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# Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion

Phase 1 and 2 Report

Peter Hick, Yvette Solomon, Joseph Mintz, Aikaterini Matziari, Finn Ó Murchú,  
Kathy Hall, Kevin Cahill, Catriona Curtin, Despoina Margariti

RESEARCH REPORT NO. 26





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# Foreword

The NCSE is pleased to publish the first report from its Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion study. We commissioned this research to examine the impact of changes introduced in Ireland in 2012 to initial teacher education (ITE) programmes. These changes included the extension of the length of programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level and the mandatory addition of inclusive education and differentiation content in them. The changes also introduced a minimum of two placement settings for student teachers, which ideally should incorporate a variety of teaching, class and school contexts, and educational needs.

This report details findings in relation to the first two phases of the study. For these phases, the research team examined the content of ITE programmes. They also surveyed and spoke with student teachers, their lecturers and/or course leaders about their experiences of ITE programmes, the inclusive teaching components and student placements.

Findings note that inclusive teaching content is incorporated in ITE programmes in different ways, such as through standalone, specific modules or by being diffused across general modules. They also note that inclusive education was often conceptualised more in the narrower sense of it being related to focussing on students with special educational needs, rather in the broader sense of working to support all learners. Teacher educators report being supportive of inclusive teaching within ITE, but often note that they do not have the confidence or expertise to implement it on their programmes, and point to the need for more professional development opportunities to address this.

Student teachers report a gap between feeling well prepared for inclusive teaching in relation to developing the right attitudes and values, and under-prepared in relation to having the confidence to utilise their newly acquired skills and knowledge to implement inclusive practices in the classroom. While student teachers value their placement learning greatly, they desire more opportunities to access practical advice, problem solving support and critical reflection with teaching colleagues while in schools.

This report provides initial insights into how student teachers are prepared to teach inclusively in classrooms. It establishes an important base for the final two phases of the study, which will follow and report on the experiences of student teachers as they become newly qualified teachers working in schools. We look forward to those findings in 2019.

**Teresa Griffin**  
*Chief Executive Officer*

August 2018

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# Acronyms

CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
EADSNE	European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EASNIE	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (name change c.2014)
EPESEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
EU	European Union
GAM	General Allocation Model
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
ITE4I	Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion Research Project
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
NBSS	National Behaviour Support Service
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAC	Postgraduate Applications Centre
PME	Professional Masters in Education
PDST	Professional Development Support for Teachers
RQ	Research Question
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SSE	School Self Evaluation
TES	Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education and Skills
UCC	University College Cork
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VTS	Visiting Teacher Service for Children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Children who are Blind/Visually Impaired
WTE	Whole time equivalents

# Executive Summary

## Background to the project

The context for this project is a growing international consensus on the importance of policy initiatives to both raise the quality of teaching (OECD, 2005) and to better prepare teachers to respond to increasing diversity in communities and classrooms (EADSNE, 2011).

The DES and the Teaching Council of Ireland developed policies requiring higher education institutions providing Initial Teacher Education (ITE) to undergo a re-accreditation process from 2012. This involved both an extension and a reconceptualisation of programmes, with mandatory additional content related to inclusive education and differentiation, together with the opportunity for a wider range of school placement experiences. All concurrent (undergraduate) programmes of initial teacher education must be of four years' duration and all consecutive (postgraduate) programmes of initial teacher education must be of two years' duration. The latter were re-accredited at Masters Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Following this major reform, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in Ireland commissioned a study of 'Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion' in 2015. NCSE's research aim was: 'to establish what the components of inclusive/special education are within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in Ireland and to explore if the recent changes prepare newly qualified teachers to be inclusive using the indicators set out in the EASNIE's Profile of Inclusive Teachers'.

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) conducted a four-year project on Teacher Education for Inclusion, involving representatives of 25 countries. A key output was a proposed 'Profile of Inclusive Teachers' (EADSNE, 2012), which outlines a range of attitudes, knowledge and skills in relation to four core values and eight areas of competence, to be addressed in initial teacher education to prepare all new teachers to become more inclusive. The NCSE proposed the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers as the baseline definition of inclusive teaching for the project and it is used by the research team as the framework and starting point for analysis.

The 'Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion' project (ITE4I), runs from 2015-2018. The research team is led by Manchester Metropolitan University in partnership with University College Cork and University College London, Institute of Education. We understand this project may be one of the first system-wide, longitudinal studies of initial teacher education for inclusive teaching in Europe.

This report relates to the first year of the project in 2015/16, which analysed the content of ITE programmes and studied the experiences of the first cohort of student teachers to graduate from the extended and reconceptualised programmes, in their final year of study. This comprised two phases of data collection: in Phase 1 we analysed programme documents and surveyed teacher educators; in Phase 2 we surveyed student teachers and interviewed a sample of student teachers and teacher educators. At the same time, a literature review was developed setting out definitional debates on inclusive education and outlining the scope of the international literature on inclusive teaching.

## Research design

The Research Questions formulated by National Council for Special Education (NCSE) were as follows:

1. What are the components of inclusive/special education within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in Ireland for primary and post-primary teachers?
2. Do the recent changes to ITE prepare newly qualified teachers to be inclusive as identified by European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) Profile of Inclusive Teachers?
3. What is the intended impact of the changes in ITE on outcomes for students with special educational needs (SEN) and do student/newly qualified teachers perceive their learning during initial teacher education makes an impact on outcomes for students with SEN?
4. What gaps are there in how current ITE programmes prepare student teachers to be inclusive as per the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers and what aspects need to be strengthened to better prepare student teachers to be inclusive?
5. What lessons can be identified from this research for initial teacher education in Ireland and subsequent phases in the continuum of teacher education?

The Project Phases were planned around data collection over the three years of the project:

### **Phase 1 (Sept.-Jan. 2016): Analysing ITE Programme Content**

Data collection in Phase 1 included documentary analysis and a survey of teacher educators. Documentation relating to some 30 programmes (out of 59 nationally) from 13 ITE providers (out of 19 in total) was obtained with the support of the Teaching Council. These were primarily standard pro forma submitted for re-accreditation, with module outlines appended in some cases; in addition, reviews of these submissions published by the Teaching Council were analysed, together with the criteria used for re-accreditation. The documentary analysis started from a typology derived from the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers, to examine how and where inclusive teaching is represented within ITE programme documents.

A survey of teacher educators was conducted at the same time, to collect initial data on the range of views expressed by teacher educators in relation to issues of inclusive teaching in ITE programmes. The survey was constructed to reflect areas of competence within the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers, and to collect free-text comments. Following piloting, 21 respondents (programme leaders, module leaders, heads of departments) provided complete or near-complete responses giving information relating to 27 programmes from 13 institutions (some survey responses related to more than one programme).

### **Phase 2 (Feb.-Aug. 2016): Understanding the ITE Student Experience**

Data collection in Phase 2 included a survey of student teachers, together with interviews with student teachers and with teacher educators at five case study sites. The five ITE providers were selected to represent a range of primary, post-primary, consecutive and concurrent programmes; and to provide a geographical spread of institutions.

The survey of student teachers elicited data about their experiences of initial teacher education and their understandings of inclusive teaching. The questionnaire captured demographic information, key areas of experience prior to and during the respondents' ITE programme, and a series of statements mapped to an analysis of the attitude, knowledge and skills components of the EASNIE profile. A total of 430 valid responses were received, representing a sample of approximately 13% of the national cohort of student teachers.

The interviews with student teachers aimed to elicit their views about their course and how their studies related to their school placement experiences; their understandings of inclusive teaching; their approaches to inclusive teaching in practice; and their reflections on their own professional development in relation to inclusive teaching and how their courses might be developed. A total of 47 students were interviewed in person or by Skype, with 32 recruited at the five case study sites and a further 15 recruited by survey responses from other institutions.

The interviews with teacher educators sought their views on issues of inclusive teaching and ITE in Ireland, and on the impact of the extension and reconceptualisation of ITE programmes; their responses to emergent themes and issues arising from the survey of teacher educators and the documentary analysis; and their reflections on aspects of the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers. A total of 11 staff interviews were conducted across the five case study sites, typically including the Head of School or a Programme Leader and a lecturer in inclusive or special education.

### **Phases 3 and 4**

Subsequent phases of the project will investigate the experiences of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs), through follow-up surveys and interviews during their first and second years as teachers. In addition, a sample of school Principals will be interviewed about the issues for NQTs. This will be accompanied by further layers of analysis, including longitudinal analysis of student and NQT data.

Phase 3 (Sept. 2016-Aug. 2017): Understanding the NQT Experience (1st year)

Phase 4 (Sept. 2017-May 2018): Understanding the NQT Experience (2nd year)

## Summary of findings

In this Report, the first four Research Questions are addressed. The Final Report will return to these four questions, in the light of additional data and further analysis, and will discuss the implications of the research and identify any lessons for teacher education, in response to Research Question 5.

### Research Question 1

ITE programmes adopt a variety of approaches to configuring how content on inclusive teaching for diverse learners and on special educational needs is delivered. Many offer discrete modules which are clearly identifiable as relating to inclusive education more broadly or to special educational needs and disability. Some aim to 'permeate' content related to inclusive teaching across the ITE curriculum, but with varying degrees of depth in how these components are embedded in practice.

Components of ITE programmes that are relevant to developing inclusive teaching are not restricted to modules with titles specifically focused on this area. Modules related to school placement experience and to subject pedagogy are also important for inclusive education. Teacher educators also reported that the research component of Postgraduate Masters in Education (PME) programmes offered an important opportunity to address issues of inclusive education for many students.

There is a tendency at times for ITE programmes to revert in practice to a narrower conceptualisation of inclusive education as focused on students with special educational needs or disabilities, so in this sense ITE programmes may not yet have fully developed a wholly consistent and coherent approach to inclusive teaching for all learners. Understandings of inclusive education may at times be influenced by the legacy of a historic dominance of a medical model for understanding special educational needs and disability, which may not reflect more recent demographic changes in the increasing diversity of learners. This tension may also reflect a policy context in which access to additional resources can relate to the identification of particular markers of difference, such as categories of special educational need.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A new model of provision was introduced recently for the allocation of additional teaching resources, tailored to a school's educational profile (DES, 2014b). This model was proposed by the NCSE, has since been piloted by the DES, and will now come into practice in September 2017.

## **Research Question 2**

Most student teachers are generally positive in their approach to inclusive teaching, irrespective of their demographic background. Many bring prior experiences of special educational needs or disability through family or friends; or through prior work experiences. However it is not clear how well such experience is drawn on by ITE programmes, as a resource for preparing students for inclusive teaching.

The core values and areas of competence identified within the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers are generally evident within ITE programmes in Ireland. Some areas are more strongly represented, such as teachers as reflective practitioners, others are less evident, such as working with parents and families. There is good coverage of the area of competence on 'effective teaching in heterogeneous classrooms'. ITE programmes do generally address the EASNIE 'core values' for inclusive teaching related to valuing learner diversity and supporting all learners, but with variable emphasis on particular components.

There is a sense of disconnection between the stated intentions of ITE programmes and the perceptions of student teachers, in relation to enacting inclusive teaching in practice. Student teachers typically report that they feel well prepared for inclusive teaching in terms of developing appropriate values and attitudes, but relatively under-prepared in terms of confidence in their knowledge and skills to implement inclusive practices in school contexts. This finding is comparable to teacher education in other contexts, in the sense that student teachers' perceptions of a gap between university tuition and practice in schools is a phenomenon that has been recognised in research internationally.

Initial Teacher Education in Ireland can be characterised as being in a transitional phase in relation to inclusive education, in which a process of significant change is taking place to better prepare students to become inclusive teachers, but this process is not yet completed.

## **Research Question 3**

There is a continuing shift in the policy context from a primary focus on special educational needs and disability, towards a broader understanding of inclusive teaching as concerned with all learners, particularly those who may be marginalised or excluded from educational opportunities for a variety of reasons.

Programme documentation and teacher educators tended not to express their intentions for the recent changes in ITE in terms of specific outcomes for school students with special educational needs, but rather in terms of preparing student teachers to include diverse learners and those with special educational needs.

There was clear evidence of a link between the diversity of students' classroom experience on placement and positive attitudes, knowledge and skills for inclusive teaching. This was particularly strong in relation to experience of working with children with special needs on placement.

Where student teachers on a range of programmes had experiences of specialist provision for school students with special educational needs, albeit brief placements in some cases, they often described this as having a substantial impact on their understanding of inclusive practice. One cohort of student teachers who elected to take a major pathway on special educational needs tended to highlight their additional focus on classroom practice as of benefit for their development as teachers of all children.

#### **Research question 4**

An important constraint for ITE in preparing more inclusive teachers remains the availability and nature of school placement opportunities. The recent changes to ITE have increased the number and range of school placements offered to students, which contributes substantially to their range of experiences. At the same time, this may limit the time available for additional taught content; and does not address a significant variability in the capacity of schools and cooperating teachers to promote more inclusive practices.

There is clear evidence to suggest a need for strengthening the alignment between school experience and the taught content of ITE programmes in relation to inclusive teaching. Student teachers said that they would value more opportunities for practical advice, collaborative critical reflection and support for problem solving in relation to experiences of inclusive practices in schools.

There is a sense in which some student teachers are encouraged to see themselves as part of a new generation of teachers who may be better placed than previous generations to promote the development of more inclusive practices in schools. This may at times conflict with a requirement on student teachers to comply with the existing policies, practices and culture of a school which is hosting their placement. Student teachers sometimes express a need for more support in navigating such issues and in reflecting on potential differences between the taught content of their ITE programmes and their experiences in schools.

Teacher educators are generally supportive of the promotion of inclusive teaching within ITE. However, they are often not confident that these elements are covered in sufficient depth within their programmes. Teacher educators identified a need for further professional development opportunities on inclusive teaching, to enable those with expertise in this area to collaborate more effectively with their colleagues.

## Emerging Issues

The next phase of the research will seek to develop a deeper understanding of how well this cohort of student teachers feel prepared to engage with inclusive practices, as they become newly qualified teachers. We will seek to understand how as NQTs they reflect back on the fit between their university and school-based experiences of ITE; how their new school contexts shape their engagement with inclusive practices; how their understandings of inclusive teaching develop; and how well supported they feel in this regard. Additional statistical analysis of the student survey data in combination with the NQT survey data, together with longitudinal analysis of the student and NQT interview data, will enable us to refine our findings further.

At this early stage, it is possible to indicate some emerging issues for teacher education that we will wish to reflect on through further data analysis. Clearly, there is a need to examine opportunities for greater alignment between university and school-based learning experiences, in terms of collaborative working and critical reflection, assessment for inclusive teaching, and school-based support for student teachers. In our data, teacher educators have also pointed to the need for further learning opportunities for them in relation to inclusive teaching, particularly for spaces for more effective collaboration between colleagues with subject specialist and inclusive education backgrounds.

## 1. Introduction and context

### 1.1 The 'initial teacher education for inclusion' (ITE4I) project

The 'Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion' project aims to provide a comprehensive account of inclusive/special education components within ITE programmes in Ireland, informed by the views of student and qualified teachers, ITE providers and principals and by a thorough review of supporting documentation. A key goal is to identify the components of inclusive/special education within ITE and determine how recent changes prepare newly qualified teachers to be inclusive in terms of the EASNIE profile of Inclusive Teachers (RQs 1 & 2). A second research goal is to investigate how new teachers' reflections on their learning from ITE about inclusion and special educational needs (SEN) may develop during their journey through the ITE/NQT continuum (RQ3). All research actions seek to inform future ITE-related decisions, with particular reference to supporting teachers to be inclusive so as to enhance the learning and life chances of all learners in the Irish educational system.

There has been increasing interest internationally in policy and research fora on the role of ITE in developing more inclusive school systems. Recent reforms in Ireland have led to an extension and reconceptualisation of ITE programmes, with a focus on inclusive education and differentiation becoming mandatory. Whilst considerable progress has been made in developing inclusive education in Ireland, practice tends to focus on those with special needs, and student and newly qualified teachers may not always be well prepared for differentiation and inclusive pedagogical approaches. More broadly, difficulties in implementing the EPSEN ACT (2004) in its entirety, due to austerity, may be reflected in the development of support for children with SEN across Ireland (O'Gorman & Drudy, 2011, p. 19; Rix, Sheehy, Fletcher-Campbell, Crisp, & Harper, 2013; Travers *et al.*, 2010).

The research team is sensitive to exploring how approaches embedded within the policy context are navigated within ITE. For example, the legislative developments associated with securing individual rights and provisions for recognised needs underpinning EPSEN (2004) and the Disability Act (2005), need to be aligned with understandings of inclusive education set out in the EASNIE Profile.

This project builds on substantial experience within the team of research on inclusive pedagogy, ITE and inclusive education, and qualitative and quantitative research methods, together with knowledge of the Irish context. The project process aims to engage fully with NCSE, taking a collaborative approach in consulting with policy makers and providers on how ITE programmes might be developed in relation to the EASNIE Profile (RQ4). Supported by an internationally renowned Expert Reference Group, the project will ultimately draw out the implications and lessons for the development of ITE for inclusive education in Ireland (RQ5). This report covers the first two phases of the project: Analysing ITE Programme Content, and Understanding ITE Students' Views.

## 1.2 The EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE)<sup>2</sup> is an independent body funded by EU member countries' Ministries of Education and supported by the EU Commission. EASNIE initiated a major project entitled 'Teacher Education for Inclusion' (TE4I), which ran from 2009-2012 and involved some 25 countries. The project addressed two key issues: what kind of teachers do we need for an inclusive society in a 21st century school?; and what are the essential teacher competences for inclusive education?

Key outputs from the Teacher Education for Inclusion project included a synthesis report (EADSNE 2011); an international literature review (EADSNE, 2010); and, most importantly, the Profile of Inclusive Teachers (EADSNE 2012).

The conceptual basis of the Profile of Inclusive Teachers lies in a values-based approach to inclusive education. The Profile further adopts an approach based on broad 'areas of competence', which are seen as developmental and as spanning both initial teacher education and early career development. The four Core Values and the associated 'areas of competence' proposed in the Profile are:

1. **Valuing Learner Diversity:** learner difference is considered as a resource and an asset to education. The areas of competence within this core value relate to:
  - Conceptions of inclusive education;
  - The teacher's view of learner difference.
2. **Supporting All Learners:** teachers have high expectations for all learners' achievements. The areas of competence within this core value relate to:
  - Promoting the academic, practical, social and emotional learning of all learners;
  - Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes.
3. **Working with Others:** collaboration and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers. The areas of competence within this core value relate to:
  - Working with parents and families;
  - Working with a range of other educational professionals.

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<sup>2</sup> The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) recently changed its name from the European Agency for Development of Special Needs Education (EADSNE): <https://www.european-agency.org/about-us/who-we-are/history>. To avoid confusion, the agency is referred to as EASNIE in this report.

4. **Personal Professional Development:** teaching is a learning activity and teachers take responsibility for their lifelong learning. The areas of competence within this core value relate to:
- Teachers as reflective practitioners;
  - Initial teacher education as a foundation for ongoing professional learning and development.

These areas of competence are set out in terms of underpinning **attitudes or beliefs**, which rely on certain **knowledges or levels of understanding**, and require particular **skills or abilities** to be developed in order to be implemented in practice. The number of items listed under each heading varies; a copy of the full Profile of Inclusive Teachers is given in Appendix 1. Table 1 gives exemplars of an item from the area of competence on 'conceptions of inclusive education':

**Table 1: EASNIE Profile exemplars**

<b>Attitudes &amp; beliefs</b>	Access to mainstream education alone is not enough; participation means that all learners are engaged in learning activities that are meaningful for them.
<b>Knowledge &amp; understanding</b>	Inclusive education as the presence (access to education) participation (quality of the learning experience) and achievement (learning processes and outcomes) of all learners.
<b>Skills &amp; abilities</b>	Critically examining one's own beliefs and attitudes and the impact these have on actions.

The Research Questions and specification for this project set out by NCSE take the EASNIE Profile for Inclusive Teachers as a key reference point for the research. In practice, the Profile has provided the research team with an operational definition of 'inclusive teaching' to work from. This has proved to be a useful tool, bearing in mind the complexities surrounding definitions of inclusive education which are set out in the literature review. EASNIE describes this Profile as 'stimulus material ... not a script for ITE programme content', nor as a finished product which should be seen as set in stone. Section 3 of the report describes how we have drawn on the Profile in developing the methodology and research design.

Two key points from the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers are worth highlighting here. First, the EASNIE Profile adopts a broad approach to inclusive education that encompasses diverse learners and is not restricted to those with identified special educational needs:

The values and areas of competence for inclusive education provide teachers with the foundations they need to work with learners with a diverse range of needs within a mainstream classroom. This is an important distinction that shifts the focus of inclusion beyond meeting the needs of specific groups of learners (e.g. those with special educational needs). The values and areas of competence reinforce the critical message that inclusive education is an approach for all learners, not just an approach for particular groups with particular needs (EASNIE, 2012b, p. 12).

Secondly, the following quote from the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers illustrates the importance of this research for all teacher educators, not only those with a particular background in inclusive education:

A key objective of the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers is to ... reinforce the argument that ... inclusive education is the responsibility of all teachers and that preparing all teachers for work in inclusive settings is the responsibility of all teacher educators working across ITE programmes. (EADSNE 2012, p.11)

### **1.3 The context of inclusive education in Ireland**

This section outlines the Irish context as it relates to ITE4I. It makes particular reference to stated policies as well as a focus on more recent research findings and a summary of actions by statutory bodies charged with different but complementary roles in relation to ITE4I.

#### **1.3.1 National policy on inclusive education**

The Department's *Statements of Strategy 2015-2017* for primary and post-primary education are the promotion of quality, relevance and inclusiveness by supporting schools in developing an inclusive environment for all learners:

The priorities in this Strategy are centred on the four main themes of Learning for Life, Improving quality and accountability, Supporting inclusion and diversity and Building the right systems and infrastructure. (DES, 2014a, p. 1)

The mission of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) is to provide for 'a well-educated, skilled and motivated population which contributes to economic progress, promote greater equality and social inclusion in our society, as well as enhancing Ireland's international reputation'. (DES, 2014, p.1)

The DES adopts a broad interpretation of inclusion that focuses upon social inclusion and the importance of education among students who may have English as an Additional Language (EAL) and/or come from areas of socio-economic disadvantage. This interpretation has seen a range of DES-led actions that involve targeting interventions to address educational disadvantage, raising educational attainment, meeting the needs of learners with special educational needs, progressing the modernisation agenda, enhancing teacher education and professional development, promoting ongoing curriculum development, school evaluation and quality improvement, and providing high-quality school accommodation, administrative and financial supports.

## Provision

Consistent with international agreements and practice, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (Ireland, 2004) states that students with special educational needs should be educated alongside their peers in mainstream schools, unless the nature or degree of those needs is such that to do so would be inconsistent with the best interests of the student with special educational needs, or the effective provision of education for students with whom the student with special educational needs is to be educated. In this context, the Department funds a range of resources and supports for learners with special educational needs including learning support and resource teachers, special needs assistants (SNAs), assistive technology, specialist equipment, adapted buildings and special school transport arrangements. Other supports for students include the Delivering Equality of Opportunities in Schools (DEIS) which focuses on providing additional supports to schools that serve communities at risk of disadvantage and social exclusion.

A new model of provision was introduced recently for the allocation of additional teaching resources, tailored to a school's educational profile (DES, 2017)<sup>3</sup>. Such a model of provision reveals the growing awareness of inclusion as a concept that extends beyond disability or identified special educational needs. Such a policy shift places schools at the heart of decisions associated with the use of the resources for those they believe to be at risk of not learning. It also highlights once more the centrality of teachers and school leaders in ensuring that modes of provision result in ensuring that all learners have access to, participate in and benefit from the Irish educational system (Ireland, 1998). This has implications for teacher preparation programmes in that decisions on how best to use and determine the impact of resources form part of what it means to be an inclusive teacher. It is noted that some policy documentation speaks of the 'special education teacher' (DES, 2016, p. 13) in place of the 'learning support' or 'resource teacher', although there are no specific criteria defining the role of 'special education teacher'.

Within the Irish educational system, 99.2% of students attend mainstream schools, with 1 in 5 teachers (c.13,000 whole-time-equivalents) being assigned on the basis of responding to needs associated with disability, disadvantage and learning difficulties. However, what is not so clear is the exact number of teachers who have secured additional qualifications and the extent to which they are using such qualifications in the context of their teaching (O'Gorman & Drudy, 2010). As well as designated teaching hours, schools may also receive the support of special needs assistants, again c. 13,000 wtes, to attend to the significant care needs of identified students. Of note is the continued and significant increase in special classes within mainstream schools<sup>4</sup>. However, it is not currently known what the qualifications are of teachers in special classes, nor the relationship between such classes and ITE/induction practices.

Curricular advances in this regard include the adoption of a universal design for learning (UDL) approach to curricular provision and accreditation as reflected in the ongoing developments associated with the work of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). Ongoing developments include the creation of a continuum of accreditation across Levels 1-3 which include students of all abilities who attend mainstream and special schools.

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3 This model was proposed by the NCSE, has since been piloted by the DES and will now come into practice in September 2017.

4 See, e.g McCoy and Banks (2016)

### **Literacy and numeracy strategy (2011-2020) re ITE4I**

The DES published in 2011 *The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020* (DES, 2011). Within that strategy, considerable attention was devoted to initial and continuing professional development for teachers. The identified critical factors that contribute to excellence in teaching included:

- Recruiting the best students to enter initial teacher education
- Developing teacher knowledge, understanding and ability including a professional commitment to reflect, improve and upskill throughout their careers
- Providing robust induction systems and high quality continuing professional development
- Ensuring greater linkages and coherence between all stages of the continuum of teacher education (DES, 2011, p. 30).

The strategy also makes specific reference to children and young people who are at risk of not learning to their potential due to a combination of factors including identified special educational needs (including exceptionally able and gifted), and forms of social exclusion including those whose first language is not that of the school. The document also highlights the need for reform in teacher education and the key role that the Teaching Council has to play in such reform.

### **1.3.2 Quality of provision**

In Ireland, it is recognised that central to a policy of inclusive learning being realised is the key role of class teacher and that of school leaders (Leithwood *et al.*, 2007; OECD, 2005, 2013). Irish educational policy supports such views and contends that inclusive education adds to the quality of learning for all, but is in turn significantly dependent upon the quality of professional learning accessed by teachers throughout their careers (Hislop, 2015).

#### **Inspectorate**

The quality of such provision at the level of the school and classroom is evaluated and supported by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills. The Chief Inspector's Report 2010-2012 (DES, 2013) suggests that inclusion relates to a range of learners at risk of not learning or of not reaching their potential, including learners identified with special educational needs, with additional learning needs and those who require a concerted focus to ensure educational and social inclusion (DES, 2005b). Overall findings by the Inspectorate were positive (80% satisfactory or better) with certain aspects requiring attention including, communication and planning so as to provide a more cohesive and effective system of support that included attention to the number of teachers delivering support. Other recommendations included an increased use of in-class supports such as team teaching and an extension of classroom practices that supported both the learner and the learning experience.

## Support Services

The quality of provision for inclusive learning in Irish schools is supported by a range of support service personnel. The Special Education Support Service was established in 2003 with a focus on assisting established teachers to access additional professional development opportunities including those not available in Ireland (i.e. accreditation in relation to teaching learners with visual and hearing needs). Other supports for schools include the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the Professional Development Support for Teachers (PDST), the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) and the Visiting Teacher Service (VTS – for students with hearing and visual impairments<sup>5</sup>). These organisations may engage with teachers at ITE and NQT stages and do so on a formal basis through the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) and the school-based Droichead framework ([www.teachingcouncil.ie](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie)). This mode of induction pays particular attention to inclusive teaching, learning and assessment practices.

Increasingly there is recognition that school-based professional support teams, which are formally established to support NQTs, are also informally involved in supporting initial teacher education candidates. Of note, the Teaching Council's Guidelines on School Placement (Teaching Council, 2013) make reference to the potential benefits of team teaching while such collaborative practices are also central to DES policy on promoting inclusive learning for students identified with special educational needs (DES, 2014b). It appears that a convergence on collaborative classroom-based practices offers opportunities for reciprocal benefits for all involved. The DES publication *Looking at Our Schools* (DES, 2016) makes reference to the importance of collaborative practice in the context of school improvement. This point has implications for this research and is also referenced in EASNIE publications such as *Raising Achievement for All* (EADSNE, 2012a) and in EASNIE-related texts such as *Implementing Inclusive Education* (Watkins & Meijr, 2016).

## School self-evaluation (SSE)

While not a new concept, the focus of SSE now is very much on a collective understanding and a collective response by schools to three fundamental questions; 'How good is the learning experience for all students?' 'How do we know?' and 'What do we need to do now to improve?' (DES, 2016). It also asks schools to review the quality of engagement in relation to how learners are included and teachers supported to ensure that all learners benefit from their interaction with their teachers and with their peers.

In supporting schools to be more accountable to themselves and their community, principals are offered specific professional development opportunities to examine how school self-evaluation can be conducted to address both attainment, as set by national and international standards, and more personalised student achievement, with a clear focus on classroom practice.

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<sup>5</sup> As of the 20th March 2017, the management of the Special Education Support Service, the National Behaviour Support Service and the Visiting Teacher Service for Children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and for Children who are Blind/Visually Impaired has transferred to the National Council for Special Education.

### **Additional recognised qualifications**

In addition to initial teaching qualifications, teachers can access additional HEI accredited courses, such as a general Postgraduate Diploma in Special Needs Education, which are offered by the schools of education and funded by the DES. More specific postgraduate diplomas are also available in the area of autism, and for teachers working with students with severe and profound needs. Of note is the view that leadership for inclusion at the level of middle leadership (until recently described as middle management) is a feature of these programmes and aligns with an understanding of strategic selection of school personnel who will take responsibility for supporting ITE and NQTs in schools.

Currently, there is an anomaly in that those working in special schools may have met specific registration requirements, leading to exclusive deployment in certain settings, e.g. special classes (in special or mainstream schools) or as full-time resource teachers. While yet to be implemented, policy discussions informed by NCSE research and policy advice are attempting to ensure that teachers would be more, and not less, qualified when employed in special schools and classes (see Ware *et al.*, 2009). It is noted that no additional mandatory qualifications are required to work in special schools and classes, and that the NCSE has raised this matter in many of its policy advice papers (NCSE, 2012-2015).

Provision for those in, or aspiring to be in, positions of educational leadership have also been recently addressed with the establishment of the Centre for School Leadership. The recognition of the role of leadership in supporting inclusive learning for students and for teachers new to teaching or to the school is an important dimension of the Irish educational landscape (Donnelly, Murchú, & Thies, 2016).

### **1.3.3 Statutory bodies and insights regarding ITE4I**

Of late, a convergence of purpose has centred on ITE4I in which both the Teaching Council and the National Council for Special Education play key roles.

#### **Role of the Teaching Council**

The Teaching Council is the professional body for teaching in Ireland and was established to promote teaching as a profession at primary and post-primary levels (including further education), to promote the professional development of teachers and to regulate standards in the profession. The Teaching Council has a major role to play in fostering and improving the quality of teaching generally and operates within a broader policy framework set out by the Minister for Education and Skills.

Within the context of the National Strategy, the Teaching Council has reconfigured and reconceptualised the content, experience and duration of initial teacher education with a view to ensuring that programmes provide adequate time for learning experiences and learning outcomes that will develop and assess student teachers' understanding and ability to apply current knowledge, strategies and methodologies in areas including:

- children's language acquisition
- the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy
- the use of assessment for formative, diagnostic and summative purposes, especially in literacy and numeracy
- the teaching of children with special and additional learning needs (e.g. SEN, EAL, etc.)
- the development of second language learning
- teaching in Irish-medium and immersion settings
- digital literacy and how ICT may be used to support and enrich learning in literacy and numeracy
- building partnerships with parents to support learning in literacy and numeracy (DES, 2011, p. 35).

