

EMPOWERING TEACHERS

**A case study of approaches to training and support for inclusive
teacher practice**

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education



CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
1. PREAMBLE	4
2. INTRODUCTION	6
3. METHODOLOGY	8
4. THE CHANGING CONTEXT - LEGISLATION AND POLICY	10
4.1 International and European developments	10
4.2 Country level developments	11
4.3 Critical issues for wider policy	16
5. INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION.....	18
5.1 Routes into teaching	18
5.2 Developing inclusive practice.....	19
5.3 Competences for inclusive teachers	26
5.4 School practice and inclusive teaching approaches.....	27
5.5 Increasing diversity among teacher candidates.....	29
5.6 Evaluation and quality assurance.....	31
5.7 Critical issues for initial teacher education	31
6. TEACHER EDUCATORS	33
6.1 Critical issues for the developing role of teacher educators.....	35
7. CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT	36
7.1 Induction of new teachers	36
7.2 National initiatives in continuing professional development.....	37
7.3 School-based professional development	40
7.4 Critical issues for continuing professional development and support	43
9. REFERENCES.....	45

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



1. PREAMBLE

Inclusive education is a human right and also a strategy to prepare all learners for a 21st century globalised society (UNESCO and IBE expert meeting, Paris, 2014).

To facilitate the development of inclusive education systems fit for the demands of the 21st century, UNESCO has called for targeted case studies from different regions and countries to support the creation of a global knowledge base that will:

- Provide opportunities for knowledge sharing and learning;
- Strengthen the practice-policy-research connections;
- Inform teacher education institutions to rethink the way teachers are trained;
- Inform policy dialogue in the light of post 2015 sustainable development goals.

This case study, prepared for UNESCO by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency) will contribute towards addressing the 'knowledge gap' (identified by the UNESCO/IBE expert meeting in 2014) on empowering inclusive teachers to address the diversity of learners by defining inclusive practices and inclusive teaching approaches and empowering teachers through training and support.

The case study is based upon examples of successful responses from Agency member countries. It discusses policy and practice in initial teacher education (ITE), continuing professional development (CPD) and on-going support for teachers and also considers the development of teacher educators to support the education of inclusive teachers.

The case study draws on the earlier work by the Agency in the Teacher Education for Inclusion (TE4I) project (<https://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/Teacher-Education-for-Inclusion>) and uses the conclusions and recommendations of this work as a basis for gathering information.

The Empowering Teachers project has two main outputs:

- a suite of case study materials made up of:
 - a literature review.
 - case study.
- the Inclusive Education in Action: Empowering Teachers website, based on the original Inclusive Education in Action site developed jointly by UNESCO and the Agency in 2009/2010.



Finally, there is an accompanying methodology paper, which describes the approach taken to the development of all the materials, outlines the conceptual framework and clarifies the links between the different outputs. It also makes some suggestions about how the materials might be used to develop approaches to training and support for inclusive teacher practice.



2. INTRODUCTION

There is a growing evidence to show that teachers play a critical role in the development of high quality education systems - *that 'the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers and principals'* (OECD, 2011, p.235). It follows that enhancing teacher quality is intrinsically linked to the quality of initial and continuing teacher education programs (OECD, 2012).

Recent research (for example Mincu, 2013) also shows that the difference made by teachers is greater for lower achieving students who are often from deprived backgrounds. It is not sufficient only to improve access to education - learning cannot be *'assumed as a by-product of increased access'* (Hunt, 2015, p.385) and many learners will, for different reasons require additional support to overcome barriers to learning and participation. Such barriers may arise from *'existing organisational structures, inflexible or irrelevant curricula, inappropriate systems of assessment and examination and negative attitudes and beliefs about some children's potential'* (Rouse and Florian, 2012, p.5). A key task for all teachers is to identify such barriers and work with learners and other education stakeholders to find effective ways to overcome them. This is not an easy task. It is imperative therefore that teachers receive appropriate preparation and also on-going support as they move through various career paths.

This case study will consider how countries can move forward in the development of teacher education (ITE), continuing professional development (CPD) and on-going support to address the question: how can teachers be empowered to meet diverse learning needs - and to *'take account of the multiple markers of identity that characterise both individuals and groups'* (Pugach, Blanton, Florian, 2012, p.235).

The methodology and conceptual framework for this case study are outlined in a separate document. The work builds on the Teacher Education for Inclusion Project (TE4I), conducted by the Agency between 2009 and 2012. While the TE4I project considered inclusive education in a broad sense - as offering quality education for all - thinking has developed further. This study is, therefore, underpinned by recent Agency work which states the following:

'the ultimate vision for inclusive education systems is to ensure that all learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers' (European Agency, 2015).

In working towards this vision, a major task is to equip all teachers with the necessary competences to support all learners and the Empowering teachers work also uses the four areas of competence identified by the Agency in the Profile of Inclusive Teachers (2012).



The case study aim is to provide an analysis of country policy and practice for teacher education in some European Countries. It will identify key challenges and highlight some of the ways in which countries are overcoming these and will also discuss critical issues and implications for future work. Although the study draws on European examples, the literature review and also world-wide examples gathered for the Empowering Teachers website, ensure that the issues addressed by the study also have global application.

This case study includes material on: the changing context for teacher education - legislation and policy; organisation and content of initial teacher education (including recruiting a diverse teacher workforce); teacher educators; continuing professional development and support for teachers and school leaders and implications for future work.

The focus throughout is on empowering teachers and the study shows, through the use of country examples, some of the ways in which teachers are being given the skills, knowledge and attitudes and thus the confidence to address learner diversity and in turn empower all learners.



3. METHODOLOGY

The Agency Teacher Education for Inclusion (TE4I) project made a number of specific recommendations in terms of both wider policy and specific areas focused on increasing teachers' capacity and capability for inclusive practice. In designing this case study, these recommendations were used as the basis for a short questionnaire to gather information regarding developments in teacher education and continuing professional development (CPD) in Agency member countries since 2012.

The questions focused on: recent development in legislation and policy that may impact on teacher education; developments in the areas of teacher recruitment and retention and any initiatives designed to increase the diversity of the teacher workforce; research into the effectiveness of different routes into teaching and the organisation and content of initial teacher education for inclusion; relevant developments in CPD and finally work on the recruitment and professional development of teacher educators.

The study was sent to all nominated country experts from 25 countries who worked on the Agency TE4I project. Where experts had moved to new posts or retired, the questions were sent to the European Agency Country Representatives.

In total, thirteen responses were received from: Austria; Belgium (Flemish Community); Cyprus; Finland; Germany; Iceland; Ireland; Latvia; Norway; Portugal; Sweden; UK (England); UK (Scotland). Additional country/policy information was received from Malta, UK (Northern Ireland); UK (Wales).

Material from the Agency's Organisation of Provision to support Inclusive Education project 2011-2014 (<https://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/organisation-of-provision>) has also been used. In particular, the visit reports have been a valuable source, as these provide direct access to the views of teachers and school leaders who were involved in focus groups and interviews.

Country examples that highlight responses to particular challenges are presented in shaded boxes. The examples selected for such presentation are those felt to relate in particular to the development of key areas of competence for teachers (i.e. those outlined in the Agency Profile of Inclusive Teachers, 2012).

The study analyses policy and legislation that impact on teacher education and the reported practices in ITE and CPD. From these analyses, it raises critical issues around the development of inclusive practice for teachers. The final section draws together priorities from the critical issues identified and discusses the implications for future work.



The literature review, which follows a similar structure and should be read together with the case study, includes a review of recent European level initiatives and background research relating to teacher education and the development of inclusive practice from both Europe and other regions. This and the triangulation of issues with world-wide examples received for the Empowering Teachers website help to ensure that the study's findings are also applicable beyond Europe.



4. THE CHANGING CONTEXT - LEGISLATION AND POLICY

Teacher education policy and practice cannot be considered in isolation from the values and beliefs underpinning the education system as a whole and the overarching national context. Ivatts (2011) stressed the need to *'widen the responsibility base for society in deciding what knowledge, values and skills and understandings are relevant and important to pass on to the children and young people'* (p.31). Such an approach would, he believes, support more democratic participation and help to resist the competitive nature of curriculum design and the risk of *'important messages...becoming vulnerable to the 'tick box' model of inclusion and compliance'* (p.35). Such issues clearly impact on teacher education. Key international and European developments are covered in more depth in the Empowering Teacher literature review (see section x) but are summarised here. This section then focuses on national legislation and policy that impacts on the development of inclusive practice.

