Core Values as the Basis
for
Teacher Education for Inclusion

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Abstract

Teacher education issues are high on the policy agenda across Europe. *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (United Nations, 2006) is gaining momentum and providing a lever for change. Article 24 covers many aspects of education and the UN Handbook for Parliamentarians on the (United Nations, 2007) argues that inclusive education not only provides the best educational environment for learners with disabilities, but also helps break down barriers and challenge stereotypes.

This paper outlines the current policy agenda for teacher education for inclusion in Europe and considers the core values necessary for teachers to work effectively in inclusive education. The paper draws upon the work of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (The Agency) project on Teacher Education for Inclusion (TE4I –more information is available from http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/Teacher-Education-for-Inclusion) and on evidence gathered from discussions with over 450 European stakeholders in education – policy makers, school leaders, teachers, support staff, parents and learners. These stakeholders, over a series of 14 country study visits, highlighted the importance of the core values as the foundation for all teachers working in inclusive education.

Within the Agency project a framework of core values was developed. These core values for inclusive education were linked with essential areas of teacher competence. The process of verification used to validate a final framework of core values and areas of competence at the European level is described in this paper.

Keywords

Education and Training across Europe – The Current Policy Context

The term *inclusion* is used in an increasing number of European countries to encompass a far wider range of pupils vulnerable to

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exclusion than those identified as having special educational needs (SEN). Acedo et al. (2009) reflecting on the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) recommended that policy makers should acknowledge that:

> inclusive education is an on-going process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination. (p. 126)

The conclusions of the Council of the European Union (2010) on the social dimension of education and training note that education and training systems across the EU need to ensure both equity and excellence; and to recognise that improving educational attainment and key competencies for all are crucial, not only to economic growth and competitiveness, but also to reducing poverty and fostering social inclusion.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) is also gaining momentum and providing a force for change (see http://www.un.org/disabilities/ for the most current list of ratifications). Article 24 states that persons with disabilities should have access to an inclusive, quality, free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live. The United Nations publication *From Exclusion to Equality: Realising the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Handbook for Parliamentarians* (2007) stresses that inclusive education not only provides the best educational environment for learners with disabilities, but also helps break down barriers and challenge stereotypes. More specifically regarding teacher education, the World

Report on Disability (World Health Organization, 2011) states:

> The appropriate training of mainstream teachers is crucial if they are to be confident and competent in teaching children with diverse needs. The principles of inclusion should be built into teacher training programmes, which should be about attitudes and values, not just knowledge and skills. (p. 222)

The Need to Strengthen Teacher Education

The preparation of teachers to meet the increasingly diverse needs of learners in today's classrooms is a key area of policy debate at European level. The Commission of the European Union (2008a) in an updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training stressed that "the quality of teachers, trainers and other educational staff is the most important within-school factor affecting student performance" (p. 8). European Union ministers responsible for education agreed that teachers should be equipped to meet the challenges of increasing social and cultural diversity in the classroom, stressing that this is crucial for the development of more equitable education systems and for progress towards providing equal opportunities for all (Council of the European Union, 2007).

The Communication from the European Commission on improving competences for the 21st century also highlighted the need for initial teacher education to improve the balance between theory and practice, and to present teaching as a problem-solving or research-in-action activity linked to children's learning and progress (Commission of the European Union, 2008a). In their conclusions on the professional development of teachers and school leaders, the Council of the

European Union (2009a) recognised that no course of initial teacher education can equip teachers with all the competencies they might require during their careers and noted that the demands on the teaching profession are evolving rapidly- requiring teachers to reflect on their own learning requirements in the context of their particular school environment, and to take greater responsibility for their own lifelong learning.

Key Messages From European Research Literature

In reviewing the literature on teacher education programmes from a range of European countries, many common themes emerge. Guðjónsdóttir et al. (2008) stressed the need to develop a holistic approach to inclusion, including issues of equity, poverty and diversity. Saloviita (2005) noted the importance of developing shared terminology and appropriate use of inclusive language while Esteve (2009) and Nuova (2009) stated that teaching practice is key in developing knowledge of the professional culture of teaching. Hajkova (2007) also stressed the importance of reflection in transformational learning.

