

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR INCLUSION

Policy Mapping Grid: Malta



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Further information about the Teacher Professional Learning for Inclusion (TPL4I) activities is available on the [TPL4I web area](#).

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SECTION 1: WIDER POLICY CONTEXT

Wider policy context

Continuous professional development is important and necessary for an inclusive and equitable school, since educators must respond to new challenges given a greater diversity of learner needs. Inclusive education is the responsibility of all education professionals and therefore training should be a priority. Teachers should gain knowledge and understanding on diverse challenges of learners so responsibility is shared in class rather than shifted onto the LSEs [learning support educators]. For educators to work effectively in inclusive settings, appropriate values, attitudes, skills, competences, knowledge and understanding are necessary (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2009)).

An understanding of inclusive practices has to be developed and diversity among learners has to be approached with a positive attitude. Reflection on practice also contributes to enhancing the knowledge and skills and ways to improve.

Inclusive best practice indicators

- *School staff is encouraged to engage in personal and professional development and training in different areas of inclusive education.*
- *Opportunities are created where educators can plan together, share resources and experiences of teaching to learn new ways about how best to respond to learner diversity.*
- *Professional development opportunities are available to enhance teachers' inclusive pedagogical skills (flexible teaching-learning methodologies) to meet the diverse needs of learners.*
- *Training is provided to educators on how to identify and support learners who may have "invisible" disabilities since these learners experience greater risk of dropping out when their conditions go unnoticed in educational settings.*
- *School leaders are aware of inherent biases that may lead to exclusionary practices and in turn guide and support educators to explore and address such bias where it exists.*
- *ICT can facilitate participation in educational activities for diverse learners promoting equity in education. CPD courses focusing on this should be promoted with all educators.*
- *Educators working together in inclusive classrooms receive training on working collaboratively to clarify their respective roles for the best interest of the diverse learner.*



Wider policy context

- *Educators are provided with CPD that upskills the necessary knowledge and understanding with a clear focus on delivering and developing high quality education and systems of support for all learners.*
- *School leaders may support educators to identify professional development as appropriate for their role and to enhance best practices in inclusive education.*
- *College systems should provide potential networking opportunities such that collaborative professional development can be organized potentially for sharing expertise and developing inter-schools collaborative teams.*
- *Opportunities for continuous professional development for school leaders on managing and setting up inclusive schools and promote inclusive education, use of appropriate strategies, implement current policies and equitable use of resources to cater for the diverse needs of learners.*
- *Training in inclusive education is provided for all education stakeholders (including policy makers, school leaders, educators and non-teaching staff such as caretakers, maintenance, secretary etc.).*

(Ministry for Education and Employment, 2019. [A National Inclusive Education Framework](#), Theme 8 – Continuous Professional Development, pp. 38–39)



SECTION 2: VISION AND MAIN PRINCIPLES OF TPL4I POLICY

2.1 Policy vision

Policy priorities	Findings
2.1.1 Policy is guided by a vision that all teachers (i.e. student teachers, beginning teachers, experienced teachers, teacher educators) can access career-long professional learning opportunities regarding the principles of inclusive education	2.1.1.1 The Institute for Education offers continuous professional development and training to all educators. It also serves as a main driver in these fields, targeting all educators at the different levels of leadership. The Institute offers short courses, Bachelor's and Master's Degrees of Education in a number of streams.
2.1.2 Policy is guided by a vision that all teachers receive education regarding their role and collaboration in and contribution to inclusive education	2.1.2.1 Theme 8 of A National Inclusion Education Framework focuses on CPD (pp. 38–39). The school plans 25 hours (based on the finding of the internal review) and centrally driven training accounts for 15 hours.



Policy priorities	Findings
2.1.3 Policy is guided by a vision that all teachers receive education regarding their pedagogical responsibility to promote the interaction, learning, participation and collaboration of all learners	2.1.3.1 All educators have to attend the Community of Professional Educators (CoPE) sessions organised at school or by the Department. Moreover, Theme 8 of A National Inclusion Education Framework states that 'Inclusive education is the responsibility of all education professionals and therefore training should be a priority' (p. 38).

Evaluative comments for 'Policy vision'

The CoPE sessions have only been implemented since October 2018 and are still relatively new. The Inclusion Policy and Framework were launched in October 2019 and are still being implemented.

