

The Educator



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Innovative Practices in Professional Development



A Publication of



**The International Council for Education of
People with Visual Impairment**

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Our International Partners





Message from The President

Dear Readers

Welcome to the January 2019 Issue of The Educator. This issue addresses innovative professional development approaches in the field of visual impairment. There is a growing body of research into innovation in the field of information and communication technology (ICT), including digital technologies that enable persons with visual impairment to participate in education, employment and society on an equal basis with sighted people. During the recent 12th International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance (ICEGOV), representatives of national governments, United Nations agencies and civil society organisations shared their use of inclusive digital technologies to promote equality, inclusiveness and productivity.

In recent years, we have witnessed the emergence of a range of technologies, software and applications that facilitate multisensory approaches to information access and communication for persons with visual impairment, including those with multiple disabilities. In the field of education, students with visual impairment are increasingly able to choose between print, braille, audio and digital formats, according to the nature of the task and their level of visual impairment. However, an important consideration in enabling the use of assistive or mainstream devices and software by students with visual impairment is access to teachers who have the required knowledge and skills to modify traditional paper-based teaching and learning activities and examinations.

The authors featured in this issue of The Educator have introduced innovative approaches to providing effective professional learning opportunities for teachers and other professionals who support children and young people with visual impairment. The authors describe their use of innovative practices to deliver online or in-person professional training in Israel, India, Latin America, the Caribbean and globally.

The topic of inclusive innovation in professional development and student learning will continue to feature in ICEVI publications and conferences, including ICEVI's joint General Assembly with the World Blind Union (WBU) that will take place in Madrid, Spain in June 2020. This Issue includes the First Announcement for the 2020 WBU-ICEVI General Assemblies, as well as announcements for upcoming events in the ICEVI Africa and West Asia regions. Please visit the ICEVI website for more information – www.icevi.org

I wish to acknowledge with thanks our Editor, Marianne Reggio of Perkins International; Co-Editor and ICEVI CEO, M.N.G. Mani; and the authors who have contributed to the quality and scholarship of this issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Gentle'.

Frances Gentle,
ICEVI President.

Message from The Editor



Greetings!

I am pleased to share with you this issue that highlights Innovative Practices in Professional Development. While reading the articles, a couple of thoughts came to my mind. As someone who has been in this field a long time, it is wonderful to see how the models for training have evolved in a way that is responsive to contexts on the ground. Professional training is no longer limited to university environment that is separated from real life situations and training programs are not isolated to one discipline. I think that it shows great professional growth in our field.

I am also struck by the creativity in the delivery of training that accommodates for the lifestyles of the trainees. We have truly come a long way. I hope that you will enjoy reading the articles about professional development as well as other very interesting work around the world.

With all good wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marianne Riggio". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marianne Riggio
Editor



WBU-ICEVI General Assemblies

19-24 June 2020  Marriott Hotel, Madrid, Spain

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

We are together again and this time with ONCE in Spain

The World Blind Union (WBU) and the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) will be holding their third Joint General Assemblies in **Madrid, Spain on 19-24 June 2020**. The Joint General Assemblies conducted in Bangkok (2012) and Orlando (2016) highlighted the synergy between WBU and ICEVI and we are together again, this time with ONCE, promoting the rights of persons with visual impairment.

The host organisation of the 2020 General Assemblies is ONCE, the National Organisation of the Blind in Spain. ONCE is a well-respected partner of WBU and ICEVI, with a staff of over 70,000 and extensive experience in organising international events. ONCE has appointed a dedicated team to address every issue to ensure that this global event is a great success.

Madrid is well connected by international airlines from various world cities. Iberia airlines, the national carrier of Spain is part of the Star Alliance airlines network and

therefore, code share flight connections are able to connect Madrid to even small cities of most countries.

Theme of the General Assemblies

The broad theme of the General Assemblies is “**World Blind Summit: What it means to be Blind and Visually Impaired**”. The Schedule of the full event is as follows:

- **Friday, June 19 to Saturday, June 20** – WBU Assembly proceedings
- **Sunday, June 21** – Joint WBU-ICEVI plenary and concurrent sessions
- **Monday, June 22** – Day 2 of joint WBU-ICEVI plenary and concurrent sessions, Gala Dinner
- **Tuesday, June 23** – ICEVI Paper Presentations – Day 1
- **Wednesday, June 24** – ICEVI Paper Presentation – Day 2, ICEVI General Assembly

The **International Organising Committee** of WBU, ICEVI and ONCE, chaired by Dr. Fredric Schroeder, President WBU, has commenced the overall planning to ensure the event a great success.

The **Joint Program Committee**, chaired by Dr. Frances Gentle, President ICEVI, will contact speakers for the Joint WBU-ICEVI days of plenary and concurrent sessions on a wide range of thematic topics.

The **ICEVI Program Committee** will issue a Call for Papers for the ICEVI Presentation Days. The two days will include seminar and conference style presentations and workshops on current topics in the field of vision impairment. The ICEVI Call for Papers and Abstract Submission Form will be posted on the ICEVI website during the first week of May 2019.

ONCE is developing a dedicated website for the General Assembly which will be in operation in early May 2019. The details of the program schedule will be posted on the General Assemblies website and also the websites of WBU and ICEVI.

Registration Fee:

The registration fees for the General Assemblies are as follows:

- Full General Assemblies (19-24 June) : **US\$ 775**
- WBU General Assembly and Joint Days (19-22 June) : **US\$ 575**
- ICEVI General Assembly and Joint Days (21-24 June) : **US\$ 525**

Details on the mode of registration, payment, bank transfers, Registration deadlines, etc., will be posted on the General Assemblies Website by early May 2019.

Hotel:

The Marriott hotel, Madrid is the venue of the WBU-ICEVI General Assemblies. The hotel is offering a special rate of Euro 115 (Plus 10% tax) rate for a double room which is inclusive of breakfast and free wifi. The Hotel has a capacity of more than 800 rooms and is located close to the Madrid International Airport. Bookings may be done either directly or through the ONCE. The hotel offers a free shuttle service every hour to and from the airport, and the travel time is approximately 20 minutes. Taxis from the airport to the hotel cost around 15 Euros.

Visas for Spain:

Spain does not have any restrictions for applying for Visas by any country. For delegates from the European Union, a Schengen Visa allows entry into Spain. Some countries are eligible for obtaining e-Visas on arrival. ONCE will be assisting delegates with the issuance of invitation letters for obtaining visas and more details will be posted on the General Assembly website.

The CEOs of WBU and ICEVI will be providing regular updates on the General Assemblies and we are sure you will list the Madrid General Assembly as one of the most memorable events of recent times. We look forward to welcoming you to Madrid, Spain on 19-24 June 2020.



Dr. Fredric K Schroeder

President, WBU



Dr. Frances Gentle

President, ICEVI

April 2019

Regional Development and Priorities for the Regions

Keeping regional development as one of the important steps to strengthen ICEVI, members of the ICEVI Executive Committee met at Manila, Philippines in October 2018 and discussed the priorities of each region for the final two years of the 2017-20 Quadrennium. Following are the broad priorities identified by our Regional Presidents in ICEVI's seven regions.

Africa

1. Provision of low cost braille and tablet devices.
2. Production of materials in indigenous languages.
3. Emphasis on quality education for children with visual impairment in primary mainstream schools who have no support or resources.
4. Organising Country Champions programmes to empower young adults with visual impairment.
5. Ratification and implementation of the WIPO Marrakesh Treaty, including training, in countries across Africa.

The priorities also include provision of low cost technology, such as Perkins Brailers and braille embossers. The ICEVI Africa region is currently formalizing its legal entity status in order to facilitate better networking and partnerships.

East Asia

1. Collaboration with International Partner Members who are working in the region.
2. Promotion of WIPO activities in the region. Vietnam has already conducted a WIPO program.
3. The ICEVI Country Champions programme will be a flagship activity in the region and will include a focus on students and young adults with multiple disabilities and visual impairments (MDVI).
4. The possibility of registration of ICEVI East Asia region will continue to be a priority.
5. Strengthening of collaboration with SEAMEO SEN.

Europe

1. Strengthening country level capacity building programs.
2. Collaboration with the European Blind Union.
3. Publication of ICEVI Europe Newsletter and revamping ICEVI Europe website.

Pacific

1. Teacher training in Kiribati and Solomon Islands.
2. Country Champions programme in Fiji or other Pacific Island Countries.

3. Promotion of the Orbit 20 braille reader.
4. Promotion of braille literacy.
5. Collaboration with Perkins International for Braille Machine repair training, including repair training programs in Papua New Guinea and Fiji, with the support of Perkins International and CBM.

North America and the Caribbean

1. Addressing the quality of teacher training in the blindness sector.
2. ICEVI-WBU collaboration in the region to organise Country Champions programme.
3. Building and strengthening the parent network in the Region.

Latin America

1. Consolidation of ICEVI programs in the Region.
2. Finalisation of regional delegates for the WBU-ICEVI General Assemblies in Madrid, June 2020.
3. Sub-regional conference in Mexico in December 2018.
4. Monitoring of inclusive education in the LA region.
5. Regional conference in 2020 in collaboration with ULAC.
6. Promotion of ICEVI-WBU Education for All Children with Visual Impairment (EFA-VI) campaign in six countries.
7. Use of social media for publicising activities in the Latin America Region.
8. Networking with organisations across the region.
9. Monitoring standards in education in collaboration with the Governments.

