


INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) FOR INCLUSION

Greece

1. Policy Frameworks

This information was provided by Athina Zoniou-Sideri (Professor of Inclusive and Special Education, Department of Early Childhood Education, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens).

1.1 Policies that impact on ICT for inclusion in the compulsory school sector

In order to understand the current policy regarding ICT integration in education, it is important to make a brief reference to the current notion and meaning of inclusive education in Greece, through following and critically approaching the changes and reforms in the legislation concerning the education of children with disabilities (Nteropoulou-Nterou 2012).

During the course of the last 30 years, since the first law on special education was passed, a basic intention was to bring about changes in the legislative framework in order to regulate the issues of students with disabilities.

The question is whether the request for change emerges from the need to redefine the goals of education for disabled students and the definition of disability from the scope of the defence of human rights.

From a critical assessment of the changes brought about by the legislation concerning special education over the last 30 years, it appears that these laws are the result of a repeatedly steady approach to the issue, which does not deny previous policy positions and legislative decisions thus reinforcing the hierarchical relationship of special education and medical authority. The legislators appear to follow the critique of the inclusive dialogue, undermining inclusion by deliberately creating a climate of confusion as to the principles, purposes and practices of inclusive education.

1.2 Current policy on ICT for inclusion in relation to the main project themes

1.2 (i) ICT as a tool for promoting equity in educational opportunities.

The introduction and promotion of ICT concerns the whole student population and does not place emphasis on an inclusive perspective.

1.2 (ii) Access to appropriate ICTs as an entitlement

This mainly exists at the level of enquiry and research. Significant efforts towards ICT access and application as an entitlement are being made by the Department of Informatics and Telecommunications at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and, more specifically, by the Speech and Accessibility Laboratory and e-Accessibility Unit for Students with Disabilities under the supervision of Mr Georgios Kouroupetroglou, Associate Professor, Division of Communication and Signal Processing.

1.2 (iii) Training of educational staff in the use of general and specialist ICTs

The Council of Ministers (decision number 52.613) proposed the conduct of a teacher-training programme in ICT issues for all educationalists. The Ministry of Education and Culture entrusted the Pedagogical Institute, as the official agency for teacher training, with



the implementation of this proposal. The ICT training programme started in 2004 and concluded in 2009.

Currently, the operational programme (National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013) 'Education and Lifelong Learning', co-financed by the European Social Fund, implementing the strategy of the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs, finances projects related to teacher education and training. The teacher-training programme is designed to make teachers aware of the new educational needs and challenges of the 21st century, and more specifically in the following issues: quality of education; the use of educational technology; the pedagogical use of ICT – especially the interactive whiteboard –; effective consolidation of the curriculum for students; working with the family and the local community; links and connections between the school and the social, economic, cultural and environmental realities; and active participation by teachers in education upgrading and reform.

1.2 (iv) The promotion of ICT research and development requiring a multi-stakeholder approach

The rapid technological progress seen in the field of education today is an integral part of international changes at social, political, occupational and geopolitical levels. It is a dynamic process that affects and is affected by changes in modern societies. Therefore, technological progress interacts closely with social developments and change. Moreover, it is inconceivable outside the social context and cannot be interpreted solely in technological terms. ICT in education is not limited to automatic channels of teaching a particular lesson; on the contrary, ICT is a complex tool with multiple interpretations and possibilities. The promotion of ICT research and development requires a multi-stakeholder approach. It is directly connected with all the issues of western societies (variability, instability, crisis, need for flexibility) and requires multiple readings of the existing reality and adaptation to the changing everyday conditions (Tsermidou & Zoniou-Sideri, 2012).

1.2 (v) Data collection and monitoring in the use of ICT in inclusion

Efforts are being made to record and collect data concerning the use of ICT in inclusion at the level of research programmes and within the framework of postgraduate and doctoral theses.

1.3 Strategic plans for implementing policy on ICT for inclusion

To date, there is no specific plan for implementing policy on ICT for inclusion in Greece. Schools use the national curricula as a guide and in very rare and individual cases we have encountered school units autonomously making policy decisions on ICT for inclusion.

