how to identify students with SEN;
- what are accommodations and modifications made for students with SEN and disability;
- how teachers can manage an inclusive classroom; and
- how to meet the needs of and support a student with SEN and disabilities in learning.

6.1. Preparations in the school

Preparations in the school may include the appropriate accommodations in the infrastructure of the school such as

- the schoolyard, school, classrooms and toilets to be accessible for students with SEN and disabilities;
- the installation of handrails;
- building ramps for students with physical impairments;
- improving lighting and contrast application for students with visual impairments;
- arranging classrooms to be student-friendly (e.g. optimal class size).

In order to meet the needs of students with SEN and disabilities, it is necessary:

- to get information about the student and their needs by interviewing the student and parents, getting information from former teachers, and from documents e.g. former IEP, health documents, tests etc.;
- to find out what are the challenges in the student's learning, and what kind of accommodations and support have been provided earlier;
- to ensure that sufficient human resources are available in the school (e.g. optimal teacher-student ratio, qualified teachers);
- to select teachers and get them trained;
- to make sure that sufficient support services for students and teachers are organised (e.g. support team, support teacher, psychologist, assistants for students with SEN and disabilities, sign language interpreter for a deaf student, support services from resource centres);

- to get ready for making appropriate modifications to the curriculum to be accessible for the student with SEN;
- to ensure sufficient adaptive teaching and learning materials are available;
- to ensure that equipment, supplies and assistive devices needed are available;
- to ensure a student-friendly environment where every student can feel physically safe, emotionally secure and psychologically enabled.
- to have the transition form filled by the previous school of the student.

6.2. Identification of special educational needs

Identification done prior to the studies in upper secondary school

The identification of student's special educational needs is often done prior to students entering the upper secondary school. The transition from primary to secondary school must be carefully prepared so that a student with SEN / disability has a good chance of succeeding from the outset of the study path.

Documents describing the student's health condition and special educational needs, former individualised educational plans, earlier achievements and experiences, support needed and provided in lower levels of education will help the upper secondary school to make necessary preparations for organising support.

Information can be provided by the student, parents and – with the permission of parents – former teachers from the lower secondary school, social welfare and health authorities, and career orientation counsellors etc.

Identification during the studies in upper secondary school

In the case where a student's special educational needs have not been identified earlier or these appear during the studies in upper secondary school, teachers have a crucial role in the identification of SEN. Teachers are the ones who recognise how difficulties in learning are manifested.

A teacher observes and assesses the learning, learning achievements and behaviour of students, and identifies when a student is not making expected progress.

The progress of the student:

- might be a lot slower than that of other students, or
- doesn't match or improve on the student's previous rate of progress, or
- the gap in learning between the student and other students in the class widens.

If in spite of good teaching, a student's progress continues not to improve, a teacher should

- have a discussion with the student about the progress and let the student describe reasons for the challenges in learning.
- discuss with other teachers if they share your observations.
- discuss with parents if the student is under 18.
- discuss with the school / municipality support teacher and or school psychologist.
- bring the case to the support team.

Assessment by the municipality assessment team

Identification of the SEN may not always be successful within the school staff. In these cases, the school should contact the municipality education directorate for the evaluation or re-evaluation of the student with SEN or disability.

In the case that a student is referred to the assessment of the municipal assessment team, the school is obliged to fill a comprehensive assessment form for the student. The form contains 21 indicators based on the International Classification Functioning (ICF) principle. The Municipal assessment team evaluates the student based on these indicators and, when needed, gives recommendations to the school for the support needed and for formulating the IEP for the student.

The Municipality Education Directorate and schools, when needed, contact resources centres. Itinerant teachers from the RCs may visit the school, discuss with the teacher and members of the support team, meet the student to identify reasons behind the difficulties in learning or behaviour.

Recognition of the need for the support

Difficulties in learning caused by SEN and disability always manifest themselves individually, and it is important to find out and recognise the reasons behind them in order to make plans for support. The information gained during identification process will be used for planning and implementing the support.

