



## A PROFILE OF INCLUSIVE TEACHERS

### (Developed as part of the Teacher Education for Inclusion project)

A concrete request coming Agency Representative Board members and National Coordinators was for information on the necessary competences, attitudes, knowledge and skills required of all teachers working in inclusive settings.

The Profile of Inclusive Teachers is a response to that request. It draws on a range of information collected during the Teacher Education for Inclusion Project including the international policy and research literature reviews (<http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/teacher-education-for-inclusion/teacher-education-web-files/TE4I-Lit-Review.pdf>); the country reports (<http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/teacher-education-for-inclusion/country-info>) and the project synthesis report (in press). Mainly however, it draws upon the discussions held with project experts that have been used to explore the debates regarding the competences that all teachers need to support their work in inclusive settings.

The goal of the profile document is to use this model to outline the essential areas of competence that *all teachers* should acquire within their initial teacher education (ITE) to prepare them to work in inclusive settings.

This short document presents a summary of key information from the Profile.

### 1. Model for the Profile of Inclusive Teachers

Two main parameters were identified to guide the development of the model for the profile:

1 - There are practical and conceptual difficulties in focussing upon isolated competences for teaching in inclusive education and for the Profile to be relevant for different countries and stakeholders, a broad approach to the idea of using competences was needed.

2 - Inclusive education is essentially a principled, rights-based approach underpinned by a number of central values. Therefore a values based approach to developing a Profile of Inclusive Teachers was necessary.

The model used in the Profile is based upon 'Areas of competence'.

Core values identified as essential for all teachers working in inclusive education are used as the basis for then describing the areas of competence. Four core values relating to teaching and learning have been identified as the basis for the competences for teachers working in inclusive education:

- Valuing pupil diversity – pupil 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 teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers;
- Continuing personal professional development - teaching is a learning activity and teachers must accept responsibility for their own lifelong learning.

The areas of competence are made up of three elements: attitudes, knowledge and skills. A certain *attitude* or belief demands certain *knowledge* or level of understanding and then *skills* in order to implement this knowledge in a practical situation.



## 2. General principles

The following statements outline the general principles underpinning the areas of competences proposed for inclusive education.

- 1) The areas of competence for working in inclusive education are necessary for all teachers, just as inclusive education is the responsibility of all teachers. The areas of competence reinforce this critical message.
- 2) The areas of competence for inclusive education do not only focus upon meeting the needs of specific groups of learners (e.g. those with special educational needs); they provide all teachers with the foundations they need to work with learners with a diverse range of needs within a mainstream classroom. The areas of competence therefore reinforce this critical message - that inclusive education is an approach for all learners, not just an approach for particular groups with additional needs.
- 3) The areas of competence identified for ITE in this document are the foundation of key attitudes, knowledge and skills that need to be built upon during induction and further teacher education opportunities. Clear progression routes are crucial and areas of competence must be seen as an integral part of a continuum of professional development opportunities, including specialist SEN courses. These areas of competence should be continuously developed during every teacher's professional career.
- 4) The areas of competence all teachers need to work in inclusive settings are not in contradiction to the specialist education and training for SNE teachers who may support mainstream teachers in their work. These areas of competence are the foundations for all teachers' work – generalists, specialists and experts.
- 5) The areas of competence identified in this profile are deliberately broad to support the development of teachers as lifelong learners and reflective practitioners through experiential learning and action-based research. The model of ITE should focus on the development of learning and competence with a reduced emphasis on a content-based curriculum.
- 6) The areas of competence can support the professional development of student teachers and be a source of guidance to teacher educators.
- 7) The integration of the areas of competence for inclusive education within ITE needs to be debated with a wide range of stakeholders within different national situations and contexts. Through such dialogue, the areas of competence can potentially be a mechanism for reducing the disconnection that is thought to exist between classroom teachers and other stakeholders in education.
- 8) The areas of competence for inclusive education should be seen as one starting point for ITE course design/planning. The principle of inclusive education as a systemic approach should apply to ITE as well as school based curricula.



### **3. Areas of competence for teachers working in inclusive education**

The core values identified as essential for all teachers working in inclusive education are used as the basis for describing the areas of competence. These core values:

- Are principles that can be evidenced in a teacher's actions;
- Become 'theory enriched practical knowledge' through learning that occurs during teacher education course;
- Express and demonstrate 'values in action' through the components of attitudes, knowledge and skills.

The areas of competence linked to each of the four core values are:

*Valuing pupil diversity – pupil difference is considered as a resource and an asset to education*

- Conceptions of inclusive education
- The teacher's view of learner difference

*Supporting all learners - teachers have high expectations for all learners' achievements*

- Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes
- Promoting the academic and social learning of all learners

*Working with others - collaboration and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers*

- Working with parents and families
- Working with a range of other educational professionals

*Continuing personal professional development - teaching is a learning activity and teachers must accept responsibility for their own lifelong learning*

- Teachers as reflective practitioners
- Initial teacher education as a foundation for ongoing professional learning and development



#### **4. Implications of implementing a Profile of Inclusive Teachers**

There are various implications that have to be considered in relation to implementing a Profile of Inclusive Teachers. Implications can be identified in relation to the following areas of the wider system for inclusive education:

- Content of initial teacher education courses and programmes;
- The work of teacher educators;
- Assessment within initial teacher education (ITE);
- Policy for initial teacher education;
- Teacher induction in schools;
- Continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities;
- The wider policy framework for inclusive education.

There are many aspects of Teacher Education for Inclusion highlighted within the document that require further examination:

- There is a developing, but still quite limited research base documenting how teachers working in inclusive settings are being, or should be prepared across Europe;
- Many countries are debating the structure of ITE and considering where and by whom ITE should be delivered (universities and/or schools) ;
- Course structures and curriculum content are also being debated and revised in many countries.

In summary, what might be meant by effectiveness in initial teacher education is being debated at national and international levels.

However, it is hoped that the Profile of Inclusive Teachers will contribute to the necessary discussion and can be used as a means of furthering debate and investigation in countries as well as at the European level.