

# A NEW MODEL OF SUPPORTING INTEGRATION OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND LIFE

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## Abstract

*Integration/inclusion of children and adults with special needs has become a key feature of discussions about the development of education policy and practice around the world. There are many benefits to be gained from integration/inclusion in relation to students with and without special needs, their parents and teachers, provided that sufficient support is offered to schools, and provided too achieve positive attitudes towards integration/inclusion among teachers, parents and local authority personnel.*

*The creating of inclusive environments is no simple process. In proposed model the key elements are the parents who are most motivated for success and have the best conditions and opportunities (time and closeness) but don't have enough necessary tools and knowledge to use their potentials and advantages. In our paper we will point out how to include parents in this process of integration.*

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays the society is taking much better care for the disabled people than in the past. It is a trend to integrate them in all areas of life, especially in school and work places. This is a good evolution, which probably will continue.

The creating of inclusive environments is no simple process. Many schools in Europe are now facing new demands to discover flexible answers, so that they will be able to educate all students with special needs as now they are responsible for their academic success and social integration. They are also expected to work collaboratively with the support teachers, as well as to develop different relationships with the broader community. But until now nobody mentioned parents as a support trainer of their own children what is the main idea of a new model, developed for the European project: Parents: Training Most Powerful Supporters and Guiders of Disabled People. Children and adults just need continuous support in the process of integration.

The teachers and specialists, who work with disabled, already have the basic knowledge on this matter. Nevertheless, the parents play very important role and could become the most powerful supporter and guiders for the development of their disabled child. The European project wants to help these parents in three main areas of their life: school time, job time and active life, in a way that assures a great multiplicative effect: build training courses for the people who can train these parents.

## MAIN AIMS

The main aims of our model are to train:

1. Teachers to work with parents. Teachers are trained to work with children but they don't have the necessary knowledge to work with adults,

especially with very emotional adults (like parents of the disabled children are)

2. Parents to become tutors for disabled children. This will enable parents to become a better support to disabled in the integration process in social and working environment.
3. Employer for tutors. They should also become a better support to disabled in their working and social environment.

The developments of the tutoring system for disabled can then help us achieve the following:

- better quality of life for disabled people,
- to alleviate the work of people who are involved with disabled,
- to raise the quality of integration of disabled in all areas of their life,
- to help raise the work ability of disabled – to help put the right people on the right work places, which will help to make disabled happier and satisfied and will result in better efficiency and satisfied employers.

## THE ACTUAL STATE

The integration of disabled people after adoption of Salamanca Statement, which was signed by representatives of 92 countries and with the adoption of the legislation documents in several countries of project partners is successfully developing and this has influenced also greater integration of disabled in all levels of education from VET to UNI, as well as the integration of disabled into everyday life. In the project partner countries as in other European states the situation is similar [Aberšek, B. (2004)].

*The integration of disabled people in the regular elementary school system means the integration of this children in all aspects and levels of life and education as well as into the national vocational training system as well as into the universities [The Development of Education, National Report of the Republic of Slovenia]. The trend is similar in all European countries as well as in the countries of the partners in this project.*

Therefore there is a great need for disabled people to have someone to help them and assist them through this integration phases. The most natural (but also very economic partner for the system of education) in this process and for this task are the parents (guardians). The main point of our new model is to use the unexploited and insufficiently well exploited potentials, to train them and give them professional competency for work that was so far performed partially and with no real effects.

EU strategies for vocational training

*We don't have the precise information about the single strategy in the area of training and work with disabled people in European Union [Key data on Education - 2002 Edition]. In the project, we are presenting,*

suggest a system that will be developed and tested in different cultural environments and can serve as an original contribution in developing the unique European strategy for vocational training for disabled people.

The European project connects partners from three countries: Slovenia, Greece and France. In all this countries similar as in most European countries continuous education, life long learning and adult education are well known methods. They are intended for training the people for work and less for training them for tutoring to help others. Our innovative contribution is in using this knowledge, traditional methods in our work with the target group of parents and employers, so that we can train them for tutors of the disabled people. In the project we will join the existing methods and work environments (instruments, products, instruments) and improve them with adapted or newly developed instruments, all with the tendency to improve the quality of integration of disabled people.

Inclusive environments are a basic condition for integration. Many schools in Europe are facing these demands. Professionals and teachers are expected to discover flexible answers, so that they will be able to educate all students with special needs as now they are responsible for their academic success and social integration. They are also expected to develop different relationships with the parents and the broader community. In this context until now nobody educated / trained parents as a support trainer of their own children. And this is the main idea of the project, while children and adults need continuous support in the process of integration.