West Asia

1. Top priority is the Middle East and central Asia sub-regions.
2. Collaboration with IPMs working in the region.
3. Sensitisation of stakeholders in the countries.
4. Delivering one Country Champion Programme every year in a different country in the West Asia region. The next programme will be in Iran.
5. Documentation of good practices in education of children with visual impairment.
6. Organising regional conference and sub-regional conferences.
7. Addressing refugee issues in the Region.

The activities of the ICEVI regions are geared towards realisation of the priorities listed above. Updates on regional activities will be posted on the ICEVI website, www.icevi.org. To find out more about ICEVI regional activities, please contact the Regional Chairpersons (e-mails provided on the cover page).



The ICEVI Education Day at the 7th Africa Forum

The 7th Africa Forum on the broad theme **“Achieving the SDGs through innovation, access and lifelong learning”** will be held at the Elilly International Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 7-11 October 2019. ICEVI will be organising an Education Day as a part of the Africa Forum on 9th October 2019 with the theme of “Education for Empowerment”. The tentative program schedule for the Education Day is as follows and speakers are currently being finalised. Those interested in presenting papers during the breakout sessions may submit abstracts via the dedicated Forum website, <https://www.perkins.org/get-involved/events/africa-forum>. The ICEVI Africa Regional Committee are contacting experts to speak in each of the breakout sessions. Updates on the ICEVI Education Day will be posted on ICEVI website.

Tentative Schedule of the ICEVI Education Day:

Plenary Session: 9:00 – 10:30

Session Chair	:	Frances Gentle, President, ICEVI
Keynote Speaker	:	“Education for Empowerment” <i>- Praveena Sukhraj, Vice-President, ICEVI</i>
Panel moderator	:	Gertrude Fefoame, Regional Chair, Africa Region
Panel Presentations	:	1. Education Financing 2. Technology in Education 3. Advocacy for Education
Morning Tea/Coffee Break	:	10:30 – 11:00
Breakout Sessions One	:	11:00 – 11:45
		Room 1 : Ingredients of effective Teacher Preparation
		Room 2 : Technology in Education
		Room 3 : Policy and Legislation in Education

Breakout Sessions Two : 12:00 – 12:45
Room 1 : Education of MDVI Children
Room 2 : Mathematics Education
Room 3 : Sustainable Development Goals in Education
Room 4 : DPO Movements in Education

Lunch Break : 12:45 – 14:15

Workshop Sessions One : 14:15 – 15:00
Room 1 : Inclusive Education
Room 2 : User friendly technology in classrooms
Room 3 : Advocacy for Education Equity
Room 4 : Parents Movements in Education

Workshop Sessions Two : 15:15 – 16:00
Room 1 : Influencing Legislation in Education
Room 2 : Networking with Global Bodies in Education
Room 3 : Sports Education
Room 4 : Education in Africa – Going Forward

Afternoon Tea/Coffee Break : 16:00 – 16:30

Interest Group Meetings : 16:30 – 18:00





West Asia Conference on Visual Impairment and Deafblindness

Jointly organized by
ICEVI West Asia and Sense International India

16th to 18th February 2020

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) is a global association of individuals and organizations that promotes equal access to appropriate education for all children and youth with visual impairment so that they may achieve their full potential. This website includes information that is relevant not only to ICEVI in general, but, most importantly, to the activities that take place in the seven regions of ICEVI. The West Asia Region of the ICEVI is headed by Dr. Bhushan Punani with Head Quarters at Ahmedabad. Visit website www.icevi.org for more details on ICEVI. Visit website www.iceviwestasia.in for more details on ICEVI West Asia.

Sense International India (also known as Sense India) is the first and only national level organisation supporting specialised services which enable children and adults with deafblindness to overcome the challenges caused by deafblindness. We combine individual, corporate, institutional and government support to work with a growing network of partner organisations in India, Bangladesh and Nepal, who provide a wide range of services to create opportunities for children and young adults through home and centre based services to learn communication and daily-living skills and receive basic education and acquire income generating skills which lead to family-based productive activities and independent living. Visit website <http://www.senseintindia.org> for more details on this organization.

Hosted by ICEVI Nepal and ADRAD-Nepal

Action on Disability Rights and Development (ADRAD-Nepal) is a human rights social organization of persons with disabilities established in Nepal. The purpose of this organization is to support implementation of UNCRPD, policy intervention, promotion of accessible Information Communication Technology, Disability Inclusive DRR and achieving Disability related indicators of SDG. ADRAD has been awarded in Zero Project Conference, Vienna in 2016 and 2018 respectively for the promotion of inclusive education using accessible ICT and promoting accessible post-earthquake reconstruction in Nepal. This organization has been listed as accredited organization of UN, member of the disability stakeholder group of UNISDRR and the secretariat of ICEVI-Nepal.

ICEVI Nepal: ICEVI Global has been promoting education of children with visual impairment since 1992 with Mr. Madhav Aryal as Country Representative on ICEVI West Asia. Nepal was covered as a Focus Country under Education for All Children (EFAVI) and variety of activities on promotion of education were organized. The Ministry of Education has always extending its fullest cooperation and support. The ICEVI also extended support to Nepal under Lee Foundation Grant and promoted development of Uniform Nepalese Braille and sensitization of teachers. It also motivated formation of Vision Alliance Nepal which is a joint initiative of ICEVI and World Blind Union. The ICEVI also organized a Champions Program for blind youth at Lalitpur during 17-18 August, 2018 and “Reading without Seeing” Workshop at Pokhara. At present, ICEVI West Asia has two representatives from Nepal including Mr. Madhav Aryal and Mr. Birendra Raj Pokhrel.

Venue	: Nepal Administrative Staff College (NASC), Jawalakhel, Lalitpur, Nepal
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Dates : **16th to 18th February, 2020**

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Contact person : **Birendra Raj Pokharel** and **Mr Madhav Aryal**

Position : Executive Secretary

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Theme of the Conference: “Inclusive Education: Leaving No One Behind”

Sub Themes

- Early Intervention and Child Preparatory Practices
- Inclusive practices and school age
- Inclusion and children with severe disabilities
- Policies and Legislations in Asia and inclusive practices
- Skill training and inclusive practices
- Technology and its use to enhance inclusion
- Access – Physical, communication , attitudinal , social and emotional
- Governance
- Resource Mobilization

Recognition

This Conference is likely to be recognized by the Rehabilitation Council of India for 150 participants under Continuing Rehabilitation, Education (CRE).

Core Committee

- Dr. Bhushan Punani, ICEVI West Asia
- Dr. MNG Mani, ICEVI
- Ms. Nandini Rawal, ICEVI
- Mr. Akhil Paul, Sense India
- Mr. Madhav Aryal, ICEVI, Nepal
- Mr. Birendra Raj Pokharel, ADRAD, Nepal
- Mr. Sachin Razal, Sense India
- Mr. Bharat Joshi, Blind People’s Association

Program Committee

- Ms. Nandini Rawal, Chairperson
- Ms. Vimal Thawani, Blind People's Association
- Ms. Sampada Shevde, Voice & Vision, Perkins International Program
- Dr. S. R. Mittal, Member, ICEVI West Asia
- Mr. Uttam Kumar, Sense India
- Mr. Birendra Raj Pokharel, Nepal

Registration

As conference venue has limited facilities, only 300 participants shall be registered for the conference.

For the registration form or the payment details, please visit www.iceviwestasia.in

Registration fee is only Indian Rupees Rs. 3000 (Nepalese Rupees 5000) per participants.

The registration fee covers:

- Conference kit including conference material
- 3 lunches, 1 dinner and 1 High Tea
- Pick up from designated hotel to conference venue and return
- Braille material, audio material and e-material

Responsibility of Participants: Look after their own travel, pay registration fee and pay for non-covered meals, hotel accommodation, insurance, incidental and other personal expenses.

The Conference organizers may arrange hotel accommodation for participants who will have to pay the hotel costs themselves. The next Announcement will have details of hotels and rates.

Paper presentation

Only registered participants need to send their papers to the Chairperson, Program Committee at the email ID: iceviwestasia@gmail.com before **31st August, 2019**.

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Conference WhatsApp Group: **ICEVI Sense Nepal 2020**

Green Conference:

As this will be a green conference,

- No conference material shall be printed
- All updates shall be provided through WhatsApp, website, email and mobile
- Complete material shall be provided as e-text (Audio, soft material and Braille)

Note:

The Registration Form; bank details for payment; hotel booking form and other details shall be uploaded on the website.

Innovative Practices in Professional Development: Creating Change in Schools in Israel – A Bottom-up Approach

Naomi Ariel, Lecturer and Pedagogical Trainer, David Yellin Teachers College, Israel

&

Mary C. Zatta, Director of Professional Development & Israel Project Coordinator,
Perkins School for the Blind, United States

Delivery of effective professional development is essential in ensuring quality educational programming for children with visual impairments and multiple disabilities. The professional development must result in changes in instructional practice and lead to improved educational programming for this population. This article describes a collaborative professional development programme that was designed and implemented by Perkins School for the Blind, David Yellin Teachers College, and the Israeli Ministry of Education. It focused on improving professional knowledge, skills, and competence in Jerusalem, Israel, over the course of three years. The result was significant improvement in the education of children with visual impairment and multiple disabilities.

