

## **“Preparing teachers to enhance learning in multilingual, multicultural and migrant contexts”**

*“Intercultural awareness and competence, as a core competence for teachers and other experts in the field of education, is not defined as merely focusing on languages (multilingual matters) and culture (multicultural matters), but strongly implies the ability to be self-reflective with respect to internalized images of ‘Others’ and to be able to analyze the existence of images and stigmatizations in society as well as having the courage to work against discrimination.”*

(Ursula Uzerli summarizing a discussion among colleagues when choosing this current ENTEP topic)

### **Background**

Through increased globalization, migration and progress in European integration and mobility, cultural pluralism in society has become the normality in many EU member states and teachers are facing significant changes concerning their pupils’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This increased socio-cultural diversity in our schools and the growing number of pupils<sup>1</sup> with a multilingual background has thus created a great challenge for all teachers, social workers and other experts in the educational sector.

Especially from the perspective of inclusion - politically, socially and educationally - strategic interventions and policies are needed to support or even guarantee equality of opportunity in education and training for all as full members of our societies. And most importantly – teachers must be adequately prepared to teach effectively in such multicultural and multilingual classroom-settings.

While some member states are rather experienced and have a long tradition of intercultural models and inclusive teaching approaches in the context of minority groups in their societies over longer periods of time, others have been confronted with this situation rather unexpectedly and suddenly and teachers have often had no time to professionalize their personal and pedagogical approach to the new situation.

But despite many years of experience with this context in many member states, many teachers still do not feel adequately prepared to teach in such culturally diverse settings and there is an urgent need for more policymakers who are aware of the sensitivities in this pedagogical field.

Among international experts there seems to be a broad consensus that all teachers should be prepared for these challenges already in their initial phase of teacher education (ITE) at university. Student teachers must become acquainted with the latest research results in the area of stereotyping and discrimination, multi-lingual and -cultural implications for learning and acquire background knowledge about the countries of origin of migrant families. To properly prepare them for teaching in a diverse classroom, TE programmes should cover these issues as mandatory competencies, to be developed at least to a minimum level during ITE. In ENTEP members’ discussions on this topic it has always been regarded as crucial that the ideal teachers are the ones who are willing and able to promote

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1 In this paper the expressions ‘pupils’ and ‘students’ are used interchangeably.

more awareness of 'otherness' among their students in relation with awareness of themselves and their own cultures – wanting to see the world also through other students'<sup>1</sup> eyes and 'living as equals in dignity', as the Council of Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs put it in their 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue' in May 2008.<sup>2</sup>

In the name of the governments of 47 member states this paper argues "that our common future depends on our ability to safeguard and develop human rights, as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, democracy and the rule of law and to promote mutual understanding." It furthermore stresses that "if there is a European identity to be realized, it will be based on shared fundamental values, respect for common heritage and cultural diversity as well as the respect for the equal dignity of every individual". (Dialogue – A Key to Europe's Future, p. 4)

Already in 2003 the work of the European Commission Expert Group A on "Improving education of teachers and trainers" stressed in its final report that teachers should adapt their 'teaching and training to the social, cultural and ethnic diversity of pupils/trainees' needs and to the classroom heterogeneity resulting from the increase of the number of immigrants and refugees, as well as from the social objective of the inclusion of all learners...<sup>3</sup>

The follow-up group, the Cluster 'Teachers and Trainers', decided in 2007 that a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) should in particular concentrate on heterogeneity issues related to 'migration' and 'minorities'. The theme was 'How can Teacher Education and Training policies prepare teachers to teach effectively in culturally diverse settings? 'Mindsets, attitudes and discrimination were pointed out as especially crucial under this topic and were to be important issues to be considered during the PLA in Oslo. The final report will be quoted in parts later in this text.<sup>4</sup>

### **ENTEP's objective in considering this new topic**

As the qualities of teachers and teacher education as a whole, and the translation of new concepts and ideas into policy learning and practice, have been part of ENTEP's objectives for almost 15 years now, it was felt to be insufficient for ENTEP members merely to share a feeling of urgency about these issues. In the ENTEP Discussion Paper on "What is a European Teacher?" already *European multi-culturalism* was identified as a matter of concern and the following passage describes "Europeanness" among other factors:

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2 Council of Europe. (2008). White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. Living Together as Equals in Dignity.

3 Mutual learning by exchanging policy practices in the field of education for the changing role of teachers, Expert Group A – Improving education of teachers and trainers, First global report (2002-2003).

