

# I AM

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION  
USING ANIMATION AND MULTIMEDIA

## TOGETHER WE ANIMATE A SCHOOL FOR ALL

## TRAINING HANDBOOK FOR EDUCATIONAL STAFF



**CMTProoptiki.**  
CONSULTING MANAGEMENT TRAINING

The Maria Grzegorzewska  
**UNIVERSITY**  
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Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



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## Introduction

The WP3 aims to develop widespread effective and tailored tools to support education and training institutions and learning providers in implementing inclusive education approaches and in promoting common values. The tailored training tools developed under this WP will be used either for self-study or inside classrooms for the promotion of inclusive education, to raise awareness of the specific needs of children with SEND, and support educational staff in addressing diversity. Educators, role models, and parents will have a crucial role in this process. The tools and material will be uploaded on the project's website, where the interesting parts will have free access, during the project's lifetime and beyond.

### Training handbook for educational staff.

The training handbook will be developed based on the principles of adult learning and the special requirements of the target groups, nurtured by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals, like psychologists, psychotherapists, experts on special education, etc. It will also offer practical hands-on strategies to ensure high-quality teaching for all, together with key facts, real-life case studies, and questions for reflection, that can be used either for self-study or inside classrooms for the promotion of inclusive education and the awareness raising on the needs of children and young people with SEND. It will be produced in two phases. Firstly, a mock-up version will be produced in English, that will be used by target users during the capacity-building activities under WP6 and the activities during WP7. The users will provide feedback on the structure, context, and usability of the handbook. The handbook's finalization will be conducted after the activities in WP7 and will be available via the project's website in 4 languages: English, Greek, Polish and Hungarian. The mock-up version will be disseminated to all participants during the capacity-building activities to be carried out, in e- publication format and it will be available on the website of the project.

Five main modules can be considered as a whole training as well as separate ones if the trainees are interested in a particular module.

### Every module is divided into 6 parts:

**1. The aim of the module. / "Why is this module important?"**

This is a short description of the main and detailed aims of the module. The trainee can decide if he/she is interested in this module.

**2. The effects of the training module. / "How will this module help me?"**

The training effects are listed and the trainee can be sure of what to expect after implementing this module.

**3. Basic knowledge about the module topic. / "What should I know?"**

In this part of the module, there is basic information/definitions/materials as crucial knowledge on this particular topic.



#### 4. The examples of the exercises and case studies. / “What should I can?”

In this part of the module, there are exercises to do in a group of trainees or individually. There are examples of case studies to consider and discuss.

#### 5. Test yourself! / “Do I know it and can I do it?”

There are some questions to answer or case studies to consider to test one’s knowledge and skills.

#### 6. Literature/additional materials.

In this section, the trainee can find some suggestions for the literature/project/websites to increase their knowledge and skills.

## (1) Module 1: Inclusive education - Basic information

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### Why is this module important?

Inclusion is one of the “Sustainable Development Goals” set by the United Nations. Countries are expected to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This means that everyone involved in education will play an important role in the fulfillment of that goal.

The emphasis of this module will be placed on inclusion which is considered to be the future of education. Some basic but essential information will be provided about the meaning of inclusion in theory and how inclusion can be promoted in practice. Inclusion will be approached through the lens of diversity and children’s rights. The role of the whole educational staff as well as the leadership in this venture will be discussed, as their role is considered key for effective and successful inclusive education for all.

This module will help you learn about terms such as disability, exclusion, integration, segregation, diversity, discrimination, children’s rights, and so on. Most probably you have already heard these terms, but in this module, they will be discussed under the prism of inclusion’s connotations to reduce any kind of confusion and misunderstanding regarding their actual theoretical and practical meaning that seems to exist among educators and other stakeholders. The delimitation of the meaning of such terms and other relevant information will be helpful as it will provide food for thought, and tricker discussions, and enable reflections on the current practices that may be called inclusive in theory, but at a practical level, they may not align with the principles of inclusion.

Discussions will be enhanced by the provision of additional information about the inclusive practices in your country (Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, and Poland).

### How will this module help me?

**Upon completion of this module, you will be:**



- ✓ Able to define and understand several terms such as disability, inclusion, inclusive education, integration, segregation, separation, exclusion, diversity
- ✓ Able to conceptually approach disability as a contested term through the lenses of different models, such as the medical model, the charity model, the social model, and the human rights-based model
- ✓ Able to distinguish inclusion from integration
- ✓ Able to understand 'Inclusion' as the ultimate goal of contemporary education concerning the fundamental right to education for everyone
- ✓ Able to articulate the benefits of inclusive education for children with and without special educational needs and disability
- ✓ Able to examine ways of promoting a whole-school ethos that aligns with the principles of inclusion
- ✓ Able to consider the role of teachers, school principals, and other members of school staff in promoting inclusive practices in schools
- ✓ Aware of the basics around the current inclusive policies and practices in your country
- ✓ Enabled to review the current inclusive policies and practices in your country with a critical eye
- ✓ Able to reflect upon and reconsider your current practices for them to comply with the principles of effective inclusive education

## What should I know?

### 1.1 Disability – A conceptual approach

The concept of disability is contested and thus any attempt to clearly describe it encounters multiple obstacles. It is a complex and multidisciplinary phenomenon that varies cross-culturally and is influenced by the current socio-political perceptions, but also by the condition of the person who is considered as disabled (Soulis, 2013).

It seems, therefore, that it is not easy to reach a widely accepted definition of disability (Brando, 2005), while there is a variety of definitions that are based on different approaches. For example, an approach to defining disability is in terms of the disadvantage an impairment brings to the individual. For example, "a child with a disability is a child who has a visual impairment of the cortex". This is an example of definitions that are oriented towards the individual as a biological being and the emphasis is on the impairment and what a person who carries the impairment cannot do (Soulis, 2013).

There are also definitions of disability based on the individual's "behaviour" and the expectations of society. For example, "a child with a disability is a child who cannot see, and thus cannot ride a bicycle. Or a child who wears black glasses or who holds a white cane, and thus he cannot greet us or look us in the eyes because he is blind". These are definitions oriented towards the individual as a social being and his relations with others. Other definitions of disability are based on the type of education the person receives or the type of school attended (Soulis, 2013).

#### 1.1.1 Medical Model



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The medical approach to disability considers disability as a personal tragedy, that is to say, disability is seen as a problem within the individual. Thus, disabled people are seen as passive and dependent on those without disabilities. This approach has been condemned by people with disabilities because it causes unfair treatment in every aspect of their lives. It generates negative attitudes and leads to stigmatization (Goodley, 2014).

### 1.1.2 Charity Model

According to the charity model of disability, disabled people deserve compassion and pity, due to their condition, thus fundraising is encouraged to counterbalance this misbalance. In many societies, the charity model has penetrated strongly into social events, to the extent that it cannot be escaped (Phtiaka, 1999).

### 1.1.3 Social Model

The social model of disability considers society as the creator of barriers around people with disabilities. The supporters of the social model argue that the society itself "has the problem", not the individuals (Oliver, 1996). The main problem of society, according to this approach, is that it expects people to conform to its requirements and conventions, rather than recognizing individual differences and thus adapting to them.

It is a matter of fact that the social model of disability was an outcome of activism that managed to shift the focus from the individual to society. It also managed to make a distinction between impairment (i.e. biological limitations) and disability (i.e. social restrictions, loss, or limitation of opportunities to participate on an equal level), something that constitutes the fundamental idea of the social model.

### 1.1.4 Human Rights-based Model

Understanding disability as a social construct empowered disabled people, who now claim their rights and equal opportunities (Barnes, 1991). This approach calls for abandoning spontaneous attitudes of pity and mercy towards people with disabilities and emphasizing inalienable and equal human rights for all, whether they have a disability or not (Retief & Letšosa, 2018).

### 1.1.5 Definition according to the United Nations

In most recent definitions of disability, there is an attempt to keep a balance between the role of impairment itself and the barriers that are created by society around individuals with disabilities.

For instance, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines disability as:

long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder [a person's] full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (United Nations, 2006, Article 1).

## 1.2 Inclusion has been an important policy issue across the world.

There are many ways to define inclusion but there is as yet no agreement between scholars regarding its accurate definition, as it receives different interpretations in different contexts. It has been argued that society itself potentially builds obstacles that prevent opportunities for societal inclusion of individuals

from different ethnic, racial, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds since there is a tendency to ignore individual differences. Society expects individuals to adjust to the demands and conventions of society rather than recognize individual differences. Inclusion calls for a societal change rather than a change of individuals who may experience oppression because of discriminatory social markers such as ableism, ageism, class, heterosexism, racism, and sexism (Cranmer, 2020).

Inclusion also applies in the context of education and is known as inclusive education. Inclusive education is now found in policy documents in every country and asserts that equitable education opportunities must be provided in mainstream schools that are expected to be prepared to accommodate all students regardless of their characteristics (Symeonidou, 2017).

Even though inclusive education emerged as a philosophy through activist action and attempts to ensure equal education opportunities for disabled children, a broader view of the term incorporates students from different ethnic, racial, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds (Forlin, 2010).

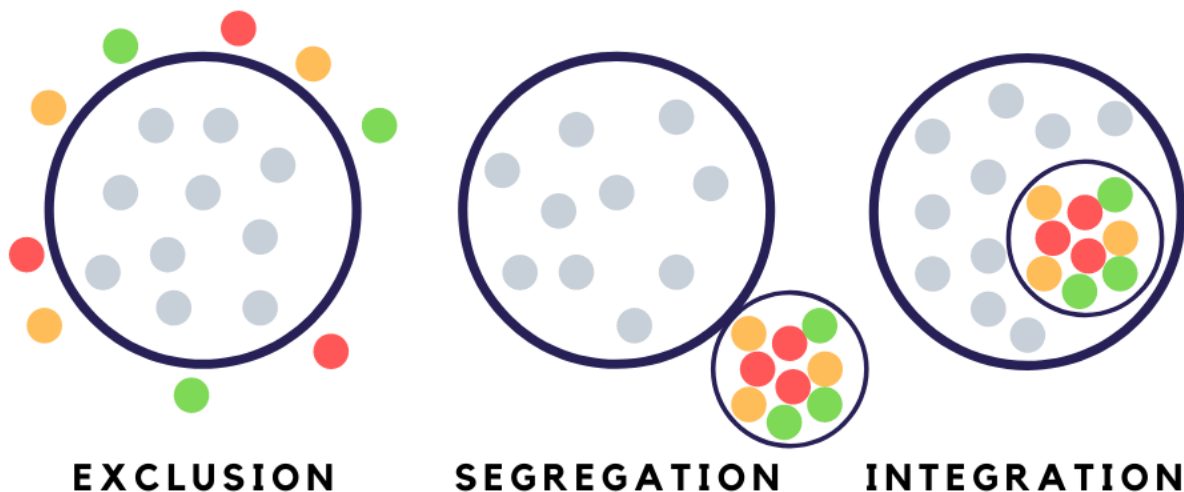


Fig.1 The picture of exclusion, segregation, and integration

‘Inclusion’ is often defined as a journey or movement away from segregation (Frederickson and Cline, 2015). Historically, children who had severe disabilities **were excluded** (see **Exclusion in figure 1**) from the right to education. There are examples from past centuries of the negative stance towards children with disabilities by society, including teachers. Later, the right to education for all was recognized with the establishment of several special schools mainly for the education of children with severe hearing or visual difficulties. Soon they were put together with other children whose needs were perceived to be similar in **segregated settings** (see **Segregation in figure 1**), such as special schools or other institutions. The logic behind this approach was that separatism would allow special facilities and specially trained staff to be made available to children who needed them.

In the 1970s there was a trend supporting the idea of **integration** (see **Integration** in [figure 1](#)), mainly physical integration of children with disabilities in mainstream settings but not necessarily in the same settings with other non-disabled children. At this stage, we had the formation of special units/classrooms within the mainstream schools, a practice that was criticized by many scholars as the transfer of special schools into mainstream schools. Of course, that development was not enough because many barriers continued to maintain children’s exclusion and did not guarantee equal education opportunities for all.

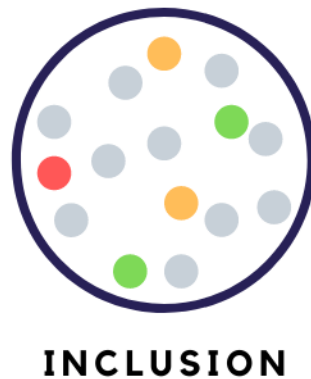


 Fig.2 The picture of inclusion

Intense activist actions were followed in the western world calling for a change to ensure equal education opportunities for disabled children. This led to the emergence of **inclusion**. From the figure, we understand that inclusion is about including everyone in the same setting by lifting any barriers or walls of segregation.

According to UNESCO (2009: 4), inclusive education is defined as “a process that involves the transformation of schools and other centers of learning to cater for all children – including boys and girls, students from ethnic and linguistic minorities, rural populations, those affected by HIV and AIDS, and those with disabilities and difficulties in learning and to provide learning opportunities for all youth and adults as well. It aims to eliminate exclusion that is a consequence of negative attitudes and a lack of response to diversity in race, economic status, social class, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and ability”.

The importance of inclusion in the context of education is reaffirmed by the United Nations’ “Sustainable Development Goals”. According to goal number four, governments should “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (United Nations, 2015).

Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on the education of all disabled children (UNESCO, 1994) called for the implementation of the philosophy of inclusion in schools to be the norm. This statement is probably the cornerstone of what we call ‘inclusive education’ as it influenced then and still influences the current inclusive legislative frameworks and has enhanced the attempts to deliver inclusive education



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in many countries. Salamanca Statement brought significant changes to policies and practices, making the venture for ‘inclusion for all’ more feasible (Cranmer, 2020).

Since its emergence in the 1990s, inclusive education has criticized the traditional special education systems as promoting exclusion due to practices of segregation (Symeonidou, 2017). However, the term ‘inclusive education’ has been abused as it has often been used to describe policies and practices that exclude disabled children (Slee, 2011). Despite the positive changes that have taken place at a theoretical level, full inclusion in education has not yet been achieved. This also applies in the case of countries with long experience in this field. For example, in the United Kingdom, where the attempts to educate disabled children “wherever possible” within mainstream settings began almost two decades before the ratification of the Salamanca Statement, there still is a debate between academics and disability activists concerning the current inclusive practices that seem to represent ‘integration’ rather inclusion (Cameron, 2013).

So, what are the actual differences between ‘integration’ and ‘inclusion’?

Although integration and inclusion are often discussed together, in fact, they deal with different ideas and approaches.

Integration implies the simple placement of disabled children into mainstream schools. It recognized disabled children’s right in being educated in local mainstream schools and emerged after a long period of segregation of disabled children in special schools. In integration, little attempt is applied on behalf of the schools to meet children’s special needs, through basic arrangements and adjustments. It involves a simple adaptation of curriculum, assessment practices, teaching, and learning to integrate disabled children within a classroom and a school. However, the main emphasis is rather placed on physical access, in integration, the integrated children themselves are those who are expected to change and adapt to the demands of mainstream schools (Rieser, 2001). Interestingly, Booth, Nes, and Strømstad (2003) argue that in integration ‘learners, irrespective of their backgrounds, interests, identities, gender, attainments or disabilities are meant to fit into a monocultural education system, with fixed curricula and approaches to teaching and learning (p.2).

It is important to note that integration led to a kind of reorganization of the then-special education system (Vislie, 2003). However, Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009) argue that integration allowed the reproduction of the special education practices of separatism (the practice before integration when disabled children were educated in separate special schools exclusively) within the mainstream education system by establishing procedures for identifying needs, allocating resources, providing individualized special education in special classes and so on.

On the contrary, ‘inclusion’ is not just the placement of disabled children within educational settings and not the simple adaptation of curriculum, assessment practices, teaching, and learning to integrate disabled children within a classroom and a school. It rather entails the transformation and restructuring of the education system to provide equal educational opportunities for all children, irrespective of individual differences (Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2009). Florian (1998) differentiates inclusion from integration as being about the right of all children to full and not partial participation in education.



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Inclusion calls for each school to “... identify and address the barriers within its environment, teaching and learning strategies, attitudes, organization and management that prevent the full participation of disabled children” (Rieser, 2001, p. 175). This implies that teachers and other school staff play a significant role in the success of inclusive education.

**According to Booth (2009), inclusive education includes:**

- access (e.g. accessible curriculum and teaching and learning practices, accessible schools, and provision of assistive technology)
- quality education (e.g. education that takes into account individual differences, preferred learning styles, academic levels, etc.)
- values (e.g. valuing all students equally, promoting participation, eliminating discrimination, etc.)

Booth and Ainscow (2011) list elements that inclusive education should involve. The combination of these elements leads to a **working definition of inclusion in education:**

- Valuing all students and staff equally.
- Increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula, and communities of local schools.
- Restructuring the cultures, policies, and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in the locality.
- Reducing barriers to learning and participation for all students, not only those with impairments or those who are categorized as 'having special educational needs'.
- Learning from attempts to overcome barriers to the access and participation of particular students to make changes for the benefit of students more widely.
- Viewing the difference between students as resources to support learning, rather than as problems to be overcome.
- Acknowledging the right of students to an education in their locality.
- Improving schools for staff as well as for students.
- Emphasizing the role of schools in building community and developing values, as well as in increasing achievement.
- Fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities.
- Recognizing that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.

As can be seen in the components of inclusion introduced by Booth and Ainscow (2011) and Booth (2009), teachers in inclusive educational settings are expected to reconsider the approaches and practices that they apply for the education of all children, rather than relying on “special” teachers meeting the needs



of “special” children (Ballard, 1999). Therefore, the success and failure of inclusive education largely depend on the strategies and practices that mainstream school teachers use and the collaboration they have with special teachers and other specialists to deal with heterogeneous learners in their educational settings. Of course, this endeavor is challenging and demanding as teachers are required to continuously explore new approaches and shift their current teaching strategies for them to become more inclusive and effective. In simpler words, in inclusion, teachers are expected to adjust their daily teaching and assessment tasks according to the features of students in their settings.

### **What are the benefits of inclusion?**

Over the years, the benefits of providing inclusive education to all children have been shown. According to Storey (2020, p. 16-17), there are benefits for all children either with disabilities or not.

#### **Benefits for students with disabilities**

- Improved academic development
- Friendships, relationships, and social networks with peers without disabilities
- Greater success as adults and preparation for the “real world”.
- Access to academics and extracurricular activities through universal design for learning
- Better social acceptance and reduction in negative stereotypes about people with disabilities
- Increased motivation
- Students with disabilities can benefit from role models with or without disabilities in inclusive settings

#### **Benefits for students without disabilities**

- Learning that diversity exists and can be positive
- Academic benefits for students without disabilities
- Understanding and appreciating individual differences
- Increased empathy, compassion, and understanding of differences in others.