4.1 International and European developments

The Empowering Teachers literature review outlines key developments at international and European level that impact on teacher education and influence the direction of change. These include, at international level, the United Nations Conventions for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Together, these provide a framework for a rights-based approach in education and an end to segregating practices.

The United Nations post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed in September 2015, aim by 2030 to: *'...eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations'* (Target 4.5).

At European level, there is a growing recognition of the need for inclusive education as a means to combat racism and discrimination and to promote citizenship and acceptance of differences of opinion, conviction, belief and lifestyle (European Commission, 2015a).

Most recently, the Draft Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on New priorities for European Cooperation in Education and Training (European Commission, 2015b) reinforces these statements and the need to cultivate mutual respect and embed fundamental values in an open and democratic society.

The World Education Forum (2015) set out a new vision for education for all in the Incheon Declaration. This commits to quality education and improving learning



outcomes and states the agreement to *‘ensure that teachers and educators are empowered, adequately recruited, well-trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems’*. (p.2).

4.2 Country level developments

Recent reports by the Agency, in particular Raising Achievement for all Learners - Quality in inclusive Education (2012) (<https://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/ra4al/synthesis-report>) and the Organisation of Provision to support Inclusive Education Summary Report (2014) (<https://www.european-agency.org/publications/ereports/organisation-of-provision-to-support-inclusive-education-summary-report>) have followed up on issues of legislation and policy development and provide evidence of increasing awareness of inclusion across Agency member countries. However, changes in thinking take time and are only now beginning to impact on policy and practice.

As the research shows (see literature review section 4), the policy discourse needs to move on from deficit models and categorisation of learners. Accountability systems need to develop to support innovation and reinforce common aims that are consistent with the principles of inclusion. The European Agency (2011) noted that: *‘While a potential conflict between meeting the diverse needs of learners and expecting everyone to meet common standards remains, teachers need to focus on providing real learning opportunities for all young people and not just opportunities to participate in and be judged by high stakes assessments which have little meaning for them’* (p.70).

Pivotal to progress is a move from thinking about inclusion as mainly associated with learners with special educational needs to seeing inclusion as providing high quality education for all learners. Related to this is consideration of a move from a needs-based approach, which locates the problem within the learner to an approach that focuses on identifying barriers to learning and participation and providing anticipatory responses, planning for all learners ‘up front’. The conceptual framework for this study, which considers these issues in more detail, can be found in the accompanying methodology paper.

At system level, such a change in thinking is required to enable support to be provided to schools in a way that will increase their capability to respond to diversity rather than focusing on individual support and compensatory approaches.

In Austria, the recent re-organisation of teacher education has been influenced by the Agency’s TE4I project. The view is now that inclusive education covers all differences, for example; learners with disabilities and/or disadvantages, those from a migrant or different religious background etc.



The example below, from Finland also relates to such a conception of inclusive education, that sees learner difference as 'the norm'.

A national policy to support all learners

In Finland, 'special education is actually nothing special'. The Ministry of Education and Culture website, points out that: 'early intervention and sustained individual support for every student are keys to educating the whole child'. The key drivers noted are equity and quality.

The new Pupil and Student Welfare Act that came into force in 2014, emphasises the participation of all learners; collaborative learning; welfare, health and social responsibility and interaction and inclusion. It also aims to improve co-operation between home and school. The new law promotes equal access to quality student learning, an accessible learning environment and early support for those who need it .

In the curriculum reform 2012-2017, key questions have been posed around vision, action, standards and teacher education. Prerequisites for success include clear standards and a well functioning curriculum, a culture of cooperation and trust and competent teachers with a high ethical orientation and commitment. The core of the reform is that the school will be developed both as a growth community and as a learning environment.

Similarly, a comprehensive re-examination of the educational act and regulation for the three school levels (pre-school, compulsory school and upper secondary school) took place in Iceland between 2009-2012. The legislation is now built on the theory of inclusive education and for the first time the language used was built on an inclusive discourse. In 2011, a new national curriculum began to build on inclusive education, stating that all children should receive their education in inclusive schools.

France has introduced a range of measures to meet the needs of the growing number of learners attending mainstream schools; to improve the assessment of learner needs, to develop personalised education plans and improve the functioning of multi-disciplinary teams as well as to provide support (in the form of assistants) to learners with disabilities.

The example below illustrates positive action in Ireland that reflects a wider view of inclusion and a move away from a deficit model.



Targeting resources to build school capacity

Recent developments in Ireland include the establishment of a single, coherent Inclusion Support Service (ISS) for children and schools. This service is in alignment with proposals for a new model of resourcing (currently being piloted) that will focus on allocating support to schools to promote inclusion and early intervention rather than relying on receiving a diagnosis for individual learners.

The ISS's remit includes: the provision of continuing professional development in special education for teachers; the provision of behavioural support in schools; and the provision of the Visiting Teacher Service for children and young people who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing or who are Blind/Visually Impaired. The Inclusion Support Service will play an important role in supporting schools and teachers to deliver a more inclusive education. This type of on-going support for teachers is a critical consideration if the capacity/capability of all schools is to be increased and teachers are to be empowered to meet the full range of diverse needs.

The Organisation of Provision Synthesis of Country Information

(<https://www.european-agency.org/organisation-of-provision/organisation-of-provision-project-seminars>) notes that legislation regarding the education of

learners with SEN/disability has generally been developed separately from mainstream legislation. In the light of both the UNCRC and UNCRPD, the report notes that legislation is often fragmented or overlapping, poorly coordinated and 'sectoral' so that laws do not sufficiently address the needs - or ensure the rights - of the most vulnerable learners.

The Organisation of Provision Report notes that some countries (for example Czech Republic, Estonia) set out a learners' rights approach to support and that there is an increasing emphasis on early intervention (e.g. in Finland, Denmark and Poland). New legislation in Belgium (Flemish Community) also sets out the right to enrol in a mainstream school and the right to reasonable accommodation and support.

The introduction of policies that strengthen the rights of learners to attend mainstream education with the appropriate provisions (such as early intervention and support when necessary and involvement in decision-making) has clear implications for teacher education. Firstly, those entering the profession must accept that they will be not only be teachers of subjects - but primarily teachers of children. They will need to take responsibility for all learners and develop knowledge and skills that will enable them to respond to the diverse learner needs that they will inevitably encounter. Further, they should believe in equity, human rights and democracy for all learners (European Agency, 2012, p. 11).



Wider education policies will further impact on what student teachers need to know about curriculum and assessment, school and classroom organisation and systems of accountability. If there are inconsistencies between these key facets of the education system, teachers will be subject to potentially conflicting agendas, for example regarding how learners are assessed and 'categorised' and what is valued and measured to hold teachers to account.

The importance of such consistency can be seen in the inter-connected recommendations made in a recent audit of Special Needs and inclusive education in Malta. These include the need to:

- Develop legislation and policy that promotes a rights-based approach to support the active participation of all learners.
- Build the capacity of mainstream schools guided by a clear policy vision for inclusive education as an approach for all learners.
- Establish a continuum of support and resources for colleges and schools
- Develop coherent training in inclusion for all school stakeholders.
- Provide flexible frameworks for curriculum and assessment, together with teaching approaches that engage all learners and support their active participation.
- Re-focus the identification of needs and allocation of support towards early support and prevention.
- Embed coherent monitoring and evaluation processes in all school, service and Ministry-level work.

The need for consistency has also been highlighted in Portugal, where new recommendations focus on bringing about greater alignment between the principles stated for special education policies and their implementation. New measures are designed to:

- (1) enhance education for children with difficulties that, currently, do not fulfil the eligibility criteria for special education services;
- (2) guarantee certification (at the end of their school career) for children with disabilities;
- (3) develop supervisory and monitoring models for the work of special education teachers;
- (4) develop rigorous regulation of specialised training courses focusing on scientific quality and pedagogic practice;



(5) develop in initial training, curricular units that allow the development of programmes in different disciplinary areas to consider adaptations for students with disabilities;

(6) perform continuous training for a range of stakeholders (not only special educators) on the teaching and learning process of children with disabilities.

Further, the example below highlights the importance of schools/teachers working with learners and their families and, in particular of having a 'vision' and high expectations of the future prospects of every learner.