2.2 Main principles

Policy priorities	Findings
2.2.1 Teachers' professional learning is defined in policy as a prerequisite for inclusive education	2.2.1.1 Theme 8 of A National Inclusion Education Framework focuses on CPD: 'Continuous professional development is important and necessary for an inclusive and equitable school, since educators must respond to new challenges given a greater diversity of learner needs' (p. 38).



Policy priorities	Findings
2.2.2 Policy states that the principles and practice of inclusive education should be part of initial teacher education	2.2.2.1 The National Curriculum Framework for All (2012) promotes 'initial teacher education and further opportunities for training and support in the use of pedagogies that are inclusive in nature and cater for diversity' (p. 43).
2.2.3 Policy states that beginning teachers should receive appropriate education and support to enable them to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills for inclusive education	2.2.3.1 Theme 7 of A National Inclusion Education Framework focuses on staff well-being. The inclusive best practice indicators state that 'Mentoring for educators needs to be enhanced in the school, especially newly appointed staff. Hence, all new staff is helped to settle into the school' (p. 36).
2.2.4 Policy ensures that experienced teachers receive appropriate education and support to enable them to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills for inclusive education	2.2.4.1 Theme 7 of A National Inclusion Education Framework focuses on staff well-being. It states that 'Staff is encouraged to meet personal and professional goals and are given access to appropriate continuing professional development' (p. 36).



Policy priorities	Findings
<p>2.2.5 Policy states that specialist teachers and other professionals (e.g. speech and language therapists, multilingual education teachers and other professionals who work in schools) receive appropriate education and support to enable them to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills for inclusive education</p>	<p>2.2.5.1 Specialist teachers and the psycho-social team fall under the remit of the National School Support Services (NSSS). In-house training and other training initiatives are organised by the NSSS.</p>
<p>2.2.6 Policy states that teacher educators working in university education departments or pedagogical institutes should be trained and committed to the inclusive education agenda in their courses, as understood in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Disability Strategy</p>	<p>–</p>



Evaluative comments for 'Main principles'

CPD is a priority for the Ministry of Education and Employment (MEDE). It is encouraged and educators who wish to further their studies are eligible for sabbatical.



SECTION 3: GOALS AND CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT FOR TPL4I POLICY

3.1 Goals

Policy priorities	Findings
3.1.1 Policy states that all teachers should have qualifications that reflect an inclusive education agenda	3.1.1.1 <i>The specific knowledge and skills required to manage mixed groups of pupils (culturally diverse, mixed ability groups and groups of pupils with special educational needs) are included in the compulsory curriculum for prospective teachers. A Master of Education Degree in Inclusion and Educational Needs is also available for those wishing to specialise further in this area (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Malta, Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education).</i>
3.1.2 Policy states competence areas for inclusive education for all teachers working at different levels of education (e.g. professional development of all teachers to facilitate their involvement in co-teaching, planning together, developing differentiated materials collaboratively, etc.)	3.1.2.1 For kindergarten educator: <i>The University of Malta and Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology provides a training programme for people wishing to work with children at kindergarten level. It enables students to work in a professional capacity with children in childcare and kindergartens. Apart from providing skills, knowledge and understanding of early years, the programme also provides knowledge and understanding of supporting children with disabilities (European Agency, Country information for Malta, Teacher education for inclusive education).</i>



Policy priorities	Findings
<p>3.1.3 Policy states that all teachers' professional learning opportunities consider teacher competences for inclusive education</p>	<p>–</p>
<p>3.1.4 There is a formal strategy for promoting dialogue between ministries, regional/local authorities/municipalities and teacher educators to agree on the requirements of teachers' professional development opportunities for inclusion</p>	<p>3.1.4.1</p> <p><i>As part of the SDP [school development planning] process, schools will perform the internal review and elicit the actions to be implemented in the following year together with the professional development identified as required by educators to be able to implement those actions (Institute for Education, Circular of 11 September 2019).</i></p>
<p>3.1.5 There is a mechanism to ensure that all professional learning opportunities available to teachers are aligned with national- and local-level policy goals for an understanding of inclusive education</p>	<p>3.1.5.1.</p> <p><i>Heads of Department (Inclusion) – formerly known as Inclusion Co-ordinators (INCO) – support primary and secondary schools in implementing the inclusive education policy. The Heads of Department (Inclusion) support senior management teams, parents, teachers and LSEs. They help to co-ordinate service provision for learners with additional needs attending mainstream schools (European Agency, Country information for Malta, Systems of support and specialist provision).</i></p> <p>3.1.5.2</p> <p>Support is provided to every mainstream school in each locality of Malta and Gozo. The NSSS co-ordinates these services nationally. Church and independent schools have their own Heads of Department (Inclusion)/INCOs that support schools or groups of schools.</p>