4 As one of the European bodies engaged in the improvement of Teacher Education in Europe, ENTEP was an official member in the Cluster Teachers & Trainers in the EU Commission and in its follow up the TWG on Teachers' Professional Development from 2004 until 2013. At the same time several ENTEP members were (and some still are) country representatives in this working group within the Open Method of Coordination by the EU Commission. Thus the flow of information and the engagement in specific topics is shared and experiences are exchanged. A representative of the EU Commission has always been a member of ENTEP as well and various outcomes of ENTEP intensive content work have been mentioned in papers of the Commission during that period.

“A European Teacher engages with the multicultural nature of European society. He/she has a positive relationship with his/her own culture and is open towards other cultures. He/she knows how to behave in a confident and non-dominant way. He/she works with heterogeneous groups, sees heterogeneity as valuable and respects any differences. He/she copes with the challenges of multicultural aspects of the knowledge society, works to promote equal opportunities.”<sup>5</sup>

In order to find interesting policy practice models, or even to promote such learning environments in programmes at universities and in the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of in service teachers, ENTEP members decided to take up this topic in the context of internal ENTEP seminars. They hoped to gather a number of currently interesting, positive and effective policy examples, and new insights and reflections that could open up discussion on a wider basis for policy makers throughout Europe.

As a first step the focus of this discussion paper intends to identify crucial factors to consider under this rather complex topic. In a later step, especially during the ENTEP Spring Conference and Seminar in Slovenia in 2015, policy practices might already be provided that can help prepare future teachers, and better support those in service, for the increasing challenges of culturally and linguistically diverse classroom settings and learning communities.

### **The intercultural approach**

The terms ‘intercultural dialogue’ and ‘intercultural approach’ were introduced at the European level through policy documents of the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the 2000s; UNESCO also enhanced the Intercultural Dialogue ICD as the best way to guarantee peace.<sup>6</sup>

As an alternative to the often criticised term of ‘multiculturalism’ the idea of ‘interculturalism’ had been adopted by the Council of Europe in the 90s and was described as follows: ‘The co-existence of different cultures entails dialogue, not confrontation. It is not a matter of delimiting, but of opening up’ (CoE 1997:47).<sup>7</sup>

Nowadays the ‘intercultural approach’ in education calls for the ability of teachers, school heads, teacher educators and other school staff to adequately react to stereotyping referring to ethnic, racist and religious differences. The basic presumption is that especially teachers, student teachers, and all actors involved in schools as learning communities, should learn to enable pupils to get to know and understand different cultures and individuals from various cultural backgrounds, religions and philosophies of life in an unprejudiced manner.

In most countries surveyed by Eurydice in 2004 this intercultural approach and related themes are already included in curricula for Initial Teacher Education (ITE). In

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5 For complete text see [www.entep.unibuc.eu](http://www.entep.unibuc.eu) under ‘Documents’ or ENTEP Publication: The first ten years after Bologna. Ed. by Otmar Gassner, Lucien Kerger and Michael Schratz, Bucharest 2010, pp.97-102.

6 UNESCO. (2002). Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

7 Council of Europe. (2007). San Marino Declaration.

some countries this approach is also integrated in the Continuous Phase of Teacher Professional Development programmes and in-service training.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, not only theory but rather a combination with research-oriented and reflective practice, interaction and dialogue among student teachers, teacher educators and teachers in the field is promoted, and proves essential for the development of intercultural competences.

But in most countries the commonly adopted practices within ITE refer to the development of intercultural approaches in certain subjects, mainly foreign languages, geography, history and religious education. But an increasing number of countries have recently introduced additional courses for intercultural communication and dialogue within programmes for educational and social sciences as well as civic education. Some curricula contain these elements only on an optional basis but increasingly countries implement these contents in mandatory and formally required courses.

Several EU member states have designed guidelines and standards for actions within the two components of Teacher Education - ITE and CPD - and several policy practices have been conducted for some time now.<sup>9</sup>

From research in the USA and Canada we can learn that general short term additional courses in teacher education programmes proved rather weak in the long run. Sleeter summarises such experiences in an article in the *Journal of Teacher Education* 2001, even coming to the conclusion that didactic presentations were seen to actually teach stereotypes and generalizations instead of changing the thinking among student teachers. Courses that were planned to be intensive and lasted only a week proved to lose gains already a month after.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand she found that community-based cross-cultural immersion programmes, in which student teachers live in culturally different communities while learning to teach, showed a rather powerful impact.

Such a model might of course contain various difficulties in its realization in some countries but field experience in adequate school or community settings is considered as highly effective and shows more significant impact than mainly theoretical approaches within ITE.