The Teaching Council has developed a standards framework for each phase of the continuum of teacher education, including its criteria for initial teacher education, Droichead, the integrated professional induction framework, which was launched in March 2016, and Cosán, the national framework for teachers' learning, which was also published in March 2016. While inclusive education is now mandatory for ITE provision, questions remain as to the frequency, quality, nature (discrete and/or infused) and impact of such provision. In its review of programmes, the Teaching Council noted that the two most common challenges relating to ITE are associated with school placement and inclusive education.

The concept of what is legitimate teacher learning and the role of schools as sites for learning for teachers as well as students is increasingly referenced in the literature. An example of such interplay is the use of team teaching as an example of ongoing teacher learning in the Teaching Council's Cosán document (Teaching Council, 2016, p. 17).

The potential positive impact that teacher education (including leadership) can play in promoting inclusive learning is a frequently referenced point of discussion in both the published research and policy advice of the NCSE.

## Role of NCSE

Charged in part with providing research-based quality advice to the DES, the NCSE has produced a range of publications which point to the aforementioned centrality of the teacher in the education of all learners in Ireland.

To date such research has elicited a number of insights but also reveals a number of unanswered questions. Consequently, the most recent tender for commissioned research focuses on *Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion*.

## 1.4 The context of Initial Teacher Education in Ireland

Societal changes in recent years in Ireland have triggered a major rethink and significant overhaul of teacher education. In the context of this study of inclusion and teacher education, it is appropriate to note those developments, and this section outlines current policy and practice in teacher education in Ireland with a view to better understanding the issues and challenges associated with teaching for inclusion. The Teaching Council has developed a standards framework for each phase of the continuum of teacher education, including its criteria for initial teacher education (work on reviewing these criteria is scheduled for 2017). Droichead, the integrated professional induction framework, was launched in March 2016, and Cosán, the national framework for teachers' learning, was also published in March 2016. This section outlines some aspects of the broader landscape of teacher education and refers specifically to the aforementioned elements of the continuum.

### 1.4.1 Background to Recent Reforms in Teacher Education

Key among the factors that gave impetus to changes in teacher education in Ireland was the increasing complexity of the role of primary and post-primary teachers arising from:

- changing and more diverse learners;
- commitment to inclusion and the full participation of *all* children in their learning;
- higher educational expectations for an increasingly diverse student body; and
- new understandings and conceptualisations of learning, inclusion, curriculum and assessment.

All these have led to the need to rethink teacher education and to move towards a new extended professionalism among teachers and teacher educators. Ireland was not unique in attending more critically than in the past to teacher education matters. Various international reports such as OECD's *Teachers Matter* (2005) had pointed to the need to take a fresh look at how student teachers are prepared for their profession and how they are developed and supported over their teaching careers. While the OECD had commented favourably on many aspects of teacher education in Ireland, not least the calibre of student entering initial teacher education programmes and the esteem the teaching profession enjoyed generally in society, it had identified a number of areas that needed strengthening. In a publication prepared for the Teaching Council, Coolahan (2003) had listed these areas as follows: the need to regard the

“three *Is*” of initial teacher education, induction and in-service education as interconnected, the need for a restructuring of ITE courses to better integrate theory and practice and to foster teachers as reflective practitioners.

In Ireland, in addition, great attention was being paid to policies and practices in countries that on various quality metrics were achieving very well. For instance, the emphasis in Finland on teacher professional knowledge and professional decision-making, on the high level of teacher training at the initial stage, trust in teachers, and sense of collegial professionalism (Sahlberg, 2006, 2011) was especially influential in shaping some of the reforms that occurred in Ireland. Finland appears to be successful on two key fronts: the promotion and achievement of equity and inclusion on the one hand and high standards of academic achievement on the other. This dual success is not a feature of many other OECD countries (Hall, Ozerk, & Curtin, 2017). In relation to teacher education for inclusive practices, the policies and practices of Finland are highly relevant for Ireland.

Research evidence was showing that learning to teach is more effective when it extends beyond the initial phase through to induction and early career development (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; OECD, 2005). Comparative research commissioned by the Teaching Council and conducted by a team of colleagues in UCC (Conway, Murphy, Rath, & Hall, 2009) showed that teachers need opportunities to become critical, inquiry-oriented professionals able to investigate professional practices especially pedagogical issues and share their inquiries among colleagues. This and other work conducted in Ireland helped shape the changes that have been introduced over recent years.

The Teaching Council is the statutory body charged with regulating teaching as a profession in Ireland. This includes establishing a *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* (2012) which includes teaching knowledge, skill and competence. Importantly, the Council reviews and accredits teacher education programmes in the State. In 2011, the Teaching Council set out expectations for these programmes in terms of inputs, processes and outcomes. This was the first time in Ireland that knowledge, skills and competences for ITE were defined at national level. Up to then it was up to each Higher Education Institution to determine the learning outcomes and processes of their teacher education programmes.

All teacher education providers now have clear specifications which their programmes must meet and all programmes go through a rigorous accreditation process. Three documents are especially noteworthy in this regard: *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education* published in June 2011 (Teaching Council, 2011b); *Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers*, published in August 2011 (Teaching Council, 2011a); and, *Guidelines on School Placement* published in 2013 (Teaching Council, 2013). These documents are informed by international research and they promote a view of the competent teacher as a critical lifelong learner who is reflective, research-aware and able to engage in inquiry in relation to practice. In line with the thinking of international scholars on teacher education (such as Zeichner, 2006) these documents view teaching as complex and demanding work requiring specialised knowledge and skills. Teaching is viewed as involving technical, professional, ethical and academic expertise enabling the qualified teacher to exercise discretion and judgement in the classroom and to adjust teaching to meet the varied needs of all learners.

The Teaching Council also has responsibility for establishing and monitoring entry requirements to the profession. Places are allocated through the Central Applications Office (CAO) for undergraduate programmes. At postgraduate level, a centralised application system is also available for some HEIs – the Postgraduate Applications Centre (PAC). Some HEIs set their own mechanisms (see Darmody and Smyth, 2016 for a detailed account). Research commissioned and published recently by the Teaching Council (Darmody & Smyth, 2016) provides an up-to-date analysis of processes of entry to the profession. The evidence from this work shows that teaching in Ireland is a popular career choice especially for young women, with strong competition for places on initial teacher education programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels and for primary and post-primary programmes. Entrants to primary undergraduate (concurrent) ITE have high grades, with a significant proportion entering with 500 or more Leaving Certificate points (Darmody & Smyth, 2016).

### 1.4.2 Structure of Initial Teacher Education Programmes

Initial teacher education in Ireland is provided by a number of higher education institutions, most of which are state supported. One private college is state accredited for the provision of teacher education. Both concurrent (undergraduate) and consecutive (postgraduate) models of initial teacher education (ITE) are and were available in Ireland. The vast majority of post-primary teachers in the system hold a postgraduate diploma in education while the vast majority of primary teachers completed a 3-year BEd. Concurrent courses are common for post-primary teachers of specialised subjects with a strong practical component such as art, physical education, music, home economics, technology, etc. (e.g. 4 year BEd Sport Studies and Physical Education; BSc in Physical Education; BSc(Ed) in Materials and Construction Technology) (Conway *et al.*, 2009). More recently there has been an on-going process of mergers and alliances forming between some ITE providers, following the recommendations of the 'Review of the Structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland' (DES, 2012). Further details on the numbers of student teachers for each provider, taken from the review, are reproduced in Appendix 3.

Over the past five years all programmes of initial teacher education were required to extend the period of training. All concurrent (undergraduate) programmes of initial teacher education, must be of four years' duration and all consecutive (postgraduate) programmes of initial teacher education must be of two years' duration. The latter was also redesigned as a masters degree – Professional Master of Education (PME).

There are also post-graduate programmes for primary teachers and again these programmes are of two years' duration and lead to a PME. Since 2012/2013, all undergraduate programmes of initial teacher education are four or five years in duration, and from September 2014, all postgraduate programmes are of two years' duration.

Along with the extended duration of the period of initial teacher education is the reconceptualisation of the educational experience itself. A key principle of the new provision across all programmes is the closer integration, than previously, of theory and practice and in this regard the school placement element of the redesigned programmes is pivotal.

All programmes are required to have an extended period of school placement and the school itself is viewed as fundamental to the acquisition of an inquiry-oriented professional stance. While the HEIs have the ultimate responsibility for the programmes, schools and experienced teachers are encouraged to serve as effective mentors and co-operating teachers and school-university partnerships are essential to this agenda. Both the co-operating teacher and the HEI tutor are expected to collaborate and share expertise in fostering the student teacher's learning. In this context the Teaching Council (2011a, p. 15) is encouraging 'new and innovative school placement models' and new kinds of relationships across co-operating teachers, HEI tutors and student teachers. While school placement was part of initial teacher education for many decades and teacher education providers have a long history of involvement with schools, relationships and partnerships were usually informal and based on goodwill. In the current context partnerships are becoming more explicit and formal with some providers developing memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with their schools although goodwill remains a key feature. Overall, the view of initial teacher education in the new policy context is one that is professionally and academically enriching and which lays the foundation for the teacher as a lifelong learner.

A key understanding now in teacher education is that it is not enough for student teachers to have more time in school, important though that is; rather, the requirement is that student teachers have the opportunity to observe experienced teachers teaching and to have opportunities to discuss their observations with mentors/co-operating teachers, HEI tutors and fellow students. In other words, the new policy is one where student teachers are positioned as learners (as well as teachers) while they are in school. The extensive literature on professional learning demonstrates that for high quality learning and competence to be achieved some key elements need to be in place. With particular reference to initial teacher education, McNamara *et al.* (in Murray & Passy, 2014, p. 502) summarise these as follows: 'a communal learning culture within the school in which students are valued ... participation in a well-planned, rich and flexible variety of activities balanced between organisation and individual needs; the availability of time and space for quality learning opportunities and experiences to occur, and then further time to reflect upon them, and finally, teaching colleagues who undertake support roles and challenge learners'. The current reforms in initial teacher education promoted by the Teaching Council conform to this research base. The nomenclature itself – school placement, replacing teaching practice – is telling in the new arrangements: it emphasises the need for student teachers to gain an understanding and experience of the wider culture and practices in a school. A more broadly based experience is thus expected beyond direct teaching.

Regardless of the type of programme (concurrent, consecutive or primary, post primary) all students have to spend a considerable period of time in school during their initial teacher education course. This involves engaging in teaching, observation and participating in a range of school activities. The School Placement Guidelines (Teaching Council, 2013) state that 'over the full programme, the school-based element must incorporate, at a minimum, 100 hours of direct teaching experience ... it is expected that HEIs and schools will work towards a position where student teachers will gain direct teaching experience in the region of 200 to 250 hours' (p.12). Typically, a student teacher on an undergraduate programme spends about 24 weeks on school placement. A student on a two-year postgraduate programme spends 30 weeks of that programme in schools. In all cases, the Council requires that the second half of the programme should include at least one block placement for a minimum of 10 weeks. Within those

requirements, programme providers have flexibility in determining the duration, structure and timing of the school-based element and thus can have regard for local circumstances. Student teachers are expected to participate fully in the life of the school and over their programme must be placed in at least two contrasting placement settings. They are expected to have experience of teaching at a variety of levels of the system (e.g. classes at upper and lower primary level if becoming a primary teacher). Students are observed and assessed by their HEI tutors.

While there is no formal structured or paid mentoring scheme in operation for the mentor/co-operating teacher, and schools provide assistance to student teachers on a voluntary basis, HEIs typically offer guidance, run information days, and other forms of support to build capacity to respond to the new requirements. Among the activities a student teacher may participate in during placement (along with direct teaching of a designated class) are the following: structured observation and feedback, professional conversations with experienced teachers, and, critical reflection on practice. In the context of the theme of this study, also listed are the following activities: learning support and resource teaching, supported engagement with other professionals and with parents.

All students have to produce an inquiry-oriented study focusing on practice as a preparation for career-long commitment to research and reflective practice.

### 1.4.3 Induction

On graduation (and subject to Garda vetting), beginning teachers are eligible for conditional registration with the Teaching Council until they have successfully completed a period of post-qualification practice, which has traditionally taken a number of forms. At primary level, this was until recently a probationary process involving incidental visits from the inspectorate of the Department of Education & Skills. At post-primary level it was a period of service, which was verified by the school principal. However, the *Beginning to Teach* report (DES, 2005a) pinpointed some of the difficulties faced in the classroom by NQTs, and recommended a nationwide programme of induction for NQTs. A Pilot Project on Teacher Induction which offered training and support for teacher mentors began in 2002. This informed the Teaching Council's policy development and, in March 2016, in recognition of the importance of the induction phase of teachers' learning, and the value of mentoring and support, the Teaching Council adopted its policy on Droichead, an integrated framework for the professional induction of newly qualified teachers. Droichead, the Irish word for 'bridge', is currently being facilitated by a growing number of schools, where experienced colleagues support newly qualified teachers and formally welcome them into the professional learning community of the school and into the profession. In time, it will be the only form of post-qualification professional practice recognised for the purposes of full registration in Ireland.

In tandem with the school-based learning in Droichead, newly qualified teachers may also avail of a flexible programme of workshops, funded by the Department of Education and Skills, and designed to meet the particular professional learning needs of newly qualified teachers. The programme is coordinated by the National Induction Programme for Teachers and seeks to build on the learning that took place during initial teacher education.

#### 1.4.4 Teachers' learning

Traditionally the term 'continuing professional development' (CPD) was used to refer to teachers' continued development as professionals. More recently, this terminology is replaced by broader terms such as 'teachers' learning' or 'teachers' ongoing learning'. Consultations conducted by the Teaching Council established that many teachers have a very narrow understanding of what constitutes CPD, hence, the use of the above heading for this section.

Since 2004, the Teacher Education Section (TES) of the DES includes an official remit for initial teacher education. The TES is the main body responsible for coordinating and initiating an on-going programme of in-service professional development for teachers. Provision for the ongoing learning of school leaders and teachers includes support for various aspects but especially for projects and initiatives related to priority areas, e.g. disadvantage and inclusion, literacy and numeracy, implementing revised curricula, e.g. the new Primary Curriculum and Project Maths at post primary level. The Second Level Support service and the Primary Curriculum Support Programme operate under the TES, and the TES liaises with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in respect of teacher development needs, especially with regard to curriculum changes. The delivery of most state-supported in-service training is currently organised by support services in collaboration with the regional Education Centres (originally Teachers' Centres) on behalf of the DES. Other providers include teacher unions, subject associations, management groups and vocational education committees.

The HEIs themselves have a long tradition of providing in-service education for teachers through a wide and diverse range of award-bearing courses at certificate, diploma, masters and doctoral levels. Teachers pay their own fees and in the past were able to claim allowances on completion of their courses but this was discontinued during the government's austerity measures in 2009. It is of note, however, that a post-graduate diploma in special educational needs (PGDSEN) is funded by the DES. Teachers who are heavily involved in leading special education provision in their schools apply and are selected for this course based on school needs and they do not have to pay fees. Often, teachers continue to pursue their education studies beyond the initial teacher education stage by enrolling for award-bearing courses run by the third level sector.

Participation in teachers' ongoing learning is voluntary; there is no requirement currently that teachers engage in formal programmes in order to continue to be registered as a teacher (Coolahan, 2003). However, the Teaching Council has noted that teachers' ongoing learning is both 'a right and a responsibility' and there is now a move, as in most professions, to make such learning, broadly defined, obligatory for continued registration. At the time of preparing this Report (June 2017) *Cosán*, the national framework for teachers' learning, has been adopted, and is being further refined through a teacher-led development process. The name *Cosán*, the Irish word for pathway, has been chosen to reflect the fact that learning is, fundamentally, a journey, and one in which the act of travelling on that journey is more important than the destination. The framework identifies core values which underpin all of the Council's work: shared professional responsibility, professionally-led regulation and collective professional confidence.

Of note is that inclusion is one of the six identified key learning areas proposed for teachers' learning in Cosán. The Council interprets inclusion in broad terms and is influenced in this by work commissioned by the NCSE (Winter & O'Raw, 2010). Hence learning associated with inclusion includes any aspect of teachers' learning aimed at improving their capacity to: address and respond to the diversity of students' needs; enable participation in learning, cultures and communities; and remove barriers within and to education through the accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and arrangements to enable each student to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her attendance at school.

## **1.5 Summary and overview of the report**

This introductory section of the report has set out the context for the Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion project, in relation to policy and provision in Ireland for both inclusive education and for initial teacher education.

A literature review follows in the next section, which aims to present the key themes in recent and continuing debates on understandings of inclusive education and of inclusive pedagogy. This is set against an outline of the scope of research currently on initial teacher education for inclusive teaching, which highlights the major streams of work internationally.

This is followed by a section on methodology that sets out the research design and details the methods used for data collection and analysis for each of the data sets in phases 1 and 2 of the project.

The findings section contains much of the substantive content of the report, and presents our interpretations of the data in detail in relation to each data source. These findings are drawn together and presented with our reflections in response to each research question, in the final discussion and conclusions section.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Inclusive education: key themes and debates

Inclusion as a term was introduced into policy debates in the 1990s. The UNESCO Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) was particularly influential and led to many countries adopting local legislation related to both social and educational inclusion as well as further development in international policy such as the UN Conventions on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006). These policy developments can be traced to theoretical developments in the academy as well as associated activism, particularly in disability studies (Finkelstein, 1980; Oliver, 1990), and linked to work in sociology which involved critiques of approaches to, first, disability and, secondly, learning difficulties, based on their roots in psychological and medical approaches to considering human difference.

#### 2.1.1 Definitional debates

There is considerable debate about the definition of the term inclusion. It can be taken to encompass concepts such as access, quality, equity, plurality, diversity, social justice, democracy, equal opportunity of involvement, and to some extent of outcome (Ameson, Allen, & Simonson, 2010; Norwich, 2013); different definitions or approaches also vary in terms of the extent to which particular concepts should be emphasised in discussions of inclusion (Shakespeare, 2014).

These variations in how inclusion is conceived clearly also have practical and policy aspects – for example, on whether the focus is on location, i.e. special versus mainstream (Farrell, 2006) or on particular pedagogical approaches that can be considered inclusive (Florian, 2008). There are also variations in terms of scope, i.e. the extent to which inclusion is a term related specifically to special educational needs and disability, or, is understood more broadly in terms of how society considers and relates to difference in general. Clearly, these definitional debates and specific questions of policy and practice are underpinned by theoretical debates about how difference can and should be conceptualised (Shakespeare, 2014) and the extent to which sociological and psychologically derived positions on difference (Barton, 1986 and beyond) can be reconciled (Norwich, 2013, 2014).

There are also differences internationally in how inclusion is conceptualised. Derived initially from disability studies and ongoing dialogues between those working in disability studies and those involved in considering inclusion in educational and social contexts, Shakespeare (2014) identifies some differences in international emphasis as follows:

*Strong social model* or materialist approaches, whereby changes in social arrangements can reduce or eliminate social disadvantages related to disability. These tend to be associated with theoretical developments derived from work initially pioneered by British researchers. 'Strong' social model positions tend to be linked to associated sociological critiques of conceptualisations of difference in educational and social settings (Slee, 2014); and to socio-cultural accounts of how difference is socially and culturally constructed as 'special educational need' or disability (e.g. McDermott, 2009; Tomlinson, 2014).

*Cultural* approaches, typically associated with North American theoretical positions and practice, whereby there is not such a strong focus on social forces and economic and materialist approaches to promoting equality via the reduction or elimination of social barriers, and correspondingly a greater focus on difference as identity, and the cultural experience of difference.

*Biopsychosocial* approaches, for example critical realist approaches where disability or learning difficulties are seen as emerging from an interaction between biological, psychological and social factors, and the capability approach (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993; Reindal, 2010), which considers functioning in relation to resources on an individual level.

Independent of these theoretical and definitional debates, it is clear that in terms of policy and practice there is a move away internationally from deficit-based and discriminatory approaches to considering learning difficulties, special educational needs and diversity. At the same time, there has been a move towards models that align with the 1994 Salamanca Statement, and are informed by sociological critiques of disability and special educational needs. These models are aware of the dangers of labelling and categorisation, and are sensitive to how diversity and difference can be recognised and addressed in educational and wider societal systems in a way which recognises the worth, capability and potential of the individual (Hodkinson, 2015; Oliver, 2013). Nevertheless, and at the same time, the theoretical and conceptual debates referred to above continue to be played out in terms of varied understandings of what inclusion, inclusive education and inclusive pedagogy means and implies in terms of policy and practice.

### 2.1.2 Orientations to Inclusive Education

As Slee (2006) notes, there is often a gap between expectations for progress in inclusive education and the reality of both policy and practice. Various perspectives have been brought to bear on this:

1. **Addressing barriers and structures.** Ainscow (2007), Ainscow, Dyson, *et al.* (2006), (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006) and Muijs *et al.* (2010) have argued strongly that addressing gaps in processes and structures within schools (as well as associated mechanisms in the wider education system) is the key to ensuring the realisation of inclusive education. In particular, Ainscow (2007) has identified the crucial role of school leaders in both setting the tone for inclusive approaches as well as the importance of a structured programme of identification of gaps such as resource issues or particular working practices that hinder effective response to individual student needs. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) consider the impetus to address such gaps as being located in the value systems adopted within a school, and thus their approach is both practically orientated and value driven.
2. **Addressing teacher attitude.** There is a long-standing theme within the literature which notes that positive teacher attitudes to dealing with difference within the classroom can be positively associated with effective inclusive practice. Much of this work has been quantitative and has involved the use of Likert scale-based studies and pre- and post- studies related to particular interventions in pre- and in-service teacher

education (see for example Carroll, Forlin, & Jobling, 2003; Florian & Rouse, 2009; Forlin, 2012, 2010; Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008). This evidence base, although open to critique in terms of the extent to which it actually can demonstrate differences in experiences or outcomes for students and schools, is nevertheless quite extensive.

3. **Radical approaches to curriculum and structure.** Echoing Dewey's (1916) seminal analysis of the relationships between curriculum and political structures, Barton (1997), Oliver (2013), Reiser (2011), Slee (2014), and Noddings (1988), following the theoretical underpinnings of the strong social model, have argued that it is the overall structure of the education system within advanced capitalist societies that hinders the achievement of effective inclusion in the educational system. They point in particular to how economic imperatives intercalate with the perceived purposes of education, and thus with the construction of curriculum and systems of assessment. As such, these theorists advocate the necessity for introducing radical change into the educational system, particularly in relation to models of assessment and measurement, if inclusive education is to be realised.
4. **Teacher education.** A significant strand in the literature, linked to (2) suggests that what is required in order to bring about effective inclusive education is to improve the attitude, knowledge and skills of teachers, and thus the capacity of schools to achieve effective inclusion. This literature is increasingly international and covers both pre- and in-service teacher education (Forlin, 2012, 2010).

In identifying these strands, we do not intend in any way to imply that they are clearly delineated or distinct either in the literature or in practice. Rather, we propose that they do represent key elements in the ongoing debate about how to achieve the overarching policy objectives related to inclusion and education set out in international agreements such as Salamanca.

### 2.1.3 Positions on Inclusive Pedagogy

Another key strand in the literature focuses on definitional debates about the term pedagogy itself, the "how" of teaching in relation to effective inclusion. A number of reviews of what the evidence shows us about the overall orientation, practices and strategies that teachers should adopt or be aware of in relation to achieving effective inclusion of children with SEN, disabilities or difference, have been undertaken. For example, Sheehy *et al.* (2009) identified 134 papers out of a total of nearly 3,000 as sufficiently robust in terms of study design and sample size to warrant inclusion in their review. Their conclusions were rather general and could be viewed as overlapping with similar messages that have emerged over a number of decades from the broad literature on social constructivist approaches to learning (Norwich, 2013). The conclusions drawn included a recognition that there is evidence to support the use of peer mentoring approaches, the use of visual approaches to learning in some cases, and the importance of overall teacher attitude, in particular the importance of teachers recognising their "central responsibility for all the pupils that they teach". Such reviews themselves tend to reflect some of the definitional complexity related to inclusion, raising the question of how inclusive pedagogy itself might be defined. Again, there are sociological and psychological strands or tensions present in any attempt at definition. Lewis and Norwich (2005) have influentially criticised the idea of special pedagogy

for special educational needs, a position which tends to simultaneously increase the importance of attitude and generic skills as opposed to knowledge of categories of special educational needs when conceptualising inclusive pedagogy.

Proposals for definitions of inclusive pedagogy include Florian and Black-Hawkins' (2011) 'framework for participation in classrooms', which is discussed further in section 2.4.2. Florian (2008) considers the implications of inclusive pedagogy for teacher education, based on an account of the dynamic reciprocal relationships between 'knowing, doing and believing' in developing teachers' inclusive practices. She summarises the approach taken in the Inclusive Practice Project at the University of Aberdeen as aiming to ensure that student teachers:

- have a greater awareness and understanding of the educational and social problems/issues that can affect children's learning;
- have developed strategies that they can use to support and deal with such difficulties. (Florian, 2008, p. 206)

#### **2.1.4 Inclusion and diversity: changing perspectives**

Clough (2000) outlined a framework of five broad approaches that map the major perspectives on special and inclusive education since the 1950s:

- the psycho-medical legacy
- the sociological response
- curricular approaches
- school improvement strategies
- the disability studies critique

This is not to suggest a simplistic view of consensus or linear stages in the development of thought; rather the aim is to place some of the debates in a historical context. Arguably, the most significant shift in thinking about inclusive education more recently has been the turn to diversity and difference more broadly (Hick & Thomas, 2009). In this sense, inclusive education has moved on from the initial focus on disability or special educational needs, to encompass all learners, with particular attention to those who may be subject to exclusion or marginalisation from education. This has important implications for how we understand debates within the field, for example in relation to the notion of inclusive pedagogy, and for how we may seek to develop initial teacher education to prepare more inclusive teachers. Crowther, Cummings, Dyson, and Millward (2003, p. 63) point to a 'significant shift in thinking ... [that] needs to take place when the focus moves from the politics of disablement to the politics of social and economic disadvantage'. In terms of including diverse learners, the required 'shift in thinking' arguably needs to be broader, to encompass a focus on intersectionality in relation to race, gender and sexuality as well as class and social disadvantage.

This is not to deny the difficulties schools and school systems may encounter in engaging with the challenge of developing more inclusive practices. As Slee and Allan (2001, p. 179) point out:

There is a tendency to speak in one breath about inclusive education, but to fail to acknowledge the policy context that presses us relentlessly towards educational exclusion in the other. Here we refer to the marketisation of schooling ...

So inclusive education has increasingly been understood as encompassing all learners, particularly those seen as marginalised or more vulnerable to exclusion, but not restricted to those with identified special educational needs or disabilities. Indeed, inclusive education can also be understood in relation to social justice more broadly. For example, Fraser (2009) proposed an influential three-dimensional conceptualisation of social justice, incorporating elements of redistribution, recognition and representation. Waitoller and Artiles (2013) drew on Fraser's model to propose that:

the inclusive education movement should constitute an ongoing struggle toward (a) the *redistribution* of access to and participation in quality opportunities to learn (redistribution dimension); (b) the *recognition* and valuing of all student differences as reflected in content, pedagogy, and assessment tools (recognition dimension); and (c) the creation of more opportunities for nondominant groups to advance claims of educational exclusion and their respective solutions (representation dimension; see also Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013).

In the influential 'Index for Inclusion' (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), inclusion is conceived as a process of promoting the presence, participation and achievement of all learners. Whilst this stance reflects a broadly supported approach, it must be acknowledged that inclusive education remains a contested concept, without a clear consensus on its meanings, which remain fluid and subject to appropriation for various purposes (Slee, 2010b). These debates are inevitably reflected in policy contexts and it is therefore unsurprising that governmental agencies may sometimes revise their own definitions of inclusive education. For example, the European Agency for Inclusive Education and Special Educational Needs recently issued a Position Paper which shifted its stance from relying on a broad UNESCO definition:

Inclusive education is an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination (UNESCO, 2008, p. 3).

EASNIE's new position statement declines to offer a definition of inclusive education, but rather proposes a vision of an inclusive education system:

The ultimate vision for inclusive education systems is to ensure that all learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers (EASNIE, 2015a, p. 1).

Nevertheless, promoting more inclusive teacher education remains widely accepted as a key priority for the development of more inclusive schools and school systems (Florian, 2009, 2011).

## 2.2 Initial Teacher Education for Inclusive Teaching

There is a developing, but still quite limited, research base documenting how teachers working in inclusive settings are being – or should be – prepared for their work (EADSNE, 2012, p.37).

Donnelly and Watkins (2011) provide an account of the policy context and evidence supporting the move towards teacher education for inclusion in the European context. Hollenweger, Pantic, and Florian (2015) report an example of a regional network promoting inclusive education in South East Europe, which linked initial and in-service teacher education through a collaborative network of schools and teacher educators.

### 2.2.1 The Irish context for ITE for inclusive teaching

The establishment of the NCSE in 2005, and the emergence of its research programme, added significant impetus and concentrated effort to research associated with inclusive education in Ireland. However, to date, research on initial teacher education programmes and inclusion is quite limited, and even more limited if you adopt the view that inclusion is a series of categorised disabilities. Within this particular research paradigm, and subsequent policy advice documents, the focus on initial teacher education usually follows a common pattern of frequent reference but scant research. Examples of this practice include research conducted in the specific areas of ASD, EBD, Deaf and Hard of Hearing and other identified needs.

Of late, teacher diversity, or lack of it, in Ireland has been researched by Keane and Heinz (2016) and Darmody and Smyth (2016), who highlight the fact that the teaching population remains homogeneous, being predominantly white, female and of the majority ethnic and social class groups. Other work by AHEAD has identified the low levels of disability identified among the initial teacher education cohort (AHEAD, 2012), while emerging HEA/DES initiatives seek to promote greater representation from certain cohorts (special education, intercultural and socio-economic disadvantage).

A more nuanced research paradigm is emerging in the context of the EASNIE profile and others such as the UNESCO *Policy Guidelines for Inclusion* report (UNESCO, 2009) where a focus on a more holistic view seeks to improve initial teacher education in the context of induction and continuing professional development. These approaches suggest that teachers adopt a problem-oriented approach that also draws upon team building and peer tutoring with an emphasis on 'daily' learning. Similar views are adopted by the TALIS report (OECD, 2009/2013), where teaching students with special needs is highlighted by established teachers as the greatest challenge they face in their teaching. Isolation and lack of teamwork were the norm in the TALIS survey of 2009 and recommendations from the 2013 survey suggest that collaborative practices both within a school and in particular within classes add to teachers' sense of efficacy and well-being. The role of leadership in schools is central to teachers' learning (Donnelly *et al.*, 2016) where a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) is established that allows the continuum of learning to be part of teachers' daily lives. While conscious that 'the ties that bind may also blind' (Chin & Vasu, 2007), collaborative practices among teachers, including ITE students, offers a range of context-sensitive possibilities. In short, we are invited by the research

to date to explore what teacher learning or professional development might look like in Ireland where a complementarity of actions between the various supports for ITE can converge and adopt a more systematic, and less ad hoc, approach to ITE4I.

Caena (2011) describes continuing professional development as 'teacher learning'. In the context of ITE4I this is an important point. In Ireland, continuing professional development (CPD) is often seen as something done to teachers, while 'teacher learning' is more outward-looking and associated with identity and growth in the context of teachers' daily lives. It should be noted that the Teaching Council has of late (Teaching Council, 2016) adopted the phrase 'teachers' learning' in place of 'CPD' when rolling out its Cosán framework. Similarly, the recalibration from 'teacher training' to 'teacher education' is more than a question of semantics and indicates an understanding that being an inclusive teacher involves not just possessing the skills required but also possessing the knowledge to choose the appropriate skill at the appropriate time. The reconceptualisation of initial teacher education is also represented in the shift from the concept of 'teaching practice' to that of 'school placement', which draws conceptually from a broader understanding of what it means to be a teacher and by implication an 'inclusive teacher'. This contextual and holistic dimension to effective teaching and learning is captured in the NCSE research (NCSE, 2015).