Increasing participation of learners and families

In Portugal, a new law sets out a framework for the transition process from school to employment or working life, for students with severe intellectual disabilities (aged 15 or over). Through a relevant curriculum and greater participation of learners and their families, the law aims to increase learners' prospects for inclusion in the labour market.

The Framework:

- stresses the need for on-going participation of students and their families in the process;
- establishes a new curricular matrix for designing the Individual Education Plan that intends to assure quality standards and make educational programmes more relevant to students;
- pre-supposes work experience in real work settings and ensures that qualifications achieved are reflected in the certificates obtained.

In UK Scotland, recent changes, reflecting a change in both underpinning thinking and terminology include: a Code of practice on Supporting Children's Learning (2010) (unlike other UK countries who retain a Code of Practice for Special or Additional Educational or Learning needs); the Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The latter, in particular, aims to strengthen the rights of children and young people, create new systems of support (bringing agencies together) and identify any problems at an early stage. The Scottish Government agenda also includes a focus on tackling inequity and strengthening rights (through the Scottish 'Attainment Challenge' and 'Getting it Right for Every Child' which introduces a single planning approach for children who need additional support.

A new version of the self-evaluation document 'How Good is our School' (Education Scotland, 2015) focuses on improving attainment for all while closing the gap in



attainment and achievement between the most disadvantaged children and their peers. The materials are designed to be used by practitioners at all levels and by a wider range of stakeholders to support *'collaborative enquiry and interrogative approaches to self-evaluation'* enabling schools to identify their own effective practice and a shared understanding of the next steps for further improvement.

Elsewhere in the U.K., a new Children and Families Act (2014) in England has revised the special educational needs (SEN) framework. It now focuses on improved outcomes and has reformed levels of support for learners with SEN. It aims to increase the participation of children and young people in decision-making and extends the rights of young people with SEN and Disability (SEND) aged 16-25.

In an attempt to improve joint working between services, local authorities will publish their local 'offer' of education, health and social care services to support young children with SEND and their families. The Act should also lead to a more streamlined assessment process and earlier intervention if the need for support arises.

In the UK (Wales), a review of curriculum and assessment arrangements sets out a new, inclusive approach, starting with a great debate about key education issues. There is currently a consultation underway on an Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Bill that proposes a new legislative system for children and young people aged 0-25 with additional learning needs. Other initiatives include a new deal to support and develop the teaching profession as part of a wider reform agenda for *'every child in every classroom'*. Increasing the focus on the rights of young people and supporting their participation in decision-making, the new bill also introduces an individual development plan that should put the learner at the centre and improve collaboration between services, replacing the current Statement of SEN.

Finally, in Northern Ireland, a key policy is 'shared education', bringing learners from different community backgrounds together and building an inclusive society based on respect for diversity and difference.

4.3 Critical issues for wider policy

A number of Agency member countries are undergoing legislative changes that will, at least in part, support inclusive education and will therefore have implications for teacher education. These include the need:

- for all teachers to recognise that diversity is the 'norm' in schools and that all learners, many of whom may require support for different reasons, at different times, are their responsibility;



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- to develop flexible curriculum and assessment frameworks at national/local levels and empower teachers to make use of the flexibility in providing quality learning opportunities for all;
 - to develop self-evaluation as the basis for a self-improving system that focuses on improving learning outcomes for all learners – including leaders and teachers. This approach should support a culture of trust and professionalism replacing control and punitive accountability measures;
 - to raise awareness of the UNCRC and UNCRPD to ensure attention to the rights of all learners and the need for support, in particular for vulnerable learners to become more autonomous and have opportunities to express their views;
 - for a focus on increasing the capacity/capability of schools and teachers by providing on-going support that may involve using existing resources in different ways;
 - to increase cooperation/collaboration with parents and other agencies;

In the next section, routes into teaching, the organisation, content and evaluation of initial teacher education programmes and the development of competences will be discussed with further examples provided by Agency member countries.



5. INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) varies between and even within countries, being mostly decided by higher education ITE providers. A recent review in UK (Wales) (Furlong, 2015) shows that the best teacher education programmes internationally:

- ensure that ITE programmes attract the best and most suitable candidates into the teaching profession;
- offer academic awards that are competitive, practice-focused and built on relevant educational research;
- develop strong links between theory and practice, in a way that helps students to understand and explore the interconnectedness of educational theories and classroom practices;
- establish strong links between initial teacher education and continuing professional development of teachers in schools;
- ensure that all of the above principles are underpinned by a clear understanding of evidence about how student teachers learn to teach and that courses themselves are the constant subject of research and development.

There is a growing consensus that increased attention should be given to the role of research in ITE (see Literature Review section 4) - to inform the content and structure of ITE programmes and also to equip teachers to engage with research. Teachers should have the necessary skills to effectively use research evidence and also to conduct research to explore the outcomes of educational practice.

This section will now provide some examples of country practices that evidence the trends outlined above and in particular focus on the development of inclusive practice.

5.1 Routes into teaching

To date, there has been little research on the effectiveness of different routes into teaching as recommended by the European Agency (2011). The recent review of the structure of initial teacher education in UK (Northern Ireland) (Sahlberg et al., 2014) notes that: *'Both concurrent and consecutive models of teacher education programmes are endorsed by international agencies such as the OECD and the EU. Whichever mode is employed, international developments highlight the value of a wide range of teaching-learning approaches' (p.10).*

Therefore, it can be argued that it is the pedagogical practice rather than the route taken that can impact on the effectiveness of initial teacher education. This



indicates the need to overcome the *'false dichotomy'* (BERA RSA, 2014, p.5) between school-based and higher education based routes.

The literature review notes that some countries are moving towards school-based training routes. Although this 'apprenticeship' model could potentially offer many advantages in overcoming the divide between theory and practice, some possible problems have also been identified.

In UK (England), the diversification of routes into teaching has led to an increase in school-based training and a consequent reduction in programmes in higher education institutions. The wide range of types of school (including academies, free-schools etc.) leads to variability in school-based training. With regard to experience of diversity, some types of schools have a lower percentage of pupils with identified special educational needs. The requirement for teachers in some of these schools to gain qualified teacher status has also been removed which may, in turn, impact on the quality of supervision for student teachers and opportunities for research and inquiry.

By contrast, other countries are maintaining the importance of universities in delivering teacher education - for example Scotland, Finland, Norway, Iceland and Portugal.

A further issue is the route into specialist teacher education - for example for teachers of learners with identified special educational needs. Decisions made regarding the extent to which this can and should be an integral part of initial education - or whether a higher level, specialist qualification is required, depend to a large extent on the country context and understanding of inclusion and diversity.

The Carter Review of Teacher Education in UK (England) (DfE, 2015) highlighted the need for better SEN and Disability (SEND) training as a priority, with a longer programme including SEND enhancement for all. This is in contrast to the current move to school based training outlined above and reflects a focus on SEN rather than broader diversity issues.

Latvia has maintained university based initial teacher education to prepare special needs education teachers, who work both in special settings and in mainstream schools in a support or consultancy role.

The next section will focus on the content of ITE programmes necessary to prepare teachers for learner diversity.

5.2 Developing inclusive practice

The literature review notes that there is some consensus around the content of ITE.



However, one key task of ITE that has not been widely discussed in recent literature is that of preparing new teachers to enter a profession '*...which accepts individual and collective responsibility for improving the learning and participation of all children, taking account that there will be differences between them*' (Rouse and Florian, 2012, p.11). This section will, with practice examples, discuss the emerging knowledge and understanding of how best to prepare new teachers to include all learners.

The 'Aspiring to Excellence' Report by Sahlberg et al. (2014) for the Minister for Employment and Learning in UK (Northern Ireland) notes that there is extensive research evidence on how student teachers learn to teach, for example: '*how they often need to 're-learn' what they think they know about teaching and learning from their own very particular school experience; the difficulties they have in learning to 'see' how effective teachers actually teach (what often looks simply like common sense); the importance of experimenting firstly within a safe environment*' (p. 13).

Critical reflection is the key to the deep understanding necessary to make sense of complex issues, including underpinning values and assumptions. For example, in UK (England), Hellawell (2015) notes that the impact of the revised SEN and Disability Code of Practice, (2014) on teacher education has been to focus on differentiation, personalisation and skills for meeting with learners and families. She concludes that: '*critical engagement with its messages and intentions may better prepare beginning teachers to meet the demands and expectations articulated within*' (p.15).

