
Promotion of Inclusive Education in Sweden through use of mainstream technology

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Abstract

The UNCRPD requires that States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education and that they ensure an inclusive education system at all levels with the aim to realize this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity. Approximately 98.5 per cent of school-aged youth and children are instructed within the mainstream school systems in Sweden. Many pupils encounter difficulties in the school environment that negatively impact their ability to complete their education, and to transition to employment and/or further education. For pupils with neuropsychological, cognitive, psychiatric and neurological impairments and conditions the difficulties can sometimes be overwhelming.

This submission reports on work carried out with funding from the Swedish Inheritance Fund in the project Paths to Employment during the period 2011 – 2014. The project explored how mainstream technology can be used in schools to address barriers so that all pupils can perform on more equal terms, and how collaboration among professionals who work with youth with disabilities both in and outside of school can improve support to individual pupils with disability.

The project was carried out in two secondary schools (approximately 4 700 pupils) in two communities; 215 pupils received individual support. Activities to increase awareness and understanding about cognitive abilities and impairments and how the school environment can support or hinder performance were carried out at the start of the project. A "technology classroom" equipped with mainstream technology (e.g. microphones, interactive whiteboards, computers, tablets, iPads, web-based platforms, MP3, smartphones with apps) was used to reduce barriers so that all pupils could perform better on more equal terms. Specific non-stigmatizing individual support was offered using mainstream technology after assessment of need using a validated interview instrument for assessment of adjustments needed in the school environment.

Collaboration among professionals working with youth with disabilities both in and outside of school was set up to better assist pupils receiving individual support to transition from secondary school to employment or further education.

Project results were positive and national information activities, including setting up a dedicated website, were carried out to inspire other communities.

Keywords: Inclusive education, mainstream technology, cognitive disability

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