Other key issues discussed included the need to close the theory-practice gap (Munoz, 2009, Mattson, 2006, Molina, 2006), and to develop critical skills in research and develop a research attitude (Rodrigues 2009). Dispositions such as resilience, positive attitudes towards disability, and beliefs regarding the potential of learners with diverse needs are considered to be essential (Tubele, 2008). Many other researchers point to the need to remove the experience based barriers which arise because students themselves were not educated in inclusive settings (Naukkarinen, 2008). The importance of the development of skills to ensure positive relationships with peers and pupils, and regard for pupil voice was noted (Molina,

2006, Kaikkonen, Maunonen-Eskelinen and Aidukiene, 2007); knowledge of learning (i.e. constructivist approaches), personalisation and support strategies were mentioned (Casonova et al., 2006, Kavkler, 2009, ONFRIH, 2008, Cefai, Fenech and Galea, 2007); the need to undertake research and improve networking among teacher educators was also described (Franzkowiak, 2009); and the importance of developing initial teacher education institutions' understanding of disability and inclusion were mentioned (Cardona, 2009).

Collaboration is widely considered to be an essential skill for inclusive teachers but is also an important skill for teacher educators teaching in special and mainstream teacher education programmes who need to merge content to better prepare all teachers to meet diverse needs (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). Acedo et al. (2009) expressed the view that due to the myriad difficulties with which all teachers are confronted, separate pre-service education tracks (special and mainstream) are not helpful. This view is supported by Young (2008) who suggested that the implied need for an ever greater range of qualifications and specialisations limits the range of pupils that teachers think they can teach. Overall, Hollins and Gunzman (2005) suggested that teacher education requires the reduction of prejudice, development of an *equity pedagogy* and field experiences to increase understanding of and sensitivity to cultural diversity.

The literature therefore supports the need to move towards initial teacher education that prepares all teachers to work in increasingly inclusive settings. This preparation necessarily involves holding certain attitudes and values in relation to inclusion, as well as possessing knowledge and skills relevant for teaching in inclusive settings.

The Agency Teacher Education for Inclusion (TE4I) project

The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (The Agency) was established in 1996 by agreement among the ministers of education in European Union member countries. It is a permanent network of ministerial representatives acting as the member countries' platform for collaboration to promote quality and equity in education as a way to achieve greater social cohesion. The Agency is maintained by the member countries (Austria, Belgium [Flemish and French speaking communities], Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom [England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales]) and is supported by the European Union Institutions[1] although it works independently from these institutions. Co-operative work between Agency member country ministerial representatives highlighted a range of common concerns and priority areas for future work in the area of teacher education for inclusion:

- What kind of teachers do we need for an inclusive society in a 21st century school?
- What are the essential teacher values and competences for inclusive education?

The Agency Project on Teacher Education for Inclusion involved 25 countries and ran from 2009-2012. Representatives from the European Commission Directorate General-Education and Culture (DG-EAC), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (OECD-CERI) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization International Bureau of Education (UNESCO-IBE) were involved in

the project to ensure consistency with other European and international initiatives in this area of work.

It was agreed the project would focus upon the education of mainstream teachers and how they are prepared to work in inclusive settings, with initial teacher education as a priority. The essential question for consideration was: *How are all teachers prepared via their initial education to be 'inclusive'?*

Key Messages From the TE4I Project

During the 3 year Agency project, information collected was linked to three strands of evidence:

- project reviews of policy and research literature;
- information from Agency member countries collected via a survey on policy and practice;
- discussions with country nominated experts during country study visits.

(All sources of project information are available in full from the project website: http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/Teacher-Education-for-Inclusion).

The analysis of this information highlighted a number of key messages, discussed in detail in the project synthesis report *Teacher Education for Inclusion Across Europe – Challenges and Opportunities* (2011):

- The reform of teacher education must be part of wider societal reform to support greater inclusion. This requires collaboration between policy makers to ensure a holistic approach and recognition of the role of inclusive education as one of the main strategies to address the challenges of marginalisation and exclusion.
- There is a need for further debate around standards, accountability and

equity in education to ensure that *measures* support inclusive practice

▪ Reform must include clarification of the language around inclusion and diversity and a clear understanding of the underlying premises associated with and the implications of using different terminology. This should include a move away from the categorisation and *labelling* of children and young people.