Policy priorities	Findings
3.1.6 There are strategies to ensure that local-level professional opportunities for teachers are flexible/adaptable to local school contexts and school development plans for inclusive education	3.1.6.1 The Institute of Education offers part-time after school hours and the use of blended learning modality. This increases accessibility for those who work full-time or are supply teachers but want to improve their qualifications and have the chance to increase their salary scales. There are also Erasmus+ teacher training opportunities.
3.1.7 There is a medium- and long-term review strategy for teachers' professional learning opportunities to ensure they meet system requirements for an inclusive education system	–

Evaluative comments for 'Goals'

It is important that teachers have the opportunity to choose to participate in voluntary CPD courses after identifying their training needs. In Malta this is possible to ensure flexibility for teachers.



3.2 Continuum of support

Policy priorities	Findings
<p>3.2.1 There is a strategy to ensure a continuum of diverse professional learning opportunities for inclusive education – for pre-service, beginning and experienced teachers, as well as teacher educators and support teachers – across all levels where teachers work</p>	<p>3.2.1.1</p> <p><i>All psycho-social services are the responsibility of the NSSS. These include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>guidance and counselling;</i>• <i>school social workers;</i>• <i>the School Psychological Service;</i>• <i>youth workers;</i>• <i>the Education Medical Service;</i>• <i>the Safe Schools Programme.</i> <p>(European Agency, Country information for Malta, Systems of support and specialist provision)</p> <p>3.2.1.2</p> <p><i>The Inclusive Education and Special Education/Resource Centres sections within the NSSS collaborate with:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>non-governmental organisations;</i>• <i>the Child Development Assessment Unit;</i>• <i>the National Commissioner for the Rights of Persons with a Disability;</i>• <i>various professionals within the healthcare services;</i>• <i>mainstream schools;</i>



Policy priorities	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>resource centres;</i>• <i>other educational establishments.</i> <p>(European Agency, Country information for Malta, Systems of support and specialist provision)</p> <p>3.2.1.3</p> <p><i>Learning Support Educators (LSEs) in state schools follow a compulsory evening training course in inclusive education when they qualify. This introductory course gives participants basic skills, knowledge and understanding of working with and supporting learners with disabilities in mainstream education. The course has a practical component in which LSEs are monitored and supported in their place of work. This course is now also being offered to prospective LSEs who wish to complete the course prior to employment.</i></p> <p><i>Following the compulsory training course, LSEs have the option of furthering their studies to degree level. Through these training courses, participants gain both practical and theoretical knowledge on supporting learners with disabilities.</i></p> <p>(European Agency, Country information for Malta, Teacher education for inclusive education)</p> <p>3.1.2.4</p> <p><i>On-going continuous professional development training is offered in various areas of inclusive education. It is offered to all educators and support staff working in resource centres and in mainstream schools. It includes courses and workshops in communication, information and communication technology, leadership, curriculum development and planning, assessment and early intervention.</i></p> <p>(European Agency, Country information for Malta, Teacher education for inclusive education)</p>