This shift in focus is represented in the emerging research in Ireland where early attention to 'teacher training' (in the terminology of the time) and individual skill sets is now accompanied by a recognition of the importance of teacher education, teacher context and teacher collaboration for professional learning (NCSE, 2013, 2016). Of note also is the importance of teacher confidence (O'Gorman, 2007) and perceived teacher competence (Travers *et al.*, 2010). Such research has informed the engagement between NCSE and DES with regard to policy advice that makes specific reference to the importance of teachers in achieving policy goals associated with inclusion in our educational system.

This NCSE policy advice has highlighted the emerging challenges and opportunities associated with ensuring that teachers are initially and continually positioned to respond to the needs and abilities presenting in their classes and their schools. It has highlighted the conundrum that the mechanisms for identifying needs and providing resources may not always align with how best to use such resources. This is significantly the case when 99.2% of the pupils in Ireland's educational system attend mainstream schools, if not always mainstream classrooms. Such a context requires resources to be used in the collective where they can be best maximised by a combination of general and specific expertise among staff while, until most recently, they are accessed by way of identified individual educational needs. Policy advice from the NCSE also highlights how specialist settings require specialist skill sets which need to be acquired in a timely manner, if not already present at the time of appointment (NCSE, 2012). Whether the focus is on an individual student profile or a general school profile, a consistent theme in the policy advice offered by the NCSE spins on the twin axis of the centrality of the importance of the teacher and the support provided by leaders.

In the context of this study, the latter paradigm may shift our focus regarding what we understand to be a national picture of research on inclusive education. Research by Hall *et al.* (2012) on initial teacher education and the experience of being a 'student teacher' draws attention to the importance of school placement and the enculturation effect. Similar work by Clarke, Lodge, and Shevlin (2012) seeks to map out where and how student teachers access support. Both studies highlight the centrality of school placement. We add that the centrality of class placement within the school and the support or otherwise of a cooperating teacher is vital in pursuing ITE4I. By implication, the role of school leaders in supporting student teachers comes very much to the fore, for example by influencing which classes student teachers are assigned to and which staff engage with them during school placement. The importance of engagement with collaborative skills (Teaching Council, 2013) such as those required to work with fellow teachers and special needs assistants as well as parents and external agencies, including health professionals, would align with a model of provision that focuses on 'teacher learning' as context-sensitive. The recent adjustments to assessment practices for ITE and the use of portfolio-based learning, including e-portfolio, and 'teacher as researcher' also offer possibilities for the pedagogical dimension of ITE to be revisited in a more coherent and reflective fashion between classroom and lecture room. In such a space, competence and standards can align with not only having the skill set but also the mind set required, i.e. the ability to choose the right response from an ever-extending pedagogical repertoire.

Such a view shifts attention from an overly social-justice stance to one that retains a focus on social justice and values while also addressing the pedagogical skill set and knowledge needed to allow for learning to occur that is in itself socially just and promotes social justice. Such a skill set can be at one level generic but needs to respond subsequently to ever-increasing needs by acquiring further skill sets. Such skill sets need to be in the possession of programme providers also, or at the very least be accessible to programme providers via support service personnel. A greater role for support service personnel to support HEIs would be worth exploring in the context of the establishment of building capacity rather than episodic visits. Similarly, the invitation from the Teaching Council to HEI personnel interested in returning to the classroom, however briefly (Teaching Council, 2013), offers possibilities and aligns with Watkins, De Vroey and Symeonidou's (2016) view that 'teacher educators should model effective practices for teachers' (p.70). We draw strength and guidance from Watkins *et al.*'s summation:

While there is wide agreement on the content required to effectively prepare teachers for diversity in the classroom, there is as yet little evidence to indicate the most effective approaches to teacher education and how best to support a move from discrete modules dealing with 'inclusion' towards integrated content ... More rigorous follow up of new teachers and evaluation of new initiatives is also needed to gather evidence on the most effective routes into teaching. (p.70)

In summary, ITE4I as depicted by the research indicates that it requires considerable attention and the present longitudinal study is an important contribution to understanding how we can support it.

### 2.2.2 Re-balancing the ITE curriculum for inclusive teaching

One influential strand of research (Corbett & Norwich, 2005; Davis & Florian, 2004; Florian, 2008; Norwich & Lewis, 2007) has suggested that, despite traditional assumptions underpinning special education, there is limited evidence for separate specialist pedagogies for learners described as having special educational needs. Norwich and Lewis (2007) proposed that it may be helpful to distinguish between specialist knowledge of particular disabilities and categories of special educational need; the use of specialist teaching strategies and equipment; and whether these can be said to constitute a special pedagogy. This argument suggests that, whilst some learners may require more intensive teaching, this does not necessarily amount to a fundamentally different or 'special' mode of learning. Indeed, the issue of inclusive pedagogy extends beyond learners with disabilities to all learners who may be at risk of exclusion or marginalisation (Dyson & Hick, 2005; Wrigley & Hick, 2009). At this stage, no clear consensus has been established within the research literature on how best to balance understandings of inclusive pedagogy in initial teacher education, with access to knowledge about particular categories of special educational needs or disabilities (Mintz & Wyse, 2015). However, this discussion is in a sense superseded by the shift in focus away from inclusive education as concerned primarily with special educational needs and disability, towards situating inclusive practice in a broader framework in relation to diverse learners and encompassing issues of cultural responsiveness.

### **Box 1: Requirements of the inclusive pedagogical approach (from Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011)**

The inclusive pedagogical approach requires:

1. Shifting the focus from one that is concerned with only those individuals who have been identified as having 'additional needs' to the learning of all children in the community of the classroom
  - Creating learning opportunities that are sufficiently made available for everyone, so that all learners are able to participate in classroom life
  - Extending what is ordinarily available for all learners (creating a rich learning community) rather than using teaching and learning strategies that are suitable for most alongside something 'additional' or 'different' for some who experience difficulties
  - Focusing on what is to be taught (and how) rather than who is to learn it
2. Rejecting deterministic beliefs about ability as being fixed and the associated idea that the presence of some will hold back the progress of others
  - Believing that all children will make progress, learn and achieve
  - Focusing teaching and learning on what children can do rather than what they cannot do
  - Using a variety of grouping strategies to support everyone's learning rather than relying on ability grouping to separate ('able' from 'less able' students)
  - Using formative assessment to support learning
3. Seeing difficulties in learning as professional challenges for teachers, rather than deficits in learners, that encourage the development of new ways of working
  - Seeking and trying out new ways of working to support the learning of all children
  - Working with and through other adults that respect the dignity of learners as full members of the community of the classroom
  - Being committed to continuing professional development as a way of developing more inclusive practices

Lani Florian and colleagues (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Florian & Linklater, 2010; Florian & Spratt, 2013) have more recently moved this debate onto the terrain of practice through ethnographic study of experienced teachers who were seen as adopting 'inclusive' approaches. Their particular focus is on understanding teachers' craft knowledge of their own inclusive practices. Box 1 summarises the inclusive pedagogical approach (from Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011) in their work.

There has been considerable debate around whether curriculum content related to inclusive education is best addressed in separate or discrete units or modules of an initial teacher education programme, or 'infused', 'permeated' or 'embedded' across the curriculum (Loreman, 2010). In part this has arisen from a historical legacy of special educational needs being seen as a specialist area – akin to a curriculum specialism – on which only a minority of student teachers would be expected to focus. Of course a pre-requisite for comparisons between national contexts is a detailed account of the pattern of provision for initial teacher education, for example taking into account whether separate qualifications are awarded for categories of disability or special educational need (as in much of the USA).

Forlin (2010) proposes a 'reframing' of teacher education for inclusion as a central element of initial teacher education for all student teachers and with greater links between school and university learning, together with increased attention to the recruitment of more diverse learners to teacher education programmes. This approach is supported by a number of recent studies, some examples of which are summarised briefly here.

Kim (2011) surveyed students across 10 teacher preparation programmes in New York state and suggested that students showed more positive attitudes to inclusion where special education content is infused with the general teacher education curriculum. Sharma *et al.* (2008) completed a study of student teacher attitudes towards inclusion across five universities in four countries (Australia, Canada, Hong Kong and Singapore) and found evidence to suggest that:

both infusion and single subject models are effective. Based on the data available from this study, though, we cannot say whether the infusion model is better than a single unit model for educating pre-service teachers. (p.783)

Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, and Hudson (2013) reviewed course content for 109 elementary undergraduate teacher education programmes in the USA and found that, whilst many cover characteristics of disabilities, relatively few address key aspects of inclusive practice such as differentiation or teacher collaboration. Their focus was on a 'possible disconnect between what pre-service teachers are taught and what they face as practicing teachers' (p.11) and they suggest that more research is needed on how best to integrate fieldwork experience with university-based tuition. Pugach, Blanton, and Boveda (2014) provide an important review of studies of collaboration by general and special educators to develop or redesign teacher education programmes. They acknowledge that 'research on preservice preparation for collaboration and inclusion ... still seems to be in the early stages of development' (p. 158), and point to the need for a renegotiation of roles between general and special teacher educators. Developing opportunities for co-teaching by both student teachers and teacher educators is an important element of this work; however, the fundamental shift required is to situate 'special' education more clearly within a broader framework of inclusive education for diverse learners.

Lambe (2011) surveyed student teachers and interviewed teacher educators in Northern Ireland, and suggested that a 'permeation' approach to inclusive education may not always be effective, due to variations in approaches to the curriculum and to constraints experienced by teacher educators. Nash and Norwich (2010) surveyed PGCE programmes in England and found wide variations in the content related to special educational needs, with often quite limited input. They also highlighted the need for more planned links between school and university learning opportunities:

Whether trainees learn about adapting teaching to the needs of pupils with varied kinds of SENs during whole class teaching practice would ... depend on how the specific placement schools provided for these pupils. (p.1478)

Lawson, Norwich, and Nash (2013) addressed this issue through a school-based task for learning about pupils with special educational needs, within a PGCE programme in England. Florian and Rouse (2009) analysed a major inclusive practice project for teacher education in Scotland. They

suggest it may not be realistic to position student teachers as change agents and propose an approach to developing collaborative practices which can create reflective spaces for engaging with practice. Similarly Guðjónsdóttir *et al.* (2007) describe a 'praxis inquiry' based approach in a three-year study of inclusive pedagogy in teacher education in Australia, Iceland, Latvia and the UK, which focused on the complex interactions between the individual student teacher and practices in the school system. Jordan, Schwartz, and McGhie-Richmond (2009) report a longitudinal study in Canada, which emphasised the role of inclusive pedagogy in both pre-service and in-service teacher education in challenging assumptions relating to learners' fixed abilities, and enabling teachers to take responsibility for developing more inclusive practices.

### 2.2.3 Promoting positive attitudes and values for inclusive education

There is a clear consensus in the literature that initial teacher education programmes should seek to promote positive attitudes towards inclusion amongst student teachers. There have been a considerable number of studies that seek to measure student teacher attitudes, many of which focus on specific curriculum innovations at particular institutions, often giving pre- and post-intervention measures of attitudes using similar survey instruments (Cullen, Gregory, & Noto, 2010; Forlin, Earle, Loreman, & Sharma, 2011), sometimes addressing other issues such as perceptions of self-efficacy and school climate. Some examples of such studies are summarised below to illustrate the scope of the literature in this area.

Beacham and Rouse (2012) surveyed student teachers' attitudes towards inclusion before and after the introduction of a new postgraduate initial teacher education programme at the University of Aberdeen. The course aimed to make inclusion central to the programme and drew on the 'Learning without Limits' approach, which focused on challenging notions of fixed ability (Hart, Dixon, Drummond, & McIntyre, 2004). In contrast to some previous findings that positive attitudes whilst on programme may become more negative following school experience, both primary and secondary students in this study were reported as sustaining largely positive attitudes throughout.

Loreman, Forlin, Chambers, Sharma, and Deppeler (2014) provide a review of approaches to 'measuring' inclusion in relation to conceptions of inclusive education. Sharma *et al.* (2008) argue that their data shows that programme content and pedagogy do strongly influence student teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. Specht *et al.* (2015) completed a large survey of Canadian student teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards inclusion, and found that prior experience of people with special educational needs was linked with more positive attitudes and greater confidence. O'Toole and Burke (2013) for example, surveyed attitudes to inclusion amongst initial teacher education students at a university in Ireland, and found that, whilst students were generally positive in their approach, they expressed greater concerns in relation to supporting learners identified as presenting difficulties with behaviour. Booth (2011) draws attention to the values that need to inform initial teacher education in order to promote more inclusive practices, and builds on the 'Index for Inclusion' (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) to propose a draft set of 'indicators' for evolving inclusive approaches.

## 2.2.4 Inclusive education and teacher education research

Booth (2003) points to a potential for conflict between the managerialist and accountability agendas that can influence teacher education providers, with attempts to develop more values-based and inclusive approaches within initial teacher education programmes. Slee (2010b) highlights the need for teacher education to build the capacity of teachers to address barriers to inclusive education, adopting the notion of the 'cultural vigilante' in advocating that courses enable students to develop their critical thinking around issues of identity and difference.

Cochran-Smith and Dudley-Marling (2012) discuss differences in disciplinary traditions between general and special teacher education in the US context and propose areas where these traditionally separate fields can benefit from collaboration, for example through a focus on social justice. This represents a further strand of the argument that a fruitful approach to resolving differences or potential contradictions between general and special teacher education traditions lies through relocating special education within a broader approach to inclusive education for diverse learners. The notion of 'culturally responsive pedagogy' in relation to learners with special educational needs (Waitoller, 2014) draws attention to a broader understanding of inclusive education in the context of cultural and linguistic diversity and issues of intersectionality. Taking an intersectional approach as a lens through which to understand multiple markers of difference is increasingly recognised as important in this context (Artiles, 2013; Cole, 2009). In seeking to develop intersectionality theory in relation to inclusive education, Artiles, Dorn & Bal (2016) point to the dual nature of disability as both an 'object of protection', affording access to resources, and as a marker of difference invoking discrimination and injustice. This approach may help to explain the sense of a 'gravitational pull' back towards special educational needs and disability in teacher education programmes aiming to address inclusive education. Pugach and Blanton (2012) analysed programme documentation for three merged, special and general 'dual certification' teacher education programmes, and found a tendency for these redesigned programmes to continue to pay more attention to disability than to other aspects of difference and diversity.

Bhopal and Rhamie (2014) suggest there has been insufficient research exploring student teachers' understandings of 'race', diversity and inclusion within initial teacher education programmes in England. Their study points to students' complex and multifaceted understandings, and highlights a need for more practical support on how to respond to diversity and issues of race within the classroom context.

McIntyre (2009) points to the disconnect between university course content for student teachers and their learning in schools as a general problem for initial teacher education, framed as one that creates particular difficulties for introducing innovations such as inclusive education. He argues that there is wide recognition of the need to move towards greater integration of school and university experiences to address this. Ainscow (2003) goes further in describing a process of teacher development in schools as key, rather than focusing on the role of initial teacher education. From this perspective, approaches that develop inclusive classroom practices should be primarily school-based, set within organisational arrangements that will provide appropriate support for teacher reflection and experimentation. Ainscow advocates a form of collaborative inquiry, with flexibility to deal with the uniqueness of particular educational

contexts, whilst encouraging stakeholders to investigate their own situations and practices with a view to bringing about improvements. Arguably, the role of school and university partnerships in promoting inclusion within initial teacher education has been somewhat under-theorised; Waitoller and Kozleski (2013) provide a useful counterpoint to this in drawing on cultural historical activity theory to develop an account of learning through partnership settings.

The notion of a professional development school or a clinical model of teacher education has become increasingly influential. For example, in the USA this was stimulated by the initial report of the Holmes Group (1986), although this early work was critiqued as neglecting special education (Sapon-Shevin, 1990). Many examples of this approach have since been developed, and this shift towards school-based professional learning is summarised in the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education's 'Blue Ribbon' panel report on transforming teacher education (NCATE, 2010). However, the central issue remains how practical experience for student teachers in schools can best be aligned with the teacher education curriculum, in relation to developing more inclusive practices with diverse learners.

Reflective learning is a well-established component of teacher education programmes, and a number of authors have considered how this might best address inclusive education. For example, Jones (2014) points to the importance of ensuring that students experience authentic 'insider perspectives' within teacher education programmes, to enrich their reflective learning in relation to inclusive education. Sharma (2010) reviews a range of strategies that could support reflective learning in focusing on inclusive practice. Baglieri (2008), writing from a 'disability studies in education' perspective, gives an account of a reflective process enabling student teachers to draw on their own experiences of difference or 'otherness', to both make meanings from social and cultural models of disability, and to make connections with their developing understandings of inclusive practices. She suggests that: 'providing teachers opportunities to reflect and connect to the experiences of persons with disabilities is a promising direction for inclusive education' (p. 601).

Overall there is a need to more clearly locate research on initial teacher education for inclusion within the broader field of teacher education research. The evidence supports the view reported in a recent literature review commissioned by EASNIE (2015b), that the balance between course content and placement experience is a key dimension of initial teacher education in preparing new teachers to become more inclusive. Equally, there is a risk that discrete courses can underpin notions of difference in ways that may undermine inclusive practice more broadly; or that a 'bolt-on' approach to additional courses on inclusion may be less effective without wider reforms which embed inclusive practice more fully. A recent UNICEF project suggested that:

Programs that lack a solid understanding of inclusion and are based on concepts of segregation or special education as their conceptual core, can often be incongruent with inclusive education (UNICEF, 2013, p. 1).

## 2.3 Summary

The key messages from this scoping review are first that teacher education programmes need to go further in addressing special education needs and disability more systematically within a broader approach to inclusive education for diverse learners; and, secondly, that student teachers and teacher educators need more opportunities to engage in inclusive practices collaboratively and critically.

Overall, there is no overwhelming evidence in the literature to support any one specific curriculum model for addressing issues of inclusion within initial teacher education. What can be concluded however is first that the literature does indicate the importance of curriculum content related to inclusive practice for all students, as opposed to focusing on a minority of 'specialists' at the initial teacher education stage. Secondly, a clear theme emerges from the literature pointing to the importance of linking curriculum content to student teachers' practical experiences.

Whilst research on measuring attitudes has been relatively well developed, there is an emerging view amongst some researchers internationally that other approaches are now needed to take the field forward, for example with a greater emphasis on longitudinal and ethnographic studies of how beginning teachers make sense of inclusive education through their practice.

### 3. Methodology and research design

In this section, we present the methodological approach and methods employed in the project. Given the longitudinal nature of the study and the multiple data sources involved, methodological choices are likely to be revised and adapted over time as we gain insights into the nature and content of data sources and the ways in which they can be inter-related in order to allow cross-analysis of the data. Such an approach is in line with our theoretical stance that the way that inclusive practices are understood and conceptualised across different national settings is complex and difficult to interpret in linear ways (Artiles & Dyson, 2005; Norwich, 2013; Slee, 2010a).

#### 3.1 The research design

The ITE4I Research Project aims to address the following Research Questions:

- RQ1: What are the components of inclusive/special education within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in Ireland for primary and post-primary teachers?
- RQ2: Do the recent changes to ITE prepare newly qualified teachers to be inclusive as identified by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) Profile of Inclusive Teachers?
- RQ3: What is the intended impact of the changes in ITE on outcomes for students with special educational needs (SEN); and do student/newly qualified teachers perceive their learning during initial teacher education makes an impact on outcomes for students with SEN?
- RQ4: What gaps are there in how current ITE programmes prepare student teachers to be inclusive as per the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers and what aspects need to be strengthened?
- RQ5: What lessons can be identified from this research for initial teacher education in Ireland and subsequent phases in the continuum of teacher education?

In order to address these questions, the ITE4I project is being delivered through a series of four linked phases:

- Phase 1 (Sept.-Jan. 2016) – Analysing ITE Programme Content (RQs 1 and 2, plus the first part of RQ3).
- Phase 2 (Feb.-Aug. 2016) – Understanding the ITE Student Experience (RQs 3 and 4).
- Phase 3 (Sept. 2016-Aug. 2017) – Understanding the NQT Experience (1st year of teaching) (RQs 3, 4 and 5).
- Phase 4 (Sept. 2017-May 2018) – Understanding the NQT Experience (2nd year of teaching) (RQs 3, 4 and 5).

This document reports on Phases 1 and 2.

## 3.2 Longitudinal design

A distinctive feature of the project is the opportunity to study change over time, in order to help us gain a better insight into how new teachers are being prepared to develop more inclusive practices in Ireland. This longitudinal element is typically absent from recent European research on initial teacher education for inclusion and is recognised by many researchers in this field as a key aim. The extension of ITE programmes across Ireland and the addition of mandatory content related to inclusive education represents a unique opportunity for our research in this context.

### Phases of data collection in longitudinal research

The process of longitudinal research is often referred to as a 'journey' (Saldana, 2003) in which it is recognised that researchers are likely to need to adjust to changing circumstances and developments as they may arise. For example, our intention was to obtain samples of data covering the range of ITE provision across Ireland that would be both manageable in terms of data analysis within the timescale and resources of the project, and sufficiently representative to enable us to draw reliable conclusions from our analysis. However, a significant process of change that is occurring concurrently with this research project, comprises the various mergers and formation of alliances developing at various rates between ITE providers across Ireland. This process adds a layer of complexity to the research, which inevitably requires the research team to engage with how this is impacting on teacher educators and their practices in relation to inclusive teaching. It is important to note how adjustments to the research process evolve, to make this explicit and to take this into account in framing and qualifying findings. A number of approaches to this task are reported in the literature (e.g. Koro-Ljungberg & Bussing, 2013) and particularly in relation to research on initial teacher education for inclusion (Young & Florian, 2013). At this stage, we would note that the longitudinal design of the project includes a likely element of methodological modification, which will be fully reported on at a later stage.

The starting point for this project is the cohort of ITE students graduating in the summer of 2016, who were the first to complete the extended programmes. For this cohort, we analysed programme documentation; surveyed teacher educators; surveyed the students; interviewed a sample of students at case study sites; and interviewed a sample of their teacher educators. The student and staff interviews are mainly focused on a small number of ITE providers, nominated as case study sites. We initially planned to identify four case study sites, but took the decision to include five. This was to provide greater flexibility and a contingency in case of withdrawal, during a period of institutional mergers. Thus five ITE providers were selected, to represent a range of primary, post-primary, concurrent and consecutive programmes, in consultation with NCSE. We also aimed for a range of types of providers and a geographical spread. The identity of ITE Providers finally selected for case study remains confidential to the research team; their characteristics are summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2: Case Study providers**

Case study sites	Case study site description
Case Study A	Post-primary: consecutive and concurrent
Case Study B	Primary: consecutive and concurrent
Case Study C	Post-primary: concurrent and consecutive
Case Study D	Post-primary: concurrent and consecutive
Case Study E	Primary & Post-primary: consecutive

The project will track the students into their first two years as Newly Qualified Teachers in subsequent Phases, and re-interview a sample of them. We have configured our data storage and analysis tool – NVivo – in such a way as to facilitate a range of further analyses as the project progresses. Whilst particular research questions form the focus for each phase, there is inevitably some overlap between research questions and phases. We will focus on key themes as they emerge through an iterative process of engaging with the data as the project progresses.

The longitudinal nature of this project enables us to analyse the data from a number of perspectives over time, performing a series of sequential but cumulative analyses. These 'waves of analysis' will involve returning to data gathered in earlier phases in order to re-analyse it from the perspective of emerging themes in later phases. At the same time, the analysis of the data from earlier phases informs that of later phases. The data gathered in Phases 1 and 2, reported here, were initially analysed independently of each other. Reflection on our initial findings from each data source identified a number of cross-cutting emerging themes, discussed in section 5. Our reflections on programme documentation in relation to both staff and student surveys and interviews enable a more in depth account of ITE for inclusion while raising issues for further analysis in Phases 3 and 4, particularly the longitudinal element provided by ongoing interviews and survey responses.

## 3.3 Methods

### 3.3.1 Literature Review

The literature review aimed to situate the project within broader research on inclusive education and on teacher education. In this sense it is framed as a scoping review, rather than as a comprehensive or systematic review. The focus here is specifically on research on initial teacher education, with the aim of highlighting key themes of particular relevance for the Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion Project. The literature reviewed focuses on the period 2000-2015 whilst highlighting the most recent published research, drawing on a preliminary journal database search and on a 'hand search' of key journals, authors and book series. This process has been informed by consultation with members of the expert reference group. The aim was to address the following tasks: identifying the major strands of research internationally relating to initial teacher education for inclusion; summarising examples of studies to illustrate these research strands; and highlighting the key findings of this field of research.

The review introduces key themes and debates in inclusive education, together with the international literature. It should be noted that an extensive literature review was not needed to formulate a theoretical framework for the research as the EA Profile provided the framework, which in itself was based on an extensive review of the literature.

### 3.3.2 Analysing programme content: documentary analysis

Our starting point was an initial scoping exercise of information in the public domain on ITE provider websites and on the Teaching Council website. ITE provider websites were reviewed to identify modules within programmes that were listed as offering specialist content in the area of inclusive education and/or special educational needs. Teaching Council Review reports were downloaded, imported into NVivo and scanned by index and key word search to identify commendations and recommendations made that were relevant to inclusive education.

The Teaching Council kindly provided access to their own analysis of primary programme pro forma, entitled an 'Overview of Inclusive Education Elements in ITE programmes (Primary)', which is included here in Appendix 2. This was based on a key word search of primary programme pro forma and describes the range of approaches evident in modules across programmes.

We negotiated access to ITE provider documentation produced in response to the requirement that all ITE programmes in Ireland should undergo a process of re-accreditation, typically involving the extension of programmes by one year. This requirement included submitting a pro forma to the Teaching Council, responding to the criteria set by the Council itself. Programme pro formas were kindly requested on our behalf from all ITE providers, by the Teaching Council of Ireland. Confidential financial and other sensitive (as deemed by the ITE Provider) information was redacted<sup>6</sup>. These documents provided us with an opportunity to examine the formal intentions and approaches developed by a range of ITE providers. The final sample submitted for analysis was re-checked with the Teaching Council, who confirmed that 13 of a total of 19 providers responded to an invitation to participate in the project<sup>7</sup>. The Teaching Council further confirmed that the programme documents submitted can be assumed to represent a total of 30 of the then 59 ITE programmes in Ireland. The Research Team consider this to be a substantial sample, which is manageable for analysis yet sufficient to allow us to draw reliable conclusions on how issues of inclusive education are dealt with in ITE documentation, across the pattern of types of provision in Ireland.

6 It should be noted that one provider has been used for piloting purposes and we do not include data from these programmes in the presentation of findings.

7 The detailed analysis by the Teaching Council confirmed that 6 from a total of 19 providers (offering 15 programmes in total) did not respond to the invitation to participate in the project. For two providers offering programmes at differing levels, partial access was given, i.e. while offering primary and post-primary programmes only the individual responsible for one of these programmes responded. In two further instances, certain programmes are actually cross-faculty; as such, the faculty with primary responsibility may have given consent for their programmes, while the other may not have responded to the invitation, resulting again in partial access. Finally, one provider declined the invitation to provide a Pro Forma, but did consent to engage directly with the researchers, while another provider consented to the issuing of the Pro Forma, but due to time constraints could not commit to redacting same. Therefore, neither Pro Forma was forwarded.

The documents offered detailed accounts of programmes, with reference to philosophy/ conceptual framework, aims, teaching approaches, assessments, modules, competences, skills, knowledge, values, school placement, and modes of delivery. In addition to the pro forma, we also had access to module descriptors for 22 of the sample of programmes. Our aim was to explore and capture the concepts around inclusive education apparent in the programmes, stated either explicitly or implicitly, in relation to the EASNIE profile for inclusive teachers. Whilst these documents provide a representation of the programmes that they refer to, we cannot make claims from them alone about the overall nature, processes and outcomes of each programme, as they cannot reveal all aspects of institutional reality. Indeed, the documents available to us were created for specific and different purposes. Bearing these caveats in mind, the documents nevertheless formed a rich database concerning what initial teacher education programmes do and/or intend to do in relation to developing 'inclusive' teachers. They also provide information on the background and context of ITE in Ireland which would enable some cross-analysis of themes with other research sources (survey and interview data).

### **Classifying module content**

Some providers explicitly name modules as preparation for Inclusive Education, but others do not. We therefore classified modules on the basis of providers' module descriptors rather than module titles, focusing particularly on learning outcomes and module content. It should be borne in mind that these documents are influenced by Teaching Council requirements for mandatory elements of ITE programmes, as listed in Table 3. Note that in this list, 'Differentiation' and 'Behaviour Management' are identified as separate elements from 'Inclusive Education', although arguably they are linked.

**Table 3: Mandatory elements of Programmes of ITE in Ireland according to Teaching Council requirements**

Early Childhood Education (Primary)/Adolescent Learning (Post primary)
Inclusive Education (Special Education, Multiculturalism, Disadvantage, etc.)
Numeracy
Literacy
Gaeilge (Primary)
The Teacher as Professional/Reflective Practitioner/Researcher
Developing a Professional Portfolio
Parents in Education – Co-operation and Collaboration
The School as a Learning Community
Preparation for School Placement
Teaching, Learning and Assessment including School and Classroom Planning
Differentiation
Behaviour Management
ICT in Teaching and Learning
Legislation Relevant to School and Classroom
The Teacher and External Agencies

We classified the modules under seven broad descriptive categories:

- Theory of Education
- Inclusive Education
- Subject-Specific
- Psychology
- SEN
- Practice Related
- Other

Modules covering sociology, philosophy and history, together with those addressing pedagogy and curriculum development, were categorised as 'Theory of Education'. Modules addressing the psychology of teaching and learning were categorised as 'Psychology'. The 'Subject-Specific' group includes modules where the focus on Inclusive Education is mediated through a specific curriculum subject (e.g. physical education, literacy, numeracy etc.). 'Practice Related' modules include both school placement and modules focused on preparation for placement experience and professional practice. 'SEN' modules comprise those that presented content in relation to, or with a clear focus on, special educational needs. 'Inclusive Education' modules comprise those named as such, having a broader focus than SEN, such as diversity and social justice. We included the category 'Other' for those modules where content information was limited or unclear for allocation to the main categories.