Introduction / Overview of the project

In the fall of 2015, Perkins School for the Blind received grant funding aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning for children who are visually impaired/blind with disabilities in schools throughout Israel. The first step was creating a focus group of leaders in the field in Jerusalem, which identified a specific target group and area of

need: children with multiple disabilities and visual impairment (MDVI).

The project focused on programme development in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas. The goal was to expand the capacity of the Israeli Ministry of Education (MOE), David Yellin Academic College of Education, and schools and organisations supporting children who are MDVI. Building capacity included:

- Increasing knowledge, experience, skills, and competency of teachers and other related professionals through training, support, and practicum experiences;
- Building the Ministry Of Education's ability to establish and maintain quality systems for delivering educational services in schools to children with MDVI; and
- Improving David Yellin Academic College of Education's personnel preparation for teachers of children with MDVI.

A unique and challenging aspect of this project was the intent to work collaboratively with both Arabs and Jews in schools in East and West Jerusalem. This project to improve educational services for children with MDVI in

the region brought together principals, teachers, multidisciplinary professionals, and the MOE.

Who? Collaborative Leadership and Building a Community of Learning

The first partners were the Perkins Project Coordinator and the Lecturer and Pedagogical Trainer at David Yellin Academic College of Education and MOE, who became the Local Coordinator for the project. They identified additional partners/collaborators:

- At David Yellin Academic College of Education, the Head of Department for training teachers to work with students with complex disabilities, and two other lecturers;
- At the Ministry of Education, Inspectors of Special Education, and Regional Coordinators of Teachers of the Visually Impaired; and
- Five Principals at schools serving children who are MDVI.

In order to accomplish the project goals, the partners agreed upon shared values, which included these beliefs:

- All children with visual impairments and multiple disabilities have a right to an appropriate education;
- All children can communicate;
- Mutual respect for all involved is essential—children, teachers, faculty, and staff; and
- With training, teachers and other related professionals can implement “best practices” in schools serving children with visual impairments and multiple disabilities.

In order to develop a plan for implementation of the grant programme we formed a Focus Group, a community of learning with key people from East and West Jerusalem. This was the first time that educators from East and West Jerusalem became part of a single entity aimed at addressing the education of children with MDVI. The group consisted of teachers, vision specialists and coordinators, faculty from David Yellin Academic College of Education, and staff from the Ministry of Education.

What? Identifying Areas of Need for Training

The work of the Focus Group was to identify and prioritise the professional training needs. In order to accomplish this group critically reviewed and analysed the following areas:

- The National Education Standards for Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs);
- The current model of teaching; and
- The strengths and weaknesses of the Teachers of the Visually Impaired in their work with pupils with MDVI.

Key findings included:

- TVIs, classroom teachers, and related professionals lacked expertise and confidence in development of communication skills with children who are MDVI.
- TVIs were working mainly with pupils individually, using a “pull-out” model which brought the children out of the classroom. The instruction focused only on vision and not on the needs of the whole child.
- Personnel lacked knowledge, skills, and training to work with the large population of

children with Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI).

- Pre-service and in-service training programmes did not adequately cover assessment and intervention for pupils with CVI and additional disabilities.
- Key professionals in the field and academia were highly motivated to work together in both East and West Jerusalem.
- The MOE leadership in special education supported the project to improve professional development.

How? Multiple Modes of Professional Development

Plans for multiple modes of collaborative training and professional development evolved over the course of the first three years of the project. The various modes of training are described below.

Establishing partner schools. An important goal of the project was to identify centers of excellence to serve as models for other schools. The Focus Group and the Coordinators of TVIs selected five partner special schools – three in West Jerusalem and two in East Jerusalem. The principals in each school made a commitment to support the professional development of the teachers and multidisciplinary staff.

The principals from each of the schools were enthusiastic and became a significant support in ensuring the project's success. Training in the partner schools was driven by the Perkins Coordinator and visiting Perkins consultants. The training focus was child-centered and involved collaboration with multidisciplinary

teams, with the TVI as a central part of the team.

The training programmes were tailored to the specific needs of each school, its principal, and its staff. The programmes included; workshops, consultations, case studies, lesson observation, and feedback sessions. These sessions fostered rich conversations in which educators could reflect on practice and give each other feedback and support.

Each school was visited three times annually by Perkins and the Local Coordinator. Teachers and principals identified specific goals appropriate to their own schools. Goals focused on the development of communication for students with MDVI and meeting the needs of children with CVI. In between visits, the Local Coordinator and the TVI Coordinators in East and West Jerusalem monitored each school's progress in meeting its identified goals.

Building a community of expert trainers. A group of twelve professionals (teachers, TVIs, Coordinators of TVIs, and therapists) were chosen from the Focus Group and the partner schools. This group became a community of expert trainers, and participated in the workshops and conferences with the Perkins Coordinator and consultants through the initial three years of the project. In addition, they completed an intensive online Perkins eLearning course on CVI, taught by Dr. Christine Roman, a leading educator in the field. Armed with these skills and knowledge, the community of expert trainers collaborated to create team-taught training courses on CVI and communication.

Additional workshop trainings. The Perkins Coordinator and visiting consultants from Perkins conducted workshops for TVIs and their Coordinators in East and West Jerusalem. These trainings included reviewing student videos and discussing strategies to address individual student needs.

Development of a seven-module MOE-sanctioned training curriculum. The community of expert trainers, the Perkins Coordinator, the Local Coordinator, and other members of the Focus Group collaborated to develop a 30-hour course. The content focused on communication for children with MDVI, as well as assessment and intervention for children with CVI. The first seven-module course was offered as a MOE-recognised in-service training during the 2017-2018 school year in East and West Jerusalem. Currently, the second seven session module course is being offered.

Annual student conferences. These conferences were held at David Yellin Academic Education College. They included Jewish and Arab students from the Malham and Arab Departments, teachers working with children with MDVI across the region, and David Yellin faculty.

Three-week study visits at Perkins. Each year, four students from David Yellin Academic College of Education came to Perkins. During the three-week study visit, the students observed in classrooms, attended lectures, and completed a case study project. As of this writing, three groups of students (total of 12) have benefited from this opportunity.

Professionals visits to Perkins. Perkins has also hosted a number of professionals, including the Coordinators of TVIs from both East and West Jerusalem, a TVI from East Jerusalem, and two faculty members from David Yellin Academic College. Our partners observed in classrooms, attended lectures, and met with key people to discuss educational best practices for children with MDVI.

Challenges of the Project

While the challenges of this project were many, the dedication, collaboration, and commitment of the participants assisted us in overcoming these challenges.

Building relationships and developing trust. While it always takes time to form relationships and develop trust between all the project participants, we faced the additional challenge brought by the cultural tensions between East and West Jerusalem.

Changing attitudes. It took work to develop the understanding that *all* children can learn when provided with the access to learning, regardless of the combination of their disabilities.

Changing teaching habits. Teachers, TVIs, and therapists had to learn to “release” their roles in order to maximise learning in children with MDVI.

Instead of removing students with disabilities from the classroom, TVIs learned to intervene *within* the classroom. This allows the general education teacher and classroom assistants to learn from the TVI's teaching strategy,

knowledge, and expertise, encouraging them to emulate the interventions when the TVI is not present.

Another example of the need for role release was observed in numerous classrooms, where the teacher assumed the role of director of instruction at the front of the room. The teacher delivered beautiful lessons in a formal manner, with the children waiting their “turn” to engage with the teacher, and the teaching assistants sitting off to the side without being involved. The teachers learned that they could still direct the instruction by delegating some of the work to the assistants. The assistant kept all the children engaged by using the materials appropriate for each child, eliminating long waits.

Creating an open and authentic learning conversation. Teachers felt their expertise was being challenged during dialogues, observation, and reflective feedback. It was a challenge to create an atmosphere in which teachers, TVIs, therapists, and other professionals felt “safe” and open to improving their professional expertise.

Address language barriers. It was important to offer all trainings with simultaneous translation in English, Hebrew, and Arabic. Logistically, this required a great deal of planning as well as some expense.

Monitoring and follow-up. Creating a systemic approach to continuous improvement required ongoing monitoring and follow-up. The team was small (Perkins Project Coordinator, Local Project Coordinator, and TVI Coordinators in East and West

Jerusalem), and it was a constant challenge to ensure that we met this need.

Current Impact

During the first three years of this five-year project, the accomplishments have been many despite the difficulties. It is important to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of the various partners: David Yellin Academic Education College, MOE Inspectorate of Special Education, Focus Group members, coordinators of TVIs, partner schools, principals, expert training team, TVIs, teachers, and therapists. Below are a list of the project’s accomplishments.