Policy priorities	Findings
<p>3.2.2 There are strategies for developing leadership competences (e.g. school leadership or learning support leadership roles) for inclusive education in all relevant professional learning opportunities</p>	<p>3.2.2.1</p> <p><i>Current initiatives in Malta include courses for senior management teams/school leaders organised by the Institute for Education. Entry requirements and eligibility criteria to apply for the position of head of school include a course on educational leadership. The University of Malta and the Institute for Education currently provide this course (European Agency, 2019, Inclusive School Leadership: Exploring Policies Across Europe, p. 30).</i></p>
<p>3.2.3 There are mechanisms to support schools/higher education institutions to develop strategic plans for teachers' professional learning in inclusive education</p>	<p>–</p>
<p>3.2.4 There are strategies to support effective collaboration and joint work between schools and higher education institutions/universities</p>	<p>3.2.4.1</p> <p><i>In Malta, state schools are organised in colleges made up of a number of primary schools and a middle and senior school at secondary level. This college system facilitates networking between schools. As a system, it aims to support partnerships, sharing of resources and joint problem-sharing (European Agency, Country information for Malta, Systems of support and specialist provision).</i></p> <p>3.2.4.2</p> <p>There is collaboration among schools belonging to the same college with regards to inclusive education. However, resource centres are used for services on a part-time basis irrespective of the college they belong to. These resource centres support learners from all over Malta and Gozo.</p>



Evaluative comments for 'Continuum of support'

Services in schools provide a continuum of support. At the same time, they up-skill educators working with learners.



SECTION 4: CAPACITY BUILDING, FUNDING AND MONITORING OF TPL4I POLICY

4.1 Capacity building

Policy priorities	Findings
<p>4.1.1 There are strategies to increase the capacity of all schools/higher education institutions to support all teachers to engage in professional learning activities on inclusive education</p>	<p>4.1.1.1</p> <p>Professional development opportunities are available to enhance teachers' inclusive pedagogical skills (flexible teaching-learning methodologies) to meet the diverse needs of learners. (A National Inclusive Education Framework, p. 38)</p> <p>The Institute of Education offers part-time after school hours and the use of blended learning modality. This increases accessibility for those who work full-time or are supply teachers but want to improve their qualifications and have the chance to increase their salary scales.</p> <p>Opportunities for sabbatical leave are also possible.</p>
<p>4.1.2 There is a mechanism to facilitate dialogue between all teachers/leaders/other stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of inclusive education as an approach that ensures high-quality learning opportunities for all</p>	<p>4.1.2.1</p> <p>Councils of Headteachers are organised in every College together with the Head of College Network. There are on-going discussions on current initiatives, projects, policies, etc. Any feedback received is relayed to the various departments by the Head of College Network.</p>



Policy priorities	Findings
<p>4.1.3 There is guidance on how teachers working in mainstream school settings/higher education institutions can understand and enact inclusive education</p>	<p>4.1.3.1 A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion and A National Inclusive Education Framework give guidance to schools.</p>
<p>4.1.4 There are guidelines that support all teachers to collaborate to support all learners</p>	<p>–</p>
<p>4.1.5 There are guidelines on how methods of quality assessment, school evaluation, inspections and other accountability measures contribute to planning/identifying priority areas of professional learning activities for inclusive education</p>	<p>4.1.5.1 Evaluative mechanisms of effectiveness and quality in inclusive education, in educational institutions catering for children aged up to 16 years, fall under the remit of the Quality Assurance Department (QAD) within the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education in the Ministry for Education and Employment. A key function of the QAD is: ‘... in support of the evaluation and the internal audit of every school, [to] implement inspections and external reviews, and also so that children and students are helped so that they may obtain in the best possible manner the set learning targets and necessary skills’ (Education (Amendments) Act 2006, Art. 9 (2)).</p> <p>In line with the Ministry’s inclusive approach, the vision of the QAD is to: ‘evaluate and promote the quality of holistic educational provision in Maltese general education, which seeks to enable all individuals, irrespective of socio-economic, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, gender and sexual status, to achieve their own full potential and reach personal fulfilment through lifelong learning, participation in the world of work and active citizenship in a democratic society.’</p> <p>4.1.5.2 The Standards for use in school external reviews (2016) guide the whole external monitoring and review process in schools. External reviews aim to evaluate how far schools are planning to and</p>