### **Addressing the EASNIE profile: analysis strategy**

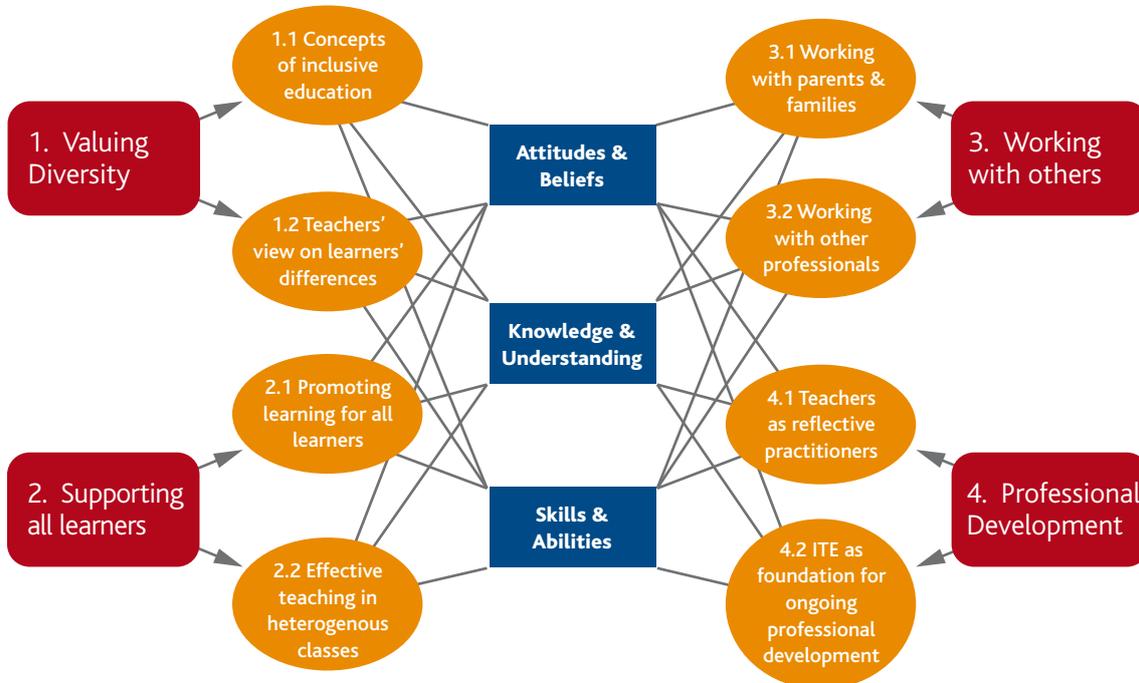
Our preliminary analysis identified sections of the pro forma documents that were the most informative for our research aims:

- conceptual framework
- programme aims
- teaching, learning and assessment strategies
- school placement strategy
- learning outcomes

Using NVivo to support the subsequent analysis, our initial coding frame focused on the core values and areas of competence described in the EASNIE profile. The basic coding matrix depicted in Figure 1 illustrates how coding in NVivo can capture the connections between document passages relevant to the areas of competence and the key elements of A: attitudes and beliefs, K: knowledge and understanding and S: skills and abilities. It should be noted that the boundaries between these categories were not always clear, as attitudes, knowledge and skills in relation to inclusion often interpenetrate, and coding involves an interpretation of the underlying meaning of each relevant passage. We aimed to be consistent throughout the coding process by following some general rules based on the verbs used:

- Where there was no explicit verb to indicate the category that the stated intention was referred to in the A-K-S frame, the relevant passage was coded under the area of attitudes and beliefs;
- Where verbs related to 'Knowledge and understanding' like demonstrate knowledge, value the importance, etc. were mentioned, the passages were coded under that area;
- If there were active verbs such as develop skills, engage with, can, etc. the passage was coded under the area of 'skills and abilities'. For example, a relevant passage where a student is expected to 'apply knowledge' would be considered to belong to the 'skills and abilities' category rather than 'knowledge and understanding'.

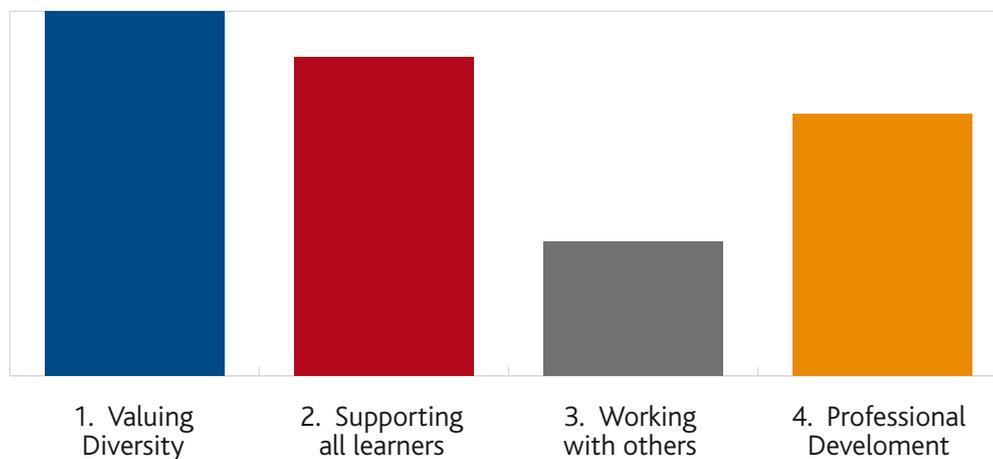
**Figure 1: Basic Coding Matrix in NVivo, connecting EASNIE profile core values and areas of competence with attitudes/beliefs, knowledge/understanding and skills/abilities**



Recognising the documentary analysis as *qualitative* interpretation as opposed to *quantitative* assessment of programme content is key to our approach. As an example, Figure 2 provides an overview of the balance of data coded in NVivo under the EASNIE core values, showing that the 'valuing diversity' and 'supporting all learners' areas are evident in more passages of the documentation relative to the 'working with others' area of competence, which was more difficult to detect.

However, these comparisons generated from our coding in NVivo should not be perceived as quantifiably 'objective' representations of document content. For example, although the area of 'professional development' is coded less frequently, this is not representative of how apparent this element is in the documents. Our preliminary overall readings showed that programmes engage thoroughly with issues relating to personal professional development and there is a deep sense of an understanding that 'teaching is a learning activity' (EASNIE, 2012, p. 16). The programmes show detailed engagement with the development of teachers as reflective practitioners throughout their documentation. The reason why 'personal professional development' appears to be coded less frequently than the other two core values is mainly due to the nature of coding large and complex documents. In order to avoid reducing analytic power by coding extensive passages under particular codes (i.e. when a theme such as professional development permeated a large section), we coded relevant passages so as to allow us to develop an indicative description of the content. Thus coding is not exhaustive in the sense of including every relevant passage since documents were often repetitive, due to their overall structure and purpose, and this should be borne in mind when assessing the data.

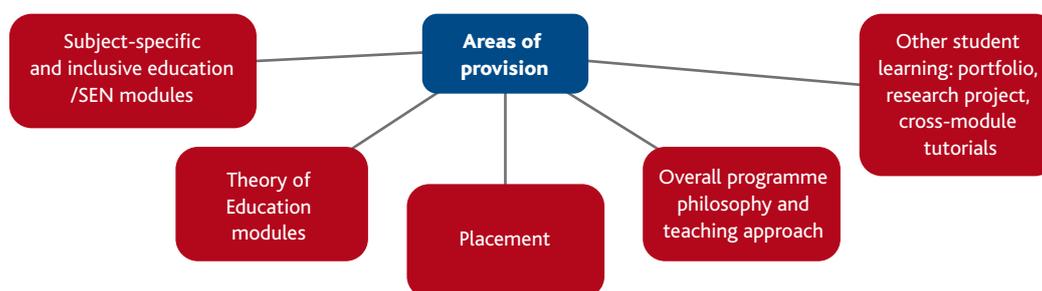
**Figure 2: Coding levels of the four EASNIE core values within module descriptors of course programmes**



### Exploring how elements of Inclusive Education are covered within programmes

Further exploration of programmes focused on not only *what* elements of inclusive education are apparent in the documents, but also *how* these elements are covered. A further layer of code-building within NVivo linked elements of inclusive education with various 'areas of provision', shown in Figure 3. In addition to particular module types, more general cross-programme features are captured here: the overall programme philosophy and teaching approach; school placement; and other student learning activities such as maintaining a reflective portfolio of professional development, research projects, and cross-module tutorials linking theory and practice.

**Figure 3: Coding of 'areas of provision' within programmes relating to inclusive education**



This coding system was used to explore the nature of provision within programmes in the five case study sites.

### 3.3.3 The ITE programme leader survey

#### Methodological approach

The ITE Provider Survey was developed through an iterative process involving a number of stages, starting from an analysis of the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers. First, close reading of the Profile established that it was not intended to be used proscriptively, but rather is presented as a tool to be adapted according to context and purpose. For example, the Introduction states:

... the Profile has been drafted as a tool to be examined and developed in ways that specifically fit within the different context of each individual country's ITE system ... it does not attempt to describe how these areas of competence should be used within different country programmes for initial teacher education ... [it] presents a starting point for stakeholders in ITE to use in different contexts in their countries ... not a final product that can be 'transplanted' into country contexts in some way. It has been developed in order to stimulate further debate in a way that may take policy makers and teacher educators in particular forward in their thinking (EADSNE 2012, p.8-9).

This approach was explored through informal consultation with members of the Expert Reference Group and with colleagues who had been involved with EASNIE in the development of the Profile. Additionally, we engaged with researchers internationally who are drawing on the work of developing the EASNIE Profile for various purposes, for example participating in an international research seminar on initial teacher education for inclusion.

Secondly, we sought to develop a typology as the basis for survey items and as an initial set of *a priori* codes for analysis of qualitative data using NVivo, based on the profile. The Profile is based on a set of four core values and eight 'areas of competence', which seek to avoid a narrow competence-based approach whilst detailing the key attitudes and values, knowledge and understanding, and skills and abilities required for inclusive teaching. We took the view that the full version of the Profile was too detailed to use directly for our survey and that a simplified typology would be required. This is included in the section of the report on the documentary analysis.

Consideration was given on how best to incorporate elements of the EASNIE Profile in the survey in order to facilitate a degree of cross-analysis with data from the documentary analysis and the Phase 2 data from the ITE staff interviews, student survey and student interviews. A set of open questions and Likert-type scale questions were developed to address the research questions and key themes from the EASNIE Profile<sup>8</sup>.

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8 The team considered in depth how best to present the elements of the profile in the survey in a way that balanced 1) the need to make the concepts being addressed clear to the respondents, 2) was not overly complex or time consuming to read and thus reduce the likelihood of response, and 3) did not introduce an element of bias in terms of how the concept should be interpreted. Giving a link to the profile with an expectation that respondents should look at this would have resulted in reduced response rates and an unacceptable element of bias and as such we are confident in the approach we adopted here.

## **Questionnaire survey**

We developed a questionnaire survey that focused on elucidating how teacher educators in provider institutions felt their programmes might be characterised in relation to the EASNIE profile, with particular reference to (1) concepts of inclusion and inclusive pedagogy and (2) course content. The full questionnaire is included in Appendix 4. It consists of two main sections:

Section (1) A series of open text questions related to the project research foci;

Section (2) A series of Likert-type scale questions.

These were designed to elucidate to what extent respondents felt that the key themes of the EASNIE Profile were relevant for their programme and the extent to which they were covered in the programme. A five-point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Not Sure, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) was used. Although there is a debate about using five-point scales to avoid bias to the neutral point (see Boone & Boone, 2012), in this case we expected some respondents in fact to be "Not Sure" in relation to some questions and using a five-point scale was felt to be appropriate.

The questionnaire survey was designed via a process of collaborative iterative review by a project sub team and was operationalised on SurveyMonkey. An initial pilot of various iterations, including the online instrument, was undertaken with colleague teacher educators at MMU, UCL IOE and at UCC. Feedback from this process as well as from the NCSE was used to refine the final online questionnaire survey.

## **Recruitment**

A full list of all providers and ITE programmes was created based on publicly available information from the Teaching Council and ITE provider websites. This included provisional contact details for each provider and, where possible, for each programme, derived from publicly available information on provider websites. Forty-one potential participants were sent an information leaflet about the project and the questionnaire survey, as per the ethics procedures approved by the Manchester Metropolitan University Ethics Committee. This was followed up by an email requesting their participation and including a link to the online survey. This email invited potential participants to consider whether there were other colleagues in their institution who could also contribute to the survey, particularly if they had relevant knowledge of particular programmes. In this case, recipients of the email were asked to forward it on to such colleagues where possible and appropriate. This initial contact took place in November 2015. Responses to the survey were tracked and a series of three reminders sent during December and up to the second week in January 2016.

## Responses

Twenty-one respondents provided complete or near-complete responses giving information on 27 programmes (out of a possible 59) from 13 institutions (some survey responses related to more than one programme). There was no response from six institutions. Given the cascade element of the distribution of the questionnaire, it is not possible to calculate a response rate easily. Nevertheless, we can state that about two-thirds of institutions provided a response relating to nearly half of all publicly listed programmes. Although it would always be preferable to achieve close to 100% response rates, given the known significant constraints on the time of tutors involved in initial teacher education programmes, we feel that this is overall a successful response to the survey.

The job titles given by the respondents were:

- Programme/Course Leader (11)
- Module Leader (4)
- Head of Department (3)
- Coordinator/Programme Leader for Special/Inclusive Education (3)

In some cases respondents referred to a specific programme with which they were very familiar and in other cases respondents referred to a range of programmes at their institution. With respect to the latter, in some instances, free text responses by these respondents indicated that they were uncertain how clearly they could assess practice on programmes with which they were less involved.

### 3.3.4 The student survey

A survey questionnaire was developed via a process of iterative consultation within the project team in collaboration with the NCSE and the Advisory Group. Based on the research questions and a mapping exercise to the EASNIE profile, it aimed to focus on final year student teachers' perceptions of their experience of ITE in relation to the intended impact on outcomes for students with SEN, and to explore their developing understanding of themes within the EASNIE Profile for Inclusive Teachers in relation to ITE programme content and placement experience. The questionnaire captured demographic information, key areas of experience prior to and during the respondents' ITE programme, and a series of statements mapped to an analysis of the attitude, knowledge and skills components of the EASNIE profile. Some questions were reversed in order to reduce overall respondent confirmation bias (i.e the risk of respondents giving the answer which they think is expected). The questionnaire was piloted a) initially with colleagues and students at the research team institutions and then b) with a selection of ITE students at UCC. Feedback from each iteration was used to fine-tune. The questionnaire was then launched on the Bristol Online Survey (BOS) tool (see Appendix 5 for the full survey). All ITE Providers were asked to distribute our e-survey to all student teachers in the final year of their ITE programme. Students were invited to provide a personal email address for follow-up contact during their NQT years.

In order to encourage engagement with the questionnaire, a targeted campaign was undertaken with several strands:

1) Contacts with ITE Providers

This was the focus of most effort and attention. Using our existing database of ITE Provider contacts we sent a series of calls to action via email and supplemented this with personal phone calls to relevant programme leaders. Personal contacts via the team at UCC were also used where appropriate to leverage engagement. For case study sites, the survey was included in the overall approach but synergies were sought between tutors involved in actions for interviews and survey and vice versa. The key message for ITE providers was that a personal message "owned" by the tutor was likely to have most impact.

2) Contacts with other organisations

We developed a database of other relevant organisations involved in education and professional development, including teacher unions, student unions, professional development bodies. A series of calls to action were made via email and supplemented with phone calls and leverage of personal contacts via UCC staff where appropriate.

3) Social media marketing

The MMU marketing department set up a Facebook boost ad campaign using selected demographics/keywords relevant to final year student teachers and this ran initially for 10 days in May.

Following cleaning, and elimination of missing records, the total sample was 437 responses with 430 complete or near complete responses. Of these, 201 responses were from primary students and 229 were from post-primary students. There was an element of skewing in terms of the response rate between providers. Responses were received from 22 providers but two of these represented 23% and 13% of the sample respectively. However, analysis of the data in terms of attitudes, skills and knowledge in relation to inclusion by provider showed no significant variations and thus the importance of this skew in the data is less important than it could otherwise have been.

Data from the Higher Education Authority indicates that the population for this cohort overall is primary students 2,011 and post-primary students 1,406. Thus the sample represents 13% of the population.

### 3.3.5 Student interviews

A sub-set of student teachers in the final year of their programme were interviewed at each of the five case study ITE providers, in order to explore in more depth their perceptions of their experience of ITE, including in relation to the intended impact on outcomes for students with SEN.

The approach taken to eliciting student engagement with the interview process was to start from their experience in schools on placement. This enabled students to talk from a position of confidence by drawing on their experiences to share examples from practice, to facilitate

a discussion of their understanding of inclusive teaching in more depth. The use of open questions, with appropriate prompts where needed was adopted in order to allow students to identify experiences they saw as significant in influencing their thinking and practice, and to assist interviewers in probing their responses. This design enabled the research team to analyse the data in relation to aspects of the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers, rather than presenting this model to the students as the structure for the interview.

This approach produced an interview schedule covering the following areas:

- an introductory preamble;
- students' approaches to inclusive teaching in practice;
- their views about their course and how their studies related to school experience;
- their understandings of inclusive teaching and the views of others who may have influenced them;
- their reflections on how their courses might be developed and their own professional development in relation to inclusive teaching.

A first draft of the interview schedule was piloted with two focus groups of students as part of a research team meeting in December 2015. These were recorded and transcribed to assist the team in reflecting on the effectiveness of the questions used.

The initial interview schedule was developed through a series of iterations during telephone and Skype conferences, and a second draft was circulated to the Project Advisory Group for comment. Detailed feedback was received from several members of the Advisory Group and the interview schedule was amended in response to these. A further draft was piloted with both post-primary and primary students at ITE providers that were not one of the case study sites. Final revisions were made before the interview schedule was used for data collection at the case study sites. The final schedule can be found in Appendix 6.

Thirty-two students were recruited for interview from the case study sites through invitations from the research team, which were sent by email from their ITE provider. The majority (27) were interviewed face-to-face during team visits to the case study sites; the remaining five were interviewed via Skype. A further 15 students were recruited from survey participants who indicated a willingness to be interviewed in their survey responses. Also conducted via Skype, these interviews represent a wider range of ITE providers, with typically only one or two students interviewed from each. Interviews lasted 30 minutes on average. Thus a total of 47 interviews were conducted during the summer term 2016 (April-June).

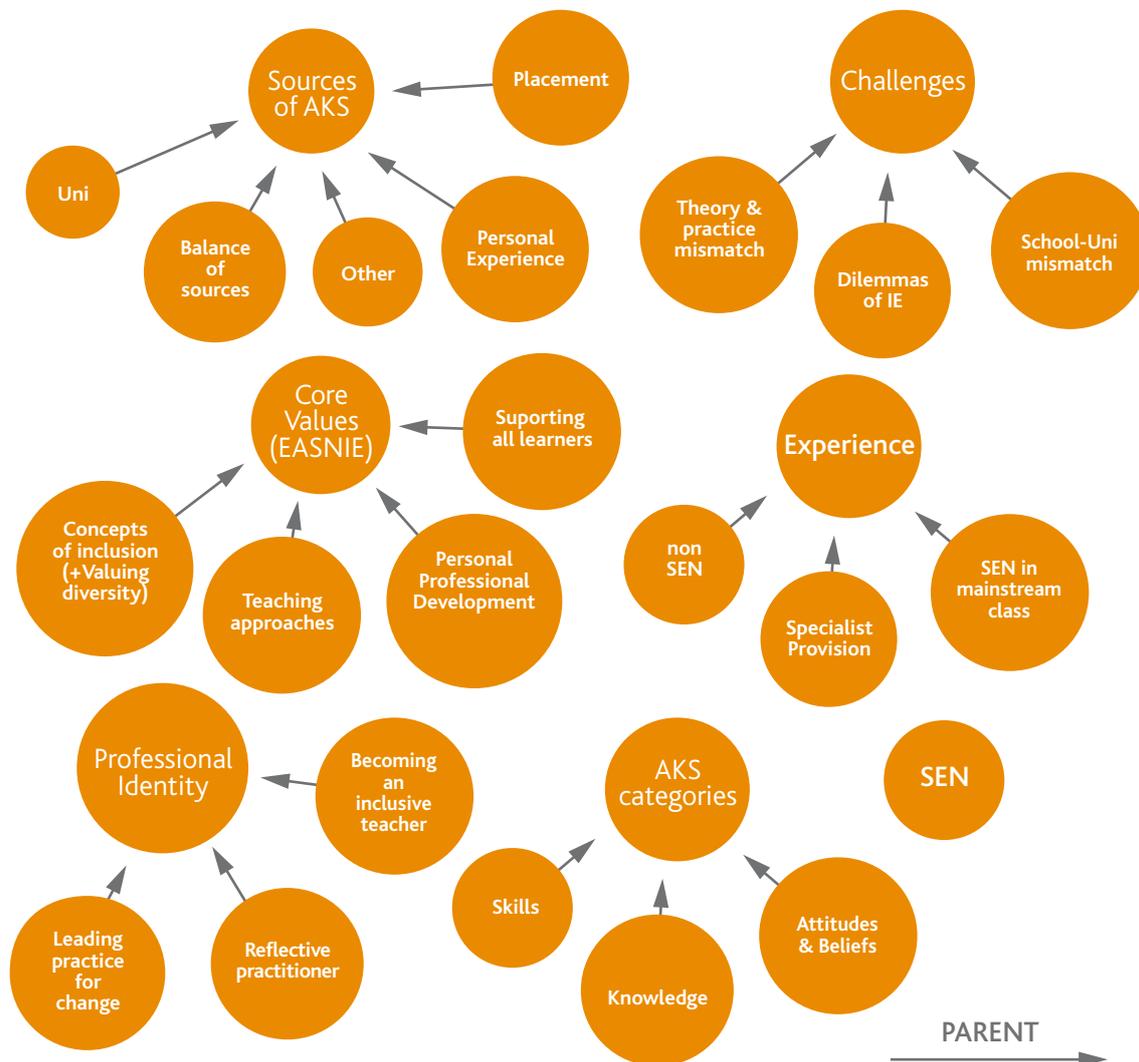
The students who agreed to be interviewed were self-selecting in that they chose to respond positively to an invitation. In some cases the invitation from the Research Team, forwarded by email by the ITE Provider, was supplemented by informal encouragement from particular tutors to participate. We are not in a position therefore to make claims regarding representativeness of the interview sample in any statistical sense. The overall profile of student interview participants is detailed in Table 4.

**Table 4: Student interview profile**

Student label	Case Study/Non-Case Study	Level	Ed. sector	Subject area
A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7	Case Study A	Consecutive	Post-primary	General (Education)
B1, B2, B3, B4, B6, B7, B8, B10,	Case Study B	Concurrent	Primary	General (Education)
B9, B11, B12, B13, B14	Case Study B	Consecutive	Primary	General (Education)
C1, C2, C3, C4	Case Study C	Concurrent	Post-primary	Physical Education, Biology, Mathematics
D1, D2, D3, D4	Case Study D	Consecutive	Post-primary	Languages, Mathematics, Business
E4, E6, E7, E17	Case Study E	Consecutive	Post-primary	General (Education)
S9V, S13V	Non-case study	Concurrent	Primary	Not available
S8V, S11V	Non-case study	Consecutive	Primary	General (Education)
S1V, S14V, S16V	Non-case study	Concurrent	Post-primary	Physical Education, Home Economics, Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics)
S2V, S4V, S5V, S10V, S12V, S15V, S18V, S19V	Non-case study	Consecutive	Post-primary	General (Education), Art & Design (x2)

### Analysis and coding

All interviews were transcribed and imported into NVivo for analysis. Although our approach is an interpretative one, the nature of our research questions directs the research design to the generation of *factual information* regarding the content of ITE provision. Hence, in our analysis we tried to capture both the experience of the student teachers and their perceptions of their acquired skills and knowledge. The coding structure was based on our research questions, the structure of the interview and the EASNIE profile, together with codes for specific areas of provision in order to locate where student teachers think that they have developed their understanding and skills for inclusive practice. Subsequent analysis generated further codes which captured emerging themes such as professional identity. Figure 4 shows the resultant node trees of parent and child nodes used for this analysis.

**Figure 4: Node trees used in NVivo coding of the student interview data**

### 3.3.6 Staff interviews

Key staff at the five case study ITE Providers were invited to participate in interviews designed to elicit further understanding of their views of ITE content in relation to the EASNIE Profile, and to compare with our analysis of staff survey responses and programme documents. The selection of participants was purposeful in the sense that we wanted to harvest the perspectives of staff working in inclusive education, special education and in leadership roles within programmes and/or schools of education, and we conducted 11 interviews in total (see Table 5 for interviewee details). Skype was offered as an option to staff participants as a matter of convenience and to ease scheduling difficulties for the research team. The shortest staff interview was 32 minutes and the longest lasted for one hour and ten minutes. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed. Full ethics consent was received and recorded for each interview.

**Table 5: Case study staff interview participants**

Case study staff interviews (n=11)	Case study site description	Roles of interviewees and labels
<b>Case Study A (n=2)</b>	Post-primary: consecutive and concurrent	Head of School (A1 Head)
		Lecturer in Inclusive Education (A2 L IE)
<b>Case Study B (n=3)</b>	Primary: consecutive and concurrent	Head of School (B1 Head)
		Head of Special Education (B2 Head SE)
		Lecturer in Special education (B3 L SE)
<b>Case Study C (n=2)</b>	Post-primary: concurrent and consecutive	Programme Leader (C1 Prog Lead)
		Lecturer in Special Education (C2 L SE)
<b>Case Study D (n=2)</b>	Post-primary: concurrent and consecutive	Lecturer in Special Education (D1 L SE)
		Lecturer in Education (D2 L)
<b>Case Study E (n=2)</b>	Post-primary and Primary: consecutive	Programme Leader (E1 Prog Lead)
		Lecturer in Special Education (E2 L SE)

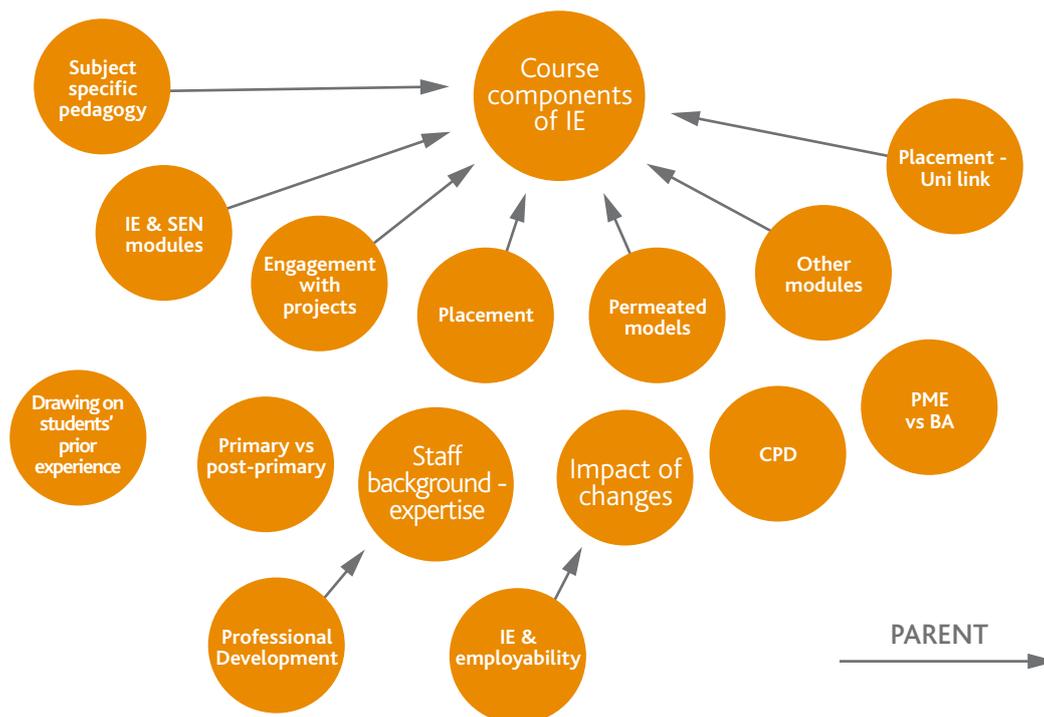
Phase one of the research drew our attention to particular issues with regard to each case study site; the semi-structured nature of the interview schedule allowed for probing questions that were specific to each site, based on preliminary findings from the documentary analysis, the programme leader survey and emergent issues from the student interviews. In this way, the EASNIE profile was reflected in the interview schedule in terms of exploring translations between policy and practice, learning from practice and the constraints and affordances of the recently changed landscape of ITE in Ireland. Accordingly, the schedule addressed the Research Questions in the context of an interview with academic staff who may not be familiar with the EASNIE Profile. The final staff interview schedule (see Appendix 7) focused on:

- general investigations of ITE and inclusion in the Irish context;
- opinions and evidence of impact stemming from the extension of ITE programmes in Ireland;
- emergent themes and clarifications from the programme leader survey;
- emergent themes and clarifications from institutional and programme specific documentary analysis;
- elements of the EASNIE 'Profile of Inclusive Teachers'.

### Analysis and coding

All interviews were transcribed and uploaded to NVivo for analysis. In addition to codes for EASNIE core values and attitudes-knowledge-skills, staff interview analysis included a number of other codes capturing local practice and change, as illustrated in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Staff interview coding nodes used in addition to EASNIE profile nodes**



### 3.4 Summary

This section has set out how our methods have been developed to enable us to address the research questions in the first two phases of the project.

It is worth emphasising at this point that the impact of the reforms to initial teacher education in relation to inclusive teaching cannot be understood through a simple unilinear or mono-dimensional lens. The trajectory of development of student teachers through their early careers as newly qualified teachers is actively negotiated by them in relation to a continually changing context in particular schools.

In common with many longitudinal studies, the landscape for this research should be seen as itself in motion, with many of the stakeholders influencing teacher education and inclusive teaching themselves introducing significant initiatives. For example, during the lifetime of the project, a number of teacher education providers have been engaged in processes of merger or of forming alliances, at varying stages and rates. Equally, new policies and approaches continue to be developed by key government agencies: for example, revised definitions of inclusive education from the Teaching Council and from EASNIE; a new resource allocation model for schools; and new arrangements for the management of special needs support services to schools.

The following section of the report aims to set out our interpretation of the data as initial findings in this context.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Documentary analysis

Our primary aim in the documentary analysis is to address Research Questions 1 and 2:

1. What are the components of inclusive/special education within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in Ireland for primary and post-primary teachers?
2. Do the recent changes to ITE prepare newly qualified teachers to be inclusive as identified by European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) Profile of Inclusive Teachers?

A secondary aim is to address the first part of RQ3 with respect to overall programme structures:

3. What is the intended impact of the changes in ITE on outcomes for students with special educational needs (SEN)?

The findings are consequently organised under three sections:

- The presentation of inclusive education content across modules – discrete and permeated approaches.
- Coverage of EASNIE core values and areas of competence in relation to Attitudes, Knowledge and Skills.
- The development of Attitudes, Knowledge and Skills for inclusive practice within overall programme structures.

We employ a mixture of text and charts to illustrate the documentary analysis. The reader is reminded that the charts in this section of the findings should not be read as representing raw quantities regarding the contents of the programme documents; rather, they are indicative of rough proportionalities and relationships, bearing in mind that such proportions are dependent on an interpretive coding of the programme document text.

#### 4.1.1 The presentation of inclusive education and SEN content across modules – discrete and permeated approaches

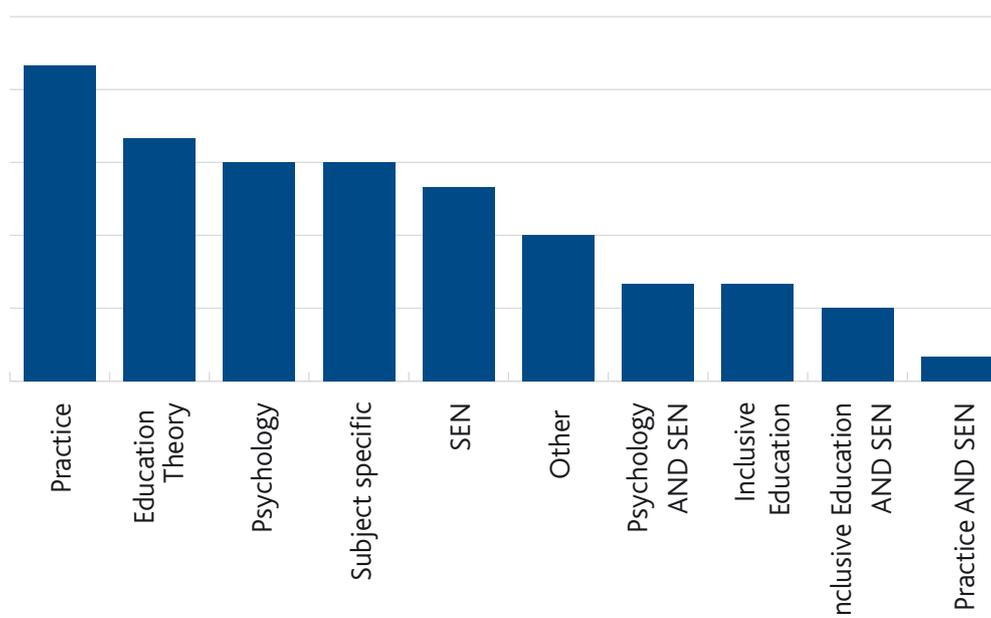
Programmes vary in terms of both the modules that address issues of Inclusive Education and the extent to which Inclusive Education is stressed as an overall approach. This observation also arose in our analysis of the open text responses in the staff survey, in which there is considerable variation in whether inclusion is considered as being delivered in discrete modules as opposed to being infused or permeated across the curriculum. The Teaching Council's analysis of the content of the pro formas (for primary programmes) produced similar findings, in terms of weighting, prevalence, rationale and content of 'inclusive education' modules (see Appendix 2). However, the presentation of specific SEN content is clearer, with modules explicitly focused on topics in SEN, together with clearly stated elements of SEN in Inclusive Education and Psychology modules.