▪ Preparation for teaching must maintain academic rigour, *educating* rather than *training* teachers. The status of teachers must be raised and reinforced by the development of training parallel to other professional groups to ensure lifelong learning. In order to select appropriate teacher candidates and reduce drop out from training and teaching, further research is required to look at the selection process, bearing in mind the need to increase diversity in the teacher workforce.

▪ While there is wide agreement on the content required to effectively prepare teachers for diversity in the classroom, there is, as yet, little research evidence to indicate the most effective approaches to teacher education, and how best to support a move from discrete modules dealing with *inclusion* towards integrated content – single courses that prepare all teachers to meet the diverse needs of all learners. More rigorous follow-up of new teachers and evaluation of new initiatives are also needed to gather evidence on the most effective routes into teaching.

▪ Teaching practice needs to be supported by intellectual analysis and a clear understanding of theoretical issues to close the theory-practice gap. Student

teachers ideally need to be placed in inclusive settings with mentors/supervising teachers who are themselves trained for this important role and are able to demonstrate attitudes and values that support inclusion.

▪ There is a need for closer collaboration between training institutions and schools (e.g. demonstration schools, communities of practice). Teacher educators should model effective practice for teachers in training (in schools and during teacher education courses) and use a wider range of more flexible methods of assessment, such as portfolios.

▪ The research and the work of the project show the need for competences for teachers (adapted to countries' own contexts) that can help to support a shared understanding of *quality* inclusive teaching and, therefore, consistent judgements about effective teacher education. Competences are a dynamic combination of knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities, developed during the process of learning and will also require new approaches to assessment.

The project analysis concluded that the goal of initial teacher education should be to develop new teachers who are inclusive practitioners, effective in their teaching as well as expert in their subject. Significantly, the project findings support the arguments that core values for teaching in inclusive settings play a key role in achieving these goals.

A Values Based Approach to Inclusive Education

Within the TE4I project, there was widespread agreement that inclusion is essentially a principled, rights-based approach to education underpinned by a number of central values.

Such a viewpoint is implicit within wider European and international level work.

Within the Europe 2020 Strategy (2009ab) one of the five headline targets relates to education. This target clearly stresses the importance of values in European education systems:

> In the period up to 2020, the primary goal of European co-operation should be to support the further development of education and training systems in the Member States which are aimed at ensuring:
> (a) the personal, social and professional fulfilment of all citizens;
> (b) sustainable economic prosperity and employability, whilst promoting democratic values, social cohesion, active citizenship, and intercultural dialogue. (Council of the European Union, 2009b, p3)

Education and Training 2020 (ET2020), a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training sets out four strategic objectives for member states. Strategic objective 3 focuses upon promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship.

Within this objective, the importance of values is highlighted:

> Education should promote intercultural competences, democratic values and respect for fundamental rights and the environment, as well as combat all forms of discrimination, equipping all young people to interact positively with their peers from diverse backgrounds. (2009b, p,4)

In the report on the International Conference on Inclusive Education (UNESCO, 2008) it is argued that:

Inclusive education is based on a series of conceptions and values regarding the type of society to be built and the ideal person to be developed. If we want to have more inclusive societies, which are more peaceful and respectful of differences, it is essential that students have the opportunity to develop and experience these values in their education, whether in schools or non-formal settings. (p.11)

It can be seen, therefore, that thinking has moved on beyond the narrow idea of inclusion as a means of understanding and overcoming a deficit and it is now widely accepted that it concerns issues of gender, ethnicity, class, social conditions, health and human rights encompassing universal involvement, access, participation and achievement (Ouane, 2008).

The International Conference on Inclusive Education (UNESCO, 2008) states that:

> Applying a rights-based approach to education in order to move towards inclusion will require comprehensive school system reform including modification of constitutional guarantees and policies, curricula, teacher training systems, materials, learning environments, methodologies, resource allocation, etc. Above all, it will require a change in attitudes of all people, throughout the system, to welcome diversity and difference and see these as opportunities rather than problems. (p. 29)

Recent developments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) support such attitudinal change. Article 24 of the Convention emphasises that people

with disabilities have a right to education. It goes further outlining:

> States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realising this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to: The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity. (p. 17)

However, UNICEF and UNESCO (2007) argue that:

> The right to education requires a commitment to ensuring universal access, including taking all necessary measures to reach the most marginalized children. But getting children into schools is not enough; it is no guarantee of an education that enables individuals to achieve their economic and social objectives and to acquire the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that bring about responsible and active citizenship. (p27)

Inclusive education as an over-arching concept impacts on different policies and implementation approaches in compulsory, higher and teacher education. At all levels, the goals of inclusive education are achieved within settings and systems that value everyone equally and see schools as community resources. Inclusive education is concerned with all learners and is aimed at increasing the meaningful participation of an individual in learning opportunities and reducing their exclusion from education and wider society.

