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## **Intellectual Output 2: How to organise a buddy system for people with intellectual disabilities**

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# 1 BUDDY SYSTEM FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES ON A UNIVERSITY CAMPUS: INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION

When students with an intellectual disability go to university or graduate school, there is a whole lot that can happen. A university campus is huge and impressive to them. And when these students are overwhelmed by things, it should be possible for intellectually disabled people to ask for help and to ask nearby students, who are then ready and willing to answer them. This is where the ‘buddy system’ comes in.

The buddy system is organised for intellectually disabled people with a view to pairing them to one or more regular students. A buddy is a student who, with their skills and knowledge, can help the other person and it is a person who the disabled student can always count. This could for instance mean that both spend lunch together. When the intellectually disabled student has any questions or requests, their ‘buddy’ will then be ready for them.

For learners with intellectual disabilities a ‘buddy’ could make a real difference when for instance they want to learn about the whereabouts of rooms or buildings in the college or when they do not know who to address for questions. A buddy system is created starting from the belief that also vulnerable people have the right to be included as civilians in society and that society should try to be more receptive, hospitable and supportive towards them.

For learners without disability at University, becoming a ‘buddy’ can give them valuable insights into questions and issues their future clients may have, regardless if they are studying social work, law or medicine. Especially people with intellectual disabilities often help professionals to see their work from a new perspective and to understand their real life concerns. It is important to keep in mind that a buddy system is mutually beneficial for both buddies and voluntary at the same time.

Cooperation with a ‘buddy’ can be seen as complementary to other forms of support. It offers the opportunity to realise support in an informal and inclusive way embedded in the real lives of people. A buddy system would also provide support to the non-disabled buddies in case they need it. The buddy system originates from the United States, where it took form in the shape of practical and emotional support (by ‘buddies’) at the end of the sixties and start of the seventies. This American system – relying on buddies only – brought about some smaller initiatives in Europe, North-America and Australia in the nineties.

The activities of a buddy amongst other comprise familiarising the people that are helped with currently accepted norms and values and with social rules and manners. This increases performance at school too and often raises motivation as well. The focus of the system is not to succeed in pre-determined goals, neither does it lie in learning or socialising. What really counts is the contact between the parties. The idea is that both have a good time.

In this output you’ll find recommendations for implementing a buddy system on campus based on experiences with different buddy systems in but also outside our campuses. The main focus will be on the role of ‘student’ but lately we are gaining experiences on working with lecturers with an intellectual disability. Persons with an intellectual disability in this role can also benefit from a buddy system.

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## 2 ADVANTAGES OF IMPLEMENTING OF A BUDDY SYSTEM

### 2.1 ADVANTAGES FOR PEOPLE WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Van den Tier & Potting (2015) obtained quite some results from meta-analyses regarding ‘buddy projects’. These can be categorized in four different branches: (1) psychological value, (2) socio-communicative value, (3) personal development and (4) widening horizons. The strongest effects are noticeable regarding the psychological and socio-communicative values.

Psychologically, the buddy system means more confidence and self-assurance for people with intellectual disabilities and a large drop in stress factors.

Regarding the socio-communicative part we can conclude that people with an intellectual disability who worked with a buddy before have more positive relationships towards others, make contact more easily and – in the end – have a lot more friends afterwards. An added bonus is that they now tend to ask for help of others more easily and problematic behaviour is lowered.

When looking at their personal development, improved school performance becomes noticeable. The system motivates them for school and their buddy often assures them enough to make them build up confidence regarding their future.

Participating at a university’s campus means widening their horizons with a range of interests, hobbies, access to new networks and broadening the look on their living environments. The people with an intellectual disability are open for new experiences and get to know different norms, values and cultures.

Being a student with a buddy means developing new social valued roles and therefore next to accessibility to new networks, gets you status, access to new places and contexts with the added bonus of meeting new people and possibly developing your own social network (Osburn, 2006). All are important aspects that contribute to a good quality of life.

