Preparing student-teachers for diversity

A analysis of teacher training curricula for primary education in the Naos member countries

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March 2016

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# Summary

The main objective of the current report is to present the results of a mapping exercise which is one of the activities of the Naos network on professional capacity dealing with diversity. The goal of the Naos network is to raise awareness about diversity and engage teacher trainers on this issue.

A mapping exercise was conducted to find out to what extent and in what ways teacher training institutes for primary education in the nine NAOS countries prepare teachers for teaching in diverse classrooms. The five areas of expertise as described by Severiens, van Herpen and Wolff (2014) were used as a framework. This framework suggests that in order to be an effective teacher in diverse classrooms, one needs expertise in the areas of language development, pedagogy/didactics, social interaction and identity, parental involvement and school- community relationships.

We have collected information from two institutes in each of the NAOS countries using a questionnaire that was either administered online or used in an interview setting. The questionnaire asked to describe courses and activities in the area of diversity.

Relating the course descriptions to the areas of expertise, it was shown that all Naos countries pay attention to social psychology, while pedagogy and language come next. Less attention is paid to school-community relationships and parent participation. In addition, the most common learning activities that were mentioned were lectures, group work, assignments, and presentations. Furthermore, all respondents mentioned internships in primary schools as the main tool for preparing student teachers for diversity in the curriculum. The internships are usually a combination of classroom observation and teaching practice. Educational seminars and training programs were mentioned as the most common methods of in-service teacher training. Finally, the analysis showed four courses as examples of innovative ways to prepare student teachers for diversity.

The fact that many respondents did not provide detailed descriptions in combination with the fact that only two teacher training institutes of each country participated in the study means that our results should be seen as indicative of approaches to preparing student teachers for diversity in each of the Naos countries.

# Introduction

In a network of centers of expertise, teacher training colleges and schools, the NAOS project aims to enhance the professional skills of teachers in dealing with cultural/ethnic diversity. Diversity refers to ethnic/cultural diversity, and diversity related to migration. The NAOS project includes study visits, mapping exercises of teacher training and professional development practices and case studies on good practices. The study visits are to primary and secondary schools in nine different European countries (Belgium, Portugal, Norway, Netherlands, Estonia, Lithuania, Greece, Croatia and Cyprus) with the aim to explore good practices in the field of professional development regarding diversity. The focus of the study visits is on the actual content of the good practice but also on the professional development that was at the root of this practice. Classroom observations as well as interviews with the professionals are the core of these visits. In the mapping exercises, the curricula of a variety of teacher training colleges are analyzed in terms of diversity and intercultural education. A literature review by Severiens, Wolff and Van Herpen (2014) identified five areas of expertise in diverse classrooms as the most significant, namely: language development, pedagogy/didactics, social interaction and identity, parental involvement and school- community relationships. The curricula are analyzed according to these five areas (see Box 1).

The main objective of the current report is to present the results of the mapping exercise that focused on teacher training and professional development in primary education. The goal is to raise awareness about diversity and engage teacher trainers on this issue. More specifically, this particular Naos activity and the resulting report intends to:

* Support school leaders and teachers in their aim to meet the needs of diverse student groups.
* Encourage schools to build capacity in the area of dealing with diversity.
* Share ideas and practices from nine centres of expertise.
* Provide insight for educational researchers, consultants and stakeholders
* Provide teachers and teacher trainers more tools to deal with diversity in the classroom.

A mapping exercise was conducted to find out to what extent and in what ways teacher training institutes for primary education in the nine NAOS countries prepare teachers for teaching in diverse classrooms. We have collected information from two institutes in each of the countries. The following sub questions were formulated:

* How many courses on diversity are offered in the five areas of expertise in the nine countries?
* In what ways is teaching for diversity incorporated in the teacher training curricula?
* Do the institutes provide any in-service teacher training modules that include diversity in some way?

In our analysis, we will pay special attention to innovative curricula, modules and other activities. By this, we refer to unique examples that seem to be rare in their focus and/or depth of approaches to diversity and inclusiveness.

Box 1 Five areas of expertise in diverse classrooms

A review of the literature (Severiens, Wolff & Van Herpen, 2014) shows that strengthening professional capacity with the aim to stimulate school success among diverse groups of migrant students asks for expertise in five content areas.

