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Edu4ALL

Disability as diversity: The inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education

Deliverable D1.3	Edu4ALL – The Committee of Practice
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List of Acronyms

This table shows the acronyms used in this deliverable in alphabetical order.

Acronym	Description
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
PC	Partner Countries

1 Executive Summary

This report outlines the significant strides made in the implementation of the Committee of Practice across higher education institutions in Palestine and Jordan. Rooted in the principles of the United Nations convention on the rights of people with disabilities, the Committees of Practice represent a collaborative effort involving staff, students, and representatives from the General Union of Disabled individuals. The focus is on ensuring equal educational opportunities for students with disabilities, with a particular emphasis on visual, motor, and hearing impairments.

The Committees of Practice have been established in each partner country institution, encompassing representatives from various departments and key stakeholders. The methodology employed involves a participatory process, including interviews and questionnaires, to define the specific needs of students with disabilities. The Committees emphasize an inclusive, student-centric approach, striving to create an environment where every student feels supported and empowered.

To ensure effectiveness, the Committees of Practice are guided by a detailed timeline, inclusive working methods, and a commitment to transparency. Regular progress reports will be generated, tracking achievements and challenges. Moreover, a strong integration with Edu4ALL Accessibility Units is emphasized, ensuring a cohesive support system for students with disabilities.

The report also highlights specific case studies, illustrating the Committees' comprehensive approach to enhancing the academic journey of students with disabilities. Cases include addressing the needs of blind, hard of hearing, and motor-disabled students through measures such as accessible learning materials, assistive technologies, and environmental considerations.

2 Introduction

People with disabilities have the right to equal opportunities in all areas of life (including Education) as well as to live in dignity and freedom. According to the United Nation (UN) convention of the right of people with disabilities, all people have the right to equal education without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity. In both partner countries (PCs), Palestine and Jordan, statistics reveal that the

most three common disabilities among individuals respectively are visual disability, motor disability, and hearing disability.

The Committee of Practice is a collaborative body comprising dedicated staff, students, and representatives from the General Union of Disabled individuals. This diverse composition ensures a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by students with disabilities. Engaging in a participatory process, the committee employs a multifaceted approach to define the specific needs of students with disabilities. Through a combination of interviews and questionnaires, the committee seeks direct input from students, valuing their perspectives and experiences. This inclusive methodology ensures that the identified accommodations are tailored to the unique requirements of each individual. The committee firmly believes that the best accommodations emerge from a cooperative relationship between staff and students. By fostering open communication and mutual understanding, the committee aims to create an environment where students with disabilities feel heard, supported, and empowered to thrive in their academic pursuits. This student-centric approach underscores the committee's commitment to providing not just accommodations but a holistic and inclusive educational experience for all.

3 Objective of the deliverable

This deliverable illustrates the implementation of the committee of practice for all universities in both partner countries. It includes further information about the working methods, timelines and planned activities for the committees. In addition, the deliverable shows the link with the work of the Committees of Practice and the Edu4ALL Accessibility Units.

4 Methodology: Establishing the Committee of Practice

We request from all partners (Jordanian and Palestinian) to provide us the members of committee of practice.



4.1 Results

4.1.1 Committee of practice for Palestine Technical University Kadoorie (PTUK), consists of:

1. Representative from each college
2. Representative from Edu4ALL project
3. Educational psychological counseling
4. Dean of students affairs
5. Representative from General union of disabled Palestine

4.1.2 Committee of practice for Al-Ummah University College (UUC), consists of:

1. Head of Student Affairs Department & Accessibility Unit.
2. Representatives from each Academic Department.
3. Representative From registration Department.
4. Representatives from "Palestinian General Union of People with disabilities – GUPWD / Ramallah".
5. Representatives from Students of the college.
6. Representative from Edu4All Project

4.1.3 Committee of practice for Palestine Technical College (PTC), consists of:

1. Head of student affairs department
2. Head of Accessibility Unit
3. Head of the registration department.
4. Representatives from major academic departments at PTC
5. Project manager of Edu4All at PTC



4.1.4 Committee of practice for Irbid National University (INU), consists of:

1. Representative from each college
2. representative from Edu4ALL project
3. educational psychological counseling
4. Dean of students affairs
5. representative from General union of disabled Jordan

4.1.5 Committee of practice for The University of Jordan (UJ), consists of:

1. Representatives of academic staff including both scientific and humanity faculties at the University of Jordan
2. Representatives from Edu4All project
3. Educational psychological counseling
4. Dean of rehabilitation Sciences faculty at the University of Jordan
5. A representative of the Jordanian higher council for the rights of persons with disabilities
6. Representative of students with disabilities studying at the university of Jordan
7. Representative of associations for people with disability

5 Committee of Practice: Working Methods and Timelines

The Committees of Practice at each partner country HEI employ a collaborative and inclusive approach to address the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Working methods involve regular meetings, workshops, and the use of surveys to gather valuable insights. A detailed timeline was established to guide the committee's activities, ensuring timely assessments, accommodations, and ongoing improvements. Regular progress reports will be generated to track the committee's achievements and challenges, fostering transparency and accountability.