Within the concept ‘Kwartiermaken’ (Kal, 2001) the buddy system is regarded as an intervention that contributes for ‘creating space for otherness’, also known as hospitable niches where people who don’t feel comfortable at other places can feel comfortable, welcome and have the possibility to develop themselves. Meininger (2013) therefore considers buddy systems potential places where ‘otherness’ and ‘strangeness’ may exist and a dialogue about these ‘nesses’ can originate. Emphasis should be on ‘being together with’ instead of ‘doing something for’. Buddies should be intrinsically motivated to share (a part of) their lives with people with an intellectual disability.

### 2.2 ADVANTAGES FOR REGULAR STUDENTS

For the buddies themselves helping someone with an intellectual disability is definitely an added value. It brings responsibility, self-confidence and more. Advantages for students are linked on what motivates them to become a buddy in the first place, which can be personal conviction to mean something for someone, learning new skills or just for the fun of it. In some cases the students can be motivated because being a buddy is considered a form of workplacement or internship and they obtain credits by being a buddy.

Michèle Jacobs (2014) established a list of advantages for these volunteers on a micro-, meso- and macro-level. Advantages on a micro-level are related to learning, absorbing knowledge, communication, listening, working together, motivating, enthusing, organising, making arrangements, making contact with others, dealing with criticism, standing up for themselves, taking responsibility and so forth. Positive effects on a meso-level are mainly: meeting new people, obtaining a bigger network of people, etc. The main effects on a macro-level is acquiring insights in certain problems, certain target audiences and in their image of structural and institutional causes.

Amsoms et al. (2014-2015) established the following added values for the volunteer: more confidence, gaining awareness about the necessity and benefits of these kinds of projects, improving socio-communicative skills, broadening their social network, gaining insight in society and even generally feeling more useful. Other authors point out the confidence of the buddies as well, just as having a new and improved self-image, better communicative skills too and a more positive relation towards school. Working with a buddy also adds to their self-confidence and to the socio-communicative skills of the volunteer and increases their insight in the problems of children and youngsters.

Regular students and students with a disability can learn a lot from each other. Therefore it is worth being in each other's environment. Regular students happen to close themselves off less from other communities and open up more to new cultures when they participate in a buddy system. They gain insight in each other's way of living and the university student develops an eye for discrimination.

## 2.3 ADVANTAGES FOR THE UNIVERSITY/CAMPUS

Like the "design for all" principle, we advise the implementation of the system not solely to help the students with an intellectual disability, but to help all students. The buddy-system is not only great for people with an intellectual disability, it could be an added value for everyone on the campus. Most certainly for freshmen this could have a lot of positive effects. A freshmen at university normally does not immediately know where they should head when problems occurs. That is why implementing the buddy system over the whole college could be advantageous. Having a person who is ready for you in case you have questions is nice and boosts the feeling of inclusion and belonging.

Due to the buddy system the pairs also get a clear vision on bullying and exclusion. The university can also actually do something with the conclusions that are most often drawn. This could point to obstruction- or even excluding-mechanisms inside the college. These could be dealt with by umbrella coordination bodies by platforms, by different services, or by policy-makers. Some buddy systems deal with these conclusions on a yearly basis with reports, research and policy advice.

Depended on the study, being a buddy could be subject of students training and education. This works both ways if utilized sufficiently. Both can use their experiences with being or having a buddy for reflecting on relationships with people whom you won't meet in your regular network of friends and family. The buddy contact can be a safe context to practice several skills that might be useful for example for future labor participation, like working together with colleagues, commercial clients or roles regarding care and support. Within education focusing on engineering and development for example people with intellectual disability can be potential future clients for whom students will design products. For students social work people with intellectual disabilities could be the people they will support in their daily lives as a professional. So in some contexts buddy systems can be a way to bring the professional practice in the classrooms.

An other important advantage is that with buddy systems the campus is more accessible for people with intellectual disabilities and therefor meeting, next to a social responsibility, the legal obligations of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with a handicap.

## 2.4 ADVANTAGES FOR THE SOCIETY

In the past few years a lot has been written about the realisation of communities with expected participation. This is just as much a political debate as a professional debate. Opposing the 'passive individual' whom, as initial consumer, demands his rights, there now is the 'active individual', who is socially involved and responsible. In the social and cultural sector, as well as the ones of care and education, the demand for volunteers and informal care is increasing. Underlying motives for moving from the professional to voluntary forces is the increasing criticism about the professional model being too dominant. The reasoning behind this is that realising 'good care' is only possible if and only if these two kinds of help are combined. Working as a volunteer is commonly viewed as a great thing by society for a good reason: it stimulates people to get involved with each other and with society.

