INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) FOR INCLUSION

Switzerland

1. Policy Frameworks

This information was provided by Beatrice Kronenberg (Director of the Swiss Special Education Centre).

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

Please note that Switzerland has a decentralised education system. There is no national ICT policy, but 26 more or less different ICT policies. A network of public and private organisations has developed a national action plan, entitled 'e-Inclusion' (http://www.einclusion.ch), which – among other goals – seeks to improve the ICT competences of disadvantaged groups in education systems, with a focus on vocational training.

The cantons (or in some cantons, the municipalities) are responsible for the infrastructure and the hardware and software. The education system is also responsible for procurement, eligibility criteria and the funding of tools which are used at school. Eligibility is established through the use of a standardised procedure. The devices belong to the schools.

In addition, the national invalidity insurance is responsible for ICT devices as auxiliary means if they are used in everyday life. These devices are allocated to individuals. The devices belong to the invalidity insurance.

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.

There is no current policy on ICT for inclusion.

1.2 (ii) Access to appropriate ICTs as an entitlement

There is a legal basis which requires the cantons to provide the pupils with adequate equipment (for use at schools).

At national level, there is the Invalidity Insurance Law (for everyday use).

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

Training of educational staff in the use of ICT is an optional part of teacher education nowadays. This was not the case in earlier times. There were ICT training sessions (F3 MITIC, which is French for third training of media, image and ICT) for regular teachers and, some years later, for teachers of learners with special educational needs (SEN).

Specialist expertise in ICT for students with disabilities or learning problems is not part of the regular teacher education curriculum. However, much is done at an optional level: specialist ICT is learned 'on the job' and there is continuing training for educational staff in the field of SEN on demand (in-service training).

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

No information is available on this issue.

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

There is no national data collection and monitoring in the use of ICT in inclusion.

1.3 Strategic plans for implementing policy on ICT for inclusion

There are no strategic plans for implementing policy on ICT in inclusion. As mentioned above, there is a network of public and private organisations/federal and cantonal administrations (e-Inclusion), which has developed a national action plan and is promoting projects in this area.

There are on-going discussions between the Swiss Special Education Centre and the Swiss Centre of ICT in Education (SFIB-educa) regarding how to improve the situation for students with disabilities using ICT. One area for discussion is the creation of electronic teaching materials and electronic tools to evaluate students' competences.

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

No information is available on this issue.

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

Since about 2000, the Swiss Confederation has been promoting an ICT policy in general education.

In general education, there are also public–private partnership programmes. There are companies (private firms) which develop electronic devices for disabled students, but there are no major national policy developments in ICT concerning inclusion.

1.6 Current issues in relation to ICT for Inclusion

There is no co-ordination of the work carried out by the various public and private actors.

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

Please see 1.6: there should be national co-ordination of all the work carried out by all the different actors.

2. Country Practice

This information was provided by Elvio Fisler (Co-ordinator of ICT in special education of the canton of Vaud; http://www.cellcips.ch/).

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

There was an evolution – even a revolution – on the technical level. In the year 2000, only specialists (speech therapists, occupational therapists, special education teachers) had knowledge of ICT and only their institutions could afford computers. Nowadays, there are plenty of tools, like iPhone, iPad, etc., accessible not only for specialists, but for parents and children; that is, for much more people than some years ago. Acquisition is more democratic now.

In the French-speaking part of Switzerland, the curriculum is online. Documents for students with SEN for French, maths and natural sciences are available on the website. A new curriculum is currently under development for the German-speaking cantons.

2.1 (ii) Access to appropriate ICTs as an entitlement

Please see 2.1 (i). Apart from national law, global firms have developed standards, such as Universal Design in Learning. The Zurich University of Applied Sciences has developed a self-assessment tool on accessibility for universities (*Leitfaden Hindernisfreie Hochschule*), which includes a section on e-accessibility. Its School of Engineering is involved in developing applications to improve e-accessibility for people with disabilities.

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

There were ICT training sessions (F3 MITIC) for regular teachers and, some years later, for teachers of learners with SEN. Some cantons offer training on demand, like the canton of Vaud within the framework of cellCIPS.

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

Parents' associations as well as professional associations (e.g. associations like alternaTIC, http://www.alternatic.ch/) ask for tailor-made courses.

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

There is no official data collection and monitoring in the use of ICT for inclusion.

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

These include Educanet2 and Educa.ch

However, these networks are not specifically made for learners with SEN or for inclusive settings.

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

Teachers may be prepared to use ICT in their initial teacher education, but they are not at all prepared to promote inclusive learning in their teaching. They should change their teaching, but they do not know how to go about it.

There are optional courses (e.g. at the University of Fribourg) in assistive technology, which range from the very specialised use of electronic instruments for severely disabled students, to software for dyslexic students.

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

PRessMITIC, a website that supports the use of media, pictures and technology, is open to teachers.

In many cantons there are ICT specialists in the education system.

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

These include public websites, like cellCIPS, and private, commercial websites, such as FST, defitech, etc.

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

The obstacles include optional teacher training (instead of compulsory training) and a lack of financial resources.

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

There are civil organisations that support ICT to promote learning in inclusive settings, such as alternaTIC and Zugang für alle (‘access for all’), and public bodies, like educa, CIIP, etc.

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

No information is available on this issue.