1. Urban teachers (or teachers in classrooms with diverse student populations) should first of all know about language development in classes of pupils whose first language is not the language of instruction.
2. These teachers should be competent in using pedagogic and didactic resources that support the learning of all their pupils. Diverse classes need different didactic resources and different types of instruction than homogeneous classrooms. If schools and teachers are committed to encouraging the talents of all their pupils they should have knowledge of the use of teaching materials, methods and types of instruction designed for diverse classes.
3. Urban teachers should know about social psychology issues such as stereotyping, teacher expectations and ethnic-identity development issues.
4. Urban teachers that succeed in engaging the parents of their diverse pupils as well as cooperate with community organisations on a basis of equality will further support school achievement in their urban schools.

The review by Severiens et al concludes that if schools are committed to increasing achievement among migrant groups, and closing the achievement gap, they should facilitate high levels of professional capacity in these areas of expertise.

# Method

Participants

The participants of this study were experts working in teacher training institutes of primary education. These institutes were selected based on the criterion that they offer courses on diversity. In most of the cases the participant was the dean of the institution or a professor who had a broad overview of the curriculum. Seven of the responses of the partners came from interviewing and five responses came from the professors directly. The remaining six responses were derived from the teacher training course manual. The participants were interviewed by the partners of the NAOS project coming from nine different European countries, namely Croatia, Norway, Greece, Belgium, Netherlands, Lithuania, Cyprus, Estonia, and Portugal. The partners were professionals working in centers of educational expertise. They were either experts working in a higher education institution or a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) focused on education. In particular, the partners were experts of the University of Antwerp, the University of Porto, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institution, the University of Patras, the Østfold University College, the APS- National Centre of School Improvement (NGO), the Tartu International school (NGO), PPMI- a public policy research center, and the Forum for freedom in education (NGO).

Instrument

An open-ended questionnaire was prepared. The main focus of the questionnaire is the ways that teachers’ training curriculum and practices prepare teacher students for dealing with diversity and the extent to which the five areas of expertise are covered in the curriculum. The questionnaire requests brief descriptions of the courses relevant to diversity in the five areas. More specifically, details concerning the learning goals, the learning activities, the type of course, the type of assessment, and the ECTS of the courses on diversity, are requested. An online form of the same questionnaire was also created, in order to facilitate the process.

Procedure

The questionnaire was sent via e-mail to the partners of the Naos project mentioned above. The partners contacted two teacher training institutes of their country that offer courses on diversity and they conducted a phone interview based on the questionnaire. Most of them interviewed the dean of the institution or a professor who had a broad overview of these courses. Those who did not have the possibility to interview the dean or a professor, tried to fill the questionnaire with the aid of the course manual of the university. Another option was to send the link of the online questionnaire directly to a person of the institute who had the appropriate knowledge to fill it in. In total, there were eighteen responses on the questionnaire from nine different countries. As the partners were educational experts, the way that they filled in the questionnaire in regard to the five areas, as well as the choice of the institution itself, were their personal choices, as they were requested to choose institutions with curriculum relevant to diversity.

Analysis

The analysis of the data comprised of three parts. First, the information of the courses mentioned in the questionnaires was put into a table according to country and area of expertise. This table provided a first general overview of the courses offered by area of expertise in each country. Second, during the analysis and after careful examination of the data, we needed a. to delete some courses because of a lack of focus on diversity and b. to transfer some courses to another category-area. In order to guarantee the validity of our study, an e-mail was sent to the partners with our arguments to transfer a course to another area of expertise in which we asked for their reflection on our changes. All the partners that responded agreed with our interpretations. Third, in this analysis, we counted the number of courses on diversity offered in each country in general, and according to each area of expertise specifically. Finally, the innovativeness of the courses and curricula were considered.

# Results

In this chapter, the results of our analysis are described. We will start with the areas of expertise and the extent to which they are covered in the teacher training curricula and then we will discuss the ways in which diversity is incorporated in curricula. The third paragraph will discuss in-service training modules and we will end with a descriptions with the most innovative practices we have encountered.

## Areas of expertise

Relating the course descriptions to the areas of expertise, Table 1 shows that in all Naos countries attention is paid to dealing with diversity using Social Psychology, while Pedagogy and Language come next. Table 1 also shows little a relatively small number of courses concerning Community-School relationships. At this point, it is interesting to note that only the Netherlands, Belgium, Croatia and Estonia offer courses on this area. Parental involvement is also an area that seems receive little attention. At the same time, seven courses focus on diversity, without demonstrating a clear focus on any one of the areas of expertise. The first findings also show that Cyprus, Belgium, Croatia and Estonia offer the most courses on diversity, while Portugal, Norway and Lithuania seem to offer substantially less courses. The exact numbers of the courses in each area of expertise are depicted in the table below.