The Oranjefonds, a national fund that supports more then 10.000 voluntary initiatives in The Netherlands, describes that buddy systems contributes to learning, self confidence, better social interaction and more social contact. Therefor buddy systems are being considered usefull for society, because they stimulate labor participation, but also social participation. Next to this they offer support to people with a need for support.

Meeting and connecting with people who are diferent then yourself and are maby considered a bit 'strange' is know to be a very important promoting factor for understanding and de-stigmatisation. Buddy system facilitate this contact and these meetings between people who naturally won't meet each other.

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## 3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

### 3.1 A WELL CONSIDERED APPROACH

The implementation of a buddy system on a university campus or in a university's educational programme needs to be done with care. Without this it could have very negative consequences: people with an intellectual disability could be left out once the regular student is done with their studies or some might underestimate the effort the buddy work requires.

Experiences with several buddy projects defined a few general methodological steps and effective elements that should be considered when implementing a system that were combined for the benefit of a research project on voluntary work in a buddy system with people with intellectual disabilities in the Netherlands (Gijzel, 2015).

This is why the following are some important focus points when implementing this system.

### 3.2 INTAKE-CONVERSATIONS WITH BOTH GROUPS OF STUDENTS

Before rushing to selection, there should first be a few conversations with on the one hand the buddies with intellectual disabilities, on the other hand with the buddy without intellectual disability. This is most definitely necessary! Such conversations can provide the right information to form a realistic image of the people involved and their shortcomings.

### 3.3 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Before linking two students together, it should be kept in mind that most likely the buddy will have an 'affinity' with a specific target audience. Minimal expectations for the buddy are to keep an open mind and to accept the person they are linked to. Furthermore is it expected of them not to judge them on some levels: socially, communication-wise, regarding their patience, emphatic capability, trustworthiness, how honest they are, if they listen well, if they are dynamic and enthusiastic, their ability to see through things, if they are autonomous in some areas and where they keep their boundaries.

Having selection criteria is not an excessive luxury. Depending on the education and base of the campus the selection for these requirements can be done in an oral conversation or in a survey. In both cases the references of the candidate are checked. An additional way to determine if the candidates are suitable is by clarifying the expectations beforehand and giving the recruits an intensive training. This combined method allows the candidates to think about their candidature for a longer period of time. A last way is to simply observe the pair very well. This can be done during the programme and at meetups and even when doing a home visit.

Another important factor for a successful relationship between them is how they relate to each other, which can be predicted in advance by matching them right. This match needs to happen in a well considered way, if it is to be durable. For a good match, some matching criteria need to be established. In our opinion one of the most important factors in this that there is common ground between the pair, meaning that they should have at least some common interests and preferences. The distance between their living quarters should also be taken into account. Demographic criteria could also be kept in mind: you could match by gender or age. Other practical things that should not be forgotten are criteria like: their free time, whether they smoke or not, if they own a pet, their character and the nature of the handicap, etc.

In many countries, like the Netherlands, it is required to have a ‘declaration of (good) behaviour’ when doing (voluntary) work with people with intellectual disabilities. Recruitment, selection and matching therefore is best to be done in corporation with care organisations or voluntary organisations. Not only can this partnership support the campus in organizing buddy systems but it can also gain access to new target groups, knowledge and skills. When there is a sustainable partnership with for example a care organisation that supports people with intellectual disabilities there will also be easier access to their support workers for questions, follow up or evaluation of the match.

### 3.4 FOLLOW-UP BY (GROUP)SURVEYS AND PEER SUPPORT

Once the buddy has been assigned, the follow-up remains important. Letting the students handle everything themselves, without any surveillance or professional supervision, is not a good idea. Problems will occur and questions might remain unanswered.