Rights-based, inclusive education for all learners consequently needs a holistic approach and this requires a view of teachers as more than deliverers of content. The 2011 European Commission report on the Peer Learning Activity centred upon Teacher Professional Development (2011) suggests that "not every aspect of teaching can be fully described or defined; aspects such as the teacher's professional values, dispositions and attitudes can be as important as more measurable and quantifiable aspects" (p7). The report suggests that across Europe, "components of teacher competences often include: knowledge, skills and values" (p.10).

The *World Report on Disability* (WHO, 2011) also suggests that: "The appropriate training of mainstream teachers is crucial if they are to be confident and competent in teaching children with diverse needs" (p.222). The report clearly emphasises the need for this training to be focussed upon attitudes and values, not just knowledge and skills.

In summary, it can be argued that:

- Inclusive education can be seen to be underpinned by the values of equality, participation, developing and sustaining communities and respect for diversity.
- The values a teacher holds are an essential determinant of their actions.
- Values are principles that can be evidenced in a teacher's actions and that become *theory enriched practical knowledge* as a result of the learning opportunities presented during teacher education courses.
- These values form the foundation for all teachers to acquire knowledge, develop understanding and implement the skills necessary for working in inclusive education.

Core Values as a Basis for Identifying Areas of Teacher Competence

At the international level, the report Teachers Matter (OECD, 2005) identifies a range of personal competencies that make a difference to the quality and effectiveness of teaching (p.100). The potential competences identified focus upon subject knowledge and a range of transversal skills (such as communication, self-management, organisational and problem-solving skills).

The majority of the countries participating in the TE4I project are debating teacher competences at either Higher Education Institution (HEI) or national policy level. However, it should be acknowledged that the understanding of competences and/or their application in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in general differs greatly across countries. Within the project, it was the case that different countries not only identified different essential competences for teachers, but also interpreted the term competences in different ways.

Within the TE4I project it was agreed that the terms *competences* and *standards* are not inter-changeable, and as a result of project discussions the following definitions have been agreed with experts for use within the TE4I project:

- *Standards* generally refer to a set of measures against which student teachers/teachers/teacher education courses can be evaluated – the summative outcomes at the end of a programme of study.
- *Competences* are seen as developing over time with ITE students and teachers demonstrating progressive mastery in a range of settings and situations. As such, they form both the foundation for ITE and the basis for continuing professional development. (European Agency, 2011 p. 46)

During project debates, country experts all agreed that there are practical and conceptual difficulties in focussing upon *isolated competences for teaching* and stressed the need for caution against

- repeating work already done in participating countries in identifying and cataloguing specific competences for particular contexts;
- developing an over simplistic checklist of teachers' competences that could be interpreted as mechanistic.

The framework proposed within project work was therefore based upon multi-faceted *areas of competence* linked to agreed core values for inclusive education.

Areas of competence are each made up of three elements: 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.

This approach builds upon the work of Ryan (2009) who described attitudes as *multidimensional traits*, but most importantly Shulman (2007) who described professional learning in terms of the apprenticeships of the head (knowledge), hand (skill, or doing), and heart (attitudes and beliefs).

Developing a Framework of Core Values Linked to Areas of Competence

Within the Agency project, a series of country study visits were scheduled for 2010 and 2011; these visits were the main mechanism for discussing and then validating the framework of core values linked to areas of competence proposed in the project.

During the five country study visits that took place during Spring 2010, a draft framework of core values was discussed together with issues relating to the use of competency based approaches. The visits took place in: Belfast, UK (Northern Ireland); Porto,

Portugal; Eger, Hungary; Borås, Sweden and Utrecht, Netherlands.

In addition to the country project experts, over 100 education professionals – including policy makers, teacher educators, students, school staff, specialist support staff and community group representatives - participated in activities during the five visits.

The key agreements arising from the discussions in the five visits focussed upon the crucial role of underlying values and attitudes towards education generally and inclusive education specifically that must be accounted for in initial teacher education.