Recall that we classified modules as follows:

- Theory of Education
- Inclusive Education
- Subject-Specific
- Psychology
- SEN
- Practice Related
- Other

Figure 6 illustrates the balance of modules addressing either Inclusive Education and SEN (or both) across the programmes in both discrete and permeated forms. Thus we see that much of the coverage of Inclusive Education is located within Practice, Education Theory, Psychology and Subject-Specific modules, while dedicated Inclusive Education modules are amongst the least represented. The number of dedicated SEN modules is greater than the number of dedicated Inclusive Education modules, while another group of Inclusive Education modules also cover SEN. A group of Psychology modules which also address SEN is similar in size to the group of dedicated Inclusive Education modules. A small number of Practice-Related modules directly address SEN through SEN placements.

**Figure 6: The balance of modules addressing inclusive education and SEN across the programmes**

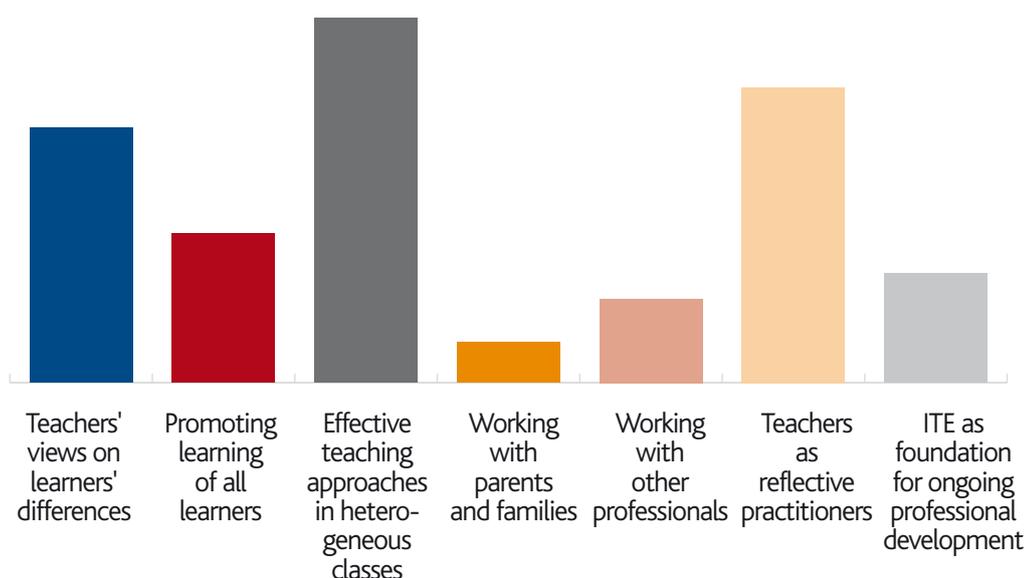


Thus while much of the coverage of Inclusive Education appears in permeated form, the data also indicate a strong prevalence of SEN focus in discrete module form. The data presented here refers to our sample of documents (representing 30 of 59 programmes) and reflects the range of approaches evident across much of the ITE system (in 13 of 19 providers) in terms of variations in the rationale, content and conceptualisation of Inclusive Education. However, different programmes, even within institutions, can have quite different conceptualisations of Inclusive Education. Some take broad approaches rooted in a social justice framework, whilst others are far narrower in their view and focus very specifically, and exclusively, on psychological and SEN perspectives. Overall, however, we found evidence for a predominance of psychological and SEN perspectives in ITE programmes. It is also noteworthy that SEN placement experience appears to be disproportionately low in relation to SEN input in taught modules.

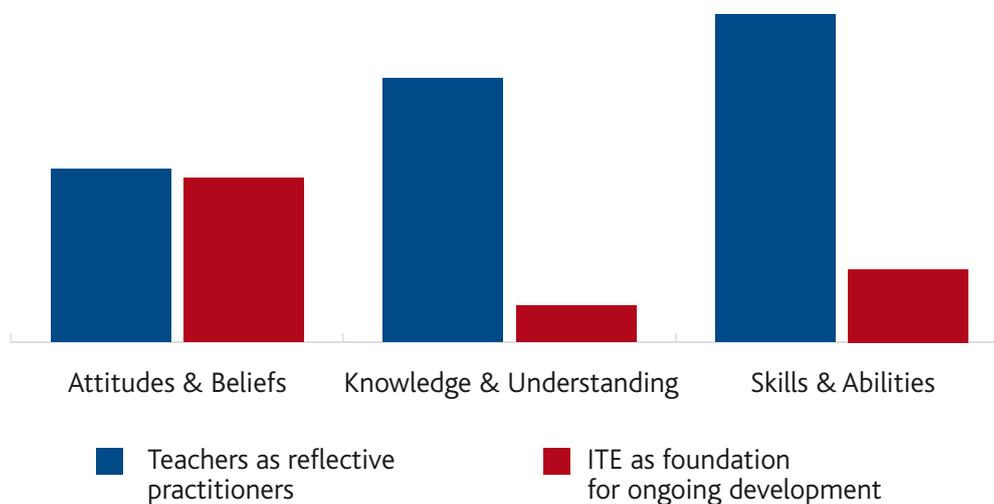
#### 4.1.2 Coverage of EASNIE core values and areas of competence in relation to Attitudes, Knowledge and Skills

Taking into account the caveats noted in the methodology concerning qualitative versus quantitative interpretations of content, presenting the four core values ('valuing diversity', 'supporting all learners', 'working with others' and 'professional development') in terms of separate areas of competence provides us with an indication of document content (see Figure 7). While the area of 'working with others' appears to be less developed within document content, 'effective teaching in heterogeneous classrooms' dominates. In this display, it is also clear that developing teachers as reflective practitioners has a strong 'presence' within ITE content.

**Figure 7: Representation of EASNIE areas of competence across programmes**



**Figure 8: 'Personal professional development' coverage within document content**



Taking a closer look at how each area of competence is covered, we can see that content related to skills and knowledge is covered more clearly with respect to the core competence of developing teachers as reflective practitioners than it is for 'ongoing professional development' (see Figure 8). Content addressing ITE as a foundation for ongoing professional learning was instead more focused on attitudes and beliefs.

**Figure 9: 'Supporting all learners' coverage within document content**

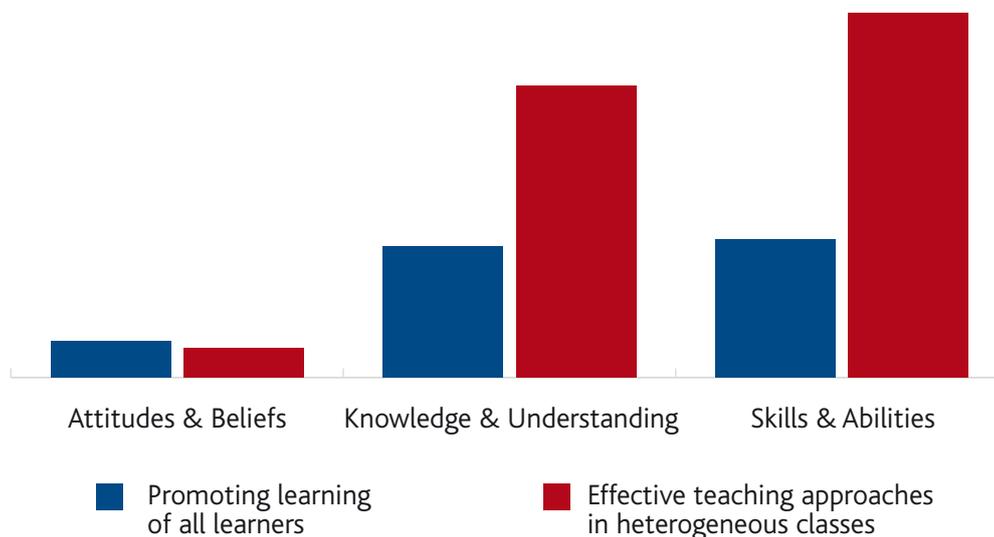


Figure 9 shows that with respect to the core value 'supporting all learners', knowledge and skills for effective teaching in heterogeneous classrooms were more clearly documented in comparison with those for promoting learning of all learners. Content on attitudes and beliefs is less documented than both knowledge and skills for the whole core value.

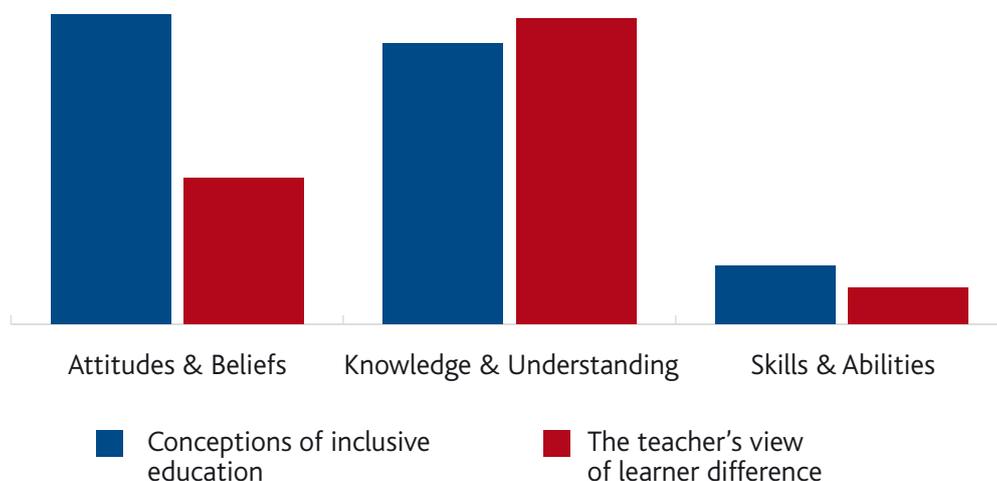
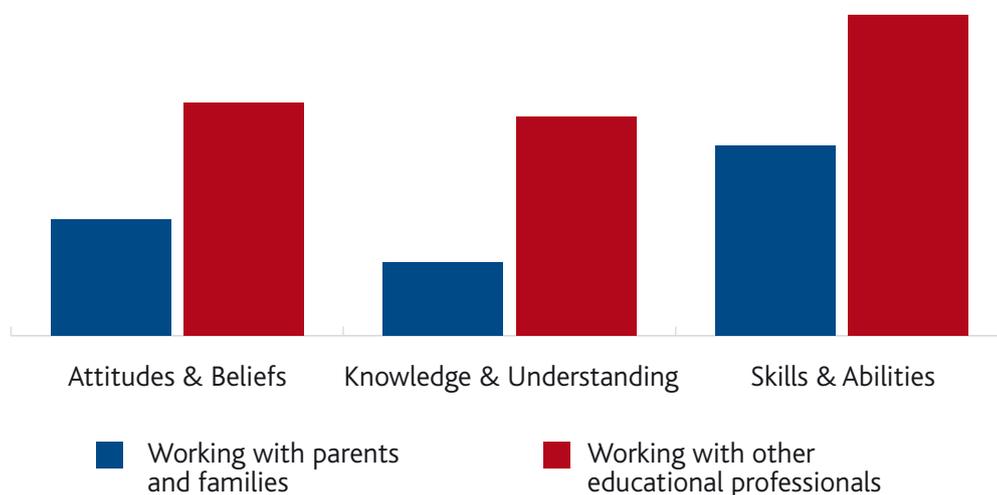
**Figure 10: 'Valuing learner diversity' coverage within document content**

Figure 10 illustrates coverage for 'valuing learner diversity'. The two areas of competence appear to be equally weighted in terms of knowledge and skills, but not in terms of attitudes and beliefs – these are more heavily documented in the area of concepts of inclusive education. It is also noteworthy that the documentation has less to say about skills and abilities in relation to conceptions of inclusive education, in comparison to both attitudes and beliefs, and knowledge and understanding.

**Figure 11: 'Working with others' coverage within document content**

Finally, Figure 11 shows that preparation for work with parents and families appears least developed within 'working with others'. However, in several passages the two areas 'working with parents and families' and 'working with other professionals' appeared to be interwoven without clear demarcation between the different skills and knowledge that student teachers need.

### 4.1.3 The development of EASNIE competences within overall programme structures at case study sites

The coding framework described in section 3.3.2 was used to analyse the documentation provided for the five case study sites, in order to understand how EASNIE competences were delivered within the overall programme structures. We present the findings here in terms of each of the four core values, and their relative appearance in the documentation in terms of:

- Overall programme philosophy and teaching approach
- Theory of education modules
- Psychology, Subject-Specific and Inclusive Education/SEN modules
- Other student-learning: portfolio, research project, cross-module tutorials
- Placement

The core value 'valuing learner diversity' has a strong presence in taught modules, and in the overall teaching and learning philosophy of the programme. It is less evident in the documentation on placement and other student learning (see Figure 12).

**Figure 12: Areas of Provision for 'valuing learner diversity': case study sites only**

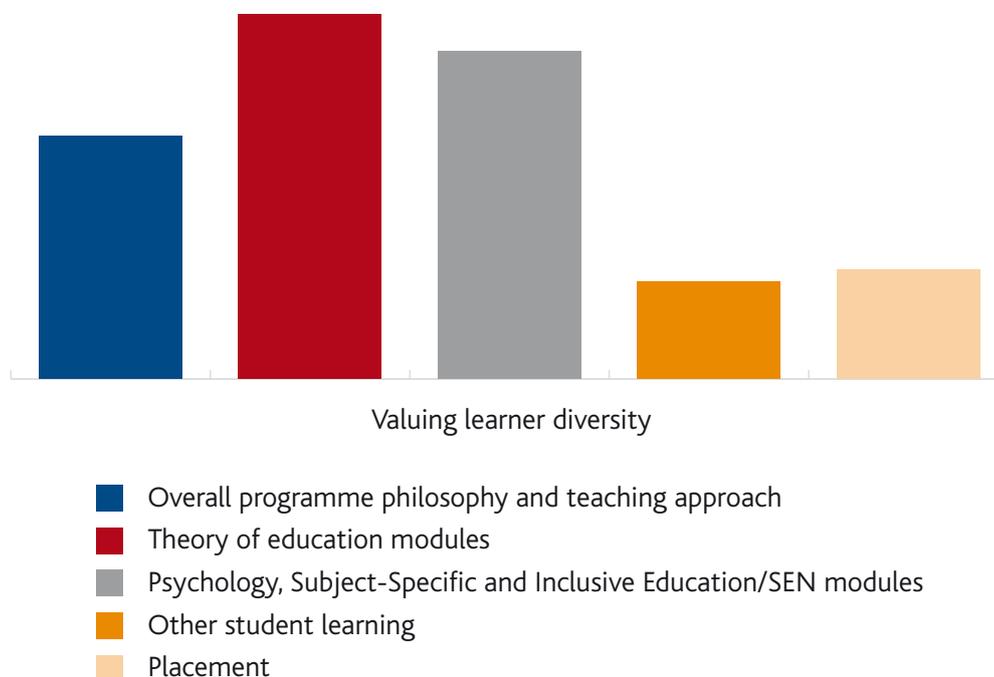
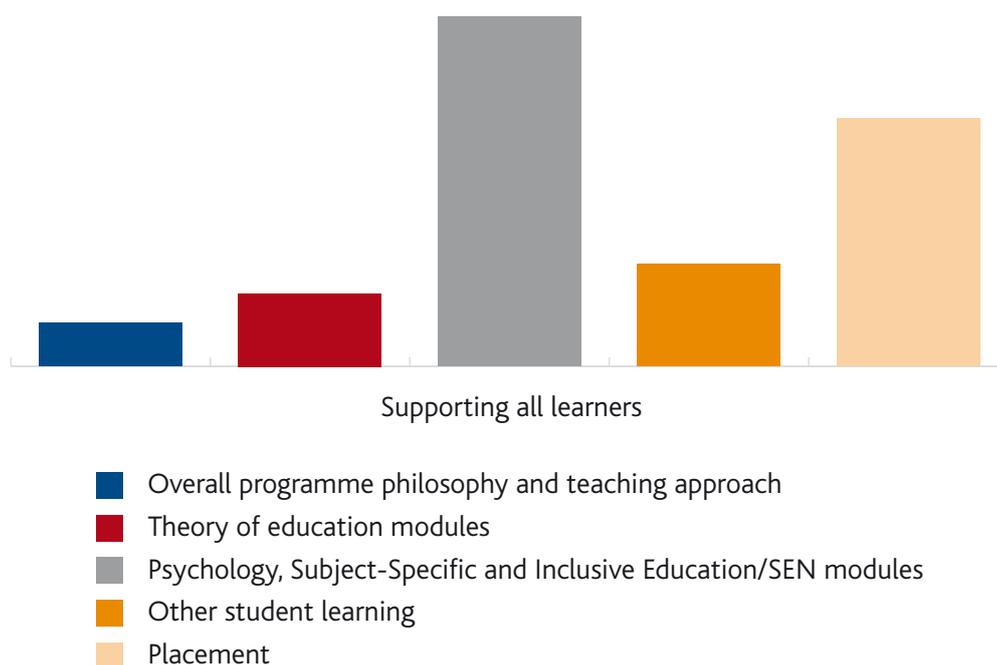
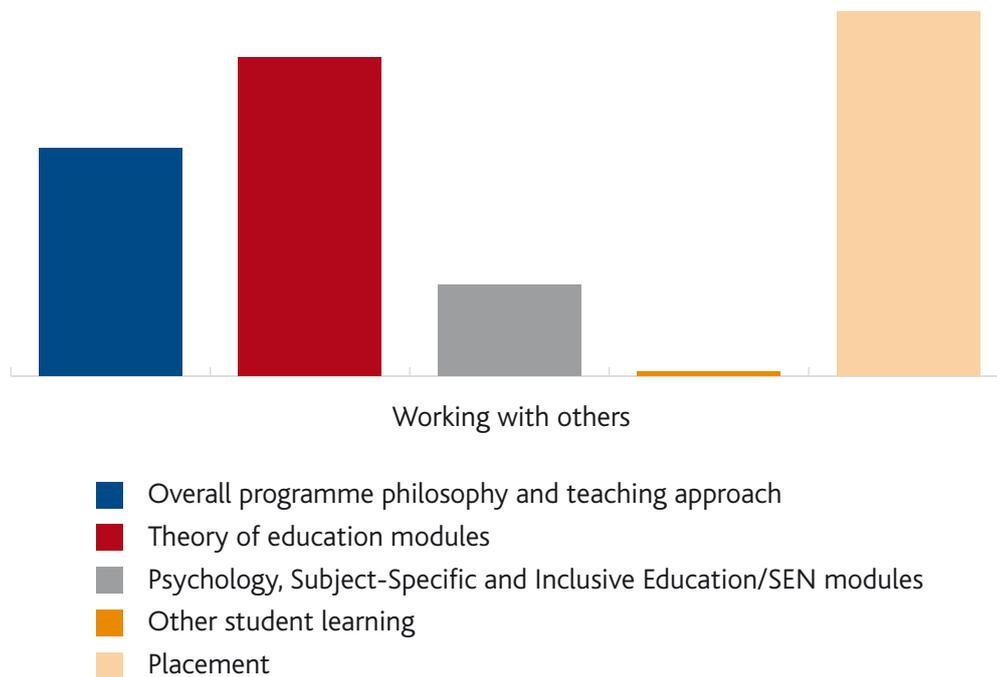


Figure 13 illustrates the core value 'supporting all learners'. Here, the data indicate that, together with placement, the Psychology, Subject-Specific and Inclusive Education/SEN group of taught modules appear to be most relevant in documenting how programmes support development of the relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes for inclusive practice. In comparison with other core values, 'supporting all learners' is not strongly represented in the overall programme philosophy documentation.

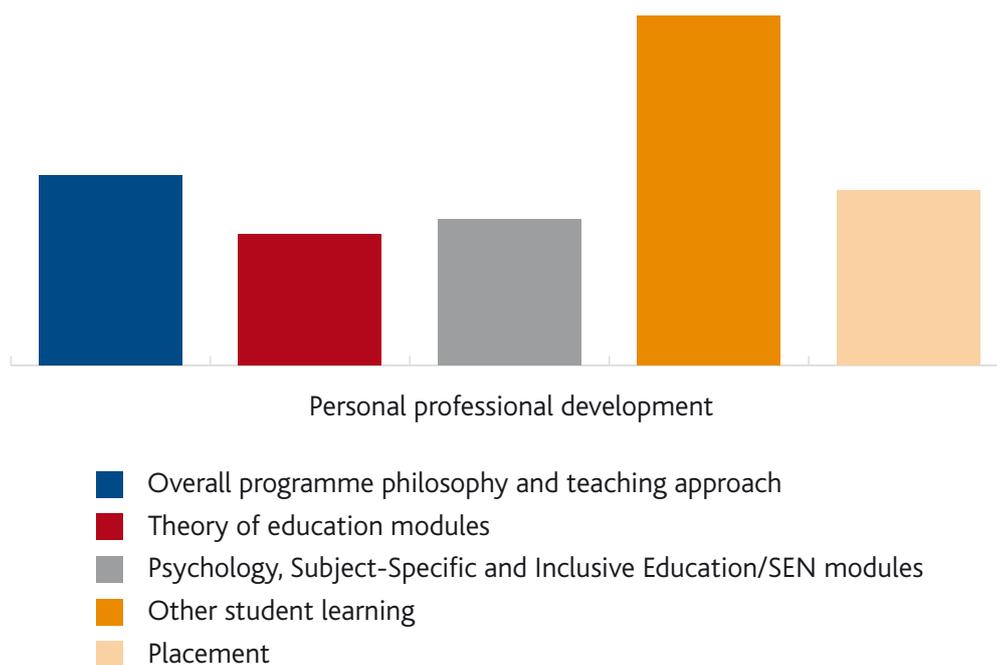
**Figure 13: Areas of Provision for 'supporting all learners': case study sites only**



Input on 'working with others' (Figure 14) appears to be developed mainly in placement experience, in combination with education theory modules. However, it should be noted that as this area has limited representation in the documents, drawing any definite conclusions regarding the areas of provision for this core value would be problematic and these data should be treated with caution, and as indicative only.

**Figure 14: Areas of Provision for 'working with others': case study sites only**

Finally, data for the areas of provision targeting 'personal professional development' offer a fairly uniform input from taught modules and overall programme philosophy, but have a noticeably greater presence in other student learning activities (Figure 15).

**Figure 15: Areas of Provision for 'personal professional development': case study sites only**

#### 4.1.4 Further commentary

Acknowledging the diversity of learners is a common theme in all programmes. Diversity is described in terms of special educational needs, social class, race, ethnicity, gender, language, ability, religion and so on, and it is mainly related to the understanding of difference and the development of an informed and ethical professional response to diverse educational needs. Evidence would point to a particular focus upon developing empathy in this regard and also on encouraging democratic schools and classrooms where learners are respected and engaged with as individuals in a world where it is indeed 'normal to be different' (EADSNE, 2012, p.12). Two of the themes in the documents which appeared to be most relevant to concepts of inclusive education were differentiation and a moral commitment towards others. For some programmes, there is a clear sociological perspective on the diversity of learners, whereas other programmes embrace and value diversity without articulating a specific rhetoric. The language of psychology and needs is frequently interwoven within the rhetoric on diversity.

The data indicated that all the programmes engage with issues relating to personal professional development and an understanding that 'teaching is a learning activity' (EADSNE, 2012, p. 16). The programmes show detailed engagement with the development of teachers as reflective practitioners throughout their documentation. Likewise, the notion of the teacher as researcher is very evident as a foundation for each of these programmes. However, as noted in the methodology section, these documents have been produced in relation to the Teaching Council guidelines, in order to provide evidence of how they meet certain requirements. Clearly, the development of future teachers as reflective practitioners is a central theme in the Teaching Council guidance.

The importance placed on the development of the future teacher as a reflective practitioner offers valuable insights into how teaching practice is conceptualised by the programmes, in ways that can be seen as additional to the EASNIE profile. In the EASNIE profile, the core competence of reflective practice is mostly articulated around the conceptualisation of teaching practice as a 'problem-solving activity', by stressing the skills of reflection on practice and of meta-cognitive and research skills as a tool for personal and professional development (EADSNE, 2012, p. 16/17). However, our analysis revealed that the approach to reflective practice articulated in the documents takes a broader view, by stressing the need for the future teacher to reflect not only on his/her own practice, learning, attitudes and beliefs, but also on curriculum policy, in order to be able to challenge the content and the process of knowledge production. The main skills for performing such a role are presented as the development of critical thinking skills, and in some cases active involvement with political debates. From this point of view, there is a linkage between reflective practice and social justice rhetoric.

Another element of reflective practice that is apparent in ITE in Ireland is the development of research-based or research-informed practice, with an emphasis on the development of action research skills. There is a focus on integration of theory and practice in the development of future practitioners, in relation to the development of professional identity. The quality of theory is acknowledged as an important element in the preparation of the future teacher. In general, there is a strong view of the teacher as an active agent in the teaching and learning process.

All documents take a view on the role of teacher as a change agent, framing both teachers and teacher educators as having potential to bring about societal and educational inclusion. There is a focus on reflective practice and research-active teachers empowered by professional development, able to lead change and have their voice heard on educational issues. At the same time, there is a view of the teacher as an advocate of pupils' rights. Such a stance indicates a strong political view of the role of teacher which, although not exclusively related to inclusive education, echoes themes that the international literature identifies in relation to the meaning and implementation of inclusive education. The idea of an empowered teacher who acts as a change agent and as an advocate for pupils' rights coincides with the view of many scholars that the development of an inclusive education system constitutes a change process of the schooling system (see for example Ainscow, Dyson, *et al.*, 2006; Barton, 1997; Norwich, 2008; Slee, 2006, 2010a).

At the same time, the documents acknowledge a context of constant change and the need for the teacher to develop the necessary skills and knowledge in order to respond to change. This is mainly presented in relation to the diversity of learners' needs; however, a further interesting theme that emerges in the documents is a tension between a changing society and more traditional notions of Irish culture and identity (ethnic, cultural, religious). The data revealed that there is a concern regarding views of teacher identity and national identity, which might imply some tacit contradictions of more inclusive approaches. The use of words such as 'challenge' in relation to the traditional Irish character of education is also interesting as it suggests opposition and debate concerning outside influences on a normalised Irish primary school teacher identity. In some documents, this tension is explicitly revealed in strong statements regarding the preservation of a particular version of the Irish teacher and a challenge to traditional Irish identity. However, this theme will need further exploration in terms of how the contextual characteristics and dynamics act together in the conceptualisations of inclusive education for specific contexts.

A final area of interest is inclusive practice within the programmes themselves. The data suggest that all programmes see the inclusivity of the course as acting as a model for future teaching practice. The inclusive character of the programmes can be seen in relation to:

- Variety of teaching styles
- Variety of assessment methods
- A range of placement experience/different school settings (some programmes state explicitly that students should gain experience in special schools or 'resource teaching' settings)
- Acknowledgement and support of students' individual experiences, strengths, needs, learning styles etc.
- The element of active learning that is expected by students
- Accessibility of the content
- Recognition of students' voices
- Respect for individuality and personal experience that students bring to the classroom

### 4.1.5 Summary

The overall picture of the document analysis revealed that all elements of the EASNIE profile for inclusive teachers (EADSNE, 2012) are visible to varying degrees within the programme documentation. Whilst some programmes take broad approaches to inclusive education that are rooted in a social justice framework, others are far narrower in their view, and focus very specifically, even exclusively, on psychological and SEN perspectives. Overall, we found evidence for a predominance of psychological and SEN perspectives in ITE programmes.

There was considerable variation in the ways in which content related to both SEN and broader approaches to inclusive education was delivered, through discrete modules and/or permeated across the curriculum. Some programmes have a comprehensive focus on inclusive education, having several specific modules together with an identifiable approach to embedding inclusive education across modules. In this sense they connect with Allan's (2008) view that programmes aiming to prepare inclusive teachers should emphasise ways that teachers can be engaged with difference and not just consider how to manage it. However, more commonly, the documentary analysis revealed relatively little evidence of strategic approaches to the permeation of inclusive education across the ITE curriculum.

The data suggest that an important location within the ITE curriculum for content related to broader approaches to inclusive education is in modules related to teaching practice. Placement experience is clearly important for the acquisition of skills and knowledge for inclusive practice, particularly skills and abilities required for teaching learners with special educational needs. A focus on providing a range of placement experiences in different settings was also underlined as important in developing students' skills for reflective practice.

In terms of the balance of coverage of aspects of the EASNIE Profile for Inclusive Teachers, there were some intriguing findings. For the core value 'supporting all learners', there was a relative absence of emphasis on attitudes and beliefs (see Figure 9). This is interesting, as this section of the EASNIE Profile covers views that may be considered to be critical to the development of inclusive practice, such as that:

- teachers' expectations are a key determinant of learner success and therefore high expectations for all learners are critical;
- the learning capacity and potential of each learner have to be discovered and stimulated;
- learners' abilities are not fixed; all learners have the capacity to learn and develop.

However, within this same core value, there was a clear emphasis on both knowledge and understanding and on skills and abilities related to the area of competence on 'effective teaching approaches for heterogeneous classes'. It may be that this in part reflects the Teaching Council requirement for mandatory content related to behaviour management and to differentiation, as this section of the EASNIE Profile covers knowledge and skills on:

- positive behaviour and classroom management approaches;
- differentiating methods, content and outcomes for learning.

## 4.2 Staff survey

Twenty-one respondents (programme leaders, module leaders, heads of departments) provided complete or near-complete responses, providing us with information on 27 programmes from 13 institutions (some survey responses related to more than one programme). The data set was downloaded from SurveyMonkey and open text responses were imported into Nvivo and coded using the same coding framework applied to the documentary analysis. This was accompanied by an overall skim review of each response set. In this section, we report first on the descriptive analysis of the Likert-style data, followed by the qualitative analysis of the open text responses. Respondents completed the survey with respect to the programmes for which they were responsible, or were involved in the teaching of, with 8 (38%) reporting on PME programmes, 9 reporting on B.Ed. programmes (43%), and 4 (19%) reporting on 'other' [in 3 cases this meant both B.Ed. and PME]. In terms of the split between primary and post-primary programmes, one-third of responses referred to primary and the remaining two-thirds to post-primary.