At this point we emphasize that the results in Table 1 are not reflecting the ‘average’ teacher training institutes in each of the countries. The institutes in the current mapping exercise were chosen to participate because of their focus on diversity. Table 1 does show the emphasis regarding area of expertise.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **COUNTRIES** | **TOTAL NUMBER OF COURSES PER COUNTRY** | **LANGUAGE** | **PEDAGOGY** | **SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY** | **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT** | **COMMUNITY- SCHOOL** | **OTHER AREAS** |
|
| **CYPRUS** | **15** | 3 | 2 | 8 | 2 |  |  |
| **GREECE** | **10** | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 |  | 2 |
| **NORWAY\*** | **6** | 1 | 1 | 3 |  |  | 1 |
| **CROATIA** | **13** | 3 | 4 | 3 |  | 1 | 2 |
| **NETHERLANDS** | **9** | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |  |
| **PORTUGAL** | **7** | 1 | 5 |  |  |  | 1 |
| **BELGIUM** | **15** | 2 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 1 |  |
| **ESTONIA** | **32** | 9 | 4 | 16 | 3 |  |  |
| **LITHUANIA** | **2** |  |  | 1 |  |  | 1 |
| **TOTAL NUMBER OF COURSES PER AREA** |  | **24** | **25** | **39** | **11** | **3** | **7** |

Table 1. *Distribution of the courses of eight countries in the five areas of expertise*

\*The results in Norway refer to courses in one teacher training institute only.

## Incorporation of diversity in the curricula

All the respondents mention internships in primary schools as the main tool for preparing student teachers for diversity in the curriculum. The internships are usually a combination of classroom observation and teaching practice. During the internship, emphasis is not placed explicitly on diversity issues, but on various teaching methods, skills and pedagogical approaches with the aim to familiarize students with the every-day-life in a school setting.

In order to guarantee practical experience on diversity issues, Belgium and the Netherlands offer internships in an urban setting specifically. Greece mentions that one can pursue an internship on diversity issues through a specific course, named “Intercultural Teaching” which focuses on practice and teaching in a diverse classroom.

Belgium and Lithuania also mention reflection on the internships (discussions or essays) as a way to include diversity issues in the curricula, while the Netherlands asks students to conduct educational research in urban elementary schools. In Belgium reflection takes place in small learning groups that cover multicultural issues.

Table 2*. Ways that teaching for diversity is incorporated in the curricula in the nine countries*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **COUNTRIES** | **INTERNSHIP** | **OTHER** |
| CYPRUS | ✓ |  |
| GREECE | ✓ |  |
| BELGIUM | ✓ | Reflection on the internship |
| PORTUGAL | ✓ |  |
| NETHERLANDS | ✓ | Research |
| ESTONIA | ✓ |  |
| LITHUANIA | ✓ | Essays after classroom observation |
| CROATIA | ✓ |  |
| NORWAY | ✓ |  |

## In service teacher training modules and other activities

Educational seminars and training programs are mentioned as the most common methods of in-service teacher training. More specifically, Cyprus uses a booklet on intercultural education in order to train teachers for diversity. At the same time, art-making activities and in-service teacher training modules concerning educational research and educational effectiveness are other ways of in service training used in Cyprus.

As depicted in Table 3, Greece uses on antiracist and human rights’ seminars and workshops, while Belgium conducts educational workshops to train the teachers. Estonia seems to offer various opportunities for in-service training, such as training programs by the university or NGOs, seminars, e-learning courses, project learning and group work related to diversity. Lithuania also mentioned training programs offered by the university and study visits abroad as the most prevalent methods of in-service training of the teachers. Portugal, Netherlands, Croatia and Norway did not mention any formal ways of in-service teacher training.

Table 3*. In service teacher training practices in the nine countries*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **COUNTRIES** | **WAYS OF IN SERVICE TRAINING** |
| **CYPRUS** | Booklet: “ Travelling stories for intercultural education”  “Carem”: educational activities through art-making  Teacher training modules: “Teacher professional development through action research”, “Educational effectiveness and effective teaching” |
| **GREECE** | Seminars “ Antiracist education and human rights” workshops |
| **BELGIUM** | Educational workshops |
| **PORTUGAL** | - |
| **NETHERLANDS** | - |
| **ESTHONIA** | Training programs by university and NGO, seminars, e-learning, group works, project learning, educational technology |
| **LITHUANIA** | Training programs (lectures & interactive group work) by university, study visits abroad |
| **CROATIA** | - |
| **NORWAY** | - |

## Innovative courses

Language diversity, social psychological phenomena and pedagogical theories regarding multicultural and intercultural education were the main focus in the majority of the courses on diversity. In addition, the most common learning activities that we came across during this research were lectures, group work, assignments, or presentations. In this section, we are going to present a few courses that include some innovative ideas of courses on diversity. The focus here is mostly on the learning goals or the learning activities of the courses and not so much on the ECTS or the type of assessment.

