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# **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES TRAINING**

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## Content

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	5
<b>Rights of persons with disabilities</b> (Drazenko Jorgic)	7
<b>Overcoming study obstacles</b> (Tanja Stankovic-Jankovic)	13
<b>Role of Career Centres/ Centres for Students with Disabilities</b> (Tanja Glisic)	19
<b>Practical teaching</b> (Margareta Skopljak)	27
<b>Activities upon graduation</b> (Brane Mikanovic and Amra Dzindo)	34
<b>Skills for an autonomous and independent life</b> (Nebojsa Macanovic)	45



## INTRODUCTION

Training students with disabilities implies training activities covered within six separate chapters and with a few subheadings in each of them. The first chapter, **"Rights of Persons with Disabilities"** includes training in four sub-chapters: Knowledge of relevant laws (Law on Higher Education, Labor Law and similar laws), Knowledge of relevant bylaws (regulations, directives, statutes and similar documents), Self-commitment of Students with disabilities and self-representation of students with disabilities. In the second chapter, titled **"Overcoming Obstacles During Studying"**, training is also included in the four subheadings: Adaptation and cooperation with other students and assistants, Adaptation and cooperation with teachers and their assistants, Mastering architectural and sensory barriers in the teaching process and Self-education (e-learning, m-learning, distance learning, hybrid learning, etc.). The third chapter is titled **"The Role of Career Centers / Centers for the Support of Students with Disabilities"**. In this chapter, students with disabilities are given the following content in the training course: The role of mentors and cooperation (communication), Networking and cooperation with potential employers, Professional orientation and Professional guidance. The fourth part of the training of students with disabilities refers to the chapter **"Practical Teaching"**. The contents of this chapter are divided into three parts: Volunteering with potential employers, Harmonisation of work tasks with employers with learning outcomes of studies and Skills for presenting quality of work to potential employers. The fifth part of the training of students with disabilities refers to **"Post-graduation activities"**. The contents of this chapter are: Labour market research, Presentation to potential employers (CV, motivation letters, personal portfolio, videos, interviews, etc.) and Additional education, retraining and lifelong learning. The last chapter is titled **"Skills for an autonomous and independent life"**. In this chapter, the training contents relate to: Inclusion in civil society and interest groups, Lobbying, Representation in the media, and Self-employment.



In order for many people, including students with disabilities among them, to know how to be self-committed and to represent themselves, one of the essential conditions for success is a knowledge of relevant laws, as well as a knowledge of relevant by-laws. In the case of persons with disabilities, including students with disabilities, the most relevant are the laws on higher education, labour laws and laws on professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities. When it comes to knowledge of by-law acts, a knowledge of regulations, directives, statutes and similar documents is crucial.

### **Knowledge of relevant laws**

Both the employed and the unemployed, when attending high school, or studying at university, and after the completion of studies, should be familiar with elementary information of laws important for education, as well as those laws relevant for the periods before and during employment. This applies to persons and students with disabilities when they are employed. They have to learn how to defend their rights guaranteed by the relevant laws.

Some people are employed immediately after their secondary education, while others continue their education at colleges or universities. While studying, the most important law for all students, even those with disabilities, is the law on higher education or the law of a similar name covering higher education. This law protects certain rights of students, but also defines their obligations, regardless of whether they have a disability or not. So, for example, for students studying in Montenegro, regardless of whether they have a disability or not, it is good to be acquainted with the higher education law current at the time of enrollment or during their studies. For example, if it is a law from 2014, it would be necessary to get acquainted with it, in particular with the tenth section regarding the rights and obligations of students (Official Gazette of Montenegro, 2014). It is also true for students studying in other countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. By knowing this law, students will be able to protect and defend their rights, if in any case they are endangered. Otherwise, if they are unaware of this law, their studies may be more difficult and slower.