1.4 Monitoring and evaluation of policies or strategic plans relating to ICT for inclusion

It is important to note that: 'The issue of assessment needs particular attention; it makes no sense to design policies for educational reforms, to construct strategies and curriculum guides aiming to support a new direction in education policy while the education outcomes continue to be assessed by methods that reflect older, more traditional approaches and attitudes.' (Zoniou-Sideri & Nteropoulou-Nterou, 2012:23).

1.5 Main policy developments in ICT for Inclusion that have taken place since 2000

Available data on this topic mostly comes from research carried out in the field of special education in the years between 2000 and 2007. In the Greek institutional framework the first reference to the introduction and use of technological tools in special education is



made in Law 2817/2000 (Education of People with Special Educational Needs and Other Provisions, FEK A'78/14.03.2000). The Department of Special Education (2007) highlights the importance of 'the promotion and application of modern technology in special education'. However, the promotion of modern technology in special education remains at the level of declarations and, according to the Ministry of Education and Special Education Department *Report of Proceedings 2004–2007*, only 75 special education schools out of the 1,192 special education school units are equipped with ICT labs (Department of Special Education, 2007). In another recent research survey (Tsermidou & Zoniou-Sideri, 2012) it is noted that the use of technology in special education is limited to first-generation and assistive technology.

The abovementioned information, combined with significant gaps in research data and careful monitoring of policy implementation concerning ICT and inclusive education, reveal the actual situation of the Greek education system today in this field.

1.6 Current issues in relation to ICT for Inclusion

Issues of social and educational policies concerning inclusive education and lack of technological infrastructure.

1.7 Important short and long-term developments in ICT for Inclusion

According to Barton (2012:32), whose view we fully embrace, there is an urgent need to address the fact that 'one of the critiques expressed by disabled people is that no-one listens to their views and voices, therefore they are not allowed to participate in decisions on issues that affect their quality of life'.

A key component of a successful ICT programme is to ensure that learning is achieved through active and empirical knowledge discovery. Technology is ideally suited to this kind of learning because it gives students the opportunity to combine and connect the educational process with their own personal interests, experiences and concerns. As students use and evaluate the sources of knowledge and experience, they create a pattern of active learning and knowledge discovery, which differs substantially from the knowledge that can be acquired through texts, information and suggestions alone. The active learning framework acts as a mobilising force for students and pushes them to discover and design their own study methods and approaches for new knowledge.

2. Country Practice

This information was provided by Athina Zoniou-Sideri (Professor of Inclusive and Special Education, Department of Early Childhood Education, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens).

2.1 Main developments in practice in ICT for Inclusion since 2000 in relation to the main project themes

2.1 (i) ICT as a tool for promoting equity in educational opportunities

In general education significant differentiations can be detected concerning the introduction of ICT at an institutional level and within the national curricula. Starting from kindergarten level, the introduction and integration of ICT is stated as a main objective both in the Interdisciplinary Curriculum of Studies (ICS) and in the Teacher's Guide.

The ICS defines ICT as an equally significant aspect in planning and implementing teaching and learning activities, in line with language, mathematics, environmental studies and creation and expression. Also, within the Teacher's Guide (Dafermou et al., 2004), we



find a theoretical documentation and promotion of literacy, with special emphasis on technological literacy right from the outset.

In special education, the first mention of the introduction and use of ICT comes in 2000 with the Law 2817/2000 (Education of People with Special Educational Needs and Other Provisions, FEK A'78/14.03.2000). Also, at the same time that the National Curricula for General Education were drawn up, a team of experts composed a series of Differentiated Curricula for students with disabilities, where emphasis is placed on the crucial need of integrating and using ICT in education.

During the previous academic year, the Institute for Educational Policy (IEP), under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, in response to the need for improvements in education, proceeded to draw up a new curriculum that uses modern research and scientific data. This new framework promotes the integration of technology, in the context of inclusive teaching and learning, and highlights the use of ICT as a tool for discovery, creation and expression in the context of daily activities as a source of inspiration and opportunity for communication, collaboration and discussion among students.