Therefore, inclusive education (when practiced well) is very important because

**All children can be part of their community and develop a sense of belonging and become better prepared for life in the community as children and adults.**

- It provides better learning opportunities. Children with varying abilities are often better motivated when they learn in classes surrounded by other children.
- The expectations of all the children are higher. Successful inclusion attempts to develop an individual's strengths and gifts.
- It allows children to work on individual goals while being with other students their age.
- It encourages the involvement of parents in the education of their children and the activities of their local schools.
- It fosters a culture of respect and belonging. It also provides the opportunity to learn about and accept individual differences.
- It provides all children with opportunities to develop friendships with one another. Friendships provide role models and opportunities for growth.

 Source: [back.nb.ca](http://back.nb.ca)

## 1.3 Inclusion and stakeholders

### 1.3.1 Parents

Over the last decades, the role of parents in the education of their children has been increasingly valued (Frederickson & Cline, 2015). Parents can be involved in their children's education both at home and at school in a variety of activities including school meetings, talking with teachers, attending school events and volunteering in school, helping with homework, discussing school projects or school events, and participating in intellectually - engaging activities like going to plays, libraries or museums (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012).

Research shows that parents' involvement in children's education can be beneficial, thus schools and teachers are encouraged to foster positive family support for children's learning and well-being through collaboration with parents (Frederickson & Cline, 2015). However, there are many barriers to effective parental involvement. According to Hornby and Lafaele (2011), these barriers can be categorized into four areas: broad societal factors (e.g. demographic issues), parent-teacher factors (e.g. different priorities, goals, and agendas), individual parent and family factors (e.g. beliefs about parental involvement) and child factors (e.g. age, difficulties).

The involvement of parents with children who have SEND has been encouraged in the last decades by the legislative framework at different levels. For instance, parents are allowed to decide on the type of school



where they will enroll their child. Parents are also involved in the SEND assessment processes. However, parents' involvement who have children with SEND are not trouble-free. Parents' levels of engagement depend on a variety of factors such as their ethnic and linguistic background, school ethos, etc. (Frederickson & Cline, 2015).

A good relationship between parents and school can be a partnership that involves sharing expertise and control to provide the optimum education for children with SEND (Hornby, 1995). When teachers and parents work closely together, with mutual respect, honesty, sharing, etc, inclusive practices seem to be more effective (Laluvien, 2010 cited in Frederickson & Cline, 2015).

### 1.3.2 Teachers and other School staff

Although the physical environment and resources are key for the effectiveness of inclusive practices, the role of teachers and other school staff seems to be more important. EADSNE (2012) identified four core values relating to teaching and learning that appeared essential for teachers' training for their attempts to promote inclusive education to be successful and effective. These values are:

- Valuing learner diversity: learner difference is considered a resource and an asset to education. This implies that school staff should be able to understand that learners learn in different ways and see these can be used to support their learning and that of their peers.
- Supporting all learners: teachers and other school staff have high expectations for all learners' achievements. This implies that teachers and other school staff should appreciate that it is essential to have high expectations for all learners. Teachers and other staff must be able to facilitate learning situations where learners can 'take risks and even fail in a safe environment
- Working with others – collaboration and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers. This means that school staff must be able to communicate effectively with parents and family members of different cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and social backgrounds. Is comfortable co-teaching and working in flexible teaching teams.
- Continuing personal professional development – teaching is a learning activity and teachers must take responsibility for their lifelong learning. This means that teachers must be open to and proactive in using colleagues and other professionals as sources of learning and inspiration.

Nonetheless, these values are subject to different interpretations by the members of school staff as they depend on factors such as attitudes, beliefs, different areas of knowledge, different levels and ways of understanding, and several skills or abilities that educators and other members of school staff have.

For Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009), "inclusion is about educating all children in mainstream schools which have all the necessary prerequisites for providing equal educational opportunities. Inclusive education requires a flexible and accessible curriculum, accessible school buildings, compulsory differentiation of teaching and assessment, and staff who are trained to implement inclusive practices" (p. 544).



Teachers' training seems to be a crucial component needed for the success of inclusive education. Most teachers acquire ideas and skills from several teacher preparation courses and personal development training sessions that they attend during their careers (Symeonidou, 2017). Research shows that teachers apply ideas from several training sessions and courses into their daily practice when they acquire skills and competencies in such sessions, when they are supported in adopting positive attitudes towards inclusion, and when they are given opportunities for greater contact and experience with people with disabilities (Forlin and Chambers, 2011).

However, teachers' training is quite generic and often not shaped around the cultural context, the historical and political developments in education, and the nature of the education systems and schools in a specific country (Symeonidou, 2017). In addition, teachers' views, attitudes, stances, and concerns regarding their role in educating disabled students and students from different ethnic, racial, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds are not always taken into account. Teachers will not apply inclusive approaches in their settings if they are not well-trained and prepared and if the provided training does not manage to shift any potential negative stance against inclusive education and diversity (Demetriou, 2020a).

### 1.3.3 School leadership

Research shows that the qualities of school leadership are strongly associated with effective schools. Interestingly, Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) explored the elements of successful school leadership and concluded that school leadership is the second most influential on students' learning after classroom teaching. School leaders seem to derive leadership practices from the same tank and have the power to influence teaching and learning indirectly by motivating staff, improving working conditions, and distributing leadership (Lindqvist and Nilholm, 2014). The strategic work of school leaders for the fulfillment of both academic and social goals may lead to the alteration of the current structure, culture, and ethos of the school (Höög, Johansson, and Olofsson, 2005).

Pashiardis and Brauckmann (2018) concluded with five effective leadership styles that school principals are likely to employ - often in a blended way - in their work: (1) Instructional Style, (2) Structuring Style, (3) Participative Style, (4) Entrepreneurial Style, and (5) Personnel Development Style. Although each leadership style consists of specific behaviors, actions, or practices which are likely to be exhibited by school leaders, the authors stress the important impact of the leader's personality, epistemological beliefs, and moral purpose on the way these five styles are employed for a school leader to create a well-functioning school that can fulfill its mission. Children's learning and well-being constitute key elements of schools' mission that can be fulfilled through a sustainable successful and effective kind of leadership (Pashiardis & Johansson, 2021).

Therefore, it is apparent that school leaders' strategic work impacts the successful implementation of inclusive education in schools, thus their role in providing leadership for inclusive processes is key (Hoopay and McLeskey, 2013). By bearing in mind the framework suggested by Pashiardis and Brauckmann (2018), school leaders' style in the implementation of inclusive practices and the promotion of an inclusive ethos in schools will be an amalgam of the abovementioned styles, however, it must be acknowledged that



school leaders' actions greatly depend on their perceptions of the particular system and organizational context in which they work. In simpler words, school leaders' actions depend on how they school leaders interpret the external environment and legal framework related to their practices (Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2011).

Villa and colleagues (1996) found that the amount of support from headteachers as well as their views about inclusion is probably the most powerful predictor of the attitudes towards inclusion that the teaching staff have. Therefore, it can be argued that moral leadership is essential to promote inclusive schools (Leo & Barton, 2006; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008). Nonetheless, many school leaders' strategic work does not support the successful implementation of inclusive education in schools due to a variety of reasons. One of the main reasons is the lack of agreement among school leaders on the way they perceive and interpret inclusion and inclusive education. Also, they may not have a clear understanding of which students are considered as needing special support. Another reason may be the lack of training but also the existence of bureaucratic procedures and legislative gaps and ambiguities that create disparities among schools on how to deal with inclusion and the challenges that may derive from inclusion for schools.

Hooper and McLeskey (2013, p. 4-5) outline the three features of the principal leadership style that are necessary for an effective inclusive school:

1. Caring for and personally investing in teachers
  - a) displaying trust in teachers
  - b) listening to their ideas, concerns, and problems
  - c) treating staff fairly
2. Buffering teachers and staff from external pressure
  - a) using data to define goals and standards
  - b) building partnerships within the surrounding community
3. Promoting the development of teachers
  - a) providing multiple opportunities for high-quality
  - b) professional development
  - c) providing opportunities for teacher leadership

## 1.4 Inclusion and diversity

### What is human diversity?

Human diversity is any dimension that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another. It is about respecting and appreciating people and what makes them different from each other, in terms of several features such as age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education, and national origin.



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Disability should be considered as an example of the difference in the endless list of variant features that individuals have. It is one characteristic among many others – from gender, ethnic and social origin to religious affiliation or sexual orientation. This approach constitutes the dominant view of inclusive education (Hinz, 2015 cited in Felder, 2019).

Felder (2019) argues that for many, the main difference between integration and inclusion is that inclusion envisages human diversity in positive ways, and even celebrates it. Inclusion in education promotes acceptance of differences in educational settings. “It is about providing a framework within which all children – regardless of ability, gender, language, ethnic or cultural origin – can be valued equally, treated with respect, and provided with equal opportunities at school” (Thomas, Walker, and Webb, 1998, p. 15). In terms of education and contrast with integration, inclusion does not define particular kinds of alleged disability.

Barton (1997) stresses that in inclusive education, the view of disability as part of human diversity should be celebrated. Felder (2019) puts it simply: “celebrating diversity” means preventing the discrimination that has especially affected disabled people, both now and in the past. The celebration of diversity is the attempt to turn negative experiences into neutral or positive ones, and thus to place disability on a par with other expressions of human diversity (p.2).

### 1.5 Inclusion and children’s rights

One of the most important conditions for the success of inclusive education is the cultivation of an environment of acceptance and appreciation of diversity on behalf of teachers and students (Demetriou, 2020b). Many conservative societies still view disability through the lens of medicalization which considers it as a personal tragedy and the same time pays no attention to the obstacles that society places in the way of people with disabilities (Goodley, 2014). These views perpetuate a generally negative attitude and stigma towards disability resulting in the unfair treatment of people with disabilities in every aspect of their life, including education. However, this is not the case in every culture. In most modern societies, the old-fashioned charity-related model has been replaced by the model of human rights where the societal norms have moved from the spontaneous stances of pity and mercy to the emphasis on inalienable and equal human rights for everyone either with a disability or not (Retief & Letšosa, 2018). There are also societies where the two models coexist (Phtiaka, 2008). This cross-cultural heterogeneity shows the complexity of the connotation of disability in different countries where despite its consideration through the lens of the human-rights approach to disability, negative views may be underlying (Darling, 2013; Johnstone, Limaye & Kayama, 2017). Nevertheless, it is apparent that any attempt to move towards a more inclusive society and education system – including legislation and policies – may be at risk if many people (including teachers) maintain negative views towards disability. Most stakeholders erroneously understand inclusive practice as the formation of a physical space where children with and without disabilities are all within the same physical environment (Slee, 2012). However, this approach of physical access sidelines the importance of the cultivation of an ambiance of acceptance (Hodkinson, 2010).



Supporters of inclusion have focused on the human rights of children with disabilities and emphasized the benefits they expect the children to experience. Children’s rights are protected by several international conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UN, 2006). For example, articles 12 and 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) calls for state parties to assure all children’s right to express their views freely and the right of all children to freedom of expression, respectively. However, in practice, it cannot be claimed that all children avail themselves of the rights that are described in these conventions. Potter & Whittaker (2011) argue that in the case of children with severe impairments – especially non-verbal children - they are usually passive agents of adults' prompts, choices, and decisions rather than being active agents, expressing their views and exerting control over their environments. Therefore, even though inclusive education is now the norm for many countries, the recognition of the uniqueness of learners, acceptance of diversity, and the promotion of children’s rights are not always fulfilled in our daily practice.

### 1.6 Inclusion in Practice: Promoting a whole-school inclusive ethos

Promoting a whole-school ethos that aligns with the principles of inclusion is key to the success of inclusive education. Booth and Ainscow (2011), devised ‘The Index for Inclusion’ which is a set of materials to guide schools and school staff through a process of inclusive school development. It is about building supportive communities and fostering high achievement for all staff and students.

The index for inclusion consists of three dimensions that are about creating, producing, and evolving inclusive practices in school settings. Each section contains up to eleven indicators and the meaning of each indicator is clarified by a series of questions. An index is a valuable tool for school leaders, teachers, specialists, and other school staff to build an inclusive community, establish inclusive values, develop a school for all, organize support for diversity, orchestrate learning and mobilize resources.

## Indicators for DIMENSION A: Creating inclusive cultures

### A.1 Building community

#### *Indicators*

- A.1.1 Everyone is made to feel welcome.
- A.1.2 Students help each other.
- A.1.3 Staff collaborate with each other.
- A.1.4 Staff and students treat one another with respect.

### A.2 Establishing inclusive values

#### *Indicators*

- A.2.1 There are high expectations for all students.
- A.2.2 Staff, governors, students and parents/carers share a philosophy of inclusion.
- A.2.3 Students are equally valued.
- A.2.4 Staff and students treat one another as human beings as well as occupants of a ‘role’.



**A.1.5** There is a partnership between staff and parents/carers.

**A.1.6** Staff and governors work well together.

**A.1.7** All local communities are involved in the school.

**A.2.5** Staff seek to remove barriers to learning and participation in all aspects of the school.

**A.2.6** The school strives to minimise discriminatory practice

## Indicators for DIMENSION B: Producing inclusive policies

### **B.1 Developing the school for all**

#### *Indicators*

**B.1.1** Staff appointments and promotions are fair.

**B.1.2** All new staff are helped to settle into the school.

**B.1.3** The school seeks to admit all students from its locality.

**B.1.4** The school makes its buildings physically accessible to all people.

**B.1.5** All new students are helped to settle into the school.

**B.1.6** The school arranges teaching groups so that all students are valued.

### **B.2 Organising support for diversity**

#### *Indicators*

**B.2.1** All forms of support are co-ordinated.

**B.2.2** Staff development activities help staff to respond to student diversity.

**B.2.3** Special educational needs' policies are inclusion policies.

**B.2.4** The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice is used to reduce the barriers to learning and participation of all students.

**B.2.5** Support for those learning English as an additional language is co-ordinated with learning support.

**B.2.6** Pastoral and behaviour support policies are linked to curriculum development and learning support policies

**B.2.7** Pressures for disciplinary exclusion are decreased.

**B.2.8** Barriers to attendance are reduced.

**B.2.9** Bullying is minimised.



## Indicators for DIMENSION C: Evolving inclusive practices

### C.1 Orchestrating learning

**C.1.1** Teaching is planned with the learning of all students in mind.

**C.1.2** Lessons encourage the participation of all students.

**C.1.3** Lessons develop an understanding of difference.

**C.1.4** Students are actively involved in their own learning.

**C.1.5** Students learn collaboratively.

**C.1.6** Assessment contributes to the achievements of all students.

**C.1.7** Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect.

**C.1.8** Teachers plan, teach and review in partnership.

**C.1.9** Teachers are concerned to support the learning and participation of all students.

**C.1.10** Teaching assistants support the learning and participation of all students.

**C.1.11** Homework contributes to the learning of all.

**C.1.12** All students take part in activities outside the classroom.

### C.2 Mobilising resources

**C.2.1.** Student difference is used as a resource for teaching and learning.

**C.2.2.** Staff expertise is fully utilised.

**C.2.3.** Staff develop resources to support learning and participation.

**C.2.4.** Community resources are known and drawn upon.

**C.2.5.** School resources are distributed fairly so that they support inclusion.

## 1.7 Local context

### 1.7.1 Inclusive Education in Cyprus

In 1999, Law 113(I)/99 for the education and training of children with special needs was passed and was followed by the publication of its regulations (Regulations for the Early Detection of Children with Special Needs 185(I)/2001 and the Regulations for the Training and Education of Children with Special Needs 186(I)/2001) that govern the implementation of the act (Angelides et al., 2004). The two accompanying regulations regulate the implementation of the law as of September 2001. Special Education Law 113(I)/1999 is the legislative framework that regulates: the detection of children with special educational needs; their assessment and development of an individual education plan; their placement in the most appropriate educational setting with the provision of both teachers and educational resources to meet their needs and the on-going evaluation of the child's progress (MoECSY, 1999).



According to this law, all children with SEND have the right to be educated in their neighborhood mainstream school (pre-primary, primary, secondary school (lower and higher levels), together with their age-mates, and with the support of teachers, special teachers, and other specialists. According to the legislation, a child can only be considered as having special needs after becoming 3 years old. The state must provide free special education and free special education services to individuals with special needs from the age of 3 until their high school graduation (18 years of age). If deemed necessary, education may be extended up to the age of 21. It is worth mentioning that the law refers not only to children with SEND education but also to their training which implies that the law expands the concept of special education beyond academic subjects. In particular, under the umbrella term ‘training’, self-help skills, social skills, vocational training, and anything that may facilitate children’s holistic development are included (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2020).

An operational definition of SEN (not SEND) is provided by the current law. A child who has a serious learning or special learning functioning or adjusting difficulty, caused by physical, mental, psychological, or other deficiencies and thus he/she needs special education and training. In addition, the Law clarifies who is considered as having a learning, special learning, functioning, or adjusting the difficulty. Two criteria are stated:

- a) The child has seriously greater difficulties compared to the majority of children of the same age, or
- b) the child has a disability that excludes or hinders him/her from using the educational means of the sort schools generally provide for children of the same age (MoECSY, 1999).

**According to the law, there are four types of attendance for students with SEND in Cyprus (MoECSY, 1999):**

- 1. attendance in mainstream schools (which constitutes the priority of the educational policy) which are equipped with suitable infrastructure, according to the Special Education Law;**
2. the attendance in special units in mainstream schools (that is to say a partial integration). These learners are assigned to a mainstream class in which they attend inclusive lessons and participate in celebratory or festive events. In the 2001 regulation, special units are defined as places of “integration and inclusion into mainstream schools, which are comfortable and accessible for children with special needs” (p.6).
3. the attendance in special schools for more severe cases of SEND. These are equipped with the appropriate staff (psychologists, speech therapists, physiotherapists, and other specialists, as well as auxiliary staff) to support and provide essential means to achieve their mission; and
4. attendance in other places (for any medical reasons). In particular, if learners with special needs cannot attend school for a long period, due to health or other problems, education may be provided in places other than public or special schools, i.e. at home or in hospitals.

In mainstream settings, special teachers and other specialists must cooperate and interact with the class teachers and the child’s parents to develop and deliver an individual education plan for each child with SEND. During the development of the child’s educational plan, staff will make every effort to ensure that the learner is fully involved in all school and class activities. The education team developing the individual



educational plan will often determine what instructional methodology will be implemented for the learner. A typical individual educational plan contains details about essential facilities, infrastructure, modern technology, and potential exceptions of the child from any course. If a child requires individual assistance outside of their classroom, this is arranged so as not to restrict their access to all subjects of the curriculum. In addition, in severe cases, an assistant helps the child with special needs, as well as the special educator or mainstream classroom teacher, during the learning process and breaks (MoECSY, 1999).

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, these services should be provided within a class at the child's local school, which should have all necessary adaptations and resources. If school attendance in a mainstream classroom is not appropriate for the needs of the child, special education, speech therapy, or attendance at a special unit within a mainstream school is provided. Special units provide more intensive special education to a small number of learners (usually up to six) while maintaining contact and inclusion with a specific reference class in the school (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2020).

