

Teacher Professional Learning for Inclusion

Literature Review

T P L 4 I



EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR INCLUSION

Literature Review



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PREAMBLE

Teacher professional learning for inclusion is a high priority for international organisations, such as the United Nations (UN), the European Commission and the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency). In particular, the topic has been identified as a high policy priority by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in its *General Comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education*, and by the European Union (EU) in the *Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching* (Council of the European Union, 2018). Recent Agency work has also addressed it. For example, the Country Policy Review and Analysis work suggests that countries could significantly improve policy provisions for teacher professional learning for inclusion (European Agency, 2016a).

Previous Agency projects have addressed teacher education and teacher professional learning (European Agency, 2010; 2015a). The [Teacher Education for Inclusion \(TE4I\)](#) project (European Agency, 2010) specifically addressed initial teacher education. Twenty-five countries participated in the project, which examined the question: How are all teachers prepared via their initial education to be inclusive? It identified the essential skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and values needed by everyone entering the teaching profession, from pre-primary to secondary school teachers in mainstream education. A key project outcome was the [Profile of Inclusive Teachers](#) (European Agency, 2012a), which informs teachers and teacher educators on competence development for inclusion.

The TE4I project also laid the foundation for a broader focus on teacher professional learning for inclusion, as stated in the *Project Recommendations linked to Sources of Evidence* (European Agency, 2012b). In particular, it called for research on different routes into teaching, including course organisation, content and pedagogy. It recommended further developing the ‘profession’ of teacher educators, to ensure that teachers gain competence to meet the diverse needs of all learners (ibid.).

The Empowering Teachers to Promote Inclusive Education project (European Agency, 2015a) highlighted the need for clear and coherent links between initial teacher education, induction and continuing professional development to form a continuum of teacher professional learning. The [Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education](#) project offered a [resource to support self-review](#) (European Agency, 2017a). This is linked to competences to inform teachers’ continuing professional development, such as:

- Pedagogy for all learners
- Support for learning
- Leadership roles
- Learner well-being and participation
- Curriculum development
- Partnerships and collaborative working



- Support systems for staff and leaders.

Furthermore, the [Inclusive Early Childhood Education](#) (IECE) project (European Agency, 2017b) took the perspective of early childhood education practitioners. The project provided standards for inclusive early childhood policy and provision, to ensure ‘each child’s belongingness, engagement and learning’ (ibid, p. 11). In a new Ecosystem Model of Inclusive Early Childhood Education, continuing professional development is situated at the micro-system level of pre-school processes and structures, encouraging effective collaboration towards high-quality early childhood education. Furthermore, the IECE project developed a [self-reflection tool](#) for early childhood practitioners to improve inclusive early childhood education settings (European Agency, 2017c).

Finally, the [Financing of Inclusive Education](#) (European Agency, 2016b) and [Financing Policies for Inclusive Education Systems](#) (European Agency, 2018a; 2018b) projects indicated countries’ intentions to plan and implement teachers’ professional development and/or provide flexibility in financing teachers’ professional development.

It is clear that teacher professional learning reaches out to a broad group of practitioners in education. It refers to a variety of formal and non-formal learning opportunities. In particular, regarding professional learning for inclusion, this wide array of professional needs amplifies demand. Fragmented initiatives and opportunities may not respond sufficiently and opportunely to the challenges in the field. Therefore, clear policy guidelines for teacher professional learning for inclusion are needed to meet the demand to prepare all teachers to include all learners more systematically and sustainably.

This literature review forms the basis for the current Teacher Professional Learning for Inclusion (TPL4I) project. The project aims to identify the essential policy elements needed to ensure that all teachers at each stage of their career are prepared for inclusive education. It focuses on all policies that affect teacher professional learning (TPL): initial teacher education (ITE), induction, continuing professional development (CPD) and in-school learning opportunities. More specifically, TPL4I aims to review what policy documents and research literature say about the following questions:

- What current policy priorities for all teacher professional learning can be identified in international and European-level documents and in research literature?
- What national policy frameworks for teacher professional learning are in place in participating member countries, and how are these situated within national contexts (e.g. within different ministries or agencies)?
- What policy elements or frameworks are needed to prepare all teachers to include all learners?
- What policy priorities for teacher professional learning required to prepare all teachers to include all learners need further investigation at the European level?

Ultimately, the TPL4I project aims to develop a comprehensive policy framework for professional learning for inclusion. This literature review is the first step in its development.



1. INTRODUCTION

The *Agency Position on Inclusive Education Systems* outlines the need 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, 2015b, p. 2). As the 2018 Council Recommendation makes clear, this goal is important because:

Ensuring effective equal access to quality inclusive education for all learners, including those of migrant origins, those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, those with special needs and those with disabilities — in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities — is indispensable for achieving more cohesive societies (Council of the European Union, 2018, clause 16, p. 3).

To make this vision a reality, all teachers must be effectively prepared to support all learners to participate in all educational opportunities. Therefore, policy development in relation to teachers’ preparation for inclusion should be an integral part of the policy framework for inclusive education (Watkins, De Vroey and Symeonidou, 2016). This is important because, in Europe, learners who may have been excluded from mainstream schools in the past are now enrolled in these schools. In addition, the increasing movement of people, both as a result of economic migration and refugee status, has re-opened public debates about civic responsibilities, including how to provide an education for all learners. Teachers in many places, in both urban and non-urban schools, are working with more diverse learner groups than ever before, at a time when uncertainty about the future has led to debates about the pros and cons of social inclusion (Florian and Pantić, 2017).

In the last decade, several researchers have underlined the significance of investing in teacher education for inclusion (Cosier and Ashby, 2016; Florian, 2009; Forlin, 2010; Pugach, Blanton and Florian, 2012). The crucial role of teachers and the need for their professional development at all levels are recognised as essential elements in implementing inclusive education systems (Waitoller and Artiles, 2013). Authors in the field have discussed numerous challenges in TPL for inclusion. These include:

- the need to address teachers’ concerns for inclusive practice more effectively in ITE (Forlin and Chambers, 2011);
- supporting in-service teachers at the school level (Connor, 2016);
- examining the outcomes of traditional and innovative approaches to this end (Florian, Young and Rouse, 2010).

Authors recognise the challenge of developing policies that can incorporate innovative approaches towards teacher education for inclusion. They underline that issues of funding and timing influence policy implementation (Blanton, Pugach and Boveda, 2018). Likewise, several authors point to the complexity of professional development processes for inclusion and the need for better transfer of professional learning into practice (Robinson, 2017; Waitoller and Artiles, 2013).

Consequently, policy development to meet these challenges demands an innovative and comprehensive approach to professional learning at all levels, from ITE to CPD.



Considering the great diversity in schools, policy for inclusion must also bring together all TPL policies, to effectively prepare teachers to be responsive to all learners. However, little research to guide advances in policy and implementation is available to support country-level developments towards TPL.

This literature review sets out to identify internationally acknowledged policy priorities for TPL for inclusion, taking into account all teachers in the field. These include pre-service and in-service teachers, specialists working alongside classroom teachers, and teacher educators. However, most of the examples in this review will focus on teachers. In particular, the review aims to identify the policy elements thought to be crucial to support TPL for inclusion more broadly and effectively. In order to understand the policy priorities and map the elements needed for their development and implementation, this review explores the main issues, needs and policy recommendations for TPL recurring in international literature. It builds on the main principles and issues for TPL for inclusion to guide policy in developing clear goals and strategies. In this review, the main themes leading to these principles are:

- the need to include all teachers in professional learning for inclusion;
- the need for a deeper and broader understanding of inclusion;
- the need for the professional learning of specialist/specialised and/or support teachers.

1.1. Structure of the review

The review is divided into six sections. Following the Introduction in [section 1](#), [section 2](#) explains the methodology for the literature review. [Section 3](#) explores priorities and issues regarding TPL for inclusion in policy documents and research. In order to identify a shared international vision and main policy principles on the topic, it addresses international and European legislation and policy recommendations for TPL first, followed by an overview of critical issues and needs found in research literature. [Section 4](#) refines the principles to formulate goals for policy support on key factors found:

- along the professional continuum;
- across diverse professions involved;
- regarding competences and content of TPL for inclusion.

Building on the ‘why’ and ‘what for’ questions in the earlier sections, [section 5](#) addresses the question of ‘how’ to develop a national policy for TPL for inclusion. It looks at the implementation strategies of policy required for effective TPL for inclusion:

- capacity building through teacher educator and leadership policy support;
- changing support roles and research;
- co-operation and funding across ministries and levels of support;
- monitoring of policy elements.

Finally, [section 6](#) concludes with further recommendations for policy analysis on TPL for inclusion.



1.2. Operational definitions used

This review uses the following operational definitions:

- A **policy framework** brings together policies/policy elements that set out the requirements and processes for reaching policy goals in line with national/organisational values and principles. A policy framework outlines roles and responsibilities for policy development, stakeholder engagement, implementation, dissemination, monitoring/evaluation, governance and operational processes (European Agency, 2018b).
- **Teacher professional learning** (TPL) covers initial teacher education (ITE) and teachers' continuing professional development (CPD), including induction and in-school learning opportunities.
- **Teacher professional learning for inclusion** is understood as reflective practice and personal competence development in the areas of valuing learners' difference, learner support and working with others, in line with the Agency's *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* (European Agency, 2012a).
- **All teachers** means early education teachers, primary teachers, secondary teachers, vocational teachers, adult education teachers, specialists collaborating with classroom or subject teachers, and teacher educators.
- **All learners** means learners who attend mainstream or special schools, as well as those out of school. It includes at-risk learners, such as learners of migrant origins, learners from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, learners with disabilities, non-native language speakers, refugees, etc. (Council of the European Union, 2018).
- **Diversity** refers to the cultural, linguistic, ethnic, developmental and other aspects of human difference that represent some of the many elements of identity that characterise both individuals and groups and account for differences between people (Florian and Pantić, 2017).



2. METHODOLOGY

This literature review aims to identify current policy priorities for TPL for inclusion in international and European-level policy documents and in research literature. This section briefly describes the methodology for the literature review of both types of documents.

2.1. Policy and research document search

The search for policy recommendations on TPL for inclusive education focused on European and international policy documents and research literature on teacher education for inclusion published between 2010 and 2018.

Two parallel search processes were performed. First, an online search was carried out on the websites of major international bodies. These included the UN, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank. The online search was expanded with a European policy search. This resulted in an initial sample of 60 international and European policy documents (legislation, official statements and reports). While all of these referred to TPL for inclusion (e.g. ITE, CPD and teacher educators' professional learning for inclusion), 32 international and European policy documents were considered distinctive for the purpose of this review. As an illustration of international policy, 15 European and non-European national policy documents on teacher education and professional development known to the TPL4I team were added.

Secondly, a systematic electronic search was conducted using academic platforms¹ that include major, international, peer-reviewed educational journals and book chapters. Using the descriptors 'teacher education', 'professional development' and 'inclusive education', the search led to an initial sample of 436 papers. A total of 83 papers were selected based on abstracts and references to policy implications. To this selection, 38 papers were added that were found by snowball methods or were already known to the TPL4I team (Greenhalgh and Peacock, 2005). Altogether, 168 documents and studies on TPL policy were used as a relevant sample for policy analysis on TPL. In a final feedback round, nine policy and research documents were added based on Agency members' knowledge, leading to a total of 177 documents.

Documents and studies that met the following criteria were included in the review:

- documents and studies raising policy issues and/or providing policy recommendations for TPL;
- documents and studies referring to different parts of the TPL continuum (e.g. ITE, teacher induction, CPD, the preparation of educational specialists and teacher educators' professional development);

¹ CEEOL Journals; Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ); ERIC; Gale OneFile; Informa – Taylor & Francis; JSTOR Archival Journals; ProQuest Central; ProQuest Education Database; ProQuest Research Library; Psychology Database; SAGE Journals; ScienceDirect Journals (Elsevier); Scopus; Social Sciences Citation Index (Web of Science); Springer; SpringerLink; Taylor & Francis Online Journals; Wiley; Wiley Online Library.



- documents and studies:
 - referring to various contexts for TPL (e.g. teacher education colleges, universities and primary or secondary schools as sites for in-service learning);
 - describing different pathways (e.g. initial programmes, postgraduate, short training courses and specialist routes);
 - with a broad understanding of inclusion (including cultural and language diversity, removing barriers to the education of learners with disabilities and reference to social justice and equity in education).

Documents and studies were excluded if they:

- did not focus on educational contexts;
- had a prior focus on subject teaching or specific interventions for learners, e.g. learners with special educational needs;
- had a prior focus on teacher attitudes to inclusion without further reference to TPL.

2.2. Analysis and synthesis

All sources were reviewed according to a preliminary policy analysis scheme, using the categories of key policy issues, key stakeholders, goals and implementation. As such, all sources were treated as policy documents. Themes were categorised according to the main policy features or elements, based on a discursive policy approach or frame analysis, as discussed by Dombos, Krizsan, Verloo and Zentai (2012) and Verloo and Lombardo (2007). Then, using the emerging themes and elements, a TPL-specific policy framework was developed to order and synthesise the findings and to outline the review's structure. Sections of the policy framework consecutively describe:

- a general vision and principles on TPL for inclusion as it appears in major international policy documents and in research ([section 3](#));
- the main goals for TPL for inclusion, based on analysis of the key issues and implications for different target groups found across documents and studies ([section 4](#));
- suggested objectives and activities to implement TPL for inclusion, based on evidence and national policy examples ([section 5](#)).



3. ENVISIONING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR INCLUSION

This section presents a vision for professional learning for inclusion. It provides an overview of the position on TPL as it appears in international and European policy documents focusing on equity and/or inclusive education. In addition, it identifies principles for TPL for inclusion derived from a review of research studies. This vision informs the recommendations for the potential policy goals, implementation strategies and policy monitoring, which the following sections will examine.

3.1. International policy vision on teacher professional learning for inclusion

First, international and European legislation and policy statements for TPL for inclusion are introduced. These statements aim to support worldwide educational change towards equity and inclusion, and the required teachers' professional development. They are considered a point of reference for a policy vision to adopt.

3.1.1. Teacher professional learning for inclusion in international policy

This section addresses the needs and policy recommendations for professional development for equity and inclusion, as they have been acknowledged in recent studies and policy documents by:

- UN (2006; Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016)
- UNESCO (2015; 2017a)
- UNICEF (2015)
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2018a; Barrera-Pedemonte, 2016; Avvisati, 2018)
- WHO and World Bank (2011).

The policy statements account for a significant commitment to support TPL for quality education and the inclusion of all learners. The recommendations reinforce former policy guidelines on teacher education for inclusion, education for all and equity. Moreover, they acknowledge the need for CPD. They also highlight the need to prepare teachers to include at-risk learners, such as learners from a low socio-economic background (OECD, 2018a; UNICEF, 2015) and learners with disabilities (UN, 2006; Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016; WHO and World Bank, 2011).