This includes the differentiation of experiences with whole groups and consequent assumptions about individuals who are part of these groups. The effectiveness of the school in this field of concern will also depend on the wider society's attitudes towards multiculturalism, and all citizens today require these skills and the awareness necessary to live in a multicultural society. In order to change one's attitude it is first of all crucial to recognize the personal biases and stereotypes.

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8 Integrating immigrant children into schools in Europe, Eurydice, 2004.

9 ENTEP members are expected to present the latest such policy examples or efforts for planning strategic interventions in the context of this topic to proceed with the next step of this ENTEP work at the ENTEP Conference in Ljubljana, 2015.

10 Sleeter, Christine E., *Preparing Teachers for Culturally Diverse Schools*, *Journal of Teacher Education*, 2001.

Transferred to classroom situations, expectations about students' performances can be based on such singular experiences and only through reflecting on and acknowledging such correlations is a change of attitudes possible. Despite the fact that there might be a high level of information on the characteristics of various cultural groups and individuals as well as on socio-cultural research the impact of teacher action will be limited if teachers' and student teachers' ownership is poor.

### **Cultural / intercultural awareness and sensitivity**

"Dealing with a culturally diverse classroom means much more than dealing with pupils who have a poor grasp of the language of instruction, though this is important..." In an internal discussion of the preparation group of the above mentioned PLA in Oslo, Paul Holdsworth thus summarised one of the main discussion points among PLA participants; furthermore, he added, "the skills and qualities that teachers require to teach effectively in culturally diverse settings will allow them to teach effectively in *any* setting."

With this important remark he quoted the group's answer to the question put by some PLA participants: whether every teacher should be qualified to teach in culturally diverse settings or rather only those who tend to enter schools with culturally diverse learning communities.<sup>11</sup>

Some participants during the PLA had referred to policy makers who tend to place the responsibility for migrant children more on language classes and language teachers, and are not aware of the pedagogical challenge that exists across all school subjects. The debate during the PLA working groups showed a clear demand to raise student teachers' intercultural awareness already during ITE and provide core knowledge and intercultural skills by means of at least one period of teaching practice in a multicultural setting, for instance, also taking into account the implications of their teaching subjects.

In the current discussion on inclusion in education and teacher education throughout Europe, and the understanding of this approach as not merely referring to pupils with disabilities (as some countries still interpret this concept of education) *every* classroom is a place of great diversity.

Therefore teachers should acquire the skills and competences to adequately respond to the needs and aptitudes of each individual learner. In fact each school leader and teacher educator must have these competences, most participants in the PLA agreed. But the question remains how to develop these required competences, especially the so called 'soft' or transversal competences like:

- social competences and a feeling for social justice
- interpersonal skills such as empathy

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11 Examples from discussions in the preparation and reflection group of the above mentioned PLA as well as conclusions from this work are in detail summarised in the Report of the Peer Learning Activity, Oslo, May 2007. "How can Teacher Education and Training policies prepare teachers to teach effectively in culturally diverse settings?" For Peer Learning concepts in general and the lessons learned from various PLAs in the responsibility of the EU Commission also see: Snoek, M., Uzerli, U. & Schratz, M. (2008). Developing Teacher Education Policies through Peer Learning. In: Hudson, B. & Zgaga, P. (ed.). Teacher Education Policy in Europe: a Voice from Higher Education Institutions. Umea, University of Umea, Faculty of Education.

- cultural / intercultural awareness
- cultural / intercultural sensitivity
- openness to diversity
- identifying values in various aspects of life
- awareness of own biases and prejudices
- realising one's own dominant behaviour towards other cultures
- understanding the interdependence of acceptance and freedom to learn
- dealing with discriminatory and humiliating behaviour
- etc.

In public discussions about the role and image of teachers, especially concerning the descriptors of ideal professional qualities, the basic assumption is that teachers should be highly competent in the above-listed characteristics and should be role models for their pupils as social individuals as well as for society.

But we all know that this expectation cannot be met by many, and policies and schools often contribute rather to selection and exclusion than being a positive example for inclusive learning environments and communities.

The influence of teachers' attitudes, feelings and behaviour are crucial and sensitive factors for success or failure in the subject matter learning fields and even more so in the development of the pupils' identities and self-concepts.<sup>12</sup>

One way or another, how teachers feel and act in the context of diversity and bias affects their teaching, their assessments of teaching outcomes and their selection processes concerning the school careers of pupils.

### **Teaching in a multilingual classroom setting**

As the main focus of this discussion paper is to address important common factors to take into consideration when preparing student teachers, teachers and other actors in the pedagogical field for teaching confidently and effectively in classroom settings with linguistic and cultural diversity, there is no room for elaborations in detail on Bi- or Multi-lingualism and specific research on language acquisition. There is no doubt, though, that despite the current results in this field, further research is needed in the context of the European discussion on inclusive teaching in order to identify critical issues in multilingual learning situations of which governments, policy makers, school staff and other actors in the pedagogical field are often not aware, or for which they are not willing to provide more specific support.