The strengths and challenges in learning are identified and in cases where special educational support is needed for the student, the IEP will be prepared. The content of the IEP is described in the chapter 5.3.7.

Transition planning

Transition in education means passing from one stage to another, e.g. from lower secondary to higher secondary education and from higher secondary to the university or to work-life. Successful transitions for students with SEN and disabilities need to be well planned and recorded in the student's IEP and in the transition form. This will help the student progress during studies and later in joining the workforce.

6.3. Accommodations and modifications based on the individual needs of a student

For many students with SEN and disabilities the key to success in studies lies in having appropriate accommodations and modifications made to their educational programme. As defined earlier:

- An accommodation is a material, device, or support process that will enable a student to accomplish tasks more efficiently; and
- Modification refers to changes to the content or outcome of the course.

Accommodations and modifications need to be individualised for a student, based upon student's strengths and needs, and personal learning styles and interests.

Accommodations

- are parts of good teaching practices, and they can be made for any student.
- make learning accessible and allow the student to demonstrate what they know without being impeded by their SEN and disability.
- are changes that help a student overcome or work around the SEN and disability.
- do not alter the expected learning outcomes but students are required to complete the same tasks, assignments or tests as other students.



Example: Allowing a student who has problems in writing to give his test answers orally. The student is still expected to know the same content of the course as fully as the other students.



Accommodations may include the following.

- Extended time to complete the assignment or test;
- Physical arrangement of the classroom;
- Preferential seating (e.g. auditory and visual distractions minimised);
- Varying of teaching approaches (e.g. visual, auditory, multi-sensory, demonstrations, modelling, individual / small group instruction);
- Mode of communication e.g. sign language for the deaf and Braille for the visually impaired;
- Allowing for different ways of responding (e.g. verbal, written, use of computer and /or assistive device);
- Adapted learning materials such as highlighted materials, large print, Braille;
- Use of assistive devices e.g. computer, calculator;
- Varying forms of instruction delivery (e.g. outlines of materials, study guides, after school tutoring, directions in small sequential steps);
- Changing the way that instruction material is presented;
- Changing the way that students respond.

Accommodations alone do not always provide sufficient support in learning. In these cases, the content of the curriculum needs to be modified to the individual needs and abilities of the student.

Curriculum modification is the process of adapting the curriculum according to the different ability levels of the student. The aim is to align the cognitive, affective, communicative, and physical demands of the curriculum to the capacities, strengths and needs of an individual student.

Curriculum modifications

- are changes made in what is being taught or expected from the student;
- alter the content knowledge expectations and assessment practices;
- are indicated in the IEP of the student.

Modifications of the curriculum may be needed for all or just some parts of the curriculum.

Teachers have an important role in making appropriate changes to the curriculum. They are experts in knowing the main content of the curriculum and they monitor the learning of the student. Therefore, they also identify the process in which the difficulties of student's learning occur.

6.4. Guides for teachers to meet the needs of students with SEN and disabilities

There is a huge diversity between and within categories of SEN and disabilities, and persons with disabilities do not form a homogenous group. Persons even with the same diagnosis all have their unique abilities, strengths, challenges and needs. Disability is only one characteristic of a person with disability, and it does not explain what a person can or cannot do.

Special educational needs and disabilities may not always be outwardly visible. They are easily visible in cases for example when a person is using a wheelchair or white cane. They may remain invisible in cases of persons with perception, attention deficit, hard of hearing or low vision and even intellectual disability. Therefore, you may have students with SEN and disabilities in your school and classroom without realising.

It is highly important that when you meet a student with SEN and disability you

- see the student behind the disability.
- do not make any assumptions about the student based on the type of disability.
- get to know the student well to find out what he/she can do, what are his/ her best ways of learning, and what kind of support or accommodations he/ she needs.
- focus on student's capabilities and potentials not on deficits.

When meeting a student with SEN and disabilities a teacher needs get to know the student well.