3.1.1.1. *Narrowing the gap caused by inequalities*

Key policy documents by UNESCO underline the urgency for all countries to commit to inclusive education and develop policies to support TPL for inclusion. To begin with, countries committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and



Framework for Action (UNESCO et al., 2016). UNESCO's *A Guide for Ensuring Inclusion and Equity in Education* states: 'Inclusive quality education is both a goal in itself (Sustainable Development Goal 4) and a means for attaining all other SDGs' (2017b, p. 10). The *Teacher Policy Development Guide* (UNESCO, 2015) also puts forward this idea of education as a means and an end. The guide was developed to support policy-makers to address a broad scope of educational needs in diverse contexts:

A teacher training policy should include principles of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). ESD considers education a key to promoting the values, behaviour and lifestyles necessary for a sustainable future, and promotes understanding of problems such as poverty, wasteful consumption, environmental degradation, population, health, conflict and human rights [...]

Teachers working in post-conflict and post-disaster contexts require appropriate training, which reflects the needs of learners and teachers in the specific context (UNESCO, 2015, p. 22).

The OECD report *Equity in Education: Breaking Down Barriers to Social Mobility* suggests that having qualified and well-trained teachers is the most important variable in the goal to educate all learners. In particular, the report highlights the crucial role of teachers in narrowing the gaps in educational outcomes caused by inequalities:

First, evidence of large differences early on suggests that initial learning and development are largely influenced by factors related to family background and early environments, including early education and primary schooling. Second, the evolution of these inequalities, particularly between primary and secondary school, underscores the crucial role that schools, teachers, and education policies and practices can play in narrowing the gaps and equalising opportunities for all students (OECD, 2018a, p. 30).

Revealing specific needs at different educational levels and transitions, the report notes:

... sufficient resources must be allocated to improve the quality of these [pre-school] programmes, by assuring that teachers are qualified and well-trained, and that the environment is conducive to learning for all students (ibid., p. 40).

Another OECD report, entitled 'In which countries do the most highly qualified and experienced teachers teach in the most difficult schools?', clearly establishes the relationship between teacher preparation and learning outcomes:

Teachers are the most important school resource. In every country, teachers' salaries and training represent the greatest share of expenditure on education; and this investment in teachers can have significant returns. Research shows that being taught by the best teachers can make a real difference in the learning and life outcomes of otherwise similar students.

But not all students are equal when it comes to access to high-quality teaching. In fact, PISA [Programme for International Student Assessment] data show that there are inequities in access to experienced and qualified teachers in many countries, and that they are related to the gap in learning outcomes between advantaged and disadvantaged students (Avvisati, 2018, p. 2).



The OECD *Education Working Paper No. 141* (Barrera-Pedemonte, 2016) uses insight from the 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) to consider teacher professionalism. It states that positive outcomes of TPL are strongly linked to developing teacher knowledge and peer networks, especially in schools with the highest proportions of socio-economically disadvantaged learners. Country policies should, therefore, encourage teachers' engagement in professional development and prevent barriers to participation in formal professional learning activities. In particular, policy must ensure that teachers participate in pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes that provide opportunities for active learning, supporting teachers in conducting classroom-based individual or collaborative research. It must also ensure the continuation of professional development by encouraging teachers' participation in networks of other teachers for information exchange (ibid.).

3.1.1.2. Support for teachers to include learners with disabilities

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016) has established the link between TPL and the inclusion of learners with disabilities. To begin with, it recognises the risk that learners with disabilities receive an inferior quality of provision. In particular, *General Comment No. 4* notes:

... despite progress achieved, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [...] is concerned that profound challenges persist. Many millions of persons with disabilities continue to be denied a right to education, and for many more, education is available only in settings where they are isolated from their peers and receive an inferior quality of provision (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016, p. 2).

The UN considers that insufficient education of all teaching staff is one of the barriers to implementing the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UN, 2006):

... lack of political will, technical knowledge, and capacity in implementing the right to inclusive education including insufficient education of all teaching staff (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016, p. 2).

Therefore, it sets out relevant values and competences for teacher education for inclusion. It explicitly includes support for teachers as one of the 'core features of inclusive education':

Supported teachers: All teachers and other staff receive education and training giving them the core values and competencies to accommodate inclusive learning environments, which include teachers with disabilities. The inclusive culture provides an accessible and supportive environment which encourages working through collaboration, interaction and problem-solving (ibid., pp. 4–5).

Similarly, the *World Report on Disability* (WHO and World Bank, 2011) emphasises the need for TPL for inclusion within an inclusive school system. It reports on a review of 28 countries participating in the Education for All Fast Track Initiative Partnership. Only 10 of the countries 'had a policy commitment to include children with disabilities' and had targets and plans on 'data collection, teacher training, access' and the 'provision of additional learning materials and support' (ibid., p. 214). As a barrier to the education of



children with disabilities, it explicitly mentions inadequate training and support for teachers:

Teachers may not have the time or resources to support disabled learners. [...] In resource-poor settings classrooms are frequently overcrowded and there is a severe shortage of well trained teachers capable of routinely handling the individual needs of children with disabilities. [...] The majority of teachers lack sign-language skills creating barriers for Deaf pupils. [...] Other supports such as classroom assistants are also lacking. Advances in teacher education have not necessarily kept pace with the policy changes that followed the Salamanca Declaration (ibid., p. 215).

3.1.1.3. Support for teacher professional learning throughout a teacher's career

Guiding teacher policy, UNESCO explicitly addresses and values professionalisation throughout a teacher's career. It states:

... international policy shows that high-quality teachers and teaching based on teacher professionalization and excellence in human resource policies yields the best learning results and reduces education costs (2015, p. 13).

A coherent teacher education framework will include three interrelated stages: initial teacher preparation (pre-service teacher education or training), an induction period and continuing professional development (CPD) or in-service training (INSET) (ibid., p. 21).

Moreover, teacher education policy must include aspects of teacher recruitment and school leaders' professional development (ibid). Nevertheless, competence development for inclusion needs to start from the beginning of a teacher's professional learning. UNESCO notes the importance of teacher skills, attitudes and pedagogical strategies, among other factors, and states that:

Teachers can acquire much of the preparation they need regarding such inclusive practices during their initial training and through short, customized, in-service training units (UNESCO, 2017b, p. 35).

UNICEF has also carried out work in this area. Building on former Agency work (i.e. *Profile of Inclusive Teachers*, European Agency, 2012a), UNICEF published the *Training of Trainer Modules on Inclusive Education* in 2015. They highlight the need for professional development for teacher educators, in addition to a TPL continuum.

To sum up, international organisations, such as the UN, UNESCO, UNICEF, OECD, WHO and the World Bank, have identified key issues that suggest educational policies should treat TPL as a continuum, from ITE through to CPD. According to these organisations, all TPL programmes should provide opportunities for teachers to understand the vision of inclusive education and their role in promoting equality and providing quality education to all learners. They stress the importance of collaboration and active learning to enhance effective classroom-based practice. International organisations also underline the link between TPL and raising achievement, narrowing the gaps in learning outcomes caused by inequalities. These organisations provide evidence to suggest there is a lack of policies that support teachers to implement inclusive education.



3.1.2. Teacher professional learning for inclusion in European policy

At European level, there has been an increasing emphasis on TPL for inclusive education. This section provides information from EU reports, communications and recommendations. These documents explain the problems with current TPL policies and the priorities needed in future TPL policies for inclusive education.

3.1.2.1. Empowerment and support for teachers

The *Communication on Improving and Modernising Education* notes the need for stronger support for school leaders and teachers:

Teachers play a pivotal role in imparting knowledge and common values and in giving support to pupils who come from a vulnerable socio-economic background. Enabling teachers to cope with these challenging tasks, requires strategic investment in effective school leadership and a teaching profession that is based on excellent initial education, teamwork, and career-long professional development (European Commission, 2016a, p. 5).

Most recently, the *Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching* reinforces the need to support teachers and teaching, and:

... enable educational staff to promote common values and deliver inclusive education, through:

(a) measures to empower educational staff helping them convey common values, and promote active citizenship while transmitting a sense of belonging and responding to the diverse needs of learners (Council of the European Union, 2018, p. 4).

Considering the diversity of educational needs taken into account, the European Commission Policy Brief, *Support for children with special educational needs (SEN)* (2013a), asserts the need for all teachers to be effectively prepared and receive specialist support.

The European Commission report, *Education and Disability/Special Needs: Policies and practices in education, training and employment for students with disabilities and special educational needs in the EU*, prepared by the Network of Experts in Social Sciences of Education and Training (NESSE), confirms the aforementioned need. It states that:

Learning support teachers and classroom assistants play a vital role in making inclusion work well in practice. [...] National and local governments should ensure that funding is available to employ sufficient support staff, and teachers should be trained in the management of such staff, ensuring in particular that learning support assistants help pupils without having a negative effect on their social integration (NESSE, 2012, p. 2).

The report also acknowledges a broader need in TPL for inclusion:

Teacher education and continuing professional development have not always been organised along inclusive lines. [...] Providers of teacher education across Europe



should ensure that the theoretical and practical aspects of programmes prepare new recruits to reflect the principles of inclusion in all aspects of their work (ibid.).

In the report *Preparing Teachers for Diversity: The Role of Initial Teacher Education*, some of the key findings state the needs for teacher learning for diversity:

If valued and utilised effectively, diversity can function as a rich educational resource in classrooms, to enrich the competences and creativity of all pupils, promote inter-group contact, opportunities for reflection and peer-learning.

In spite of this diversity, the teaching population remains largely homogenous and lacks experience in teaching in diverse schooling environments. Teachers feel ill-prepared to teach students from diverse socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

[...] There is an increasing need to prepare future teachers to build on the benefits of diversity, shifting from compensatory to inclusive learning approaches. A comprehensive system of teacher education is crucial to equip teachers with the intercultural competences necessary to respond to and manage the evolving diverse school environment (European Commission, 2017a, p. 20).

3.1.2.2. Improving teacher supply and teacher diversity

An in-depth *Study on the Diversity within the Teaching Profession with a Particular Focus on Migrant and/or Minority Background* established the need for teacher diversity as a response to learner diversity:

Teacher diversity initiatives should provide support to people of migrant/minority origin at every stage of the teaching 'pathway'. Attracting and retaining teaching staff with a migrant and/or minority background in the profession are equally important. [...] barriers to diversity exist at every stage of the pathway, and can be intersectional and cumulative. In order to create a level playing field and promote teacher diversity, systematic intervention is needed at all stages of the pathway into and through the teaching profession (European Commission, 2016b, p. 127).

The *Teaching Careers in Europe* report addressed the context of teacher supply more broadly (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018). It mapped more general areas for TPL policy. These include:

- Forward planning for teacher supply and demand
- Entry to the profession
- Teacher mobility between schools
- Continuing professional development and support
- Career structures
- The use of teacher competence frameworks
- Appraisal systems.



Although the report does not provide data on specific challenges for inclusion, some of its assumptions about the identified areas are relevant for TPL for inclusion:

Most countries are facing a number of challenges, most of which are inter-related as well as linked to the more general issue of attractiveness of the profession. Besides the challenge of attracting sufficient students to enrol in ITE, there is also the issue of ensuring that they complete the course and actually enter the teaching profession rather than migrating to other careers. Shortages of ITE students are not necessarily due to any real decline in entry levels, but they may be related to other issues such as an increasing demand for teachers due to the ageing workforce, more teachers leaving the profession for other reasons, or high drop-out rates during ITE (ibid., p. 28).

Following specific work by the European Commission on supporting teacher competence development and teacher educators for better learning outcomes (European Commission, 2013b; 2013c), a study of policy measures was published. The measures aimed to improve the attractiveness of the teaching profession. *Council conclusions on effective teacher education* (Council of the European Union, 2014) were published along with the policy measures. The conclusions noted the need for more emphasis on supporting diverse groups of learners, including those with disabilities.

3.1.2.3. Supporting change

The European Parliament (2014) also published a study on primary teacher training in Europe. It recommended that teacher training be approached as a continuum in which ITE, early career support and CPD are all involved, to address the practical challenges of teaching. However, it does not mention education for inclusion or equity.

The ET 2020 Working Group on Schools Policy produced a guide on policies to improve ITE (European Commission, 2015a). It suggested a series of policy actions around the continuum and need for collaborative approaches, action research, financing and governance of ITE. However, it did not refer to inclusion or diversity. Other publications (e.g. European Commission, 2015b) also lacked focus on this key area.

However, in 2015, the *Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)* noted that teachers should:

... be trained to deal with learners' individual needs and growing diversity in terms of their social, cultural, economic and geographic backgrounds, to prevent early school leaving and to use innovative pedagogies and ICT tools in an optimal manner (Council of the European Union and European Commission, 2015, p. 5).

At this time, the Council of Europe also published a *Tool to Upgrade Teacher Education Practices for Inclusive Education* (Hollenweger, Pantić and Florian, 2015). The tool resulted from the work of networks of experts and schools established in the course of a joint EU and Council of Europe project in south-east Europe. It was developed 'to help upgrade and innovate the existing programmes for teacher training for inclusion' (ibid., p. 6). It came as a response to the identified need for an overall framework for teacher education for inclusion and transversal collaboration among all stakeholders in the field.



Publications from 2017 reflect both the growing focus on teacher education and the need for inclusion and equity. For example, the *Council Conclusions on school development and excellent teaching* recognise ‘high-quality, inclusive and equitable school education’ as ‘a top priority that influences the European Union’s social progress and sustainable growth in the future’ (Council of the European Union, 2017a, p. 2). The accompanying *Staff Working Document* further states:

The role of teachers is changing in response to new knowledge about learning and increasing expectations about quality and equity in education. [...] There is research about how people learn effectively, which recognises that there are significant differences between individuals that teachers and schools need to take into account.

Education systems aim to reconcile high quality with high equity (European Commission, 2017b, p. 32).

The *Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on Inclusion in Diversity to achieve a High Quality Education For All* invite member states to:

... support teachers, educators and other teaching staff and foster their motivation and competences, including for example emotional intelligence and social skills, to deal with diversity through initial teacher education programmes and continuous professional development, including digital education, practical tools, ongoing support and guidance, while also encouraging a more diverse teacher force (Council of the European Union, 2017b, p. 6).

Drawing on recent work at European level, *Preparing Teachers for Diversity: The Role of Initial Teacher Education* reiterates that the ‘EU and its Member States have called for renewed efforts to prepare teachers for diversity, and to lay the foundations for more inclusive societies through education’ (European Commission, 2017a, p. 13). This study ‘seeks to consolidate the existing knowledge base and to gather evidence on the way student teachers are prepared for diversity in the classroom’ (ibid.).