Very little has been done in this area internationally, among different European states. We have to be aware of the trend of the common European labour market and the globalisation where the demands on the market will become more unified. Our idea connects all levels of education, from elementary to university as well as with praxis. It will enable closer and permanent cooperation among different institutions, with different experiences and from different cultural environments also in the future. This has all the purpose of creating a common European cultural space and unifying the European educational system.

Among the innovative aspect there is definitely the development of the tutoring system – the combination of didactical methods of education with a great natural potential of parents motivation for implementation of knowledge for the good of their children with special needs. The tutoring system with minor changes can be adapted also to other related areas – for example in the companies that will need someone too work with disabled, to direct them and do the counselling.

## PRESENT STATE

- Teachers are professionally trained but at their efforts they are limited in their motivation and time frame.
- Labour market - employees in general are not sufficiently trained to work with handicapped and also unable to define their needs and environment for their efficient work [Aberšek, B. (1997)].
- Parents have no necessary tools or knowledge to perform their work well but we can assume that they wish (are personally and emotionally involved) and are motivated to dedicate more time and assist more than any other party to help disabled.

## PROPOSED MODEL

The key elements of the proposed model are the parents who are most motivated for success and have the best conditions and opportunities (time and closeness) but don't have enough necessary tools and knowledge to use their potentials and advantages. With this model we can fill this gap by parents and use all the advantages. So we would like to develop a system that will be tested in different cultural environments and can serve as an original contribution in developing the unique European strategy for vocational training for disabled people.

## Suggestions

- Development of the necessary tools.
- Definition of the criteria for the simulative environment.
- Definition of the informal educational system, organization of the education and the competent educators.
- The last stage of proposed model will be transfer of the pilot product into general praxis – expansion of the tutoring system in different areas of work with disabled.

## TUTORING SYSTEM

Developments of the tutoring system for disabled which will help us achieve the following:

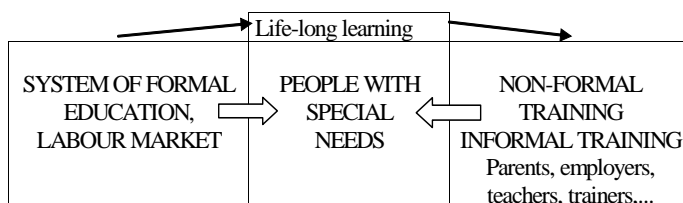
- better quality of life for disabled people,
- to alleviate the work of people who are involved with disabled,

- to raise the quality of integration of disabled in all areas of their life,
- to help raise the work ability of disabled – to help put the right people on the right work places, which will help to make disabled happier and satisfied and will result in better efficiency and satisfied employers.

The tutoring system for disabled involves:

- The development of tools – the didactic methodology to work with educators and parents, the didactic methodology for parents to work with disabled, development of didactic tools (handbooks, teaching material, equipment and instruments), didactic environment.
- The development of the concept for organizing the training for parents and employers (who and how can train the parents and employers?).

On the bases of the demands and set priorities we will develop the tutoring system which will involve all interested parties:



The key elements of the system are mostly the parents who are:

- most motivated for success,
- have the best conditions and opportunities (time and closeness).

But they don't have enough necessary tools and knowledge to use their potentials and advantages.

## CONCLUSIONS

The final results of the projects will be:

- Tool package to train the teachers - trainers.
- Tool package to train the parents - tutors.
- Methodology and organization for the transfer of the results from the performers to the users.
- Dissemination and promotion of the methodology how to help disabled people and to increase their quality of life and integration in working environment and everyday life. The main promotion material will be the documentary movie which will show to the broader audience how we can more effectively help this population of people.

The dissemination of the results will be realized gradually during the project:

### 1. Phase

After the first year of the project we will additionally include all interested institutions that will actively participate. We will also train the teachers to become the trainers for parents or employees (tutors).

### 2. Phase

After the second year of the project we will start with the pilot training for smaller groups of parents – tutors, so we can get the experiences to simultaneously improve the system of education. We will also organize the conferences and workshops on the national level where the results and experiences about the project will be presented to all interested parties.

### 3. Phase

In the last year of the project we will perform the national performance of the project and invite all interested parties. Along that we will develop the necessary tools for the auditing and data analysis. At the end of the project the results will be presented to a broader international professional audience. For all interested we will prepare the educational package with personal assistance of the project members. The final report (Proceeding of the international conference) will be published in bigger numbers than the number of participants, since it will be also sent to the responsible institutions in all member states of the team project.

The main dissemination and especially promotion product, of course besides the package tools, will be the documentary movie in English and in all languages of partners which will show to the broader audience the concept and the results of project. This will be the a direct transfer of the results into praxis.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Presented paper is a preliminary report of EU project Leonardo da Vinci: n° 2005 [SI/05/B/F/PP-17600 6], Parents: Training Most Powerful Supporters and Guiders of Disable People

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