It does not seem to be a great idea to have only one programme in only one course, in which the lecturer hands over all the tools to the buddies. Every buddy and each person with an intellectual disability is different and each relationship needs to be approached differently. That is why peer support and/or supervision is appropriate. Buddies with and without disabilities can come together to share doubts, questions and look for solutions to their problems. The teacher can then act as a supervisor or co-intervision who can lead the conversation’s direction. This supports that this is a peer-to-peer concept and thus any support or training should be directed to the peer-relationship instead of to one of the buddies. This allows them to learn from each other. The uniqueness of this is to not simply hand them the solutions, but to ask about each buddy’s thoughts and recent acts. This way the buddies can come to a reachable and realistic solution for themselves, which also fits with their own ambitions and capabilities.

These intervention<sup>1</sup> sessions should be held on regular basis, allowing every buddy to bring forward all they have to say. The method of intervention is also instructive and can be used later on in the buddy’s career.

### 3.5 CREDITS

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<sup>1</sup> Intervention: this differs from supervision in the way that supervision is led by supervisors, while intervention is held between equals.

In higher education, the work load of each programme or course unit is expressed in credits. If you pass the examination of a course unit, you will receive these credits. Acquired work loads of courses are also called credits. A student receives a credit certificate for this. A credit certificate is the recognition of acquired competencies on the basis of an examination of a course unit. What you have earned for a course unit is shown as credits. So a credit means that you have succeeded in the job.

Even though the buddy system is completely voluntary, we do want to stress that giving buddies credits would definitely be appropriate. In the current educational system, students are often overdemanding, which means they need to handle a lot of tasks in a short period of time. If no credits are granted at all, many students might quit over time. This leads to people with a disability getting turned a cold shoulder and it would be a missed opportunity for regular students. This would also cause a problem for lecturers and management. Since no credits are offered, buddy work cannot be combined with regular school work. Their commitment would also suffer.

By working with people with an intellectual disability, students gain experience, certainly if they wish to develop this expertise in their careers.

They will learn about the specific needs of a person with an intellectual disability and how to deal with them. Apart from keeping an open mind they also need to have the right learning-attitude. They should definitely be able to keep arrangements, be open for feedback and to be open to being followed-up. Also their willingness to work together and take part in the intervisions and their self-reflection will be an added value for their education.

By giving credits, a university or course also makes it clear that the buddy system is important for the university or course. This message does not miss its purpose among the regular students: students still learn most from copying the experienced behaviour of what is shown in the programme itself. If the study programme feels that participation is important, it will also implement a student council and take it seriously. This is more important than repeating in theoretical courses how important school participation is. The same applies to caring for and taking responsibility towards people with intellectual disabilities. A well designed credit system with regard to the buddies seems to be an important signal from the degree programme to us.

How and in which courses and parts of courses these credits could be granted, is up to the lecturers to decide. Being creative with how to put the credits in practice is important. Here are some examples:

- A part in a traineeship
- An optional subject/elective subject
- A part of a seminar
- A project
- A supplement to the diploma (perhaps combined with other extra tasks)

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## 4 FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

A project with a buddy-system generates valuable effects for various target audiences. The question of how to achieve those effects is yet unanswered, though. Which criteria should be met for this?

We identify the main focus points and conditions to organise in a buddy system (based on Dekker and others, 2013 and on Van den Tier & Potting, 2015).

### 4.1 BASICS: DETERMINING THE GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS

Attention must be given to creating the right expectations, for the regular students as well as for the students with an intellectual disability. Be advised that time should be spent in organising and planning this system.

One of the things to keep in mind as a teacher is that the ‘absorption-capacity’ of a student is limited. After only twenty minutes of listening the attention of an average student will lessen. For people with an intellectual disability, these twenty minutes might even be too long. The result of this is that they might become passive or even disrupt the other, attentive students. The challenge to keep them interested should be met by teaching in a manner that is interesting and includes sufficient variety. Show the timeframes in advance for them (with pictures and pictograms for the students with an intellectual disability) to let them know what they are in for. Speak not only to, but also with your students. Talk about the difficulties they might encounter along the way, show interest and respect each of their opinions and capacities.