On the basis of the 2010 country study visits, a revised and extended framework of core values was presented for discussion at a full project meeting in Zürich in Autumn 2010 involving experts from all 25 participating countries as well as representatives of the European Commission, OECD-CERI and UNESCO-IBE.

Using the concepts of core values and areas of competence as a framework, a model was developed in draft form for further discussion during the nine country study visits held in 2011. Within the proposed framework, four core values were identified as essential for all teachers working in inclusive education. These core values were used as the basis for describing the areas of competence required by all teachers and each area of competence is seen as inter-connected and highly inter-dependent.

The model of core values linked to areas of competence is presented below (core values indicated in bold font and areas of competence in italics):

Valuing Learner Diversity - learner difference is considered as a resource and an asset to education. The areas of competence within this core value relate to:

▪ *Conceptions of inclusive education;*
▪ *The teacher's view of learner difference.*

Supporting All Learners - teachers have high expectations for all learners' achievements. The areas of competence within this core value relate to:

▪ *Promoting the academic, practical, social and emotional learning of all learners;*
▪ *Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes.*

Working With Others - collaboration and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers. The areas of competence within this core value relate to:

▪ *Working with parents and families;*
▪ *Working with a range of other educational professionals.*

Personal Professional Development - teaching is a learning activity and teachers take responsibility for their lifelong learning. The areas of competence within this core value relate to:

▪ *Teachers as reflective practitioners;*
▪ *Initial teacher education as a foundation for on-going professional learning and development.*

The 2011 country visits involved a series of validation activities. Within the project activities, validation was understood to refer to stakeholder agreement on the proposed framework of values and areas of competence. (European Agency, 2012)

In preparation for discussions during the visits, all participants (including country

stakeholders) were provided with copies of the draft model document (either in full or in summary format) before the meetings. The main goal of the 2011 country visits was to collect feedback from a range of different stakeholders in teacher education on the content and potential usefulness of the framework of core values linked to areas of competence. To achieve this goal, the country host teams organised a range of activities involving different stakeholder group representatives. Activities included visits to and observations in schools and classes, visits to teacher education institutions and observations of ITE classes, and presentations about country policy and practice for ITE.

Most importantly, in all visits there were a series of discussions between the visiting project experts and country stakeholders in ITE regarding the framework – its content and potential usefulness. These discussions were highly interactive and took the form of focus groups where stakeholders were encouraged to provide their feedback and the project experts and staff team acted as recorders.

For all visits a template for collecting feedback on the framework was completed by all project experts and some key stakeholder participants. This template asked the project experts to record information relating to five areas:

- stakeholder agreement about the framework of core values: valuing learners diversity, supporting all learners, working with others and personal professional development;
- stakeholder agreement about the areas of competence outlined in the model;
- discussion regarding the general principles underpinning the framework;
- comments or suggestions regarding implications for implementation of the framework;

- anything stakeholders want to add or delete.

The visit discussion activities ranged from conversations with small groups, to large plenary debates with audiences of over 50 stakeholder group representatives. In addition to the country project experts, over 300 participants were involved in the nine visits. These included:

- learners (both with and without special educational needs), their parents and family members;
- local community representatives;
- class teachers, school leaders, specialist teachers and support staff;
- multi-disciplinary team members (including school psychologists, social workers and health care professionals);
- school inspectors, local area administrators and policy makers;
- newly qualified teachers;
- student teachers – studying both ITE and in-service education programmes;
- teacher educators working in inclusive, special needs and subject based programmes;
- teacher education institution senior managers (rectors, deans, heads of departments and faculties);
- national level policy makers for inclusive education and teacher education.

European Stakeholder Agreement on the Framework of Core Values and Areas of Competence

The nine country study visits in 2011 were grouped into two phases of information collection:

Information collection for validation: Using the agreed template, feedback on the Framework was collected during the visits to Cyprus, Malta, Norway, Latvia and Finland and then analysed by the project staff team in

order to identify emerging themes and ideas across visits.