The next important and highly relevant law applies to persons, including students with disabilities, when they are in the stage of completion of their studies, or when they are already looking for an opportunity to start a first job. For this purpose, knowledge of labour laws or laws with a similar name is also necessary. Knowing this law, people with disabilities, whether students or students who graduated, would be well aware of some of the key facts of the law. For example, if people or students with disabilities studying in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina are well aware of law acts such as: Establishment of employment, Basic rights and obligations of workers, Basis and types of discrimination, Prohibition of discrimination, Freedom of association, Conditions for employment contract, Hiring of trainees, Working hours, Record keeping obligation, Worker protection, Salary of employees, Professional development of workers, Compensation of damages, Termination of employment contracts, and similar acts of this law (Official Gazette of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2016). Knowing the law or similar acts would also apply to disabled people studying in the Republic of Srpska (BiH), Montenegro and Serbia. Knowing the key provisions of this law is especially important for those persons with disabilities prior to the conclusion of the employment contract.

It is likely that the most useful law for students with disabilities is certainly the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities or laws of similar names. People, including students with disabilities, when choosing what to study and even during the course of

studies, and even after graduation, should be familiar with this law. Every act of this law is relevant for students with disabilities. Good knowledge of this law gives students an opportunity for further personal and professional development, effective professional rehabilitation, but also a much greater chance of employment, unlike students with disabilities who do not know anything about this law or a similar law. From the beginning to the end, almost all the points of this law are very important for students. Thus, for example, if students with disabilities study in the Republic of Serbia, then they should know more about the provisions of this law. The law from 2013 contains eleven. These are: Basic provisions, Rights and obligations of persons with disabilities, Work capacity assessment, Encouraging employment of persons with disabilities, Professional rehabilitation, Employment of persons with disabilities, Measures of active employment policy for persons with disabilities, Special forms of employment and work engagement of persons with disabilities, Supervision, Penal Provisions and Transitional and Final Provisions (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, 2013). Knowledge of these and similar provisions applies to students studying in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro as well.

Therefore, people with disabilities, including students with disabilities, while young, should not make unnecessary mistakes when choosing what to study, or when choosing a future profession. These relevant laws offer great help when enrolling, studying, and even after graduation. Students can only benefit by knowledge of the law; it cannot have a bad effect on their personal and professional development.

### **Knowledge of relevant bylaws**

Sometimes relevant laws are not fully explicit and explicitly explained, so ordinary citizens, including students with disabilities, cannot fully understand everything, that is, they cannot clearly understand their "between the lines" rights and obligations in given laws. For this purpose, they are assisted by relevant bylaws that are in some way "subordinate" to laws. These are the most common rules and statutes of public and private institutions and companies.

If we talk about the Law on Higher Education in Montenegro, then it is also good to know the Rules of study in the basic studies that arise from this law. From these Rules, it would be desirable for students with disabilities to be familiar with: General Provisions, Study Organisation, Progress during the course of studies, Evaluation of students' work, Study papers and similar provisions of these Rules (Rules of studying at basic studies, 2004). There are similar rules for students in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. If it happens that some of the persons, that is, students with disabilities are employed in a public or private institution, then it is good to know the rules of their employing institution, if they exists. For example, if a person with disabilities would be employed at the International University of Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), then he/she should be well aware of the Rules of Procedure of this institution (Rules of Procedure, 2016). Knowing this or similar by-laws, along with the knowledge of the labour law, would be beneficial to disabled people studying in Serbia and Montenegro. In addition to the law on professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, certain regulations may exist. It is also useful for people, i.e., students with disabilities, to know the Ordinance on determining the quota for employment of people with disabilities, as well as, for example, the Rulebook on incentives for the employment of persons with disabilities as they are inherent in the Croatian legislation and/ or similar legislation in the region.

Namely, in addition to knowing the relevant laws for people with disabilities, in this case for students with disabilities, it is desirable that besides them, students also know the relevant bylaws. The width of information cannot be detrimental to these students. They can only eliminate prejudices if they have them on the study and employment of people with disabilities.