### 4.2 A DURABLE RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST

Building a durable relationship between buddy and person with an intellectual disability, with enough personal attention, is one of the most important factors of a successful pair-project. Without trust no successful results can be expected. Projects with the span of a year and highly frequent meetings obtain the most successful results (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Uytterlinde et al., 2009). Research in the U.S. shows that buddy relationships of less than six months can even bring disadvantages, especially for young people who have already seen a lot of people in their lives leave them (Philip & Spratt, 2007).

### 4.3 RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING OF VOLUNTEERS

We prefer to not give any predetermined selection criteria, but rather some things to keep in mind: the buddy needs to be available, needs to possess a minimum of social and communicative capabilities, can

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show affinity towards the target audience and needs to either have experience with or be open to supporting people who are/feel vulnerable.

#### 4.4 MAKING AN EFFECTIVE MATCH

There is a need for a certain 'spark' between the two people of the pair. A good match is essential for success and prevents any disappointment in later phases. Volunteers and participants need to feel good about their respective partners. If there is nothing wrong between the two, then this will automatically lead to the people flourishing, obtaining confidence and enough courage for the disabled person to break out of social isolation. Matching the pairs is like completing a puzzle, a piece of experience and a large dosis of 'fingerspitzengefühl'. Every single time a match is made, factors like age, needs and expectations should be kept in mind. Similar interests lead to positive results. A good match can be made on the basis of a logical combination of (a) the amount of support needed for the student with an intellectual disability, (b) the capabilities and also the incapacibilities of the buddy and (c) the personalities and preferences of both of them.

#### 4.5 CLEAR ROLES AND RELATIONS

It is not aimed at to construct an equal relation between the buddy and disabled student in which they both make compromises. The contact which the buddy and person with a disability offers is functional, with a goal in mind which can be realised in this span of time. Due to this, a positive addition to the quality of life for the person with an intellectual disability can be made in only one or one and a half year time. If the buddy acts as a friend, then the supportive relationship will obtain more characteristics of a friendly relationship over time. Agreements and expectations should be agreed on, so that both parties know what they can expect from each other. A friendship is an added value, but it is not always necessary: an effective, successful pairing has an eye for the target group and its problems and understands the possibilities to make positive changes through the buddy system.

#### 4.6 SUPPORT GIVEN TO A BUDDY

For the well-being of the volunteer and for the effectiveness of intervention the buddy needs to have a place to share their experiences, to be supported and receive feedback.

Education and training (e.g. by roleplaying, how to communicate best, how to accompany them helpfully) and intervision-meetings (in which the knowledge and experiences can be exchanged) add to the quality of the buddy system tremendously. Volunteers often quit because of false expectations or short-term failure.

During the previously mentioned activities these volunteers learn the limitations of acting themselves, to put things in perspective and to be satisfied with small steps forward.

Evaluation and reflection is an important factor for success for both parties. When there is contact with a social worker or support worker it is good to involve him in the evaluation of the match.

## 4.7 INTEGRATION OF A PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Research shows that when a pair-project is used alongside other interventions, it becomes more effective (Dekker et al., 2013; Hall, 2003) For example, a professional pair aimed at the elderly who make agreements with other voluntary projects and/or professionals works fine.

Working together with another (societal) organisation is useful in the search of raising money, easing the implementation of the pair-project, and dividing the effort. Furthermore cooperation offers also the possibility to benefit from each other's level of expertise. It needs to be clear who handles what kind of situations and when.

Offering credits to buddies is an obvious way to assure a good process. It prevents buddies from quitting early and it makes sure that professional effort is put into the work. The support needed for the buddy could also be guaranteed in setting of credits. If there are no credits offered for them, all of this would be much harder to realise, both for students and for the lecturers.

Making a contract where appointment, commitments and expectations are written down helps to make clear what is to be expected from each other.

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## 5 COMMON MISTAKES

### 5.1 DO NOT FILL IN THE NEEDS OF THE PERSON WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY YOURSELF AS A BUDDY

An important pitfall is that the buddy - with all good intentions - fills in the needs of the person with an intellectual disability themselves. Perhaps the person with a disability is not considered to be empowered enough or is convinced that they cannot indicate what they need. This can bring about a lot of problems. Ask what your student wants and do not assume that everything you want to do will meet the needs of the student you are buddy of.