It is necessary to discuss with the student and find out

- what are student's interests and future plans,
- what are student's challenges in learning,
- what kind of support the student has received earlier and needs now,
- what are student's expectations for the studies,
- what are student's preferable ways of learning.

When in need for professional support, the teacher may turn to the support team, support teacher and school psychologist, and if solutions are not available in the school, services of the MEDs and resource centres are available as described earlier in chapter 5.

Since many students with SEN and disabilities need to have accommodations and curriculum modifications, an individualised educational plan (IEP) helps determine these appropriate changes, support and resources needed for the student.

- An IEP should be developed when a student begins with the upper secondary education or shortly after the student has been identified with difficulties in learning.
- Support from itinerant teachers will be available on request in preparation of the IEP.

6.5. Practical tips for teachers in managing an inclusive classroom

A teacher plays a vital role in creating an inclusive classroom and putting into practice the features of an inclusive classroom. Good qualities of the teacher to manage an inclusive classroom are

- handling diversity and having positive attitudes towards diversity,
- willingness to deal with differences,
- patience,
- sensitivity and skills to enhance social relations between students,
- understanding of how to develop good interactions and relationships within the classroom;
- flexibility and good planning, and
- good collaboration skills.

Other than these features, it is important that a teacher

- has knowledge and skills to deal with diverse needs;
- uses various teaching methods and materials;
- uses accommodations to meet the needs of students,
- uses IEPs with curriculum modifications of students;
- provides time for instruction and individual guidance;
- co-operates with support personnel and other teachers and parents.

The following sub-chapters provide general tips for teachers for managing inclusive classroom.

A positive classroom climate and positive self-esteem

It is highly important for the self-esteem of students with SEN and disabilities that there is a climate in the school and in the class where diversity is accepted and valued. Teachers are in the key role in creating such a positive climate in the classroom. When students have a feeling that everyone is respected, they learn to respect each other. Students must get a feeling that they are valued even if they may fail at a given task. In an atmosphere which tolerates and respects diversity, learning is made easier.

Teachers should have sensitivity and skills to enhance significant social relations between students. Particularly for students with SEN and disabilities, meaningful interactions with non-disabled peers are of the utmost importance. The teacher should have the right attitude, but also needs a good understanding of how to develop these interactions and relationships.

Students with SEN have often experienced failures in learning and therefore, they may have a feeling that they are not capable of learning. It is important that teachers convey high but realistic expectations for the performances of all students.

giving a student the chance to experience success helps him or her to develop positive self-esteem. This is highly important for students with SEN and disabilities, since many of them may have experiences of being different from others in some particular way, not learning as fast as their peers and they may feel as though they are not as good as others. A teacher can help students to develop their self-esteem by giving chances for everyone to experience success. Positive feedback is needed to students when they succeed even if the progress is small.

Arrangements to optimal learning environment

A teacher needs to be aware of how to organise the classroom and teaching in order to engage and motivate all students and facilitate learning in the classroom. Students with SEN and disability may need additional arrangements to have optimal learning environment, and the teacher may need to:

- provide the use of a study corner when necessary.
- seat the student in an area free from distractions.
- eliminate all unnecessary materials from the student's desk to reduce distractions.
- use a checklist to help the student get organised.
- keep an extra supply of pencils, pens, books and paper in the classroom.
- allow the student frequent breaks.
- have an agreed upon cue for a student to leave the classroom.
- reduce visual distractions in the classroom.
- allow the student to use supplementary aids when needed.

Planning and implementing the lesson

- Explain learning expectations to the student before beginning a lesson.
- Make sure you have the student's attention before beginning a lesson.
- Include activities that reflect the student's preferences and experiences.
- Limit the number of concepts presented at one time.
- Provide supplementary support to the student.
- Ensure that there are sufficient opportunities to practice new skills.
- Ensure that generalisation and maintenance activities are included.
- Modify expectations based on the student's needs.