5.1 Inclusive Initiatives: A Collaborative Approach to Addressing the Diverse Needs of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education

The Committees of Practice at each partner country Higher Education Institution (HEI) are poised to undertake a series of planned activities to comprehensively address the needs of students with disabilities (SwD). These activities are designed to be collaborative, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse requirements of SwD.

The committees initiate regular meetings to facilitate open communication and constructive dialogue among staff, students, and representatives from the general union of disabled individuals.

Workshops are organized to provide training on inclusive practices, awareness-building, and the utilization of assistive technologies. Surveys were deployed to gather valuable insights into the specific needs of SwD, ensuring a nuanced understanding that forms the basis for tailored accommodations. A meticulously outlined timeline will guide the committees' activities, including the assessment of existing support systems, the implementation of accommodations, and the continuous improvement of services. Regular progress reports will be generated to document achievements and address challenges promptly, promoting transparency and accountability in the pursuit of creating an accessible and inclusive academic environment for all students.

5.2 Planned Activities for the Committees

To enhance the effectiveness of the Committees of Practice, a series of planned activities were implemented. These include:

- training sessions for committee members on the latest developments in inclusive education,
- workshops on assistive technologies, and awareness campaigns to promote a more inclusive campus environment.

by engaging in these activities, committee members will be better equipped to understand and address the unique needs of students with disabilities.

5.3 Integration with Edu4ALL Accessibility Units

The Committees of Practice will collaborate closely with the Edu4ALL Accessibility Units, aligning their efforts to create a seamless support system for students with disabilities. This integration aims to optimize the use of resources, avoid duplicative efforts, and streamline the delivery of services. The Edu4ALL Accessibility Units, as outlined in the proposal, will play a crucial role in implementing the personalized accommodations recommended by the Committees of Practice. This synergy ensures a comprehensive and well-coordinated approach to fostering inclusivity within each partner institution.

5.4 Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

Robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be instituted to assess the impact and effectiveness of the Committees of Practice. Regular feedback loops involving students, staff, and relevant stakeholders will be established to gather insights on the implemented accommodations. These mechanisms will not only measure the success of the committees' initiatives but also provide valuable data for continuous improvement. The findings will be used to adapt strategies, refine working methods, and address emerging challenges, reinforcing a commitment to ongoing enhancement.

5.5 Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing

Recognizing the dynamic nature of inclusive education, the Committees of Practice will prioritize continuous capacity building. Members will have access to professional development opportunities, workshops, and resources to stay abreast of evolving best practices. Moreover, the committees will actively engage in knowledge-sharing initiatives, fostering a collaborative environment where experiences, successes, and challenges are openly discussed. This approach ensures that committee members remain well-informed and empowered to drive positive change within their respective institutions.

5.6 Community Engagement and Advocacy

To extend the impact beyond the university campuses, the Committees of Practice will engage with the broader community. This includes collaborating with local advocacy groups, participating in awareness campaigns, and fostering partnerships with external organizations. By actively involving the community, the committees seek to create an inclusive society that supports and empowers individuals with

disabilities. These external collaborations will complement the internal efforts of the committees and contribute to a more holistic approach to inclusive education.

6 Case1: The Committee of practice in practice: A Comprehensive Approach to Enhancing the Academic Journey of Blind Students

In the context of gathering requirements for a blind student, the Committee of Practice focuses on a multifaceted approach, considering various aspects to enhance the student's academic journey.

- **Accessible Learning Materials:** The committee collaborates with academic staff to identify and create learning materials that are accessible to individuals with visual impairments. This involves converting textbooks and written content into alternative formats such as braille, large print, or digital formats compatible with screen readers. Additionally, the committee ensures that multimedia content, such as audio and video materials, is accompanied by descriptive text or captions for a comprehensive learning experience.
- **Assistive Technologies:** Recognizing the pivotal role of technology, the committee explores and recommends assistive technologies tailored to the blind student's needs. This includes screen readers, braille displays, text-to-speech software, and navigation tools designed to facilitate seamless interaction with digital platforms, educational resources, and online learning environments.
- **Environmental Considerations:** The committee assesses the physical learning environment to identify and eliminate barriers. This involves ensuring that classrooms and study spaces are equipped with appropriate lighting, tactile indicators, and clear signage. The physical layout is organized to facilitate easy navigation, and any potential hazards are mitigated. Additionally, the committee collaborates with relevant stakeholders to establish protocols for guiding and supporting the student in diverse academic settings.

By meticulously addressing these elements, the Committee of Practice endeavors to create a learning environment that not only accommodates the blind student's specific needs but also empowers them to actively engage in their academic pursuits.