It is amazing how well people with an intellectual disability are capable of indicating what they need exactly. After all, nobody else can understand better what they want than they themselves. It could quite possibly be things regular students would not think of. Because everyone is different, the existence of a certain list of 'needs' for people with a disability does not exist, one should simply ask.

### 5.2 CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS

Different expectations of the buddy and the student with disability can cause problems for the pairing project. It needs to be clear to both of them what is to be expected, which kinds of questions can be asked or cannot be asked, whether or not phone-numbers should be exchanged, etc. If the rules are set, misunderstandings can be avoided.

For instance when a volunteer takes on too many of the responsibilities of the student with disability, the supporting relationship might become one of dependency. The student with intellectual disability in that case will not learn to take matters in their own hands, which will not contribute to their autonomy.

Stay away from complying with too many things to avoid becoming stressed out as a buddy, remain calm and focused.

### 5.3 AVOID ISOLATION

Buddies should not try to live alone on an island far away without the other students. Then they miss out on the aim of the project (inclusion) completely. Activities should be held with groups as much as possible. During these activities the buddy keeps an eye mainly on their own student. Involving other regular students is also possible, for instance going to a bar with friends should not be avoided.

In the system of 'many-to-one' (see 6.2) this is also the essence: inclusion in group, avoiding isolation.

## 5.4 PRACTICAL EXTRAS

Do not underestimate the importance of the following things: the timeframes, which accommodation is available and at what time, whether or not the buddy can provide transportation themselves, how far apart they live, etc. Take into account transport, even if the buddy only has one partner. Moving from one place to the next is not always easy for students.

## 6 DIFFERENT FORMS OF ORGANISATION FOR THE BUDDY SYSTEM

### 6.1 'ONE-ON-ONE'

With 'one-on-one' is meant that one regular student helps out one student with intellectual disability.

The tasks the buddy will do can be filled in freely together with the student with disability. They could go for lunch together, walk to the bus together, go to a bar together, keep each other company, etc. This often causes an attitude of 'nothing is obliged, everything is allowed', which helps their relationship become spontaneous.

The most important added value of a buddy is the trust which they create for the person with intellectual disability. A buddy is a familiar face, a person who is always helpful to them. This gives them a feeling of safety.

With 'one-to-one' the focus is to be committed to each other in a friendly manner. The relationship is much like a friendship, but it need not be one. The relationship could be described as 'friendship-ish' and is unique in bringing about a non-directive, reliable emotional connection between the two. The regular student offers informal and social support. The main goal consists of building a durable relationship which would diminish social isolation and exclusion. Other gains (like self-assurance) can also originate from this, but are not the main goal.

The following characteristics are typical of the 'one-on-one' method:

- A regular student gets linked one on one with a student who has a need for their help, usually lasting about one year. This need can extend to social contact and support, gaining a bigger network of people, broadening their perspectives of things, etc.
- The relationship of support is brought about artificially and by a course or by a university's campus who links regular students to those with an intellectual disability. The school searches for, recruits, trains and supports the volunteers and also gives guidance on how they can support their student with an intellectual disability.
- The roadmap is unique to every student, as the needs to aid a person with an intellectual disability differs every time. The capacity and character of every regular person is of course also unique.
- The regular student and the disabled one go about with a clear goal in mind work on change.
- Their relationship is asymmetrical. Even though the regular student and the student with an intellectual disability have a certain relationship towards each other, the aid of the student with disability will remain the most important thing. The aid offered by the volunteer is functional by nature.
- The effort which the volunteer makes is structured and happens frequently following a schedule. The contact of the volunteer with the person with an intellectual disability usually takes about a part of a day per week, and this lasts about a year.
- Moments of reflection scheduled for the buddy. This could possibly be done together with a professional caretaker. On these moments progress can be monitored.

## 6.2 'MANY-TO-ONE'

With 'many-to-one' is meant that a group of students functions together as buddies for one student with an intellectual disability. Tasks can then be divided between them and group activities can be held.

Going through activities together is central, which realises inclusion. Goals can be set to succeed in, like trying to raise inclusion by engaging in 'community activities'. Succeeding in these however, should remain second to furthering the relationship. The success of this – of course – can only be measured if there is time.