Optimal assignments

Tasks and assignments must be optimal for a student. Too difficult or too easy tasks may lead to frustration. When giving assignments it is good to remember to:

- break assignments into segments of shorter tasks.
- give alternative assignments rather than long written assignments.
- adjust tasks in length, content and time.
- provide written and verbal direction with visuals if possible.
- highlight to alert student attention to key points within the written direction of the assignment.
- check that all homework assignments are written correctly in some kind of an agenda/homework book. Sign it and have parents sign it as well.
- provide outlines, study guides, copies of overhead notes.
- provide incentives for beginning and completing assignments.

Responses expected for students, time management and transitions

Most students with SEN and disabilities require more time to do tasks than others. When planning the lesson, it is good to remember to:

- allow more time to interact with and respond to learning materials and activities.
- provide additional time to complete the task.
- provide opportunities for the student to express what he/she knows in multiple ways (e.g. through text, speech, movement, illustration).
- space short work periods with breaks.
- allow extra time for homework completion.
- inform student with several reminders, several minutes apart, before changing from one activity to the next.
- reduce amount of work from usual assignment.

Repeating

Students with SEN and disability may benefit most if new information is repeated because they are usually slower at processing information than others.

Support in the classroom

Students with SEN and disability need time for extra support. A teacher can provide extra support by

- organising activities of a lesson to give more time for individual instruction (e.g. group work, individual work).
- previewing, pre-teaching and reteaching assignments that are challenging for the student.

In addition, support can be provided by an assistant for students with SEN and support teacher.

Managing behaviour in the classroom

The following may help teachers in controlling the behaviour in the classroom:

- Develop the rules of the classroom; the main rule being to respect one another.
- Avoid confrontations and power struggles.
- Provide an appropriate peer role model.
- Develop a system or code that will let the student know when behaviour is not appropriate.
- Ignore attention-seeking behaviours that are disruptive to the classroom.
- Develop a code of conduct for the classroom and visually display it in an appropriate place where all students can see it, review it frequently.
- Develop a behaviour intervention plan that is realistic and easily applied.
- Provide immediate reinforcement and feedback.
- Create an interesting curriculum with materials that are meaningful to students: it helps students to be interested and become involved.
- Develop observation and recording skills to determine what causes a particular behavioural problem.

6.6. How to support students with SEN and disabilities in mainstream upper secondary school

The following sub-chapters give basic information about different special educational needs and disabilities and what kinds of challenges in learning they may cause. In addition, there are tips for teachers how to support a student with SEN and disability in mainstream upper secondary classroom.-

It must be emphasised that special educational needs manifest individually. Even if two students have the same diagnosis, their needs and abilities are unique. Therefore, the teachers have to get to know the students well.

6.6.1. Students with specific learning disabilities

Definition

A specific learning difficulty is a different way of learning, organising and processing information and it occurs in:

- reading, writing and / or mathematics.
- difficulties in perception, attention deficits and motor learning skills may also occur.

The academic performance of the student is inconsistent with his or her ability to learn, or with age or talent.

The specific learning difficulty is not caused by any impairment or resulted by insufficient instruction.

Challenges in learning may include

Dyslexia

- Difficulties in reading and in accurate word recognition;
- Difficulties in reading comprehension and limited vocabulary;
- Overall difficulties in learning by reading.

Dysgraphia

- Difficulties with written expression and forming letters and numbers by hand;
- Difficulties with spelling, handwriting, and expressing thoughts to paper;
- Difficulties with tasks that require thinking and writing at the same time, such as notetaking.

Dyscalculia

- Difficulties with processing numbers and quantities and learning number-related concepts;
- Difficulties with performing basic math skills and accurate math calculations, and reasoning and problem solving;
- Trouble recalling basic math facts (like multiplication tables) and difficulty making sense of money and estimating quantities;
- Poor visual and spatial orientation;
- Difficulty immediately sorting out direction (right from left);
- Troubles with recognizing patterns and sequencing numbers.