Policy priorities	Findings
	<p>actually managing to achieve the required quality standards to fulfil the curricular and equitable entitlement of all learners. The external review acknowledges that the starting point for each learner, let alone for each educator and school, is different. However, the target is the same: the fulfilment of the curricula and equitable entitlement to best address learner variability. The routes to reach this target are necessarily diverse. At its best, the external review highlights and celebrates the consistent efforts of the school to combine these diverse routes into a single teaching/learning journey for the particular learning community. It also indicates ways to improve these efforts at classroom and school level for improved learner experience and achievements.</p> <p>4.1.5.3</p> <p>The QAD has invested in developing nationally-agreed criteria for school quality and in aligning internal and external review processes. These processes form the basis of its functions and mirror the National Curriculum Framework for All (2012): ‘Quality Assurance is to be realised through a system of ongoing self-evaluation, monitoring and review within schools complemented by an external review system that together foster school improvement’ (p. 32). Therefore, schools are guided to use the established standards and success criteria to steer their internal evaluation and school development planning. Success criteria are not binding but provide clear guidance on evaluating how far a standard is being achieved. This is complemented by external reviews that evaluate schools according to the standards. Reports outline areas of strength and recommend ways to progress in the achievement of the standards.</p>
4.1.6 There are strategies to support schools/higher education institutions to build strong leadership teams that are aware of the inclusive education agenda	–



Policy priorities	Findings
4.1.7 There are incentives stated in policy for all teachers to engage in professional learning activities for inclusive education	4.1.7.1 National School Support Services organise CoPE sessions for schools. Schools can also request specialised training to suit their needs. CPD is also linked to accelerated progression for educators.
4.1.8 There are strategies stated in policy to develop the role of specialist teachers as a resource for mainstream schools	4.1.8.1 <i>The resource centres are networked so that they can complement each other's services and facilities and work more closely with mainstream schools. The centres aim to tailor education to the needs of the individual learner. The skills covered are cognitive, gross motor, social, language (both receptive and expressive), self-help, cooking, sewing and others. The centres promote and give utmost importance to good health, personal hygiene and training for adult life. A central unit provides educational and professional support to the resource centres (European Agency, Country information for Malta, Systems of support and specialist provision).</i>
4.1.9 There are strategies to promote professional learning for inclusion in teachers' common competence areas (e.g. experienced teachers and specialist teachers are expected to engage in professional learning activities that promote inclusive education pedagogies, such as co-teaching)	4.1.9.1 The Institute for Education offers different courses, including courses on inclusive education. Management-driven CoPE sessions can cover gaps identified by the school staff. The University of Malta is organising a post-graduate certificate in educational mentoring .



Policy priorities	Findings
4.1.10 There are competences for professional learning in inclusive education for all teachers	4.1.10 The Institute for Education offers courses which are available and accessible for all on various topics related to inclusive education.

Evaluative comments for 'Capacity building'

CPD in Malta is readily available to all. Some training courses are free and others are available for a minimal fee which can be reimbursed through scholarship funds.

4.2 Funding

Policy priorities	Country information
4.2.1 There are financial incentives to encourage all schools/higher education institutions to develop policy and action plans for teachers' professional learning for inclusion	4.2.1.1 The Institute for Education supports schools to finance training initiatives.
4.2.2 There are mechanisms for systematic data collection on expenditure on teachers' professional learning that informs cost-effectiveness issues	–



Policy priorities	Country information
4.2.3 There are flexible resourcing mechanisms that foster teachers' professional learning at school level	4.2.3.1 Some CPD courses are free or available for a minimal fee which can be reimbursed through the Get Qualified Scheme or scholarships scheme .

Evaluative comments for 'Funding'

CPD for educators is readily available for free or for a minimal fee that can be reimbursed.

4.3 Monitoring

Policy priorities	Country information
4.3.1 There is a comprehensive accountability framework for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of teachers' professional learning for inclusion activities	–
4.3.2 Monitoring mechanisms ensure that inequalities in access to professional learning opportunities at regional or organisational levels are addressed	–



Policy priorities	Country information
4.3.3 There are mechanisms to support schools/teacher education departments/higher education institutions to have ownership of review and improvement processes in relation to teachers' professional learning	4.3.3.1 CPD can either be self-sought or management-driven. The latter emerges from the needs analysis in the School Development Plan which highlights the gaps in training.
4.3.4 There are mechanisms to share and analyse data to inform improvement processes in relation to teachers' professional learning at national and local level	–
4.3.5 There is data available on whether teachers are engaged in professional learning that is relevant to the level of education they teach	–



Policy priorities	Country information
4.3.6 There are mechanisms to ensure that teachers' professional learning contributes to improving inclusive education practice at school level/the level of a teacher education department or higher education institution	–

Evaluative comments for 'Monitoring'

–