Learners attending special units within mainstream schools have the same school day as the mainstream classes. Depending on their individual needs, they may spend most lessons with their mainstream reference class. They also attend inclusive lessons and participate in celebratory or festive events with their reference mainstream class. The amount of time spent in the special unit depends on the learner's level of learning difficulty. This also determines the amount of differentiation that the learner's personalized curriculum will have from that of their peer group (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2020).

### **Critique on the current inclusive practices in Cyprus**

The radical changes that take place in education, both in Europe and internationally, influence the way of thinking and practice in Cyprus, as in many other countries. Attempts for the revision and development of the current educational system are being enforced to increase the participation and learning of children who are considered as having SEND. In 2004, Cyprus became a full member state of the European Union. This important historical event in the contemporary history of Cyprus created a new era of thinking where the concept of inclusion tends to replace that of integration since inclusion has become an educational priority (Angelides et al., 2004). Nevertheless, this is far away from becoming a reality. There are so many areas to develop for us to speak about inclusive education in Cyprus. Primarily, a strong political will beyond any other changes is required for such a change.

Phtiaka (2002, 2007) argues that even though Law 113(I)/99 was a pioneering step for the Cypriot context of the 2000s, it may not have been so effective or functioning due to several difficulties and deficiencies. The number of special education coordinators is not satisfactory, therefore inclusion could not be reached when there is limited coordination and cooperation between schools, parents, teachers, other specialists, educators, and the MoECSY. In addition, the same author pinpoints the inadequate specific knowledge in the aspects of SEND that some educators have in Cyprus. Many of them are still prejudiced and still have negative attitudes toward students with SEND in their classrooms. Furthermore, schools lack the substantial technical and material infrastructure to meet the needs of differentiation; this incommodes



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the role of the teacher (Phtiaka, 2002, Demetriou, 2020b). Moreover, the evaluation and re-evaluation of students' needs seem often to be inadequate and problematic (Phtiaka, 2002).

According to Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2012), the negative stance of Cypriot teachers towards the inclusion of children with SEND in their classrooms is mainly affected by the dominant societal approach of disability which is influenced by the charity model of the interpretation of disability. They argue that the main justifications that teachers refer to justify their negative or skeptical stance are a result of misinformation and misunderstanding of disability and inclusion. One reason they refer to is that the child with SEND may deprive other children's time which may affect their learning experience negatively. Another justification is the impression that a child with SEND may be 'safer' in segregated settings because they are not exposed to possible feelings of pity and sorrow and even because of their possible exclusion on behalf of their peers in mainstream settings. Also, another justification is that the presence of a child with SEND in mainstream settings may disturb other children in the classroom.

For inclusive education to be successful in Cyprus and elsewhere, we must exploit every available resource. The notion of inclusion requires the development of a logic that aims primarily at bringing about improvements in educational strategies and programs, and better use of all available resources (Angelides et al, 2004; Demetriou, 2020b; Phtiaka, 2002). What we practice in Cyprus is more integration than inclusion (Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2009). Although the current legislative framework institutionalizes integration as the targeted practice, the same authors argue that the education of disabled children still maintains a segregated nature, whether it is provided in a special or in a mainstream school as it often reproduces the practices of special education in the mainstream school (Allan, 2006). For example, disabled children who are integrated into mainstream classrooms often withdraw from their classrooms to receive individualized support in either special units or special classes. Another example analogous to the segregating special education system has to do with the little attention that is paid on behalf of the MoECSY to the essential cooperation between the mainstream class teacher and the special teacher in making the learning environment more enabling for the children (Symeonidou, 2002).

Summing up, the current legislation in Cyprus has some strengths but also a significant number of weaknesses. For the current and any future legislation to be effectively functional, significant progress must be achieved in the field of attitudes, infrastructure, training of in-service teachers, better preparation of prospective educators, and the revision of the curriculum (Charalampous & Papademetriou, 2018).

In the last years, the MoECSY invited several stakeholders to public consultation to express their views regarding the work that should be done for the reformation of the current special and inclusive education policy and practices in Cyprus. These ideas led to the formation of a draft law which was reviewed by a committee formed by specialists in the field from the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. The specialists made recommendations for amendments to the draft that were discussed in another open public consultation that was organized by the MoECSY. The revised draft law is expected to be possibly ready in 2021/22 which will be discussed by the members of the House of Representatives (MoECSY, 2020). Although the current draft law received criticism from the academic community of Cyprus due to vague statements, disagreements with the relevant academic literature, and similarities



with the current Law 113(I) of 1999, the new law will be a positive step for the reformation of the current statutory framework, policy, and practice. It is worth mentioning that the new legislation will provide definitions that are not provided in the current law. Also, the new law will not only apply to children with disabilities, but to all children, including those belonging to vulnerable and special population groups and experiencing learning disabilities, as well as gifted and talented children (MoECSY, 2020).

### What should I be able to do? Group activities for discussions or individual reflections

#### Activity 1: Reflections on personal experience

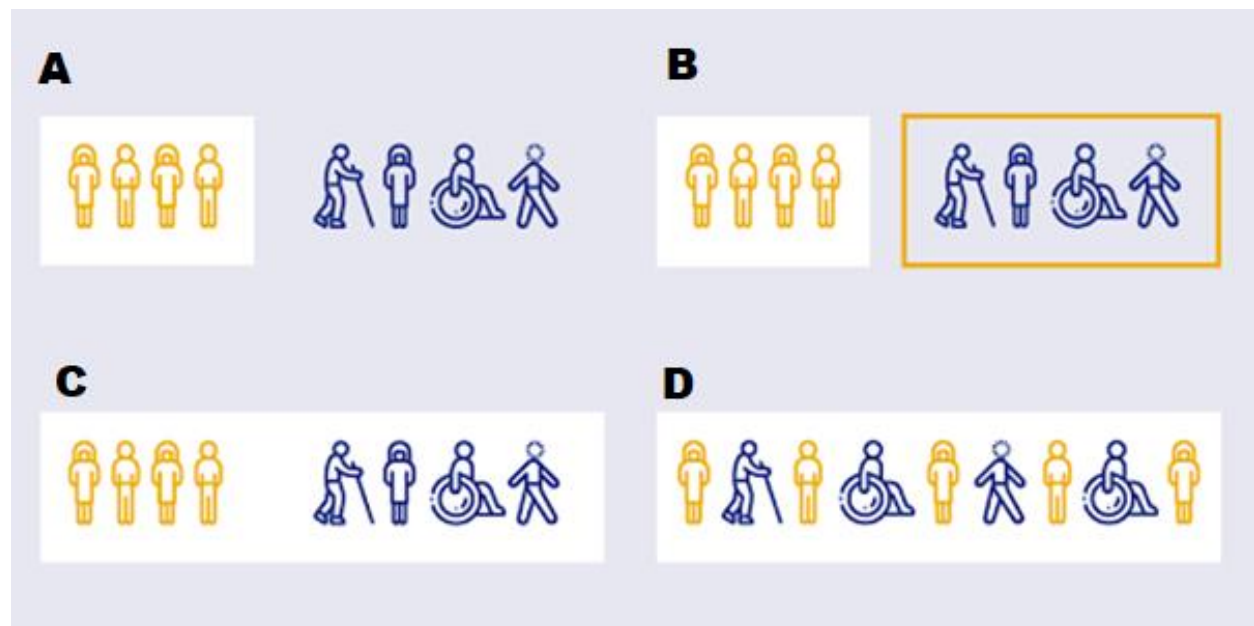
Social exclusion refers to the experience of being socially isolated, either physically (for example, being alone), or emotionally (for example, being ignored or told that one is unwanted).

Feeling left out or excluded is something we all experience. Reflect on your personal experiences and discuss what the feeling of being excluded is. What are the potential consequences of exclusion for students with disabilities in schools?

**Note:** This activity is only for the current training which refers to adult educators. It would not be a good idea to ask your students to do this activity, because the exclusion that children without disabilities may experience for a variety of reasons differs from the exclusion that children with disabilities experience due to the oppression of society against disabled people.

#### Activity 2: Defining inclusion

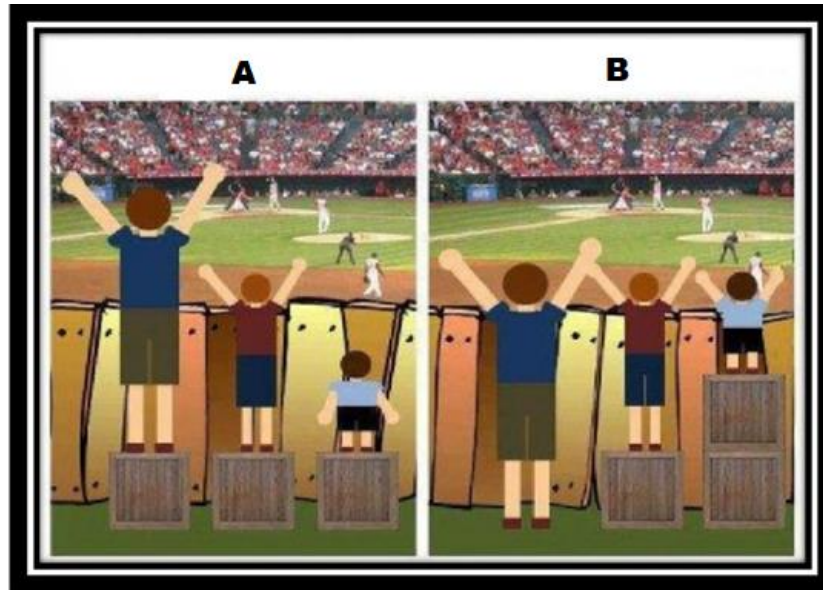
In groups, think about how the terms **Inclusion, Exclusion, Integration, and Segregation** match with the following figures. Then, discuss the difference between the four terms in the context of education by using the following figures and try to define inclusive education in your own words.



Source: Unesco.org

### Activity 3: Differences between inclusion and integration

In groups, think about which term between **Inclusion and Integration** best matches the following figures. Then, discuss the main differences between the two terms.



Source: <http://collectif-inclusion.blogspot.ch>

### Activity 4: Reflecting on local current practices

Consider the current educational system in your country and discuss the following questions in groups or think it over:

- Is inclusion defined explicitly in the current legislative framework?
- Is inclusion referred to in a way that reveals the implicit definition or conceptualization being employed?
- How would you best describe the current practices in your country? Are your descriptions closer to inclusion or integration?

### Activity 5: Reflecting on your current practices

Consider one or more children with disability with whom you worked. Reflect on your teaching approaches and the potential reasonable adjustments that you applied. How would you best describe your approaches? Are your descriptions closer to inclusion or integration?

### Activity 6: Promoting a whole-school inclusive ethos

Promoting a whole-school ethos that aligns with the principles of inclusion is key to the success of inclusive education. Booth and Ainscow (2011), devised 'The Index for Inclusion' which is a set of materials to guide schools through a process of inclusive school development. It is about building supportive communities and fostering high achievement for all staff and students.



In groups, spend some time studying the following indicators that Booth and Ainscow (2011) highlight as key to the promotion of a whole-school inclusive ethos. For each indicator, discuss practical ideas that could be implemented in your schools to promote a more inclusive ethos.

### Indicators for DIMENSION A: Creating inclusive cultures

#### A.1 Building community

##### Indicators

- A.1.1 Everyone is made to feel welcome.
- A.1.2 Students help each other.
- A.1.3 Staff collaborate with each other.
- A.1.4 Staff and students treat one another with respect.
- A.1.5 There is a partnership between staff and parents/carers.
- A.1.6 Staff and governors work well together.
- A.1.7 All local communities are involved in the school.

#### A.2 Establishing inclusive values

##### Indicators

- A.2.1 There are high expectations for all students.
- A.2.2 Staff, governors, students and parents/carers share a philosophy of inclusion.
- A.2.3 Students are equally valued.
- A.2.4 Staff and students treat one another as human beings as well as occupants of a 'role'.
- A.2.5 Staff seek to remove barriers to learning and participation in all aspects of the school.
- A.2.6 The school strives to minimise discriminatory practice

### Indicators for DIMENSION B: Producing inclusive policies

#### B.1 Developing the school for all

##### Indicators

- B.1.1 Staff appointments and promotions are fair.
- B.1.2 All new staff are helped to settle into the school.
- B.1.3 The school seeks to admit all students from its locality.
- B.1.4 The school makes its buildings physically accessible to all people.
- B.1.5 All new students are helped to settle into the school.
- B.1.6 The school arranges teaching groups so that all students are valued.

#### B.2 Organising support for diversity

##### Indicators

- B.2.1 All forms of support are co-ordinated.
- B.2.2 Staff development activities help staff to respond to student diversity. B.2.3 'Special educational needs' policies are inclusion policies.
- B.2.3 The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice is used to reduce the barriers to learning and participation of all students.
- B.2.4 Support for those learning English as an additional language is co-ordinated with learning support.
- B.2.5 Pastoral and behaviour support policies are linked to curriculum development and learning support policies



**B.2.6** Pressures for disciplinary exclusion are decreased.

**B.2.7** Barriers to attendance are reduced.

**B.2.8** Bullying is minimised.

## Indicators for DIMENSION C: Evolving inclusive practices

### C.1 Orchestrating learning

**C.1.1** Teaching is planned with the learning of all students in mind.

**C.1.2** Lessons encourage the participation of all students.

**C.1.3** Lessons develop an understanding of difference.

**C.1.4** Students are actively involved in their own learning.

**C.1.5** Students learn collaboratively.

**C.1.6** Assessment contributes to the achievements of all students.

**C.1.7** Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect.

**C.1.8** Teachers plan, teach and review in partnership.

**C.1.9** Teachers are concerned to support the learning and participation of all students.

**C.1.10** Teaching assistants support the learning and participation of all students.

**C.1.11** Homework contributes to the learning of all.

**C.1.12** All students take part in activities outside the classroom.

### C.2 Mobilising resources

**C.2.1.** Student difference is used as a resource for teaching and learning.

**C.2.2.** Staff expertise is fully utilised.

**C.2.3.** Staff develop resources to support learning and participation.

**C.2.4.** Community resources are known and drawn upon.

**C.2.5.** School resources are distributed fairly so that they support inclusion.



### Activity 7:

The Convention on the Rights of the Child contains 54 articles on children's rights that can be divided into three general categories that are known as the 'three Ps':

- Protection, guaranteeing the safety of children and covering specific issues such as abuse, neglect, and exploitation;
- Provision, covering the special needs of children such as education and health care;
- Participation recognizes the child's evolving capacity to make decisions and participate in society as he or she approaches maturity.

It seems that there is ground for the protection of the children and provisions in place covering children's needs. However, when it comes to participation, it seems that children's right to participate in procedures such as decision-making tends to be underestimated.

Flowers (2009) provides a ladder that contains eight degrees of children's participation in several activities attached to their lives. In your groups, go through the eight degrees of participation and discuss how these apply in the case of children with disabilities and children from different ethnic, racial, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds. Why is children's participation important in inclusive settings? You may use the ladder as a reference to reflect on your own experience.

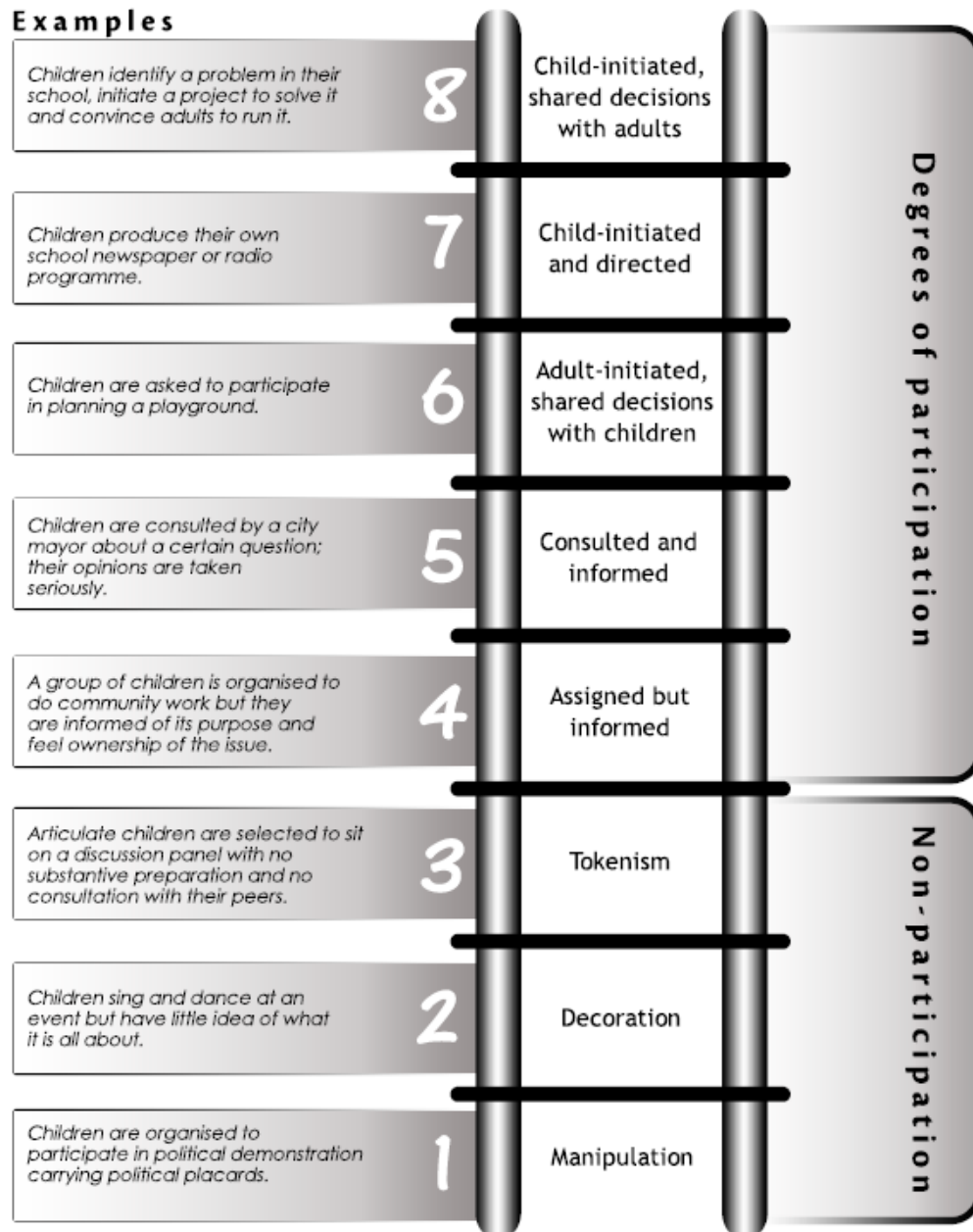


Figure 3.... Source: Ladder of participation - Manual of Human Rights Education for Children (Flowers, 2009)

### Activity 8: Meeting children’s needs and assuring their rights in inclusive settings

According to article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child, “States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her views the right to express those views freely in all



matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight by the age and maturity of the child. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

In addition, according to article 13, “The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice”.

Potter & Whittaker (2011) argue that in the case of children who experience severe impairments in the area of communication, such as those with severe or profound learning impairments or children with severe autism, do not avail themselves of these rights as often as they should.