How to meet the needs in a mainstream classroom

Each learning difficulty has to be assessed individually and assistance may be given in forms such as:

- Provide study guides, practice tests, textbooks to highlight, and taped books;
- Allow alternative response forms, extra time, or alternative places to do work or take tests;
- Use multiple delivery methods;
- Provide verbal instructions for those who need it;
- Provide notes ahead of time;
- Allow more time on assignments and tests;
- Allow the use of a calculator or computer;
- Adjust the difficulty of the task;
- Separate complicated math problems into smaller steps;
- Use posters to remind students to basic math concepts;
- Provide supplementary information via computer-based interactive lessons or hands-on projects.

Limitations / Preferable profiles in upper secondary education

Limitations, if any, are individual. With appropriate support, instruction and practice, students with specific learning difficulties will find different ways to learn and use those strategies successfully all their lives.

6.6.2. Students with intellectual disability

Definition

Intellectual disability is a disability characterised by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behaviour. Intellectual functioning refers to general mental capacity, such as learning, reasoning, problem solving and memory functions. Adaptive behaviour is the collection of conceptual, social, and practical skills that are needed in everyday life.

- Conceptual skills: language and literacy; money, time, and number concepts; and self-direction.
- Social skills: interpersonal skills, social responsibility, self-esteem, gullibility, social problem solving, the ability to follow rules/obey laws and to avoid being victimised.
- Practical skills: activities of daily living, occupational skills, self- and healthcare, safety, use of money and phone, travel/transportation, etc.

Note that:

- Intellectual disabilities are of a great variety and the intensity and degree of the disability vary enormously.
- Students with intellectual disabilities do not form any one homogenous group and each of them has their own individual strengths and needs.
- Only commonality is difficulty in understanding and learning and this varies from mild to significant.

Challenges in learning:

- Difficulty in developing social and communication skills
- Increased time needed for cognitive processing of tasks or new learning materials
- Difficulty in understanding new or different information
- Difficulty understanding or comprehending abstract concepts
- Difficulty in processing information sequentially.

How to meet the needs in mainstream classroom and support needed

Students with intellectual disabilities need supplementary services and aids.

1. Physical environment

- Provide a structured environment and specialized instructional strategies that supports and enhances student's learning potential.

2. Preparation

- Instruction and learning materials tailored to each individual's learning abilities
- Invite students of varying abilities to work together toward a common goal (e.g. project).
- Provide the student with teacher notes or taped lectures.

3. Modified Teaching Style

- Use simple language and words and illustrate with pictures or other visual representations.
- Modify teaching to be more hands-on and be as concrete as possible.
- Use multi-sensory approach.
- Break the lesson and the tasks up into smaller, easier-to-manage steps. Demonstrate the steps. Wait until the student masters the step before moving onto the next one. Repeat each step until the student is able to do it correctly. Then go to the next step, until the process is complete as many repetitions may be needed.
- Make sure the student understands the assignment and task.
- Give the student extra time to complete assignment, tasks or tests.

- Have the student work with a tutor, and in a small group or with a peer.
- Allow the student to respond orally or on a computer.
- Provide support to complete the assignment.
- Be patient.
- Remain encouraging and give immediate feedback.
- Help the student learn life-skills.
- Communicate regularly with your student's parents and guardians.

Limitations / Preferable profiles in upper secondary education

Weaknesses in general ability to learn and process information result invariably low achievement in all academic areas. VET profiles tailored to the individual needs.

6.6.3. Students with hearing impairment

Definition

Hearing impairment ranges from mildly impaired to total deafness.

- Congenitally and pre-lingually deaf are born deaf or lost hearing before learning to speak and sign language is their language.
- Deaf students use sign language to communicate and in a classroom they need to be assisted by sign language interpreters.
- Deafened are those who lost their hearing after learning to speak. They may be able to express themselves by speech but need other communication modes such as sign language, signed speech, finger spelling, lip-reading and writing to understand others.
- Persons with hard of hearing have residual hearing sufficient to enable successful processing of linguistic information through audition. FM listening systems, hearing aids and lip reading may assist students with hard of hearing.