Example 1: “Diversity-Math”

This course is categorized in the “Language” area of the Dutch response. The innovative idea here is that the course incorporates diversity issues by raising awareness in linguistic math problems and ‘foreign’ computational strategies. Focusing on these aspects of diversity does not seem to be a common practice.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| TITLE | Diversity- Math |
| GOALS | Awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of linguistic math problems, how to make a distinction between functional contexts and application situations and the national character of the (realistic) mathematics. You are willing and able to understand some foreign computational strategies teaching methods to deal with the multilingualism of math problems and can apply. |
| ACTIVITIES | College assignment for practice |
| ASSESSMENT | Assignment for practice |
| ECTS | 2 |
| TYPE | Compulsory |

Example 2: “Physical Education 1 for the Primary Teacher Education Program for Years 1-7”

This course is categorized in the “Social Psychology” area of the Norwegian response. The innovative idea here is that the course incorporates diversity issues by explaining the body as a symbol in contemporary society and understanding multicultural forms of movement. These are important aspects regarding diversity; however they are hardly ever covered in teacher training programs.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| TITLE | Physical Education 1 for the Primary Teacher Education Program for Years 1-7 |
| GOALS | The student:  -is knowledgeable about pupils based on theories about physical and motor development, the importance of gender, social background, ethnicity, abilities and functional level relating to physical education and bodily learning  -understands the body as a symbol in contemporary society with the emphasis on how this is expressed in children's culture  -is capable of facilitating progress in education adapted for pupils in years 1–7 in relation to contemporary forms of movement in multicultural child and youth communities |
| ACTIVITIES | Lectures, group work, individual work, field trips |
| ASSESSMENT | The assessment forms are an oral exam and an exam where the student's practical and didactic skills are tested through a teaching plan for his/her fellow students |
| ECTS | 30 |
| TYPE | - |

Example 3: “Diversity- the healthy school”

This course is categorized in the “Pedagogy” area of the Dutch response. The innovative idea here concerns the learning activities. Students are expected to design a motivating parents evening and lead the conversation. This type of activity motivates the students to enhance their imagination and learn how to lead a public conversation including the students’ parents as well.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| TITLE | Diversity- the healthy school |
| GOALS | Healthy school policies, activities that help children when they are bullied, obstacles you may encounter when teaching about sexual education. |
| ACTIVITIES | Designing a motivating parents evening on the theme. Leading the conversation |
| ASSESSMENT | Presentation |
| ECTS | 2 |
| TYPE | Compulsory |

Example 4: “International and Comparative Education “

This course is categorized in the “Pedagogy” area of the Estonian response. The innovative idea here is that the course incorporates diversity issues by using comparative education. Students have the chance to understand and compare a wide range of educational theories and systems, thus, getting more ideas on multiculturalism and how to deal with diversity.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| TITLE | International and Comparative Education | |
| GOALS | | To expose students to a range of ideas and issues in international and comparative education, so that students may construct a substantial foundation in the theories, vocabulary, preoccupations, and concerns of comparative and international education. By examining different approaches to common problems across systems, students will acquire a good sense of educational practice internationally. To enable students to make sense of the practices students see in the world of education and to envision alternatives.  Outcomes: After completing this course, students  • will be able to understand key theories of international and comparative education;  • will be knowledgeable in the multiple theoretical approaches and corresponding assumptions used in international and comparative education;  • are aware of a document in the contexts of other thinking and practice; will be able to see more deeply than the surface meaning;  • will understand the useful role of theory; have acquired skills in communicating information in comparative education. |
| ACTIVITIES | | - |
| ASSESSMENT | |  |
| ECTS | | 3 |
| TYPE | | - |

# Conclusions

This report presents the results of a mapping exercise on teacher training curricula for primary education in het NAOS countries. The results showed where the selected teacher training programs put the emphasis. In all Naos countries, a relatively large amount of attention is paid social psychology theories, pedagogy and language diversity. A lower amount of attention is paid to community-school relationships and parental involvement.

Internships, reflection on the internships through discussions or essays, and educational research are ways that teaching for diversity is incorporated in the curricula in the participant countries. It is important to note that all the respondent institutes mentioned the practical component of the curriculum as the most important component to help student teachers deal with diversity.

With regard to the in-service teacher training methods, educational seminars and training modules seem to be the most prevalent practices. Estonia offers opportunities for in service training by incorporating e-learning courses, while four respondents did not mention any formal ways of in-service teacher training.

