



# QUICK GUIDE FOR LEARNING MEDIATORS IN IVET





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## 1. Introduction

This guide is an annexe to the "**PEDAGOGICAL MEDIATION 4ALL- INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE**" handbook. It fosters an **active** and **cooperative learning** model that involves the stakeholders in the co-definition of objectives and tools to promote inclusion and well-being at school (or in any formal or informal learning context).

We collected the needs and suggestions of the different stakeholders involved in pedagogical mediation and learning facilitation.

The document wraps up the results of the focus group, held at EnAIP FVG in Pasian di Prato (UD) on 5 July 2023, with iVET<sup>1</sup> tutors and coordinators.

### 1.1 Target-group

As specified by the guidelines of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, pedagogical tutoring and the disability support service are a constitutive and structural part of the iVET offer for young people.

With the introduction of compulsory training in Italy (law 144 of May 1999) and subsequent laws n. 53/2003 and implementing decrees, pedagogical tutoring has become a central process, a point of reference and connection for students, families and trainers.

The tutor/mediator accompanies students from the point when they are welcomed to the Vocational Training Centre until they enter the world of work, with a person-centred project that is progressively updated, in parallel with the learning and professionalisation process.

The tutor connects all the subjects of the training institution: training coordinators, trainers, and guidance counsellors. He/she also deals with involving families, interacting and collaborating with institutions, associations and youth aggregations.

The tutor is the learning mediator and process facilitator within the training centre.

Working in vocational education and training with students aged from 14 to 19 years old, the tutor uses formal learning in class, non-formal learning during the work experiences and traineeship with business companies and the "learning by doing" during the workshops and practical lab activities. The tutor also encourages extracurricular non-formal activities, e.g. personal growth and socialization, using the tool of international mobility.

The ultimate recipients of this action are VET students: often these are young people with previous school failures, learning difficulties or disadvantaged social and familiar backgrounds, which are all elements that negatively affect their access and opportunity to learn.

Compared with other educational pathways, in Vocational Education and Training, there is a higher percentage of students with the following characteristics:

- Learners from poor households
- Low-skilled learners or learners who have failed more advanced study paths
- Learners with certified learning difficulties

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<sup>1</sup> iVET means initial Vocational Education and Training. The offer is addressed in Italy to young people aged between 14 and 18 years old.



- Learners coming from families with a problematic social background (divorce or separation, drug, alcohol, unemployment, criminal environments)
- Learners coming from immigrant families with low language skills.

An average of 20 to 25% of students are foreign (first or second-generation immigrants).

## 1.2 Goal

This guide intends to educate trainers and tutors as good learning mediators in iVET programmes. The person-centred planning approach and the five dimensions of inclusion by John O'Brien is using for this guide.



1)

The learning mediators in VET will find support in:

- ✓ **enhancing VET students' well-being,**
- ✓ **fostering active participation in the community life,**
- ✓ **promoting capacity development,**
- ✓ **facilitating students' acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and attitudes,**
- ✓ **helping students to make responsible choices,**
- ✓ **encouraging open dialogue and self-respect.**



## 2. Methods, tips, recommendations

The section "Methods, tips, and recommendations" presents some hints of the tutors participating in the focus group. Here are some practical and useful instructions for being a good learning mediator in VET.



2.

- ✓ 2.1 Have you ever asked yourself how to encourage participation, promoting positive group dynamics and well-being at school?

### **The first day is crucial**

- Carefully prepare for students' arrival on the first day of class
- First, organize a welcome visit to introduce them to the spaces and facilities of the training centre
- Introduce some "icebreaker" activities followed by self-regulation activities
- Take charge of monitoring, through direct but also indirect observation (through the testimonies of other trainers), the dynamics within the class group
- The observation will help you develop coping strategies in case of critical issues (together with the family, trainers, and students, depending on the situation).



The dynamics when forming a new group are different from those encountered with an already fixed one. In the latter case, the students have, in the eyes of their peers (but also of the teachers), precise roles, sometimes very stereotypical ("the geek", "the bully", "the dork", "the loser", "the disabled") that are difficult to break.



**Promote storytelling (e.g. in the Active Citizenship Module) to reduce conflicts and foster group socialisation, personal and social wellbeing**

- Storytelling works with migrants, often with a poor use of the local language.
- Storytelling can be organised with the help of visual and digital tools (Google translator can help!).
- It is a powerful mean to exchange through “stories”, sharing emotions, thoughts and feelings in a broader human community.
- Curiosity and the desire to fit in and learn quickly helps the students to progress until they are fully integrated at the end of the training year.



The major benefits of storytelling:

1. Promote a feeling of well-being, fun and relaxation
2. Increase students' willingness to communicate their thoughts and feelings
3. Encourage active participation
4. Encourage cooperation between students
5. Increase verbal proficiency
6. Enhance listening skills
7. Encourage use of imagination and creativity.