- Professionals from East and West Jerusalem have established relationships and support each other in meeting the needs of children with MDVI.
- TVIs, teachers, and therapists have developed confidence and competence in providing instruction to children with MDVI.
- Five partner schools in East and West Jerusalem have been established and two new partner schools have been identified.
- The five partner schools have developed “best practices”.
- Participants have a clear focus on two areas for instructional development: communication and CVI.
- The partner schools have established authentic professional learning conversations.
- Approximately 300 staff members from the partner schools have received training, impacting approximately 400 students.

- 45 TVIs, who work with 440 students, have received training in East and West Jerusalem.
- 75 multidisciplinary staff participated in the seven-module MOE-sanctioned training, provided by the Project Coordinator, the Local Coordinator, and the locally recruited expert trainers. This training is now in its second year.
- Workshops have included 200 participants.
- Twelve multidisciplinary staff completed the Perkins eLearning online CVI courses.
- Twelve student teachers completed three-week study visits to Perkins.

Future Directions

Establishing a strong professional development programme in the Jerusalem region has proven successful, and we are excited that the project has progressed so well. Although there remains much work to be done in that region, we have also received recognition from the National Coordinators of TVIs, and were invited to provide a two-day presentation in February 2019.

Our next goal is to engage the MOE on the national level, bringing our training curriculum and professional development to many more teachers who work with children with MDVI.

We will continue to focus on the topics of communication and Cortical Visual Impairment, as these are the gateways to access to education for children with MDVI.

We will expand our focus to include parents, engaging them as partners and collaborators in meeting the needs of children with MDVI.

We will continue to build the expert training team by strengthening their knowledge and skills, and will identify other professionals who may join the team.

We will build and implement a semester course for student teachers at David Yellin Academic College of Education, introducing the basic principles of teaching pupils with MDVI.

We will conduct research in one school, systematically looking at teacher competencies and impact, and student growth.

Finally, we will conduct an impact study of the project to analyse qualitative and quantitative data gathered from the project partners. This will show what needs have been met and what the ongoing needs are.

Parting note:

It has been such a pleasure to work on this project due to the true collaboration between the various agencies, schools, principals, and professionals. Most of all, the cooperation and collaboration between the groups from East and West Jerusalem has been a true inspiration. We shared a vision: improving the educational programmes for children with visual impairments and multiple disabilities. When we have a shared vision, we overcome barriers!

Model for Effective Training

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In India, about 60% of children with cerebral palsy or other neurological impairment are likely to have vision impairment (Jacob & Prabhakar, 2006). However, vision impairment is consistently under-diagnosed in these populations and children often do not receive appropriate clinical or rehabilitation support (Jacob, Sridhar & Sasirega, 2008; Vasant, Jacob & Viswanathan, 2014).

Children with disabilities should have equal access to high-quality examinations and clinical interventions. However, the visibility and urgency of other issues such as seizures, respiratory difficulties, and the obvious motor and muscle tone issues, take the focus away from routine checkups that include vision exams (Bhatia & Joseph, 2000). A second deterrent to quality vision examinations is that the standard protocols and tools used by Indian pediatric ophthalmologists do not permit a thorough examination of the visual system. Motor impairment creates unique difficulties, such as positioning of the child during examination, the need for adapting methods of responding to tests, and alternative tests. The typical pediatric ophthalmologist, neuro-ophthalmologist, or optometrist has little knowledge of the typical functional situations of children with other disabilities. For instance, the visual requirements when moving in a wheelchair are different from those for typical mobility. Modes

of communication vary, and vision is important in concept development for children who lack good hand skills. These are all important elements to be considered when making recommendations for visual intervention.

For years, Chetana Trust has gathered information on assessment and intervention through its “I Count” project (Jacob & Prabhakar, 2006; Jacob, Sridhar & Sasirega, 2008). Based on that information, Chetana Trust created a training programme to give professionals effective assessment tools and protocols, build assessment skills, and develop an understanding of the importance of vision for the lives and growth possibilities of these children. This training programme provides a philosophy of intervention that guides the assessment process and development of intervention guidelines.

Professionals need effective in-service training programmes to learn new strategies and best practices in services for children with disabilities. Every alternate year since 2006, Chetana Trust has conducted the I Count training, to share practical skills and knowledge derived from the field. While professionals gained knowledge, we did not achieve our goal of transforming that knowledge into changes in practice and sustained improvement in skill levels. We reflected on the experiences and feedback

from training programmes, and identified those elements that are most conducive to our targeted outcomes and worked to incorporate them into our trainings. This paper explains the theory behind the design of the training programme and documents the outcomes.

Background of the Training Organisations

Vidya Sagar is an organisation that works with persons with neurological impairments and their families in the areas of education, employment, empowerment, and inclusion. Vidya Sagar staff have conducted several pre-service and in-service programmes for professionals across many topics. Their extensive experience as trainers leads them to value the importance of long-term on-site mentorship in ensuring implementation of new methods and development of skill levels. They have mentored several individuals and organisations within the country.

Chetana Charitable Trust in Chennai created the I Count, which comprehensively documents the visual status and services available to children with developmental disabilities. I Count assessed 1000 children, in partnership with the pediatric ophthalmologists and optometrists from Sankara Nethralaya, a premier institute for ophthalmology in India. We assessed the children both clinically and functionally, and we tracked a subset of these children over two or more appointments across the years. Analysis of the first 250 children revealed a shocking inadequacy of clinical and rehabilitation assessment protocols for vision, diagnosis, and even basic interventions, such as spectacle correction or environmental modifications.

Since 2006, Chetana Trust has conducted many professional training programmes for optometrists, ophthalmologists and rehabilitation workers. Although I Count trainings had a strong practical and guided practice component, and the participants learned a great deal, very little of what was learnt was actually being implemented in the field. Given the complexity of the target group, as well as the lack of overlap in expertise of the different professionals, Chetana Trust recognised the necessity of creating multidisciplinary training programmes.

Vidya Sagar and Chetana Trust partnered to offer the three-day I Count training programme. The organisations are already partners. Vidya Sagar, with technical support from Chetana Trust, started intervention services for children with multiple disabilities that included vision impairment. Since 2004, its Vision Center has served as a resource and training center.

Vidya Sagar and Chetana Trust presented a joint training in May 2017, with the goal of achieving sustained change in practice. Based on direct lessons from the field, the trainings established teams of rehabilitation and clinical professionals who are equipped to conduct vision assessments and implement basic intervention, focusing on function. The participants came away from these trainings with a basic set of materials and the tools to immediately implement their learning.

Designing an Effective Training Programme

The training team reviewed the causes for the failure of sustained use of new knowledge and skills. We found organisational factors and

participant factors, and consciously addressed these problem areas as we designed this round of training.

Participants sometimes come from organisations whose scope of work doesn't allow for application of learning. So, we only selected participants whose organisations are already working with (or are keen to start working with) children with multiple disabilities including vision impairment (MDVI).

In order to ensure complete administrative support, we informed the organisational or department head of our expectations. We outlined the training and asked for commitment in creating a supportive climate for implementing the learning.

We carefully analysed the length of the training programme. We realised that senior professionals are pressed for time and are unlikely to attend longer trainings. Instead, they send junior staff who aren't empowered to make significant institutional changes, nor pass the training on to colleagues. We limited the training to three days, and optimised the learning by distributing pre-training materials, including the test material usage protocols. This allowed us to eliminate training time focused on information that the trainees could get on their own.

Skills that are not practiced immediately tend to fade and disappear. To ensure immediate practice, we required that participants work with children upon their return, and send us visual and written reports within a specified timeframe. We designed a clear work plan and a timeline for response in consultation with

each participating organisation. On our side, we committed to providing a strong follow-up and mentoring support. We also provided a basic set of required materials and tools, including instructional videos.

In the past, a considerable number of participants did not change their practices after our training programme. A significant reason for this is lack of anybody to give support and feedback when the participant practices the new skill. Therefore, we requested that each organisation send two professionals to the training, so that they could support each other in learning and working on their return. Each team had at least one person who worked hands-on with children, to ensure that learning would be put into practice.

Participating Organisations

Seven teams from hospitals and special schools from across the country took part in the training. The participants varied in terms of their knowledge, position in the organisation, and seniority. Six had prior experience working with children with MDVI but no professional training in the area of vision, and six had some professional training in the area of vision (Table 1).

For the sake of discussion, the organisations have been given the following labels: special schools, denoted by S (S1 and S2) and Hospitals, by H (H1 to H5). The numbers are given in the order of distance from the training organisation, 1 being the closest. Different numbers are given to the two teams from the same hospital for convenience's sake (H2 & H3).

Table 1: Participant details

Name	Nature of Work	Distance from the training institute	Professional background of the participants	Professional specialisation in Vision - Y/N	Rehab experience with children with VMID Y/N	Nature of work
S 1	Rehab	Same city	Physiotherapist and special educator	N N	Y Y	Both work hands on with children in rehab
S 2	Rehab	Neighboring state	Principal and special educator	N N	Y Y	Special educator works hands on
H 1	Clinical	Same city	Paed.. Ophthalmologist and Optometrist	Y Y	N N	Optometrist works on assessments
H 2	Clinical	Same state	Ophthalmologist/ Asst. professor and Optometrist	Y Y	N N	Optometrist works on assessments
H 3	Clinical	Same state	Occupational therapist and Developmental Psychologist	N Y	N N	Occupational therapist works with children
H 4	Clinical	Neighboring state	Ophthalmologist/ Professor and Special educator	Y N	N Y	Special educator works with children
H 5	Clinical	State in other zone	Optometrist and Counselor	Y N	N N	Optometrist works with children

The Training Programme and the Follow-up Mentoring Programme

In India, it is often the reality that a child may arrive for rehabilitation support with no clinical assessment, or for clinical support when they stay in a place where professional rehabilitation is not available. It was therefore important that all participants become familiar with the key aspects of the entire process, from assessment to intervention. This enables them to fill the gaps in services more effectively.