In groups, consider Potter and Whittaker’s claim and discuss ways of assuring the two abovementioned rights and meeting the needs of children with communication difficulties in your settings.

### Activity 9: Meeting children’s needs and assuring their rights (two scenarios)

Read the following two scenarios that describe a situation in settings where severe impairments in the area of communication are included (adopted from Potter & Whittaker, 2011).

*Scenario 1: Five children with severe autism with little, or no, speech is sitting around the table at snack time. The adult is standing and offers the children a drink by going around the table and asking each child, in turn ‘do you want orange or do you want the lemon to drink?’, holding each bottle in front of each child. Each child waits for his or her turn, having been previously taught to do so.*

*Scenario 2: Five children with severe autism with little, or no, speech is sitting around the table at snack time. The bottles of drink are behind the adult on a different table, out of reach but within the children's view. The adult waits without speaking for the children to indicate their wants. One child points to the orange bottle and immediately given the drink. The adult says ‘orange’ as the child takes it.*

Then try to answer the following questions based on the two scenarios:

- a) What are children being taught in the first scenario and how are they being taught this?
- b) What are children being taught in the second scenario and how are they being taught this?
- c) Which environment is considered more enabling and thus closer to the principles of inclusion?
- d) How does an inclusive environment assure children’s rights and meet their needs?

### Activity 10: Scenario

Three secondary school students are chatting in the schoolyard during a break. They are first years, and it’s quite soon after the start of the school year. They are discussing with their classmates. The conversation between two the students goes something like this:

- “I feel sorry for Katie – it must be terrible to be handicapped like that. I don’t know how



- she manages, and imagine everyone staring at you all the time. I think I'd just stay at home or go to a special school.”
- “I know, I think the disabled are brave. They have such a lot to deal with. Sometimes it
- makes me want to cry.”
- At this point, the third student suddenly gets angry and accuses the other two of being
- ‘patronizing’ and ‘offensive’. The other two looks completely mystified and then just start to
- laugh.

What do you think about this situation? In your group, discuss the following approaches based on the above scenario:

- a) The third student has a point (the other two were stereotyping Katie and their ‘sympathy’ is misplaced and inappropriate).
- b) There’s nothing wrong with what the two students have said (they are being sensitive, considerate and thoughtful).
- c) The third student is behaving ridiculously (there’s no point getting angry and being judgemental because the other two didn’t mean to offend anyone).

 (Source: <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/university/media/students/equality-diversity-inclusion-course.pdf>)

### Activity 11: Professional development targets for inclusive teachers

Identifying the attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, understanding, and skills that teachers in inclusive schools require for their work with pupils who have SEN.

A European initiative involving 14 countries identified four core values relating to teaching and learning that appeared essential for teachers’ professional development in this context (EADSNE, 2012). For each of the core values listed below you will find an example of one of the following that is seen to relate to it:

- an attitude or belief
- an area of knowledge or understanding
- skill or ability

Can you suggest other attitudes, beliefs, areas of knowledge, etc that would realize each core value in an inclusive school and be relevant targets for initial teacher training, and continuing professional development?

Core values

Examples of associated attitudes, beliefs,  
knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities



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<b>Valuing learner diversity: learner difference is considered as a resource and an asset to education.</b>	Understands that learners learn in different ways and sees these can be used to support their own learning and that of their peers.
<b>Supporting all learners: teachers have high expectations for all learners' achievements.</b>	Appreciates that it is essential to have high expectations for all learners. Can facilitate learning situations where learners can 'take risks' and even fail in a safe environment;
<b>Working with others – collaboration and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers.</b>	Communicates effectively with parents and family members of different cultural, ethnic, linguistic and social backgrounds. Is comfortable co-teaching and working in flexible teaching teams.
<b>Continuing personal professional development – teaching is a learning activity and teachers must take responsibility for their own lifelong learning.</b>	Is open to and proactive in using colleagues and other professionals as sources of learning and inspiration.

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 Source: Frederickson and Cline, 2015



## Test yourself!

**Activity 1:** Match the following statements with the terms: Segregation, Exclusion, Inclusion, and Integration. They justify your choice.

	<b>Segregation, Exclusion, Inclusion or Integration?</b>	<b>Justify your choice</b>
All children are able to be part of their community and develop a sense of belonging and become better prepared for life in the community as children and adults.		
Children with varying abilities are often better motivated when they learn in classes surrounded by children with similar abilities.		
Physical access to the local mainstream school of every child with disabilities must be a priority.		
It allows children to work on individual goals while being with other students their own age.		
It is when a headteacher decides that a child is not allowed to attend school.		
It encourages the involvement of parents in the education of their children and the activities of their local schools.		
It fosters a culture of respect and belonging. It also provides the opportunity to learn about and accept individual differences.		
It refers to exceptional students being partially taught in a mainstream classroom		
It provides all children with opportunities to develop friendships with one another. Friendships provide role models and opportunities for growth.		
A child is enrolled in a mainstream setting and spends a few hours per day in a separate classroom, unit, or school for additional support.		



**Activity 2:** In the following table, state whether the 9 statements stand as key features of Inclusive Education or not by choosing true or false. In the last column, justify your answer briefly.

Generally, inclusive education will be successful if these important features and practices are followed:

		True or False?	Why?
1.	Accepting conditionally all children into mainstream classes and the life of the school.		
2.	Providing as much support to children, teachers and classrooms as necessary to ensure that all children can participate in their schools and classes.		
3.	Looking at children at what they cannot do rather than what they can do.		
4.	Teachers and parents have high expectations of children depending on their capacities.		
5.	Developing education goals according to each child's abilities. This means that children do not need to have the same education goals in order to learn together in regular classes.		
6.	Designing schools and classes in ways that help children learn and achieve to their fullest potential (for example, by developing class time tables for allowing more individual attention for all students).		
7.	Having strong leadership for inclusion from school principals and other administrators does not play an important role in the success of inclusive education.		
8.	Having teachers who have knowledge about different ways of teaching so that children with various abilities and strengths can learn together.		
9.	Having principals, teachers, parents and others work together to determine the most affective ways of providing a quality education in an inclusive environment.		



**Activity 3:** The below list includes the elements that inclusive education should involve, according to Booth and Ainscow (2011). Please self-evaluate your current inclusive practice in your school settings by reflecting on the following statements using a scale from 1 (very poor level of inclusion) to 10 (very good level of inclusion). When you are done, calculate the total sum of your evaluations. Then calculate the mean of your answers (total sum divided by the number of statements) and reflect on your overall inclusive practice. For statements with evaluations smaller than 3, think of the causes as well as possible practical solutions for improvements.

	very poor level of inclusion								very good level of inclusion	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Valuing all students and staff equally.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in the locality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Reducing barriers to learning and participation for all students, not only those with impairments or those who are categorized as 'having special educational needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Learning from attempts to overcome barriers to the access and participation of particular students to make changes for the benefit of students more widely.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Viewing the difference between students as resources to support learning, rather than as problems to be overcome.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10



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Acknowledging the right of students to an education in their locality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Improving schools for staff as well as for students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Emphasising the role of schools in building community and developing values, as well as in increasing achievement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Recognising that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10



**Activity 4:** You have heard of the terms Equality / Diversity / Inclusion / Prejudice / Stereotype / Discrimination. Having a good understanding of these terms is key, especially to reassure effective inclusive practices in education.

How do the terms match with the 5 following statements?

**Equality / Diversity / Inclusion / Prejudice / Stereotype / Discrimination**

<p>1. Acknowledging and valuing all the visible and non-visible differences of the children in your school through our practices, activities, understanding, and backgrounds.</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>2. Treating a student worse than another student for reasons that are not relevant.</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>3. Feeling less positive towards a particular group of students (i.e. disabled).</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>4. Fair and respectful treatment of children, with civil and political rights.</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>5. Creating and maintaining a culture where students feel welcome and valued for who they are as an individual or groups.</p> <p>.....</p>



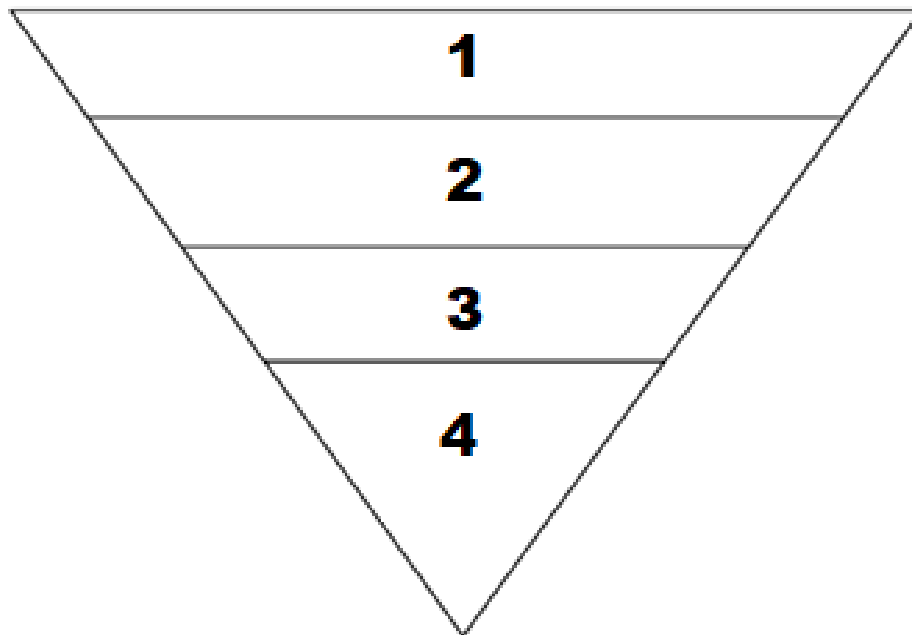
**Activity 5:** In the following table, state whether the 7 statements that are related to inclusion and diversity are true or false. In the last column, justify your answer briefly.

		True or False?	Why?
1.	Multiculturalism and diversity are used synonymously because these terms have the same meanings.		
2.	Diversity and Inclusion are terms that can be used interchangeably.		
3.	Diversity is mainly defined by the characteristics of race and gender.		
4.	Valuing diversity and inclusion is realising the importance of how diversity and inclusion impact us individually and collectively		
5.	Making generalisations about people is acceptable behaviour because we all do it, but may not honestly admit it.		
6.	To make our school diverse and inclusive, we should start from the top of the school management.		
7.	We will need more funding and much effort to make our school more diverse and inclusive. The efforts and resources will outweigh the benefits.		

**Activity 6: A hierarchy of levels of inclusion**

Frederickson and Cline (2015) adopted the ideas of other researchers in an attempt to hierarchize four different levels of inclusion. They used the shape of an inverted pyramid to depict this hierarchy, where each level presupposes and incorporates those below it. This means that the higher level of inclusion, the broader conceptualization of inclusion involving the transformation of the whole educational system and community is implied. Read carefully the following four statements and try to place them in the inverted pyramid.

- a) Meeting the social and/or academic needs of all students despite challenges relating to poverty, linguistic and cultural differences, etc.
- b) Placement of students with SEND in mainstream classrooms
- c) Creation of communities in and out of school characterized by equity, care, valuing of diversity, etc.
- d) D. Meeting social and/or academic needs of students with SEND





## Additional materials

- Compasito: Manual on human rights education for children. Edited and co-written by Nancy Flowers  
<http://www.eycb.coe.int/compasito/pdf/Compasito%20EN.pdf>
- European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education website  
<https://www.european-agency.org/>
- European Union: Inclusive education. Building inclusive and cohesive societies through education and culture is a priority for the Commission.  
[https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/inclusive-education\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/inclusive-education_en)
- Helpdesk Report: Implementing inclusive education. By Dr. Matthew J. Schuelka, University of Birmingham, 29 August 2018  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c6eb77340f0b647b214c599/374\\_Implementing\\_Inclusive\\_Education.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c6eb77340f0b647b214c599/374_Implementing_Inclusive_Education.pdf)
- Inclusive Education in Action  
<https://www.inclusive-education-in-action.org/>
- Inclusive Education Training Manual. Published by the Ministry of Education and Sports & Inclusive Training Center, Department of Preschool and Primary education of Lao People's Democratic Republic  
[https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/new\\_iem\\_march2014\\_eng\\_111.pdf](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/new_iem_march2014_eng_111.pdf)
- Myths and Facts about supported inclusive education. Blog by Tom Mihail(2021)  
[https://www.tommihail.net/inclusion\\_myths.html](https://www.tommihail.net/inclusion_myths.html)
- Open Society Foundations: The Value of Inclusive Education  
<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/value-inclusive-education>
- Project: Teacher Education for Inclusion (TE4I). Profile of Inclusive Teachers. European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education  
[https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/profile\\_of\\_inclusive\\_teachers\\_en.pdf](https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/profile_of_inclusive_teachers_en.pdf)
- UNESCO: Inclusion in Education  
<https://en.unesco.org/themes/inclusion-in-education>
- UNESCO: Programme: Inclusive education - Every child has the right to quality education and learning.  
<https://www.unicef.org/education/inclusive-education>

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## (2) Module 2: Developmental needs of children with SEND



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### The aim of the module. / “Why is this module important?”

School is a very important place. Children spend a large part of their time there. Of course, in addition to the educational goal of acquiring knowledge and competencies in the basic subjects, children develop social and personal competencies at school.

### The effects of the training module. / “How will this module help me?”

The formation of a child's personality is less known and described in the typical professional preparation of teachers. However, every adult can easily recall a teacher who was a significant figure in their biography. This applies both to the positive attitudes for which we are grateful to our teachers and to the negative ones that we recall as a nightmare. In evaluating teachers, the learning outcomes achieved in a subject are secondary. What is crucial is the attitude of the teacher, their approach to the student, the way they communicate, their understanding of the student's needs, and their respect for the student. What can help the teacher to understand their students' special needs? Knowledge of the psychological mechanisms behind the formation of a child's personality, in addition to knowledge of teaching methodology, is a valuable resource in teaching work with students, especially students with special educational needs. Apart from educational competencies, which are directly assessed in the course of education, equally important are the personal competencies of children acquired through experiencing themselves in tasks and contacts with peers and teachers. One of the best-known concepts of personality development is **Erik H. Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development**. It will be described in detail in the next chapter. Sometimes it is the backlog of successive developmental crises in personality formation that contributes to children's school failures. Proper diagnosis of a child's problems in terms of deficits in the formation of personality virtues can have a significant impact on the child's educational and social success.

### The basic knowledge about the module topic./ “What should I know?”

#### 2.1 The theory of stages of psychosocial development by Erik H. Erikson

Besides Sigmund Freud, one of the most prominent psychoanalysts was Erik Homburger Erikson (1968, 1982). He enriched thinking about human development by showing that in addition to inner instincts, the development of an individual is influenced by the interaction between these instincts and external cultural and social demands. He described how the *ego* is developed as the force responsible for organizing experience and rational planning.

He identified psychosocial stages of development throughout the life course in which the individual's attitude towards themselves and their social environment changes. This occurs in eight crises that must be positively overcome by the individual. The first five developmental stages take place during childhood. Being influenced by internal drives, the child takes actions that are confronted with the expectations of the closest ones, and it is the environment that sets expectations - challenges for the child to meet. Correct



resolution of the crisis requires the proportionate experience of both positive and negative emotions associated with the activities undertaken. As the child grows older, there are new dilemmas, and new tasks to be faced. If the previous problems have not yet been successfully resolved, they become negative baggage in subsequent stages. As a result of the positive resolution of the crisis, the child acquires virtues that become a resource for the next developmental stages (Erikson, 1997; Brzezinska, 2000; Birch, 2005). The experience of overcoming a crisis permanently reorganizes the personality structure. The interactive nature of this model provides a good background for looking at the development of a child with special educational needs. The child comes into the world with an individual predisposition for development and at the same time with a specific sensory functioning, which may be perceived differently by those closest to him/her. During the first period of the child's development, it is the parents and their attitudes that determine the child's functioning. When the child starts school, peers and teachers play an important role in making demands on the child and reinforcing a desired behavior.

## 2.2 Chances and risks in the development of children with special educational needs in Erik H. Erikson's stages of personality development

### 2.2.1 Basic trust versus distrust

According to E.H. Erikson, the age between birth and one year is the time when an infant develops trust in the world and adults. The skill that is formed then is *basic trust*. Erikson refers to the crisis of this developmental stage as the crisis of trust. Through living conditions, relations with parents - especially the mother, pressures from the outside world (e.g. breaks in feeding), and signals from the inside of the organism (hunger - satiety; painful defecation; depth of sleep-wakefulness) the child learns safety, trust towards adults and predictability in meeting its own needs. The infant also naturally experiences deprivation, loneliness, anxiety, or pain. The mother creates a sense of trust in the child using "a course of action that combines tender care and concern for the child's needs with a strong sense of personal responsibility within the boundaries of trust set by the lifestyle of the culture to which they both belong" (Erikson 1997, p. 259). It is on the proportion of "positive" and "negative" events that the resolution of the first crisis depends; the acquisition of the first "developmental virtue" - hope and the readiness of the *ego* to move on to the next developmental stage. Important in Erikson's thinking is the certainty that the psychological competencies acquired in resolving each successive crisis remain as a resource in further stages of development.

- ✓ What is the first year of life like for **a child with any kind of developmental difficulties**? Does the infant experience unconditional acceptance, are its biological and emotional needs for establishing close relationships satisfied? As described in the research, parents' reactions to the diagnosis of, for example, a child's disability or somatic illness is often as if a parent were in mourning after losing the image of an ideal child. They are more preoccupied with grief, fears, and a sense of threat. Some parents lose faith in being competent parent. They hand over decision-making to professionals. Many people appear between the child and the caregiver, which can make the child anxious. Medical and therapeutic procedures disrupt the regularity and predictability of meeting the child's needs. The parent adapts the daily schedule to visits to specialists and not to the child's circadian cycle. Expectations are also set for the infant, e.g., in the course of motor rehabilitation. A grieving mother,



even if she cuddles her child, does not qualitatively provide them with a sense of security. Threats to a proper formation of the virtue of hope coming from the parents include clinical symptoms in the mother, difficulty in accepting the child, medicalization of development, and a task-oriented approach to contact with the child.

- ✓ During this period the child faces a serious developmental challenge related to the formation of bonds, the regulation of physiological states, and the building of a code allowing the communication of needs.
- ✓ On the part of the child, the impediment to the proper development of the virtue of hope may be a low level of adaptability as well as an increased level of anxiety as a consequence of the medicalization of development. The child may experience more frequent failures in communicating their needs.

### 2.2.2 Autonomy vs shame and doubt

Early childhood (second and third year of life) is a time of **shaping the beginnings of self-control**, attempts to gain control first over one's own body (stopping - letting go) as well as over the physical and social environment. According to Erikson, it is a time of tension between the desire for self-control and doubts, shame, and embarrassment resulting from failures. The positive experience of the crisis depends mainly on the parents' educational methods, on the expression of loving acceptance, or on an excess of criticism and restrictions. In this developmental phase "external regulation must bring definite consolation, dispel fears" (Erikson, 1997 p. 262). The psychosocial crisis of this developmental stage is **the crisis of autonomy**. The developmental virtue that is formed as a result of its positive resolution is **willpower**.