2.1 (ii) Access to appropriate ICTs as an entitlement

The development of hardware and software to support all learners is still at an early stage, with a few exceptions that remain at the research level: for example, the work conducted by the Speech and Accessibility Laboratory and e-Accessibility Unit for Students with Disabilities under the supervision of Mr Georgios Kouroupetroglou, Associate Professor, Division of Communication and Signal Processing.

2.1 (iii) Training of educational staff in the use of general and specialist ICT

The project 'In-Service Training of Teachers for the Utilisation and Application of ICT in the Teaching Practice' of the operational programme 'Lifelong Learning', National Strategic Reference Framework (2007-2013), which is being implemented with co-funding from the European Union and the European Social Fund, is the continuation of an older respective project, 'B-Level in-service training', which was completed in 2008. It concerns an action by the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports, which had undertaken to form a consortium of its bodies, comprising the Organisation of Teacher Training, the Research Academic Computer Technology Institute (RA-CTI) and the Pedagogical Institute (PI). Since 24 February 2012, the consortium has been reformed to include the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) (successor of the project, after the Organisation of Teacher Training and the Pedagogical Institute were shut down under law N.3966/24-5-2011), as final beneficiary, and the Computer Technology Institute & Press 'Diophantus' (CTI 'DIOPHANTUS') (which is how RA-CTI was renamed under Law N.3966/24-5-2011), as scientific partner.

The scope of B-Level in-service training involves learning the principles of the pedagogically sound utilisation of ICTs, the acquisition of skills according to teacher specialisation, the pedagogical use and application of educational software and generic tools and the development of the 'knowledge-skills-attitudes' triptych. See: <http://b-epipedo2.cti.gr/en/>

2.1 (iv) The promotion of ICT research and development requiring a multi-stakeholder approach

This condition has not been covered in the Greek context and, as a result, ICT research and development is not given a multi-stakeholder approach. Generally speaking, new



hardware and software are still designed and produced by non-disabled people for disabled people.

2.1 (v) Data collection and monitoring in the use of ICT for inclusion

It is difficult to access data and evidence relating to the use of ICT to promote learning in inclusive settings, because most data and findings are produced within the academic field and are not widely disseminated to stakeholders.

2.2 ICT to promote learning in inclusive settings

2.2 (i) Country-based networks to support teachers in using ICT to promote inclusive learning

- The Department of Special Education of the Pedagogical Institute has included amongst its priorities the promotion and implementation of ICT. See: http://www.pi-schools.gr/special_education_new/index_en.htm
- The Hellenic Ministry of Education Educational Portal 'constitutes a place of meeting and mutual support for the educational community, aiming to help teachers find resources more quickly and easily. Teaching Scenarios, Supporting Material, Articles and Useful Links are available for the Greek teacher as well as Conferences, Announcements and Contests that might be of interest for the educational community.' See: http://www.e-yliko.gr/default_en.aspx

2.2 (ii) Initial teacher education in using ICT to promote inclusive learning

We note significant limitations in this area, since within the initial teacher education university departments there is a lack of modules and courses that combine and deal with the issue of ICT use to promote inclusive learning.

2.2 (iii) Practical support in classrooms to help teachers' use of ICT to promote inclusive learning

Practical support for teachers to help them with their use of ICT to promote inclusive learning is another problematic issue. Teachers have no substantial support, as the seminars and workshops carried out are not systemically designed and organised and therefore fail to meaningfully and effectively help teachers in their work.

2.2 (iv) Important information sources about new developments, hardware and software products and ideas for using ICT to promote learning in inclusive settings

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2.3 Current obstacles to using ICT to promote learning in inclusive settings

- Issues concerning the country's current economic and social situation;
- Issues of educational policy concerning inclusive education;
- Lack of material-technical infrastructure.



2.4 Factors that support using ICT to promote learning in inclusive settings

Individual and isolated efforts made by agencies, disability associations, scientists, education and policy researchers and educationalists on research, innovation, information and exchange of views.

2.5 Perceived short and long-term developments that will have an impact on ICT for Inclusion practice

The promotion of inclusive education in all possible ways and the involvement of disabled people themselves in all aspects of their lives is the key to change.