The following characteristics are typical of this method:

- Multiple regular students (e.g. three) become linked with a student with an intellectual disability for an extended period of time (usually about one year). The focus of the regular students being the student with intellectual disability's social contact and supporting them socially, enlarging their networks, broadening their horizons or being accepted.
- The relationship of support is brought about artificially and by a course or by a university's campus which links regular students to those with an intellectual disability. The school searches for, recruits, trains and supports the volunteers and also gives guidance on how they can support their student with an intellectual disability.
- The method aims to strengthen the confidence of people who feel vulnerable in society. Because work is done in groups, the focus is less one-sided towards the person with an intellectual disability, which complements the natural state of the buddy-system.
- The need for help of the student with an intellectual disability forms the basis of the project a bit less than before. The regular student and the disabled one do not only work in a focused way, but also are together whilst trying to have fun. This way they undergo a less direct change process.
- The supportive relationship is more symmetrical than the one-to-one method. It is watched over that all students of the group do their parts, which makes the offered support towards the student with an intellectual disability less functionally focused.
- The relationship is dynamic. The relationship evolves, just like the workflow. The impact of these relationships changes depending how much time the students spend with the student with intellectual disability.
- The input of the volunteers is less structured and has a permanent character. The contact happens on an irregular basis (depending on the activities and day of the week and when the students are available). This usually spans over a year.
- Moments of reflection are scheduled in for the buddies. This could possibly be done together with a professional caretaker. During these moments the progress can be monitored.

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## 6.3 DIFFERENT TASKS

With different tasks is meant that all involved regular students can undertake activities with all involved students with a disability. The nature of these tasks is of course determined based on collective activities, not focused on one specific person.

The list of activities will always change depending on the wishes of the people with disabilities. The regular students can of course bring in ideas for the activities too. How people eventually construct the list and its size is up to the creativity of the campuses or degree programmes. People can start of by making a 'tree of wishes'. Ideas for activities are written down on post-its and stick to a tree-branch. Regular students can then choose the activities they prefer to do. For example, regular student X likes to cycle and accepts to go cycling outside with student Y (who wrote it down). However he could then decide to go to the cinema with student Z, etc.

The following characteristics are typical of the method 'different tasks':

- It is not the idea to try to realise any goals. Doing things together should be the focus.
- No individuals are to be coupled together. Only activities will be done together, nothing else. It aids social contact, social support, enlarging their network, broadening perspectives or even being accepted.
- The relationship becomes less artificial due to a professional organisation who links volunteers together with people with an intellectual disability. This relationship is based on common interests, which might immediately cause a good relationship between the two.
- The person with an intellectual disability is not looking for support, rather for doing an activity. The volunteer and the person with an intellectual disability do not try to work towards a goal, but to enjoy themselves.
- The relationship is symmetrical. The support of the regular student is practical.
- The commitment of the students is structured and defined. The contact period depends on the activities and day of the week and when the students are available. This period spans over a year.
- Moments of reflection are scheduled in. This could possibly be done together with a teacher. During these moments the progress can be monitored.

	One-to-one	Many-to-one	Different tasks
Amount of inclusion	+	++	+
Differences in abilities	++	+	-
Distance socio-culturally	-	+	--
Can be repeated	-	-	+
Structural	-	+-	+
Required competences of the buddy	++	+	+-
Training needed	++	+	+-
Complexity	++	+	-
Support of the buddy	++	+	+

## 7 CONCLUSION

We can conclude that the buddy system is very efficient and that students with a disability feel a lot better thanks to the system. The students are satisfied to have someone around to help them and they enjoy seeing this person many times. The buddies get more experience this way and are encouraged to learn to take responsibility. In this way the buddy system is a win-win situation.

A well considered methodical approach is needed, just like support sessions with intervision and supervision. The regular students who function as buddies are also allowed to make mistakes and learn from them in a safe environment in which they can speak about their doubts and difficulties.

Depending on the goals of the course and/or the organisation of life on the campus, it can be opted to implement the 'one-on-one' buddy system, the 'many-to-one' or the 'different tasks' system. One is not better than the other, though much depends on the nature of the degree programme from which the buddies are recruited. The three systems have pros and cons. It is up to the campuses or degree programmes to make the choice of which system to use.

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