

Teacher competences in Belgium (FI)

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Teacher Education in Belgium (FI)

- ITE = 180 ECTS → bachelor program of 3 years for pre-school, primary or lower secondary education
- Specific TE = 60 ECTS → master degree of 1 year following a master degree in a specific subject; teaching in higher secondary education
- Specific TE = 60 ECTS → postgraduate degree for vocational education

Teacher competences in Belgium (FI)

A. Overall attitudes:

A1 Decisiveness: ready to take action and to take responsibility

A2 Relational attitude: showing respect, authenticity, acceptance and empathy in contacts with others

A3 Critical thinking: towards own opinions, goals and opinions and goals of others in the discussion; verifying the opportunities and options for certain goals before taking a clear position

A4 Curiosity: looking for situations to broaden and enhance competences

A5 Talent for organization: planning and coordinating in order to reach the goals effectively

A6 Sense of collaboration: working together on common tasks

A7 Responsibility: being engaged in the school community and towards the development of the pupils

A8 Flexibility: adaptation to changing circumstances, means, people and procedures

See also: Themes throughout the European Reference Framework:

Critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem-solving, risk assessment, decision-taking, and constructive management of feelings

Teacher competences in Belgium (FI)

B. Functional framework for competences

- ***Function 1: The teacher as supervisor of developmental and learning processes***
- ***Function 2: The teacher as educator***
- ***Function 3: The teacher as an expert of specific content***
- ***Function 4: The teacher as organizer***
- ***Function 5: The teacher as innovator and researcher***
- ***Function 6: The teacher as partner of parents or caretakers***
- ***Function 7: The teacher as partner in a school team***
- ***Function 8: The teacher as partner of external colleagues***
- ***Function 9: The teacher as a member of the larger educational community***
- ***Function 10: The teacher as a cultural participant***

Function 1: The teacher as supervisor of developmental and learning processes

Example:

1.5 The teacher is able to select and design teaching methods and strategies (cooperative learning, critical use of multimedia...)

1.7 The teacher can design a powerful learning environment that takes the heterogeneity of the learners into account

1.8 Preparing assessment (formative assessment, IEP, ...)

Function 2: The teacher as educator

- 2.2 Working towards emancipation of each pupil (recognition of and dealing with individuality, social and cultural diversity, for full development and integration of each pupil; stimulating towards autonomy, initiative, participation; ...)
- 2.3 Working towards a broader attitude for individual development and social participation (modeling)

Function 6: The teacher as partner of parents or caretakers

Function 8: The teacher as partner of external colleagues

- 6.1 The teacher informs and deals ethical with student information
- 6.2 communicates with parents

- 8.1 communicates and collaborates with different services and professionals

Function 9: The teacher as a member of the larger educational community

Function 10: The teacher as a cultural participant

- 9.1 participates in societal debates about education
- 10.1.1 uses a framework to interpret information on education critically

Comparison with the key competences for LLL (European Reference Framework)

1. Communication in the mother tongue;
2. *Communication in foreign languages;*
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
4. Digital competence;
5. Learning to learn;
6. Social and civic competences;
7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
8. Cultural awareness and expression.

Translation into the curriculum of ITE

The competences have taken diversity as a main guideline → curriculum should provide a lot of opportunities for teaching diverse learners

'Competences for dealing with diversity are no longer a small part of the curriculum, but are welcomed in teacher education as an integral part of qualitative teacher practice. Theoretically, inclusion seems to be well integrated in Flemish teacher education. Also in practice, students are well aware of a growing diversity in classrooms'

< Equal Opportunities Act (2002)

But... the open definition of inclusion may be misleading for ITE

“As soon as inclusion is referring to disability issues, examples of good practice in ITE are fewer, apart from *discussions and reflection* among students on the topic of inclusion with regard to pupils with a higher level of support needs. ITE is not actively seeking opportunities for student practice where they can be teaching or supporting these pupils in inclusive contexts. There is a large contrast with highly stimulated educational practice in more intercultural contexts”

Barriers

- “The dominant position and high status of special schools is a main barrier for ITE to provide practice in inclusive contexts. Although a growing number of special teachers are working in mainstream schools as visiting teachers supporting pupils with special needs, teacher educators don’t refer to this practice as relevant for students. At the same time, teacher educators do refer to practice in special schools.”

Barriers

- “Secondary education is a highly categorised system in which pupils are referred to different programs, according to their results in primary education or later. In this context, vocational classes often represent a higher level of diversity and SEN, but not every student in teacher education for secondary education has practice in this context. Teacher educators are aware of the importance of varying these experiences. Some of them have practice in special schools instead of working in a more inclusive context”

Barriers

“Political decisions about special needs education – including special schools – are delayed and it is uncertain when a reform can be expected. As soon as teacher educators can be sure about the direction policy is choosing, they can start to prepare their students, and – in the case of the planned reform (Leerzorgkader, 2008) – it could accelerate the process.”

Practice

Despite the widely diversity-focused competences and the opportunities for students in vocational, intercultural and 'inclusion-light' practice, educators do not always translate the competences into a more complex inclusive context for student practice.

Practice

“Many ITE illustrate a clear inclusive policy towards their own students (high flexibility and many opportunities for remedial support, facilities and optional routes, student facilities for students with a disability..). Also educators with a disability are part of the team in a few cases. Inclusive practice in higher education and in teacher education in particular can be seen as part of an inclusive curriculum. This ‘congruent teaching’ seems to be a very strong tool for further inclusive practice. It offers the students a model of dealing with diversity in an educational context”.

Ex.

-‘Cur-Ik’ project: differentiation in the TE curriculum for students for pre-school and primary education in need of support for certain subjects

-Talent-oriented projects in which the focus lies on the TE students rather than on the target schools in which the students will be practising

→ **Modeling how to cope with diversity, although student diversity is minor compared with the reality of diversity in compulsory education**

Conclusions

- The reference to 'special needs,' with an emphasis on so-called special knowledge, is too narrow.
- Expertise on 'support for inclusion' in general is needed. International and national research on inclusion has to be an integral part of the curriculum of all teachers. The relation with intercultural teaching practice should be transparent and explicit, in order to diminish the social and cultural barriers for inclusion among teachers.
- A more inclusive 'reading' of the basic competences can be a good starting point for further action → action research can lead to change the curriculum towards inclusive practice (growing interest in inclusion as a research theme in TE)
- Modeling of inclusion in ITE is an important tool

Questions

- **Inclusive competences do not necessarily mean an inclusive curriculum:** in Belgium (FI) we need a deeper reading and discussion about the meaning of inclusion and diversity in the already existing competences; although inclusion is implicitly present, the challenge is to make it explicit in renewed curricula
- **Competence based curricula** need to be put in practice in a wide variety of contexts; structural differences in ITE (60 → 180 ECTS) can be a barrier for a real preparation; important role of action research