In early childhood, **parents continue the measures taken in the first year of life**, if the child has been diagnosed. He/she is provided with therapy and meets with specialists for 3 - 4 hours a week. The child's progress is monitored by both therapists and doctors. This puts pressure on the parents. The parents also expect the child to cooperate with them at home and do the exercises set by the therapists. The mobility skills acquired by the child allow him/her to choose a place, and to move to interesting objects. Children are fascinated by motor skills. The therapy limits the freedom of choice. During this period the natural desire for self-control, but also for influencing the environment, and for developing self-empowerment are frustrated. The child is subject to pressure from professionals and parents. It can be particularly disadvantageous for the child if the mother assumes the role of the rehabilitator. Failing to meet expectations can create a sense of shame in the child, for not being good enough. Sometimes the parent rewards only correctly completed exercises and tasks and ignore the child's achievements in other areas. They do not reward the child for creative activities. Such an attitude may lead to the objectification of the child, who becomes a subject of educational and rehabilitative actions, the aim of which is to mechanically produce the desired effects. A special situation occurs when an effective communication code is missing, which also causes difficulties and inappropriate behavior. The child experiences frustration and sometimes expresses it in a way that parents may perceive as problematic.

Sometimes it is during this period that symptoms of developmental disorders manifest themselves, e.g.: a spectrum of holistic developmental disorders. Practicing self-control in a child can be very limited and sometimes impossible. Sometimes it is difficult for parents to distinguish between the child's willpower problems and the clinical symptoms. At first, they try to cope on their own, and when that fails, they seek



specialist help. The dynamics of the parents' psychological processes can be said to be very large and take many different forms. The child will always be the direct recipient of these processes. If the autonomy crisis is well resolved, the child can start preschool education with a high level of competence. The child regulates their excretion, can take care of their hygiene, and communicate their needs. Not all children with developmental difficulties enter preschool education with the necessary competencies.

### 2.2.3 Initiative versus guilt

Between the ages of four and five, the child enters the third stage of psychosocial development: the *ego* is formed between initiative and a sense of guilt. The growth of initiative serves to organize activities to achieve a goal. The child enjoys using different tools

The child becomes more assertive in defending their desires, sometimes openly expressing aggression. In addition, children begin to identify with their biological sex and engage in role-specific play. Manipulation, aggression, and competition predominate in boys' activities while being affectionate and attractive in girls' games. The psychoanalytic theory also describes a *castration complex*, which manifests itself as hatred towards one of the parents. The essence of this stage is a crisis of *initiative*. Failures occurring in this period may result in resignation from action, fear of punishment, feelings of guilt, and anxiety. A developmentally important event is separation from parents during preschool education. The child experiences for the first time how to act independently without their parents' support.

**Parents who are concerned about their child's development** are worried about his/her ability to cope. They also hope that contact with peers will positively influence the development of the child's communicative and social skills. They want their child to be "the same" as the other children in the group. On the other hand, they expect their peers to show understanding toward their children. They continue intensive therapy. Given the time the child spends in kindergarten and the extra therapy hours, the child has few opportunities to develop their initiative. The games with the parents are often revalidating in form. Failure to meet adult expectations can make the child feel guilty. The time of a child with developmental difficulties is more structured. It does not encourage the child to initiate activity. Children are rewarded for obeying therapists, kindergarten teachers, and parents rather than for their inventiveness, which may make it difficult for them to properly solve their developmental crisis.

**The attitude of parents is important here.** They decide which educational institution they choose and whether they will disclose their child's difficulties. Some people hide their child's difficulties, not wanting others to know about them. Sometimes they do not share medical records or diagnoses. This attitude of the parents makes it difficult for the child to receive proper support from the kindergarten teachers. Moreover, children observe the embarrassment and difficulties of their parents in contact with the kindergarten teachers, which may lead to a feeling of shame. However, there are also different attitudes. Some parents try to make their child's peers aware of various developmental difficulties in preschool education. Generally, these are parents who have already come to terms with the specificity of their child's functioning. They want to be active. They are more open and at ease in communicating their child's needs to others because they have learned to deal with their child's developmental difficulties. The child



in turn, seeing the freedom of the parents, learns from them to speak openly about themselves and their difficulties. The child takes the initiative. They direct their actions towards achieving their goals, which helps them to properly solve the developmental crisis of this stage.

Sometimes parents deliberately choose an institution for special education, so that the child can have all the therapeutic interventions there so that less time is spent at home on therapy. The child has more freedom. They can act as initiators of various activities at home.

Sometimes it is the kindergarten teachers who are the first to notice the child's difficulties and ask the parents to contact specialists. Quite often what is worrying is the lack of initiative on the part of the child, their low level of independence, and the difficulty in adapting to the group rules.

In addition to the attitude of the parents, peers play an important role.

In many cases, children with developmental difficulties have lower communication competencies and may therefore be accepted less favorably by their peers. Their habits and special needs may not correspond to the expectations of educators and peers. The initiatives undertaken by the child may not meet with approval. They may not conform to the accepted rules. The child may experience more frustration in being autonomous and in charge.

#### 2.2.4 Diligence versus feelings of inferiority

The sixth year of children's life is a watershed as they begin schooling. In the psychosocial stages of development, the child enters a period of hard work. Between the ages of 6 and 12, the child has time to develop a sense of competence. A sense of inferiority will be reinforced if the child does not live up to the expectations. Erikson (1997) identified the following as dangers in this developmental period: a sense of inadequacy in the face of expectations and striving at all costs to meet the demands placed on the child. A sense of inadequacy leads to discouragement and a failure to fulfill the child's developmental potential. The excessive desire to meet the requirements results in the conviction that the only criterion of a person's worth is meeting the demands made by others. The role of adults in this period is to help the child feel competent and effective in performing activities. Typical activities of a child during this period are school learning, playing, developing interests, and helping adults. It is also important to acquire knowledge of cultural patterns and the use of basic tools.

. For children with developmental disabilities, starting education is just as challenging as it is for all children. Under the guidance of teachers, they learn to read, write and count. They receive structured verbal instruction from teachers and learn to follow instructions given to the whole group. In addition, they remain in a peer group for several hours a day. On the other hand, what for peers is just another stage of development, for a child with developmental disabilities is a double challenge. Firstly, they learn to function in an unfamiliar environment: a new building, a new educator, teachers, and classmates. Children quickly learn that recognition from the teacher and other pupils is gained by the correct execution of instructions and tasks. And this is made more difficult by the objective difficulties of the child. It requires much more effort from the child. When the child does not meet the expectations of their friends, they do not trust their position among their peers, which results in feelings of inferiority,



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inadequacy, and discouragement to build relationships. When the child achieves school and social success, they experience a sense of competence. When this does not happen and there is no hope of mastering the expected skills, a sense of inferiority emerges. Therefore, it will be particularly important for the child to achieve at least a minimum level of educational success and to be accepted by other children. The correct solution to this crisis is not to be good at learning and at the same time be excluded from classmates. A child with difficulties needs acceptance and respect from their peers. He/she needs more successes and fewer failures in their peer relationships to develop a sense of competence.

For parents of children with developmental disabilities, the 6th year of a child's life is also a challenge. All these parents are faced with the dilemma of choosing the right school for their child. For many parents, the dream is to have their children educated in either the mass or integrated system.

Usually, as soon as the child has mastered communicative competence to a degree that allows them to do so, they begin mass or integrated education. They experience a lot of stress. Previous ways of adapting to the environment may fail. The child has to look for new ways to function optimally. Learn to ask for help. Develop ways of influencing their peers so that they will not make it difficult for them to function. Know how to answer uncomfortable questions from peers about their functioning. Moreover, they receive emotional strain from parents who perceive the child's success as their success or failure. Starting school is a test for the child's adequate preparation and at the same time a reward for the parents for their efforts in therapy. The child feels this burden. In addition, therapists look at the child's achievements and also expect his/her successes as confirmation of therapeutic work well done. Apart from learning at school, most children also attend speech and/or pedagogical therapy, etc., which requires additional commitment and energy. If cognitive resources allow, the child tries not to disappoint parents and therapists. He/she develops the belief that he/she is only of value if he/she does well in school. The whole attention of the child is focused on learning new skills at the expense of having fun, developing interests, etc. Parents, seeing the child's work, often dismiss the child from helping them with everyday activities. This deprives the child of the opportunity to acquire skills that are a source of satisfaction. In clinical practice, some children achieve very good academic results but do not have satisfactory peer relationships. This situation causes a developmental ballast, the child cannot positively solve the conflict of diligence vs. a sense of inferiority.

If the child has positively solved the previous crises and starts education in an integrated / mass school, they enter the group with a different experience from previous developmental periods. They know that they are accepted by their parents and that they deserve to be accepted by others. They also know that their functioning is different from their peers. They are more aware of their strengths and weaknesses. They can define their needs because they have expressed them before. The child shows their peers areas in which they are "the same" but also areas in which they are different. Probably they have a better chance of being accepted. Parents who accept and know their child is more aware of the child's challenges. They are therefore more appreciative of the child's efforts and less focused on actual high achievement. This attitude fosters a sense of competence in their child. An additional element that reinforces the resolution



of the diligence vs. guilt crisis in a positive way is the fact that the child does not feel inadequate or incomplete in their relationship with the parents.

In terms of acceptance by the peer environment, children with difficulties are subject to natural group processes. Some of them become sociometric stars, others take on the role of the mouseburger. The child's difficulties mustn't play a moderating role here. It is important that the child's educational achievements are the result of cognitive abilities and learning motivation. Lack of knowledge in comparison to peers can lead to a feeling of inferiority.

In the peer environment, the child can observe other children and their ways of coping. This can have a positive effect on his/her coping. The child learns flexibility and different forms of relationship building. They can develop a flexible way of evaluating themselves, not only for measurable results but also for the effort they put in, which can effectively protect them from feelings of inferiority.

If the environment places high demands on the child's cognitive performance, the child must meet the expectations of adults. A combination of external pressures disrupts the normal developmental rhythm of children. There is a lack of space for their needs; recognition for their efforts; overcoming difficulties.

### 2.2.5 Identity versus role insecurity

The identity crisis involves an important aspect of development - the integration of past knowledge of oneself acquired while performing the roles of child, pupil, and friend. The knowledge of oneself from the past is integrated into the present, which allows one to create a vision of the future. Between the ages of twelve and eighteen a kind of summing up of past experiences takes place to define oneself and take on the tasks of adulthood. Erikson saw two dangers in this period: the acquisition of an identity shaped by the peer group, the so-called synthetic identity, and a negative identity which is the opposition to previous roles and gives a sense of inner emptiness and disorganization. A young person who has successfully resolved the identity crisis begins adulthood as an internally strong and autonomous person. Achieving sexual identity is also important in identity formation. The child has to cope with the changes associated with puberty. The competence gained is **fidelity**, associated with sacrifice. The integration of personality that should occur during this period is: "the layered experience of the ego's ability to integrate all identifications with innate aptitudes and with the opportunities offered by social roles" (Erikson, 1997 p.272). For a young deaf person, for example, it is a time of answering important identification questions: Who am I? Whom do I want to be? Which social group do I identify with? What is my social reference group? And the question arises: Am I the same as/different from my parents? He/she chooses between important alternatives: am I the same as my peers or different? During this period there can be many inconsistencies between the parent's view of the child and the child's assessment.

**Children with developmental difficulties** may experience problems in fully identifying with their home environment. Their personal experiences resulting from their special needs, the effort they put into learning and being in a peer group, and the feeling of tension in relationships when the child wants to catch up with their peers at all costs, may go unnoticed or be diminished. Parents can expect their children to be grateful for the effort put into rehabilitation and expect adequate educational results. A difficulty



that arises in the course of adolescent therapy is the strong need to free oneself from a relationship, for example: with a dominant mother. In the age of access to information on the Internet, children look for information about other people with similar difficulties to them. They appreciate the contact with others with the same needs. With them, they can at last feel at ease. They often make a drastic break from the values communicated by their parents. A risk for young people in this period is uncertainty about their own identity. The consequences are self-denial and a sense of diffusion. The child does not know how to be faithful to themselves or their parents. Young people who do not have full freedom of communication are in a particularly difficult situation. They do not have the chance to fully participate in home life; they feel comfortable only in one-to-one contact. This sometimes requires a confrontational attitude toward parents. It seems that children with difficulties who attend mass schools and who have people without developmental difficulties around them feel most acutely the lack of opportunity to fully identify themselves. They either keep quiet about their dilemma of not fully fitting in or, in opposition to their parents, manifest it with rebellious behavior. Clinical practice shows that to solve the identity conflict well, young person needs to experience themselves and also be in contact with other people who are similar to them.

Parents who accept their children are likely to give the child more room to experiment - to test themselves in different social contexts. It is the child who decides which environment they want to be in, to build their inner world. It is the child who can benefit from contact with both normatively developing peers and those with difficulties. They can experience positive and negative events in both environments. They can derive personal benefits from diversity. Parents do not portray either community as superior. As a result, the child is not put in a situation of internal conflict. They can build an identity based on personal experiences and psychological benefits. Such a child has a chance to positively resolve the identity crisis by describing themselves in terms of a complex but integrated identity.

### 2.3 Conclusions

Does a child with developmental difficulties have a chance of passing successive developmental crises successfully? It seems to be the case. Both the biological and environmental resources of the child play an important role. Biological resources include a balanced temperament, a properly developed nervous system, and cognitive resources. When it comes to environmental resources, it would be, for example, parents who can provide their child with a secure attachment model, who use the right parenting styles, who present adaptive patterns of coping with stress, and who can seek support for both themselves and their child. The essence of proper development is not the number of difficulties encountered, but the amount of support that will reduce these difficulties.

This publication does not exhaust all possible options for raising a child with developmental difficulties. Rather, it advocates a broader view of children's development, not only from the perspective of their acquisition of cognitive competencies.

The examples of the exercises and case studies. / What should I can?



In this part of the module, there are exercises to do in a group of trainees or individually. There are examples of case studies to consider and discuss.

### Activity 1

In a group of 3, you read the story and then each of you describes what happened.

A child stands at the board. He/she has to solve a task and write down the result. Instead of concentrating on finding the solution, he/she looks around, blushes would like to write the result on the board, but does not do so. The child sits with his head down at the desk. He/she does not respond to the teacher's questions.

How would each of you describe the child's behavior? What emotions does the child express? What do you think was going on in the child's head? What competence did the child lack to perform in front of the board? What was blocking the child? About Erik H. Erikson's stages of personality development, at what stage did the development stop?

### Activity 2

At which stage of Erik H. Erikson's personality development do children who experience the frustration of their developmental needs say: "I must be the best!", "I only got an A on a test! I am useless!", "I won't tell my mum what mark I got, I will correct it first", "I only got second place in the science competition - that's awful!" The child received a B plus on the test and starts sobbing hysterically, unable to calm down.

Discuss in the group whether you have heard such statements or observed such behavior in your pupils. What virtue should these children practice according to Erik H. Erikson? Brainstorm how you can support such a child.

### Activity 3

Individual work - in two columns please write: at which stage do children with special educational needs experience the most difficulties in personality formation according to E.H. Erikson's theory? How can these difficulties be impacted by relationships in the peer group? What should the teacher pay attention to? Which peer behavior will be most problematic? The individual suggestions of the participants are then collected and discussed by the whole training group.

### Activity 4

In pairs, participants write down the stages of personality development and behaviors that they think indicate a positive resolution of a developmental crisis. Next, they come up with invented ways to support such positive behaviors.

The trainer collects all the ideas and creates a "bank of supporting positive behaviors in children".

## Test yourself! / "Do I know it and can I do it?"

1. Describe Erik H. Erikson's Theory of Stages of Psychosocial Development.
2. List the virtues that are formed at each stage of development.



3. What are developmental crises?
4. Can the child go through the stages of personality development alone?
5. What factors can hinder the positive resolution of developmental crises?
6. Which virtues are influenced by the teacher's attitude?
7. How do you think the teacher can support the student at each stage of personality development according to E.H. Erikson?



## (3) Module 3: Observation as a method of collecting information about students' special needs

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### The aim of the module. / "Why is this module important?"

Observation is a technique of learning about the world, familiar to every person, as it is used in everyday life practically all the time. For example, when in the morning you are to decide what to wear, the first thing you do is to observe the weather outside the window - whether it is windy, cloudy, sunny, and so on. When you want to know if someone is happy with a gift they have received, you anxiously observe their facial expressions and behavior. One of the first activities that infants undertake is to observe the world around them, especially their caregivers. Observing other people's behavior is often the primary source of information about their psychological properties, emotional states, intentions, or their role in a group (Kowalik, 2000). The ability to observe other people and understand their behavior develops over the course of a lifetime, thus shaping our mentalizing abilities, which enables us to understand social events, predict our behavior as well as other people, and build close relationships (Allen et al., 2008). When interpreting observed events in everyday life, we refer to common knowledge and create naive theories about the surrounding world. Some of them have been and are subject to empirical verification, others cannot be verified and remain as superstitions and stereotypes, passed on in a specific culture. Thus, everyone has experience in using this technique, although it is far from its scientific application. Observation is one of the older diagnostic techniques, which is used by researchers representing very different fields of science - social (psychology, pedagogy, and sociology), medical, or natural - and despite its limitations, it is treated as an important way of learning about the world (Kmita, 2011; Kowalik, 2000; Łobocki, 2005; Zalewska, 2011). Based on the observation of children's behavior and the changes taking place in them, including those of his children, Jean Piaget produced one of the better-known theories of development (Piaget, 2006). The observation of specific behavior with specific characteristics and frequencies is also a basis for the diagnosis of such neurodevelopmental disorders as ADHD or autism spectrum disorders (Cierpiątkowska et al., 2020). These are just a few examples, but they indicate how important this technique is and how useful it can be when we work with other people. One such situation could be working with students in a diverse school group. This technique makes it possible to identify children's needs and to observe the changes taking place. It is worth remembering that it is also used by pupils themselves as one of the simplest techniques for making inferences about the surrounding world. For an observation to be not only a source of everyday knowledge, but also to meet the criteria of a research tool, it must be conducted in a specific way, and the person carrying it out should have relevant knowledge. The key "tool" for observation is the observer - a fact that makes this method easily accessible but at the same time entails various limitations.



## The effects of the training module. / “How will this module help me?”

The module aims to present how observation should be conducted to be methodologically correct and provide reliable information. It will also show how observation can be used in the classroom where a child with special educational needs is taught, by presenting example situations. The following will serve this purpose:

- presenting basic definitional issues and typologies of observation;
- discussing the limitations of observation as a research method;
- proposing guidelines to facilitate observation as a method of working with a diverse group;

The information presented here is intended to improve the observational skills of the participants so that their observation will meet the criteria of reliability, and thus be:

- **purposeful**, i.e. it serves a research purpose clearly defined by the observer, which is feasible and directs them to the object of observation
- **planned**, i.e. it is conducted according to a specified plan, taking into account the knowledge of different types of observation, its stages, ways of recording the observation, the influence of the conditions in which it takes place, and the principles of interpretation of the collected observation material
- **accurate, exhaustive, and incisive**, i.e. it includes all the data that can be collected on its subject, and it does not disregard the broader context of the observed phenomenon
- **objective**, i.e. it is not influenced by the observer's beliefs, expectations, stereotypes, or personal experiences;
- **active and selective**, i.e. it is based on the recording of data selected by the observer about the purpose it is to serve.