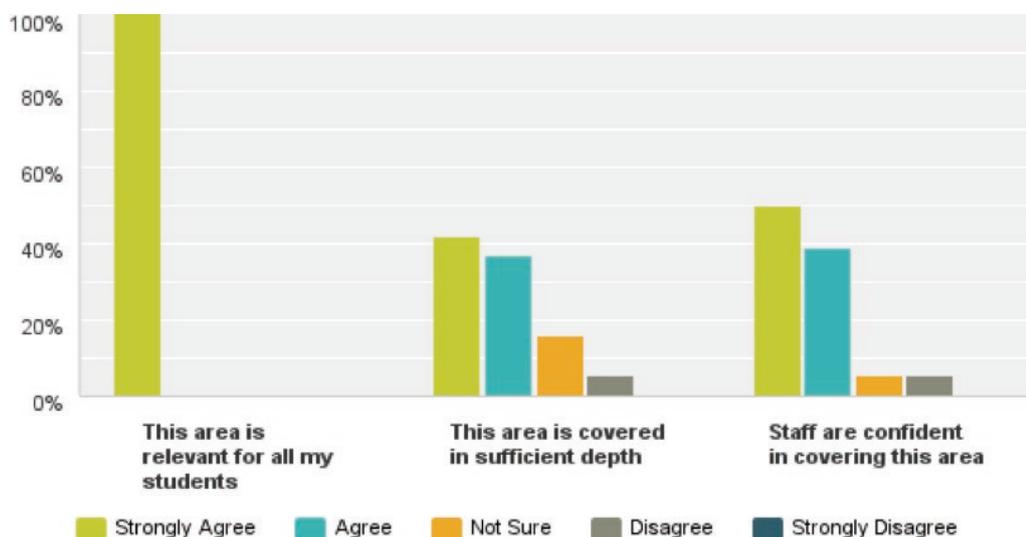
### 4.2.1 Likert scale responses

The Likert scale items addressed the eight 'areas of competence' – such as 'Concepts of Inclusive Education' – drawn from the EASNIE profile as discussed in Section 3.3.3., and as shown in Appendix 1. Each item asked respondents to rate their perceptions of their programmes in relation to one area of competence in terms of its relevance to their students, the depth of coverage of the area, and staff confidence in covering the area. A short summary explanation was provided for each item. The responses for each area of competence are illustrated in Figures 16-23.

#### **Concepts of Inclusive Education (EASNIE area 1.1)**

'Concepts of Inclusive Education' was summarised for the respondents as follows: 'This relates to wider theoretical conceptualisations of inclusion and diversity, such as how we might think about difference in society, and the key concepts for inclusive education covered in your programme.' As Figure 16 indicates, respondents all strongly agreed that concepts of inclusive education were relevant for their students; however, while over 75% agreed it was covered in sufficient depth, agreement was less strong and, the remaining respondents were not sure or disagreed. With respect to staff confidence, again over 80% agreed, but were less likely to strongly agree, with a small number unsure or disagreeing.

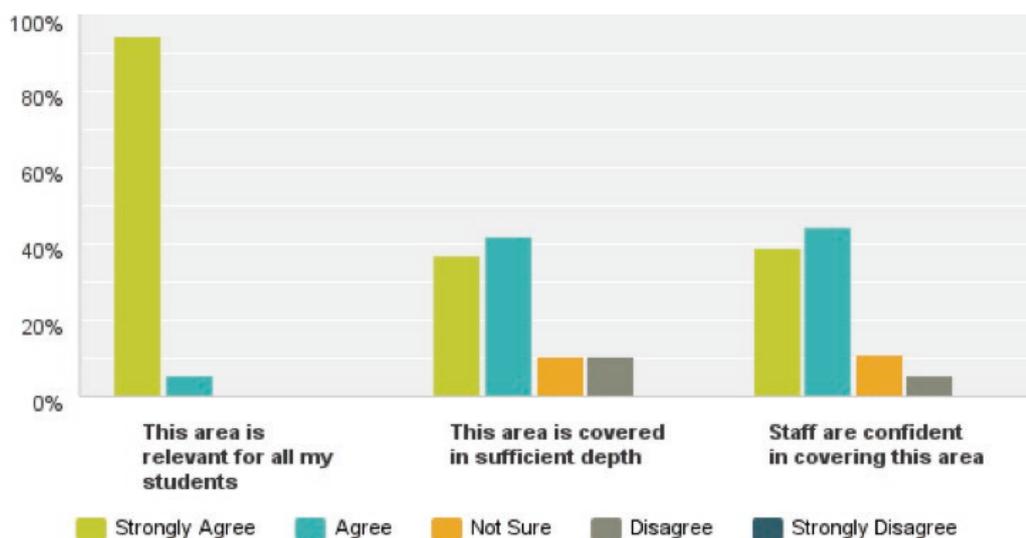
**Figure 16: Concepts of Inclusive Education**



**Developing the teacher’s view of learner difference (EASNIE area 1.2)**

‘Developing the teacher’s view of learner difference ‘was summarised for respondents as: ‘This relates to the notion that differences between learners are to be recognised and responded to positively in the classroom, and refers to how ITE students are encouraged to value learner diversity as a resource and an asset to education.’ As Figure 17 indicates, nearly all respondents agreed strongly that developing the teacher view of learner difference was relevant for their students, but while a large majority agreed regarding coverage and staff confidence, agreement was less strong, and a small number were unsure or disagreed.

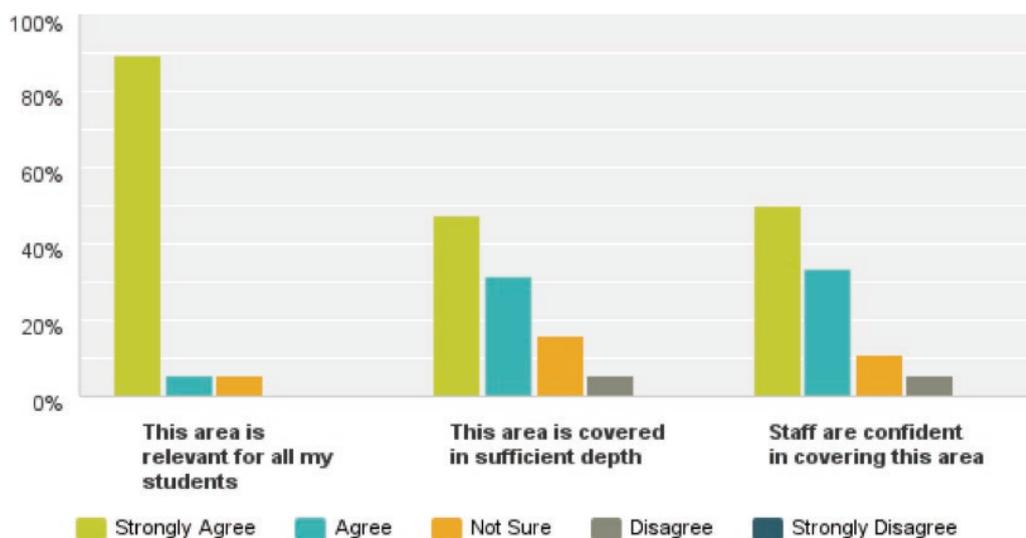
**Figure 17: Developing the teacher’s view of learner difference**



### Promoting academic, practical, social and emotional learning for all learners (EASNIE area 2.1)

'Promoting academic, practical, social and emotional learning for all learners' was summarised as: 'This relates to how ITE students are encouraged to have high expectations for all learners' achievements, including where the learning capacity and potential of each learner has to be discovered and stimulated.'

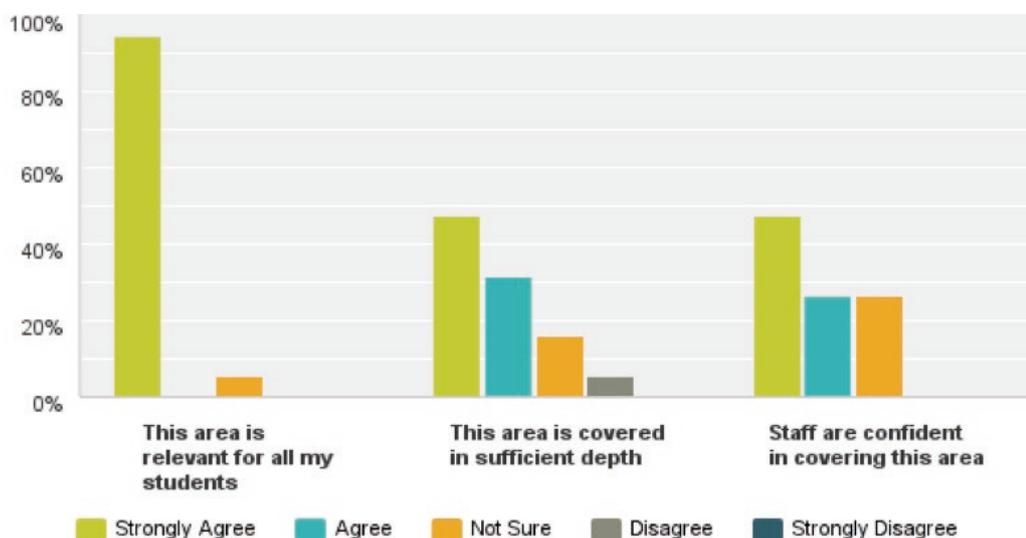
**Figure 18: Promoting academic, practical, social and emotional learning for all learners**



As Figure 18 indicates, nearly all respondents strongly agreed that promoting academic, practical, social and emotional learning for all learners was relevant for their students, but, while the large majority agreed that this was covered in sufficient depth and that staff were confident in covering this area, fewer strongly agreed, and a small number were unsure or disagreed.

### Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes (EASNIE area 2.2)

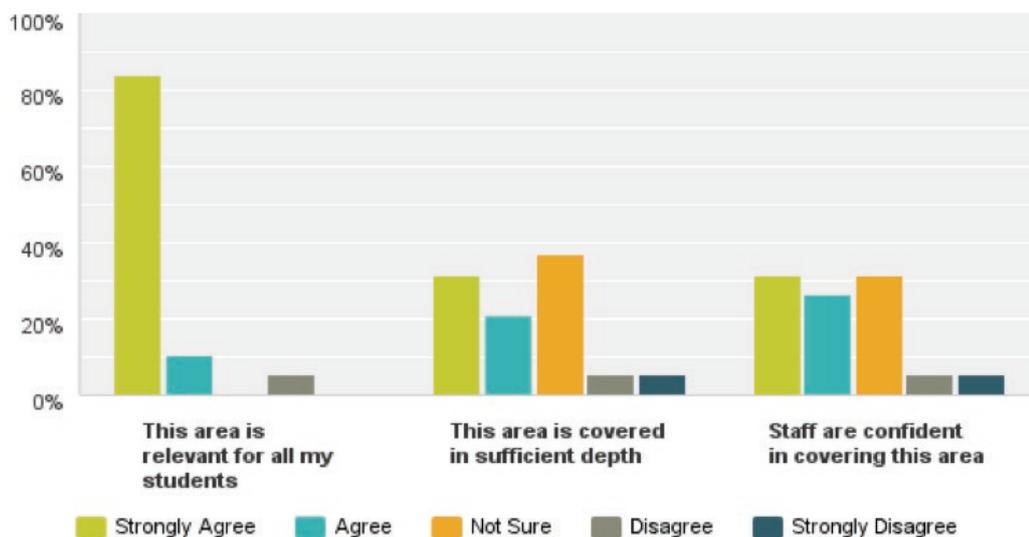
'Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes' was summarised as: "This relates to understanding how teaching strategies can be developed that will address barriers to learning and help all learners to achieve their potential, including through differentiation and personalising learning." As Figure 19 indicates, nearly all respondents strongly agreed that effective teaching approaches for heterogeneous classrooms was relevant for their students, but while a large majority agreed that this was covered in sufficient depth and that staff were confident in covering this area, they were less likely to agree strongly, and some were unsure or disagreed.

**Figure 19: Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes**

### Working collaboratively with parents and families (EASNIE area 3.1)

'Working collaboratively with parents and families' was summarised for respondents as: "This relates to collaborative working with parents and families by engaging them as partners in the learning of their children, and how ITE students are encouraged to show respect for the culture, social backgrounds and perspectives of parents and families." As Figure 20 indicates, a large majority of respondents strongly agreed that working collaboratively with parents and families was relevant for their students, but agreement dropped to around half of respondents as to whether this was covered in sufficient depth and whether staff were confident in covering this area. A substantial number were 'Not Sure' about depth of coverage and staff confidence, higher than for other areas of competence apart from the related area 'Working with a range of educational professionals'. A very small number of disagreeing respondents appear in this area, including strong disagreement regarding depth and confidence.

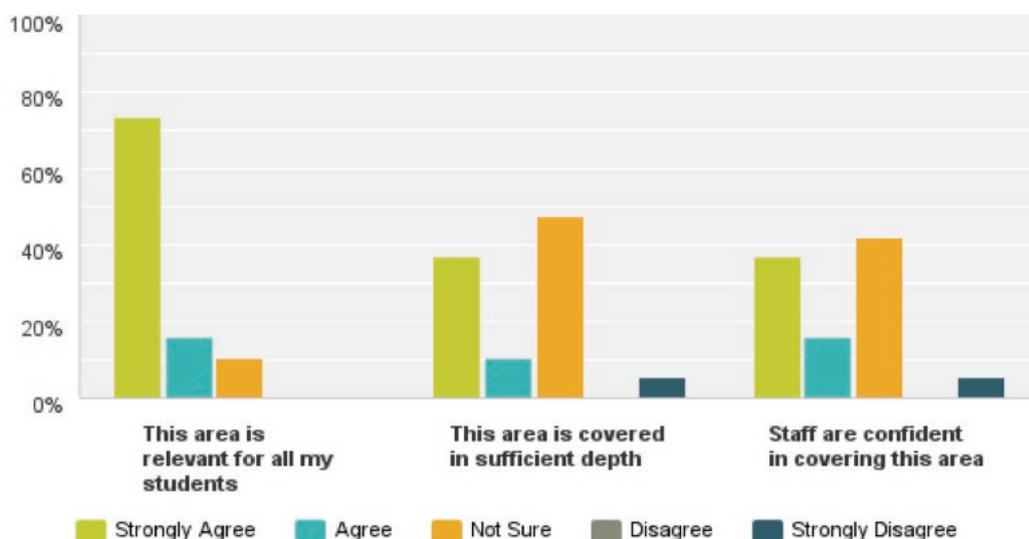
**Figure 20: Working collaboratively with parents and families**



**Working with a range of other educational professionals (EASNIE area 3.2)**

‘Working with a range of educational professionals’ was summarised for respondents as: “This relates to understanding that collaboration, partnerships and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers and how ITE students are encouraged to work effectively with other professionals to meet the individual needs of all learners.”

**Figure 21: Working with other educational professionals**

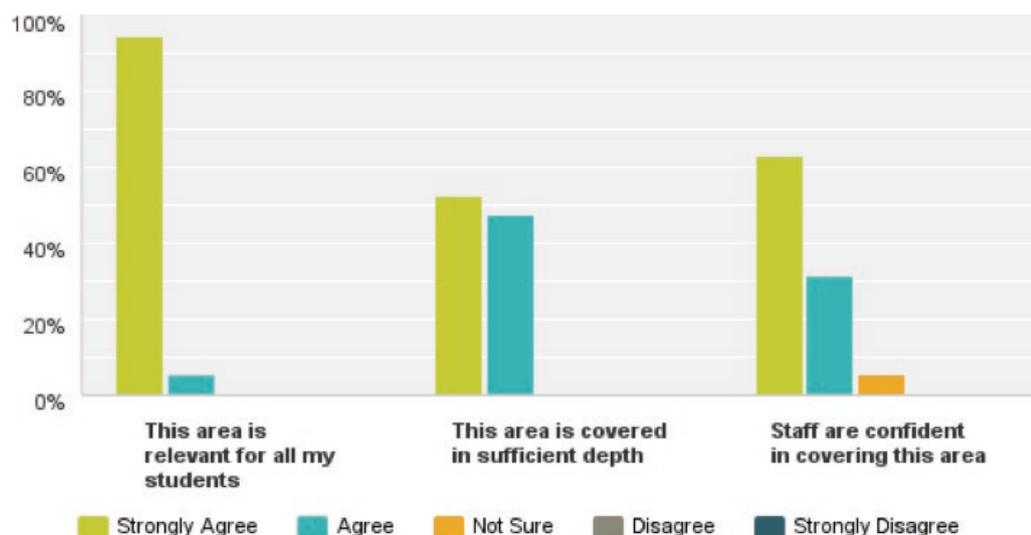


As Figure 21 indicates, nearly all respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that working with a range of other educational professionals was relevant for their students, although the level of agreement was not as high as for previous areas of competence. Although around half of respondents agreed (some strongly) that the area was covered in sufficient depth and that staff were confident in covering this area, the percentage who were 'Not Sure' approached half, and was higher than for the other areas of competence. Again, a very small number strongly disagreed.

### Teachers as reflective practitioners (EASNIE area 4.1)

'Teachers as reflective practitioners' was summarised for respondents as: "This relates to methods and approaches for evaluating one's own work and effect on the learning of children; and approaches to improving one's own practice through the process of reflection. It involves understanding teaching as a problem-solving activity that requires on-going and systematic planning, evaluation, reflection and then modified action."

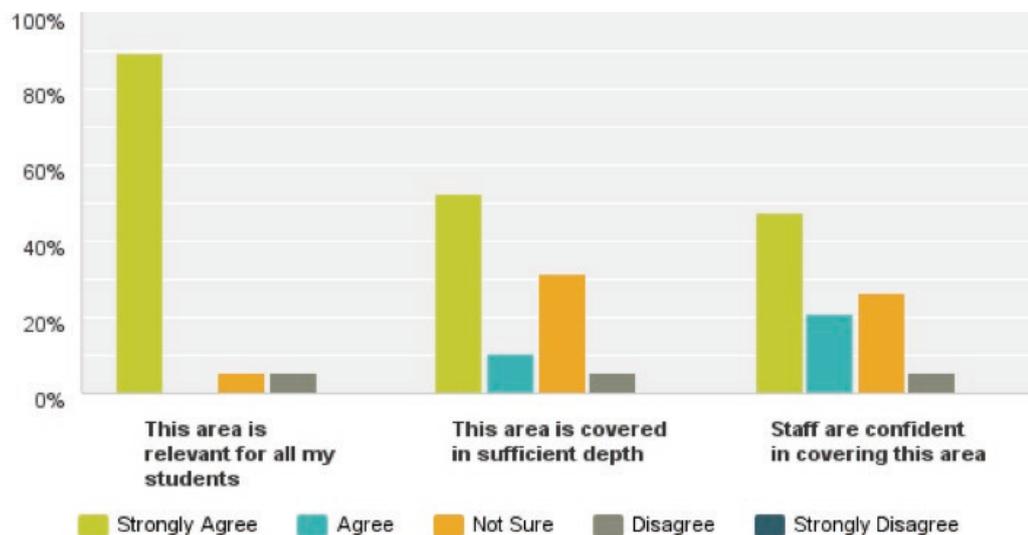
**Figure 22: Teachers as reflective practitioners**



As Figure 22 indicates, most respondents agreed strongly that the concept of teachers as reflective practitioners was relevant for their students, but while all continued to agree that this was covered in sufficient depth, agreement was less strong. Regarding whether staff were confident in covering this area, again there was general, although less strong, agreement, with a very small number 'not sure'.

### ITE as a foundation for ongoing professional learning (EASNIE area 4.2)

'ITE as a foundation for ongoing professional learning' was summarised for respondents as: "This relates to the concept that initial teacher education is a foundation for learning that needs to be developed further ... and that teachers can take responsibility for their own ongoing professional development. It involves understanding teaching as a learning activity where being open to learning new skills and actively seeking information and advice is seen positively."

**Figure 23: ITE as a foundation for ongoing professional learning**

As Figure 23 indicates, nearly all respondents strongly agreed that the concept of ITE as a foundation for ongoing professional learning was relevant for their students, but while the majority agreed – most still strongly – that this was covered in sufficient depth and that staff were confident in covering this area, up to 30% were unsure, with a small number disagreeing.

### Overview

There is clearly a marked trend across all of these responses in that 90-100% of respondents, for each item, strongly agree that the statement is relevant for all students. Yet, in contrast, although most respondents tend to agree overall, approximately only 40-60% of respondents strongly agree that a) the area is covered in sufficient depth in the programme, and b) staff are confident in covering this area of content, with varying distributions across the other scale options. The numbers responding 'Not Sure' regarding depth and confidence are fairly low, except for the two items 'Working collaboratively with parents and families' and 'Working with a range of other educational professionals', which may suggest that these areas are less well embedded within some programmes. It needs though to be recognised that respondents may respond 'Not Sure' because they are not familiar enough with elements of the programme to make an informed judgement. In fact in some cases, respondents noted this explicitly in some of the open text response items, as in:

Please note the following: I have completed this questionnaire based on my own perceptions which may be disputed by colleagues working on this programme. I have ticked a number of 'not sure' boxes. This is because we have not formally reviewed and researched these questions.

It is reasonable to suggest that this response reflects the considerable complexity of many ITE programmes, as well as the inevitable multiple extant views on them within programme teams. Nevertheless, the number of 'Not Sure' responses overall was lower than expected based on the professional experience of the research team and their familiarity with the typical competencies of programme leaders working in ITE, and thus may suggest that we can have some level of confidence in the overall trend revealed in the survey, namely that there is a noteworthy difference between agreeing that the areas identified in the EASNIE profile are important, and being clear about how these are implemented in programmes. Florian *et al.* (2010) in their review of a re-engineering of an initial teacher education programme towards inclusive pedagogy noted that some teacher educators also expressed a lack of confidence in their understanding and ability to implement an inclusive approach in their teaching. However, a review of the literature (search terms 'teacher educator' and 'inclusion' on the PsycInfo and SCOPUS databases) did not indicate any significant quantitative data on teacher educator confidence to which the data presented here could be compared.

We also note that there is scope for comparison of the pattern of responses identified here in the survey with the documentary analysis, and it is worth noting that the survey instrument was not constrained in the same way by the context of the Teaching Council expectations.

#### 4.2.2 Open text responses

Our approach to analysis of the open text responses was broadly similar to that adopted for the documentary analysis. Initially we examined the content of the documents by skim-reading the whole document in order to become familiar with its content and structure. The text was then imported into Nvivo, and coded against our typology of *a priori* themes derived from the EASNIE Profile for Inclusive Teachers (EADSNE, 2012). The level of responses to questions varied, with some items attracting more comment than others, hence conclusions can only be tentative and are intended to feed into the overall analysis rather than stand on their own.

Again, our approach in the analysis was an interpretative act acknowledging that we cannot draw definite conclusions regarding the programmes based on these responses, which were no doubt completed under different time constraints, and, as indicated above, were likely in many cases to involve single individuals making judgements on large and complex programmes involving many actors. As already noted, there was considerable variation in the level of response for most of the open text response items on the survey. Some respondents gave lengthy answers up to 600-700 words, while some only gave answers of a few sentences in length. Given the (inevitably) contingent nature of the data, our aim was to explore and capture the concepts around inclusive education apparent in the responses stated either explicitly or implicitly in relation to the EASNIE profile. However, given the nature of the data collection method these can only be indicative rather than definitive. In this sense, the numbers of text references coded to the typology derived from the EASNIE Profile offers only a loose indication of areas that seemed to occur more frequently in the data.

Again, similar to the documentary analysis, the overall picture of responses broadly concurs with the content of the EASNIE Profile for Inclusive Teachers (EADSNE, 2012). The core values of the profile are evident to a great extent throughout the preponderance of the responses.

Overall, 111 references were coded across all 21 respondents, with the spread of responses broadly in the proportion 30% primary and 70% post-primary. Thirty-eight references across all question responses for the 21 respondents were coded to the data node "Concepts of Inclusive Education". For example:

"Issues of inclusion and diversity are imbedded both explicitly and implicitly in many of the programme aims."

"The development of professionals who challenge and confront social injustice and inequality as they see them in the class, playground and in the community, thus helping them to become agents of change."

"To move consideration of this issue from being perceived as a marginal optional extra to be seen as part of the mainstream of education provision."

Ten references were coded to the data node "Teacher Views on Learner Differences". For example:

"... recognition of, and respect for, the dignity of the individual; and the recognition, appreciation and accommodation of the diverse education needs."

"The BEd programme provides opportunities for students to engage in a critical manner with their own attitudes and beliefs in relation to difference and inclusion; and to provide them with the language to engage in critical debate in relation to difference and to understand that the recognition of difference goes beyond mere tolerance."

References were also coded to the following data nodes:

- Promoting learning for all learners (7 references)
- Effective Teaching in Heterogeneous Class (33 references)
- Working with Other Professionals (4 references)
- Teachers as Reflective Practitioners (15 references)
- ITE as a foundation for ongoing professional development (4 references)

Again, this is not to say that there were not gaps and differences, and a number of key themes could be identified across the open text data set. These are best identified by looking at the responses for key open-text survey questions individually, as follows:

## How are issues of inclusion and diversity addressed within your course or programme?

The following broad themes could be identified:

1. Responses which focused on overall aims and responses and those that included detail of specifically how these are addressed in programme content, with considerable variation in the balance between these.

For example, two respondents on B.Ed. post-primary courses demonstrated strong social justice rhetoric linked to equality and diversity, etc. with respect to empowering teachers to effect change in society, whereas in contrast another respondent (post-primary concurrent) gave a very brief response.

2. The extent to which inclusion was considered as being delivered in discrete modules as opposed to being infused or permeated across the curriculum; again there was considerable variation in the balance between these across responses.

For example, one respondent (Post-Primary PME) referred to an embedded approach within core modules, with opportunities for additional focus through reflections on school placement and choice of thesis. Another respondent (Primary B.Ed.) listed Inclusive Education as a separate Module with no reference to any embedding/infusion. Another respondent (Post-Primary PE) referred to a separate module for 'integrated and inclusive' physical activity with children with disabilities, which seems to be run as a separate community activity for children with disabilities only.

3. A significant number of responses that stressed the importance of reflection in fostering understanding and effective application of inclusive practice, and some that indicated that the extension of the programme length had allowed time for more reflection by students.

For example, one respondent (Post-Primary PME) reported that there was now more time for in-depth critical reflection on inclusive practice.

4. A "narrow" view of inclusion which focused on SEN and disability in some responses as opposed to a "broader" view of inclusion related to overall conceptualisations of difference in others.

Other areas which were present in only one or a few responses and thus could not be identified as broad themes across responses but nevertheless are relevant to note, include:

- Considering diagnostic categories versus needs and diagnostic assessments
- Early childhood and developmental stages
- One course which had a specialised route for a number of students
- Catering for the needs of students with sensory difficulties and severe learning disabilities
- Critiquing the implementation of policy and being aware of the policy context
- Focusing on the voice of students, both ITE students and students in schools

As can be seen, this selection of foci areas across the respondents itself indicates possibly significant differences in conceptualisation of inclusion and inclusive practice, which have the potential for further illumination via more in-depth probing in subsequent phases of the project.

### **How does the inclusive education content of your programme relate to the school placement experience?**

The following broad themes could be identified:

1. A number of responses that gave clear detailed description of how inclusive practice is embedded in the requirements for school placement, encompassing claims for both an approach aimed explicitly at 'all learners' rather than 'differentiation' being something presented as additional; together with additional placement opportunities in specialist settings.

For example, one respondent (Primary B.Ed.) gave a detailed description of how inclusive practice is embedded in the requirements for school placement, encompassing claims for both an approach aimed explicitly at 'all learners' rather than 'differentiation' being something presented as additional, together with additional placement opportunities in specialist settings. Another respondent (Post-Primary PME) gave a very brief claim for 'embedding' based on assessment criteria for school placement incorporating aspects of inclusive education.

2. In contrast, a number of responses that proposed that 'embedding' was based on responsiveness to assessment criteria for school placement incorporating aspects of inclusive education, following input on categories of SEN on the university phase of the programme. Similarly, a number of responses focused on differentiation as a key indicator of the implementation of an inclusive approach on school placement.

For example, one respondent (B.Ed. and PME Post-Primary) indicated that students are expected to differentiate appropriately when planning lessons – "Additional information is required in lesson plans on students with additional needs. The level of attention paid to SEN varies from tutor to tutor supervising school placement. Students are encouraged before going out to experience as wide a range of student type as possible".

3. A number of responses indicating concern/strategies to ensure that students had exposure to a diversity of settings when on placement.
4. A number of responses indicating that programmes included periods, sometimes termed alternative educational placements, at special schools. One response suggested that specialist placement influenced ITE student attitudes within mainstream settings.

For example, one respondent (B.Ed. Primary) indicated that there is one specialist placement in 3rd year whereby students work in a teaching role other than that of a mainstream primary teacher, usually in special school/special class/learning support/resource. This respondent also noted that there is an expectation that students must show inclusion and differentiation in their planning and teaching across all placements.

Other areas which were present in only one or a few responses and thus could not be identified as broad themes across responses but nevertheless are relevant to note, particularly in considering areas for further probing in the later phases of the project, include:

- One response indicating that the assessment of students on placement has a specific focus on the effectiveness of planning for inclusive practice.
- It was interesting that there was only one response that considered this process element, although other responses did note the importance of training for placement tutors around SEN. One response in particular was candid in noting that “the level of attention paid to SEN varies from tutor to tutor supervising school placement” (B.Ed. and PME Post-Primary).
- A few responses that noted the use of portfolios include reflective elements related to inclusion.

### **How has the recent extension in the length of your programme impacted on how inclusion and diversity are addressed?**

The following broad themes could be identified:

1. A number of responses that considered the extension to have had a significant positive impact, noting that there was greater embedding of inclusion and diversity across programmes associated with more opportunities for in depth consideration, debate and reflection.

For example, one respondent (PME Post-Primary) indicated that the extension allowed for more extensive and deeper exploration of the issue in practice and allowed students more time to experiment and examine their practices in a more critical way.

2. In contrast, a number of responses that indicated that the length extension had not had an impact due to policy and process constraints. For example:

(PME Post-Primary) ‘We are considerably constrained by the overall level of requirements as stipulated by the Teaching Council of Ireland and the inevitable constraints of time and available opportunity to focus on these issues. Some initial feedback from student teachers indicates that they would like to have more time and attention given to this arena of endeavour.’

(B.Ed. Primary) "Overall, there has been a significant reduction in the amount of course contact time with students since the introduction of the four-year degree. In the three-year programme the Inclusive Education course extended over two full years with two hours of contact time per week and a three-week placement in a special education setting. However the re-configuration has also made provision for all curriculum lecturers to incorporate an 'inclusive' emphasis in their course work and hence contribute significantly to the preparation of our students as inclusive practitioners."

(B.Ed. Post-Primary) "It remains the same. We made sure that it remained the same. We would like to have extended it but the programme extension would not allow this to happen."

This set of responses was, to the researchers, somewhat unexpected, and clearly flags an important area for further investigation and elucidation in the later phases of the project.

**What is the intended impact of these changes on outcomes for children with identified learning needs, when your current students become NQTs? How do you feel your programme might develop in the future in enabling students to become more inclusive teachers?**

These two questions are considered together as similar themes were identified across both answer sets. In fact, there was little sense of cohesive themes emerging for either of these two questions, and responses tended to recap on the broad attitudes and conceptualisations that respondents gave in relation to earlier questions, as well as setting out uncontentious intentions to engage in ongoing processes of programme review and evaluation.

However, in response to the latter question, some specific responses are relevant to note:

- Two responses noted an intention to increase the level of permeation of inclusion across programmes.
- Three responses noted that it was too early in the cycle to fully assess the impact of the new structures.
- One response stated: "As a fan of evidence based research I would like to see the impact of our current structures on NQT attitudes before second guessing future changes".

Our intention is that the future phases of the project will help to elucidate just that.

### 4.2.3 Summary

There may seem to be something of a disconnect between the two elements of the survey. However, when we consider the two most revealing issues noted in the analysis this can perhaps be resolved. We first noted, with the Likert-type data, an overall difference between whether respondents felt that the key heading areas relating to the EASNIE Profile were important and the extent to which they felt these were covered in sufficient depth/staff were confident in covering this area. In the analysis of the open text responses we also noted, most prominently, that, for a number of providers, a variety of constraints and process issues had meant that, in their perception, the extension of programmes had not led to an increased impact in relation to inclusion and diversity. Both of these features arising from the analysis denote a “disconnect”, in some instances, between intentions and overall attitudes and the actualities of implementation in practice. This also resonates with the documentary analysis, one of the salient points of which was the identification of variations between the specification of overall aims and intentions, and the operationalisation of these aims and intentions in terms of actual programme content.

