Factors to Consider

- Resources [1]

Implementing assistive technology in the education setting has particular challenges. Decisions about what AT devices to use can range from the very simple to the very complex, depending on a wide range of factors. Traditionally, decisions about provision for people with disabilities have been made in isolation by specialists but, in this case, eventual success will be largely determined by the pupil, school and home factors. It is preferable therefore, that pupil, teachers and parents are involved in decision-making as much as is possible.

While the provision of assistive technologies is often considered as a once-off event, it should be considered as an on-going process and part of the case management of the pupil, whose needs will change with growing age, competency, educational demands and improving technologies. Certain factors that may have a crucial bearing on decisions are outlined below, and some of these, such as home circumstances and classroom practicalities, may not be immediately apparent at a formal technology assessment. Assessment and decision-making should, therefore, be as closely linked as possible to the context in which the pupil will use the technology. In most cases, this will be the school and assessment should, therefore, take place in the school whenever possible.

It is difficult to identify one single framework or template that will adequately cover the process of evaluating the pupil's technology needs and the development of a strategy that will meet them. However, the following range of factors may be taken as central:

1. The pupil [2]
2. Matching technology and pupil [3]
3. Home circumstances [4]
4. Cognitive ability [5]
5. Ergonomics [6]
6. Inclusive curriculum [7]
7. Other factors to consider [8]

Optimum assistive technology provision is that which will work best in any given circumstance. Many contextual factors will effect the feasibility of technology within the school milieu, and attempting to achieve the theoretical best provision, without considering these practicalities, may contribute to eventual failure. Achieving optimum provision requires experience, good judgement and common sense. Where possible, strategy is best decided in the school context.

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Special Education Support Service is an initiative of Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education and Skills, funded by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan 2007-2013, "Transforming Ireland

- A Better Quality of Life for All".