The three-day training focusing on vision assessment and broad principles of

intervention for children and infants with MDVI was conducted at Vidya Sagar, Chennai, in May 2017. Fourteen participants took part. Dr. Namita Jacob from Chetana Trust led the training, along with the staff of Vidya Sagar and an optometrist. The training was hands-on, and all participants worked with infants, children, and their families as a team, and practiced assessments under guidance of the resource team.

We encouraged the teams to draw from each other's expertise during practice, to move out of their comfort zones and step into another discipline. We thus had the doctors working

with the children, and teachers using the tools during the assessment. We composed the practice teams so that the clinical and rehabilitation participants from the same city worked together, in hopes of fostering future partnership. Each participating organisation received a set of tools and materials that would help them start services that included basic assessments and interventions.

Follow-up Plan

The teams were asked to use the tools and protocols and complete fifteen assessments in a period of three months. We asked them to send us the videos and forms that summarised their assessment and guidelines for intervention. The organising institute responded with suggestions and further support, as requested by the participant institutes. The teams from the same city were encouraged to work together.

Ensuring the Expected Level of Change

A training evaluation form and a rating scale were used to assess the increase of participants' knowledge and skills at the end of the training. However, the desired outcome of this training was visible change in practice—an enhanced quality of assessment leading to clear and effective rehabilitation for children and infants with visual impairment and additional disabilities. To ensure this, we

asked organisations to send in videos of their work during the follow-up period for our review.

Soon after the training, we sent out an email reminder to all participants and their organisation heads. One organisation responded immediately with examples of their work. We provided feedback, which ultimately led to them coming to the center for a guided assessment and intervention session. This second phase of intensive support resulted in the organisation completing all requirements to our satisfaction about four months after the training.

Every month, emails or calls were made to participants, eliciting some completed reports, some updates on work being done, problems faced, and in some cases silence. With reports in hand, we could provide feedback, send more examples of filled forms, and invite them to the center for guidance. In one case, we provided on-site support. In the case of silence or reports of no implementation, we followed up with emails and calls to the head of the organisation. We persisted for nine months post training, and except for one special school and one hospital, all the remaining provided reports that demonstrated competence at the level expected (Table 2).

Table 2 Timeline and actions post training:

Activity	Time										
	May 2017	June 2017	July 2017	August 2017	Sept. 2017	Oct. 2017	Nov. 2017	Dec. 2017	Jan. 2018	Feb. 2018	March 2018
Training Completed											
Reminder to organisation/ participant		all		S2, H1, H2, H3, H4, H5	S2, H1, H4, H5			S2, H5		H5	
Telephone discussion						S1 H5					
Sample assessment forms sent					H5						
Partial completion of assessments		S1		H2 H3	H5 S1	H2 H3					
Request for support						H5				H1	
Updates in response to email				H4 H1							
Feedback on submission			S1		H2 H3						
Visit for guidance to Vidya Sagar			S1		H2 H3						H5
Guidance visit to an organisation							H5				
Complete Requirement					S1	H2 H3	H5				H1

Shaded rows indicate the activity of the training team.

Discussion

Factors such as distance from the mentoring institute, participant specialisation, or the kind of institute did not make any significant difference to compliance or achievement of desired outcome. The organisation that was

furthest away made complete use of the support offered by organising a three-day on-site training. Except for one special school and one hospital, all others fulfilled the requirements.

The trainees were able to cross their professional boundaries and take up other roles. Therapists, special educators, and counselors did as well as trained vision professionals with respect to the content covered in the training. With support from the follow-up programme, they were able to conduct assessments, draw inferences, and plan programmes using the tools and guidelines introduced in the training.

Two years post training, we received a positive response from all the institutes to our follow-up questions of whether the protocols developed were used by the participating institute, and whether cross referrals across disciplines were in place. Since several institutes have called us over the last two years to request referral support, we are confident that this is indeed the case.

Review of assessment forms and videos were the major form of support to the participants planned. The videos were very effective because they provided us with an opportunity to observe issues we would otherwise have missed with just a report. Examples include how a space is organised, a person's use of his/her own body and space, ways of interaction with the child, or a missed or misunderstood response from the child.

The video format obliged both participants to actively conduct assessments which we could not have known from only seeing written reports. The reporting process also required participants to immediately apply the knowledge and skills gained at the training, thus helping them seal their new knowledge through active implementations of learning.

Indeed, participants who did not start conducting assessments within the first two months had to return for hands-on review before they began their work.

During the follow-up period, we found we had to include other methods of support—reviewing in person, sending filled formats, phone calls, video calls, and onsite guidance. The support methods were based on individual preference or our own perception of their needs. This flexibility and intensity of follow-up and support made the difference in achieving the desired outcomes.

The organisations were given three months for sending back their assessments, and the total support period was intended to be six months post training. Few organisations actually graduated within that period. We therefore continued interactions and kept the channel open for further support as required.

Consistent reminders and offer for support did help to receive a response even ten months after the original training. In spite of our efforts, during and after the training, hospital and rehabilitation teams from the same city did not begin to work together. However, as reported by the participating organisations, referrals between rehabilitation and clinical services became more common.

Conclusion

Changes in science and technology have led to growing knowledge and new methods in assessment, interpretation, and intervention for children with disabilities. Professionals are challenged to grow beyond traditional divisions of knowledge and expertise and partner more strongly across disciplines.

This is especially important for children with complex disabilities like cerebral palsy and other neurological conditions, where several systems are involved to varying degrees. Vision is often impaired in these children, and assessment and intervention planning require collaboration across professions. Infants and young children with MDVI need the services of both the clinical and rehabilitation professionals, who don't receive specialised training to work with this population. As a result, residual vision, a strong gateway to learning, is often underutilised or lost functionally to these children. Effective training programmes in the area of vision assessment and intervention for children with multiple impairment is therefore a huge need in India.

The design and follow-up support of the I Count 2017 training has been successful in achieving the desired outcome. We were able to document change in individual professional practice and cross referrals that ensure children with multiple disabilities receive appropriate clinical and rehabilitation support.

Funding and resource allocation for training should ensure the ability to provide support for up to a year. It is important to provide varied methods of support in order to make

training truly effective in changing professional practice. Delaying certification until the end of the follow-up period can increase compliance. This model can be replicated to provide effective trainings that improve professional skills and communication between professions.

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New International Partner Member of the ICEVI



OVERBROOK
SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

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The Overbrook School for the Blind has become a new International Partner Member of ICEVI.

We warmly welcome the Overbrook School for the Blind and Todd Reeves, CEO, to the Executive Committee of ICEVI.

Online Teacher Training by Perkins International Academy: Lessons Learned

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Introduction

Perkins International in Latin America and the Caribbean (PILA&C) began delivering online courses in the region in 2009. Through online training, PILA&C reaches people who can't attend courses in person because they live far from the main cities, can't travel to universities, or work long hours. Another great benefit of online training is the enrichment of knowledge that arises from bringing together people from beyond national borders, and from different fields of education. In the LA&C Region the two main languages are Spanish and Portuguese, which made efforts for localisation easier.

In 2016 Perkins School for the Blind launched the Perkins International Academy (PIA). It provides a series of certified courses that define an international competency standard for teachers and service providers of children with multiple disabilities and sensory loss. Perkins piloted it online in LA&C because it

already had a years-long online presence in the field of teacher training. Since the inception of the Foundations Course 1, PILA&C has taught three cohorts in Argentina, one cohort in Ecuador, and one in México. The third cohort in Argentina was delivered in a hybrid modality, which means partly online and partly in-person. Course 1 is currently being delivered again in Ecuador and for the first time in Chile, while Course 2 is underway in Argentina. So far, a total of 83 educators from Argentina, Ecuador, México, Paraguay, Costa Rica, Perú, Honduras, and Dominican Republic have graduated.

The educators participating so far have been regular and special education teachers, physical education teachers, speech and language therapists, psychologists, and educational technicians. Each course includes people from different locations, most of them from small towns where they do not have trained colleagues or access to training opportunities.

The team who directly supports the delivery of the PIA courses are:

- One tutor per module, although sometimes there is a second co-teacher who is a tutor-in-training;
- A webmaster who provides technical support for the course's online resources; and
- A course coordinator, who serves as liaison and support between the tutors, the webmaster, and the participants.

The course is also supported by PI Regional Representatives for administrative and technical support, and the Monitor and Evaluation Team. The critical importance of this team approach is confirmed by Henry & Meadown (2018, pp. 12-13), who state, "To develop and offer online courses requires many more skills than those commonly found in a single person".