## The basic knowledge about the module topic. / “What should I know?”

### 3.1 Definitional issues

In the simplest terms, observation can be defined as the intentional, deliberate, and planned perception of a phenomenon, process, or event and the recording of data collected in this way (Łobocki, 2005; Stemplewska-Żakowicz, 2009). However, this definition describes only the first two stages of the observation process. The observation of a given object and recording of collected data is followed by its interpretation, which is the essence of observation as a research method (Kowalik, 2000; Soroko, 2020; Zalewska, 2011). In psychology, therefore, observation is defined as "intentional recognition of indicators belonging to the selected categories of observational data, and subsequent theoretically justified inference about the properties or mental states of the examined individual" (Kowalik, 2000 p.442). In other words, observation as a diagnostic method means attributing psychological meaning to observed behaviors, i.e. searching for the child's internal property behind a specific behavior or the function this behavior fulfills. Thus, it serves to answer the question of what the observed behavior of a verbal or non-



verbal nature means, as it is the indicator that can be observed. By asking this question the observer tries to understand the child's behavior rather than evaluate it (Zalewska, 2011).

Observation defined in this way is based on three assumptions (Zalewska, 2011). **The first assumption** states that each behavior is determined by a system of different variables, which include, among others, the mental properties of an individual, and therefore a person's behavior is an expression of mental processes and mental states. According to **the second assumption**, mental processes and mental states are phenomena that are not subject to direct evaluation, and therefore can only be inferred by observing their external manifestation, which is the behavior of an individual. **The third assumption** says that it is the reliable theoretical knowledge of the observer that provides the basis for inferences about mental states or processes, derived from observational data. When assigning meaning to observed behavior, we can do so concerning two levels of interpretation. According to the reductionist approach, we can refer to the knowledge of primary processes conditioning behavior, e.g., concerning a person's somatic state. According to the non-reductionist approach, we refer to our knowledge of the psychological properties of an individual.

**When working with a group of students who have diverse learning needs, a theoretical reference point for interpreting observational data will be the knowledge of:**

- developmental patterns and needs (Module 3 of this handbook),
- clinical picture, i.e., strengths and weaknesses of a student with special educational needs;
- group processes (module 4. of this handbook);
- didactics (e.g., the idea of inclusive education in module 1 of this handbook, information on the individualization of the teaching process, and possibilities of adapting the teaching process to students' special needs).

It should be remembered that the observation of the same behavior may lead to different conclusions for different observers, as they will analyze a different element of the behavior concerning a different theory. The observation of individual behavior cannot be used to make a comprehensive diagnosis or to predict the success of actions taken.

It is worth noting that the source of information that should also be taken into account at the stage of observational data interpretation is the observer's knowledge about their own beliefs, feelings, stereotypes, or preferences, through the prism of which they can "filter" the observed phenomena. Disregarding the knowledge of one's judgments or evaluations may lead to superficiality and biased conclusions, and earlier to the subjectivity of the very registration of the data derived from observation (Łobocki, 2005; Zalewska, 2011). This may manifest itself in the fact that the observer (a teacher, educator, etc.) (Lobocki, 2005) will:

- select observed and recorded stimuli according to a preconceived assumption they wish to prove;



- omit (not necessarily consciously) information about situational conditions that constitute an important background for the observed behavior;
- selectively focus attention on people or events that are personally important to them (e.g. interesting or disturbing);
- treat their judgments or speculations as facts, which they will not verify.

Psychology has identified **several cognitive errors** that should be considered when analyzing one's interpretations of observed phenomena. One of them is **the halo effect**, which involves the tendency to attribute positive or negative characteristics to a given phenomenon or person depending on the first impression made by the observer. **The halo effect** also means that if we perceive a person/phenomenon in a positive light and we like them, we tend to ascribe positive traits to them and not see the negative ones. The opposite of the halo effect is **the horn effect**, which is when we tend to attribute only negative characteristics to a person or phenomenon that arouses negative feelings in us. Other effects include **the primacy effect** and **the freshness effect**. The former is based on the fact that the first observed characteristic of a person or phenomenon or the first information that reaches the observer leaves a greater impression than those that are presented later. In turn, according to **the freshness effect**, facts or events observed last may make a stronger impression on the observer. We are all subject to the described processes, and the awareness of their occurrence may protect us from distorting conclusions based on observational data.

Other possible limitations include the inability to replicate the obtained observational data (Zalewska, 2011). A limiting frame may also be a theory that the observer refers to when interpreting the collected information or a hasty interpretation. Therefore, if possible, it is better not to be limited to one theoretical model to obtain the most complete picture of the phenomenon described.

### 3.2 Method of recording observational data

The possibility of interpreting the obtained data will depend on how they are recorded, which is one of the first stages of the observation process itself (Soroko, 2020). Regardless of its nature, however, observational data must be recorded in the most detailed and objective manner possible (Zalewska, 2011). Every behavior or situational element is important. Therefore, in many cases, it is only by analyzing the whole observation material with all its details that it is possible to see connections that are not noticeable at the beginning, which leads to completely different interpretative conclusions (Zalewska, 2011). At the stage of recording, it is important to focus only on the facts related to the object of observation, without trying to assign meaning to them, i.e. to include only what has been observed rather than what we guess or expect. The recording process may vary depending on the type of observation and the conditions in which it is carried out. Usually, an observation is recorded in written form, which is done after the end of the observation by the person who conducts it. It is a reproduction of the observed facts from memory (Zalewska, 2011), which, unfortunately, may adversely affect the details of the recorded information. The course of observation can also be described based on a film recording, photographic documentation, or the recording of the sound itself (especially useful when recording conversations). Film



footage in particular offers great opportunities for data analysis, including interaction microanalysis, which is not possible otherwise (Kmita, 2011). However, it should be remembered that the use of various external forms of recording the observed phenomena changes the conditions in which the observation is conducted, and this must be taken into account when interpreting. After all, these are not natural conditions. The collected material can be recorded in a free manner, without referring to any predetermined categories. In this form, it will be subject only to qualitative analysis. It is also possible to record the material in a structured way, using scales or sets of criteria specially designed for the needs of a particular observation, which allows for quantitative analysis. An example of such criteria can be the behavioral dimensions that are taken into account during behavioral observation (Soroko, 2020). These are:

- frequency - how often the child engages in the behavior we are interested in from an observational perspective;
- duration - e.g., how long the child has been engaged in the behavior;
- latency - how much time has elapsed between engaging in the behavior again or between the behavior and the stimulus that triggered it;
- the strength/intensity with which the behavior is undertaken;
- the form of the reaction/behavior;
- the location of the behavior.

### 3.3 Types of observation

Observation can be classified into several types, depending on different criteria. The first type of observation depends on the kind of contact between the observer and the observed persons or phenomena. According to this criterion, we distinguish **direct and indirect observation**. Direct observation takes place when the observer is in direct contact with the observed phenomena or persons. This means that during such a form of observation the observer is personally present and records research material themselves, which they later analyze. A special form of direct observation is participatory observation, i.e., such observation where the observer directly participates in the situation that is being observed. This type of observation may also come in different variants, depending on the degree and nature of the observer's involvement in the observed situation. On the one hand, we can distinguish passive observation, where the observer is physically present, but does not actively participate in the situation nor interacts with the participants. The observer is merely a first-hand witness to the events that they record. An example could be observation performed during classroom hospitalation. At the other end of the spectrum is the case where the observer takes a more or less active part in the situation in which the observation is made. The observer may be a "moderate" participant, balancing the role of the observer and that of the participant. An example of this form of observation may be a situation when a teacher assigns tasks for group work to pupils. While being a participant or even the author of the situation, the teacher can still participate in it by supporting the pupils, but on the other hand, he/she can observe the



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pupils' behavior e.g. how they communicate with each other while solving the tasks together, which roles individual pupils take, which students are more and which are less active while working, etc. The opposite pole in terms of the degree of the observer's involvement is active observation. It concerns conditions in which, after a short period of getting familiar with the situation (behavior of participants, prevailing rules), the observer tries to adopt the behavior patterns to become a full participant in the situation. Observation will depend on the type of contact - directive versus non-directive. The first type of contact assumes a very active role of the observer - directing the situation or even creating it. The second means leaving the choice of activity to the other person. This type of non-directive contact can be particularly difficult to enter, as most people will try to stay in contact by being directive, giving orders, asking questions, and applying a particular method. **It is believed that active observation in the school environment is not possible, because the teacher cannot and will not be a participant in the educational process on a par with his/her students. Indeed, by definition, his/her role is completely different (Łobocki, 2005).** A certain sphere of the situation will always be inaccessible to an adult observer. This is because there is no such role in a child or youth group that could be taken by an adult, who would obtain all the rights of a group member (Łobocki, 2005). Hence, in a school situation, only **partial participation** is possible. In turn, **indirect observation** does not require the personal presence of the observer, who can rely on the material collected or recorded by another person. Also, such an observer can investigate the effects that a specific behavior has caused.

Another type of criterion concerns the degree of observation overtness. We identify **overt observation**, during which the observer officially acts in his/her role, and the observed persons are informed that they are being observed, know the nature and purpose of the observation, and have agreed to participate in it. It should be remembered that under such conditions people may behave differently than usual. This is illustrated quite well by differences in pupils' behavior during lessons, during breaks, or on school trips. The second type is **covert observation**, which is conducted in such a way that the people being observed do not know that they are being observed.

Another type of criterion refers to the time of observation. We can distinguish between **continuous and discontinuous observation**. **Continuous observation** is carried out continuously over a given period. It may take the form of observation logs, kept systematically over a specific period. **Discontinuous observation** is performed over a predetermined period or in equal intervals of time. Then we deal with the observation of time samples. This type of observation can be aided by observation scales, which will be aimed either at recording specific behaviors or characteristics of a particular type of behavior

The number of people observed may also be a criterion determining the type of observation. **Individual observation** will involve one person and his/her interactions with other people. **Group observation** will refer to a group of people, which in school conditions could be represented by selected groups of students or entire classes.

Observations can also be categorized by the content scope of an observation. **Holistic observation** will attempt to gather as much information as possible about the problem/phenomenon under investigation.



On the other hand, **partial observation** will be narrowed down to a selected aspect of the observed phenomenon, e.g., students' communication while solving a task in dyads.

A very important criterion allowing us to distinguish between different types of observation is the conditions in which observation is carried out. Observation may be conducted in natural conditions, i.e. in which the observed people naturally participate and are familiar with. Observation can also be done in arranged conditions, i.e., pre-prepared and well-planned. The best example of this type is observation undertaken in laboratory or experimental conditions.

### 3.4 Observation tips

#### 1. When observing a child, it is advisable to answer the following questions:

- Are they engaged in the activity?
- What kind of contact are they in?
- How do they regulate and control their emotions?
- Are they able to generate enough motivation to do the task, or undertake the activity?
- What is their plan for completing the activity/task?
- What strategy do they adopt to perform the task?
- How do they manage their cognitive processes?

- a) attention;
- b) memory.

#### 2. To obtain as much information as possible, it is useful to conduct observations:

- in individual contact;
- in a group;
- during task activity:
  - a) performing the task assigned by an adult individually;
  - b) performing the task in a group (of two, three, or more).
- during an activity suggested by an adult:
  - a) a short speech on a given topic (tell me your favorite fairy tale; or a holiday memory; describe your plans for the weekend; tell me what you like to do most; what is your favorite game; tell me what annoys you most; what do you do when you are upset; is there anything you would like to change; what makes you uncomfortable; what is the most fun/pleasant thing about school);
  - b) a drawing ( a child`s free choice or on a given topic; a collaborative drawing by a group of pupils);
  - c) composing stories.
- during an activity in a well-structured situation (e.g. solving a textbook task);



- in boring situations, while doing repetitive activities;
- when a child is not under adult control;
- when doing a free-form activity:
  - a) free play;
  - b) symbolic/narrative play;
  - c) motor activity;
  - d) playing together with an adult;
  - e) playing a film/preparing a performance.

**3. When analyzing a child's speech, it is important to pay attention to:**

- the way the child formulates their speech in terms of form;
- whether the child can hold a dialogue, how well they acknowledge the interlocutor's perspective in their speech;
- the plan of the speech;
- digressions;
- concentration on selected aspects of the message;
- repetition of content (this may be information or events that are important to the child);
- what their emotional expression is (appropriate to the situation, too weak, too intense).

**4. When observing a child in contact with their peers, it is helpful to answer the following questions:**

- How are they perceived by their peers?
- Do they cooperate with other children?
- Are they able to join in with other children's play?
- How do they encourage others to follow their idea?
- Do they take account of what happens to other children when doing things?
- How do they react to frustration?
- Which games do they prefer when interacting with other children

**5. Observing a child in a peer group can be a source of knowledge about:**

- their social functioning;
- how the child is perceived in their environment;



- how the child manifests symptoms of difficulties related to special educational needs;
- to what extent the symptoms interfere with the child's functioning;
- what coping strategies the child employs/if any;
- how they manage to control and regulate their emotion

## The examples of the exercises and case studies./ “ What should I can?”

### Activity 1

The task is carried out in a group of three, in which participants will swap roles. One person is an observer, the second plays the role of a child with special educational needs and the third is an adult talking to the child. The adult asks the child to talk about what they enjoy doing most and what they find difficult at school. The person who plays the child does not tell the other people what special educational needs he/she has in mind when playing his/her role. The observer makes a record of the interview. The adult also records the conversation as a participant observer. The observer and the adult compare their records. Then together they decide what special educational needs the child has, and how to help them. The observer and the adult compare their findings with the person playing the role of the child. The exercise is repeated three times so that everyone can play different roles.

### Activity 2

A group of people read the following observation records and discuss which one meets the criteria of the observation material record.

#### Description 1

"Janek enters the office, holding his mother's hand, looks at the psychologist, then at the car, at the slide, smiles, and says to his mother: " A slide like the one in the playground, only a small one." (Zalewska, 2011, p.39)

#### Description 2

"Janek entered the office with his mother and right at the door was delighted to find a slide in the office." (Zalewska, 2011, p.39)

### Activity 3

Each of us has our preferences - we like certain people more than others. Think if there are students who are more popular than others. If so, how can you account for this? And are there any students who are disliked by most of their peers? If so, why? Maybe some children are ignored, overlooked, or are neither liked nor disliked. If so, what do you think the reason might be?

Participants are next invited to share information and have a brainstorming discussion on how to help the marginalized or ignored pupils.



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#### Activity 4

Children with special educational needs have different resources and face different difficulties. Please try to think of any situation in which it might be particularly difficult for a child (examples may be selected based on what is familiar to the trainees):

- a) with diabetes
- b) with ADHD
- c) with Asperger's syndrome
- d) having a stammer
- e) with physical disabilities.

Give examples of these situations. Now please think about whether there are situations in which they would cope (or have coped) better than children without special educational needs.

Next, the participants are invited to exchange information and have a brainstorming discussion on how children with special educational needs can be empowered based on information about their strengths, i.e. situations in which such children perform better or as well as children without special educational needs.

#### Activity 5

Think about how the following situation could be interpreted:

- a) according to the halo effect
- b) according to the horn effect

"Kasia entered the classroom and looked at Monika sitting at the front desk in the middle row, who was just making a huge gum bubble. While staring at her friend, she tripped over the foot of Krzys, sitting at the front desk by the wall, and knocked down the backpack that was on the desk. A heavy thermos fell on the foot of Krzys, who grabbed it and started crying that he was in great pain."

#### Activity 6

Individual work.

Each trainee reflects on what kind of observations they make most often and for what purpose. What, at a given stage of professional life, hinders observation as a source of reliable knowledge and interpretation of observed students' behavior? It is recommended to write down these ideas in two columns on a sheet of paper.

Next, the participants can share their thoughts if they want, and the trainer writes down their conclusions on one big list. Do the types of observation used and the difficulties noticed by the participants in their interpretation recur? What can be done to minimize the difficulties? The group works together or, if the module is done independently - individual reflection can be given.

#### Attention:

It is worth noting to what extent purposeful observation is used; whether the observation is used as a diagnostic tool before adequate support is given to pupils. And to what extent is the collection of



information about pupils done without a plan, being more of a response to a specific situation? In what way can stereotypes / prejudices / currently experienced personal emotions influence the interpretation of observed pupil behavior? The awareness of one's own (the teacher's, specialist's) difficulties can help to use observations appropriately and thus support pupils in the classroom.

### Test yourself! / “Do I know it and can I do it?”

- How does observation used in everyday life differ from observation as a research method?
- What are the assumptions of observation as a research method?
- What are the limitations of observation as a research method?
- How can observation as a research method be used with pupils in the classroom?
- What is the halo effect?
- What is the primacy and freshness effect?
- Why is participatory observation difficult to carry out in a school setting?
- How can the information gathered be affected by the degree of overtness of the observation?
- In what situations is it useful to observe a child to gather as much information as possible about their functioning?
- What should we pay attention to when observing a child in a group and why?



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## (4) Module 4: Abilities of working in a diverse group

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### Why is this module important?

This part of the handbook aims to raise awareness and promote knowledge of the communication skills needed in working in a diverse group such as an inclusive class. Furthermore, it aims at highlighting the importance of interdisciplinary cooperation in the school context as a means to inclusive education.

### How will this module help me?

To develop communication skills that promote cooperation and understanding in a diverse group, this module suggests various *experiential interventions* that will help educators to obtain and master the appropriate tools in working effectively within an inclusive school context. These interventions refer mainly to socio-educational *group animation*, which is a pedagogical method of great psychological importance.

### What should I know? Basic knowledge of the module topic

#### 4.1 Introduction to interdisciplinary cooperation

**Interdisciplinary cooperation** is defined as the need for cooperation of various sciences/disciplines to comprehensively understand an issue or a problem. Thus, scientists through the process of interaction without eliminating their special features and their autonomy, offer concepts, theories, and methodological tools, to collaborate in problem-solving situations. The basic principle of the interdisciplinary approach is the belief that nobody can have complete results working alone. Each scientist investigates and possesses part of the truth, which can only be approached through the synthesis of different points of view (Μαστοράκη., 2014).

The successful operation of the interdisciplinary team contributes decisively to the realization of the objectives of inclusive education. It is commonly accepted that the diagnosis, planning, and intervention in the field of Special Education should be undertaken by groups of specialists and not by individuals. In addition, the inclusion and co-education of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools cannot be achieved unless it is accompanied by the inclusion of specialists who can educate and support them. Thus, the work of the school and the teacher will become more efficient as a result of joint effort and interdisciplinary cooperation, which, as a concept and practice, touches the whole spectrum of special education, from the first diagnosis and evaluation, pre-school and school education to vocational rehabilitation (Στρογγυλός & Ξανθάκου, 2007).