Challenges in learning:

- Poor instruction and lack of teachers fluent in sign language or sign language interpreters.
- Difficulties in learning speech and acquiring written and spoken language
- Poor vocabulary and grammar development
- Difficulties in understanding written texts and expressing themselves in writing.
- Physical classroom environment: noisy and poorly lit classrooms

How to meet the needs in mainstream classroom

1. Physical Environment:

- Seat a student in the front of the classroom.
- Make sure the student will see your face and gestures and faces and gestures of other students during the lesson.
- Avoid teaching in front of bright windows as they tend to be a distraction to visual communication.

2. Preparation

- Full use of visual aids (text telephones, signalling systems such as sound or tactile doorbells, clocks, smoke alarms) and amplification instruments (hearing aids, classroom amplification devices such as phonic ears) is very important.
- Write important information on a board or in notes provided to students.
- Provide note-taking guides or peer note takers.
- Sign language interpreter to support deaf students.
- Adapt the curriculum for students with hearing impairments or deafness.
- Use textbooks and worksheets with lower reading levels.

3. Visual Teaching style

- Use written or pictorial directions and use speech patterns that are clear and natural, not exaggerated and make sure that a student who is using lipreading can see you
- Be patient if you have to wait for response.
- Use close-captioned videos.
- Provide a variety of multisensory experiences for students. Allow students to capitalize on their other learning modalities.
- Use concrete objects such as models, diagrams and samples
- In exams and assignments:
 - Avoid complicated language and long sentences in examination questions as interpreters may be asked to interpret a test.
 - Allow extra time for a student to complete examination when needed.
 - Supplement oral or signed explanations with written material.

Limitations / Preferable profiles in upper secondary education

Limitations related to hearing. With appropriate auditory aids and sign language interpretation as well as an appropriate learning environment – hard of hearing and deaf students can be as effective and capable in learning as their hearing peers.

6.6.4. Students with visual impairments and Blindness

Definition

Visual impairments are divided in two categories:

- Low vision: clarity of sight is reduced permanently to such a level that a student is unable to perform everyday visual tasks.
- Blindness: vision is completely and permanently lost.

Challenges in learning:

- Most of schoolwork is based in some way on vision and therefore, visual impairment has many effects on learning.

How to meet the needs in mainstream classroom

1. Physical environment:

- Seat the student close to the main instructional areas with plenty of natural and artificial light sources.
- Limit external and internal noise by closing doors and windows.

2. Preparation

- Prepare and make course materials (preferably in electronic form) available early so there is sufficient time for them to be reproduced in audio or Braille.
- Provide large print notes ahead of time.
- Provide low-glare, high-contrast materials to the student with low vision.
- Provide recordings of lectures and any printed materials in Braille for blind students.
- Prepare well activities which take place out of school and partner students with other students who can help.
- In film and video class presentations provide the student with prior notice which allows them the option to see it beforehand very close to the screen or to have someone to explain the film or video.

3. Verbal teaching style

- Provide clear oral instructions and explain verbally what is being shown on visual presentations, read any printed information and describe any charts or graphs being used.
- Use hands on hands physical guiding with blind students.

- Be aware of any terminology you may use that would demand visual acuity the student is not capable of (e.g. phrases such as “over there” and “like that one” would be inappropriate.)
- In exams and assignments:
 - Student may use Braille or computer;
 - Extended time and breaks during exams may be arranged;
 - Examinations may have to be read out aloud.

Limitations / Preferable profiles in upper secondary education

Limitations related to the vision. Whilst certain visually based vocational training education is clearly not appropriate for students with visual impairment and blindness, with appropriate assistive devices and individual support blind students and students with low vision can be as successful as their seeing peers in their studies.