This article will focus on the lessons the PILA&C team learned in delivering the PI Academy courses online (both entirely online and hybrid). The purpose is to contribute to the body of experience of online teacher training to ensure that the trainees have the best learning experience, and consequentially have more capacity and interest in working with their students.

Perkins International Academy (PIA) Online

The PI Academy Foundations Course (Course 1) and Advanced Course (Course 2) consist of four modules each on these topics:

- Learners with Multiple Disabilities and Sensory Impairments;
- Communication;
- Assessment; and
- Curriculum.

Course 2 builds upon Course 1, providing more in-depth information and knowledge. The online five-month PIA course offers a total of 120 instruction hours, spending four weeks on each module, with one week between. Some of the students use the week in between modules to finish up assignments. A few of them may take more than five months to complete all their work and pass the course. Enrolment is limited to 30 participants per course. The course is asynchronous, which means that students log onto a course on their own time. However, there is activity at the end of the course in which participants are required to work in groups. Participants are graded according to their participation in the forums, the completion of assignments, a portfolio, and one post-test for each module. When they pass, participants receive a Perkins International Academy certificate.

The hybrid version of the course includes one eight-hour in-person session per module. These sessions bring the participants together, and focus on the main topic of the module. The participants analyse and discuss the essential concepts, and this gives continuity to online elements of module. The hybrid course in Argentina also had in-person introductory and final sessions that contextualised the course within the country's legal framework and the specific requirements of the Ministry of Education.

Lessons Learned From the Experience of the Tutor

The tutor delivers the content, but more importantly is the guide who creates a community of learners. Additionally, “learning is much more than accessing information” (Meadson and Henry, 2018), so teaching in this format demands great creativity. In online learning students still need the instructor, but significant learning will occur through learner-content interaction and learner-learner interaction (Kelly, et al., 2007).

When the tutors created this online learning space, these questions arose:

- What classroom space do we need to support interaction?
- How can I encourage interactions that move us from individual to collective learning?
- How I can offer adequate support for learning that moves beyond the material offered in the course and leads to the construction of new knowledge?

Following are some of the answers to these questions discovered by the LA&C PIA tutors:

- **Be present.** Interact with participants constantly; this facilitates bonding with them and lets them know they have the support they need for learning.
- **Give the participant feedback.** Recognise the good work they do and help them expand their knowledge by asking further questions and making comments.
- **Encourage group work activities.** Encourage the participants to meet,

collaborate, and share knowledge, experiences, and ideas.

- **Design course materials for the online environment.** The didactic materials should be designed for online classes, and follow a “roadmap” that continually guides the participants to where they should go next.
- **The course material can match the tutor's teaching style.** There are many ways to present the material, and the instruction works best when it arises from the tutor's unique training, experience, and personality.
- **Enhance the basic course material.** The tutor can expand upon the audios in the slide presentations, forums, individual feedback, and other elements by adding other “expert voices” with theoretical and practical references (Schwartzman 2013). If possible, include internet links so participants can explore sources and learn to use the web for quality information.
- **Present information in diverse ways.** Some participants learn best from the video format, others from participating in the forums, and others prefer the theoretical structures. The essential thing is to offer a range of paths that allow the participants to reach the same objective. Having multiple pathways allows participants to design their own educational trajectory.

Lessons Learned From the Experience of the Webmaster

The webmaster designs the course space, loads materials, trains the coordinator and

tutors on the operation of the class, and provides technical support in the courses.

The webmaster's biggest challenge arose from the participants' lack of experience in online classes. In response, the webmaster created video tutorials and a section called "frequently asked questions". Some students start the course without knowing how an online course is organised or how to benefit from it, e.g., how to participate in the forums, how to upload files, etc. However, as Pardo Iranzo (2014) points out, participants can succeed by consulting the tutorials and the "frequently asked questions".

Sometimes it is necessary to give individual explanations through e-mail. The key is to respond quickly. Participants, coordinators, and tutors all encounter inconveniences, doubts, questions, and difficulties. They are dependent on the webmaster for the course's function, so quick response is critical in supporting the continuity of the course.

The successful participants exhibit three behaviors: they complete and carry out the various activities from the first day; they ask for assistance when they have doubts or difficulties; and they are consistently engaged with the development of the course (new materials, answers to mail, etc.). The webmaster's responsiveness and efficiency is integral to these successful behaviors.

Lessons Learned From the Experience of the Course Coordinator

During the five months of online coursework, the training team accompanies the participants and supports them through the

stages of learning. Before launching the programme, it is essential to craft the Virtual Campus, creating and organising tutorials. That is why PIA courses dedicate the week prior to the start of the training to exploring the classroom and learning to manage it, so the participants feel competent when it's time to work on tasks. The content, materials, and timeline are structured and organised, so that the participant understands the work dynamics from the beginning.

Over the years of online training, the PIA staff have become familiar with the kinds of situations that call for participant support, and the tutors work to meet those needs as a team. Our trainees are committed professionals working to improve the education and quality of life and education of people with disabilities. They cannot travel to large cities for training, and their access to the internet or computers is very often restricted to certain times or days of the week. It is important to understand these realities in order to support and accompany the participants, reinforcing the effort, dedication and commitment they bring to the training.

The course team must also consider the profile and professional background of the participants of each cohort, adapting the starting point, the training expectations, and the delivery to the participants and their professional experience. This flexibility calls for coordination with the tutors of each cohort. The instruction is adjusted to match the participants' needs, while respecting the standards of the PIA curriculum. The trainees who finish express their satisfaction regarding

the training, the quality of the material and the professional accompaniment of the tutors.

Lessons Learned From the Experience of the Monitor and Evaluation Officer

The PIA staff has designed an evaluation system for the PIA courses that gathers assessments from the perspectives of all involved-- participants, tutors, and coordinators. The officer evaluates experiences, strengths and weaknesses of the course, and opinions about the practical usefulness of the knowledge and skills presented. The officer also considers the participants' expectations for the course, and tallies which have been met and which have not. The evaluation system has allowed the courses to evolve positively, with modifications and new versions that are better adapted to the expectations and requirements of students.

Following are most of the modifications based on an ongoing evaluation:

- **Organisation and presentation of the course.** The space dedicated to presenting the course was reorganised in a new tab and specific content was added. Additionally, staff added a week-long introductory module. A tab for direct communication with the course coordinator has been added, so participants can easily request assistance. The content of each module is now organised to add cohesion and continuity as participants transition from one module to the next.
- **Access and use of technology.** The tutorial in the introductory module demonstrates how to use the various

functions of the online classroom, which will be particularly useful for new participants in online learning. With this tutorial, participants can see exactly what level of technical competency is expected from them.

- **Participant engagement and motivation.** In order to provide participants with a clear idea of what to expect from the course, course advertisement now includes detailed information about the topics covered and course expectations, such as how much time the course demands. Throughout the course, instructors are expected to respond quickly to participants' requests and questions. The course coordinator closely monitors participant activity.
- **Roles and Responsibilities** of the instructors, participants, webmaster, and course coordinator are clearly defined.
- **Training and Evaluation of Tutors.** In addition to having expertise in the education of children with multiple disabilities and sensory impairment, PI Academy tutors must complete a training before they begin teaching the Foundations Course 1. The training covers the content and structure of the course, introduces evaluation criteria, creates a sense of community, and is a forum for commenting on and making suggestions for the course.

Lessons Learned From the Experience of the Regional Representative

Distance education is a teaching modality with its own characteristics, and with teaching and learning processes that arise from its unique

nature. The relationships between teachers and students are established through virtual media. The team drew from the experience of the last three years, evaluating in detail the course aspects that worked well and those that required some adjustment.

Formal aspects and presentation of the course. We adjusted the organisation of information, resources, and course tools in the virtual classroom. Equally important, we paid attention to the aesthetics in each of the modules, the specific spaces that allow communication between participants and teachers. In the preparation of materials, we took care in respecting the principle of accessibility, so that all people can complete this training.

Processes. With respect to the processes, we adjusted the administration of the study material. This includes the distribution in the times and fulfillment of the activities, as well as the number of activities, their characteristics, and the incorporation of tasks that facilitated the comprehension and application of learning. We considered it very important to incorporate group meetings in the schedule. We strengthened teachers' support to the participants in different ways, both in the orientation of the topics, as well as in the feedback and advice they gave participants as they completed the activities.

We enriched the course by incorporating theoretical material that allows the articulation between the different modules. We also contextualised the training so it is relevant to conditions in each country. To this end, we added some instances of reflection

and analysis that relate to the legal frameworks of education in each region or country.

We consider collaborative teamwork among tutors, coordinators, evaluators, webmasters, and regional representatives very important. This facilitates the development of the training with greater efficiency, the resolution of emerging situations, as well as systematic evaluation of the process. To this end, we scheduled periodic meetings, which helped guarantee the quality of the training proposal.

There are many benefits of the online and hybrid modality of training, both for teachers and for participants.