The need for interdisciplinary cooperation is reflected in international law, which encourages or enforces the cooperation of people of different specialties (DfEE, 2000/England, DfES 2004/England, PL 94-142 /1975/USA). International research also suggests that isolated individual work does not help us properly assess and educate children with disabilities (see Research Review in Rainforth and York-Barr, 1997).

For many decades, it has been widely accepted that multidisciplinary teams are necessary for educational decision-making concerning children with SEND. Research on group decision-making and team effectiveness in various organizational settings suggests that teams can be useful under certain conditions, and that team development and maintenance are important factors to consider when employing new team approaches (Abelson & Woodman, 1983). Lacey (2001), also claims that cooperation among educators, therapists, and social scientists can achieve better results as a team working together, than each team member alone.

#### 4.1.1 The advantages and difficulties of interdisciplinary cooperation

Working in an interdisciplinary mode at school empowers professionals to gain better information and knowledge on key issues related to behaviors and difficult situations faced by students, school culture, family life, and community involvement. The cooperation of the team of teachers and social scientists offers several advantages, such as a) a global view of the child's needs, b) an exchange of knowledge, experiences, and understanding of the other's work, c) holistic rather than a piecemeal approach, dealing with the student globally as an individual but also as a member in interaction with various subsystems, d) designing commonly pursued goals based on complementary and collaborative actions, e) more effective final work/better results (Μαστοράκη, 2014)

However, interdisciplinary cooperation presents several difficulties that can be summarized as follows: different philosophies in basic education, a different way of thinking, role stereotypes and different aspirations, irrational fear that "others" will learn our job and so we will no longer be useful, differences in terminology, the confidentiality of information, lack of time, as well as physical factors: group size, place, time, duration (Γαλάνη & Τραγάκη, 2014).

#### 4.1.2 How to achieve effective interdisciplinary cooperation

To avoid the above difficulties in interdisciplinary cooperation and to achieve the most effective education of children with special educational needs in the context of inclusion, the following conditions need to be met (Galani & Tragaki, 2014):

- a) identification of distinct roles,
- b) change of perceptions and attitudes - overcoming prejudice and stereotypes,
- c) mutual respect,
- d) equal contribution of scientific roles,
- e) acceptance of diversity and complementarity of roles,
- f) mutual responsibility,
- g) g) commitment to common work,
- h) h) common culture and philosophy in inclusion,



- 
- i) i) Cultural Formation
  - j) j) institutionalization and organization of the framework of cooperation in which the roles of the specialists in the schools, the ways of cooperation, the duration and the time of cooperation are defined, and the way of communication and cooperation with the parents is determined.

In the handbook of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2009), “Basic principles for the promotion of the quality in Inclusion-suggestions for policymakers”, one of the basic principles for the promotion of the quality in inclusion and the support of the co-education of students with SEND in the mainstream school, is the existence of support services. These services can either promote or hamper the scope of inclusion, depending on their method of work and their approach. Those which promote inclusion applies an interdisciplinary approach that:

- Integrates knowledge and perspectives from different areas of vocational specialization to achieve a holistic view of students' needs;
- Uses a participatory approach that requires a change in the control center for support and input from support specialists. Decision-making for support does not just involve mainstream class teachers, students, and their families but is increasingly directed by them, in collaboration with interdisciplinary professionals. This requires a dramatic change in attitudes on the part of professionals as well as a change in the practices that follow.

A policy report drawn up in the context of the Erasmus + European project **InSchool “Inclusive Schools”** (2019-2021), under the coordination of the British Council, refers to the special recommendations resulting from the “Conference for the Inclusion in Education”, which took place on a national level in 2020 (co-organized by British Council and the Greek Institute of Educational Policy). Some of these recommendations concerning the legislation, the inclusion programs and the operational framework of the support services, underline the importance of the incorporation/appointment of specialists and psychologists in mainstream schools to deal with the support needs at an inclusive level. Also, reference is made to the necessity of essential interdisciplinary cooperation among educators, support services, and local social services (page 10).

As already mentioned, the successful operation of the interdisciplinary team presupposes both overcoming many obstacles in cooperation and developing a variety of interpersonal skills. Highlighting and understanding the importance of the concepts: of "group dynamics", interaction, respect, acceptance, trust, and cooperation, are crucial conditions for the successful implementation of the project. We believe that the ideal approach to achieving interdisciplinary cooperation as well as the inclusion of students with SEND in the mainstream classroom is experiential intervention through cooperative learning, which offers behavioral and psychological tools difficult to find in other types of learning, especially in terms of cooperation and the psychological climate prevailing at school.



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## 4.2 Prevention in mainstream schools

In the previous section, we argued that interdisciplinary cooperation is essential for achieving successful inclusion in the school context. The importance and benefits of cooperation between different specialists to achieve mainstreaming were described. However, this collaboration is an approach or strategy and should not be regarded as a goal in itself, as our main aim is to develop cooperation, respect and empathy within a diverse group of students, promoting, in this way, the idea of inclusion of students with SEND in mainstream education. There is strong evidence that this aim is best achieved through experiential interventions.

There are two types of experiential interventions: the first type concerning primary prevention will be carried out through awareness raising by informing students, teachers, and parents within the educational context. The second type is secondary prevention which is addressed to specific students, parents, and educators on the occasion of a specific special educational need. In these cases, the animation is suggested through the creation of groups and group work.

### 4.2.1 Raise awareness and actions with the contribution of students, educators, and parents

In the context of raising awareness within the educational community, presentations and actions could be made on the occasion of world days or months, for example, Mental Health Day, Developmental Language Disorder Awareness Day, [World Autism Awareness Day](https://www.worldautismawarenessday.com/), ADHD Awareness Month, etc please see <https://www.awarenessdays.com/>.

A specific day can be chosen which will be related to the difficulties faced by students with special educational needs, to raise awareness and inform the whole school community about these cases. Although for such a day creativity and imagination have no limits, it will be good to consult the material suggested on the internet and reputable websites that can give you the appropriate information and awareness programs.

These programs can include short presentations to students from teachers and parents with SEND children, who encounter difficulties and obstacles in their daily lives both at home and at school. Also, activities could take place between students and parents submitting personal experiences or feelings to allow students with SEND and/or their parents to speak up supporting them to pursue their goals and aspirations.



## Examples:

### What I would like my teachers to know about Developmental Language Disorder

Activities proposed by specialists during the Developmental Language Disorder Awareness Day in Greece aimed at expressing one's needs. As an example, there are some student's requests:

- Now that we are wearing masks in the classroom because of the pandemic, I find it very difficult to understand all the words, so please try to talk a bit slower.
- -When we are taking a test, I would like to be able to ask about the meaning of some words. I'm not asking, because I'm trying to find out the answer to the question, I'm asking because I'm trying to understand the question!!!
- It would be really helpful if you could give me extra time, especially during writing tasks. I would feel less pressured.

Marianna  
(15-years old girl with DLD)  
Greece

### A letter was written by the student's mum

Greece, 2021

*Dear Teacher,*

*You, who want to teach children, teach mine too. To mine, who has been walking hand in hand with developmental language disorder for fifteen years now...*

*Do not fear her! She is intelligent! Very! However, when you ask her a question, be sure that she understands ALL the words.*

*WORDS... For her it is a great chase... she is looking for them, tirelessly, every single day although she doesn't always find them, even if they don't end up coming out of her mouth... or even if they make her angry! But she doesn't stop. She fights, chases, and endures! So, don't fear for her! She knows how to fight, just help her understand! Then she will answer! For sure!*

*Explain and give her time! She needs more time! If you are in a hurry, ask somebody else! Don't make her feel anxious! It isn't her fault that her mind goes blank! It isn't her fault that words pester her! Do you know how much she wishes to answer you?*

*She loves school! She wants to be excellent, that's why she has been studying for hours! Because she wants you and me to be proud of her. She does it for us, you have to know that! So, if her longing to answer makes her confused about the words she wants to use, or say them in the wrong order, don't tell her that she made a MISTAKE! You should know that this word is very painful... It makes her run to the restroom ALONE during every break to mourn that MISTAKE...*



*I am not asking you to love her the way she loves school! After all, she has us, who are “showering” her with tons of love! I am just asking you to accept her, praise her whenever possible for her enormous (trust me on this one) effort and allow her to be herself!*

*Be sure that in this way, you will help her SHINE!!!*

*Thank you,*

*Marianna’s mother*

*(15years old girl with DLD)*

### 4.3 Creating groups at school

Creating animation groups is an amazing tool because it promotes empathy, ie the ability to communicate with the thoughts, opinions, and feelings of others. People do not share the same experiences, thoughts, and emotions. Each of these factors plays an important role in how we interpret the world around us. To truly understand each other we must understand the other person's experience of thinking, emotion as well as his words and behavior. Improving empathy skills will lead to better interpersonal and school relationships for all students with each other, especially for students with special educational needs with their peers.

#### 4.3.1 What is a group and what are the criteria for creating a group?

A group is a set of individuals who meet over some time and develop a stable pattern of relationships that allow them to discover and use potential and existing energy sources, both collectively and individually, that are available (Douglas, 1997). The criteria for creating a group should be:

- Typical social structure
- Interpersonal interaction
- The presence of three or more people
- Common goal
- Interdependence
- Self-definition of group members as members of a group
- Recognition by others (Tsimpoukli, 2012)

#### 4.3.2 What are the basic functions of a group?

- Project Implementation.
- Cultivation of team spirit.
- Expression of emotions.
- Creating intimacy.
- Change/adjustment.



- Connection with personal meaning.
- Encouraging autonomy and uniqueness.
- Maintenance/Compliance

#### 4.3.3 What is (socio-educational) animation and what is its significance today?

Animation is, in its original meaning, an action that gives life, and breath to the activities of a group or offers a new organized activity in a sometimes more and sometimes less structured context. Socio-educational animation is identified with the use of active pedagogical methods (Sfyroera, 2007). However, the term animation has a broader meaning today. This term refers to modern teaching approaches which are based on a series of technical and methodological tools that an educator or specialist can use in the classroom by creating an educational atmosphere different from the traditional one. It aims to make available to children and young people recreational and educational activities related to their interests. It is the development of creative expression and skills through relationships based on cooperation, initiative, and mutual trust. Sometimes it is about direct animation, ie guidance of activities, and other times it is about the coordination of activities.

#### 4.3.4 What conditions and skills the animator must meet?

The animator uses practices that create a friendly and safe atmosphere in the group. He/she is a "gardener" that enriches the soil and helps the seeds to grow (Waller D., 2001). In such a climate, communication is maximized and the group comes to life. More specifically, the animator follows the needs expressed within the group without directing (Ναυρίδης, 2005). He/she ensures the development of a safe climate, free for expression and also rich in stimuli/interactions (Φιλίππου & Καραντάνα 2010). He/she offers help in the sense that he/she prepares the meetings, reminds the plan, the goals and responsibilities, encourages the expression of all and highlights the special abilities of the members, and finally draws intermediate conclusions.

#### 4.3.5 How to connect with another specialist: ' socio-educational co-animation'

As mentioned in the introduction, the interdisciplinary cooperation and coexistence of educators and specialists is a very helpful and enriching opportunity because in this case there is a greater variety of interventions and the skills of both animators are utilized. It also acts as a stress catalyst and gives the second look or exchange of thoughts and ideas. However, cooperation is needed in the preparation, the evaluation, and during each meeting. It is also a prerequisite that both animators have a good relationship to complement each other and speak the same language (Αρχοντάκη & Φιλίππου, 2003).



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#### 4.3.6 Structure of each meeting and the role of the animator in every step/phase

The animators need to emphasize the welcoming of the team members, which is an important part of the process. They prepare the place and plan to have some drinks like coffee, tea water, and even a candle. It is very important that the participants feel comfortable in the room where they will communicate. In the first two meetings, the coordinators should take time to explain to the members the experiential way of working, the climate they want to create, and the reason why they suggest experiential exercises or activities. According to the literature (Φιλίππου & Καραντάνα, 2010), the exercises affect and facilitate on two levels: that of the group and that of the individual. At the team level, they facilitate the development of trust, communication, familiarity, and cooperation between members, while at the personal level, they help individuals reduce fears of meeting with others, as well as to establish genuine relationships and to bring out personal issues.

As for the group, according to Douglas (1997), it refers to a group of people who meet for a period of time and develop a stable pattern of relationships that allows them to discover and use existing energy sources both collectively and individually, where they are available. A new group prepares as if they are going on a journey with the animators as guides and facilitators.

Additionally, the coordinators inform about the co animation, and the presence of different coordinators from different specialties which can be a very helpful and enriching feature that offers the team different models, and a greater variety of interventions, where more ideas and skills are utilized.

A final and important part is the operation of the group in terms of behavior and communication rules, for example, physical violence is not allowed within the group (especially when the group is made up of students), there is also freedom of expression, everybody should take care of confidentiality between members which means that no one discusses the content of the meetings with people outside the group and everyone shows consistency in arrival time and participation, from the beginning to the end of the meetings.

Each meeting is structured in three phases, the *introductory* phase, the *development* phase, and the *closing* phase. In the introductory phase, the animators help the participants to express their wishes and needs with the main goals being the focus on the 'here and now' as well as the interaction of the members with each other. The *development phase* is more creative because it involves deepening self-knowledge. The goal of the animators is to create a climate of trust to achieve acquaintance and bonding in the group. Participants in this phase will cultivate skills, such as empathy, and try new behaviors. This will help them to share their experiences with the whole team. The last phase of closure should take place in every meeting to discharge emotions and for relaxation. In addition, each member has the opportunity to share with the group the discovery for themselves in the meeting. Thus, in this way, every participant answers the question 'what do I take with me from this meeting' in emotions or new thoughts.



## What can I do? Examples of the exercises and case studies

### Examples of Experiential Exercises, fairy tales, and stories

These examples include activities for **communication**, the foundation of social success, which helps children to understand and express what makes them unique. **Being a part of a group** in elementary school can be challenging and group skills are needed in a classroom setting. Classrooms are essentially social groups, and all social groups form hierarchies. Once these hierarchies are established, it may be very hard for children who were previously viewed as “different” or “uncool” to change their social standing (Shapiro, 2004). In addition, students need experiential exercises which help them to express their feelings, believe in themselves, and develop skills such as active hearing and empathy.

#### Activity 1: Communication, Acquaintance/first contact

- I know that he/she ...
- I imagine that he/she ...
- Who wants to choose a classmate from the group whom he/she does not know very well and present him/her to us? First, tell us what you know about him/her, and then imagine what he/she is or does. The other student listens and at the end corrects and adds if he/she wants. In turn, he/she choose someone else who is presented to us in the same way. So, we all continue. Who wants to start?

#### Activity 2: Communication, Acquaintance/first contact

##### Something special about me

Take a piece of paper and a pencil and please write down some sentences focusing on things in which you are considered special for example write a talent of yours or a favorite hobby or a special experience. Subsequently, at the bottom of the page note two to three external features for example long hair, green eyes, etc., so that it is easier for others to guess whose paper is being read.

Put all the notes in a basket or a box and have students take turns choosing a paper to read aloud.

As each paper is read, the others try to guess whose it is. When someone guesses correctly the person with the special talent, hobby or experience talks more about what he/she has written.

The other children are allowed to supplement the discussion and share their own experiences or interests related to the interest that their classmates focused on before.

The person who guessed correctly is the next one to choose the paper from the box or basket and so the activity continues until all the notes are finished.

#### Activity 3: Communication- Acquaintance/first contact

##### What do I like most...

Ask the children to write on a paper or say orally their favorites, like.



- 
- What is your favorite computer game.....
  - What is your favorite vacation .....
  - What is your favorite sport .....
  - What is your favorite food or cuisine.....
  - What is your favorite lesson.....
  - What is your favorite show on TV .....
  - What is your favorite film.....
  - What is your favorite color.....

This way the group members learn more information about each other.

#### Activity 4: being a part of a group, empathy, and social communication $\Delta$

##### Sharing

Ask the group what the word *share* means to them. Do they find it difficult to share?

If so, why? In which situations is it best to share and why?

You could tell the students that learning to share is difficult because they have to give something up. On the other hand, it means being generous and thinking about the needs of others. When we share we feel good because we are good to someone else. And when the other person shares something with us, we feel good because he/she is considerate to us.

You can support students to express what they would do and why in some cases. Suggest some examples to the group one after the other. Ask students if it was easy or difficult for them to share each of the following cases/situations:

- During the lesson the teacher distributes photocopies but these are not enough for all students
- At a school party, there is only one treat left in the box or on the plate
- In a school event, there are not enough chairs and so a student is left standing up alone

Finally, ask the group if they can think of other examples when sharing is necessary

#### Activity 5: expressing feelings and developing empathy

Choose images of real people in different social and emotional situations, for example, anxious people, thinking, negotiating, arguing, isolated, etc. Place these pictures on the table. Ask the students to look at it and write down their thoughts about what is happening in each picture and how people feel about what is happening.

- What is happening in the picture?
- How do these people feel?



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## Activity 6: expressing feeling, developing empathy, group dynamics, self-assertiveness, acknowledging feelings of inclusion and exclusion

### At all costs

- We explain the rules and the process of the experiential activity. Depending on the number of participants we form one or two groups of about 12-15 persons.
- Group members hold hands tightly forming a very strong circle. They hold each other arm in arm and join their shoulders. One member of the group remains outside the circle and tries to find *at all costs* a way to enter the circle. After two minutes he/she will indicate the next person to step outside the circle. All members of the group in rotation should step out of the circle.

### Ask the students:

- How did you feel outside the circle?
- How did you feel when you managed or didn't manage to enter the circle?
- How was it for the other members in the circle that someone kept trying to break the circle?
- In the end, we refer to the purpose of this activity, connecting the experience to the theoretical aspects of group dynamics.

## Activity 7: expressing your feelings, empathy

### THE BLIND AND THE MUTE

Half of the group participants have their eyes closed with a piece of cloth and the other half choose one of the "blind" persons to form a couple. In this way, one has taken the role of the blind and the other the role of the mute person. The mute will guide the blind during a stroll without revealing his/her identity. After 5 minutes they will switch roles under the coordinator's instruction. Alternatively, music can be played and the couples may dance instead of strolling around.

### Ask the group

- How did you experience each role?
- Did you trust your guide while playing the role of the blind?
- Which characteristic of your partner made you feel trust or what disturbed you?
- Did you use a speech at all? Did you ask your guide for anything?
- While playing the "mute" were you able to find a nonverbal way of communicating with your mate?
- Did you follow the blind's pace/tempo?



## Test yourself

It is important at the end of any program to conduct a quiz with multiple choice or open questions to evaluate the knowledge on the subject. Furthermore, the animators could take feedback regarding the exercises and their emotional impact.