Underpinning principles for ITE

In Scotland, between 2007 and 2011, initial teacher education at the University of Aberdeen was re-organised around a set of principles to inform practice that acknowledges and responds to the diversity of learners that are present in every classroom, while at the same time avoiding labelling some children as 'different', with the pitfalls that this presents.

The three underpinning themes were as follows:

- Understanding learning – based on the principle that difference must be accounted for as an essential aspect of human development in any conceptualisation of learning. This approach also challenges any deterministic views of children's ability and practices based on assumptions around a 'normal' distribution of intelligence.
- Social justice – based on the principle that teachers are responsible for the learning of all children and that difficulties in learning are a dilemma for the teacher, rather than a shortcoming in the child. This principle also rejects the idea of planning for



'most' children with something different for 'some', moving to a rich learning environment that offers a menu of appropriate learning opportunities for all.

- Being an active professional – based on the principle that teachers should seek new ways to support the learning of all children and enhance their participation and that there is no division between mainstream and specialist teachers for learners seen as having SEN. All teachers should work together to support all learners.

Exploration of these themes enables student teachers to challenge many of the existing beliefs and practices that they may encounter when working in schools.

In 2014, a five-year master's level teacher education was introduced in the University of Iceland to give more space to focus on inclusive schools. The University also offers:

- a B.A. in International Studies in Education focusing on education in the context of globalisation, the development of multicultural societies, sustainable development and development studies and education in developing countries. This programme aims to train teachers to meet the needs of a growing group of immigrant and bilingual children in Iceland.

- a 10 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) course in Pedagogy that aims to prepare student teachers to teach students in international and multicultural settings in Iceland and around the world. This course is taught in English and attracts a nationally diverse student population.

- a specialisation at the graduate level in Learning and Teaching in Inclusive Schools in a Multicultural Society which includes a compulsory course on Working in Inclusive Practices (10 ECTS). This is outlined in the example below.

Developing a professional working theory with student teachers

The Working in Inclusive Practices elective course at the University of Iceland emphasises critical engagement with learning and teaching in inclusive schooling. The course provides space for student teachers to develop their own professional working theories, established through professional knowledge, experience, reflection and ethical and moral principles. Through lectures, discussion and practical tasks – both in class and on-line, as well as formal assignments, student teachers are encouraged to respond creatively (e.g. by building a 3D visual model, rather than a written task). In this way, teacher educators demonstrate a range of teaching approaches. In their evaluations, students report a change in thinking, better connections between theory and practice and the development of a rationale for the type of teacher they want to become.



In Finland, student teachers have at least one course of inclusive education, although universities have different names for such courses. Recent legislation and the new core curriculum, to be introduced in 2016 emphasise the role of all teachers in student support.

Every university has similar courses for general teachers (in addition to separate education for special education teachers: which is one year's study for teachers having at least two years teaching experience, or five years for those taking special pedagogy as a major). Now all teacher education emphasises collaboration with other teachers, shared teaching, differentiation and flexible grouping of students.

Valuing learner diversity

The courses for new class and subject teachers at Aalto University aim to illuminate the diversity of needs in every classroom and stress that all teachers, according to the new legislation now have a role in answering the needs of all learners. The course covers:

- The importance of interaction and cooperation in the work of teachers.
- The importance of mental well-being in learning.
- Special education basic concepts - forms of support, pedagogical guidance, identification of learning difficulties, the challenges of studying, learning and teaching responses, personalisation and inclusion and its practical implementation.
- Multicultural Education basic concepts - guiding documents and different approaches, the realisation of social justice, diverse families, cultures and values, cultural capital and cultural identity, different world views and religions, intercultural communication and multicultural schools.
- Multiculturalism and the diversity of situations in school and kindergarten, and the pedagogical means for the teacher to act on them.

A recent study in Portugal analysed the attention given to the theme of inclusive education by 17 higher education (HE) institutions (Almeida & Lopo, 2015). The current scenario has changed from the situation described in the Portuguese report prepared for the Agency TE4I project (2009-2012), which noted that inclusion was almost non-existent in course plans and was often optional. However, this recent study notes that the content relating to inclusive education varies widely, resulting in future teachers with different levels of knowledge and skills for working with children with additional support needs.

This situation in Portugal may be helped by the 2014 decree-law (Decreto-Lei n.º 79/2014), which aims to reinforce qualifications for teachers in general education by



increasing the duration of study cycles and the relative weight of inclusive education in ITE. Further to including teachers' knowledge, capabilities and attitudes to perform activities in the classroom, the general teaching component now also includes areas of developmental psychology, cognitive processes, curriculum and assessment, educational organisation, special educational needs and classroom management.

Due to the increasing complexity of teacher education, different approaches involving greater collaboration both within and between institutions and other organisations, as well as practice schools is likely to be required. A recent study in Norway stressed the need for more co-operation between and consolidation within different teacher education institutions. The report notes that it is not efficient for a single institution to offer a wide variety of subjects (Følgegruppen for lærerutdanningsreformen, 2014).

In Germany, in 2013 and 2014 the standards for teacher education for special education, educational science and all subject teaching areas have been revised with a focus on the requirements for inclusive teaching methods. This development should enable future teachers to deal with diversity and to support the joint learning of students with and without disabilities. These standards are now a basic requirement for the teachers' examination regulations in all 16 Länder.

In March 2015, the Standing Conference of the Ministries of Education of all Bundesländer (KMK Kultusministerkonferenz), together with the Germans Rectors Conference of the Universities (HRK Hochschulrektorenkonferenz) adopted recommendations for 'A teacher education for an educational system with diversity'. As part of a quality initiative by the State Ministry for Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF), all Universities in Germany with teacher education programmes can apply for development grants. One of 16 main goals is related to improving how inclusion and heterogeneity is addressed at all stages of teacher education.

Some variations between universities remain. Some universities have added an extra module into their programmes, some have a more integrated concept and have changed the modules on many subjects, while in others (e.g. Bielefeld, Potsdam) there are new teacher education programmes with a dual-degree-examination (Primary education in combination with special education). The quantity of the ECTS in the programmes also varies.

In France, the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research is considering the reorganisation of initial training for special teachers with a focus on the certificates of professional competences for both primary and secondary level special teachers. The goal is for these certificates to fit the university training of



teachers who now need a Masters level degree. The new programme will focus on common core courses and specific modules depending on specialities.

In Ireland, the Teaching Council's *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education* and the Department of Education & Skills in its *National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People* which were published in 2011 both recommended the reconfiguration and extension of concurrent teacher education programmes (Primary & Post Primary) to a minimum of four years and the post graduate programmes (consecutive pathway) to a minimum of two years. The programme content has also been reconfigured and ITE is now seen as one phase in career long development.

The revised programmes, introduced between 2012 and 2014, include substantial periods of school placement as central to student teacher development and a number of mandatory elements including inclusive education (special education, multiculturalism, disadvantage, etc.), literacy and numeracy, teaching, learning and assessment including school and classroom planning, differentiation, behaviour management and ICT in teaching and learning.

Comprehensive reform of teacher education has taken place in Austria, following conceptual work from 2012-2014. These developments have been driven by the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and a governmental agreement to establish an inclusive school system by 2020. The changes are supported by research and integrate different forms of teacher education.

The main changes include:

- Extension of bachelor study for primary teachers from 3 to 4 years (180 EC - 240 EC) plus a 1 year compulsory masters level study in a selected subject area (e.g. sports, sciences, inclusive education etc.)
- A 4 year bachelor-study for primary teachers with a specialisation in the field of inclusive education (63 EC) plus a 1.5 years masters level study in inclusive education (90 EC)

There are currently different arrangements for secondary teachers studying to teach 5th to 8th grade (courses taken at the Pädagogische Hochschule) and 9th to 12th grade (courses taken at the university). The new teacher education could be a first step towards a comprehensive approach for all teachers. For Bachelor study, the course is 4 years (120 ECTS): with 2 subjects or 1 subject and inclusive education; for Masters level study (120 ECTS), there is in-depth study in 1 subject or in inclusive education.



The example below illustrates how one university prepares teachers to work with diverse learners.