Online Format Benefits:

- Educators from all corners of the country and region can take a high-quality course, not only those who live close to big cities.
- The community of learners and tutors, drawn from different regions and countries, benefit from the differences in cultures and experiences.
- The course takes five months. This allows the participants to learn, read, share, process, and apply what they have learned.
- The course has one tutor per module. This allows having a specialist on the topics that each module addresses.
- Students log onto a course on their own time to watch instructional videos, complete assignments, and participate in forums.
- The online format accommodates working professionals with full-time careers that

prevent them from being absent from work for extended periods of time, and those with limited resources that prevent traveling long distances.

- While working on a module, the participant can review the class presentation and materials as many times as needed.

Hybrid Format Benefits:

- It is an option that responds to the needs and preference of many students.
- It is flexible because it allows a combination of modalities and a more direct connection with the tutor.
- Questions in the in-person session can be addressed immediately.
- The in-person meetings foster relationship and communication.
- The students exhibit greater permanence and continuity.

Conclusion

Online teacher training is a real option for reaching a wide range of educators when it is delivered with the seriousness it deserves. It requires high-quality content in diverse formats, a team that supports it with varied expertise and approaches, and a group of participants who are really committed to the course.

It is not surprising that this form of training is growing worldwide as internet-based information and social connections are on the rise. Communication and information-sharing is changing rapidly; and consequently the tools of teaching and learning are changing as well. The demand for university and non-

university distance education has increased by 250% within the last decade, while the demand for face-to-face training has increased by 6%. For example, today in Argentina, more than 30 private and state universities offer distance career education.

The principles of good teacher training apply equally for in-person and online. What changes is the form of teaching and learning, and in consequence the culture of teacher training. It requires equal commitment from all individuals (tutors and participants) to learn from each other despite the lack of face-to-face contact. Online learning goes beyond mere online content; it is about the community of teaching and learning from each other. The tutor is the guide and expert, but the participants also participate in the construction of new knowledge and experience.

Perkins International has been training teachers for decades in different parts of the world. Now, participating in online teacher training ultimately means giving great educational opportunities to children and young adults with multiple disabilities and their families. With Perkins International online training available, their educators are have access to high quality training, no matter where they are located in the wide world.

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In-service Sessions for Physical Education Teachers

Learning to Accommodate Diversity

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INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses the difficulties encountered by mainstream physical education teachers in the inclusion of students with different disabilities in pre-school, elementary, and high schools in the city of La Plata, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Inclusion of students with different abilities has been required since 2011 by the Pedagogic Plan of Supervision. One of the authors of this article was then an Physical Education Inspector, responsible for ensuring that all students are included. Because of her experience in working with people with visual impairment, she was in charge of coordinating the study group and the in-service sessions for physical education teachers.

We decided to implement in-service sessions that focused on teaching strategies and student learning processes for Physical Education teachers working with students with disabilities. For that purpose, we invited teachers who specialise in teaching students with various disabilities, so they could share their expertise with the physical education instructors. The other author of this paper is

teacher specialising in visual impairment, experienced in working with children, young people, and adults to create strategies for their inclusion.

In each session we focused upon the institutional teaching practices, valuing the expertise of the participants. We highlighted the current concept of disability, emphasising that our perceptions of disability change and evolve as the person interacts with the environment. We emphasised that every student can learn if his or her needs are properly met.

Integration is an open door that invites the student with disabilities to learn and be included in mainstream schools. Inclusion is a process of democratising education and guaranteeing human rights. School integration requires altering educational strategy and environments, creating the supports to accommodate and include students with disabilities in mainstream schools.

Inclusion is the responsibility of the entire educational community: authorities, teachers, administrative staff, parents, peers, members

of the support team, and teachers of the student with disabilities. Because inclusion is centred in the school and social context, the support systems must facilitate the learning process and make environments less disabling.

Objectives the In-service Sessions

- To create a space for evaluating the teaching practices of physical education in inclusion;
- To invite all physical education teachers to commit to strengthening educational integration;
- To foster the emergence of real educational proposals within physical education teaching, so that the students with visual impairment can succeed;
- To provide teachers the necessary professional tools to develop classes with confidence, emphasising that integration is only possible when educators understand and value the child with special educational needs;
- To comprehend the need to get actively involved in integrating students;
- To understand the holistic nature of physical education instruction. The teaching methods should support the gradual acquisition of personal autonomy, self-awareness, and awareness of others.
- To share challenges, experiences, and solutions encountered in their professional practices; and
- To actively participate as members of the integration team in the educational institution, providing inputs in the development of each student's Individualised Education Programme.

Concerns of Physical Education Teachers with Students with Disabilities in Their Classes

The inquiries of teachers of inclusive physical education classes arose from fear of the unknown, insecurities related to personal issues, feelings of pity, belief that the students couldn't succeed, uncertainty, and sometimes feelings of rejection.

We participated in productive exchanges with stakeholders belonging to different educational levels and modalities. We fostered an "open door" environment, where everyone could share their input and experience. As a group, we created tools for inclusion. Rethinking and examining our own practices was a productive way to create a new educational model.

Physical education contributes to the comprehensive education of children. It fosters, in a purposeful and systematic way, the building of corporal, motor, recreational, and relational skills, with the objective of enriching the child's self-awareness and relationships with others. Physical education classes help children recognise their skills and possibilities, as well as their limitations. Students use, enjoy, and value their own corporeality and that of others. Classes should be a meeting point, a space for learning, interacting with others, and fostering harmonious interactions.

The input of the physical education teacher supports a comprehensive educational goal. The teaching methods contribute to development of personal autonomy, self-awareness, awareness of others, binding

motility, and understanding of the cultural and social contexts to which the student belongs. Consequently, physical education teachers *must address* teaching strategies that favour the motor expression and performance of *all* students.

Discussion Topics of the In-service Sessions

These Sessions were conducted in the following years:

- 2013 :** Integration in Physical Education Classes – the inclusion of students with disabilities in a regular class.
- 2014 :** The Individual Pedagogic Project and the Physical Education Teacher – inclusion in the class.
- 2015 :** Integration in Physical Education Classes in Contexts of Confinement – proposals, challenges, and strategies.
- 2016 :** Inclusion in Physical Education Classes – strategies for the accommodating of diversity.

In the beginning, we gathered teachers of students with various disabilities to organise a study and planning group on the inclusion of students in the regular school. By the end of the year, they had created a series of training sessions.

Throughout the in-service sessions the following topics were discussed:

- Physical education classes and students with disabilities, including proposals, challenges, and strategies.
- Supports for inclusion for students with disabilities: reduced mobility, sensory

disabilities (deafness, hearing impairment, blindness, visual impairment) impairment), emotional disorders, intellectual disabilities.

- Engagement of the physical education teacher in the “Integration Project”, a document created by the School Integration team that facilitates the processes of building skills and knowledge for people with disabilities, by outlining the processes in a pedagogic and didactic way.
- The Individualised Education Program and the engagement of the physical education teacher in it. The IEP builds comprehensive educational trajectories through specific goals and objectives customised for each individual student. It includes a report of the current learning situation of the student, his or her trajectory, school performance, integration strategies, choice of supports, agreements between the school, the families and the students, and assessment and follow-up criteria (General Directorate of Culture and Education of the Province of Buenos Aires Resolution 4635/11).
- Supports for inclusion in the physical education classes, aids that enable learning: the networks, relationships, positions, and interactions between people, groups or institutions. After identifying barriers for learning, the educational team develops strategies for supporting participation in the school and the community. The starting points of these supports are the needs and situation of the individual student.

- Integration in physical education classes guarantees the right of education for all the population. The objective is to foster the comprehensive education and full development of each student. The exercise of this right cannot be limited because of the restrictions created by a disability.
- Orientation and mobility skills, which are tools for the independence of people with visual impairment; importance of inputs from physical education teachers.
- The practice of physical education beyond school: community projection.

Methodology

During the sessions, we used a variety of methods and techniques:

- **Study groups.** We exchanged experiences and knowledge, particular and general, enriching one another, and transforming them into useful tools for everyday practice.
- **Presentations by professionals.** We benefitted from visits by representatives of well-known academic and educational institutions in our field (e.g., National University, Provincial Direction of Physical Education, and Physical Education Inspection).
- **Presentations by physical education teachers.** Expert teachers who work in special schools explained how to integrate students in mainstream/regular schools at every level.
- **Discussions / Presentation of real situations.** We considered real situations of students with disabilities participating in

a physical education class. The case studies were shared in written form, and proposals for the participation of that student in the class were discussed. We explored different approaches and principles, challenges, and solutions. The proposals were then put into practice.

- **Videos.** We viewed videos of physical education classes with students with different disabilities. Then, through guiding questions, viewers were encouraged to question the strategies and supports used by the teacher, and to suggest other strategies and supports. We grouped the videos based on teacher strategies used in each class. We created exploratory and descriptive scopes to facilitate analysis in the session discussions, and moved the group to devise a conclusion based on what they viewed.
- **Group Reading of Individual Pedagogic Projects.** We analysed the involvement and participation of physical education teachers in the Projects.

Results

The educational community showed great interest in these in-service Sessions, and attendance was high, so we repeated them year after year. All of them had very positive results, with new concerns and topics arising.

We conducted evaluations at the end of each in-service Session, giving us information about the choice of topics, the methods of addressing them, and the length of the Sessions, among other aspects. These evaluations also allowed us to explore the needs and expectations of the participants,

and their suggestions for developing more topics.

