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Introduction



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In the course of three years the IRIS project has developed a training package, which is based in research to describe the CONCEPTIONS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND PRACTICES in the partner countries. It can be used by European partners and be a catalyst for changing practice across the European community.

The teachers' training package includes modules about:

- I. CLASSROOM CLIMATE,
- II. TEAMWORK IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS,
- III. SUPPORT SYSTEMS IN INCLUSIVE SETTINGS,
- IV. INCLUSIVE ASSESSMENT,
- V. INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PLANS AND CURRICULAR ADAPTATIONS IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS ,
- VI. STRATEGIES AND PRACTICE IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS, and an
- VII. The AIDE MEMOIRE and the "FIT TO LEARN BOOKMARK". This is a NEW tool to support and evaluate inclusive classroom practice.



The target groups for the project are mainly teachers, teaching assistants, and different professionals such as psychologists, therapists, nurses, etc., who work with children in the school community and also parents, who as equal partners play a vital part in the education of their children. The modules vary in their degree of interest for the different groups.

Our starting point is the social child, a child in context, a resilient, active, reflective child who is our co-actor, participating in the construction and upholding of the social environment (Candeias et al., 2008; Christensen & Prout, 2005; Corsaro, 2000; Ljusberg, 2009)

This course contains various complementary sections, all of which are equally important. Therefore each section can be a starting point. It is best to begin with an initial self-evaluation in order to find out in which areas each teacher has the greatest needs. The Aide Memoire can help with this. For each teacher the itinerary followed will be different according to his/her needs, interests or professional situation. In any case it is best to

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learn from all the sections. Allow about 10 hours for each section.

Moreover it will be very enriching to compare what we have learnt in each section with professional application. The course will be greatly enriched once it has been put in to context with the class and widely debated with other colleagues.

Children build their own theories about the world through interaction with others in different social contexts. The child who attends the inclusive school has different opportunities to learn and a different understanding about work in school. Adults have a lot of power in relation to the pupil and consequently a big responsibility to and for them. Therefore we as adults have to be attentive to ourselves and our own theoretical assumptions about children, because adults' **attitude** is a crucial element in the success of the educative process in inclusive schools (Grácio, 2007). Adults' positive attitudes toward inclusion are reflected in their behaviour in the inclusive classroom.

We wish to see a future where the child does not have to adjust to the school norm but attends a school which accepts and welcomes differences. In doing this we move the focus from the child to the child in an environment and centre on the task rather than the child.

We will now give a short introduction to the various teacher training packages.

Climate in Inclusive classrooms is a strong mediator of values, beliefs and standards, demonstrating a democratic environment where everybody feels respected and accepted (Ljusberg & Brodin, 2007). It is determined by interpersonal relationships, the personal development of each individual and their systemic characteristics. It also has consequences in fundamentals such as knowledge, learning, emotions, interactions and power relations. In order to create a healthy classroom climate, **team work** is an important issue. It is essential for the development of interaction in inclusive classrooms and plays an important role in the way the interactive style is used. Results have been positive when the work in the classroom is supported in this way. Teamwork develops sociability, fundamental communication competences, cognitive capacities, emotional well-being capacities, constructive interaction with the relational environment (Pomar et al., 2009).

Educating pupils with diverse prerequisites as well as diverse social and economic backgrounds, demands a variety of **support systems** in school, such as tools for assessment, IEPs and materials for basic and in-service training of teachers. To support

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the teachers is essential but not enough. Each individual pupil also needs support in education based on his/her limitations to succeed.

This is based on three cornerstones: The right to education, disability policies and the availability of a support system in school. Brief reports from the partners in Austria, Belgium, Catalonia (Spain), Portugal, Sweden and United Kingdom show results of the support systems for children in need for special support in preschool and school and also highlight some critical aspects concerning support in inclusive education. From the reports it appears that all countries seem to have a well-developed support system in school, but there is still a discrepancy between policy and reality. Our conclusion is that there are no simple solutions to include all children in school as each child is unique. But the time has come when changes must be reality and not just a vision.

To be able to support children`s learning and skills, teachers need to assess. Inclusive Education requires the development of individualised and personalised educational assessment and intervention in order to improve pupils` skills, based on their empowerment and social inclusion. It is a challenge for us to think, rethink and renew the practice of identifying and assessing pupils in need of special support (permanent or temporary) based on the new theoretical assumptions of **Inclusive Assessment**.

Pursuing this goal we present a theoretical review of what should be the guidelines for inclusive assessment and a description of the evaluation procedures applied in several European countries.

Finally we highlight the relevance of this conceptual and practical change in special educational needs assessment based on assumptions about inclusion.

To create an inclusive school, staff have to be able to assess development on three levels:

- school level – meaning inclusive school development
- classroom level – meaning inclusive classroom management and teaching strategies
- child level – meaning pupils` level of achievement and/or development in different areas (academic, personal and social) and assessment for learning(Earl & LeMahieu, 1997).

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The model of inclusive school intervention aims to support the children according to their specific needs in an ecological perspective and therefore inclusive assessment should be the starting point to **Individual educational plans (IEPs) and curricular adaptations**. Based on an analysis of collected plans and programs, we have seen that the conceptual structure of Individual Education Plans is based on the ecological model underlying the care of children in need of special support. IEPs include components based in legislation that stipulate what should be incorporated in both the plans and the educational programs. We found in addition to the plans and educational programs, development plans for early intervention, plans for transition to work and plans to support the family. In all cases these plans are supported in the existing legislation (Chaleta et al., 2009).

In order to achieve an inclusive classroom climate, inclusive team work, inclusive assessment linked to individual educational plans and curriculum adaptations we have to introduce classroom **strategies and practices different** from those that are traditionally used. Inclusive strategies and practices depend on: The attitude, the knowledge, competence and skills of teachers in innovation and to create contexts for learning that meet the needs and the potential of their pupils.

Essential practices which are considered as useful for inclusive classroom practice are classified under the following headings: pupil grouping practice, teaching practices, co-operative work among educational personnel, practices related to specific strategies and resources and practices related to an inclusive school culture. Strategies in the classroom must promote membership, facilitate friendship and collaboration with the aim of creating an **inclusive community**. Strategies for the development of social interactions are indispensable to the success of the inclusive program. The peer-to peer relationships, meaningful interaction between pairs, has great educational potential, promoting cognitive, social and emotional progress for both.

Teaching inclusively is about creating an ethos and environment where pupils can enjoy learning, reflect, improve and grow in confidence. This is fundamental to all learning.

The **IRIS Aide Memoire** helps to support inclusive practice in a variety of ways for the individual or as a whole school approach. It is a tool to encourage good practice and to give helpful and practical advice. It comprises of a bookmark and a web booklet which extends the ideas on the former. Additionally there is a section on assessment which can be used in full or as required.

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The IRIS project highlights the importance of **action-research in promoting contextual improvements**. This methodology meets the objectives of understanding, improving and reforming the practices, involving careful planning, a more rigorous data collection and systematic self reflection. Through action-research teachers acquire contextual knowledge that will be used to solve the day-to-day problems, giving them greater autonomy (no longer depending on the knowledge produced by others). Action-research requires the active involvement of all people responsible for the educational process (teachers, other educational specialists, pupils and families and academics). It is a fundamental strategy for inclusive education and, especially, for the inclusive classroom (Sanches, 2005).

The teacher training package developed by the IRIS project in the partner countries will be available through this CD-Rom and the IRIS project webpage. <http://www.irisproject.eu>.

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