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Ειδικού Σχολείου σε Κέντρο Υποστήριξης Ειδικής Αγωγής Εκπαίδευσης»- Πρόγραμμα Επιμόρφωσης Επιμορφωτών-Πολλαπλασιαστών: Διευθυντών Κέντρων ΣΔΕΥ, Ψυχολόγων και Κοινωνικών Λειτουργών.

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## (5) Module 5: Teachers' and students' emotional intelligence and communication skills

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### The aim of the module. / "Why is this module important?"

Emotional intelligence is a disposition that is of great importance in managing emotions (Ciarrochi, Chan, Bajgar, 2001). Depending on the level of emotional intelligence, the individual identifies - better or with greater difficulty - their own and others' feelings/emotions, which is the basis for coping with experiences. In turn, communication skills guarantee the effective expression of experienced emotions and feelings and successful communication with others. Importantly, both emotional intelligence and communication skills can be developed over the course of a lifetime. Current literature and research indicate a link between emotional intelligence and social competencies (Plakiewicz, 2020), including interpersonal communication.

The module aims to present basic information about emotional intelligence and effective communication. Awareness and knowledge will help to practice and develop emotional intelligence and effective communication, which is also the aim of the module. This will be done by first providing basic information and then proposing exercises to be done in groups or individually.

We invite you to complete the module if:

- You want to systematize your knowledge of emotional intelligence and emotional communication;
- To look at the role of emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication in your work and in dealing with children with SEND;
- To analyze your way of communicating (with pupils and colleagues) as well as to increase your skills and to more effectively model the pupils you work with in developing their communication skills;
- To explore the manifestations of emotional intelligence and its importance in your relationship with pupils.

For years it has been advocated that teachers' emotional and social competencies should be taught at the university level (Twardowska-Staszek, Alberska, 2020). Gaining knowledge on the subject as well as analyzing one's skills may contribute to increasing self-awareness and, for example, a better understanding of the reasons for difficulties arising when working with children with SEND. Limitations in the area of emotional intelligence or communicative competencies may make it more difficult for people to work with SEND pupils.

### The effects of the training module. / "How will this module help me?"



Developing interpersonal communication skills and emotional intelligence is a very important aspect of training professionals who work with children and young people with special educational needs (SEND) (Twardowska-Staszek, Alberska, 2020). School staff, including teachers and educators working in different schools - mass, special, inclusive, those introducing inclusive education, etc. - differ in their readiness to work with SEN children (Skura, 2019). Sometimes the factor influencing teachers' openness to work with SEN pupils is the former's background and interests, and sometimes their personal and social competencies. By completing this module, you will learn:

- What emotional intelligence is, what it depends on and what impact it has on the psychosocial functioning of the individual;
- What role the teacher/specialist/school staff plays in developing the emotional intelligence and communication skills of students with and without SEND
- Why emotional intelligence and effective communication is important in inclusive education;
- How to improve your communication skills and develop emotional intelligence.

The basic knowledge about the module topic. / "What should I know?"

### 5.1 Emotional intelligence - general information

The importance of emotional intelligence for the effective psychosocial functioning of an individual has been emphasized for years. Examination of the level of emotional intelligence at successive developmental stages, on the one hand, allows noticing and describing the strengths of the individual, while in the case of a low level of emotional intelligence, can provide an impulse to organize effective assistance (Płakiewicz, 2020), which, among other things, is the task of teachers in inclusive education.

Emotional intelligence is: *"(...) the ability to perceive, evaluate and express emotions adequately, the ability to access feelings, the ability to generate them at times when they can support thinking, the ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, as well as the ability to regulate emotions to support emotional and intellectual development"* (Mayer, Salovey, 1999. p. 34). Thus, considering the above definition, it is possible to distinguish four skills that are components of emotional intelligence and which develop successively, namely:

1. The ability to perceive, evaluate and express emotions accurately. This ability concerns both one's own and other people's emotions; people and phenomena, objects e.g. elements of art, nature, etc.
2. The ability to generate, express and feel emotions in the process of communicating feelings and cognitive processes e.g. attention, memory, or thinking.
3. The ability to understand and analyse emotional information, which enables, among other things, understanding interpersonal relations, complex feelings, or anticipation of experience changes.
4. The ability to regulate emotions, which on the one hand is connected with the ability to consciously engage in one's own emotions, e.g. pleasant ones, or to disentangle oneself from them, e.g. those that are difficult, and to control one's own and other people's emotions.



The presented understanding of emotional intelligence is one of the existing definitions and theoretical models (Płakiewicz, 2020). It seems to describe in a very accessible way the construct of emotional intelligence and this description can be useful in the context of understanding the difficulties of children with special educational needs, among others, in the area of emotional intelligence development.

The literature and current research indicate that emotional intelligence develops most intensively during childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood. Its level depends on biological factors, including temperamental and environmental ones, where the key role is played by adults - initially parents, then teachers, and educators. Therefore, what is emphasized is the significance of school institutions and their educational and teaching programs in the development of emotional intelligence in children and adolescents.

Inclusive education that offers the chance to learn together for children with and without special educational needs seems to be particularly helpful in the formation of social skills. It is the diversity of the group that enables communication skills and emotional intelligence to be continuously developed through experiencing different reactions, needs and coping. The competencies formed will be useful in adult life. Thus, it is not only a matter of coping with and tolerating diversity at a given time and a given stage of life but of shaping those social skills that will be useful in students' adult lives. In this process, however, proper support and awareness of teachers and educators are important (Płakiewicz, 2020; Skura, 2019). It is their communication skills and abilities related to a high level of emotional intelligence that can support students by creating a safe space where differences are accepted and diverse individual needs are met. According to Goleman (1997), a teacher with a high level of emotional intelligence has such an impact on the student that the latter not only thinks and acts but also experiences, which is particularly important. On the other hand, this is not an easy task for educational staff to handle, so it is necessary to support specialists as well, by providing them with proper working conditions and training opportunities. The latter is to increase knowledge, awareness, and skills in working with students with special educational needs.

### **5.1.1 The usefulness of the teacher's emotional intelligence in the process of schooling a student with special educational needs**

Students with special educational needs are sometimes exposed to frustrations in the area of learning. This can increase their anxiety and lower their self-esteem, which in turn affects their general well-being, sometimes leading to adaptation difficulties. Also, the described group of students is more likely to have difficulties in acquiring social and emotional skills (Witek, Lewandowska-Kidoń, 2018).

Research indicates a positive correlation between the teacher's and pupils' intelligence levels, which in turn translates into social and school success for children and young people (Twardowska-Staszek, Alberska, 2020). It is worthwhile to analyse this potential relationship further by referring to the definition of emotional intelligence and its components.

1. The ability to perceive, evaluate and express emotions accurately. A teacher with this ability will be more attentive to the pupil and will find it easier to notice and respond appropriately to their needs. It should be noted that pupils with SEND are often ambiguous about their needs. Getting to know a pupil



with SEND requires not only openness and readiness on the part of the teacher but also the ability to notice the sometimes very subtle signals sent by the child. For example, a boy suffering from Asperger's syndrome would shake his left leg harder every time he felt his anxiety growing. The fact that the teacher reacted at the beginning of the frustration and allowed the child to rest in a safer and quieter place in the room made the pupil calm down and thus prevented an attack of anger.

2. The ability to generate, express and feel emotions in the process of communicating feelings and cognitive processes. This ability is expressed by consistency in the content and manner of e.g. communication. This in turn is very important for creating a safe atmosphere. It manifests itself in the fact that the teacher, depending on the situation, reacts in an emotionally appropriate way, e.g. by laughing in funny situations, or by raising their eyebrows in a moment of surprise. It is not only about facial expressions, but also voice modulation, body posture, in other words all body language. The absence or inadequacy of emotional expressions can cause anxiety, e.g. a request to a child with ADHD to remove unnecessary and distracting objects from the desk while doing math, made by the teacher in a low voice and with a broad smile, can be taken by the child as permission to continue playing. The pupil focuses on the smile he/she notices.
- ✓ Here it is worth noting the difficulty of working with masks, which have been recommended since March 2020 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The covered face is not only a handicap for deaf people, but for everyone, as it severely limits the communications coming from facial expressions.
1. **The ability to understand and analyze emotional information, which enables, among other things, the understanding of interpersonal relationships.** This ability makes it possible, for example, to notice and understand group relations as they are experienced, built, and shaped by pupils in the classroom. It can be particularly difficult to grasp certain dependencies and relationships in a large class. Children, especially between the ages of 8 and 9, are very sensitive to being treated properly and fairly, which is related to the developmental stage they are in (Sokolowska, Zablocka-Zytka, 2013). In turn, children with special educational needs may have this sensitivity higher at different age levels, which is related to their difficulties and deficits as well as the frustrations they experience due to school difficulties. For example, a pupil in class 6 aged 12, with diagnosed depression often complains to his mother after returning from school that the history teacher favors some boys and praises only them for their participation in the lesson. Although he has been raising his hand for three lessons, the teacher has not taken him to answer. And right now, a subject he is particularly interested in is being discussed.
  2. **The ability to regulate emotions.** This aspect of emotional intelligence manifests itself, among other things, in the control of one's own and other people's emotions. This seems to be essential when working with pupils with SEND. On the one hand, it is the pupils themselves who cannot manage their emotions and a calm, stable teacher is very helpful in this situation. On the other hand, teachers themselves may experience various difficult emotions when working with pupils with SEND, e.g. anger, frustration, and impatience, and it is important to control and effectively handle these emotions. It is worth quoting a pupil without SEN who spoke of her classmate's "fits of aggression", which were, however, always mitigated and calmed down by the calm but firm teacher. This gave the pupil an important sense of security.



- ✓ It should be emphasized that the described competencies, observed by children and young people, become an example to follow – an inspiration on how to solve difficult situations. Students learn by modelling emotions and coping with them and thus shape their emotional intelligence, which is important in adult life for their psychosocial functioning as well as their well-being (Witek, Lewandowska-Kidoń, 2018).

## 5.2 Interpersonal communication - general information

Communication, including interpersonal communication, seems to be a term understandable for everybody, which means, however, that it is understood in different ways, as its specific elements may have different meanings for different people. However, it seems worthwhile to pay attention to the etymology of the word communication and thus define what it is. The term communication originates from the Latin words *communico*, *communicate*, which means to make common, to connect, to give someone a message, to hold a discussion, and also from the word *communio*, meaning togetherness, a sense of connection (Wilczek-Różycka, 2007). These meanings are very close to the principles of inclusive education, hence in its process communication plays a key role. Transmission of information, sharing for example a thought or an experience, connects the persons involved in the communication process, brings them closer, and creates a bond between the participants in communication, which may be temporary and short, but is nevertheless formed.

Zimbardo (1988, pp.139-140) defines communication as a process thanks to which an individual transmits and receives information using speech, graphic signs and non-verbal messages. Therefore, the communicative element is not only speech (verbal communication), but also facial expressions, gestures, body posture, dress, and hairstyle (body language), as well as the environment we create (non-verbal speech).

The basis of effective interpersonal communication is the proper use of both verbal and non-verbal speech elements. Table 1 shows the elements of verbal and non-verbal communication that are helpful in effective communication.



**Table 1 Verbal and non-verbal behaviors supporting interpersonal communication**

Supportive verbal behaviours	Supportive non-verbal behaviour
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Easy-to-understand language</li><li>2. Advanced forms of verbal response: clarifying, reflecting, summarizing, interpreting</li><li>3. Verbal reinforcements like "mhh"</li><li>4. Addressing the assisted person personally</li><li>5. Asking open and closed questions appropriately</li><li>6. Asking one question at a time</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Maintaining eye contact</li><li>2. Keeping a safe physical distance</li><li>3. Moderate volume and rate of speech</li><li>4. Appropriate gestures and facial expressions</li><li>5. Relaxed, open posture; your body facing the patient</li><li>6. A safe and friendly place to talk; providing enough time and minimising distractions.</li></ol>

### 5.3 The usefulness of the teacher's effective interpersonal communication in the process of schooling a student with special educational needs

It is essential to remember that communication is a process that happens between people involved in communication, with the participation/use of certain elements. Effective communication between the teacher and a student with special educational needs can be facilitated by (Sokołowska et al, 2015):

1. **Awareness of non-verbal speech and its importance in communication.** Depending on our temperament or emotional state, we gesture with different intensity, we choose our dress and hairstyle, we sit or stand at different distances, and we modulate our speech in different ways. It is important to know what meaning our non-verbal speech has for pupils, to what extent it is understandable and noticed by them, and whether it inspires trust or disturbs e.g., sudden, dynamic movements or tone of voice may arouse anxiety or anger in pupils with Asperger syndrome. In such cases it can be difficult for pupils to concentrate on their learning; they may become more anxious and find it difficult to focus and may be reluctant to engage with a teacher.
2. **Coherence of verbal and non-verbal speech**, i.e., of what I talk about with how I talk. Lack of coherence usually causes cognitive dissonance, sometimes even leads to breaking the communication process. Lack of coherence creates confusion and sometimes even a complete failure of understanding in, for example, pupils with mild intellectual disabilities or ADHD who, for example, focus on the teacher's smile rather than on the words that discipline. As a result, the pupil may continue with undesirable behaviour.
3. A special situation severely limiting non-verbal communication is that of remote working, and communication by telephone, sometimes the only possible means. It is crucial to be aware of how



limited non-verbal information is in such a situation and to be all the more attentive to the verbal aspect of communication, namely:

4. **Openness and readiness for contact** e.g., active listening and skillful use of questions, paraphrasing, repetition, etc. Open questions, which give the opportunity to choose an answer and to elaborate on what is said, teach pupils to express themselves. For example, questions about their favorite toy/book, dreams, hobbies, or how they spent the last evening. These are relatively safe questions that can usually be answered by everyone, and this increases confidence and self-esteem. Experiencing conversation and interest from others is very important in developing one's openness to contact with others and building self-esteem.
5. **A similar range of topics to cover.** This is related to the readiness to talk about topics of different specificity, e.g., more or less personal, referring to experiences. Differences in readiness to talk about a specific topic, e.g., a very personal one, are most often a reason for conflict or break-up of the relationship. It is essential that the teacher is attentive to this and adequately assesses the readiness of a student to talk e.g., about his/her difficulties and need for help.
6. **5. A conscious choice of words** and the ability to express thoughts adequately. Clear, understandable language and accurately expressed thoughts help to avoid misunderstandings. This is especially important for pupils with intellectual disabilities and children with attention deficits. Misunderstanding exacerbates anxiety, feelings of threat, and misunderstanding.
7. **The use of I-messages,** helps build assertive statements, especially in conflict or highly emotional situations. This type of communication gives the opportunity to express the feelings experienced and is useful in modeling pupils to express and name their emotions.
8. **Avoiding so-called communication barriers,** i.e., messages which make understanding difficult or impossible, e.g., interrupting, comforting, threatening, or moralizing. It is more effective to deliver a message firmly and precisely, sometimes repeating it and making sure it has been understood by the student.



## The examples of the exercises and case studies. / “What should I be able to do?”

### Activity 1

#### Observation of your emotional states

Individual work.

Think about what emotions you experience most often when you work with students with special educational needs. What do you think causes them? How do you express them? If these are difficult emotions, how do you cope with them?

To help you with this task, you can use the table below, which you can fill in according to the questions you have been asked. Words written on a piece of paper help on the one hand to become aware of the emotions you are currently feeling and on the other hand are a way of expressing and reacting to your own experiences. It is a good exercise to do once in a while to be aware of the emotions you are having. Put away a piece of paper with your answers and compare them after a while. You will see that the emotions you are experiencing and the emotions you wrote down are not the same. If they have not changed and if, for example, difficult emotions keep recurring, consider modifying your ways of coping and perhaps seek support.

**Table 2 Exercise for observing your emotional states**

Date of observation	What emotions do you most often experience when working with SEN pupils?	What do you think causes them?	How do you express them?	If these are difficult emotions, how do you cope with them?

### Activity 2

#### Emotions of our students

Group work

It is recommended that the task is first carried out in smaller groups of e.g., three people or pairs, and then discussed in the whole group and the results are written down.

Participants are asked to fill in the same table as in exercise 1, but concerning their pupils. It is suggested that each participant thinks of one of his/her pupils and gives an example of emotions experienced by that pupil, their cause, how they are expressed and how they are coped with. These examples are discussed in small subgroups. It is possible that some of the described emotions will recur. After that, the



whole group creates one joint table based on the work done by the smaller groups, and they go on to discuss it.

**Table 3 Exercise for observing pupils' emotional states**

Example no.	What emotions does your student experience?	What do you think causes them?	How does he/she express them?	If these are difficult emotions, how does he/she cope with them?

It is advisable to analyze the content of the table filled in together. Can we as teachers/caregivers help children to handle their emotions effectively? How can we do this? How do we do it? The joint analysis can be an impulse for sharing experiences and mutual support. The cooperation of educational staff is very important and helpful. This exercise can be an example of building such cooperation.

### Activity 3.

#### Elements of communication important to me

Group work

Participants are asked to complete the following sentence on a sticky note:

"Interpersonal communication is...." The coach writes this unfinished sentence on a large sheet of paper and asks participants one by one to stick their end of the sentence on. In this way, a group definition is created. It is worthwhile to pay attention to sentences that recur and to include all elements of communication (verbal and non-verbal speech, also body language) in the definition.

At the end of this exercise, it is recommended to ask the trainees to reflect on what their strengths and weaknesses in interpersonal communication are at this stage of their lives. If the participants are willing, they can share these reflections with others.



#### Activity 4.

### Effective ways of communicating in difficult situations

Individual work.

Participants are asked to list elements of their communication that help them to manage a conflict/difficult situation with a pupil and those elements that hinder it. They fill in Table 4.

Table 4 Useful and hindering ways of communication in conflict/difficult situations

<b>My ways of communication are useful in dealing with a conflict situation</b>	<b>My ways of communication that hinder me from dealing effectively with a conflict situation</b>

If participants are ready, they can share their reflections. Everyone must have some time to reflect on their way of communicating. Then the principles of effective communication should be presented. A list of effective ways of communication is presented in the module content.

#### Activity 5

### A new pupil in the class

Individual/group work

Participants are asked to read the situation described and think about and plan a conversation with the girl and the class. What should be taken into account in the conversation?

*"Ania is 11 years old and as she has moved house in the new school year, she has joined Class 5 in a school that is completely new to her. Ania has suffered from diabetes since early childhood. She has an insulin pump and has to check her blood sugar level several times during lessons and take meals and drinks accordingly."*

Suggestions from the participants should be discussed together in the group. If there are people in the group who have not previously had experience with a child with diabetes, ask them about their thoughts and emotions about such a child. These can have a great impact on the suggestions for discussion with a sick child and the class.



## Test yourself! / “Do I know it and can I do it?”

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is emotional intelligence? How does it manifest itself and what significance does it have on the functioning of an individual?
2. What factors are important in the development of emotional intelligence?
3. Why can the emotional intelligence of an education professional have an impact on contact and work with a pupil with special educational needs?
4. List the elements of verbal and non-verbal speech.
5. Describe the elements of effective communication.
6. Why is the coherence of verbal and non-verbal speech important? What can be the consequences of incoherence in verbal and non-verbal speech?

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