## Self-determination of students with disabilities

Not all university teachers and their assistants are fully trained in the teaching process to meet all the educational needs of students, especially students with disabilities. Sometimes in the teaching process, there are such situations that some teachers and assistants perform the teaching process as if they are the centre of the teaching process. In such cases, they are the subject and object of the teaching process. Such teachers and teaching assistants do not put students in an active, but in a passive listening position. In such situations, teachers ignore the roles of students in which they can choose, decide, often feel independent and competent, and feel their own personal and professional development, that is, they are not motivated to study and be part of the learning process. At such a university tutorial, in which students, and especially students with disabilities are in a passive role, they increasingly lack internal motivation for studying and working, and the teaching process becomes meaningless. Students with disabilities who do not have the opportunity to be more active in the teaching process, or who have no chance to be eager and curious, to ask questions, to seek solutions, to explore, to choose and decide, to be more autonomous and less controlled, must take things into "their own hands" and in some way "outsmart" such teachers and assistants, who, unfortunately, are part of university education.

When it comes to the theory of self-determination, it is often assumed that we are in a very wide continuum of the theory of internal and external motivation. Desai and Ryan developed the theory of self-determination with associates at the end of the last century. Gagné and Deci describe this theory as a motivation theory for work and point to the relevance of this theory, which is in the theories of organisational behaviour (Gagné and Deci, 2005). These authors put the difference between autonomous or internal and controlled or external motivation at the heart of this theory. Autonomous or internal motivation implies, for example, that students with disabilities already have the will, or they are very willingly studying, while, on the other hand, controlled or external motivation implies a certain amount of pressure on these students by teachers or teaching assistants, often in the form of some reward or punishment. When the teaching process already lacks certain positive external incentives from teachers and teaching assistants, then students with disabilities are left only with the dilemma of how to motivate themselves internally by their own strength, and to find support in some other people, like other students find external incentives that will eventually internalise in order to evolve into self-determined and competent individuals.

Nenad Suzić, a renowned professor at the University of Banja Luka, sees self-determination in an inextricable relationship with competence. He points out that the concept of self-determination consists of several sets mentioned by other authors, such as Maslow, White and De Charms. Referring to Deci, as well as to the above authors, he emphasises that the notion of self-determination contains three notions: the orientation to the expansion of oneself in nature and society, the effectiveness in man's interest in interaction with the environment, and causality, i.e., one's power, with his own will, to become the causative factor of change. Suzić emphasises that in order to better understand the essence of Deci's theory of "competence and self-determination," it is necessary to explain the lower rate concepts such as: challenge, curiosity, cognitive evaluation, locus of causality, control and information aspect of the prize, social rewards, model of motivation (Suzić, 2005). What then might be the implications of Suzić's views on the theory of self-determination in the case of training students with disabilities, regardless of whether they are encouraged by teachers and teaching assistants in the direction of development of self-determination? From the perspective of self-determination of the notion of self-determination, that is, its three conceptual terms, Suzić points out, students with disabilities should be more oriented, more effective and more focused on changes. In cases where students with disabilities have individual teachers and their assistants who don't encourage students to focus on expanding

themselves, then students themselves are forced "not to wait" for teachers and teaching assistants but rather to work on their own. This would mean that from those courses where they do not see a broader perspective, they should try to study and explore by themselves much more. In this way they expand the horizon of their knowledge, which will certainly prove to be useful one day with employers if they continue with such orientation as employees as well. Likewise, teaching situations that lack effective activities and where there is almost no interaction between teachers, assistants and students with disabilities, there is no reason to stop and give up on some more productive teaching environment. Thus, in these cases, students with disabilities are left to ask the course teachers and their teaching assistants to provide them more information from time to time, in addition to theoretical lectures, situations in which students will apply the theory and create concrete actions and activities related to the future profession (e.g., role play, simulation of processes and activities, performance of experiments etc.). In addition, students with disabilities can initiate with their teachers and their teaching assistants situations in which students cooperatively study and teach each other. This is a unique opportunity in which it can be clearly seen that students with disabilities can be almost as successful as students who do not have disabilities to participate in the teaching process and bring benefit to others and the community in general. The self-determination of students with disabilities makes a wide range of activities that are mostly internally motivated, and fewer activities are encouraged from outside. If students with disabilities are not offered chances for new challenges, then they should create them. For example, one of challenges for students with disabilities may be to get the best grades in most essential courses. In addition to a possible lack of challenges initiated by teachers in the teaching process, students with disabilities do not need to allow themselves a "standstill status". The lack of feedback on the curiosity of students, evaluation of knowledge, locus of causality, control and information aspect of the prize, social rewards, and similar features of self-determination, should be sought and initiated out of school where students have total freedom to determine with whom, when, where, what and how to work. Jasmina Knezevic and Jelena Mićević-Karanović wrote on how the theory of self-determination can be applied in the work of the educators. They believe that this theory can be applied by encouraging internal motivation and self-regulation and that this theory suggests that external and internal motivations are not discrete categories, but types of motivational orientation that are deployed along the motivational continuum. They also emphasise that developing children's skills such as *making choices, making decisions and solving problems* contribute to meeting basic psychological needs, which is the basis of internal motivation and self-regulation of behaviour. The authors also point out that the observation of competence implies that by creating a sense of greater personal competence through a certain activity, internal motivation is also increased, and vice versa. They also emphasise that basic psychological needs occupy an important place in the theory of self-determination, where authors speak of three of these needs:

- the need for autonomy;
- the need for competence;
- the need for connectivity (Knežević and Mićević-Karanović, 2014).

For a basic psychological need of *connection* they say that:

In literature on self-determination theory seven types of activities are mentioned that contribute to the general sense of connection:

- talk about personally important topics;
- participation in joint activities;
- existence of a group of friends with whom an informal social time can be spent (going out, chats);
- the existence of a sense of understanding and appreciation by other people;
- participation in activities that are pleasant and enjoyable to the person;
- avoiding quarrels and conflicts that create distance and a sense of non-involvement with significant other people;
- avoiding feelings that direct attention to self and other people - feelings that increase self-awareness, insecurity, and direct attention to the self of a person, that is, from other people. (Reis

et al., 2000, according to Knežević and Mićević-Karanović, 2014, pp. 33)

From the above on the application of the theory of self-determination in the work of the educator, certain implications can be drawn for the self-determination of students with disabilities. Again, we emphasise, if there are insufficient external incentives by teachers and assistants in order to motivate students, then students only have to remain in line with the above and students should be more active themselves or more precisely: they should choose the contents and ways of learning outside the curriculum, make decisions and solve numerous problems, and others should not decide and solve problems in lieu of them. In addition to this, if students with disabilities, besides meeting the needs for autonomy and competence, want also to have a satisfactory need for connectivity, they should do the following: talk to other students about personally important topics, participate in joint learning activities, join the group of students with whom they can spend time, create a sense of understanding and appreciation by other students, participate in activities in which they enjoy and feel comfortable (for example, always to be taught by quality teachers), avoid quarrels and conflicts with students who create distance and feeling of their non-involvement, and avoid feelings that direct attention to oneself and other students - feelings that increase self-awareness, insecurity and direct attention to students, that is, from other students.

### **Self-representation of students with disabilities**

Self-representation of students with disabilities is one of the main self-determination skills. As well as other skills, it can be trained and improved over time to enable students with disabilities to self-determine themselves during their studies. Many students, even students with disabilities sometimes have problems representing themselves during their education or, for example, with a potential employer.

There are some ways and experiences that can be learned to develop and improve self-representation skills. For example, according to Kvenka-Karlina and associates, students with emotional disorders and behavioural disorders can successfully represent their ideas and thoughts with logical and coherent arguments through convincing writing (Cuenca-Carlino, Mustian, Allen, & Gilbert, 2015). The results of data processing from the conducted semi-structured interviews in focus groups of students with disabilities showed that the following four self-representation or self-determination skills are absolutely necessary for students in university in order to obtain the support needed by these students: seeking from the Centre for Support of Students with Disabilities and College Services available to all students; Forming relationships with professors and instructors; Development of campus support system with friends, support groups and Centre for support for students with disabilities, and acquiring self-awareness and self-understanding for perseverance (Getzel, & Thoma, 2008).

In conclusion, students with disabilities who do not have enough external support from teachers must "take things in their stride" in such cases. For the successful study of these students at the universities of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro and the "reaching" of the labour market, it is necessary to have a somewhat higher self-activity of students than usual. Only in this way, will students with disabilities "fight" for better study and faster employment.

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