Four courses are presented as examples of innovative ideas for preparing student teachers towards diversity. These courses are deemed innovative as they use a different point of view on diversity, in comparison to the majority of the responses.

Limitations

The fact that many respondents did not give detailed descriptions of the requested information proved to be a limitation in this research. As a result, not all the courses could be used in all the steps of the analysis, thus, narrowing the sample size of the analysis.

Another limitation is that three different approaches were used in order to collect the data for this study (interviews, survey, document analysis), thus jeopardizing the validity of this research. The fact that the choice of the institutes was delegated to the NAOS partners can also be considered a threat to the validity.

One more limitation is the fact that only two teacher training institutes of each country participated in the study. The results are tentative and it is difficult to generalize these findings to the educational policies or approaches of each country. However, the findings offer an insight into the initial teacher preparation on diversity of the participant institutes.

# APPENDIX: Teacher training for diversity in primary education questionnaire

NAOS Questionnaire, April 2015

1. PRE-SERVICE TRAINING
2. LANGUAGE DIVERSE CLASSROOMS

Increasing numbers of pupils have different mother tongues compared to the language of instruction.

1. Does the institution offer a course or multiple courses in the area of teaching in classrooms with a diversity of languages?

* yes
* no

1. Briefly describe the context and features of these courses:

The course’s title:

The learning goals:

The learning activities:

Type of assessment:

ECT’s:

Type of course: compulsory/ elective

Please, add the same information for other courses.

1. DIDACTICS/PEDAGOGY

This area of expertise refers to teaching practice, methods of instruction (e.g., differentiated instruction, collaborative learning), and also to classroom management, teacher-student interaction etc.

1. Does the institution offer courses with regard to pedagogy and didactics focused on classrooms with ethnic/cultural diversities?

* yes
* no

1. Briefly describe the context of these courses:

The course’s title:

The learning goals:

The learning activities:

Type of assessment:

ECT’s:

Type of course: compulsory/ elective

Please, add the same information for other courses.

1. SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

This section refers to social psychology issues. In particular, stereotyping, teachers’ expectations, ethnic/cultural identity issues and their influence on students’ performance are the main concern.

1. Does the institution offer courses with regard to social psychology in diverse classrooms?

* yes
* no

1. Briefly describe the context of these courses:

The course’s title:

The learning goals:

The learning activities:

Type of assessment:

ECT’s:

Type of course: compulsory/ elective

Please, add the same information for other courses.

1. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement is considered to be one of the more crucial factors that help school and teachers deal with diverse issues. The importance of the role of parents and ways to encourage family involvement in the school community are the main concern of this section.

1. Does the institution offer courses with regard to parental involvement in diverse classrooms or Family Education?

* yes
* no

1. Briefly describe the context of these courses:

The course’s title:

The learning goals:

The learning activities:

Type of assessment:

ECT’s:

Type of course: compulsory/ elective

Please, add the same information for other courses.

1. COMMUNITY SCHOOL- COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Community and school relationships refer to the ways that teachers and schools can contribute to improving circumstances of their pupil’s neighborhoods and strengthen the social participation.

1. Does the institution offer courses with regard to community- school relationships in a diverse context?

* yes
* no

1. Briefly describe the context of these courses:

The course’s title:

The learning goals:

The learning activities:

Type of assessment:

ECT’s:

Type of course: compulsory/ elective

Please, add the same information for other courses.

1. OTHER AREAS OF EXPERTISE
2. Does the institution offers relevant courses that you cannot categorize in only one of these categories but pay attention in diversity issues?

* yes
* no

1. Briefly describe the context of these courses:

The course’s title:

The learning goals:

The learning activities:

Type of assessment:

ECT’s:

Type of course: compulsory/ elective

Please, add the same information for other courses.

1. PREPARING FOR DIVERSITY IN PRACTICE
2. In what ways is (teaching for) diversity in practice incorporated in the curriculum (e.g. in internships)?
3. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMME
4. Is there a system in place that evaluates the effectiveness of the teacher training programme in some way (for example by keeping in touch with alumni)? If so, please describe this system.
5. INSERVICE TRAINING

*Note. Please consider and decide for yourself the best way: Perhaps the interviewee at the teacher training institute can answer this question, but perhaps you need a different informant.*

1. Can you give us two examples of in-service training modules for diversity?
2. Briefly describe these examples:

* Type of organization offering this training
* Learning goals
* Learning activities
* Length of the modules (in number of days)
* Which areas of expertise apply to these examples?

🞎 Language Development

🞎 Didactics/Pedagogy

🞎 Social Interaction and Identity Development

🞎 Parental Involvement

🞎 Community – School relationships

🞎 Other: ………………