This key document reaches the following conclusions:

- *National education policies in Europe need a paradigm shift in their approach towards diversity*
- *Competence-based ITE systems are more likely to effectively prepare student teachers for diversity, provided competences for diversity are well-defined*
- *Transversal and comprehensive curricular approaches help to better prepare student teachers for diversity*
- *Well-prepared teacher educators are key for effective ITE for diversity; however, there are very few initiatives in Europe to prepare them appropriately*
- *Several support measures and initiatives are being implemented across Europe to help current ITE systems adjust to the needs associated with classroom and societal diversity*
- *There is a need for a supportive culture for change to be developed at all levels for policies on ITE for diversity to be successfully implemented* (ibid., pp. 102–105).



In sum, a review of documents from the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament and the Council of Europe highlight the urgency for:

- comprehensive systems of national TPL policy;
- policy measures that support and empower teachers;
- particular competences for teachers (such as managing learning support and working with other professionals, early identification of needs, etc.).

Policy must encourage and support the changing roles of teaching staff. European Commission documents also recognise the challenges facing European countries. These include the need for policies to ensure the employment of teachers from diverse backgrounds and the need to increase the population of potential teachers in countries that have teacher shortages. However, for many countries, the main challenge is to reinforce a policy framework for TPL.

3.1.3. Key points

The previous sections presented how TPL is viewed in key documents on inclusive education by international and European organisations. The main findings suggest that:

- There is a need for comprehensive systems for TPL in many countries. It is important to have comprehensive TPL policies because well-trained and qualified teachers:
 - can improve education quality;
 - have high expectations for all learners;
 - increase learners' achievement;
 - narrow the gaps in learning outcomes caused by inequalities.
- TPL policies for inclusive education need to:
 - prepare teachers to include learners from diverse backgrounds;
 - support and empower all teachers, in all levels of education (pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher education);
 - ensure teachers' learning throughout the continuum, beginning from ITE, to induction, through to CPD;
 - ensure that particular teacher competences for inclusive education are in place (such as managing learning support assistants and classroom assistants, early identification of needs, etc.).
- All TPL programmes should provide opportunities for teachers to understand:
 - the policy vision of inclusive education;
 - their role in promoting equality and providing quality education to all learners;
 - their role in promoting interaction and participation;
 - the importance of collaboration and problem-solving.



- TPL policies need to ensure the employment of teachers from diverse backgrounds and increase the population of potential teachers in countries that have teacher shortages.

3.2. Evidence to guide policy for teacher professional learning for inclusion

A vision for TPL in line with international and European inclusive education policy or legislation was outlined above as an internationally promoted foundation for further policy. This vision clearly expresses the role of teacher education and professional development for inclusion as it has been identified and adopted internationally (UNESCO, 2008). It has been gaining momentum over the past decade in research and in international policy. International and European documents highlight the need for teacher preparation for inclusion and the importance of a continuum of professional development opportunities. The European Commission and the international organisations cited promote a broader equity agenda for teacher preparation. They also acknowledge specific educational needs and contexts to consider, such as TPL for the inclusion of learners with disabilities. This section will explore international research literature from the last decade to identify the main principles for policy development for TPL for inclusion, based on recent evidence.

3.2.1. A continuum of teacher professional learning for inclusion: connecting practice to theory

This section identifies the TPL continuum (i.e. ITE, induction, CPD, teacher educators' learning) and the links between the different stages and forms of TPL along it. It also discusses the policy issues arising from the research literature in relation to these forms of TPL for inclusive education.

3.2.1.1. Initial teacher education

Most research on TPL for inclusion refers to ITE. While this demonstrates the need to draw a better picture of induction and CPD, it also reveals the relatively recent interest in the field.

Analysis of TALIS data shows that ITE in general makes a difference, but:

... the overall feeling of preparedness is higher in relation to the 'content' of teaching (subject knowledge) than to its 'pedagogy' (understanding of teaching and learning) and 'practice' (classroom-based training) (European Commission, 2015b, p. 3).

In ITE, the duality of subject knowledge and pedagogy reflects a:

... tension between dominating 'fundamental' disciplines (that mainly provide the 'subject matter' to teacher education) and the 'applicative' – and therefore subordinated – field of 'teacher training' (Zgaga, 2017, p. 24).

It also leads to tensions between parallel and consecutive systems of teacher education (ibid.). Across Europe, teacher preparation programmes have moved from local higher



education institutions to university colleges and university departments. As such, teacher education is not immune to trends of:

... massification of higher education, internationalization, growing mobility and the 'global battle' for students, growing academic managerialism, pressures of institutional ranking, etc. (ibid., p. 27).

While European mobility programmes have expanded pre-service teachers' and teacher educators' opportunities for learning, the new position of teacher education institutions is 'disconnected from elementary and secondary schools as their "laboratory"' (ibid., p. 25). This trend has amplified the fragmentation of teacher education and its inherent tensions between subject knowledge and pedagogy (Zgaga, 2017).

The disconnect between theory and practice and between teacher education institutions and local contexts challenges the quality of teacher preparation for inclusion. A review of studies on teacher preparation for diversity and equity in ITE (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015) identified the influence of coursework and fieldwork, the intertwining of both and the need for practice as main themes. The review found that, to transform teaching and learning in today's diverse classrooms, coursework on inclusion is often based on one or two courses, which is 'insufficient to affirm diverse ways of being' (ibid., p. 115). A one-sided coursework approach reflects a slow and fragmented response to increasing learner diversity among teacher educators (Villegas, Ciotoli and Lucas, 2017).

On the other hand, the same review reveals that practice of several weeks of teaching resulted in a more positive attitude towards inclusion. Moreover, both coursework and field experiences elicited more complex thinking about diversity (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Lancaster and Bain, 2010; Matović and Spasenović, 2016). Having teachers who are more responsive to today's learner diversity requires a well-balanced structure of teacher education, which allows students to participate fully in cycles of coursework and practice.

In general, studies on ITE show an incomplete and fragmented picture of pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion. It lacks the integration of diversity topics across courses, effective tools and a repertoire of culturally responsive teaching practices. This may be because teacher education for inclusion is still a relatively new research field with little investment to generate a sufficient knowledge base.

Earlier reviews of ITE in the Agency's work outlined similar topics, with a strong recommendation to connect theory and practice (Donnelly and Watkins, 2011). However, although findings on the impact of combined courses are positive (Beacham and Rouse, 2012; Richards, 2010; Sokal and Sharma, 2017; Swain, Nordness and Leader-Janssen, 2012), the nature of practice and course content is crucial.

Forlin and Chambers (2011) found that self-efficacy for inclusive education especially relates to overall confidence in teaching skills and knowledge of legislation for inclusion. It relates less to diverse experiences of contact with people with disabilities outside a school setting, or courses on accommodating the needs of learners with disabilities. For beginning teachers, the latter seem to result in higher stress levels when anticipating having learners with disabilities in the classroom, and a higher acceptance of the norm of segregation compared to their view when entering ITE. Similarly, Allan (2011) stresses how diversity topics produce fear in ITE and relates this to teacher educators' lack of experience.



However, even when teacher educators do commit to inclusion as a teaching principle:

... newly qualified teachers feel ill-prepared to deal with diverse classrooms and are ambiguous as to their understanding of 'inclusion' as a teaching principle, especially since they face school organisation and policy requirements that are based on non-inclusive principles (Alexiadou and Essex, 2016, p. 6).

Conflicting messages and observations experienced in schools keep ambiguous views about inclusion alive (Beacham and Rouse, 2012).

3.2.1.2. From initial teacher education to induction

Sharma, Forlin and Loreman claim that 'the content and the pedagogy of teacher education courses are by far the most significant predictors of student teachers' attitudes to inclusion and diversity' (2008, p. 783). It is in implementing inclusive practices that teachers' concerns grow. Therefore, critical reflection in the context of daily practice, as supported by teacher education courses and pedagogy in ITE, needs to happen in the early years of teaching through induction programmes. Through pedagogy and practice focusing on inclusive education, beginning teachers have opportunities to understand and discuss the organisational and pedagogical barriers to learning observed in schools. They are also challenged by roles of inclusive practitioners developed in authentic learning experiences (Beacham and Rouse, 2012; Bentley-Williams, Grima-Farrell, Long and Laws, 2017; Florian and Linklater, 2010; Florian and Spratt, 2013; Kozleski, Gonzalez, Atkinson, Mruzec and Lacy, 2013; Symeonidou and Phtiaka, 2009).

3.2.1.3. From induction to continuing professional development

These opportunities for learning need further extension in CPD. Several authors found positive attitudinal shifts towards inclusion expressed by teachers following a professional development programme, after several years of teaching experience (Bačáková and Closs, 2013; Isosomppi and Leivo, 2015; Male, 2011; Seçer, 2010). In particular, action research and collaborative approaches are effective to empower teachers to become more inclusive-minded (Beaton and Spratt, 2017; Carrington, Deppeler and Moss, 2010; Deppeler, 2017; Naraian, 2013; Baldiris-Navarro, Zervas, Gesa and Sampson, 2016; Robinson, 2017; Rytivaara and Kershner, 2012; Sales, Traver and Garcia, 2011). Using participatory action research, Robinson (2017) recommends models of partnerships of ITE and CPD, including CPD for teaching assistants. These enhance collegial support and shared responsibilities. Moreover, they enable and value the contribution of everyone working as an educational professional with or alongside a classroom teacher.

Lesson study approaches are another promising model of CPD or partnership opportunities for collaborative learning (Norwich and Ylonen, 2013). In lesson study cycles, inclusive classroom practice is collaboratively built and examined. In professional learning groups, the teachers research, plan, teach, observe, discuss and refine a series of lessons. Through critical theorising and new models of partnerships of ITE and school teams, teachers increase their professional autonomy and develop skilful and confident inclusive practice.

This on-the-job learning is not the same as putting theory into practice by using evidence-based practice, which is based on the past. Nor is it de-intellectualised practice (Robinson, 2017). Rather, it promotes a practice-into-theory approach, using critical



enquiry in here-and-now practice, or a ‘local grounded approach’, which is applicable throughout teachers’ careers (Norwich and Ylonen, 2013; Robinson, 2017). As Biesta asserts, teacher professional learning is not:

... experiential or practical learning, but rather judgment-focused learning through praxis: one that constantly takes the ability for making wise educational judgments as its reference point and centre (2012, p. 19).

Providing opportunities for inclusive praxis is the challenge of ITE, induction and CPD. In particular, in CPD, such opportunities may enhance broader teacher agency or teachers’ capacity to ‘act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of their colleagues’ (Calvert, 2016, p. 4).

3.2.1.4. Teacher educators’ learning for inclusion

As new models – from university courses, to schools, to new partnership arrangements – inform traditional approaches to TPL, a broader group of teacher educators is involved (McMahon, Forde and Dickson, 2015). This trend reinforces the need to include leadership for inclusion in the professional continuum for inclusion (Boyle, Scriven, Durning and Downes, 2011; Shady, Luther and Richman, 2013).

To deliver high-quality teaching throughout a teacher’s career, teacher education must develop and adapt programmes and practice for career-long professional learning. These must align with wider educational reform and policy demands, including inclusive leadership development. This process involves ‘widening the pool of teacher educators so that all teachers and school leaders are recognised as teacher educators’ (McMahon et al., 2015, p. 158).

The professional learning needs of teacher educators who belong to teacher education institutions are recognised (Allan, 2011; Berry, 2011). However, it is necessary to include a broader group of mentoring teachers and leadership in schools that support teachers to develop inclusive practice (Bentley-Williams et al., 2017; Donnelly and Watkins, 2011). For instance, many studies consider the shift of special education teachers or learner support co-ordinators to leadership roles in the process towards inclusion (Agaliotis and Kalyva, 2011; Done, Murphy and Bedford, 2016; Gavish, 2017; Morgan, 2016; Naraian, 2010; O’Gorman and Drudy, 2010; Van de Putte, De Schauwer, Van Hove and Davies, 2018). For mentoring teachers and new leadership roles in inclusion in particular, collaborative professional learning models apply, such as lesson study or other teacher practice enquiries, in which a facilitator’s role is to be adopted (Norwich, Benham-Clarke and Goei, 2019).

3.2.1.5. Towards a collaborative continuum of teacher professional learning for inclusion

For policy, these findings affirm:

- the need for well-designed ITE;
- an urgent need for induction programmes for beginning teachers;
- the acknowledgement of good practice of CPD;
- the need to more effectively prepare teacher educators to connect theory and practice regarding diversity topics.



In particular, given the possible difficulties in affirming attitudes towards diversity at the beginning of a teacher's career, a strong connection between ITE and induction programmes is advisable. The provision of high-quality pre- and in-service professional development opportunities should be a priority for policy-makers (Male, 2011). Together, they form a continuum of TPL opportunities, rather than isolated objects of study. In particular, teacher education needs to embed career-long research, programme and practice orientation into its design and enactment (Robinson, 2017).

Moreover, as many initial teacher preparation programmes are one-year postgraduate courses (Beacham and Rouse, 2012; Beaton and Spratt, 2017; Lawson, Norwich and Nash, 2013; Spratt and Florian, 2015), a more hybrid picture of ITE emerges. This is often more closely related to adult education and in-service professional development than traditional higher education programmes. ITE already yields a range of pathways, both parallel and consecutively preparing for subject and teaching expertise, and both as a first or later career choice.

Similarly, CPD opportunities are diverse, innovative and collaborative, including pre-service partners. In addition, induction programmes (Alila, Määttä and Uusiautti, 2016; Andresen, 2015; Florian and Spratt, 2013) and international mobility programmes (Florian and Becirevic, 2011) form a less documented, but significant, model of TPL for inclusion.

Finally, due to a fragmentation of teacher education with a dominance of subject expertise, and thanks to the willingness of the educational field to work collaboratively with teacher education, teacher educators' professional development is justifiably an integral part of the professional continuum for inclusion. Moving towards shared pedagogy for inclusion and new roles in the field, teacher educators themselves obviously need opportunities to support, reflect on and discuss aspects of inclusive practice.

3.2.2. Acknowledging context and diverse equity issues in teacher professional learning for inclusion policy

In addition to the categorisation of TPL along a varied professional continuum, this section discusses the need for TPL policies for inclusion to acknowledge diverse equity issues and their intersections in education. Research explores how the dominance of one perspective, e.g. special educational needs, can be a barrier to TPL for inclusion.