## 4.3 Student survey

### 4.3.1 Key student characteristics

Please refer to Appendix 7.8.3 for details of the analysis strategy for these data.

#### Programme type

There were 207 responses (48.3%) from students on undergraduate programmes and 222 (51.7%) from students on postgraduate programmes. There were 201 (46.7%) responses from students on primary programmes and 222 (53.3%) from students on post-primary programmes.

#### Gender

Overall, 345 responses (80.2%) were from female students, and 85 (19.8%) from male students. For undergraduate programmes, the ratio was 83% female to 17% male, and for postgraduate programmes 77.8% female to 22.2% male. For primary programmes, the ratio was 86.6% female to 13.4% male, and for post-primary programmes 74.6% female to 25.4% male. For comparison, looking at large scale samples or national data for ITE entrants in Ireland, Clarke *et al.* (2012) identified a ratio of 26% female to 74% male in responses to a survey of postgraduate teacher education entrants.

#### Subject Area

Table 6 shows the representation of subject areas and sectors among all students. Science/Mathematics/Technology and Humanities dominate in equal quantities, and are more strongly represented in post-primary programmes. Special Education/Psychology programmes were the smallest proportion of programmes represented, and were all primary.

**Table 6: Subject area studied: all students**

Subject Area	Number	Overall Percentage	Primary as % of Subject Area	Post-Primary as % of Subject Area
Humanities	165	37.8	35	65
Special Education/ Psychology	41	9.4	100	0
Creative Subjects	69	15.8	44	56
Science/Maths/ Technology	162	37.1	11	89

For comparison, looking at large scale samples or national data for post-primary ITE entrants in Ireland, Clarke *et al.* (2012) found figures of humanities 55%, science/business 36%, and other 9%. Of course, the way in which categories are constructed across different project methodologies may vary.

Table 7 breaks down subject areas by gender as well as sector, illustrating a greater proportion of female to male respondents in primary humanities and special education/psychology, and more male than female respondents in post-primary science/mathematics/technology. More men than women responded from primary creative subject areas, while the reverse is true in the post-primary sector.

**Table 7: Subject areas by gender and sector**

Subject Area	Gender	Percentage of overall number of male/female respondents in primary	Percentage of overall number of male/female respondents in post-primary
Humanities	Female	59.0	60.0
	Male	41.0	60.0
Special Education/ Psychology	Female	27.0	0.0
	Male	14.0	0.0
Creative Subjects	Female	10.0	25.0
	Male	31.0	16.0
Science/Maths/ Technology	Female	2.0	15.0
	Male	5.0	24.0

Clarke *et al.*'s sample (2012) reflected a similar association between gender and degree type for post-primary, although in our sample the variations between gender are more pronounced, however broadly they reflect the differences in subject selection between genders identified internationally (e.g. Drudy 2008), although this is somewhat less pronounced for primary as compared to post-primary. In addition, the overall number of males in our sample (85 responses) is relatively small and this should be taken into account when interpreting variations in categories.

### Age Range

Table 8 shows respondents' age range by gender, and Table 9 adds sector. For comparison, looking at large scale samples or national data for postgraduate ITE entrants in Ireland, Heinz (2008) reported an age distribution of: 20-23 (45%), 24-26 (22%), 26-29 (18%), 30 and over (15%) (although note that this was age on entry and the survey data here is age on exit). Overall, in our sample, male students tended to be older than female students and post-primary students tended to be older than primary students.

**Table 8: Age range by gender**

Age Range	Number	Overall percentage	Percentage of Female Students	Percentage of Male Students
20-23	256	59.5	63.3	45.9
24-26	85	19.8	20.1	5.9
27-30	37	8.6	8.2	10.7
30+	52	12.1	8.5	25.9

**Table 9: Age range by gender and sector**

Age Range	Gender	Percentage of overall number of male/female respondents in primary	Percentage of overall number of male/female respondents in post-primary
20-23	Female	80.9	45.3
	Male	70.4	45.9
24-26	Female	12.1	28.2
	Male	3.7	17.6
27-30	Female	4.0	12.4
	Male	11.1	10.6
30+	Female	2.9	14.1
	Male	14.8	25.9

### **Experience in school and with children with special educational needs before ITE**

Fifty-seven per cent of students had spent at least three months working in a school before starting their programme, with 22 per cent having spent more than three months. Forty-eight per cent of students had spent at least three months working with children with special educational needs. A notably high percentage of students reported having had significant interaction with a friend or relative with a special educational need or disability (47.4%), and 4.7% considered themselves to have a special educational need or disability.

#### **4.3.2 Experience on School Placement**

Details of various aspects of the respondents' school experience are included in Appendix 7.8.3. Students had placements at a wide variety of schools, with 29% having rural school placements and 37% having urban placements. From these data it is interesting to note that 92% of respondents indicated that they chose all or some of their placements. In addition, over 70% of students had the opportunity to teach students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and students with different levels of social disadvantage to a significant or very significant extent. A smaller proportion – around 60%—had the opportunity to teach students with English as an Additional Language and with Special Educational Needs to a significant or very significant extent. It is somewhat surprising that such a relatively low percentage of students had this opportunity, particularly in relation to special educational needs.

In line with the findings from the student interviews, the survey data also suggest that students found experience on school placement most useful in helping their understanding of inclusive education. When asked to rank which part of the course helped them understand about inclusive education the most, 62%, ranked school placement first, 28% stated college learning and 10% experiences outside of the programme such as experiences with family and friends.

#### **4.3.3 Areas for improvement**

##### **School Placement**

Respondents were asked to identify in what ways their school placement could be further developed in helping them to include all children in their classrooms. Their responses are illustrated in Table 10.

**Table 10: Areas for Improvement on School Placement**

Area for Improvement	Number	Percentage
Opportunities to work with children with a range of abilities and needs	342	16.3
Opportunities to work with children with mild or moderate learning needs	260	12.4
Opportunities to work with children with severe learning needs	219	10.4
Opportunities to observe good inclusive practice	334	15.9
Level of support from my university tutor in helping me develop inclusive practice whilst on school placement	221	10.5
Level of support from my school in helping me develop inclusive practice whilst on school placement	198	9.4
Level of support from my co-operating teacher in helping me develop inclusive practice whilst on school placement	213	10.1
Level of support around dealing with challenging behaviour and meeting children's emotional needs	297	14.1
Other	15	0.7

The most commonly selected responses were: opportunities to work with children with a range of abilities and needs; opportunities to observe good inclusive practice, and levels of support around dealing with challenging behaviour. Given the relatively low percentage of students who indicated significant involvement with teaching children with EAL and SEN on placement, the rate of response for the first two items is not surprising. The response rate for the final item reflects concerns about behaviour management noted in the interview data.

### **Further Development of College Elements of their Programme**

Respondents were also asked to identify in what ways their college experience could be further developed in helping them to include all children in their classrooms. Their responses are illustrated in Table 11.

**Table 11: Areas for Improvement in College Experience**

Areas for Improvement	Number	Percentage
More input on attitudes and understanding in relation to inclusive education	158	9.0
More input on specific strategies and approaches for working with children with a range of learning needs	321	18.2
More input on understanding typical and atypical development in children	234	13.3
More input on subject specific strategies for inclusion	291	16.5
More emphasis on inclusion across different areas of my taught programme rather than in just one or two modules	214	12.2
More input on dealing with challenging behaviour and meeting children's emotional needs	284	16.1
Better integration between university-based and school-based elements of the programme	250	14.2
Other	8	0.5

The most commonly selected responses were: more input on specific strategies and approaches for working with children with a range of learning needs, more input on subject specific strategies for inclusion, and more input on dealing with challenging behaviour. Again, the first two items reflect concerns expressed by students in the interviews about the need for input on specific strategies in relation to SEN, and the third item also again reflects themes identified in the interview data.

It is also interesting that around half the sample wanted more emphasis on inclusion across different areas of the programme rather than in just one or two modules. This can be considered in the light of the staff survey and interviews which indicate a variety of views on whether content on inclusion should or should not be permeated.

#### 4.3.4 Understandings of inclusion

Questions 21 and 22 on the student survey contained a number of statements concerning their attitudes, knowledge and skills in relation to inclusion and inviting Likert-type responses. Students' responses to these statements were correlated with key attributes of the sample (i.e. Age, Gender, Experience on School Placement)<sup>9</sup> to look for trends in these data. Details of the analysis are presented in Appendix 7.8.3, but we present key points of interest here.

A relevant finding to note throughout the data, is that most correlations were not significant (and are thus not reported on) or indicated only a weak association. This in itself

9 Correlation analysis gives a measure of the strength of the relationship between two variables, with a maximum value of 1 indicating a perfect positive correlation – i.e. as one variable (e.g. age) increases, another variable (e.g. confidence in dealing with different learner needs) increases in tandem. A negative correlation falling between 0 and -1 indicates that as one variable increases, the other decreases. A correlation of 0 means that two variables are not related in a linear way. Although there is no absolute standard in this area, for the purposes of this study we define a weak correlation (association) as a value less than 0.2, a moderate association as a value of 0.2 or more, and a strong association as a value of 0.4 or more.

is an interesting finding given the survey size, in that we might have expected to see stronger associations between a variety of demographic, background and course experience variables and student attitude, knowledge and skills in relation to inclusion.

However the most interesting finding on this analysis is that there is a clear pattern of moderate correlations between the diversity of students' classroom experience on placement and positive attitudes, knowledge and skills to inclusion. For 10 of the items on Q21 and Q22 on the survey – Understanding of Inclusion – there was a moderate association with at least one item denoting level of experience of working with diversity on placement. This is particularly strong in relation to experience of working with children with special needs on placement, where for five items the association was moderately strong. The student interview data also indicate that quality of school placement was key in promoting understanding of inclusion, and in combination with the quantitative data presented here is worthy of further analysis particularly in relation to the subsequent collection of NQT data.

There are a number of weak correlations related to Primary/Post-Primary, Gender and Undergraduate/Postgraduate as well as in relation to the type of school attended/phase of teaching, and the extent respondents' experience of team teaching and small group and 1:1 teaching. For example, female students as compared to male students were moderately more likely to feel confident in dealing with the needs of different learners in the classroom. Primary as compared to post-primary students were moderately more likely to understand about typical and atypical child development in relation to social and communication skills, and to feel confident in implementing positive behaviour management approaches that support social skills development in the classroom. Postgraduate as compared to undergraduate students were moderately more likely to understand the concept of a reflective practitioner and how it relates to their work as a teacher. There is a paucity of literature on differences between undergraduate and postgraduate roots and attitudes, knowledge and skills in relation to inclusion. We could speculate that the greater overall experience of postgraduate students means that they are more likely to be able to assimilate and make sense of the concept of the reflective practitioner. There is also little literature on differences related to gender, and primary versus post-primary.

There was a moderate correlation between experience of working with children with SEN prior to the course and students feeling that it is possible to expect all learners to achieve high standards in mixed ability classrooms. We might expect that prior experience of working with children with SEN would be positively correlated with attitude to inclusion. However, looking at the full item set, it is probably more interesting to note how little moderate or stronger association there is between prior experience and attitude, knowledge and skills in relation to inclusion.

Finally, as noted, another key finding is that overall, the levels of association between demographic and background data, and attitudes, knowledge and skills in relation to inclusion, were low. Given the potential of the survey sample size to illuminate moderate and stronger associations, this is in itself an interesting finding. Further analysis based on the combination of ITE and NQT data may shed further light on specifically which factors could be said to have a clear association with understanding of inclusion.

## 4.4 Student interviews

In this report, we present an analysis of the student interviews carried out in the five case study sites towards the end of their initial teacher education. At this stage, our analysis is able to address certain elements of the Research Questions, as follows:

1. Research Question 2: "Do the recent changes to ITE prepare newly qualified teachers to be inclusive as identified by European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) Profile of Inclusive Teachers?" Here, we present data on students' perceptions of how well prepared they feel to be inclusive teachers, focusing on their perceptions of their areas of competence – attitudes and beliefs, knowledge and understanding, and skills and abilities in relation to the EASNIE core values – professional development, teaching approaches, supporting all learners, and valuing diversity. Set alongside these data are their accounts of where their learning takes place.
2. Research Question 3: "What is the intended impact of the changes in ITE on outcomes for students with special educational needs (SEN); and do student/newly qualified teachers perceive their learning during initial teacher education makes an impact on outcomes for students with SEN?" We focus here on the latter half of this question, in particular on students' accounts of how well equipped they feel to be inclusive teachers. In order to access this, we build on their accounts of sources of learning as in RQ2, but we focus on their accounts of the challenges to inclusive teaching and their placement experiences.
3. Research Question 4: "What gaps are there in how current ITE programmes prepare student teachers to be inclusive as per the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers and what aspects need to be strengthened?" We approach this question here from the point of view of the students at this phase 1 stage, building on the findings revealed by addressing RQs 2 and 3, and focusing further on perceived gaps in knowledge and skills, and students' responses to direct questions on the content and value of their ITE courses.

This section is organised accordingly, beginning with (i) students' accounts of attitudes, knowledge and skills, analysed in accordance with the EASNIE profile; (ii) their sources of learning; (iii) perceptions and experiences of challenges to inclusive teaching, particularly within placement; and (iv) the content and value of ITE courses and the knowledge and skills that students gained from them.

The reader is reminded that, in presenting this analysis, the aim is to present dominant views within themes, together with any notable exceptions which might indicate variations on a theme or nuances in understanding. The nature of coding in the analysis is such that not all 47 interviews will contain data relevant to particular themes, and so specific enumeration is avoided, and is replaced by an indication of the balance between varying responses within a theme – 'many'/'most' for majority responses, 'some' for a minority – and indications of a sizeable sub-group – 'several'. Single exceptions/nuances are indicated by being clearly attached to an individual response.

In order to aid cross-referencing with the staff interviews, illustrative quotes are drawn from interviews with students from the five case study sites, labelled as indicated in Table 4.

#### 4.4.1 Attitudes, knowledge and skills within the EASNIE core values

##### Attitudes and beliefs

In response to direct questions – “what kind of students do you think of when you hear the phrase inclusive education?”, and “how would you describe an inclusive teacher?” – students’ immediate responses are sometimes framed in terms of special needs, but the majority ultimately moved on to recognise other issues in a broader definition, which often emerged in the course of answering other questions in the interview. Within these broad definitions, there were variants in terms of difference versus diversity, the idea of supporting all learners, valuing diversity, and the emergence of a professional identity which challenges earlier views of difference.

This PME post-primary student exemplified a focus on difference rather than diversity:

... for me inclusive education would cover a wide range of areas from it being students who have come from different ethnic backgrounds or different countries to Ireland and need to be integrated into the education system, but also in terms of students with special educational needs of any description. (A3, PME, Post-Primary)

Student A7, also PME post-primary, thought that inclusivity meant treating all pupils the same:

... an inclusive teacher is just someone who tries to teach every student to their best ability, every student learns differently. ... it’s not about treating one student differently, because that’s not inclusive. It’s about treating them all the same, but in their own way. (A7, PME, Post-Primary)

Some students talked about inclusion in ways which more closely fitted the EASNIE profile core value of supporting all learners:

I don’t think of inclusive as including a certain culture, background or a certain religious background. I think it, inclusive is, that’s the word, it should be everybody no matter what background you are or status. (A5, PME Post-Primary)

The same student saw an inclusive teacher’s job in similar terms:

... an inclusive teacher is someone that works towards creating an inclusive environment, so making sure that all students feel comfortable in the classroom, making sure that students respect each other and their backgrounds, because we are in a kind of more multicultural society and creating a place where students can work towards their own goals ... using methods of differentiation and things like that and performing collaborative activities as well to ensure that you get an inclusive environment yeah. (A5, PME, Post-Primary)

The EASNIE core value of valuing diversity was also evident in many responses such as this one from a BA of Ed. Primary student:

... an inclusive teacher takes into account that every kid is an individual and they're authentic and every child is diverse and the diverseness should be celebrated regardless of if they have a diagnosis or not ... kids are kids at the end of the day, but like I said not all kids are the same and I think that's something that needs to be considered and all kids or people, adults included, we're all different types of learners. (B2, BA of Ed. Primary)

Here, a PME post-primary student reflects on the value of a particular placement for underlining what they had learned in college about diversity:

... to me it was real and that's where I really saw diversity in every form that I read about in Sociology lectures ... It's a multicultural world. We have to become more inclusive in not just our teaching, but our views, our own personal views about how we treat other people. (A6, PME Post-Primary)

As this quote indicates, valuing diversity is part of an emerging teacher identity. This BA of Ed. Primary Student described valuing diversity as having a major impact on the purpose of teaching and its associated professional identity:

... an inclusive teacher is someone who looks at like all the cases as individual and doesn't think like ... 'Oh no I've got someone with ... ' you know A, B or C. ... I think a teacher who isn't inclusive just wants a class who's good, like you know for their age and ability who's a well able class. But I think like that's not what teaching's about so I think you have to look at what are the needs, strengths and needs of the class you have in front of you, and just working from where they're at – I think that's really important. ... I think it's a part of like ethos and everything so I think it's not just about your specific class one year, it's about like who you are as a teacher. (B10, BA of Ed. Primary)

### **Agents of change**

Several students also talked about valuing diversity in terms of the benefits for children in general and the way in which inclusivity challenged 'normality':

it's good for children to learn that there is no normal as such – everyone is unique and different. ... I think children become more empathetic to other people's situations then, ... the last school I was in ... there was a lot of different races in the school, but it was never pointed out ... it was never a big issue or anything, and the children were just quite accepting of things ... (B12/13, PME Primary)

Indeed, many students saw inclusivity as a new trend in Irish schooling, and as something that experienced, older teachers found challenging in professional identity terms, and less likely to practice. Here is A7 (PME Post-Primary) again:

Some teachers I suppose they've been teaching for so long and ... they have so many classes a day, sometimes they just don't want to even hear it. But ... I think it's just something in teaching that has to be brought in and it has to be challenged, and you have to challenge yourself as well like. As I said, one of the biggest challenges is fitting it in, but it just has to be one. It shouldn't be a thing that you fit in, it should be something ... it should be your way of teaching ... (A7, PME Post-Primary)

This BA of Ed. Primary student took a similar view:

I think the newer generation of teachers will have a very different view. ... there's already a huge difference in how our generation teach and how the other generation teach. ... I doubt if you went back 30 years whether there would've been an emphasis on inclusion. (B4, BA of Ed. Primary)

Consequently, several students saw themselves as agents for change in their schools, particularly in terms of a need to challenge conservative pedagogic practice:

it has happened that we as PME students in the most recent branch of education ... have different viewpoints to a lot of the older teachers in the school. ... there has definitely been times where I've felt that for the benefit of the students they should be able to consider it differently, so like that maybe they sit behind a book and do it old style, teach old style. Whereas ... you know that if the teaching style was maybe different it could benefit the children who are acting out or who are having difficulty ... there's a lot of conflicting ideas. (A1, PME Post-Primary)

This PME post-primary student gave an example of how her college learning had led her to take a particular course of action which would not have happened otherwise:

... this year there's one student in the class who has trouble with writing. Now if I was to ask him an oral question he was very quick, very good at answering, but I found that one of my cooperating teachers said that she doesn't even ask him oral questions because she thinks that he's not strong enough based on his writing. ... But I've found that he was actually able for the higher order questions ... but he just wasn't being given a voice to answer those questions. So I asked one of the resource teachers to take him for extra writing ... And you'd notice a big change in him in the last couple of weeks where he'll actually put up his hand to answer a question where he never would have before. (A7, PME Post-Primary)

Similarly, this BA of Ed. Primary student cited a leadership for inclusion module as directly responsible for her ability to intervene in school practice:

we did a leadership for inclusion module which ... was the most helpful thing I did ... it was basically teaching us to be leaders in inclusive education so the one in the staffroom who might say 'Oh well maybe we should be doing something more for ... ' ... the one who's standing up for the people. ... they were just encouraging us to be the good example rather than just going along and agreeing in the conversation. (B10, BA of Ed Primary)

Student D1 (PME Post-Primary, Languages) anticipated intervening once qualified:

if I was working in the school, if I was a paid member of staff and they were my peers, I would try my hardest to make my classes inclusive and make sure that I'm meeting all their needs. ... if I felt that certain students needed more support I'd definitely be bringing it to someone's attention ... (D1, PME Post-Primary, Languages)

### **Knowledge and skills**

Attitudes and beliefs regarding inclusion are of course dispersed throughout the interview data, underpinning much of what students say in response to questioning about their approach to teaching. Our interview questions asked specifically about differentiation and individualised learning, and student A1 (PME Post-Primary) gave a general answer which situated learning in the influence of college:

[How well do you feel you are prepared to be an inclusive teacher?] Hugely so, we have the literature, we have the readings, we've gone through courses. ... it's been drilled into us almost at this stage that being a teacher is nothing without being an inclusive teacher, there's no point teaching just the ones who can learn off the bat. You need to be prepared for the ones who need the differentiation, need the scaffolding and everything, so the course has taught us well in that we wouldn't consider ourselves a teacher without differentiation. (A1, PME Post-Primary)

More often, students gave specific examples of helping individual children. In these responses, there was a far greater likelihood that students would talk in terms of special educational needs in citing particular knowledge and skills associated with inclusivity. Student C1's PE story was typical:

... what I learned as I said about the equipment for PE that you know you can use anything for everything, and there's one game ... they stand up on benches, and the girl with Down's syndrome, the balance ... she's just not got her balance, and she genuinely couldn't get up on the bench and stay on it. ... so I just brought out two gym mats and it wasn't the same height as the bench but she could get up on it, she had far more space than on a bench and she could play, and it clearly worked. She was engaged as any of the rest of them. (C1, Post-Primary)

Many responses described inclusivity with respect to particular subject teaching, especially PE, teaching of English and mathematics. Students tended to talk about the challenge of making successful adaptations in PE for pupils with physical disabilities or autism, and in catering for EAL pupils in English lessons. Making adaptations was seen as more problematic in mathematics, as C1's interview illustrates when we contrast her account of her two specialisms (PE and mathematics). Her account of the challenges of inclusivity in PE was detailed about challenges as here:

I have one class with a student with autism and one with Down's Syndrome, and you know all the theory's great and all, but there's some sport ... they can't participate to the same quality. ... you can include them to a certain extent ... and get them involved, and definitely in activities ... and I think they would have benefited more from me taking them aside in an extra class and then ... not saying catch up, but giving them extra on the badminton, and then bringing them back in and including them. (C1, Post-Primary)

Despite her confident dealing with PE, she felt that inclusive mathematics was difficult to put into practice and that she had been ill-prepared for this:

You know you think of the littlest of things, and you just change it into something else for PE. And Maths ... I don't think the course really prepared us that well for dealing with the special educational needs of Maths. (C1, Post-Primary)

D3, a PME post-primary with mathematics student, explained the difficulties further:

It very much is a Maths thing ... Other subjects I can understand it, it makes sense in some regards, but there's not that many ways you can teach something like geometric constructions you know. There's not that many ways that you can make it student led or interactive ... there's also in Maths a massive time issue you know. I was getting from the teachers in school this is what you have to have done in your time here. You have to finish it, because if you don't finish it then it puts us behind ... (D3, PME Post-Primary)

#### 4.4.2 Sources of learning

Students were asked directly about where they had learned about inclusive practice. Three main themes emerged from the data in this respect: personal experience, college learning, and placement learning.

##### Personal experience

A large number of students talked about learning from personal experience of special needs based on siblings or their own children. This experience had various effects, including sparking interest in special needs teaching or feeding a commitment to inclusivity, providing specific experience that they could draw on when teaching, and in a few cases constituting their *only* source of experience about special educational needs prior to school placement.

Student D3 (PME Post-Primary, mathematics) talked about how her experience of having children with special needs had underlined the meaning of inclusivity for her and given her confidence:

... inclusive to me means for everybody ... , as a mum with special needs to me it means that ... kids with special needs shouldn't be treated differently in terms of education. Now I know you might need to make some dispensations or compensations in terms of say the exemption from Irish or these kind of things, but in general like all kids are different anyway and all kids learn differently ... (D3, PME Post-Primary, mathematics)

Student A3 (PME Post-Primary) also talked about the effect of family experience on understanding inclusivity:

I've seen it from personal experience and from experience of family members that deal with kids with autism and those kind of challenges and seeing how they've developed from being integrated as much as possible into the education system in Ireland, like from when I would have seen them when they were 3 or 4 until they're 10 and 11 now. ... So I'd say from having an interest personally in getting more and more kids included in schools, because I've seen the benefits of it. (A3, PME Post-Primary)

Student A5 (PME Post-Primary ) had felt excluded herself because of her background and this influenced her philosophy of teaching:

it's something that's interested me anyway ... probably because of my own experiences in school of not feeling included. Because I'm from a different background and so I suppose that comes into play in my own teaching philosophy and how I want to be inclusive, because of my own personal experiences, so I think maybe a teacher that maybe never experienced that might not be as aware of how inclusive they're being. (A5, PME Post-Primary)

Some students cited personal experience prior to their studies as a particularly important source of learning or as their only experience of particular disabilities. For example, student B6 (BA of Ed. Primary) had experience of Down's syndrome, which influenced their choice of elective modules and of school placement opportunities:

... my only experience of children with special educational needs would've been my step brother who has Down's Syndrome. I have a cousin with Down's Syndrome as well. (B6, BA of Ed. Primary)

Student D1 (PME Post-Primary, languages) contrasted a lack of input on the course with seeing their experience with a family member as almost their *only* starting point for learning about special educational needs, prior to school placement:

... to be honest I felt very ill equipped to deal with students that had any kind of learning difficulty. My own brother, he has dyslexia and he has like a sequential memory difficulty ... I think it goes along with dyslexia ... and he would be my only reference point for dyslexia ... and that's all I had, I didn't know what to look for or how to help them. (D1, PME Post-Primary)

## College learning

Many students cited particular modules as sources of learning, including dedicated inclusive education modules, SEN modules, and theory of education modules. These had impacted on their understanding of inclusivity as a concept and on their practical pedagogic knowledge.

### *Changing understandings of inclusivity*

Some students noted that their college courses had had a major impact on how they thought about inclusivity and inclusive teaching. Student B2 (BA of Ed. Primary) notes that college opened up their understanding of inclusivity as a concept:

... before I started college I would've been guilty of thinking "kids with special educational needs". I don't really think that way any more, which I think is a really good thing. Um, to me inclusivity just includes all kids really, you know whether diagnosis or not to be completely honest with you. (B2)

B8 on the other hand, also BA of Ed. Primary, noted that college had opened their eyes to the meaning of inclusion:

It's definitely opened my eyes to it. I wouldn't have seen it anywhere else, because when I think of special ed I think of learning about the different disabilities or learning about the different limitations and how to do this if someone has difficulty with this. I didn't think it would be about inclusive ... I wasn't aware of it ... (B8)

Student D2 (PME Post-Primary, languages) similarly commented on how a psychology course had filled a gap in experience in prompting thinking about inclusive practice:

... the Psychology module we had in first year definitely made me think more about it and then being on placement and experiencing students with different needs or students from different countries and things like that it definitely makes you question "am I doing this right?" (D2, PME Post-Primary)

### *Developing practical pedagogic knowledge*

Two PME post-primary students talked about the impact of a whole package of modules around catering for diversity and the context of inclusion:

It really provided ... such a depth of information, so we would've known that we were going to come up against SEN and Autism or Asperger's, all of these different aspects of school life now, but the ways to cater for them and maybe the Psychology behind it or the Philosophy behind the school is why the ethos are that way. (A1, PME Post-Primary)

We've got a number of lectures in the first year of the course involving catering for diversity, so we have been explained what different special educational needs are, the different cultures that students may be coming from in our class and how best to include them in the class without being explicit about that you're making a difference for them. (A3, PME Post-Primary)

More specifically, students were very likely to point to the practical things they had learned in SEN modules:

I had a child EAL in my placement before Christmas. ... my aim was that he learn just how to write a procedure out or how to order something. So instead he had little boxes and he'd draw the different stages and wrote a caption with them – and that's something we were taught in both our SEN module and across all the other modules to use ... (B12/13, PME Primary)

Student A3 also talked about the value of specific SEN input:

What I learned about dealing with students that have the likes of dyslexia, and that's where I would have used the key word handouts to help them develop as a student. So I was kind of learning the different SEN needs that are there, and trying to cater for them. (A3, PME Post-Primary)

Similarly, student B7 (BA of Ed. Primary) saw the SEN module as their main source of information:

They focused the most on it and other subjects maybe like Maths or English were kind of looking at it more from a differentiation point of view, that you're catering for everyone and yeah the special education department then kind of looked at differentiation, but also doing games and stuff to include everyone as well. (B7, Primary)

Student B11 (PME Primary) also saw their SEN module as the most helpful input in college:

that would've got us very much prepared for the special ed placement and the different strategies to use with children who have special needs in the classroom and the different sort of positive reinforcement ... so, hands on, especially for children say with Autism and how they strive more ... to gain their rewards and move on to the next stage instead of the old ways of saying oh he can't do that ... (B11, PME Primary)

Some students reported that inclusive teaching was covered across almost every aspect of their courses. In this sense, college was a source of principles of practice such as differentiation. Student A3 (PME Post-Primary) explained how college teaching about differentiation had helped:

... the biggest challenge would have been differentiating the learning outcomes and ... you know it does take a while to get into that ... as you can't ... say to one student 'Johnny you only do 1 to 4, everyone else do 1 to 6' – you're making it very obvious. So it's probably one of the things that the college also instruct student teachers more on is how to deal with that kind of situation and differentiating in that case. (A3, PME Post-Primary)

Student B1 (BA of Ed. Primary) also emphasised differentiation as a major target of college modules:

Other subjects they talked a lot about differentiation. Differentiation is the big buzz word that actually we never heard of until we came to college. (B1, Primary)

Student A5 also talked about applying particular pedagogy learned at college:

... , being very aware of different learning needs of students and I've learnt from the course to try and identify those needs and do enquiry-based teaching to see what works and what I can do to help them ... (A5, PME Post-Primary)

Student B6 (BA of Ed. Primary) also talked about the difference between learning 'tips and tricks' and developing an inclusive mindset as a result of their specialism in inclusive education:

That was a very, very good course in terms of inclusive education. ... most people would've said "oh I don't know any tricks" or "you know it's kind of about all the tricks and different strategies that you can use on a day-to-day basis". Whereas to me having done the specialism, I feel that inclusive education is a bit more than that. It's a bigger picture. It's your attitudes, the way you think about it, the way you collaborate with other people about it. It's not about "this child has dyslexia, therefore I do this with them". (B6, Primary)

## Placement learning

In general, students valued their placement learning enormously. Some felt that this was more valuable than their college learning, but others valued the opportunity to connect theory and practice, while some felt that placement had not delivered well at all.