These in-service Sessions allowed us to understand the real situation that the inclusion of students with disabilities in our district posed. As a result, we outlined guidelines, changed the course of action, accompanied teachers, and found new ways to remove obstacles to the educational trajectory of children with disabilities.

The discussions during the Sessions allowed us to understand that inclusion is not defined solely by the tools or strategies used, the training received, or the support the teacher chooses in his or her practice. Rather, the important factor is the teacher's attitude, approach, and willingness to face the challenge, understanding that our preconceptions about disability are the biggest obstacles.

This initiative created new spaces for reorientation and exchange, with the aim of enhancing the teachers' practice. This was particularly true of the specific Sessions for each disability in the School for the Blind and the Visually Impaired during 2014 and 2016, and this year in the School for the Motor Disabled, where new pedagogic discussions were proposed. One of the positive results of these in-service Sessions was that they opened doors for the training of the teachers in the field. Within the Province of Buenos Aires, directors continue to meet to develop strategies on inclusion.

The initiators of this project continue to offer these in-service Sessions in other educational environments, motivating teachers in this

field to see inclusion as an achievable challenge.

This project was submitted as a research work to the National University, in the Forum "Education, Culture and Society" (2016), allowing for future physical education teachers to make educational inclusion a reality in the everyday practice of schools in Argentina.

Conclusions

In our educational system there has been a great evolution, moving from a segregated model, through the normalising models, to the elaboration of theoretical frameworks supporting full inclusion. This evolution arises from a respect for diversity and a commitment to human rights. Nevertheless, there is still a lot to do in our own everyday practice. We must constantly ask ourselves: What are my preconceptions when I see others? Do I truly accept diversity? Or am I only exercising a "politically correct" tolerance? In which paradigm of which model do I place myself when I face a person with disabilities? What am I promoting with my actions or with what I choose not to do? Which attitudes am I perpetrating? From the discussions and experience sharing in the Sessions, we observed that our teachers show a great creativity in their search for tools, have interest in ongoing training, and have a great willingness to evaluate and reformulate their teaching strategies. All this, even though they have scarce material, facilities, and pedagogic resources. With teaching and intervention strategies, the teacher facilitates the achievement of corporal and motor skills in different environments. The use of different

strategies fosters an improvement of the corporal and motor readiness of their students.

We believe that the future challenge is to transform diversity into a pedagogic advantage. Living in heterogeneity benefits the socialisation and learning of all. We request the revision of the approach to teacher training; changing the emphasis to inclusion and away from the perspective of normalisation. It is of paramount importance to change the point of view, directing it to what students “can do”, and not to what students “are lacking”. We focus on our students' abilities, wishes, possibilities, and needs.

Physical education contributes to building the identity of children and teenagers, while impacting their corporality. It involves all their cognitive, emotional, motor, expressive, and relational skills. It contributes to their comprehensive training, and integrating the corporal and motor readiness of every person. Our efforts are directed to the full participation of every child in our classes.

These in-service Sessions allowed us to open up debates and discussions, to promote exchanges, and to establish networks for continuously reflecting upon our field. We who work in the field of education, have a great opportunity in our hands: to open new paths, to generate hope, to promote relationships based on respecting our students' differences, to develop tools, and to break down prejudices. We do all of this in a framework of respect and personal and professional responsibility.

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Online professional development in braille

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Strong literacy and mathematics skills are essential for achievement in education and employment in the 21st Century. Students require instruction by teachers with expertise in curriculum content and an understanding of the connections between language, literacy and mathematics development. Students who use the medium of braille require instruction by teachers who are also knowledgeable of the braille code and braille literacy and numeracy teaching approaches. The ability of teachers to convert print-based materials and assessments into hard or soft copy braille will greatly enhance student engagement with curriculum content and sense of belonging in the classroom. In the area of mathematics, for example, students require teachers who possess the skills to incorporate braille into lessons involving reasoning, abstraction, generalisation and problem solving, together with use of braille symbols to communicate mathematical ideas and knowledge. Student success in the mathematics curriculum paves the way for success in the other STEM subjects of science, technology and engineering.

The Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC, Australia) has created a website that offers free, online training programs in braille literacy and mathematics using Unified English Braille (UEB) - <https://uebonline.org>. The purpose of the website is to promote equitable information access and expression for children and young people who use the medium of braille. The target audience for the UEB training programs include educators, parents and families, allied health professionals and

education administrators. The lessons are curriculum focussed, and include print-to-braille or braille-to-print exercises that progressively build braille knowledge and mastery of content. It is recommended that the literacy training modules be completed prior to commencing the introductory and extension mathematics modules.

The UEB Online registration process involves creating a personal profile and password using a Windows PC, Mac or laptop computer with an internet connection. Registration enables program users to complete, save and re-open their lessons. The website includes a high contrast mode for people with low vision and a non-visual access mode for people who use screen readers.

RIDBC promotes the rights of all persons with vision impairment to inclusion in education, employment and society on the same basis as sighted persons – leaving no-one behind. The braille training programs are offered free of charge, in recognition of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UN Education 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. RIDBC acknowledges with thanks the organisations and individuals who have contributed to the development of the braille literacy and mathematics training programs. Particular thanks are extended to the project funders, content authors, the website developer and RIDBC's professional learning and alternative format production teams.

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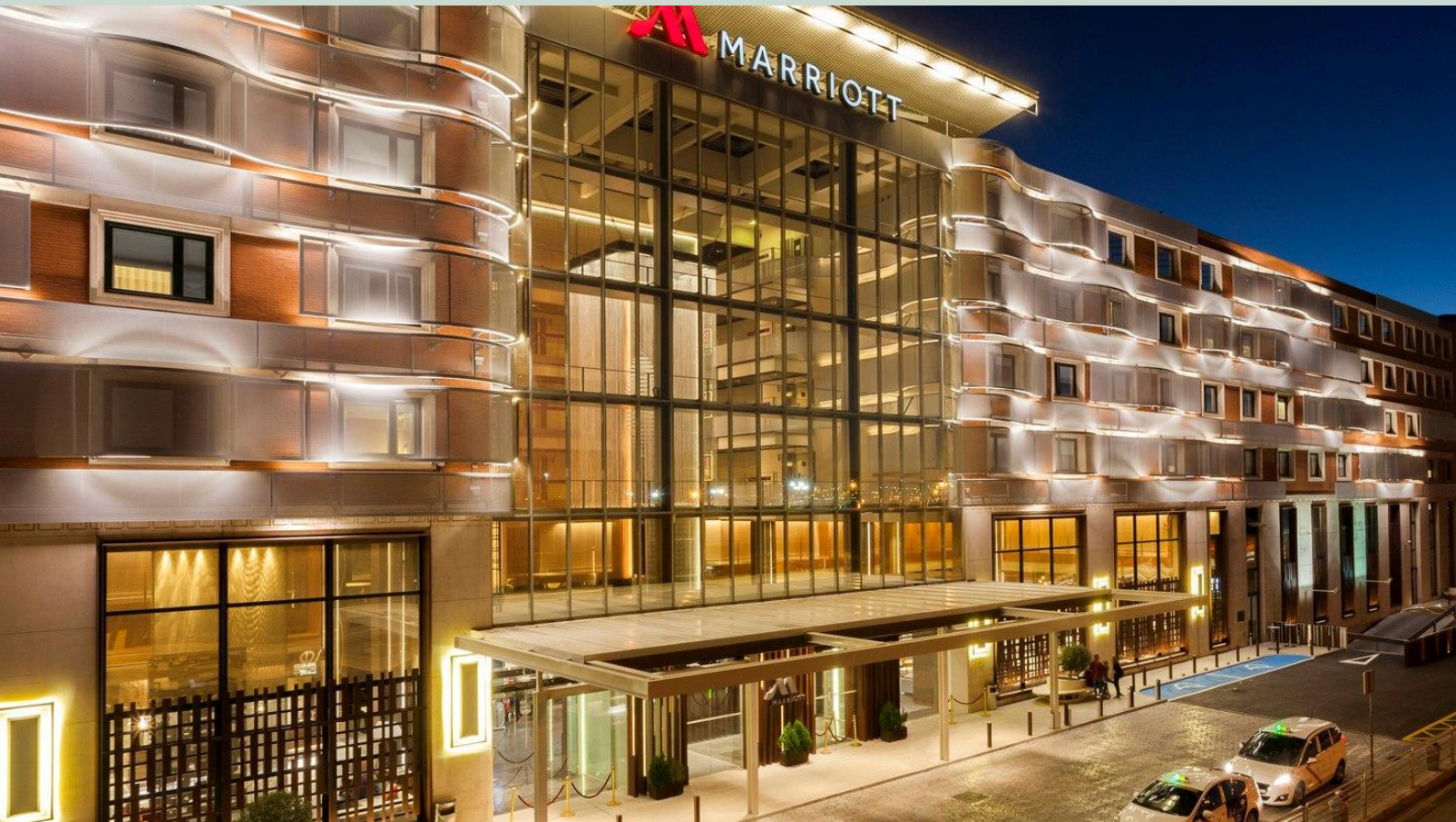
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