6.6.5. Students with physical impairments

Definition

A physical impairment means not being able to use your hands or feet properly, stand, sit or move around. There are many different types and degrees of physical impairment such as:

- mobility-related impairments,
- health and medical impairments, and
- impairments that result from brain injuries.

Note that

- Sometimes physical disabilities are obvious; however not always.
- Some physical disabilities require the use of an assistive device (for example, a wheelchair or walker).
- Some persons with physical impairments may be accompanied by a personal support person.

The most common physical impairment is Cerebral Palsy (CP) which is caused by a brain damage. The CP has several forms which may include forced movements which often also interfere with speech.

It must be emphasised that students with physical impairments are no different intellectually than the more mobile students in your classroom.

Challenges in learning:

- Transportation difficulties to the classroom
- As a result of extra physical effort required to perform tasks, some students may become easily fatigued
- Some students may be taking strong medication that adversely affects their concentration and performance
- Due to the difficulty controlling movements, handwriting may be difficult and increased time may be needed

There are many assistive devices available to be used for children with physical disabilities that allow them to participate in activities in the classroom. Also activities should be selected and adapted based on the needs and possibilities of those children.

How to meet the needs in a mainstream classroom

1. Physical Environment

Physical activities in the classroom must be adapted to the needs of students with physical disabilities.

- Wheelchairs and other devices must be accommodated;
- Ask the student's input on how to make the facilities in the classroom more accessible to them;

- Arrange seating so as to fully include the student in class discussions and activities and keep aisles between desks clear and provide sufficient space for physically disabled students to manoeuvre.
- Install ramps at every door of every room and rails in corridors and toilets must be created, doors wide enough for a student to enter the school and classroom.

2. Preparation

Adaptations should be made in that way that allows students to fully participate in the learning activities organised in the classroom.

- Make sure there is free access to the school building and the schoolyard, and adequate access to all parts of the classroom so that a student can participate in all activities
- Make classroom materials and work areas accessible.
- Modify the height, slant, or angle of desk and chairs to meet individual student's needs
- When designing an activity, be on the lookout for alternative methods of display, manipulation, or presentation.
- Provide a list of written assignments as soon as possible

3. Modified Teaching Style

- Writing with computer, if necessary;
- Give assignments both orally and in written format to avoid confusion
- Encourage students to participate in all activities to the fullest extent possible.
- Establish a rotating series of "helpers" to assist any physically disabled students in moving about the room. Students often enjoy this responsibility and the opportunity to assist whenever necessary.
- Help the student use his or her problem-solving abilities and thinking skills in completing an assignment.
- Physically impaired students may get frustrated and therefore take some time periodically to talk with students and help them with feelings of frustrations
- Use materials to help stabilise work materials (tape, clamps, suction cups).
- Use technology and adaptive equipment (a computer adapted to the student's needs, assistive information technology, mobility aids, hand controls, arm/wrist support, page-turning devices, modified keyboards, scanners, voice recognition programmes).

Limitations / Preferable profiles in upper secondary education

Depending on the type and level of disability, students with physical impairments can be successful in educational profiles that do not require a lot of physical movement.

6.6.6. Students with ADHD and ADD

Definition

Students with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder) have difficulties with attention, hyperactivity and impulse control. Impulsive and hyperactive behaviour of a student may lead to disturbances of conduct at times. The ADD is an Attention Deficit Disorder without motor restlessness and impulsivity.

Challenges in learning may include

- Difficulties concentrating, paying attention and following instructions;
- Difficulties starting and finishing tasks;
- A low tolerance level and a high frustration level (ADHD);
- Easily distractible and confused;
- Difficulty in working within groups;
- Difficulties in planning actions and schedules;

How to meet the needs in mainstream classroom

- Provide a quiet work area and minimise distractions in the classroom.
- Make your instructions and assignments brief and clear and as short as possible.
- Allow frequent breaks or time to move around.
- Make sure a student has a task he/she can complete successfully each day.
- Give extra time on tests and make expectations clear and help with staying organised.
- Make frequent eye contact to the student and use physical contact e.g. a hand on the shoulder to focus attention.
- Establish and use a secret signal to let students know when they are off task or misbehaving.
- Give positive reinforcement and feedback.