3.2.2.1. Towards situated equity-focused teacher professional learning for inclusion

A recurring theme in the literature on TPL for inclusion and diversity is boundary thinking in teacher learning for inclusion. This is a barrier to teachers' commitment and professional identity formation (Deppeler, 2017; Humphrey, 2014; Macura-Milovanović, Pantić and Closs, 2012; Waitoller and Artiles, 2013). Allan (2011) points out that difference is treated as problematic and as something to 'manage' or diminish. As such, it produces fear instead of responsibility and engagement among future teachers. In the context of education, deficit views of difference increasingly dominate explanations of school failure and diversity issues, constructing boundaries between what is assumed to be 'normal' and what is perceived as 'deviant' (Deppeler, 2017; Humphrey, 2014). In particular, when differences intersect across disability, social class, gender, or cultural, racial or language background, a unitary special educational needs approach towards exclusion is adopted



(Artiles, 2011; Waitoller and Artiles, 2013). It causes inclusive education to be narrowed and under-theorised, ignoring the intersection of differences and relying on ‘politically and institutionally decontextualized studies’ (Waitoller and Artiles, 2013, p. 343).

The consequences of a one-sided representation of difference and the shifts in boundaries described affect the education system as a whole, not least teacher preparation and professional development providers. A deviant view of difference is clearly problematic for learners, but is equally so for school communities, which perpetuate inequalities in education by relying on causes outside their control (Artiles, 2011). It impedes the development of inclusive practice in schools by continuing teaching and assessment practices that negatively affect learners (Deppeler, 2017). As a consequence, it jeopardises teacher professional learning. Not only do teacher educators fail to engage pre-service teachers and beginning teachers in diversity, they also seem to lack experience, expertise and capacity to engage in professional learning for diversity (Allan, 2011).

Several authors point out the risk of competing discourses on inclusion among teacher educators. As an example of this worldwide trend, O’Neill, Bourke and Kearney refer to New Zealand:

... teacher education is not immune from the dilemma that originates in these differing positions, and it is special education discourse that is at present deeply entrenched in most teacher education programmes in New Zealand (2009, p. 589).

At the same time, Alexiadou and Essex remind us that teacher education is designed within local contexts of teaching and pedagogy that frame ‘what “reading” of inclusion is possible’:

The logics of contemporary education policy in England shape the practices of both schools and teacher education providers along the lines of differentiated pedagogies and highly performative and competitive school cultures. In such context, the transformative cultures needed for an inclusive pedagogy are not supported (2016, p. 16).

As such, ambivalent discourse can be aggravated or diminished, depending on the national education policy context. For example, additional standards for teacher education or strict regulations from inspectors may lead to a focus on managing difference in the classroom rather than on challenging the core principles of local policy and pedagogy. While inspectors’ frameworks could serve as drivers for change, additional regulations may impede school-wide inclusive pedagogy (Alexiadou and Essex, 2016). Especially in education systems with high accountability measures, professional development for inclusion may hardly get started:

In terms of the current equity landscape, navigating the boundaries of difference through collaborative practitioner inquiry, is a conceptual and practical labyrinth, made messier by educational policies that encourage competition among schools and where accountability mechanisms dictate priorities for action (Deppeler, 2017, p. 161).

Due to boundary thinking in inclusive practice and inclusive discourse in teacher education, two issues remain critical. First, a critical stance and vigilance for deficit views are crucial in all professional learning for inclusion. This is particularly true if the aim is to



prevent deficit thinking being at the forefront of the diversity debate and becoming a legitimate limitation to teacher performance in teachers' minds. Second, by narrowing difference to special educational needs, it becomes decontextualised. As such, local policies, school communities and teacher education risk lacking the empowerment and engagement needed to enact inclusion.

Therefore, Waitoller and Artiles recommend collaborative professional development within 'overlapping institutional boundaries, e.g. schools and universities' (2013, p. 344). They also recommend using an intersectional approach and situated learning:

... to explore the construction and resolution of tensions or contradictions, to enrich each other's expertise and to innovate practice to address the needs of students who experience compounding forms of exclusion (ibid., p. 345).

From the previous discussion, it can be inferred that collaborative models of TPL for inclusion are more likely to promote sustainable inclusive practice, teacher engagement and expertise when they are related to the understanding of local exclusionary policies and practice. Collaborative professional learning in context allows for a deeper insight into the history of a school's inclusive policy and practice, revealing not only the tensions, but also the achievements. A steady process towards inclusive practice seems closely linked to the leadership of key players across the school, who activate the existing expertise based on a broad and multi-dimensional view of inclusion (De Vroey, 2016).

When professional learning is directed nearby, in daily practice, teachers may be more easily reminded of what works and what does not, sharing both unlearning and learning experiences (Will, 2019). Collaborative professional learning does not need to be limited to in-service learning. Its role is equally important in ITE. In particular, it is regarded as essential for teacher educators. This is suggested in an Icelandic self-study on developing an inclusive support system in school through self-study and collaborative inquiry:

Developing practice builds on data gathered about practice and self, and on understanding the struggle we go through when we realize that our practice is in conflict with our values. These changes are not easy; they need to become deeply embedded in our professional self so that we are able to show them through our actions as well as our words (Óskarsdóttir, Guðjónsdóttir and Tidwell, 2019, p. 54).

National and regional educational policies and practice should be congruent with international policy discourse on inclusion as equity. To achieve this, a deeper, cross-sectional understanding of inclusion and exclusion – rather than a fragmented one – is needed in teacher education policy. In this view, diversity is central, yet differs across contexts. To overcome this ambivalence and reach a common vision for inclusion and a consensus view (Villegas et al., 2017), teacher educators and school leaders must take a more active role to build capacity for TPL for inclusion.



3.2.3. Key points

Research on TPL for inclusion stresses the following policy issues along a professional continuum for teachers' learning and across diverse and intersectional inclusive learning environments:

- providing opportunities for inclusive praxis in ITE, induction and CPD;
- establishing a strong connection between ITE and induction programmes;
- valuing diverse, innovative and locally-situated collaborative professional development models that have the power to engage (future) teachers for diversity;
- including special education teachers and learner support co-ordinators in collaborative learning for equity;
- engaging teacher educators, mentoring teachers and leadership as participants and partners in the professional continuum of teacher learning for inclusion.

3.3. Key principles for teacher professional learning for inclusion policy

A manifestation of a vision for TPL for inclusion is the final conclusion of both perspectives that this section addresses: international and European policy on the one hand and research findings on the other. Based on knowledge of teachers' needs and learners' rights for inclusive education, policy for TPL for inclusion needs to consider the following principles:

- Include all educational professionals when addressing professional learning for teachers:
 - Address teacher professional learning as a professional continuum, from pre-service learning to induction, from induction to experienced teaching, from experienced teaching to mentoring teachers and teacher educators.
 - Address teacher professional learning as a broad area of educational professionalism, including all practitioners who work alongside teachers in inclusive learning environments, from teaching assistants' professional learning to the specialisation of support teachers, and from traditional learning support roles to consulting or leadership roles in developing inclusive education.
- Strengthen all levels and areas of TPL for equity and inclusion by promoting a cross-sectional discourse on diversity to enhance the understanding of the complexity of diversity issues and the engagement for inclusion in varying contexts.
- Strengthen all levels and areas of TPL for equity and inclusion by promoting reflective, enquiry-based collaborative trajectories, combining the examination of personal and collective beliefs, knowledge and skills.



4. SETTING POLICY GOALS FOR TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

An overview of needs and challenges for TPL for inclusion clarified the main principles for policy. This section proposes policy goals that reflect the TPL vision and principles identified in the review. In particular, it focuses on TPL policy across multiple domains of professional expertise, and with regard for the broad professional learning discourse on equity and inclusion. Based on research literature on TPL policy and examples of national policy frameworks, the following sections suggest goals for:

- ensuring a continuum of support for all teacher professional learning ([section 4.1](#));
- a wide spectrum of support within an inclusive education system ([section 4.2](#));
- competence and curriculum development support for teacher professional learning for inclusion ([section 4.3](#)).

The selected goals offer a framework to guide TPL policy for inclusive education.

4.1. Ensuring an effective continuum of support for all teacher professional learning

This first section on policy goals for TPL for inclusion suggests main goals along the professional continuum of teacher learning, to cover all professional stages and areas in inclusive education practice:

- Initial teacher education
- Induction
- Continuing professional development
- Teacher educators' professional development.

For each stage of the continuum, similar and specific topics that need policy support emerge.

4.1.1. Ensuring meaningful inclusive practice in initial teacher education

To improve the effectiveness of ITE for inclusion, teacher education needs to find ways to connect courses with meaningful practice (Arthur-Kelly, Sutherland, Lyons, Macfarlane and Foreman, 2013; Beacham and Rouse, 2012; Bentley-Williams et al., 2017; Florian and Linklater, 2010; Florian and Spratt, 2013; Kozleski et al., 2013; Nash and Norwich, 2010; Symeonidou, 2017; UNESCO, 2015). This need for practice requires sustainable collaboration between universities and schools, teacher educators and mentoring teachers.

In turn, collaboration implies a shared reference of inclusion, to guide pre-service teachers, their mentors and teacher educators through the process of professional learning for inclusion (Bentley-Williams et al., 2017). Moreover, to enhance a



cross-sectional approach in TPL for inclusion, ITE and specialist programmes involved in diversity issues in educational settings must consider collaboration in different ways.

An example that effectively blends ITE and school-based learning is described in an immersion programme of ITE and special needs education, with an emphasis on collaborative partnerships and situated learning. In Australia, year 4 students doing a bachelor's degree teacher programme were encouraged to engage in paid support hours in one school for 38 weeks. A year-long sustained practice fostered authentic learning and a deeper understanding of the roles of inclusive practitioners (Bentley-Williams et al., 2017). The study revealed significant benefits for all stakeholders, while establishing the conditions to sustain collaborative partnerships. The authors conclude:

- *The concept of partnerships in pre-service teacher education is still evolving*
- *There has been a shift from the traditional few weeks block practicum to a more collaborative model with sustained time in schools to foster a climate for productive teacher-student relationships;*
- *Partnerships appear to enhance the likelihood of smoother transitions from university to schools with improved teacher quality;*
- *Effective partnership models have experienced leaders and mentors with systemic, school-wide support structures;*
- *Positive outcomes for students with disabilities, their families and wider school communities were enhanced by collegial interactions;*
- *The nature of hospitality of schools made the implementation of the Project an enjoyable experience for all (ibid., p. 279).*

4.1.1.1. Suggested goals for policy support for ITE and ITE inclusive practice

- Ensure that ITE programmes and learning activities are based on principles of inclusion and equity (e.g. Barrett et al., 2015; European Agency, 2010; 2019; Scottish Teacher Education Committee, 2014; UNESCO, 2015). For example, 'trainees should be aware of the mechanisms of exclusion, prejudice and discrimination' (UNESCO, 2015, p. 21) and equipped for 'inclusive and equitable quality education and [promote] lifelong learning opportunities for all' (UNESCO, 2017a, p. 18).
- Ensure that 'all teacher candidates complete their initial preparation with the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully enter the profession and meet the instructional needs of students with disabilities' (Blanton, Pugach and Florian, 2011, p. 16).
- Ensure that teacher colleges/universities provide teacher candidates with meaningful opportunities for learning and teaching in diverse and inclusive local contexts (UNESCO, 2015; Watkins et al., 2016).
- Ensure that schools and school communities welcome pre-service teachers as professional participants across all educational settings, irrespective of diversity challenges (Bentley-Williams et al., 2017).



- Ensure that teacher colleges/universities collaborate with schools and school communities, irrespective of the diversity challenges encountered (Bentley-Williams et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2015). The ‘focus is on the holistic education of students, and on how to assist them in becoming self-directed lifelong learners’ (European Commission, 2017a, p. 39).
- Ensure a system-wide approach of ITE departments with schools/school communities, and with health and social departments in higher education (e.g. Donnelly and Watkins, 2011; European Agency, 2011; Young, 2011). This should provide ‘cross-curricular links and themes including citizenship, inclusion and diversity, personal, social and health education’ (Teaching Council, 2011, in European Commission, 2017a, p. 39).
- Ensure pre-service and in-service ITE pathways for diverse teacher candidate recruitment to ‘attract candidates from diverse backgrounds into teaching’, with ‘rigorous teacher preparation activities’ to ‘prepare teachers to meet the needs of all learners’ (European Agency, 2010, p. 18).
- Encourage innovative and collaborative approaches in TPL for inclusion and reduce all barriers to cross boundaries of general and separate pathways. This will ensure educators’ collaboration in programme development and programme performance (Blanton and Pugach, 2011).

4.1.2. Teacher induction in inclusive learning environments

Teachers raise concerns about responding to diversity when (new) teachers are personally involved in implementing inclusive practice (Allan, 2011; Beacham and Rouse, 2012; Conderman and Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). This observation justifies immediate professional learning opportunities at the start of a teaching career. In Europe, compulsory induction courses exist in several countries. Research shows that induction helps to reduce the teacher drop-out rate and improves teacher quality (European Commission, 2017a). It bridges the gap between ITE and CPD. According to the European Commission, ‘induction is a crucial period for novice teachers to effectively emerge into practice, by enhancing their skills, improving school and teacher performance’ (ibid., p. 73).

However, structured induction programmes are rarely designed to prepare ‘future teachers for diversity in classrooms’ (ibid., p. 74). Other induction models exist, such as collaborative professional learning for beginning teachers.

Andresen (2015) reports on policy-driven work-based teacher affinity groups and data teams in Denmark. Affinity groups working in the area of inclusive teaching and learning enhancement showed an increase in teacher self-efficacy and professional understanding. Courses were provided by university colleges, and schools allocated time for group meetings. In particular, for new teachers, coherent work-based learning supported the development of a common language, a common repertoire, informed problem-solving, avoidance of quick fixes, and positive group autonomy. Most of all, early professional learning opportunities led to continuous work-based learning, in a positive cycle of adult professional learning. In this cycle, ‘learning fosters identity formation, and the formation of professional identity improves learning opportunities in the workplace’ (ibid., p. 772).



Likewise, supervision groups are significant for beginning teachers to develop 'inclusive teacherhood' (Alila et al., 2016). The authors strongly endorse allocating time for supervision meetings.

4.1.2.1. Suggested goals for policy for teacher induction courses

- Ensure induction programmes in formal learning settings and/or in-service supervised reflective practice as a bridge from ITE to CPD for inclusion throughout a teacher's career (Alila et al., 2016; Andresen, 2015; European Commission, 2017a). Induction is a 'structured support programme provided for qualified first-time teachers' (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015, in European Commission, 2017a, p. 73).
- Ensure the development of sustainable partnerships between universities/teacher colleges and schools to extend professional learning opportunities for beginning teachers in inclusive learning environments (Bentley-Williams et al., 2017).
- Ensure a common core, a common language of inclusion/diversity and collaborative practice in the induction phase among mainstream and specialist teachers, to enhance future collaboration in challenging practice (Conderman and Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009).
- Ensure a constructive feedback culture regarding the professional learning of beginning teachers/education staff, individualised professional plans and mentoring programmes (ibid.). Ideally, 'newly qualified teachers should undergo induction programmes where they can further develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes developed during initial training, with support from mentors who are experienced teachers' (UNESCO, 2015, p. 21).