While bi-/multilingual teaching approaches and programmes have been established in minority and indigenous language communities in many countries others have reduced their investments in such programmes in schools especially for immigrant children in the last decade, and have often ignored pupils' important proficiency in their mother tongue and have focused instead on a more effective and intensive

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12 See also, Recommendations of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2006/962/EC).

competence development in further languages and better chances for their school career.<sup>13</sup>

A project studying the learning situation and learner typology of Turkish pupils' problems in Second- and Third Language acquisition at comprehensive schools in Kassel/Germany highlighted the need for policy makers to pay more attention to - and provide more strategic initiatives at - such schools. The alarming Semi-Language-Competence in the mother tongue of the participating pupils, as well as in the target language German as their Second Language, was then identified as one of the main causes of, and indicators for, failure in several school subjects and endangered the school career of these youngsters as a whole.<sup>14</sup>

After two years of one-to-one support by student teachers the candidates' learning development had improved in most cases in several subjects, although the support concentrated on the language problems in general and was not subject oriented.

Language deficiencies were still rather obvious, but other effects seemed very striking and were noted by teachers, school heads and parents throughout the whole curriculum with these candidates. Clearly stronger self-esteem and higher confidence in their own capacities for learning and development were reported by all teachers and parents in the participating schools. Although the candidates' language performance had improved, this seemed to be of marginal importance in the end.

Interestingly enough, teachers' grading and assessment results proved to be guided much less by low expectations of these pupils even when in many cases an objective screening of test results did not exactly justify it. An explanation for these effects referring to the 'pedagogical treatment' in the participating schools in the aftermath with Teacher Educators was discussed controversially.

Nonetheless there was wide consensus among the reflecting group that the special attention and the constant personal feedback from student teachers for each individual learner within the project had created a learning environment for intensive interaction in a so to speak 'protected room' in these schools.

This had helped the candidates to open up, to reflect on their own learning situation, to feel accepted in this and in their struggle to catch up with classmates and to meet the expectations of their teachers.

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13 For more information on this topic see for instance: "Paper commissioned for UNESCO", and contact [y.kaga@unesco.org](mailto:y.kaga@unesco.org) and [n.andriamiseza@unesco.org](mailto:n.andriamiseza@unesco.org).  
"Enhancing Learning of Children from Diverse Language Backgrounds: Mother Tongue Based Bilingual or Multilingual Education in the Early Years".

14 Joint Pilot Research Project with the Hessian Ministry for Culture, Education and Schooling and the University of Kassel 1995 – 1999, "Analyzing the learning situation and the learner typology of Turkish students at Comprehensive Schools in Kassel, Germany, with a focus on third language acquisition", offering an individual support system with student teachers in their practicum (Ursula Uzerli) combined with a coaching for participating student teachers on the psycho-social and general psychological disposition for learning in Turkish pupils. (Coach: Hueseyin Uzerli, as lecturer on intercultural issues in the faculty for educational, social and political sciences). The conclusions are taken from the internal report for the Ministry for Culture, Education and Schooling in Hesse. 1999

Their 'failure-orientation' as one of the most frequent learner typologies among the participating pupils had gradually been changing into a more confident and motivated self awareness concerning their own learning with the effect of trust also in the system rewarding them with a kind of re-empowerment.

Even their families became more engaged within the school community and expressed their gratitude for this experience and the new chances for their children.

One of the participating student teachers wrote in her final reflections on the benefits for her own teacher competence development in this specific field among other factors:

"For me it became clear that various forms of living together are somehow experimental situations, where we can experience that language, a feeling for language and behaviour play a crucial role just like tones in music. There are so many different tones and melodies between the lines when we really listen...and, to reach individuals deeply a language is needed that they can really understand and that they personally feel addressed by..."

### **Examples of specific curricula in ITE and CPD for (future) teachers' work in classes with ethnic and linguistic diversity**

In order to ensure that teachers, teacher educators and student teachers gain the necessary competences to be able to deal appropriately with ethnic and linguistic diversity the following are considered strong factors beside the previously listed transversal competences:

- Offering possibilities for student teachers and teachers within CPD to:
  - o gain didactic competence in improving the language proficiency of migrant children through specific additional provision at school as a comprehensive inclusive approach
  - o gain field experience in the community
  - o gain competences in interconnecting this knowledge with research findings about low performing learners and the interdependence of learners' language deficiency, culture clash and personal self-concept;
  - o gain awareness of research-based problem solving in this sensitive context;
  - o gain specific information about the socio-cultural background of pupils in the specific schools, and
  - o monitor their own attitudes, behavior and learning as a process of personal and professional development.

