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‘Access to learning’ and ‘learning to access’: Analysing the distinctive role of specialist teachers of children and young people with vision impairments in facilitating curriculum access through an ecological systems theory

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Tables

Table 1. Examples of support strategies provided by specialist teachers in the microsystems for facilitating curriculum access

Key access issue / learning objective	Example of MQ outcome (England) and MQ competence (Scotland) to illustrate required knowledge/understanding and/or skills	'Access to learning' support strategies	'Learning to access' support strategies
<p>Early print reading for learner with low vision</p>	<p>MQ outcome 4.4: <i>Know appropriate approaches, strategies and interventions to enable learners with VI to acquire key literacy, mathematical and ICT skills, and how to implement these</i></p> <p>MQ competence: <i>A critical knowledge of and ability to use a range of ICT and, as appropriate, low and high technology augmentative communication approaches to facilitate access to the curriculum and lifelong learning.</i></p>	<p>Specialist teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies books of appropriate level with larger print, bold and attractive pictures. • Designs and produce bespoke large print materials with modified pictures / associated material. • Encourages early writing with high contrast bold pen. • Introduces specialist equipment to create an optimised reading environment (lighting, angled desk) • Uses talking books. 	<p>Specialist teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduces magnifiers to access print books. • Introduces eBooks, and teaches how print presentation can be adjusted. • Encourages learner to make adjustments to optimise lighting. • Teaches touch typing skills (and associated software). • Teaches methods for making adjustments to computers to improve accessibility (e.g. change resolution, increase icon size) • Teaches speed control for talking books (including access through

			<p>synthetic / computer speech).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where appropriate considers alternative routes to literacy (e.g. braille, Moon).
<p>Moving around the educational setting</p>	<p>MQ outcome 4.9. <i>Undertake environmental audits to assess and review settings/ classrooms for accessibility and safety</i></p> <p>MQ competence: <i>A knowledge of, and ability to use effectively, the orientation and mobility techniques for both able bodied and wheelchair using children and young people with a visual impairment;</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carries out an environmental audit: removes hazards and makes the environment inclusive. e.g. appropriate signage, contrasting doors and bannisters. • Trains peers, teachers and other staff in sighted guide techniques. • Adjusts timetabling to minimise travel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaches mobility and orientation skills, e.g. the use of a cane (this will often involve drawing upon other professionals with appropriate training). • Teaches young person how to ask for mobility help (and how to politely refuse it). • Teaches young person skills needed to learn to navigate a new environment
<p>Formal assessment approaches (e.g. public tests and examinations)</p>	<p>MQ outcome 7.3: <i>Ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place so that learners with VI can access exams at key transition points.</i></p> <p>MQ competence: <i>An understanding of how children with visual impairment learn, including the impact of visual impairment and other disabilities on language and communication,</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages the use of access arrangements which reflect learner's preferred classroom practice (e.g. individualised large print formats, reader, scribe) • Liaises with external agencies to ensure match between classroom arrangements and external tests and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages the use of technology to provide independent access to tests and examinations • Liaises with providers to ensure provision of test papers in electronic formats • Facilitates practice with examination conditions so learners become

	<i>access to information and mobility and movement, and the significance of these for curriculum development and teaching approaches;</i>	examinations. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure teachers and other staff are fully informed about any additional examination arrangements.	familiar with independent access strategies
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Table 2. Examples of support strategies provided by specialist teachers in the mesosystem for facilitating curriculum access