**iVET centres are still considered a second chance choice. What about diversity and inclusion approaches?**

- The inclusive mediator works on students' awareness
- The inclusive mediator tries to generate mutual trust with tutors and coordinators
- The learning mediators achieve exceptional results by listening, communicating the value of the example and demonstrating the congruence between lived and expected behaviour
- They have to work on their biases and prejudices, before deconstructing the ones of their students.
- They can find unexpected alliances with their students: often students are much more inclusive than some teachers or other adults.



Second-choice school is often attended by people with difficulties (not only linguistic but of a general socio-cultural nature), with intellectual or physical disabilities, whether



certified or not, or with obstacles linked to the identity dimension (gender identity/gender dysphoria).

**It is important not to delegate the role of pedagogical mediation exclusively to technical teachers.** (Teachers are focused on disciplinary objectives and often, coming directly from the world of work, do not possess adequate pedagogical tools).

- Try not to delegate the management of group dynamics to teachers
- Use classroom observation and individual or group interviews
- Subsequently involve the teachers in activities that can improve the classroom climate or well-being at school
- Save time and space for listening and inclusion, in and especially outside the classroom and practical workshop activities, where students can express who they are.



It happens, for example, during the organisation of the end-of-year concert or special projects on transversal skills or during educational visits or study trips, such as mobility periods abroad.

[Have you ever asked yourself how to achieve learning objectives by increasing students' motivation to learn?](#)

It is not easy to work towards standard learning objectives, which lead to the attainment of regional vocational qualifications when one starts from diversified abilities. We are not only talking about motivation and commitment in reaching the learning objectives, but also about the possibility of actually being able to reach them, due to certified disabilities or extremely fragile socio-familial contexts.

- The inclusive learning mediator working with learners with Specific Learning Disorders, uses different strategies to achieve the standard, putting in place customised and individualised tools.
- The inclusive learning mediator promotes and feeds relations with social services and families. It is a matter of assessing together what pathway and what kind of autonomy (and job placement) is possible at the end of the process.
- The inclusive learning mediator works with fine-tuning adaptation and/or customisation activities also in the so-called individualised educational projects.
- It is important to work on the empowerment and self-motivation of students.



EnAIP has set up a 'Points Licence', which is awarded to learners on the basis of their exposure to vocational-technical tests, but also to behaviour and modes of action (e.g.



respecting rules, working safely for oneself and for others, representing the training agency in the context of enterprise training, etc.).

- ✓ Networking with trainers, mediators, family members and peers is important. Here are some tips and recommendations to improve the communication skills.
- The facilitator of inclusive learning must first place himself/herself in a condition of open, non-judgmental listening
- The facilitator must gather all the elements to plan and propose "group work" about specific tasks and didactic objectives
- The learning mediator must work both on the group and on the individual, on relationships and individualisation
- The mediator has to work on the perception of one's own and others' characteristics and on deconstructing certain stereotypes
- The process facilitator must team up with the teachers, with the social or social-health services (for pupils with a disability diagnosis and certification), and with the families
- The mediator must activate networks and build a relationship of trust
- The process facilitator should find alliances within the class, activating peer support and self-help groups with classmates. The work is very delicate because the contribution (or sabotage) of an individual pupil contributes to the success or failure of a project and determines the climate within the class
- The learning mediator has to work on young people's anger and the distrust felt against the democratic structure of representation and government
- The facilitator has to focus on building shared goals, as a task-centred group
- The learning mediator has to pursue the approach of listening, giving and receiving trust, positive reinforcement and (self and hetero) motivation.



This is not always easy. Often families are absent, and sometimes they are even too present and bring or highlight 'problems' instead of helping to find solutions. When, as in the age group under consideration (14-18 years), trainees are struggling to find their way and understand who they are, there is no community of intentions, greater anxiety and frustration come up, erecting walls instead of creating bridges.

Have you ever asked yourself what the characteristics of a learning facilitator/mediator are? In the following, we describe them.

The characteristics of a 'good inclusive mediator' are mainly as following:

1. **Personal predispositions** (which can, however, be 'trained')





- Empathy
- Patience
- Listening skills
- Active listening
- Relational skills
- Organisational skills
- Firmness in the ability to enforce rules
- Confidence in the relationship (defined by participants “positive recognition”)

## 2. **Disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge**

The ‘congruence’ is the glue between the dimension connected to personal skills, attitudes and styles, and the one connected to the sphere of knowledge and know-how.

The inclusive learning facilitators have to be consistent with what they say and do. They also have to be consistent in different contexts, situations and relationships with students.

They believe in the “value of example” and trust in the development of their students' ability to choose and decide with responsibility and autonomy.

[Have you ever wondered what tools are in the learning mediator's toolbox? Here is what the experts told us.](#)

The tools in the 'toolbox' of the inclusive learning facilitator consist of

### 1. **Techniques** such as

- Individual interviews
- Activation of collaborative working groups
- Group discussions
- Mentoring and learning by doing
- Use of multiple observers

### 2. **Personal skills** such as

- Effective communication skills
- Proximity (another name for empathy)
- Capacity for confrontation
- Facilitation (of communication, but also specific tasks), knowing how to place oneself in a helping relationship

### 3. **Specific tools**

- Computer equipment
- Dedicated tools



### 3. Conclusions

To learn and to teach, it is crucial to operate in a dialogic and inclusive environment. The facilitator must be capable of empathy, also being able to set boundaries, without risking "putting himself on the same level" as the learners.