Information verification: the key trends and messages emerging from the first visits were presented to participants in the visits to Denmark, Spain, UK (England) and Austria. Participants were asked to specifically comment on the trends identified in the first phase of visits in order to see if the findings the TE4I project website: were verified or contested. (More information on the country study visits is available from http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/Teacher-Education-for-Inclusion/country-study-visits)

This pattern of two phases of information collection activities, as well as the fixed structure of the visits and the varied participants involved in them meant that different forms of data (information) triangulation could be used. Denzin (1979) originally identified four types of triangulation techniques, which have been latterly discussed by Creswell and Miller (2000) among others. Two of these techniques were used in the visits: *data triangulation* (the same process for collecting information being repeated nine times, resulting in nine datasets) and *different investigator information triangulation* (two project managers and nine teams of experts all using the same information collection tools).

In total, 68 written responses using the template for feedback and comments were collected and analysed; 36 in the information validation phase and 32 in the information verification phase.

The respondents represented the following countries: Austria, Belgium [Flemish and French speaking communities], Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom [England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales].

A potential problem with engaging the project experts to provide feedback was that even though they were asked to present the views of stakeholders during discussions, personal views on the values and areas of competence were likely to be reflected in their written comments. For the small number of responses where it was obvious that a personal reply had been given – for example, where the use of the word 'I' was prevalent – the staff team asked the respondent whether the reply was personal, or whether it did reflect the stakeholder discussions. Only those replies confirmed as reflecting stakeholder discussions were included in the analysis.

The main focus for the analysis of the respondents' feedback was upon collecting evidence of agreement (or otherwise) with the framework model, specifically:

- reported agreement with the core values;
- reported agreement with the areas of competence.

An overall breakdown of these responses is presented in the table below:

	Reported agreement with the core values	Reported agreement with the areas of competence	Total
Overall	59	54	68
Validation phase	30	30	36
Verification phase	29	24	32

Table 1 – Overview of Responses   32

There was strong general stakeholder agreement on the model – over 87% of respondents reported agreement on the core values and 79% reported agreement on the areas of competence.[2] In the validation phase, there was 83% agreement on both the core values and the areas of competence. In the verification phase, there was 91% agreement on the core values and 75% agreement on the areas of competence.

Based on the analysis of information from the nine visits, the basic framework based upon four core values linked to areas of competence (and presented in section 6 above) was agreed upon. As a result of this European level validation of the framework, the core values and areas of competence were used as the basis for developing a more extensive *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education 2012). This Profile document was sent to all Agency representatives and nominated project experts for comment in early 2012. The final draft was also presented at the TE4I project dissemination conference, held in Brussels in Spring 2012. During this event, in addition to project experts having a final opportunity to comment on the text, structured reflections on the potential value of the Profile were presented by representatives of UNESCO and UNICEF CEE/CIS, as well as speakers representing key education employers, newly qualified teachers and student teachers.

The agreed objectives for the Profile document were to:

- identify a framework of core values and areas of competence that are applicable to any initial teacher education programme;
- highlight the essential core values and areas of competence necessary for preparing all teachers to work in inclusive education considering all forms of diversity;
- highlight key factors supporting the implementation of the proposed core values and areas of competence for inclusive education within all ITE programmes;
- reinforce the argument made within the TE4I project that inclusive education is the responsibility of all teachers and that preparing all teachers for work in inclusive settings is the responsibility of all teacher educators working across ITE programmes.

Core Values Linked to European Policy Priorities for School and Teacher Education

The final Profile of Inclusive Teachers developed within the Teacher Education for Inclusion project presents the core values and agreed areas of competence needed by all teachers to enable them to work effectively in inclusive education. While the political priorities and effects of social policies within individual countries cannot be ignored, there is a framework of international and EU level policy subscribed to by all countries that impacts upon both inclusive education and teacher education.

The work conducted to identify agreed European core values and areas of competence for teachers working in inclusive education links directly to three areas of European level policy initiatives: firstly, key competences for lifelong learning; secondly, competency approaches within higher education and finally improving teacher education policy.

The key competences needed by all citizens within a context of lifelong learning are described in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council of the European Union (2006). Eight key competencies are identified:

- communication in the mother tongue;
- communication in foreign languages;
- mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
- digital competence;
- learning to learn;
- social and civic competences;
- sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and
- cultural awareness and expression.