Induction policy closely relates to ITE policy. Improvements in one may influence the other. Many systems have some opportunities for induction in place. However, policy-makers should (re)consider induction requirements in line with ITE. In addition, barriers to induction caused by other policies, such as limited replacement contracts, must be identified.

4.1.3. Continuing professional development

CPD lifts teachers' induction phase to a career-long professional learning trajectory. According to Timperley, above all, experienced teachers must show adaptive expertise. This allows them to judge when professional learning and innovative approaches are required:

Part of being an adaptive expert is to know when and from where to seek help. Engaging in ongoing inquiry and knowledge-building cycles is at the core of their professionalism (2011, p. 6).

Throughout a teacher's career, a variety of formal and informal professional learning opportunities will be presented. However, teachers' professional development depends on their motivation to learn. Establishing a culture of learning in which teachers seize opportunities for professional development will raise their motivation to learn, especially when professional development goals are set as a team. Teachers must be able to deepen



their professional learning according to their individual professional needs and the team's needs.

Teachers are more likely to engage when the process focuses on improving the performance of all teachers not just the bottom of the performance curve, and when they have been actively engaged in the process (Hay Group, 2012, p. 21).

Specifically, teacher performance is likely to improve when the following conditions are present:

- *opportunities for teacher self-reflection and objective setting (including methods for self-assessment);*
- *regular classroom observation and the provision of constructive feedback from both their school leader or manager, as well as their peers;*
- *frequent feedback on classroom performance as an ongoing dialogue, not a once a year discussion;*
- *shadowing, coaching and mentoring from peers and leaders;*
- *opportunities to contribute to and engage in teamwork, collaboration and action learning with other teachers to obtain the best possible outcomes for students (ibid.).*

More than 15 case studies across Europe regard CPD as continuous support for teachers. It empowers them to provide support, particularly to learners who are vulnerable to marginalisation. Moreover, it enables them to work towards improved learning outcomes for all (European Agency, 2015a). Acknowledging that improvement tends to slow after the first two or three years of teaching, for on-going competence development to accept responsibility for all learners, teachers need support and feedback in a 'culture of trust and professionalism developed through effective self-evaluation' (European Agency, 2015a, p. 51).

The principles of collaborative professional learning opportunities, underpinned by essential values and principles of (inclusive) learning and teaching, form a successful basis to support teacher professional development for inclusion. Two examples of policy-driven projects may illustrate this. Carrington et al. (2010) report on the Principles of Learning and Teaching (PoLT), a national framework for teachers' professional development in Victoria, Australia. Based on six principles, the framework aims to operationalise pedagogical change and curriculum renewal. It does this by developing a shared language of pedagogy and insights into classroom strategies, activities and planning appropriate to each principle. The principles are broad, focusing on the essence of effective learning and teaching. They aim to increase the recognition of the 'importance of collaborative critical reflection between teachers' (ibid., p. 9), in particular of their pedagogy.

Another example of professional development is the development of a Scottish Master's Programme on Inclusive Education (Beaton and Spratt, 2017). Based on the Scottish *National Framework for Inclusion* (Scottish Teacher Education Committee, 2014) and the principles of inclusive pedagogy, this programme supports teachers to interrogate their own pedagogy and practice in their own setting, while earning a further qualification. Formal professional development courses, such as postgraduate or master's programmes,



contribute to inclusive practice in many ways. They enhance knowledge and skills in the field, improve collaboration between teacher educators and schools, and add to diversification among teaching staff.

4.1.3.1. Suggested goals for continuing professional development for inclusion

- Ensure that all teaching staff/education staff in schools participate in professional development routes for inclusion (e.g. Hay Group, 2012; European Agency, 2019).
- Develop formal and informal routes for professional learning (e.g. Beaton and Spratt, 2017; Carrington et al., 2010; Timperley, 2011), such as postgraduate or master's programmes on inclusive education.
- Set goals for inclusion among staff and plan professional learning as part of schools' implementation plans for inclusion (e.g. Hay Group, 2012).
- Ensure a constructive feedback culture regarding learning for diversity and inclusion (e.g. Beaton and Spratt, 2017; Carrington et al., 2010). 'Facilitated and scaffolded social dialogue combined with self-reflection can assist teachers to develop their professional, situated and individual identity' (Carrington et al., 2010, p. 11; European Agency, 2015a).

4.1.4. Teacher educators' professional development

Across the professional continuum, professional learning for inclusion is equally important for those who are involved in the professional learning of pre-service, beginning or more experienced teachers. This need could easily be overlooked. It must, therefore, be regarded an integral part of TPL for inclusion. For example, in ITE, teacher educators are usually academic staff, who may lack experience of inclusive practice (Allan, 2011). In most cases, however, teacher educators are engaged in programme development in ITE or CPD. A collaborative approach is essential to deepen teacher educators' professional learning and engagement.

O'Neill et al. (2009) report on a collaborative inquiry approach for teacher educators to develop a new integrated inclusive teacher programme, by doing case study research on inclusive classroom practice and the emancipatory potential of inclusion. Other examples are the development of a sustainable network of schools for pre-service student practicums in an immersion programme (Bentley-Williams et al., 2017), or a collaborative redesign by teacher educators of a merged programme for ITE and special educational needs (Blanton and Pugach, 2011). In sharing the same goals, teacher educators acquired a deeper understanding of diversity. Smith and Tyler (2011) report on the development of a web-based resource model for teachers, enhanced by teacher educators in collaborative networks of educational professionals. Moreover, teacher educators may be invited to reconsider frameworks for inclusion to be used in ITE or CPD, as in the case of the *Scottish National Framework for Inclusion* (Barrett et al., 2015).

Teacher professional development also requires professional development of mentoring teachers, such as learning support teachers or school leaders. In partnerships between universities and schools, mentoring teachers may be involved in teacher educators' learning communities, or they may have mentoring courses or supervision.



In Australia, learner support co-ordinators receive professional guidance to become models of effective teaching and to facilitate professional development, through the installation of learning support teams in schools (Boyle et al., 2011). In addition, school leaders play an important role in their teaching staff's professional development. In Australia, a national charter for the professional development of teachers and leaders explicitly includes school leaders as teacher educators (Timperley, 2011).

4.1.4.1. Suggested goals for teacher educators' professional development policy support

- Reduce barriers to university/college teacher educators being involved in inclusive educational practice. This could be by ensuring that universities and colleges offer teacher educators opportunities for professional learning in inclusive educational settings and practice, through critical enquiry to deepen their understanding of inclusion (e.g. Allan, 2011; O'Neill et al., 2009).
- Ensure that university/college teacher educators collaborate with schools/school communities to support research on inclusive practice and enhance professional learning opportunities for inclusion (Bentley-Williams et al., 2017; Boyle et al., 2011; European Agency, 2017a; O'Neill et al., 2009).
- Ensure that university/college teacher educators collaborate with colleagues in cross-sectoral and sectoral programme design (e.g. Blanton and Pugach, 2011; Smith and Tyler, 2011).
- Ensure that collaborative practice with schools is valued as enhanced teacher professional learning. Ensure that school leaders, learner support co-ordinators and other experienced lead professionals are regarded as mentoring teacher educators (e.g. Boyle et al., 2011).
- Ensure that universities/colleges can provide mentoring teachers and school leaders with the professional development needed to coach beginning and experienced teachers for inclusion, including collaborative practice (e.g. Barrett et al., 2015; Boyle et al., 2011).
- Ensure that school leaders develop coaching and mentoring skills for school innovation and inclusive school development (e.g. European Agency, 2017a; Timperley, 2011).

4.2. Ensuring a wide spectrum of support within inclusive education systems

This section looks at the professional development policy support needed for educational professionals working with or alongside teachers to provide a complementary system of support. This system of support includes:

- preventative support, universal support and specialist support, if needed;
- learning or language support teachers or co-ordinators, special educational needs teachers, or practitioners working with learners with low-incidence disabilities, such as teaching assistants.



4.2.1. Routes for different professionals

Different professionals are involved in developing inclusive learning environments and inclusive school communities. Alongside teaching staff and school leaders, other educational or social work practitioners and so-called para-professional staff are often engaged. Historically, specialist teacher routes in teacher education institutions developed as a response to the existing separate structure of general and special education (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely and Danielson, 2010; Young, 2011). Other higher education departments (e.g. social work, health department or vocational education) have been responsible for additional professionals' routes. A shift in policy has encouraged education departments to develop alternative routes for general education and/or specialist teachers, such as merged or immersion routes (Blanton and Pugach, 2011; Brownell et al., 2010; McCrimmon, 2015). However, other departments have not always adopted the paradigm shift required. In particular, for specialist tracks, a change of roles and professional identities is challenging.

Agaliotis and Kalyva (2011) emphasise the need for clear policy guidelines on the roles of special education co-ordinators. In inclusive practice, roles are shifting from a primarily compensatory focus to prevention as its first and main perspective, supporting the professional development of teacher staff to develop quality education for all. Still, to become 'lead professionals' in inclusive practice, special education staff need a broad competence base, including deeper knowledge and skills in developing inclusion. In particular, this promotes a shift to strategic roles, where staff become inclusion facilitators who empower colleagues and foster inclusive school development (Agaliotis and Kalyva, 2011; Done et al., 2016; Florian and Becirevic, 2011). Evaluating their role as strategic change managers within a complex policy environment, special education co-ordinators rated negotiating competences as the highest professional need (Done et al., 2016).

In Greece, special education co-ordinators gradually chose to develop a broader professional orientation, in order to enhance job opportunities. In eastern European countries where a defectology tradition exists, inclusion projects seemed to empower former defectologists to become consultants or supervisors. This was particularly the case when they were already members of the school staff, rather than visiting mainstream schools as special education teachers (Florian and Becirevic, 2011).

Teacher education and postgraduate programmes for special education co-ordinators and inclusion facilitators need high standards to enable them to:

- respond appropriately to the needs of teachers and schools as a whole;
- inspire and support learners who have difficulties in learning and participation in school.

A critical enquiry into innovative ways of professionalisation for special education staff is needed. These could include merged teacher education programmes with specialisation in the final year of ITE (Bentley-Williams et al., 2017; Pickl, Holzinger and Kopp-Sixt, 2016). In these models, special education teachers require general education competences, collaborative and reflexive learning regarding inclusive practice, and knowledge on access to specialised support. In addition, the need arises for train-the-trainer or teacher educator programmes for new evolving 'lead professional' roles.



4.2.1.1. Suggested goals for a professional development policy for other professionals in inclusive education

- Ensure professional learning for learner support/special education co-ordinators that focuses on learner support, teacher support and school-level support. Facilitate innovative and collaborative means of support through their professional development (e.g. Agaliotis and Kalyva, 2011; Done et al., 2016; Florian and Becirevic, 2011).
- Ensure reflective practice opportunities, e.g. supervision or learning communities, for support teachers and co-ordinators that focus on enacting inclusive principles among staff and learners (Alila et al., 2016; Andresen, 2015).
- Ensure train-the-trainer or teacher educator programmes for learner support co-ordinators and/or other support teachers that demonstrate collaborative roles, reflective practice and inquiry.
- Ensure that support teachers have professional learning opportunities to acquire teacher competences or to become qualified teachers if they do not have a teaching qualification, e.g. by providing parallel and/or postgraduate routes to become a teacher (Bentley-Williams et al., 2017; Pickl et al., 2016).

4.2.2. Specialisms for low-incidence disabilities

Teaching learners with low-incidence disabilities, such as sensory impairment or severe and multiple disabilities, has been a specialist profession for a long time. In particular, teaching in separate schools or special classrooms has strengthened the professional identity of special education teachers. However, in the shift to inclusive practice, in many cases, learners with special educational needs are instructed by others whose qualifications differ largely, such as therapists, specialist teachers or teaching assistants (Fisher and Pleasants, 2012; McConkey and Abbott, 2011). The assumption that seems to prevail is that mainstream teachers are not capable or responsible enough to teach learners with low-incidence disabilities.

4.2.2.1. Teaching assistants', specialists' and therapists' professional development needs

Several studies have shown the benefits of sharing support tasks by means of co-teaching or teaching assistance (Rytavaara and Kershner, 2012). In particular, when learners with low-incidence disabilities are involved, mainstream teachers express benefits. These include a positive impact on professional development, job satisfaction, stress reduction, and classroom organisation. However, studies also point out the risks. Particularly where teaching assistants or other specialists without a teaching qualification are in place, several issues emerge, such as:

- a lack of learner academic achievement;
- a high ratio of one-to-one instruction;
- uneven responsibility towards the most vulnerable learners (Butt, 2018; Fisher and Pleasants, 2012; Giangreco, Doyle and Suter, 2012; Jardí, Puigdemívol and Petreñas, 2018).



McConkey and Abbott (2011) identified the training needs of teaching assistants in the United Kingdom. These assistants particularly work with learners with wide-ranging and complex medical and health needs, learning and behavioural difficulties and disabilities. Given the complexity of learners' needs, teaching assistants expressed the need for training, e.g. knowledge of the learners' conditions, physical well-being and a wide range of practical skills in learning and behavioural support. Other studies confirm the increased need for training (Butt, 2018; Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015; McLachlan, 2014; McLachlan and Davis, 2013). However, Giangreco et al. (2012) warn of a 'training trap'. This might result in more isolated tasks for teaching assistants or specialists working with learners with low-incidence disabilities. More importantly, clear role descriptions and training are needed.

4.2.2.2. Special education teachers' roles in specialised instruction

Other models of inclusive support teacher roles exist. These may be to support learners with both high- and low-incidence disabilities, and others who might have temporary additional needs or language support needs. Gavish (2017) describes four profiles of inclusive support teachers, evolving as stages towards a collaborative-consulting co-teaching model of support. Effective inclusive support is not additional support operating in a 'bubble' to provide assistance and specialised instruction. Nor is it the role of a supervisor who claims to provide full access to the curriculum. Rather, the essence of support is collaborative work for the benefit of the learners. For teaching assistants, Cockroft and Atkinson (2015) illustrate the importance and effectiveness of good communication and collaboration with class teachers. They stress the positive effect of a collaborative model of mutual consultation. In this way, the role of specialists and teaching assistants goes beyond providing particular instructions, interventions or assistance. This raises the capacity and the competences of all staff involved.