The question of whether there is evidence of a need for intercultural skills and knowledge that are specific to certain subjects has also been widely discussed in recent years, as reported by participants at the above-mentioned PLA and by ENTEP members. The participants recommended that Teacher Education should ensure that teachers of all subjects have the specific knowledge and competences to teach their specialist subject in intercultural settings.



There remains a lot of work ahead to complete the list of specific skills and competences under this topic. How they can be assessed or measured has also been a question highlighted in ENTEP members' discussions and the favoured model was formative rather than summative assessment.

Finally, Teacher Education Institutions should initiate effective partnerships with schools, teacher educators, school leaders, teachers and all actors in the field and take account of the views and experiences of parents, pupils, minority groups and other social partners. Information and reflection, the identification of problems and conflicts should flow not only one way.

After the PLA the following questions were gathered to support policy makers.<sup>15</sup> These will also be interesting for the comparison of examples of policy practice provided by ENTEP members:

- Is it clear what role the school is required to play in a multicultural society?
- To what extent does the cultural diversity of the teaching workforce reflect that of students?
- Is there a specific policy on preparing teachers to teach effectively in settings with linguistic and ethnic diversity? Does it fit in with wider policies at the level of society, of the education system as a whole, and of each school?
- Are there procedures in place for drawing on the views of stakeholders and researchers in the development of policy in this area?
- Are there systematic approaches to develop in all teachers the skills and qualities necessary to work confidently and effectively in multicultural settings? In initial education? In in-service education (CPD)?
- Is full advantage taken of mobility opportunities so that student teachers can experience living and working in a different cultural context?
- Is there a sufficient supply of training and development opportunities about working effectively in culturally diverse settings?
- Do Teacher Education syllabuses cover, as a minimum, the skills listed above?
- Is there an effective two-way flow of information and advice between Teacher Education institutions / researchers and schools?
- To what extent are school leaders and teacher educators currently equipped with the advanced intercultural skills and sensitivities necessary to lead a multicultural learning community?

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15 In a first attempt to discuss this Paper with ENTEP members some of these questions were addressed as well.

When discussing these questions the following list of competences for the development of *inclusive practice* in teacher education should be kept in mind:

- “Reflecting on their own learning and continually seeking out information to overcome challenges and support innovative practice;
- Attending to the well-being of learners, taking responsibility for meeting all learning and support needs and ensuring a positive ethos and good relationships;
- Using a variety of ‘inclusive’ teaching methods and group and independent work appropriate for the aims of learning, the learners’ age, and their abilities/stage of development and evaluating learning and the effectiveness of methods used;
- Addressing language learning in multi-lingual contexts and valuing cultural diversity as a resource.”<sup>16</sup>

## Looking ahead

The above mentioned White Paper points out that “intercultural dialogue cannot be prescribed by law. It must retain its character as an open invitation to implement the underlying principles ... to apply flexibly the various recommendations ... and, to contribute to the ongoing debate about the future organisation of society”.

In recruiting the best teachers for school, criteria like those discussed above regarding the competences required of teachers, school leaders, teacher educators and policy makers in their highly responsible role in society will play an important role in coming years.

The approach of interculturalism presented here has been widely appreciated by ENTEP members in discussions in recent years and is regarded as a concept to promote awareness and understanding, reconciliation and tolerance as well as preventing conflicts and ensuring integration and cohesion in society.

Effective and interesting examples from EU member states or other good practices outside the EU to be identified within this challenging theme will hopefully contribute to a better understanding of system problems, policy dilemmas and possibilities, willingness and capacities for change and empower ENTEP work with further inspirations for innovation in Teacher Education generally.

Looking ahead to further contributions within ENTEP in this context the motto in the White Paper summarises this challenging process as ‘our common responsibility to achieve a society where we can live together as equals in dignity’. Transferred to

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16 The European Agency for Special Needs Education did a very interesting report a few years ago about the competences required by teachers for (all sorts of) inclusive teaching. For complete text see: <http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/Teacher-Education-for-Inclusion>.

ENTEP's and other bodies' work in the field of European Teacher Education, this could be:

*Let us live up to our responsibility to achieve a school learning environment, a learning community, with equal opportunities and respect for every individual learner and his/her individual learning disposition, expecting all the above mentioned teacher competences and further development factors...*

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ENTEP/ Ursula Uzerli