Pedagogy for all learners

At the Pädagogische Hochschule, Oberösterreich, (Austria) student teachers are prepared to teach diverse learners:

- each teacher student has an obligation to graduate with inclusive pedagogical competences;
- a common study facilitates responsibility for all children, pedagogical knowledge and skills for different needs;
- the extension of the period of study makes an in-depth analysis of contents more possible;
- teacher students develop a different professional understanding.

In primary and secondary study, inclusive content is now added to each subject. Inclusive pedagogy is also a scientific field.

Compared with the current system of teacher education (independent/separate study for primary, secondary and special education), the changes are designed to have an impact on the attitudes, knowledge and skills of prospective teachers. Despite the fact that it is early in the implementation phase, an evaluation is planned, to assess the impact of the inclusive study programme.

As can be seen from the discussion of country practice above, a number of countries have recently reviewed their teacher education provision and in most cases are moving to increase the length of ITE and ensure input on inclusive education. Other countries are already implementing such changes. It is evident, however, that the thinking - and language - around the concept of inclusive education still varies - from a focus primarily on special educational needs and disability to a much broader approach. Even for the countries taking a broader focus on inclusion, there is still a dilemma around the extent to which 'specialist' content is required and if this is the case, how such content can be integrated to avoid the suggestion that teaching learners with diverse needs requires specialist approaches. It should be noted too, that the need for the development of good subject knowledge remains. As Coe et al. (2014) highlight, there is an important relationship between measures of a teacher's content knowledge and gains made by learners. It is clear, however, that there is a growing acceptance of the need to prepare teachers for the diversity of today's classrooms - and some evidence of the best ways to achieve this - including the competences needed. This will be the focus of the next section.



5.3 Competences for inclusive teachers

The definition of competences and recent European level work in this area is discussed in the literature review (section 4). The review notes that there appears to be some consensus across Europe about the competences needed for teaching in general including among others, awareness of diversity issues. The Agency Profile of Inclusive Teachers (2012) is also beginning to have an impact. The Profile sets out the following areas of competence:

- valuing learner diversity - learner difference is considered as a resource and an asset to education;
- supporting all learners - teachers have high expectations for all learners' achievements;
- working with others - collaboration and team work are essential approaches for all teachers;
- personal professional development - teaching is a learning activity and teachers take responsibility for their lifelong.

In addition to country developments (e.g. Austria, Ireland) a recent publication by the European Commission and Council of Europe (Hollenweger et al., 2015) uses the four areas of competence from the Profile to link to four visions or goals in a model of inclusive practice designed to support teacher education (see also page 40).

In UK (Wales), a recent report on teacher education (Furlong, 2015) notes that in the current standards there are behaviourally based competences setting out what newly qualified teachers (NQTs) must know and do. The report calls for teacher learning to be seen in a developmental way with more formal links to practising teacher standards – and long-term professional learning. In addition, the report notes the key role played by research and critical reflection, with teachers being seen as active professionals and leaders of children's learning.

In Norway, an expert committee has recently evaluated and reported (2014) on special needs education and on research conducted in this area to consider the question: 'What are the future needs for competence and research in Norway?' The committee concluded that teacher education programmes and institutions should increase the emphasis on inclusion and that there is a need for teachers to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) in special needs education.

A report on the reform of teacher education in UK (Scotland) 'Teaching Scotland's Future' has highlighted the need to better prepare teachers to work in today's schools – working with other adults as well as young people. The General Teaching Council's newly revised professional standards for teacher registration, emphasises



career long professional learning (CLPL) and leadership and management and makes clear that inclusive approaches are ‘core business’ for all in Scotland schools.

A critical part of any ITE programme is the school experience that brings together theory and practice and this is discussed in more detail in the next section.

5.4 School practice and inclusive teaching approaches

The literature review highlights the fact that little research has been undertaken recently into the development of inclusive teaching approaches. However, a notable exception is the work on ‘inclusive pedagogy’ - an approach that requires teachers to provide ‘rich learning opportunities for everyone’ without needing to mark out some as ‘different’ (Florian and Black Hawkins, 2011, p.14).

Work on the Inclusive Practice Project at the University of Aberdeen (described on page 20) formed the foundation for more recent work, based on the understanding that inclusion and standards are ‘*not mutually exclusive but mutually beneficial*’ (Florian and Rouse 2009 in Mintz et al. p.14) and that teachers need to be given pedagogical strategies which show them how it is possible to support the learning of all pupils.

Given the vital importance of school practice, there may be limitations to relying solely on schools to plan, provide and monitor experiences for ITE students - as, like the schools themselves - these experiences may vary widely and - whether positive or negative - can have a lasting impact on the practice of new teachers. This may be overcome to some extent by placing groups of teachers in a smaller number of schools as suggested by the recent review in UK (Northern Ireland).

Careful attention needs to be paid to how the elements of college-based ITE and school practice link together. Research in Norway (Finne et al. 2014) shows that there is a great potential for better coherence between the theory learned in teacher education and practical experience provided in the classroom. All stakeholders involved in the study (teacher educators, students, principals) identified the need for better co-operation between teacher education and schools.

The example below shows how effective collaboration can support both teacher education and school development.

A collaborative approach to inclusive ITE at Goethe University, Frankfurt

The Arbeitsstelle für Diversität und Unterrichtsentwicklung- Didaktische Werkstatt is a cooperation between the Institute for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion, the Institute for Primary Education, and the Ministry of Culture and Education in Hessen. It aims to support teacher education and professional development as well as research in inclusive education, literacy, numeracy,



natural sciences and school- and curriculum development in primary and secondary school.

The Didaktische Werkstatt facilitates exchange and mutual learning by providing professional development workshops, counselling, and advanced training for practicing teachers in the domains of reading, writing, numeracy and science in inclusive education and on cross-curricular issues such as working with heterogeneous student groups and the construction of individual learning plans.

In special projects (“Praxisprojekte”), student teachers at Goethe University provide special educational support to small groups of pupils in schools around Frankfurt in reading, writing, or early mathematics twice a week during one school year. These projects are integrated into the university teacher education programme with special preparatory classes and are evaluated on a regular basis. The projects receive financial support from several foundations around Frankfurt and the partner schools are able to integrate the project into their own school development plans, (required by the Federal State of Hessen).

In a constant exchange during theory-based classes and practical implementation, teacher students learn how to: perform individual assessments; use this information to construct an individual curriculum; implement an individual educational plan and assess the progress of each participating pupil. Within the university classes, students have the opportunity to share ideas on teaching and to critically evaluate each other. In this way, the professional development of teacher students is closely monitored.

Sahlberg et al. (2013) in considering international trends in teacher education as part of a study for the Department of Employment and Learning in UK (Northern Ireland) considered effective ways to develop ‘research informed clinical practice.’ They suggested that ITE institutions could work closely with chosen schools to support them to *‘become places for clinical teaching practice similar to teaching hospitals that are part of faculties of medicine in many countries’* (p.9).

In 2013, the Teaching Council in Ireland prepared School Placement Guidelines in partnership with stakeholders. The Guidelines provide a structure for school placement and are aimed at promoting collaboration and a balance of responsibility between programme providers and schools.

A different approach taken in UK (England) includes using placements in special schools. Although this has been shown to be successful in raising awareness of SEN, it could reinforce the idea that specialist skills are needed to work with certain groups. Depending on the school specialism, it is also likely to provide experience of only a narrow range of diverse needs.



The example below illustrates how one college in Belgium uses school placement to develop teachers' competences to work with diverse learners.

Developing inclusive competences through school practice

During the advanced Bachelor (Special Educational Needs) Course at Leuven-Limburg, students undertake a 2 day per week internship for 15 weeks in an inclusive setting. As the college is aware that not every context gives a 'mature' example of inclusive education, guidelines are provided for students, schools and mentors/teacher educators, focusing on the attitudes, knowledge and skills required for inclusive education.

The placement aims to develop critical examination of beliefs and attitudes to teaching in inclusive settings; to find ways to identify and address barriers to learning and the implications of these for teaching and to co-teach and work in flexible teams. Mentors/teacher educators provide support to ensure that student teachers recognise that they can become a good teacher for ALL learners.

When talking about inclusive practice in schools, the diversity of the teacher workforce is also important. Teachers from diverse backgrounds, with different strengths and talents are needed to connect to students and their families and to reduce stereotyping and provide positive role models. This is further discussed in the following section.