4.2.2.3. Suggested goals for professional learning policy for specialists

- Ensure that professional learning for support teachers and/or teaching assistants of learners with low-incidence disabilities focuses on teacher support and mutual consultation, as well as learner support. For example, ensure that teaching assistants have professional learning opportunities to acquire instructional competences (e.g. Butt, 2018; Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015; Fisher and Pleasants, 2012; Giangreco et al., 2012; Jardí et al., 2018). They should be 'sufficiently and continually trained for the appropriate roles they are asked to undertake' (Giangreco et al., 2012, p. 370).
- Ensure that the roles of teaching assistants or other educators who do not hold teaching degrees are clear and valued among all school staff. This will enable teaching assistants, 'para-educators' or 'para-professionals' to:
 - ... engage in appropriate roles (e.g., provide supplemental, teacher-planned instruction, facilitate peer interactions, engage [in] non-instructional roles resulting in more opportunities for students with disabilities to receive instruction from highly qualified teachers and special educators) (ibid.).*
- Ensure that specialist knowledge and experience are accessible, are shared and disseminated in school teams, and are available on a flexible basis to address



learners with low-incidence disabilities, when needed (e.g. Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015; Gavish, 2017; Rytavaara and Kershner, 2012).

- Ensure a cross-sectoral professional development plan for support teachers/teaching assistants to appropriately address a variety of knowledge and skills domains, as needed (e.g. health, social work, education and instructional skills) (e.g. Butt, 2018; Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015; McConkey and Abbott, 2011).
- Ensure reflective practice opportunities (e.g. supervision or learning communities) for support teachers and/or teaching assistants that focus on enacting inclusive principles among staff and learners. This will ensure that para-educators 'are adequately supervised on an ongoing basis to ensure fidelity of instruction and other supports' (Giangreco et al., 2012, p. 370).
- Ensure that mainstream and special needs education expertise is shared among all staff in professional development opportunities, including support teachers and teaching assistants (e.g. Robinson, 2017).
- Ensure that differences in qualifications and roles regarding learners with low-incidence disabilities are not a barrier to role shifts, responsibilities and the professional learning of mainstream teachers (e.g. Gavish, 2017; Giangreco et al., 2012).

4.3. Ensuring competence and curriculum development support for teacher professional learning for inclusion

The previous sections looked at a variety of TPL routes for inclusion to be supported by policy. However, a final topic to inform policy goals for TPL for inclusion raises the question of the competences, curricular design principles and core content that are crucial to enable teachers to work in inclusive learning and teaching environments.

4.3.1. Teacher competence frameworks for inclusion

Common and separate needs for professional development policy were identified across the professional continuum and among all teachers and specialists working in co-teaching/collaborative inclusive practice. However, core values and competences for inclusion are central to teachers' professional development in inclusive practice. *General Comment No. 4* states:

A process of educating all teachers at pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational education levels must be initiated to provide them with the necessary core competencies and values to work in inclusive educational environments. This requires adaptations to both pre and in-service training to develop appropriate skill levels in the shortest time possible to facilitate the transition to an inclusive education system (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016, p. 22).

In a review of competence frameworks in Europe, Caena (2014) stresses the added value of teachers' competence frameworks. These indicate 'clear objectives of student learning and shared understanding of accomplished learning' and reflect a 'holistic, dynamic, process-oriented view of teacher competences underpinned by research, policy highlights



and peer learning' (ibid., p. 314). Competences are understood as complex combinations of knowledge, skills, understanding, values and attitudes, leading to well-considered actions in a specific situation.

The complexity of teaching shapes the basic definition of teacher competence as context-bound, embedded in a system with multiple actors and layers of activity (ibid., p. 315).

In a globalised world, teacher education and professional development must be sensitive to local needs, while indicating the essential competences required for quality teaching. Policy has a mediating role in providing opportunities for competence framework development, research and refinement. For policy, reference frameworks of teacher competences ensure quality in teacher preparation, throughout teachers' career-long professional development, in teacher selection, and in 'facilitating effective dialogue between different stakeholders about policy planning and implementation' (European Commission, 2013b, p. 23).

Allan (2011) points to the confusing, interchangeable use of the terms 'competence' and 'competency'. 'Competency' reduces the meaning to a narrow view of an individual's skills and activities, while 'competence' rather signifies the 'ability', 'aptitude', 'capability', 'effectiveness' and 'skill' to meet the demands of the context, acquired by social groups or institutions, as well as individuals. In particular, when referring to the demands of competences for diversity or inclusion, there is a risk of narrowing its meaning to the management of skills. Rather, teachers' competences for diversity do not pursue ready solutions, but seek true engagement and responsibility for others. This ethical notion of teachers' competences supports Biesta's notion of 'pedagogy with empty hands' (2008, p. 198). In this, classroom practice is not predictable by applying textbooks or 'skills', but by a readiness to respond to diversity 'in whatever shape or form it surfaces' (Allan, 2011, p. 133). When asking what teachers should know, be or do, a fixed set of knowledge, skills or behaviour is not expected, but rather a responsiveness to change, reflection and adaptation. In essence, competences for diversity are demonstrated by 'simultaneously creating opportunities for dialogue and removing barriers for participation' (ibid.).

Consistent with this ethical notion of teacher competences, two reference frameworks for teacher competences for inclusion and diversity were developed in Europe in the last decade. Based on a three-year project on ITE for inclusion, the *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* sets out the core values and competences for TPL for inclusion:

- **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 ongoing professional learning and development (European Agency, 2012a, p. 7).*

As such, the *Profile* aims to:

- *Highlight the essential core values and areas of competences necessary for preparing all teachers to work in inclusive education considering all forms of diversity;*
- *Reinforce the argument [...] 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 (ibid., p. 6).*

Value-based competences have the potential to guide (initial) teacher education to become a model of democratic participation and dialogic communication. They can also collaboratively develop a curriculum based on global rights for all and social justice (Booth, 2011). Since its publication, the *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* has inspired ITE and CPD courses (Andresen, 2015; Baldiris-Navarro et al., 2016).

Earlier, the Council of Europe published a framework of teacher competences (2010). It explicitly highlights teachers as agents of intercultural dialogue. It identifies 18 competences along three dimensions:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Communication and relationships
- Management and teaching (Allan, 2011; Council of Europe, 2010).

4.3.1.1. Suggested goals for policy support for competence development

- Ensure that reference frameworks of competences for diversity/inclusion guide the professional learning of all teaching/education staff towards inclusive education (e.g. Allan, 2011; Caena, 2014; European Agency, 2012a; European Commission, 2013b; Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016).
- Ensure that competence frameworks represent the essential values, attitudes, knowledge and skills to underpin teachers' professional development, in order to enhance quality education in inclusive learning environments (e.g. Allan, 2011; Booth, 2011; European Agency, 2012a).
- Ensure that competence frameworks reflect teachers' responsiveness to change, reflection and adaptation (e.g. Allan, 2011; Biesta, 2008; European Agency, 2012a).



- Ensure that competence frameworks for diversity/inclusion are sensitive to local needs for social justice and diversity (e.g. Booth, 2011; Caena, 2014).

4.3.2. Curricular design and core content for teacher professional learning for inclusion

Competence frameworks aim to provide clear and substantiated indicators of student teacher goals and societal and professional expectations. However, teacher educators may need additional guidance to develop programmes and curricula that effectively and coherently support the intended competence development. This is particularly true for teacher education reform as part of inclusive education system development.

The *Framework for Inclusive Pedagogy* (Rouse and Florian, 2012; Florian, 2017) primarily strives for coherence in curriculum design by offering clear and distinct guidelines for reflection, action and challenges to consider in curricular reform. The *Framework* emphasises three key assumptions that underpin effective programme design for teacher education for inclusion. This leads to careful investigation and development of curricular content and practice consistent with these assumptions, while acknowledging the challenges and dilemmas encountered in current educational practice. These assumptions form the basis of inclusive pedagogy curriculum design:

- *Difference must be accounted for as an essential aspect of human development in any conceptualisation of learning*
- *Teachers must believe (can be convinced) that they are qualified/capable of teaching all children*
- *The profession must develop creative new ways of working with others* (Rouse and Florian, 2012, p. 21; Florian, 2017, p. 16).

Villegas et al. (2017) propose a framework for curriculum design to prepare teachers for inclusive classrooms. They refer to six characteristics of culturally responsive teachers:

- *Sociocultural consciousness*
- *Affirming views about diversity and students from diverse backgrounds*
- *Commitment to acting as change agents in schools and advocates for students*
- *Understanding how learners construct knowledge*
- *Knowing about students' lives*
- *Using insights into students' lives to help them build bridges to learning* (ibid., p. 136).

Using a competence or curricular framework for inclusive pedagogy or diversity makes diversity and collaboration the central elements in the preparation of all teachers. It also defines the curriculum of (initial) teacher education and systematically integrates a clear vision for inclusion throughout the course. As a team, teacher educators will look for coherence and focus on diversity throughout every teacher preparation programme.

In addition to the support that competence and curricular design frameworks for inclusion provide, international policy documents and research suggest core content for TPL for inclusion. Both specific content for understanding and responding to disability and broader programme content regarding diversity, equity and social justice recur. Specific



needs and risks must not be overlooked, especially when addressing a broad range of needs, as well as barriers and opportunities for learners.

General Comment No. 4 provides a clear statement on the core content all teachers need in their professional development towards inclusion of learners with disabilities:

All teachers must be provided with dedicated units/modules to prepare them to work in inclusive settings, as well as practical experiential learning, where they can build the skills and confidence to problem-solve through diverse inclusion challenges. The core content of teacher education must address a basic understanding of human diversity, growth and development, the human rights model of disability, and inclusive pedagogy including how to identify students' functional abilities - strengths, abilities and learning styles - to ensure their participation in inclusive educational environments.

Teacher education should include learning about the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, such as Braille, large print, accessible multimedia, easyread, plain language, sign language and deaf culture, education techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.

In addition, teachers need practical guidance and support in, among others: the provision of individualized instruction; teaching the same content using varied teaching methods to respond to the learning styles and unique abilities of each person; the development and use of individual educational plans to support specific learning requirements; and the introduction of a pedagogy centred around students' educational objectives (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016, pp. 22–23).

Diverse documents and studies have identified (other) areas of curriculum content as relevant to enhance teachers' self-efficacy and positive attitudes for inclusion. These include:

- legislation and policy for inclusion (Berry, 2011; Forlin and Chambers, 2011);
- teaching methods 'inclusive of all learners' (UNESCO, 2015, p. 21);
- awareness of the 'mechanisms of exclusion, prejudice and discrimination' (ibid.);
- democratic participation and participative inquiry (e.g. Booth, 2011);
- teacher-learner relationships (Wubbels, 2017);
- classroom management (Andersen, 2010);
- sign language and Braille (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016);
- ICT, accessibility, differentiated instruction (Pegalajar, 2017);
- curriculum development and pedagogy within a disability studies framework (Broderick and Lalvani, 2017; Chrysostomou and Symeonidou, 2017; Symeonidou and Chrysostomou, 2019; Symeonidou, 2019; Gilham and Tompkins, 2016);



- ‘teaching for diversity’ intervention strategies to meet learner educational needs (Cardona-Moltó, Tichá and Abery, 2018);
- developing an inclusive curriculum, modifying the curriculum (e.g. Cardona-Moltó et al., 2018);
- parent involvement (Hornby and Witte, 2010);
- diversity-related fieldwork (Cardona-Moltó et al., 2018);
- learner functional assessment of learning (Hollenweger, 2011);
- ‘intercultural education’ and the ‘integration of transversal guidelines on diversity in curricula’, to ‘ensure a greater focus on tackling social inequalities resulting in different chances in education’ (European Commission, 2016b, p. 128);
- emotional intelligence and social skills (Council of the European Union, 2017b).

While these areas illustrate core content in inclusive teacher education, they are not exhaustive. Nor are they coherent without the aforementioned frameworks for design. Many efforts are still underway and may add more examples of relevant content in teacher education and professional development for inclusion. Content must also be specific to the local context and aligned with national education policies and specific classroom issues, such as language policies. It must combine theory and a significant amount of classroom-based teaching practice, and lead trainees to become ‘reflective practitioners’ (UNESCO, 2015, p. 21).

Listing content shows the inherent limitations of curricular reform if it is not linked to a competence framework and learning outcomes that guide reflective practice and knowledge construction. Some countries provide clear guidelines for a curriculum, in line with a clear vision, teacher standards and professional competences. This consistent line is found in the *National Framework for Inclusion* in Scotland (Scottish Teacher Education Committee, 2014). Internationally, the UNESCO advocacy guide *Promoting Inclusive Teacher Education: Curriculum* (UNESCO, 2013) provides clear principles and goals for curricular design.

4.3.2.1. Suggested goals for policy support for curriculum design

- Ensure that all teacher education/TPL curriculum development and reform actively promote and demonstrate inclusion:
 - ‘All pre-service teacher education institutions, universities or colleges need to educate all prospective teachers about inclusive education’ (ibid., p. 5)
 - ‘Every course or module in teacher education needs to actively promote and demonstrate equality, inclusion and human rights’ (ibid., p. 6).

(E.g. Florian, 2017; Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016; Villegas et al., 2017).



- Ensure that teacher education/TPL curriculum reform is underpinned by the understanding and commitment of teacher educators for inclusive education:
 - ‘Teacher education curriculum developers/teacher educators need to improve their understanding of the special needs and inclusive education paradigms’ (UNESCO, 2013, p. 9).
 - ‘Teacher education institutions need to develop a commitment to innovation and change within their own institution, and develop curricula which reflect these commitments’ (ibid.).(E.g. Florian, 2017; Villegas et al., 2017).
- Ensure that teacher education/TPL curriculum development and reform support the connection between inclusive education values, knowledge and skills and practice-based learning:
 - ‘The teacher education curriculum needs to place greater emphasis on practice-based learning’ (UNESCO, 2013, p. 13).
 - ‘... support student teachers to understand the connections between inclusive education theory and the reality of teaching’ (ibid., p. 14).

4.4. Summary of goals for teacher professional learning for inclusion

This section aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of possible policy goals to support the development and implementation of professional formal and non-formal learning opportunities for inclusion, along teachers’ professional continuum and across diverse educators’ roles. The process of defining goals raised dilemmas regarding specialist versus general education competence development. This reflects the challenges of professional role shifts and alternative professional routes needed to move towards a shared understanding and responsibility for inclusion.

The section also discussed the crucial role of clear competence frameworks for inclusive quality education. It highlighted the importance of coherent curriculum design and core content reflecting and pursuing the identified competences.

To summarise, goals strongly emphasise:

- integrating inclusion and diversity topics across ITE and CPD courses;
- strengthening professional learning for diversity in induction courses;
- including teacher educators in the professional continuum in need of professional learning for inclusion;
- shifting the roles of special education teachers, learner support co-ordinators and other para-professionals towards those of collaborative-consultative teachers and inclusion facilitators;



-
- including teacher educators of (postgraduate) special education teaching programmes in the professional continuum in need of professional learning for inclusion;
 - enhancing reflective collaborative practice for all teaching staff and educators involved in inclusive learning environments;
 - strengthening teacher leadership competences as a process for providing direction and applying influence;
 - underpinning all professional learning for inclusion with competence frameworks, curriculum design and core content, reflecting the values and assumptions needed to develop inclusive learning environments.