The relevance of these eight key competences for all learners is highlighted within Strategic objective 3 of the ET 2020 Strategic Framework, which argues that:

> Education and training policy should enable all citizens, irrespective of their personal, social or economic circumstances, to acquire, update and develop over a lifetime both job-specific skills and the key competences needed for their employability and to foster further learning, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue. (p4)

The development of key competences during school education is closely linked with the use of competency-based approaches in higher education. Within the European Union Bologna process[3] work, the report from the Joint Quality Initiative informal group (European Universities Association, 2003) supported not only an outcomes based approach to higher education, but recommended a competency based approach where learners:

> . . . can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining

arguments and solving problems within their field of study. (p.57)

This is supported by Sjur and Radu (2010) who, in a Council of Europe report argue that developing learners' competence should be seen as part of the mission of higher education, with the competences to be developed dependent upon what are considered to be the purposes of higher education. They suggest that *converging competences* highlight the need to educate the whole person; education should be seen as being about acquiring knowledge and skills, but also about acquiring values and attitudes.

A number of implications for teacher education are apparent: student teachers should be educated using a competency based approach, as this is likely to make their ITE more effective, and prepare them to develop competence based learning with all learners in their classrooms. As the TE4I project synthesis report (2011) suggests:

> New teachers must understand the complexities of teaching and learning and the many factors that affect them. They should recognise that all learners should be actively involved in making sense of their learning, rather than passive consumers of tightly prescribed curriculum content. (p68)

Three recent Council Conclusions – from 2007, 2008 and 2009 – have identified priorities for improving teacher education as defined by the Ministers of Education in member states. These have been summarised within the document, *Improving Teacher Quality: the European Union Policy Agenda*, (Holdsworth, 2010). Ten priority policy areas can be identified in these three sets of Council Conclusions. The priority areas are to:

- promote professional values and attitudes;

- improve teacher competences;
- ensure effective recruitment and selection to promote educational quality;
- improve the quality of initial teacher education;
- introduce induction programmes for all new teachers;
- provide mentoring support to all teachers;
- improve quality and quantity of continuing professional development;
- support effective school leadership;
- ensure the quality of teacher educators;
- improve teacher education systems.

The core values for inclusive education agreed upon in the project by European stakeholders underpin all of these policy priorities; furthermore it is argued that the core values are beneficial for all learners, not just those at risk of exclusion.

Concluding Comments

Many European countries are reviewing 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 widely debated and many of the proposed revisions are in line with an inclusive approach. The OECD 'Teachers Matter' report (2005) discusses "changing the emphases in initial teacher education"
and suggests that:

> It is unrealistic to expect that any initial teacher education programme, no matter how high quality, will be able to fully develop student teachers … rather than being the main or indeed the only qualification for teachers, initial teacher education is now starting to be viewed as the entry point for the profession and the platform for teachers' on-going development (p. 134).

The OECD report goes further and argues that raising teacher quality is the policy most likely to lead to gains in school performance. This argument is in alignment with the wide agreement among the professionals working with the Agency project that educating teachers to respond to diversity is likely to be the policy having the greatest impact on the development of more inclusive schools and communities.

The reform of teacher education must be part of wider systemic reform that requires the principle of inclusion to become an integral part of the thinking of policy makers and other stakeholders. Such change inevitably takes time and highlights the importance of consistent, long-term, holistic policies. Throughout the Agency project, a recurring message from project experts and country stakeholders has been the potential of teacher education to act as a lever for change in the education system and promote inclusive practice. Work within the project suggests that individual teachers cannot be viewed as agents for systemic change in education, but that they can be considered as a crucial factor contributing to necessary systemic change.

Teachers who hold values in line with an inclusive approach and who are prepared to work effectively with a diverse range of learners' needs can act as multipliers for inclusive education. Every action that supports inclusive education matters and all actors in education can make a difference in the short and long term.

Notes

1. The Jean Monnet Action Programme in the field of Lifelong Learning for 2007-2013 entered into force on 14th December 2006: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/structure/monnet_en.html
2. There were 9 negative responses (13%) in relation to the core values: 6 respondents did not reply; 1 respondent suggested that more

development to the framework of core values was needed; 2 respondents questioned whether the values were sufficiently personalised to individuals and local contexts.

There were 14 negative responses (21%) in relation to the areas of competence: 8 respondents did not reply; 2 respondents suggested the concept was overly simplistic; 2 respondents suggested more details were needed to develop the concept; 1 respondent suggested the issue was not covered well enough in the visit to give a reply; 1 respondent stated that the concept requires a huge paradigm shift.

3. Please see: http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/bologna_en.htm for more information.

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