5.5 Increasing diversity among teacher candidates

In Norway, efforts are being made to address the issue of gender balance (as most student teachers are women) and to recruit more students with minority language backgrounds. However, the gender imbalance remains and many students from minority backgrounds who achieve the grades needed for admission to teaching seem to prefer to enter professions such as law, medicine and engineering. This highlights the need to take steps to make the teaching professions more attractive - not only through increased pay and other incentives but by increasing the status of teachers in society. Arguably, making entry to and qualification for teaching more demanding will contribute towards this goal.

To encourage students with disabilities to enter teaching, the law in Norway secures access to higher education for students with physical challenges, stating that, '*as far as possible and reasonable, the physical working environment shall be designed in accordance with the principles of universal design*'. The learning environment should also be adapted for students with special needs, as long as the adaptation does not



lead to a reduction in the academic requirements. However, few students with disabilities have so far chosen to enter the teaching profession.

In Cyprus, the Hiring of People with Disabilities in the Greater Public Sector Act of 2009 requires that the 10% of staff hired for the greater public sector are disabled people. This act applies to the recruitment of teachers. According to the Annual Report of the Department for Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities (2013), up to 2013, 123 persons were assessed and 50 considered as persons who could be appointed, according to the law. Out of the 50 persons, only 11 were finally hired (7 as teachers and 4 as public servants).

The University of Helsinki in Finland has introduced a multicultural teacher education route and students are often recruited from ethnic minority backgrounds. This approach aims to strengthen the multicultural workforce in schools, especially in areas where the population is becoming more diverse.

The Qualitätsoffensive Lehrerbildung in Germany supports projects to develop quality teacher education in all phases (from 2014-2023) focusing on practically oriented education. Some measures, such as the promotion of teachers without a teaching qualification is one among many that should support the recruitment of a more diverse teacher population.

Ireland has made specific efforts to improve access to college and universities through the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE). This admissions scheme offers places on reduced points to school leavers with disabilities and has been set up by a number of colleges and universities for school leavers under the age of 23, who have the ability to benefit from higher education, but who may not be able to meet the points for their preferred course due to the impact of a disability or ongoing illness. The ten providers of post-primary ITE joined the DARE Scheme before 2012, while the five State funded providers of primary ITE have joined more recently.

The Hochschulzugangsverordnung (University Entrance Regulations) in Austria, intends to change the legislation that regulates access to and enables study for people with disabilities, migrant backgrounds and other first languages. From 2015, students with disabilities will be allowed to become teacher trainees. Currently, the number of students with a migrant background is increasing, while the number of students with disabilities is still extremely limited. However, there are coordinated efforts to change this situation at national level.

The next section will consider issues around evaluation and quality assurance.



5.6 Evaluation and quality assurance

The Empowering Teachers Literature Review highlights the fact that despite increased attention to evaluation and quality assurance in higher education, there is still considerable work to be done. Regarding evaluation and quality assurance of CPD, the picture is more complex due to the diversity of such opportunities. It is clear too, that there is scope for further development in particular of processes or tools that focus on the preparedness of teachers for the diversity of today's classrooms.

In Ireland, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has recently commissioned a two-year research study, which will examine ITE programmes for student teachers and support for newly qualified teachers. The study aims to address the question: Do the recent changes to ITE prepare newly qualified teachers to be inclusive as identified by European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education Profile of Inclusive Teachers? The study will also consider impact on outcomes for learners and gaps to be addressed in ITE programmes.

5.7 Critical issues for initial teacher education

- A number of countries are working to increase the focus on issues around inclusion and diversity. However, further work is needed to ensure that such content is 'core learning' for all students preparing to teach learners of any age, studying any subject. Inclusive principles are fundamental for all those preparing to teach - not an optional extra. Courses should be based on evidence about teacher professional learning as well as content and should provide models of inclusive teaching and assessment.
- The key role of school experience in linking theory and practice and developing inclusive teaching approaches should be further explored. Student teachers need a clear conceptual framework in order to develop their own 'professional working theory'.
- As the key role played by teachers is recognised and, in many countries standards required for admission to ITE are rising, there should be a parallel increase in status and pay as well as on-going support to improve retention rates. As efforts focus on recruiting candidates with high academic qualifications, consideration should also be given to the values, attitudes and broader competences deemed to be critical in inclusive teachers.
- While there are efforts in some countries to increase diversity in the teacher workforce, further work is required to explore the impact of flexible entry and different training routes, as well as other incentives.



- Greater collaboration is required within courses, between courses and across institutions (universities/colleges and schools) to ensure co-ordinated provision and a consistent approach to key messages about inclusion and diversity. There is a need to recognise that teacher education is developmental - and that ITE is the start of a continuum requiring strong links in learning between career phases.
- Indicators of effective ITE require further development to ensure that quality assurance is appropriately focused and in line with inclusive principles and the development of the areas of competence for inclusive teachers. Feedback from newly qualified teachers should inform reflection and further development.

The following section discusses the important role of teacher educators – those working in higher education institutions and in local authorities/municipalities and schools.



6. TEACHER EDUCATORS

In the Agency report, *Teacher Education across Europe (2011)* teacher educators were referred to as the '*hidden profession*' (European Commission, 2010, p.1). As the *Empowering Teachers* literature review suggests, the profile of teacher educators has since been raised, although there has been little specific work on inclusive practice.

As ideas about teacher education for inclusion differ widely, and teacher educators form a disparate group with multiple identities, there is also no agreement about the requirements for recruiting teacher educators who can perform this role. The picture across countries is currently fragmented, with teacher educators holding many different qualifications, with different backgrounds and experience. More information about European level work on teacher educators can be found in the literature review (pp. 18-23).

In many countries, there is no formal induction and few opportunities for development of teacher educators and levels of involvement in research vary. Some may pay little attention to diversity and lack experience in inclusive schools. However, there are some promising developments in a number of Agency member countries.

The Norwegian National Graduate School of Teacher Education (NAFOL) is a national school offering specialised education and training in the thematic fields of pre-school, school and teacher education. It was established 2010 to strengthen a research based perspective in the fields mentioned. Regarding professional development of teacher educators in schools, the 'practice teachers' are experienced teachers, who provide guidance to student teachers during periods of school practice, which is an integral part of teacher education programmes. The practice teacher may also be formally qualified as a mentor. Practice teachers are offered supervisor training by Teacher Education Institutions, although this is not obligatory.

Similarly, mentors working with newly qualified teachers are also considered to be teacher educators. These mentors are also offered supervisor training by Teacher Education Institutions. The supervisor training for both mentors of newly qualified teachers and for practice teachers partly overlaps and is normally two modules of 15 ECTS.

In UK (Wales), the recent Furlong report notes that standards affect who Universities recruit to teach on teacher education programmes and how these people are developed. If Universities are assessed on the extent to which they are able to prepare student teachers for practical day-to-day classroom practice, the



best staff will be those with recent classroom experience. It also stresses that teacher educators should be required to develop as 'research active' lecturers.

The reform of higher education institutions in Portugal however, has established that teacher educators in HE must now have a PhD degree or a specialist title.

At recruitment the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) in Ireland seeks teachers with an understanding and an appreciation of inclusive education. PDST provides training and development in all areas relating to inclusion as part of internal CPD, using in-house and external personnel to provide relevant policy updates of key changes and advice on leading practice. It also provides training and development to staff of other support services and to staff of ITE/HE institutions with regard to inclusion related areas.

The Inclusive Practice Project final report (Rouse and Florian, 2012) made an inductive analysis of the professional development needs of teacher educators in UK (Scotland) by reviewing data to identify themes. These included: different understandings of inclusion; the search for common ground and uncertainty about evidencing inclusive practice. Bridges were built between subject teacher educators and inclusion specialists when agreement was found on important issues such as the primacy of belonging and the responsibility that teachers have to care as well as teach. The common ground centred on the belief that all children could learn and that there are common teaching approaches across all phases of education. The project report suggests that it is helpful to *'suspend judgments about practices linked to other, perhaps less inclusive approaches, rather than seeing them as problems'* (p.38).

The findings state that teacher educators need to reflect on assumptions about human abilities and diversity and consider how these beliefs are communicated in ITE and CPD programmes. As teacher educators may not have worked in inclusive settings and may not be comfortable with working in this way, the report concludes that professional development for teacher educators is required.