5. IMPLEMENTING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR INCLUSION

This section builds on the principles and goals defined in the previous sections. The previous sections focused on policy development for effective and appropriate professional learning for inclusion for all teachers and other educators jointly involved in learner support. To specify the goals and suggest how to proceed in policy implementation, this section examines the policy elements and strategies needed to implement and monitor TPL policies.

While previous sections primarily highlighted international principles and global goals of TPL for inclusion, implementation guidelines are more closely aligned with contextual prerequisites, resources and experience. As such, examples are both scarce and diverse. However, by identifying more specific policy elements, this section seeks to be the culmination of policy guidelines for TPL for inclusion for national policies to get started. Implementation topics discussed include capacity building for TPL, cross-sectoral co-operation and funding, and monitoring of processes.

5.1. Capacity building for teacher professional learning

To implement effective and appropriate TPL for inclusion policy, specific roles and responsibilities need to be addressed. Teacher educators, leadership for inclusion, specialist professionals and researchers must take part in the (planning of) professional learning for inclusion to enhance capacity for further dissemination and teacher education for inclusion.

5.1.1. Strategies for preparing teacher educators

The previous section discussed the crucial role of teacher educators' professional development. However, if TPL for inclusion needs to get underway across all teacher preparation pathways, then teacher educators must be broadly supported and encouraged to become committed change agents. A supportive and consistent policy for inclusion across all contexts where teacher educators are involved is key to build true capacity for the professional learning for inclusion of all teachers.

In European teacher policy, support for teacher educators is recognised as a fundamental policy concept. Referring to the conclusions of a thematic working group on teachers' professional learning (European Commission, 2013c), Stéger notes:

... the quality of teacher educators influences the level of competences of teachers and their effective professional development. They reproduce the teaching body, thus the educational system; they play a key role in introducing innovation and change into schools and are also important for undertaking research on teacher education (2014, p. 341).

However, in spite of their influential role, national supportive policies are rare. European co-operation has taken a lead position in raising the concept of support for teacher



educators through peer learning activities. The document *Supporting Teacher Educators for better learning outcomes* considers several policy conditions, including:

- *an awareness of the unique nature of the multiple professional identities of teacher educators [...];*
- *who takes the lead in organising professional development activities: national or regional authorities, (networks of) teacher educational institutions, professional associations, or all of these [...];*
- *different profiles of teacher educators (school-based, university-based, subject-oriented, practice-oriented, research-oriented, and so on) [...];*
- *space, time and funding [...] for the engagement of teacher educators in professional learning, and for the development of activities and resources [...];*
- *the attitudes and motivation of teacher educators [as] catalysts of innovation (European Commission, 2013c, p. 26).*

The report further stresses that for teacher educators to develop agency concerning the teacher profession, it is important that they feel recognised as key stakeholders:

The opinions and expertise of teacher educators should be acknowledged in social and professional dialogues. [...]

National authorities and employers can support, as appropriate, the development of professional communities and bodies of teacher educators, to strengthen their professional agency. These can support and nurture the development of a culture of quality, empowerment, accountability and continuing improvement (ibid., p. 36).

National authorities, faculty administrators and other members of university staff must provide the necessary support for teacher educators to adopt and promote inclusion (Ahsan, Sharma and Deppeler, 2012; Deluca, 2012; Zgaga, 2017). Capacity for inclusive education curriculum development can be built by developing communities of teacher educators. Despite fragmentation of faculty across multiple subjects, Zgaga (2017) notes specific opportunities for teacher education institutions within the academic landscape.

More than in other fields of knowledge and expertise, teacher education must increasingly deal and experiment with transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary streams of knowledge. This broad collaboration within institutions offers opportunities for teacher educators' learning about inclusion. Moreover, in Europe, teaching opportunities across national contexts have traditionally been limited due to the incompatibility of systems. However, this local experimentation of teacher education institutions has proven to have transnational impact, through European teacher education projects such as Comenius and the Trans-European Mobility Programme for University Studies (TEMPUS). Communities of teacher educators and teacher education researchers emerged through project development by consortia of universities, which add to the capacity of teacher education faculty.

However, contradictory policies or standards of teacher performance may hamper local experimentation and collaboration in developing teacher educator capacity. Alexiadou and Essex (2016) stated the counterproductive effect of explicit policy requirements. For example, having to 'add inclusion and diversity into every teaching session and



performance sheet' (ibid., p. 16) frustrates staff and students. Promoting differentiated pedagogies in a highly performative and competitive school culture does not support transformative cultures. Capacity building of teacher educators' knowledge needs academic autonomy, while reaching beyond the individual teacher educator's learning.

5.1.2. Strategies to support leadership roles

In addition, school leaders' role is key to support policy for TPL for inclusion. The Supporting Inclusive School Leadership project policy review (European Agency, 2018c) demands appropriate status for school leaders. This status would enable them to:

- *access support – both from formal development opportunities and from greater collaboration with colleagues and other stakeholders at all system levels;*
- *access resources – to develop the workforce's capacity through training, teamwork and knowledge exchange;*
- *have autonomy and discretion to make evidence-informed decisions on the school's strategic direction and organisation, to enhance the learning environment and ensure equity across the whole school including pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, organisation of support and resource allocation;*
- *be held accountable through mechanisms that are aligned with other policy areas to support inclusive practice and focus on what really matters to stakeholders in the school and community (ibid., p. 25).*

If 'these types of strong leadership are present, teachers may feel less need of professional development support since they are already getting it from their school principal' (OECD, 2018b, p. 5). This refers to instructional leadership in particular for teaching learners with special educational needs. As such, school leaders play a central role in teachers' CPD. Moreover, their own professional trajectories are crucial for implementing inclusive education. Some countries have developed school leadership professional development frameworks and standards to support school leaders to fulfil their lead roles in an increasingly complex organisation. The *Ontario Leadership Framework* defines leadership as:

... the exercise of influence on organizational members and other stakeholders toward the identification and achievement of the organization's vision and goals (Institute for Education Leadership, 2013, p. 5).

The framework identifies 'Building relationships and developing people' as a major area of competence for school leaders. Given school leaders' major concerns about teacher retention (Earley et al., 2012) – among other concerns, such as financing issues or inspection frameworks – their leadership role in turning schools into inclusive learning environments is demanding. Support for school leaders in professional communities and professional development is a priority for an effective policy for inclusion.

5.1.3. Strategies to support specialist teachers' changing roles

The previous section proposed a shift in roles for learning support or special education co-ordinators, other educators or specialists and, to a certain degree, teaching assistants.



This places a new emphasis on collaborative roles. In particular, with a shift to consultative roles, capacity for inclusive education should be reinforced in mainstream schools.

However, Agalotis and Kalyva (2011) warn of a lack of specialisation. In spite of a growing appreciation of special education co-ordinators' interpersonal skills, mainstream teachers still expect them to have specialised knowledge and skills. A shift to so-called 'multi-category teaching' was also seen as the first source of professional burn-out for special education co-ordinators (ibid., p. 548). The authors therefore propose mild specialisation, differentiating between low- and high-incidence disabilities or learning needs, and a clear policy on caseload and working conditions for learner support co-ordinators if they are to fulfil new roles. For special education co-ordinators to take a lead role in teachers' in-service professional development, policy must consider the risk of overreliance for the broadest variety of issues. It must also consider the risk of them becoming distant supervising co-ordinators, as identified by Gavish (2017). Close alignment with classroom practice, knowledge and skills is crucial to motivate and support teachers (Brownell et al., 2010).

5.1.4. Strategies to support research to inform teacher professional learning

In a study on professional development needs, preferences and efficacy, as perceived by learning support teachers and head teachers in Ireland, O'Gorman states:

If the quality of learning for students with SEN [special educational needs] is to be enhanced then the quality of teacher education must be continuously upgraded. Systematic research, therefore, is necessary to ensure that PL [professional learning] for inclusion is grounded in research based evidence (2010, p. 40).

Studies on ITE reform, such as the development of infusion or merged teacher education programmes, have revealed both significant challenges and positive outcomes, as previous sections of this review have described (Anderson, Smith, Olsen and Algozzine, 2015; Blanton and Pugach, 2011). More research on different pathways and opportunities for TPL for inclusion is needed. It should consider the diverse contexts in which programmes exist and the perspectives of the stakeholders involved.

Reviewing professional development for inclusion, Waitoller and Artiles (2013) conclude that professional development programmes continue to struggle to prepare teachers effectively for inclusion. Slee (2010) argues that teachers are 'working in education systems where exclusion tends to be ubiquitous' (Waitoller and Artiles, 2013, p. 320). Waitoller and Artiles (2013) state there is a unitary, descriptive and decontextualised approach to inclusive education professional development research. They advise that future research on TPL for inclusion be primarily participative research, using an intersectional approach in which teachers identify multiple barriers to learning and participation. As such, research should enable teacher educators and pre-service and in-service teachers to examine their respective practices, toolkits and resources, including exclusionary practices. It should also enable them to develop new resources to support, for example, the learning of learners with complex needs (ibid.).

In this process, professional development for inclusive leadership must not be overlooked. O'Gorman and Drudy (2010) advocate a more revolutionary approach to special education teachers' professional development. This is to reverse professional development that



supports traditional practices belonging to a medical model. In particular, for specialist professions, several authors point to an immediate need for useable information or short-term training. They also highlight the need for critical analytical skills and long-term, deep understanding of role development and inclusive support (Andresen, 2015; Giangreco et al., 2012; O’Gorman and Drudy, 2010).

Policy must, therefore, encourage professional development providers to develop new kinds of programmes and approaches. These would enhance mainstream teachers’, school leaders’ and specialist teachers’ understanding of the complexity of diversity and the shared responses in educational practice.

A research project designed by two university colleges in Denmark shows the importance of research on professional learning for inclusion (Keilow, Friis-Hansen, Henze-Pedersen and Ravn, 2016). Supported by the Danish National Centre for Social Research (SFI), the project reached out to more than 400 classrooms and over 8,000 learners. It provided a three-day course, aiming to:

- increase awareness of learners with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and learners in complicated learning situations in relation to learning and well-being;
- enhance inclusive learning environments for the whole class, and specific interventions for the target group;
- raise professional challenges regarding the main course topics.

After four months, a main effect of the teacher-focused intervention was improved learner concentration as a prerequisite for learning. The overall effect on academic achievement and behaviour was less apparent. As such, directions for TPL for inclusion were derived from the findings focusing on learning. In addition, it acknowledged barriers to implementation (ibid.).

5.1.5. Suggested policy goals to support strategies for capacity building for teacher professional learning for inclusion

- Support teacher educators’ professions and roles as change agents, particularly in the shift towards an inclusive education system, through professional development. This could include courses, collaborative networks, participative research and teacher educator associations (Alexiadou and Essex, 2016; European Commission, 2013c; Stéger, 2014).
- Support school leaders with professional development opportunities for inclusive education, resources and autonomy (European Agency, 2017c).
- Ensure that professional role shifts of specialist teachers have a multiplication effect of knowledge and skills across the teaching staff, while taking into account teachers’ and specialists’ concerns about collaborative learning (Agialotis and Kalyva, 2011; Brownell et al., 2010; Gavish, 2017).
- Ensure research funding for the continuing development of appropriate models for TPL for inclusion, including the need for specialist courses and lead roles, and collaboration across institutions and schools (Anderson et al., 2015; Andresen,



2015; Blanton and Pugach, 2011; O’Gorman, 2010; O’Gorman and Drudy, 2010; Waitoller and Artiles, 2013).

5.2. Cross-sectoral co-operation and funding for teacher professional learning for inclusion

Several ministries and regional and local organisations may be involved in developing a clear policy for TPL for inclusion. This section considers strategies and goals for cross-sectoral and cross-level co-operation and funding, based on *Financing of Inclusive Education: Mapping Country Systems for Inclusive Education* (European Agency, 2016b) and other illustrations of national policies.

5.2.1. Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and other ministries

For teacher education and other higher education courses to develop new ways of preparing teachers for inclusion, collaboration across departments and courses and funding support for innovation are essential policy elements. While this counts for all levels of the professional continuum and all areas of study involved, studies mainly illustrate the funding of professional development courses and postgraduate courses for special needs education by several ministries. For example, the Financing of Inclusive Education project demonstrates that, in many countries, specific support services for mainstream schools or special settings also provide in-service training. The Ministry of Health and/or Welfare often financially supports these settings (ibid.).

Funding support may refer to participants’ fees and other resources for schools to encourage teachers to subscribe. With regard to professional development for inclusion, for example, in Ireland a postgraduate diploma in inclusion was accredited to build system capacity for inclusion. The Department of Education offers support by providing a substitute teacher to cover the teacher’s absence from school and extra posts for the host university to increase capacity for lecturers, school visits and research (O’Gorman, 2010). In addition to this diploma, other state-funded professional learning opportunities exist. A number of teacher support agencies, such as the Special Education Support Service established by the Department of Education, provide short courses in special needs teacher education. These courses are mostly government-funded, free to participants and certified (ibid.).

5.2.2. National/regional/local-level co-operation

Whether as complementary or primary policy, local funding and co-operation is a significant driver for teacher professional development and, hence, for inclusive education. A white paper from Learning Forward and the National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future (NCTAF), *Moving from Compliance to Agency: What Teachers Need to Make Professional Learning Work*, recommends a broader transformation of TPL conditions at the level of local schools and districts (Calvert, 2016).

It also suggests that districts abandon structures and traditions that don’t serve learning [...] and support teacher engagement with learning networks and teacher leadership organizations (OBrien, 2016).



This policy requires districts to rethink the organisation of the school day. This will allow teachers to meet regularly and be involved in analysing data and identifying teaching and learning challenges (ibid.).

While local funding and co-operation may not be available to all education systems, such provision of support at the local or school level empowers all stakeholders to implement the principles of inclusive education (European Agency, 2016b). For example, local initiatives are encouraged in the Netherlands, where there have long been high rates of segregated school attendance:

Dutch education policies and legislation have promoted inclusive education by changing funding procedures, creating incentives for regional organisations of schools and organising teacher support. Government policy, however, has not required teachers and school heads or boards to make schools more inclusive. Although government policy has removed the stumbling blocks for inclusive education, it has asked regular schools to take initiatives to stem the outflow of students with special needs to full-time special schools (Meijer, 2003) (Pijl, 2010, p. 198).