Limitations / Preferable profiles in upper secondary education

Limitations, if any, are individual. However, people with ADHD often are creative, innovative, energetic and unafraid to take up new challenges and this should be encouraged where possible.

6.6.7. Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Definition:

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition and a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioural challenges. The ASD includes several conditions for example autistic disorder and Asperger syndrome. Characteristics vary depending on the person and can range from mild to severe.

A few common signs of autism spectrum disorder include:

- Trouble talking or making eye contact;
- Preference of playing alone and often “in their own world”;
- Unusual attachments to certain objects or activities;
- Struggles in social interactions with other students;
- Appears overly sensitive to noises or images;
- Ways to communicate, interact, behave, and learn are different from most other people.

Learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD can range from gifted to severely challenged. Some people with ASD need a lot of help in their daily lives; others need less if any.

Signs of ASD begin during early childhood and typically last throughout a person’s life.

People with autism might:

- have trouble relating to others or not have an interest in other people at all.
- avoid eye contact and want to be alone.
- have trouble understanding other people’s feelings or talking about their own feelings.
- appear to be unaware when people talk to them but respond to other sounds.
- be very interested in people, but not know how to talk, play, or relate to them.
- repeat or echo words or phrases said to them or repeat words or phrases in place of normal language.
- have trouble expressing their needs using typical words or motions.
- have trouble adapting when a routine changes.
- have unusual reactions to the way things smell, taste, look, feel, or sound.

Challenges in learning:

- challenges in communication may cause troubles in learning generally,
- often co-occurs with ADHD and specific learning disabilities,

- learning of students is not necessarily impacted by a lack of cognitive ability,
- social-emotional and/or sensorimotor difficulties,
- many students with autism face bullying.

How to meet the needs in mainstream classroom

- Avoid sensory overload in classroom decorations or activities, which can make it tough for students with autism to pay attention,
- Establish clear and ordered routines in the classroom
- Prepare a student when changes are anticipated
- Plan and practice communication strategies and social routines
- Let student use earplugs or noise-canceling headsets in noisy places
- Provide a student with a quiet area where the student can take a time-out if necessary
- provide visual or written instructions and schedules (visual learners)
- present new or difficult content presented in a variety of ways, but especially by showing what to do
- Let the student use a computer, especially word processing for writing
- Students with autism spectrum benefit from structural instruction and daily routines,
- Use literal language since many students with autism have difficulties understanding figurative language.
- Don't assume that a student with autism has an intellectual disability.

Limitations / Preferable profiles in upper secondary education

Limitations are individual. Many students with Asperger syndrome are very successful in their studies. Students with Autism need to be personally guided to the studies tailored to their individual needs.

6.6.8. Students with emotional problems

Definition:

Students with emotional problems

- Demonstrate an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships;
- Develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems,
- Exhibit a pervasive mood of unhappiness under normal circumstances, or
- Show inappropriate types of behaviour under normal circumstances.

Challenges in learning

- Emotionally challenged students benefit from a highly structured programme in which the sequence of activities and procedures is constant and stable.

How to meet the needs in mainstream classroom and support needed

- Whenever possible, give the student a sense of responsibility. Put the student in charge of something small and be sure to recognise the effort.
- Provide opportunities for the student to self-select an activity;
- Invite the student to share his or her findings or discoveries with the rest of the class.
- Get the student involved in activities with other students and particularly those students who can serve as good role models for the student.
- Discuss appropriate classroom behaviour at frequent intervals.
- Be sure to seat the student away from any distractions.
- Whenever possible, keep the activities short and quick.
- Provide immediate feedback, reinforcement, and a sufficient amount of praise.

Limitations / Preferable profiles in upper secondary education

- Properly guided and supported students are expected to have no limitations in upper secondary education and beyond.

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