Such professional development is also likely to be required if teacher educators, working in all settings, are to be able to effectively model inclusive teaching approaches and use these as an integral part of their work. The Overview of International Trends in Teacher Education conducted for UK (Northern Ireland) (Sahleberg et al.2013) suggests that *'...formal lectures are supplemented by small group sessions such as seminars, tutorials, workgroups, paired-learning, micro-teaching and problem-solving groups. In addition, training and facilitation in the use of a repertoire of information and communication technologies are essential to the equipping of student teachers for the modern classroom'* (p.8).



In Germany, most teacher educators are teachers or former teachers and many are linked to ITE courses at universities. Later, they may also be involved in advanced training courses. This school - university collaboration is considered to be crucial in ensuring that teacher educators have experience in inclusive practice and are informed about scientific results and research - especially in their subject and in the field of inclusive education.

6.1 Critical issues for the developing role of teacher educators

- The role of teacher educators is now receiving more attention but is still diverse and fragmented with little agreement about the qualifications, experience and competences required. Further work is needed to establish the most effective approaches to professional development and on-going support for people working in this key role with a particular focus on:
 - involvement in research both to develop evidence based programmes for teacher education and to support teachers to engage in and use research in their own inclusive practice.
 - ensuring that teacher educators gain recent classroom experience in inclusive schools to develop the necessary understanding of inclusion, diversity and the rights agenda (as opposed to the needs of specific groups) and the ability to model inclusive teaching approaches.

In the following section, continuing professional development and on-going support will be discussed, with a particular focus on increasing the capacity of schools and empowering teachers to meet the diverse needs of all learners.



7. CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

The Empowering Teachers literature review shows the need for clear and coherent links between ITE, induction and CPD to form a continuum of development. The 'disconnect' between teacher effectiveness research and professional learning programmes should be addressed with a focus on improving outcomes for all learners.

7.1 Induction of new teachers

There is evidence internationally that effective induction is needed to build on ITE and to ensure that newly qualified teachers receive appropriate support, not only to further their skills, knowledge and understanding - and attitudes and beliefs - but also to build the mind set that they should continue the process of professional learning throughout their careers.

The overview of international trends in teacher education carried out in UK (Northern Ireland) (Sahlberg et al. 2013) stresses this point: *'Effective programmes of initial teacher education can be set at nought if they are not built upon in ways that take teachers' professional understanding and skill further forward in a structured way well beyond the point of induction' (p.9).*

However, as for other 'stages' of teacher education, there is little explicit reference to diversity/inclusion in research or country documentation regarding the induction of new teachers.

In UK (Wales) a Masters in Educational Practice (MEP) was developed in 2012 to enhance and support the teaching practice and professional development of newly qualified teachers (NQTs). The course is a mix of direct teaching and distance (on-line) learning, school based work and mentoring by experienced professionals. Modules include: behaviour management; literacy; numeracy; reducing the impact of poverty on attainment; additional learning needs; child development; reflective practice; leading learning and action enquiry.

A recent review of teacher education (Furlong, 2015) noted the need to ensure that teachers' professional learning can be supported in a systematic way throughout their careers, with more systematic links between CPD providers, local authority consortia and teacher education centres in universities.

In Norway, an arrangement for the mentoring of newly qualified teachers has existed since 2010. Newly qualified teachers who start a teaching career are generally offered mentoring by an experienced teacher in the same, or in a neighbouring, school. The experienced teacher may also be formally qualified as a mentor, although this formal qualification is not a requirement. The aim is to give professional and practical support on a one-to-one basis and help newcomers build



confidence through access to the collective competence and experience of the school community.

This critical area needs further attention, as the early experience in school and the quality of mentors are highly influential in any teachers' early development.

7.2 National initiatives in continuing professional development

With regard to on-going professional development, in-service opportunities for teachers are becoming increasingly diverse (European Commission, 2015c). There is a move away from formal 'courses' often delivered in a top down model, towards greater collaboration and use of terms such as 'joint practice development' and 'professional learning'. Among such a range of provision for CPD, the focus on diversity and SEN issues varies widely.

While it is hard to distinguish between more formal CPD (such as accredited courses) and school-based development, the following examples are primarily central initiatives, often organised in response to changes in national policy or centrally identified priorities. Examples of more informal, school or local area based opportunities are included in a later section (p.41).

The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute organise training seminars for pre-primary and primary school teachers at the beginning of each school year. Teachers are expected to attend one such seminar each year. Schools are also expected to organise a seminar on a topic of interest, and to invite academics or other experts to give a lecture/workshop. The topics of inclusive education and collaborative teaching between the mainstream class teacher and the special education teacher to promote inclusion have been included in the programme of seminars for the last 3 years. The seminars were conducted by academics specialising in inclusive education issues.

In Latvia, as more children with identified special needs are included in mainstream education, there is recognition that teachers need continuing professional development. New professional development courses, lectures and practical seminars are provided for teachers working in mainstream schools about learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders, behavioural problems etc. Some higher educational institutions offer a study course 'Introduction to special needs education' where knowledge, some professional skills and attitudes towards diversity in schools are formed.

In UK (England), Teaching Schools work with other schools to provide quality training and development but these are just one of a number of potential providers. CPD, therefore, tends to be fragmented and of variable quality (Lawson, 2014). Master's level training for teachers, supported through policy and funding from



2009, was also discontinued from 2011. A concern about teacher education for SEN lead to the development of a range of on-line materials for teachers and the Carter Review of Teacher Education (DfE, 2015) highlighted the need for better SEN and Disability (SEND) training as a priority with a longer programme including SEND enhancement for all - but not attention to wider diversity.

As stated above, research has indicated the need for a 'continuum of development' and, if single or 'one-off' courses are organised, it should be clear how they fit into such a continuum and link with other development opportunities. In some countries, although flexibility is needed to respond to national priorities, provision is often funded only in the short term with few, if any opportunities for follow-up and is not therefore likely to be sustainable or to change practice in the classroom.

A strategy for competence and diversity

A more strategic approach is taken in Norway, where in response to recent events, a main goal has been to strengthen teachers' qualifications in migrant education. This has been done through several measures including prioritising Norwegian as a second language in the national education strategy and introducing a five year strategy 'Competence and Diversity' (2013-2017) to provide CPD for teachers to meet identified needs.

The universities and colleges (teacher educators) are central to the success of the competence and diversity programme, which has, to date, focused on building competences by funding them to conduct research within this field.

Competences considered relevant to the education of learners from migrant backgrounds are multicultural understanding and the development of Norwegian as a second language within regular curriculum subjects.

The programme is also designed to strengthen the competences of school leaders and school owners in managing multicultural schools at municipality and county level and strengthen knowledge of migrant student rights. The Norwegian directorate of education provides web-based information and teaching resources. Independent researchers are continuously evaluating this programme, so that adjustments can be made on an on-going basis to ensure success.

In addition to the teacher education provided by higher education schools and training centres, in Portugal, in 2012 the Ministry of Education organised in-service teacher education according to identified needs: early childhood intervention; ICT, Braille, orientation and mobility and written Portuguese as a second language for Deaf students. The Ministry of Education is currently organising a plan for



2015/2020 that aims to support the professional development of in-service teachers with regard to inclusive practices, again taking a longer-term approach.

In Finland too, professional development has been planned in response to the new national core curriculum to be introduced in 2016. This emphasises inclusion and participation, as differences in learning and student diversity have to be taken into account in all school subjects. The new curriculum is based on phenomena instead of traditional 'subjects', which makes a more comprehensive approach possible and is likely to support more diverse learning and teaching styles. This development has led municipalities (with teacher education and universities) to start in-service training for all teachers. In a bottom-up process, the teachers have had their say about the core curriculum. The municipalities and schools have to renew their curricula according to the national core curriculum guidelines, and teachers and other school professionals have to think about the implications for teaching practices. The emphasis on inclusion (already in 2014 documents) will now be refined with the whole content of the core curriculum (not just the former *special education* part) taken into account.

An important part of CPD in Finland is the "Kasvatustieteen päivät" [Educational conference for teachers and teaching researchers], which has theme groups, relating to inclusive practices. In vocational teacher education, a *handbook for special education teacher education*, has been written which (despite the title) emphasises inclusion and uses the Inclusive teacher profile of the Agency as reference. This approach, involving teachers in the planning process would seem more likely to engage teachers and therefore have a greater impact than training planned to meet 'top down' priorities.

The wide variety of approaches taken to CPD raises issues around quality assurance, which is lacking in many countries, with little or no follow up or means of learning about the success - or otherwise - of development opportunities and the impact on learners.