7 Case2: The Committee of practice in practice: A Comprehensive Approach to Enhancing the Academic Journey of Hard of hearing Students

The Committee of Practice, in the dedicated pursuit of enhancing the academic journey of hard of hearing or deaf students, employs a comprehensive and hands-on approach. This initiative is grounded in the commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, recognizing the unique needs of students with hearing impairments. The committee engages in collaborative efforts, working closely with academic staff, students, and representatives from the general union of disabled individuals. Their multifaceted strategy includes the identification and implementation of assistive technologies tailored to the specific requirements of hard of hearing or deaf students. This encompasses the exploration of tools such as hearing aids, captioning services, and visual signaling devices. Additionally, the committee assesses the learning environment, ensuring that classrooms and study spaces are equipped with appropriate accommodations like clear visual aids and optimized acoustics. By addressing these elements, the Committee of Practice aims to create an academic environment where hard of hearing or deaf students can fully participate, learn, and thrive.

8 Case3: The Committee of practice in practice: A Comprehensive Approach to Enhancing the Academic Journey of Motor disability Students

The Committee of Practice, dedicated to enhancing the academic journey of students with motor disabilities, adopts a comprehensive and proactive approach to ensure inclusivity and accessibility. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by students with motor disabilities, the committee collaborates closely with academic staff, students, and representatives from the general union of disabled individuals. The focus is on identifying and implementing accommodations and assistive technologies that cater to the specific needs of students with motor disabilities. This may involve assessing and enhancing physical accessibility in classrooms, lecture halls, and other educational spaces. The committee works to eliminate barriers by recommending the installation of ramps, elevators, and other mobility aids. Additionally, they explore and recommend specialized assistive technologies, such as adaptive computer interfaces and

ergonomic furniture, to facilitate seamless participation in academic activities. Through this holistic approach, the Committee of Practice aims to create an academic environment that empowers students with motor disabilities to engage fully in their educational journey.

9 Photos



Figure 1. Committee of Practice Meeting at PTC



Figure 2. Committee of practice meeting at PTUK



Figure 3. Students of Disabilities at UJ



Figure 4. Teaching a blind student how to use the assistive technology I

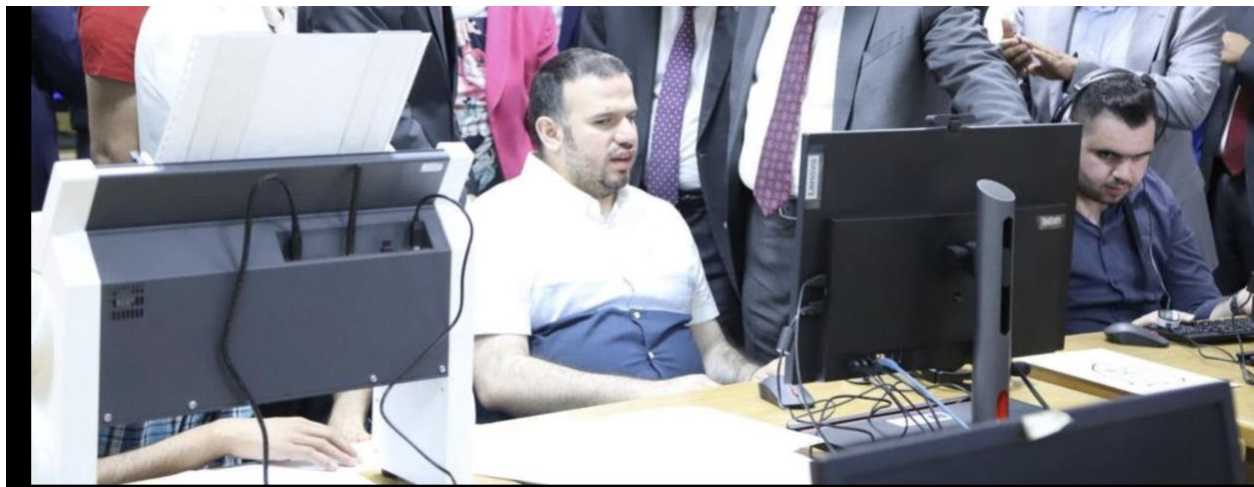


Figure 5. . Teaching a blind student how to use the assistive technology II

10 Conclusions

In conclusion, the Committee of Practice stands as a beacon of progress in the pursuit of inclusive education in Palestine and Jordan. The committed efforts of staff, students, and disability advocates have

resulted in the establishment of inclusive frameworks that cater to the unique needs of students with disabilities.

Moving forward, the Committees of Practice will continue their planned activities, ensuring ongoing capacity building, community engagement, and advocacy. The integration with Edu4ALL Accessibility Units reinforces a holistic support system, promoting inclusivity within higher education institutions. By addressing the specific needs of students with disabilities, the Committees of Practice are instrumental in fostering an academic environment where every individual can thrive, irrespective of their abilities. This report signifies a significant step toward realizing the vision of equal education and opportunities for all.