When strengthened by national co-operation, local initiatives have the power to become sustainable examples of inclusive practice and professional learning communities for inclusion. A German example illustrates the need for co-operation at all levels:

In Germany, quality assurance is the responsibility of Lander. A recent report from North Rhine-Westphalia described the implementation of the 2009 law on teacher education (Landesregierung Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2013) and made provisions for obligatory modules on 'German for students with a migration background' and 'Diagnosis and support.' [...] At the national level, the quality strategy for teacher education [...] provides support in six fields of action through selected funding. These priorities include qualifying teachers for the demands of heterogeneity and inclusion within all stages of teacher education (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, 2016) (European Commission, 2017a, p. 51).

In particular, better communication and networking, creativity and reciprocity among teacher education institutions show the added value of joint programmes for higher teacher education quality. They improve the visibility and attractiveness of teacher education within universities and beyond (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). Project outcomes, such as newsletters and booklets on the thematic topic of inclusion and heterogeneity in teacher education, reach a broad audience of teacher educators and policy-makers. Initial results also show a higher awareness of weaknesses in teacher education programmes, stressing the opportunity and the ambition to optimise cross-structures. These include Schools of Education, collaboration with external stakeholders and optimisation of governance (ibid.).

In Northern Ireland, *Learning Leaders: A Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning* (Department of Education, 2016) sets out a vision for TPL. It highlights policy commitments to strengthen teachers' professionalism and expertise to meet the educational needs of young people in the 21st century.



By establishing a strategic oversight group and four working groups of stakeholders, it aims to:

- build a TPL framework;
- disseminate good practice;
- build professional learning communities, leadership capacity and engagement;
- enhance its implementation through annual action plans (ibid.).

5.2.3. Suggested goals for policy support for cross-sectoral co-operation and funding

- Ensure cross-sectoral co-operation and funding to maximise resources for TPL and to enhance the efficacy and relevance of courses provided.
- Ensure local, regional and national organisations and bodies co-operate:
 - to better respond to local needs;
 - to enhance local initiatives and commitment for inclusion;
 - to enhance the sustainability of professional development plans and projects by providing incentives.

5.3. Monitoring teacher professional learning for inclusion

Effective implementation of new strategies needs monitoring of the processes involved. This section briefly explores monitoring strategies for TPL for inclusion. These include quality assurance and accountability and monitoring the integration of inclusive competences in the development of teacher standards.

5.3.1. Monitoring the achievement of competences

Earlier, this review outlined competence development for inclusion, as underpinned by valuing learner diversity, support for learners, collaboration and reflection, and the ethical notion of true engagement and responsibility for others (Allan, 2011; Donnelly and Watkins, 2011; European Agency, 2012a). Assessment will therefore picture inclusive competence development rather than achievement. As was acknowledged for beginning teachers, a constructive feedback culture prevails over evaluation (European Commission, 2017a). For pre-service teachers, attention must also be paid to a close alignment of competences and learning outcomes by operationalising stages of competence development. At the same time, the holistic view of competences and the many expressions of inclusive practice found in diverse contexts should be kept in mind (Caena, 2014).

Assessment tools have been developed to measure pre-service teachers' achievement of professional standards and competence development in inclusive education (Sharma, Loreman and Forlin, 2012). However, it is important to note that scales assess the perceived self-efficacy of teachers in different areas of inclusive practice. Rather than using scales for individual student teacher evaluation, they may provide a monitoring strategy for programme development. In particular, measuring efficacy in inclusive



instruction, collaboration and dealing with disruptive behaviours may give an indication of programme and policy monitoring.

Two examples illustrate the monitoring of programme development in teacher education following a TPL4I national policy. In Ireland, the National Council for Special Education began a study on renewed ITE programmes, with a mandatory focus on inclusive education and differentiation (Hick et al., 2018). Based on documentary analysis, student teacher and staff surveys and interviews, the study showed how the areas of competence of the *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* (European Agency, 2012a) laid a solid foundation for inclusion. It also revealed gaps in ITE and further professional development needs for newly qualified teachers, as well as for teacher educators. Overall, on the implementation of TPL4I, the authors conclude:

This is not a simple linear process with a clear end point; rather, it involves continual adjustment and repositioning [...] The overall picture emerging from the data, reflecting the wider literature (Pugach and Blanton, 2012), is one in which initial teacher education programmes are engaging with the notion of inclusive teaching, but are often at a relatively early stage of development in terms of resolving how best to prepare student teachers for inclusive practices in the classroom with diverse learners (Hick et al., 2018, p. 119).

Broader surveys may generate a more precise picture of needs for TPL for inclusion. The Danish Ministry of Children, Education and Gender Equality set up an expert group of practitioners to evaluate inclusion and teachers' competence development in primary education. Based on the expert group's study visits and surveys, recommendations for competence development included:

- the need for more inclusive practice, referring to close supervision and integration of skills in the workplace;
- equal treatment of competence development for academic and social learning;
- interprofessional co-operation, which was stressed as a field of competence development (Ministry of Children, Education and Gender Equality, 2016).

Other examples mention the use of student portfolios as a quality assessment of professional learning for inclusion (Pugach and Blanton, 2009). Portfolio and questionnaire models are useful tools to monitor the development of competences for inclusive education on a larger scale, including pre-service and in-service teachers' professional development. Combined and supported by feedback for beginning teachers and collective learning opportunities for experienced teachers, they may serve as a resource for school development plans and implementation of inclusive practice. However, following the research recommendations stated in the previous section, tools mapping an intersectional approach need further development to monitor competence development for complex additional learning needs.

5.3.2. Teaching standards, quality assurance and inspection

Learning outcomes, competence questionnaires or student portfolios may give an indication of the achievement of specific competences for inclusion, including underlying attitudes. However, national professional standards for teachers may strengthen the understanding of the ethical foundation of inclusion and its adoption, by stating a policy



commitment towards inclusion. Many examples of national teacher standards exist that give an updated account of what is currently expected of teachers, including an inclusive approach, and what is broadly understood as the teaching profession.

For instance, in Scotland, the *National Framework for Inclusion* outlines standards and specific indicators that are expected in different stages of the professional continuum (Scottish Teacher Education Committee, 2014). Barrett et al. explain:

The GTCS [General Teaching Council for Scotland] publish a suite of standards against which teachers are expected to examine, inform and continually develop their thinking and practice. The standards are expressed as statements which are organised as ‘values and beliefs’, ‘professional knowledge and understanding’ and ‘professional skills and abilities’. The [National] Framework [for Inclusion] explores their implications of selected standards, relating to our overarching themes of inclusion and social justice, through a series of guiding questions (2015, p. 3).

Based on the GTCS, a working group of teacher educators developed the *National Framework for Inclusion*. It was intended as a document through which teacher educators, teachers and student teachers could interrogate and develop their own values, beliefs and practice.

Most countries have professional teacher standards, but not all of them explicitly refer to inclusion, reflecting debates on standards and accountability (Donnelly and Watkins, 2011). The use of teacher standards across the professional continuum also differs across countries. In a revised document, *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do*, the United States National Board for Professional Teaching Standards emphasises the importance of teaching standards as a tool for meaningful transitions in a teacher’s professional career (Shulman, 2016). For instance, when applying for a leadership role, a national board certificate is needed:

At the heart of the continuum is National Board Certification, a process designed for teachers to demonstrate, through standards-based evidence, the positive impact they have on student learning as a result of their deep and abiding understanding of students, content knowledge, pedagogical practice, ongoing reflection, and participation in learning communities. [...] candidates for Board certification submit evidence that their practice meets the Five Core Propositions and National Board Standards, a body of knowledge that is maintained by teachers (ibid., p. 44).

While focusing on inclusion and diversity in separate ways, the standards primarily refer to equity:

Teachers Treat Students Equitably

As advocates for the interests of students, accomplished teachers are vigilant in ensuring that all pupils receive their fair share of attention. Educators recognize their own biases and make certain that any preconceptions based on real or perceived ability differences, exceptionalities, socioeconomic or cultural background, family configuration, sexual orientation, physical characteristics, race, ethnicity, language, religion, age, or gender do not distort their relationships with students. Accomplished teachers maintain an open mind and a balanced perspective on their students (ibid., pp. 15–16).



Professional standards aim to safeguard high quality and the authority of the teaching profession by identifying and exemplifying a benchmark of teacher competences through a teacher's career, underpinned by the core values of the profession. As such, high standards are also needed for other professions working alongside teachers in the context of inclusion, such as teaching assistants. Given the challenges found in the profession of teaching assistants, as stated earlier, the Department for Education in England commissioned departmental advice for school leaders on *Professional standards for teaching assistants* (Department for Education, 2015). The aim was to establish:

... a set of standards for teaching assistants that:

- *can be used to inform performance management processes;*
- *steer the professional development of teaching assistants at all levels;*
- *are designed to inspire confidence in teaching assistants and ensure that schools use their skills and expertise to best effect (ibid., p. 4).*

Finally, there are national and European accreditation benchmarks for professional development courses. These demand a careful process of teacher education development and/or reform. Alexiadou and Essex (2016) report on positive change within one teacher education institution, due to an inspection cycle of the postgraduate teacher education course. The inspection emphasised the need to incorporate diversity issues more deeply throughout the course. However, it did not further assess the 'how' of the diversity infusion, leaving local institutions to respond to local needs, e.g. a choice of infused and/or consecutive courses on general education and special needs education or diversity.

5.3.3. Suggested goals for policy support using monitoring mechanisms

- Clearly operationalise competences for inclusion as learning outcomes at stages in the professional continuum. They are indicators of the development of knowledge, inclusive practice, attitudes and beliefs towards inclusion and its ethical foundation of true engagement and responsibility for all learners, irrespective of the learners' needs (Allan, 2011; Caena, 2014).
- Ensure that competences are broadly reflected upon, discussed and assessed, reflecting an intersectional approach to diversity and a collective professional learning process towards inclusion (Pugach and Blanton, 2009).
- Ensure that national teaching standards clearly state that teachers' competences to value and manage today's diverse classrooms in collaborative and reflective practice are at the heart of the profession (e.g. Barrett et al., 2015; Shulman, 2016).
- Formulate standards for educators who work alongside teachers in diverse classrooms (e.g. Department for Education, 2015).
- Ensure inspection and accreditation procedures support diverse pathways to enhance the development of inclusive education systems (Alexiadou and Essex, 2016).



5.4. Summary of policy elements for the implementation of teacher professional learning for inclusion

To develop and enhance collaborative practice for inclusive education, the implementation and monitoring of policy goals for TPL for inclusion requires careful consideration of capacity building of several key stakeholders:

- Teacher educator associations and learning communities
- School leaders
- Researchers
- Specialist teachers or learner support co-ordinators.

In addition, cross-sectoral and cross-level co-operation and funding of professional learning opportunities for inclusion are crucial. So too is quality assessment in the monitoring process. The suggested goals above reflect the elements identified, which include:

- support for teacher educators' networks or associations to build capacity for inclusion;
- support for school leaders to select, recruit and retain teaching staff committed to inclusion and to steer collective professional learning opportunities for all towards inclusion;
- support for a shift in roles for learner support and special education co-ordinators towards collaborative-consultative roles, in order to establish and provide a culture of learning;
- support for universities and colleges for research on ITE, induction and professional development for inclusion, diverse pathways and collaboration with schools to foster effective inclusive education practice and support inclusive cultures;
- quality assessment procedures and tools for reflection and discussion on teachers' continuing competence development;
- quality assessment procedures for teacher education programmes as part of the development of inclusive education systems.



6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This literature review explored policy needs and goals for TPL for inclusion. This is broadly understood as the professional development of pre-service teachers, beginning teachers and experienced teachers, as well as all educational professionals involved in inclusive education. By looking for major issues, visions and principles for a broad professional development agenda, goals were suggested to enhance policy development, implementation and monitoring of TPL for inclusion. The suggested goals in this report cover:

- the professional continuum and professional areas involved in inclusive education;
- competences and curriculum design;
- capacity building elements;
- cross-sectoral co-operation and funding;
- quality assessment and monitoring.

Critical issues and policy recommendations for TPL for inclusion found in international policy and research literature are:

- the need to include all education staff in TPL for inclusion, at all stages of a professional career and across educational roles;
- the need to enhance a deeper and broader understanding of inclusion, across diversity challenges and beyond classroom practice;
- the need for specialist professional learning as professional teacher support.

As a response to the main needs of teachers' preparation for inclusion, policy for TPL needs to be:

- Comprehensive, addressing all professionals involved in inclusive education and fostering collaboration and co-operation at all operational levels. This includes pre-service and in-service teachers. It requires particular attention to beginning teachers, teacher educators and a range of specialist teachers, whose roles are being transformed and need further development. It also emphasises the collaborative and overlapping character of professional development opportunities for all teachers and education staff, in order to reflect a shared vision of the development of quality education for all.
- Effective, improving education quality, increasing learners' achievement in general, decreasing early school leaving, and narrowing the gaps in learning outcomes caused by inequalities. This includes effective use of innovative approaches to improve the quality of education for all.
- Intersectional, including all diversity issues and acknowledging their complexity. By using an intersectional perspective, the broadest range of barriers to inclusion should be acknowledged, preventing one diversity issue from obscuring others or amplifying barriers to learning and participation.



- Underpinned by the ethical notion of responsibility and engagement, as reflected in inclusive pedagogy and international human rights legislation.
- Operational, providing competence frameworks, teacher standards, quality assessment, funding and co-operation for capacity building.

In this comprehensive search for policy on TPL for inclusion, following a preliminary policy framework to guide the analysis, not all aspects were represented broadly in literature. Most policy and research describe the major principles, vision, challenges and practice of TPL for inclusion. Although many national examples of implementation exist, they need further exploration. The goals suggested in each section of this literature review form the basis for a policy framework for TPL for inclusion. However, further exploration and analysis are needed to address the following key questions:

- How do national policies support professional learning for inclusion across pre-service and a career-long continuum of professional learning, i.e. pre-service and in-service teachers, with particular attention to beginning teachers, teacher educators and a range of specialist teachers, whose roles are being transformed and need further development?
- How do national policies support professional learning for inclusion across the different areas of diversity and inclusion?
- How do national policies support professional learning for inclusion to respond to the local needs of schools and the collaborative roles of pre-service teachers and teacher educators, to enhance the understanding of inclusion?

By exploring and mapping national policies for TPL for inclusion in further research, a much broader illustration and understanding of the effectiveness of policy support may emerge. National policies will further illustrate the main policy elements and may fill some of the gaps in the current listing. For now, the suggested goals and strategies underline the need for broader and committed support for TPL for all teachers and educators in the field.

Based on this review, it is clear that policy support for TPL needs to be assured if inclusive pedagogy and inclusive school development are to become the default approach to ensure quality education for all. Developing inclusive education systems means investigating, debating, supporting and monitoring many aspects of inclusion. However, without consistently preparing all teachers for inclusive practice, all other actions and debates may be doomed to fail.



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