Continuous and recurring training is necessary for the staff who perform the activities of process facilitators (tutors, educators, coordinators, guidance counsellors), as well as a clear definition of the roles and tasks of the teachers (often external consultants, professionals from the different business areas) within the training agency.

Devices and aids adapted to the different types of learners are indispensable. Digital technologies favour inclusion if used correctly and consciously (i.e. Media Literacy).

For some targets, they are fundamental support for learning.

It is important that the training agency is a welcoming place for learning and socialising.

The learning mediators should be involved in promoting the well-being at school.

Concerts and exhibitions organised by and for the students are among the most successful events. They create:

- team-building,
- a sense of belonging,
- confidence in one's abilities,
- and a desire to measure oneself in new challenges and new roles

However, it is necessary to encourage the trainees to be themselves, respecting their capabilities and talents.

For some students, even becoming autonomous in the journey from home to school, using public transport, respect of timetables and personal self-organisation are important achievements.

The obstacles to inclusive learning consist primarily of time, a scarce resource.

The transformation into dual learning, with the massive insertion of young people in companies, takes away many resources and time from educational activities in the strict sense, i.e. those not directly linked to learning a trade but aimed at building the citizens of tomorrow, capable of knowing how to be and not just knowing how to do. Tutoring hours are scarce. Individualised support activities are affected.

As mentioned, the trainer's training, mostly external professionals and not experts in teaching models is a continuous problem.

Because of their outside activities, they have no time or interest in deepening the pedagogical and relational aspects assigned to tutors.

In vocational training, there is an urgent need to redistribute the competencies between teachers, tutors and process facilitators to harmonise interventions and create coherence of purpose and shared approaches.



## 4. Glossary and Definition of terms

**Inclusion** is the equal participation of all people in society. Social life also includes attending school together.

**Example:** A school that adapts its curriculum and environment to accommodate students with different learning needs, such as providing wheelchair ramps and offering learning materials in braille or simplified language.

**Inclusive education** includes everyone (all learners/students), regardless of their (dis)abilities and special qualities.

**Example:** A classroom where students with and without disabilities learn alongside their peers, with teachers using teaching methods that work for all learners. **Inclusion** is the equal participation of all people in society. Social life also includes attending school together.

### **Peer-to- Peer mediation**

Peer mediation is a process of conflict resolution or finding workable solutions in which individuals from the same group help their peers in a structured dialogue to reach a mutually acceptable solution or to share information relevant to people's daily lives, such as information about rights and how to make them effective, information about obligations and how to carry them out, and so on.

The process promotes communication, empathy and problem-solving skills, while fostering a sense of community and trust between peers.

**Example:** In a vocational training program or in a self-advocacy group, students or self-advocates facing a disagreement over decisions or equipment engage use in a peer-to-peer mediation. Through structured dialogue, they share perspectives, understand each other's concerns, and collaboratively devise a solution. This process enhances mutual understanding, communication skills, and fosters a sense of community among peers.

### **Pedagogical mediation:**

Pedagogical mediation for inclusive education in schools involves creating an environment and employing teaching strategies that accommodate the diverse needs of all students, including those with disabilities or special educational needs.

#### **Example: Scenario: Inclusive reading lesson**

*Objective:* To teach a reading lesson to a diverse group of students, including those with different learning styles and abilities. Identify the diverse needs and abilities of the students in the class, including those with learning disabilities, English language learners, and students who excel in reading and provide various reading materials at different reading levels to cater to the diverse reading abilities of students, using multimedia resources, such as audiobooks or videos, to support students with different learning preferences.

### **Self-advocacy**



Self-advocacy, especially for persons with intellectual disabilities, means they speak up for themselves, expressing their needs, and standing in for their rights. It's about empowering individuals to voice their thoughts and preferences, ensuring their unique needs are understood and respected.

**Example:** In a program for individuals with intellectual disabilities, a participant, who has difficulty with verbal expression, uses a communication board to convey his preference for a quiet workspace. His self-advocacy leads to the creation of a designated quiet area, ensuring his needs are met and promoting an inclusive environment.

### **Easy-to-read and easy language** (text and verbal)

Information presented in a simple and clear manner, using simple language and uncomplicated formatting to enhance understanding for a wide audience.

Using straightforward words, short sentences, and clear expressions to communicate information in a way that is easily comprehensible, particularly for individuals with various literacy levels or cognitive challenges.

**Example:** At a community center, information about voting is presented in easy-to-read format. The guide uses easy language, simple words, short sentences, and clear visuals. It explains how to register, where to vote, and what to expect on voting day, ensuring everyone, regardless of their literacy level, can understand and participate in voting.



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