Key access issue / learning objective	Example of MQ outcome (England) and MQ competence (Scotland) to illustrate required knowledge/understanding and/or skills	'Access to learning' support strategies	'Learning to access' support strategies
Transition planning	<p>MQ outcome 5.8: <i>Plan teaching approaches that promote access to learning and participation for learners with VI. Recognise challenges that may arise from the physical and social environment and understand how these may change in different phases of education and at transfer from one setting/school to another</i></p> <p>MQ competence: <i>An understanding of the specific needs and issues which can arise with visually impaired pupils at transitions to and from different stages of education and experience.</i></p>	<p>Specialist teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes connections with teachers and peers in next educational setting to explain learner's needs. • Undertakes an environmental audit in a learner's next educational setting. • Reviews with habilitation staff the mobility needs to and from home for the next educational setting. 	<p>Specialist teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote opportunities for the learner to meet with staff and peers and talk about his/her needs. • Involves the learner in carrying out environmental audit in his/her next setting and determining recommendations. • Facilitates mobility training to enable young person to get to new setting independently.
Working with families	<p>MQ outcome 8.8: <i>Liaise effectively and work in partnership with the parents/carers of learners with VI, providing information, advice</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links parents with specialist support services. • Provides specialist advice and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves the learner and his/her family in decision making about their perceived support needs.

	<p><i>and support, based on the principles of informed choice and the needs of the child</i></p> <p>MQ competence: <i>An ability to plan, develop and evaluate their strategies for working with parents/carers, teachers and multidisciplinary teams in support of visually impaired learners.</i></p>	<p>guidance on support needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaises with agencies that provide social activities, support and advice. • Speaks to parents on behalf of their child in relation to VI (e.g. helping parents understand what child can or cannot do independently) • Provides guidance on changes to the home to promote access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates independent contact between families and specialist agencies. • Supporting child/young person to be able to advocate to their families. • Promotes independence development of the child, and the families' role in this.
<p>Informed decision making</p>	<p>MQ outcome: <i>Liaise with appropriate information, advice and guidance services to empower learners with VI to be prepared and make informed decisions about their future</i></p> <p>MQ competence: <i>An ability to reflect on the effectiveness of their practice in different contexts and roles, and the level of their awareness of appropriate practices for learners with visual impairment from ages 0-18 years, in the context of current legislation, policies and advice for education and access, and local and national support provision.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides the learner with information about future career possibilities. • Links with the guidance teacher of the learner to ensure coherent message. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides the learner with opportunities to discuss potential career possibilities, including those followed by other people with vision impairment.

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Table 3. Examples of support strategies provided by specialist teachers in the exosystem for facilitating curriculum access

Key access issue / learning objective	Example of MQ outcome (England) and MQ competence (Scotland) to illustrate required knowledge/understanding and/or skills	'Access to learning' support strategies	'Learning to access' support strategies
Awareness raising within educational setting of potential barriers to curriculum access	<p>MQ outcome 8.11: <i>Raise awareness of vision impairment among peers, teachers and other adults working with learners with VI and model best practice</i></p> <p>MQ competence: <i>An understanding of the range of barriers visually impaired learners face in accessing the curriculum, and of strategies for enabling access and support within different contexts;</i></p>	<p>Specialist teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides training for whole school staff on a regular basis. • Ensures awareness raising activities are included as part of induction for new staff in an educational setting. • Provide raising awareness sessions for learners peers in class. 	<p>Specialist teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works with learner to help them develop an understanding of the support that they require and to facilitate them in being able to articulate this. • Involves learners in awareness raising activities where possible with peers, teachers and other agencies. • Facilitates opportunities for learners to be 'interviewed' by new staff as part of their induction activities to find out about <i>individual</i> curriculum access needs.
Curriculum policy development	MQ outcome 8.14: <i>Be part of, or work closely with, leadership teams, taking a lead in</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports school in developing, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves learners with vision

	<p><i>developing, implementing and evaluating policies and practices that contribute to the achievement, inclusion and well-being of learners with VI so they may become part of a community</i></p> <p><i>MQ competence: An ability to reflect on the effectiveness of their practice in different contexts and roles, and the level of their awareness of appropriate practices for learners with both a hearing and a visual impairment from ages 0-18 years, in the context of current legislation, policies and advice for education and access, and local and national support provision.</i></p>	<p>implementing and evaluating policies and practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advises on implications of support practices for learner's wider inclusion, e.g. direct support from teaching assistant. 	<p>impairment in evaluating effectiveness of policies and practices within educational setting that relate to curriculum and curriculum access.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates opportunities for learner to contribute to decisions about direct support.
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