STAP = SLO, an ICT tool to design and develop personalised education plans in the subject of mathematics for students with special educational needs

The context for the use of ICT for Inclusion

Since 2008, the Netherlands has been moving towards the implementation of a new policy called 'appropriate education'. An important aim of this policy is to improve education for pupils with special educational needs within the (mainstream) educational system.

Compulsory schools in the Netherlands are faced with challenges in trying to include children with special needs in mainstream schools. One of those challenges is that teachers have to cope with a larger group of children with different needs. Several measures and ICT programs have already been set up in order to support these teachers by providing them with tools for designing appropriate education.

One of these programs is STAP (SLO Tool to Arrange Educational Plans). The SLO is the national institute for curriculum development in the Netherlands. This is an ICT tool for mathematics that can be used to design and develop a personalised educational arrangement for children with special needs. The SLO developed this program to support schools in the design of appropriate education in the classroom.

The aims of the STAP tool are:

- to diminish teachers' uncertainty by leading them through a process of making appropriate educational decisions for learners with special needs;
- to help schools design and develop appropriate and tailor-made (individual) lesson plans;
- to increase the quality of education for 'special' students.

The use of ICT

Teachers and care supervisors in the school have access to the template; they can add specific details and work together to create and adapt a better plan. The tool also generates information on goals to be achieved with a specific child for a specific mathematical problem. It also makes reference to the three most widely used maths textbooks, which provide the teacher with practical information. The information can also be used as a discussion paper with parents, exploring the goals to be achieved in a half-year period.

Key outcomes and benefits

A formative evaluation took place among the approximately 500 users. The following conclusions can be drawn, based on the outcomes of the quantitative and qualitative analyses:

- users gained insight into children's specific needs, including mathematical needs and pedagogical needs;
- users appreciated the list of didactic and pedagogical tips that the tool generated;
- users appreciated the program's flexibility: they can choose to follow all the program's steps or just select those relevant to their situation;
- users appreciated the references made to specific goals and textbooks, which made it very easy for teachers to implement the educational plans in the classroom.

Main challenges and obstacles

Because of the program's huge database and its possibilities and flexibilities, it is still not fast enough when uploading information.

Another challenge is to develop a similar tool for planning and designing educational plans for language subjects.

Additional information

http://www.slo.nl/primair/themas/passend_onderwijs/stap/ (in Dutch)

Publication: *STAP: SLO Tool Arrangementen Plannen. Een web based applicatie voor het ontwikkelen van passende onderwijsarrangementen rekenen*.

Publication: *Handleiding om STAP te gebruiken* (2011).