This is not the case in Ireland where, in October 2014, the Teaching Council embarked on a consultation process with teachers to learn about their experience of professional learning. The goal was to enhance the Council's understanding of their learning journey so as to better inform a national framework for teachers' learning. The feedback was analysed and a first draft of the framework, *Cosán*, was developed. The draft framework is rooted in the core values that underpin all of the Council's work: shared professional responsibility, professionally-led regulation and collective professional confidence. A second phase of consultation is now taking place and final phase will involve a series of workshops for teachers in October/November 2015.



The UK (Scotland) has a clear commitment to career long professional learning (CLPL) (GTCS 2012). Every teacher should have a professional learning action plan and areas include: Pedagogy, learning and knowledge of subject area; curriculum and assessment; enquiry and research; educational contexts and current debates in policy, education and practice; sustaining and developing professional learning and learning for sustainability. The principles of CLPL include: reflection on practice, experiential learning; collaborative learning and cognitive development. Different routes can be taken from personal reading to formal study and professional learning should be assessed in the light of the impact on learning/teaching processes and wellbeing and achievement of learners.

The Scottish Teacher Education Committee has also developed a National Framework for Inclusion in Education (Revised 2014). This gives attention to teachers' attitudes and beliefs; developing skills and knowledge and focuses on actions in classroom and school. It is the result of a collaboration between seven Universities and sets out key questions for consideration at every stage of a teacher's career – from student teachers and teachers to advanced professionals and teacher educators.

Finally, work by Hollenweger, Florian and Pantic (2015) provides a framework for the development of inclusive practices that seeks to facilitate dialogue between teacher education providers and schools. They have developed a 'tool' to identify gaps and learning needs and serve as a basis for reflection, for the formation of partnerships and for giving/receiving feedback. It can also be used as a self-review by schools and to support ITE and CPD for teachers, mentors and teacher educators. The tool is based on the 4 areas of competence identified in the Agency's Profile of Inclusive Teachers and these have been expanded to provide a focus on practice including: access, participation, learning and achievement (learner focus - valuing learner diversity); transforming learning capacity (curriculum focus - supporting all learners); enabling social and physical environment (contextual focus - working with others) and competent inclusive practitioners (teacher focus - taking responsibility for lifelong learning).

7.3 School-based professional development

The Empowering Teacher literature review provides evidence (for example Cordingley and Bell, 2012; Walter and Briggs, 2012) that the best CPD is collaborative, sustained over time, connects practice to theory and focuses on learner outcomes. It should involve teachers in a choice of activities, provide opportunities for mentoring and coaching and be supported by the school leadership as well as by external expertise.



All these characteristics point to CPD that provides on-going support so it follows that efforts should be made to ensure that all teachers receive such support in ways that contribute to their career long professional development. It appears, as noted above, that there has been an increase in such teacher driven, collaborative CPD in recent years.

However, for such development to be effective the role of school leaders is critical and leaders also need support to identify teacher needs and source (and/or organise in-house) quality opportunities to meet those needs in a way that will impact on learner outcomes. School leaders also need to have in place mechanisms for the evaluation of professional development in all its forms, to ensure that feedback informs and improves further CPD practice.

Examples of such support can be seen in the reports written following visits undertaken for the Agency Organisation of Provision to Support Inclusive Education project in 2013 (See: <https://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/organisation-of-provision>).

At Nossebro School in Sweden, class/subject teachers were paired with special education teachers. This helped general teachers to realise that there is no 'quick fix' for many of the difficulties encountered by learners and that they often had the necessary strategies in their repertoire. Following conversations with colleagues, they found that they were able to adapt to new situations and make best use of their own competences. The teachers found this type of support concrete and geared towards the learners in the classroom and stated that *'co-operative teaching is the best form of competence training'*. At the same school, research played a key role in developing practice - collaboratively, connecting learning to the teachers' own experience. It also helped to develop a common language to use when discussing difficult ideas.

In the Waldschule in Flensburg, Germany, team teaching was also considered to be a strength with regular teachers meeting to discuss problems and how to solve them. Teachers felt that they had time to reflect and address issues as a team. Again, research informed the development process and there was a link with a local university.

The report on the Inklusive Mittelschule in Vienna reports on the process of coaching used in particular with new teachers to this inclusive school. One teacher noted: *'It is very important to know that there is always a person I can ask questions. I feel safe. I have learned that this school provides the space for learning for all learners'*.



In all these examples, strong and supportive leadership was a factor: being open to new ideas and helping staff to be innovative in response to the challenges faced in ensuring the full participation of all learners in the learning process.

As the example from Sweden shows, a key task for leaders is enabling teachers to work together to share complementary experience and expertise in order to benefit all learners. The Profile of Inclusive Teachers (European Agency, 2013) also notes that collaboration and teamwork are essential approaches for inclusive education. The following example illustrates the effectiveness of peer learning as teacher professional development.

Team teaching as professional development

In Ireland, team teaching is used as a form of professional development for teachers at all stages of their career and for developing instructional leadership. The initiative by Cork Education Training Board focuses on learners at risk of not learning or not attending school. Originally, two teachers worked together focusing on literacy and numeracy but increasingly they are able to 'play to their strengths' and work flexibly across different subject areas.

As well as positive outcomes for learners, teachers report their appreciation of the opportunity to learn in real time in real classrooms. They also experience an enhanced sense of professional belonging; develop new professional relationships and learn new methodologies while also returning to forgotten good practice. This approach also helps teachers to reflect during lessons to gain a greater insight into how students learn or are prevented from learning. They feel empowered by having more choice in the ways in which they respond to students that, in turn builds confidence and competence.

The study concludes that team teaching has the potential to be a key driver in promoting inclusive learning among students and workplace learning among teachers.

Some countries are attempting to develop support services with a clear remit that can provide a consistent approach - and consistent quality of support. The Teaching Council in Ireland advise the Minister in relation to teachers' CPD. They conduct research into CPD and raise awareness of its benefits among the public and teaching profession alike.

Ireland's national in-service provision for teachers is designed and delivered jointly by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and the Inclusive Education Support Service (see also page 13). This service aims to:

- Facilitate effective capacity building among the teaching community and provide local support, in association with other services



- Provide CPD and support to teachers in the area of special educational needs with a focus on learning and teaching.
- Target and access best practice and create a data-base of expertise within the teaching profession in association with other agencies/providers.
- Provide feedback to range of national and local stakeholders.

A key component of PDST's professional development is in-service and school based support for those teaching students with English as an Additional Language and also exceptional ability (EA). PDST designs and delivers CPD modules on team teaching to promote the use of inclusive teaching and learning methodologies in the classroom. It also ensures that schools that participate in the programme 'Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools', the national educational initiative for tackling educational disadvantage, are prioritised for CPD support in a range of intervention programmes.

In Austria, as in many other countries, the current situation demands maximum effort to support teachers working with refugees. Support is provided for the compulsory school development process 'SQA' (Schulqualität und Allgemeinbildung), which requires all authorities in the school system to make development plans, which are monitored and focussed through asking different questions (e.g. about the pathway to inclusion, individualisation and differentiation etc.). Austria also expects a change in the professional role of the teacher for inclusive education and special needs. The new role will focus on supporting and counselling schools in their development as inclusive schools and working as counsellors in support centres.

In a number of other countries, professional learning communities are seen as an effective way to provide support - and CPD - for teachers and improve learner outcomes. Examples include all UK jurisdictions and also Iceland.

7.4 Critical issues for continuing professional development and support

- There is a need to address the gap between teacher effectiveness research and professional learning and develop more effective mechanisms of quality assurance and appropriate indicators to monitor the effectiveness of CPD and support in schools (what works, in what situations and why) empower teachers and increase school capacity/capability for inclusive practice.
- The importance of induction for new teachers is increasingly being recognised but this needs to build on ITE as part of continuum - and include the systematic development of competences for inclusive practice. While some flexibility is required to enable countries to respond to new situations (e.g.



arrival of refugees), an adequately resourced, strategic approach is required, underpinned by a clear conceptual framework to support sustainability.

- Support for school leaders is needed to enable them to organise in-house collaborative opportunities according to context and teacher development needs in an outward-looking strategy that also includes links to research and use of external expertise.

In the final section, all of the critical issues raised in the study will be considered and prioritised to focus on implications for future work.



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