Student B11 (PME Primary) felt that placement was the best preparation for being a teacher:

... the best learning ... has been out in the classroom and seeing different schools in action and how different schools do it ... I've seen amazing things going on in schools and to be honest no one can prepare you for the classroom except the placement ... and it's all the different methods maybe and different teachers have that I've learned so much from ... it's the hands on stuff that has definitely given me the confidence ... (B11, PME Primary)

Student A1 (PME Post-Primary) felt the same:

... it would be the teaching practice again, just through experience you understand what you need to be or what you need to do as a teacher to include everyone. Though theory is great, it compares nothing to practice ... even if it is a trial and error and you do fail, you always learn from those and you can work up. (A1, PME Post-Primary)

Seeing experienced teachers in action was also important:

So observing them in their own teachings, seeing how they deal with the students that I have myself, discussing with them ... they've had so many more years' experience than I. They're going to have more knowledge than I as well and just the most practical, so yet again in theory you can look it up online and it can give you great advice and then you can go to your co-operating teacher and ask them what works. (A2, PME Post-Primary)

Other students, such as D2 (PME Post-Primary), valued discussion with experienced cooperating teachers but also the opportunity that placement offered for connecting back to college learning:

I think they offered the best strategies because they were working with the same students, so they understood the issues that maybe might have been there and how to cope with them. ... and then maybe you know going back to the lectures and things like that. Where I knew what I was looking for then I could use the notes. (D2, PME Post-Primary)

Student A5 (PME Post-Primary) also valued learning in the staff room alongside other resources from the internet and college:

... obviously you learn so much when you talk about ideas with other teachers. I've picked up so many things by just discussions in the staff room ... and staff meetings as well. We discuss new concepts, new resources, things like that, but there's, you know there's great kind of tips on you know blogs and PDST and things like that. If I'm really kind of struggling to think of a concept, you know there's so much out there and again we've got so much resources like that from the university as well. (A5, PME Post-Primary)

Student A2 (PME Post-Primary) exemplified students who valued SNA input as well:

Yeah, the SNAs are the, they're the people on the ground ... Who can tell you what it's like from the students' perspective. You can then get the teachers' perspective from the co-operating teachers and just in the school that I'm in they're massively helpful in that they will sit down and talk to you. (A2, PME Post-Primary)

B14 (PME Primary) put the value of placement down to the compression of input in college:

There was a lot crammed into it, so I feel that I've learnt more on school placement about that area than I have in college itself, because it was literally just skimmed over and we didn't do that much on it. (B14)

Not all students were as positive about placement, however. As B2 (PME Post-Primary) pointed out, its value depended on what opportunities it offered:

... last week I was subbing in a school ... it was a school for dyslexia, that was fantastic ... I didn't have that opportunity on teaching practice ... I feel now if I had a child with dyslexia personally I would be more equipped for that. I don't necessarily feel my teaching practice gave me that ... I think that unfortunately some of our teaching practice placements didn't allow for having enough diversity possibly and to deal with those diversities ... (B2)

Student B6 (BA of Ed. Primary) observed that being able to act as a teacher was crucial – placements which did not enable this were unhelpful:

... some of the placements I was on I didn't feel part of the place. I was only in there, I was a student, they were teachers ... Whereas the last two placements I've been in I've had the most fantastic mentors who have really included me, really made me feel part of the classroom, really made me feel like a teacher and I of course then feel that I can ask questions, that I can tell them about my concerns about either pupils or methodologies or difficulties that I'm having to plan or to deliver whatever in the classroom. (B6, BA of Ed. Primary)

Student D1 (PME Post-Primary) pointed out that the attitude of cooperating teachers was crucial:

... I felt that my cooperating teachers saw my placement as a break for them. And I was just told "there you are now, do this, cover these chapters and I'll see you again in December". ... I didn't have that kind of relationship with them that I could ... I would have had to go to them for behaviour issues, because sometimes it was just awful, but there was never that kind of relationship where I could go and look for assistance or help. (D1, PME Post-Primary)

However, SNAs could provide good back-up:

... I kind of distanced myself from the teachers cos I felt like everyone was getting tarred with the same brush whether or not they had learning difficulties they were wasting your time ... While I was on placement I found ... I didn't have anywhere to go. I found myself going to the special needs assistants asking them what they thought or should I do this or should I do that ... they were more to me knowledgeable about it. They're more hands-on ... (D1, PME Post-Primary)

#### 4.4.3 Perceptions and experiences of challenges to inclusive teaching, particularly within placement

Most of the students' comments on the challenges of inclusivity revolved around actual pedagogic practice in the classroom. We have already seen above that students noted difficulties related to the nature of subjects such as PE and mathematics, but they also talked about dilemmas arising from mixed ability teaching, classroom management, time, class size and testing, and mismatches between college and school approaches.

##### Time, class size, management and testing

Students cited numerous issues to do with what they described as the reality of classrooms which often clashed with the theory and practices advocated by college.

Student A4 (PME Post-Primary) found that mixed ability teaching was challenging:

My first school placement I found it a lot easier to do that, because I knew that all the students were at the same level ... Whereas this year it was such a mixed ability group. It was very difficult to know if students could carry out certain tasks ... (A4, PME Post-Primary)

D3 worried about how effective they could really be in a mixed ability class:

So for me there was a very fine line between teaching inclusively as ... like you can't teach them all the same and if you have one student that is not getting it, do you keep the whole class at that level until they get it or do you move on and try and make time up with that one student afterwards? I had questions like that almost the whole way through my placement. (D3 PME Post-Primary)

Students pointed to related issues such as class size and time:

I think time ... and the classroom size, because I think with classroom size comes less *[time]* that you can allocate to the individual children and I think unless you have the help of like an SNA or you know another person in the class, you're restricted to what time you can give those kids ... (B2, BA of Ed Primary)

Student B14 also saw time and class size as a barrier to putting theory into practice:

I think a lot of the things do slip through, schools' grasp of children that are struggling. It's just so busy. The teacher/pupil ratio is so big and I think that college has a very different view than, a very unrealistic view of what it's actually like. Well that's from my ... yeah from what I've experienced in the lectures. (B14, PME Primary)

Other students felt that college expectations were simply not realistic, as B9:

I think some of the stuff that they say, that you can put in place on placement is great and if you have the time ... Some of the stuff, um, it's just not realistic ... You know, it's unachievable and it just puts more pressure on you ... (B9, PME Primary)

Student D1 felt that the pedagogic practices advocated in college weren't practicable in placement:

... this jigsaw method, oh my God! Blue in the face from listening to it, and I know I shouldn't be slating it, cos it obviously works somewhere ... here it's a very idealistic view of everything ... And then you went to the classroom and you try your different techniques and it just all falls away to nothing. There's definitely a disconnect I think between ... what's been taught in lectures and what actually will work in a school setting. (D1, PME Post-Primary)

B14 (PME Primary) observed that schools did not have the resources to put college learning into practice:

... so the special educational lectures, a lot of them we'd have resources as examples, but I just found that when you went out to the schools, the schools did not have these resources. The resources weren't available, so you were literally starting from scratch and I just felt that from the lectures we didn't get much from them, because they were using materials that schools didn't have. They were using support, even like teacher and SNA support that schools don't have. I felt they were very unrealistic, so when you went out you just didn't have the resources, the time or anything to be able to facilitate for what we had been taught. (B14, PME Primary)

For many students the problems were compounded by behaviour management issues:

... the area was quite, it was quite poor and most of the students came from that area. ... and the teachers were all very aware of that, so the teachers were ... there's a lot of behaviour difficulties in the school ... So that kind of took up most of the time ... The teachers' time, the principal's time, even our own time as student teachers, it took up a lot of our time and that was our main challenge was behaviour. (A4, PME Post-Primary)

### Mismatch between school and college

Other sources of challenge concerned mismatch, between student teachers' and pupils' expectations, between school and university, and between theory and practice. As indicated earlier, several students talked in terms of being agents for change in schools, and these comments were often tied to reports of the challenge of putting inclusivity into practice. Student B10 found resistance from pupils was a problem:

some of the things they want us to do ... it was a lot of like active learning and if the classes weren't used to that kind of thing – I think that was kind of hard. ... sometimes I had classes that weren't used to a lot of discussion, so they were kind of just 'Why aren't we doing our writing?' ... so I found that was kind of challenging ... (B10, BA of Ed. Primary)

Student E7 (PME Post-Primary) commented on differences in how inclusivity is seen by schools and college:

... the ideal and the reality – there's always a difference between the two. You know I think it's up to academics to set us the highest bar they possibly can and it's up not just to the schools we're in but to ourselves to kind of decide just how high we go, and try and keep that as high as we can. (E7, PME Post-Primary)

Student D2 felt that schools did not really understand inclusion:

I suppose in school it's probably more general, like inclusion means having everyone in the same room or something like that, but there's not that much genuine understanding of the theories and practices and things like that, you know the strategies of how you might include everyone genuinely in the class. (D2, PME Post-Primary)

Neither did D3 (PME Post-Primary):

I don't think college personnel and school personnel have the same view on any aspect of teaching to be honest. (D3, PME Post-Primary).

A6 (PME Post-Primary) pointed out that a related issue is the emphasis on testing in wider education policy which runs counter to much inclusive philosophy:

It gets frustrating that you think that the examination is so focused on predicting and like learning, regurgitating and then us with you know active methodologies about games and cards and you know you think okay, yes and I understand that teaching is in a transitional period, but you think okay, until the examination process catches up with the new teaching methods there is still a place for taking down notes and learning and regurgitating. (A6, PME Post-Primary)

#### 4.4.4 The content and value of ITE courses: critically reviewing the experience

A key question that students were asked in the interview was whether they felt that their course had prepared them to be an inclusive teacher. As earlier sections show, the vast majority of students felt that they had gained a great deal of understanding from their courses of what inclusivity meant, and what it meant to be an inclusive teacher. There was greater variation among them, however, on the issue of how well prepared they were in the sense of having the right amount of knowledge and skills they needed to enact inclusivity. Here we focus on the students' views of their courses as a whole in response to this question inviting them to critically review their experience. Their answers focus on two major topics: skills gaps and course structure and content.

##### Skills gaps

Our question about preparation for inclusive teaching elicited a number of comments that students felt ill-equipped in practical terms. Unsurprisingly, the major focus here was on SEN. Student A6 (PME Post-Primary) wanted more input in this area:

And even as a new teacher going in to the school and I've a few Autistic children and I didn't know what to do to be honest ... in the college it's like "here's what a student with Autism does, now out you go and teach him". You know, but it's so, it's such a wide spectrum. It's like they inform us, but then go off and do what you can. (A6, PME Post-Primary)

Students B12/13 (PME Primary) also talked about lacking practical know-how:

Yeah, we've been told a lot about it. Not necessarily shown how to effectively do it. ... In a real life situation. ... We've just been given like you know the textbook. ... Yeah, like I know the theory, but yeah like it's totally different trying to do it ... I think it will be something we'll probably struggle with at times. (B12/13, PME Primary)

Students C2/3 (BSc Post-Primary) raised the issue of subject-specific teaching and SEN. Again, they felt that there was a lack of practical information on the course, and they felt ill-prepared:

... we're not very equipped for it from college I don't think. ... In a lot of our modules they talk about differentiation and how you can do that in the classroom. But we haven't had any modules of kind of practical, like how you would actually you know. (C2/3, BSc Post-Primary)

Student D2 (PME Post-Primary) felt ill-equipped for teaching students with special needs, but better prepared for general inclusivity:

I feel quite confident about including new students, so incoming students, like students from different language backgrounds, different religious backgrounds ... With students with special educational needs I would be the complete opposite I think. ... I think definitely we need more specific work on SEN, um, on you know what kind of range of special educational needs there are ... (D2, PME Post-Primary)

Student D1 (PME Post-Primary) said that lack of input had led to a negative experience in placement:

... I think first of all you're completely against it if you don't know what you're dealing with ... maybe if I had been equipped going into the classroom, I knew that you know this child had dyspraxia or this child ... I could have gone off then, researched dyspraxia, dyslexia, found out okay well if he has dyspraxia then I need to do this to help him ... or if they're dyslexic I can do this. ... we had one class the whole two years, and that was on autism, and it was just one class. (D1, PME Post-Primary)

### Course content and structure

Some comments on skills gaps were embedded in overall views on the structure of courses, and suggestions for improvements. For example, BA of Ed. Primary student B3 pointed out that being a student on the special education specialist pathway was key to having far larger input on inclusivity:

I feel I'm prepared and from my school placement experiences I'm very well prepared, but talking to other people on the BEd course as a whole I think the reason I feel so prepared is down to the major specialism. (B3, BA of Ed. Primary)

Student B10, who also took this course agreed and pointed out other areas of the course that related to inclusive teaching:

PE is one good example, they did it really well. Like we'd be doing something in PE and then they might say like "Okay imagine like someone's in the class now who's a wheelchair user, how are you going to include them in this?" (B10, BA of Ed. Primary)

Student B4, also on the specialism, provided further details:

Mathematics, Literacy especially there was a big emphasis on what we could do to be looking not only at the children who were striving and getting along fine and didn't need the help, but the other children that needed to. Um, I think special ed was very good in the fact ... this year especially I found it that we did a lot on IEPs and how to look at a child in a way that it isn't anything to do with their home life, just look at it in an educational way and I just thought it was very informative. (B4, BA of Ed. Primary)

Some students commented on the timing and nature of modules. Student B10 noted a large gap in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years, arguing that there needed to be more dedicated special education modules:

But like we do more religion modules ... than we do special ed, and we do way more Irish than we do special ed. ... I just think they should have more special ed modules for everyone. I know they try to like integrate it across the course, but I just think it's very important for all of us to have. (B10, BA of Ed. Primary)

Student A4 (PME Post-Primary) commented on delivery, suggesting that workshops rather than lectures were important:

It was just lectures ... there was no situation where we'd sit down and decide "okay, should you give this work to a student with Autism?" "No, yes, why not?" Um, there was nothing there. I think really a workshop or something more hands on to help with our planning ... would've really been beneficial. (A4, PME Post-Primary)

D1 (PME Post-Primary) suggested that other professionals should be invited to contribute to college teaching:

I mean we had 50 minutes on autism, and like autism is such a broad spectrum of things. Like how can you prepare someone to go into a teaching career on 50 minutes of one massive disorder like ... There needs to be like more education then about different learning difficulties ... guest speakers that ... tell you about their experience they could maybe do like a focus on a specific ... disorder or something every week. (D1, PME Post-Primary)

Student A4 also raised the issue of assessment, and emphasised a need for practical rather than written activity:

Built in work with the SEN co-ordinator or built in work with an SNA as part of the course would be much more beneficial than go write an assignment on it if that makes sense. ... I had never taught students with SEN and I didn't actually know what to do or how to teach them and I didn't feel that there was anybody really in the college say that would have given any sort of advice on that ... (A4, PME Post-Primary)

The emphasis on SEN in these comments is noteworthy. Despite the fact that they do comment at other points in the interviews on the challenges and dilemmas of inclusive education in general, students are clearly focused on SEN issues. This is in spite of a recognition that it would not be practicable to cover every potential issue in their courses, and the emphasis within courses on ongoing teacher learning. This latter is picked up by Student B8, however, who felt that they lacked experience but they would be able to develop their skills:

I feel like I haven't had the experience to effectively do it well from the get go. I feel like I'd have to you know find my feet, find the context ... I feel like I would be able to, but it would take me a while. (B8, BA of Ed. Primary)

#### 4.4.5 Summary

The interview analysis raises a number of issues in response to our research questions. First, it appears that students feel very positive about their courses in terms of how they have developed their attitudes to inclusion, and concepts of inclusion which align closely with the EASNIE core values are clearly visible, permeating students' emerging professional identities. We find that students feel that they have a range of theoretical knowledges for developing as inclusive teachers, and that they locate valuable sources of learning in personal experience, their college input, and in their placement learning. As might be expected, they see many challenges to inclusivity, but are not unduly surprised by their existence.

However, when asked how well prepared they feel they are for being inclusive teachers, there appears to be a clear trend in terms of students who have specialised in special needs feeling better equipped and more confident. This seems to reflect perceptions of a stronger focus on classroom practice in these programmes, as illustrated by this quote from student B1 (Concurrent primary):

Because we had four hours a day talking about differentiation, special needs, in an actual classroom ... where the rest of them were just going ... they were studying Romeo and Juliet in their English, Arts ... and they were writing essays that had nothing to do with the classroom. (B1, Concurrent Primary)

Despite the enthusiasm shown by students when talking about teaching, when invited to comment directly on their courses they can be very negative about what they see as missing practical skills input. Nevertheless, students do seem to appreciate that they are novices just about to begin careers in teaching, and that they will continue to learn in their NQT years.

Student A1 (PME Post-Primary) perhaps sums up the situation best in terms of students' experiences of their teacher education programmes as a whole package of college input and placement experience:

We had a course caring for diversity, that was focused on the different aspects in a school that you may be confronted with, like ESL or children with learning difficulties and I really read into the spectrum differentiation and so including everyone through the means of differentiation of your lessons ...

- I Okay, and what has been the most helpful?
- R ... teaching practice, just working with mainstream teachers and getting from them the experience that they have and the insight that they have in dealing with students. Like I said the catering for diversity course was hugely influential in showing us the ... reasoning behind it or the literature behind it. All of that in theory is fantastic, but it is only whenever you go into practice that you're able to realise what the difficulties are and how best to achieve being an inclusive teacher ... So talking to the co-operating teachers, talking to established teachers.
- I Okay that's great and how well has the course prepared you to be an inclusive teacher do you feel?
- R Oh massively so.

## 4.5 Staff interviews

This analysis is based on 11 staff interviews spread across the five case study sites. Their locations and labels for this analysis are as follows:

- Case study A: Head of School (A1 Head), Lecturer in Inclusive Education (A2 L IE);
- Case study B: Head of School (B1 Head), Head of Special Education (B2 Head SE), Lecturer in Special education (B3 L SE);
- Case study C: Programme Leader (C1 Prog Lead), Lecturer in Special Education (C2 L SE);
- Case study D: Lecturer in Special Education (D1 L SE), Lecturer in Education (D2 L);
- Case study E: Programme Leader (E1 Prog Lead), Lecturer in Special Education (E2 L SE).

The analysis identified particular emergent themes focusing on (1) the nature and impact of recent changes in understanding inclusive education; (2) the components of inclusive education, particularly issues of permeated versus discrete presentation, and placement patterns; and (3) skills gaps in ITE programmes.

### 4.5.1 Components of inclusive education

#### Permeated versus discrete presentations

All of the case study sites reported the existence of mandatory, discrete modules on inclusive education and special education whilst many also offered elective modules on inclusive/special education. It would appear that undergraduate primary concurrent programmes have more elective flexibility and therefore are more able to provide elective routes to particular specialisms such as inclusive education. Some programmes could offer as many as five elective modules to students over four years where a specialist interest could be developed. Postgraduate consecutive programmes at primary and post-primary appear to be far more constrained in terms of contact time, and therefore find it difficult to allow for many, if any, elective modules. In one instance, it is worth noting, the introduction of the two-year consecutive model at primary level has in fact resulted in a reduction of content coverage around inclusive education because of larger commitments to school placement and other mandatory elements of the programme.

Some staff made the point that the development of mandatory modules in inclusive education had been a recent phenomenon and therefore that they now see the next steps as being the development of more permeated content across programmes, particularly in areas connected to placement and subject-specific methodologies. They reported that a number of the programmes had already developed permeated content on inclusive education throughout their curricula, with some moving away from distinctively traditional module names towards more hybridised modules where foundation studies modules would become more explicitly linked to practice. However, the interviews revealed a variety of viewpoints on the issue of permeated versus discrete presentations, suggesting that this contrast is not necessarily conceptualised in the same way by all, and can mean different things in practice.

This complexity is illustrated by a lecturer at Case study D, who explained the difficulties of a permeated model in ensuring that coverage really happened:

So it was this idea that like you know differentiation, inclusion, all these types of attributes and things should actually be common across all modules, common across with experience and so on. I don't think that worked ... because based on just even the research work I undertook when I came, talking to students and so on, they did not feel prepared and it is that, you know and we always do say it's the idea that if it's everyone's responsibility to feed the dog, the dog is starving. (D2 L)

At Case study B, the head of special education also commented on how a permeated approach requires development over time, including the need for staff development:

So I think easy to say you know it's permeated, easy to put that in a policy document, but the practice to that is highly complex and to actually implement that in a way that makes a lasting difference will take a huge amount of time to get right and a lot of research to inform what's the best way to do it, so I think in the future a lot more attention would be paid to how you do it and how initial teacher education staff themselves collaborate and upskill themselves to be able to do it ... it's a long-term cultural change, so you need, you need ongoing support if you want to make you know long-term embedded changes in the programme. (B2 Head SE)

The above findings align well with what emerged from the staff survey and documentary analysis. The widespread existence of discrete modules on inclusive and special education is evidenced throughout the dataset. Findings regarding permeated content are far less uniform in the sense that it is seen as the next step in the developmental curve of ITE. Staff report here, and in the staff survey, that there is some good practice in this regard and that they are working on developing the permeated nature of content on inclusive and special education.

### **Placement issues**

Placement is seen as a central plank in inclusive education in ITE, as noted by the Programme Leader of Case study E:

I think ... the most obvious module that would be very heavily related to inclusion or special education needs or multicultural education, would be our [School Placement] modules ... where our students are asked over two years to engage in a taught element and a professional practice element where they're going out to secondary schools or post primary schools to do their teaching practice ... [these modules] would be most heavily involved in inclusive education. (E1 Prog Lead)

Staff noted the benefits of the opportunity to engage with contrasting school placement experiences that allowed student teachers to experience more diversity in terms of pupil cohorts and school cultures than would previously have been the case. This expanded placement experience is deemed particularly important in consecutive programmes that have moved from one year to two years in duration. For example, the Lecturer in Inclusion Education at Case study A noted that:

They go in with the notion all we have to do is teach the same thing to everybody and all students will learn in the same way. They come out quite keenly aware, they're taken aback by the difference and variety, the differences linguistically, learning styles, as well as literacy levels, interest levels. There's all sorts of difference there. (A2 L IE)

However, the Programme Leader at Case study E noted problems with the notion of diverse placement experience:

I think that there's a huge vacuum of different types of school, the different types of education facilities that we could ensure our learners get experience in. Unfortunately we have to stick with mainstream, and they're only assessed in mainstream schools, so that's the challenge and that's an issue that we have to work on. Um ... but yeah I mean I do think our students are allowed to explore different typologies, I think they're allowed to investigate ... I guess also experiences in other types of school, in other school environments. You know like what I've been much more focused on is looking at informal or non-formal learning environments. (E1 Prog Lead)

The Programme Leader at Case study C made similar comments, in the context of the impact of extended provision on the overall programme design:

I suppose the fact with the extension they've listed that specific component [Inclusive Education] as a core component of teacher education now, so we've been able to I suppose add a couple of more modules on it, but really a lot of the extension has actually led to, is a more increased school placement, so they're out in schools a little bit more. ... because of the amount of credits actually towards school placements, I don't think it's given enough scope of what we could do within the actual core teaching delivery, so yeah one or two modules I think has kind of really been the only benefit of that in terms of the new extension of the programmes. ... so now the biggest problem ... is it's very difficult to get placement, so we have to be a little bit looser in terms of how we define two different settings ... So it could be for example you know an all boys' school and then moving into an all girls' school. ... I think it was meant to be more diverse than that ... but at the moment it's very much if we can get a school it's great, because that's been one of the negatives of the extension of the programme is that we've literally doubled the amount of ITE students in the system. (C1 Prog Lead)

## 4.5.2 Change and impact

### Impacts on programmes

Case study sites reported that the Teaching Council's (2011a, p.14) definition of inclusive education – 'Inclusive Education (Special Education, Multiculturalism, Disadvantage, etc.)' – was significant in terms of expanding their programme<sup>10</sup>. The Lecturer in Inclusive Education at Case study A commented that 'we have gone from strength to strength in the last three to four years' (A2 L IE). Although the area of SEN remains a central plank of all of the case study sites in terms of inclusive education, there were also reports of programmes incorporating areas such as English as an additional language, global development education, education for social justice and education for diversity in their inclusive education modules, constituting a significant development from their traditional focus on special educational needs. The Lecturer in Special Education at Case study C extolled the virtues of recent changes as enabling an unprecedented expansion in attention to inclusive education in their programmes:

we're moving beyond this whole notion that it's just about special educational needs and that's a big challenge for us in Ireland, because that's always the way we have perceived it. ... we've only had the special needs, this inclusive module on two years, because the Teaching Council only [just] made it mandatory, so I've had to fight very hard to get it onto the programme [before then] (C2 L SE).

For Case study B, the extension meant a great deal of change in terms of inclusive education coverage. This is how the Head of Special Education describes the situation before the extension of the programme:

... historically we would've had very little input. We'd have had one module, when it was a three-year programme, would've had one module in third year, one discrete module on inclusion and special educational needs. We would've loved for years to have more input, but there was a huge issue at the college in terms of the students being overworked and the timetable was too much for them and really they couldn't put anything else in. In terms of an operated permeated model at that time there wasn't enthusiasm for it, for minor disorders, extra burden on the students at the time. (B2 Head SE)

The extension resulted in a combination of components for IE in the programme (discrete and permeated components, an option for specialism and SEN placement opportunities):

So the real emphasis, impetus for change I suppose for us came with the Teaching Council expansion of the programme to four years and that combined with the new guidelines for initial teacher education ... we engaged hugely with that process and we saw it as a great opportunity to embed kind of principles of inclusive education in the new programme ... we did a lot of research at the time around what were the best models to use in initial teacher education in terms of promoting inclusive education and particularly including

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<sup>10</sup> The Teaching Council have recently updated their definition of inclusion as: *any aspect of teachers' learning aimed at improving their capacity to address and respond to the diversity of students' needs; enable participation in learning, cultures and communities; and, remove barriers within and to education through the accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and arrangements to enable each student to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her attendance at school* (Teaching Council, 2016, p.18; Winter and O'Raw, 2010, p.39).

the children with special educational needs ... so based on that then we comprised our strategy and approach and through initial teacher education, particularly the BEd., the four-year BEd. ... so it was a massive change ... (B2 Head SE)

### Impacts on teachers

Interviewees felt that it was too soon to talk about the impact on the teachers they were training. The Head of Special Education at Case study B felt that 'they will be better prepared than previous cohorts, but how well I'm not sure.' Similarly, the Lecturer in Special Education at Case study C knew that there was more input to students but was unable to judge its impact:

We're giving them more information and we're giving them more opportunity to engage and develop maybe some skills in that, but how it's actually impacting I really don't know. (C2 L SE)

The Head of Special Education at Case study B was sure that NQTs would need ongoing education:

I think it needs to be seen in the context of continual teacher education and I think it's unrealistic to expect teachers to be totally prepared for the diverse needs that they're going to meet just on the basis of initial teacher education. I think what you're really hoping for in initial teacher education is ... in terms of disposition and attitude that all children should be included, that they need to meet the needs of all children. (B2 Head SE)

At Case study D, the Lecturer in Education felt that NQTs should have certain competences and an awareness of their ongoing learning needs:

... all teachers need to be using CPD, but I think teachers coming out of the programme should be sufficiently able to teach SEN in a mainstream school and to also kind of have the awareness that they need CPD. (D2 L)

The Programme Leader at Case study E felt that the expansion of placement would have a positive impact on students' pedagogical knowledge:

... the length of time, the longer course has had a massive impact because they can then test pedagogy, they can test methods that they learn in the classroom in real time, in a very safe and I think supportive space. Unlike maybe their previous counterparts who really only had the opportunity, a quite I think limited opportunity, in the classroom. They didn't have the confidence maybe to test ... they didn't have the confidence to create new methodologies and explore different pedagogies. (E1 Prog Lead)

Interviewees reported that another facet of the extended provision was the combination of interests in inclusive education with the development of research-active teachers. Three of the five case study institutions reported figures of around 20% where students were choosing this focus for their research. These institutions also pointed to opportunities for developing the research space around inclusive education in order to address issues of attitude, skills and knowledge around inclusive education, and the staff interviewed here reported on the importance

of connecting inclusive education to the placement experience from the outset in their various programmes across settings. At Case study E, the Programme Leader noted the popularity of inclusion as a research topic, but saw these developments as a 'happy accident':

... the real difference that I have observed is actually nothing really to do with inclusive practices or inclusive education, I think there's more of a focus there on teacher as researcher, and many of our graduate student teachers, as we call them, many of them are actually exploring and researching inclusive practices or general educational needs, or special educational needs. I think it's almost a happy accident, I don't think those were intended outcomes of extending or expanding on the programme ... I really think the focus at the time was on teacher as researcher and making or professionalising the teacher into teacher as researcher. Now thankfully maybe because of the extended programme I think that we have had an opportunity to fill and increase our module content to include a wider range of activities. But I certainly don't think it was driven by inclusive education practices at all. (E1 Prog Lead)

### 4.5.3 Gaps in ITE programmes

#### Staff development

There is some evidence of a skills gap amongst teacher educators where staff may have a proactive attitude towards inclusive education but they may have some gaps in terms of their own experiences, skills and knowledge in this regard. As the comment from the Case study B head of special education above indicates, overall programme development, particularly in a permeated model, requires staff development. Indeed, even the Programme Leader of PME at Case study C suggested that they would refer student teachers to specialist lecturers if the need arose:

it is something as a teacher educator I need more upskilling on so that I can embed it more in my own practice ... that's being looked after by experts in that area. If a student comes to me with issues I will direct them to the expert in that area. (C1 Prog Lead)

Subject-specific methodology was pointed out as an area of noted and possible inconsistency in relation to the development of inclusive education curriculum content. The Case study C Programme Leader felt that areas such as differentiation for all learners would get 'a nod rather than being properly embedded' in subject-specific methodology lectures – 'I don't think the pedagogical alignment is as strong as it could be'. This idea recurred throughout the staff interviews where participants felt that more attention could be paid to the experiences, skills and knowledge of ITE staff in the area of inclusive education. The Case study E Programme Leader stressed the personal dimension in the development of programmes:

I'm not sure that even our programmes were developed with inclusivity in mind. I think it really comes down to particular interests of the programme directors, of academic managers like myself – it really just comes down to what is maybe of interest to these developers at the time. (E1 Prog Lead)

The Head of Special Education at Case study B made a similar point with regard to permeation:

I mean the permeation approach I suppose it still relies a lot on goodwill, on people being willing to collaborate and I'd like to see ... more of a shift towards having ... an obligation to collaborate and an obligation to permeate your programme with these principles ... professional obligation to upskill yourself into this area. It's not just invitation or optional, but that is a core aspect that you have a responsibility to do, so I think that they, there's still a fair amount of lip service around the area and that if you want to really make changes you need people to see it as part of a real professional obligation. (B2 Head SE)

### **HEI-school mismatch**

Other gaps or inconsistencies arose in terms of the 'mixed messages' being received by students in relation to inclusive practice, noted by staff in three of the case study sites. The Head of School at Case study A commented on a serious mismatch between the programme message and that of some placement schools:

I see the students developing in that way and then they go out to the schools and they get a different message ... at a philosophical level and value, principled sort of level and they are forever managing the two ... the different message would be that around certain students that it is not part, it shouldn't be part of this school. "We're not capable of catering for them, they shouldn't be here" – that type of dialogue in the staffroom ... you know there are certain exclusive strategies that are happening in schools and our students do talk about it. Which is good. ... How they manage that and how they negotiate that into the second year when they're more in school than here is a challenge for us. (A1 Head)

The Programme Leader at Case study E elaborated on the problem: they noted that students in post-primary setting felt that there is probably not enough knowledge and practice of inclusive education in these settings:

... what they were actually coming up with is that it's a real big problem and they don't feel that post primary schools are actually equipped with either the staff or the knowledge or whatever resources they need to adequately resolve the issues of educational disadvantage or you know students who are actually excluded from the mainstream classroom. (E1 Prog Lead)

The Lecturer in Special Education at Case study C commented on the same issue and pointed out the impact on students' marks:

I think that is a big problem. If the school doesn't have an inclusive ... vision, well then I think that makes it very difficult for our students to work within that type of environment. If I'm saying to them you should be doing a, b and c, um, so for example I remember there recently somebody telling me about one of the students was using really creative methodologies ... in her classroom and to engage all the students and the teaching practice supervisor came out who didn't understand this at all and failed the student. (C2 L SE)

They went on to connect the problem with wider policy issues:

... my observation is about upskilling teaching practice supervisors as well as teachers in schools if we want to move again towards a more inclusive framework, because some of them have never, you know have never actually informed themselves about it and if they don't have to do it, they're not going to do it. Now CPD is coming on with the Teaching Council, but the Teaching Council really need to up their game about that ... I'd like to see the Teaching Council becoming more involved in ... developing a broad framework of CPD to enable inclusion to happen at a more seamless level than what's going on at the moment. (C2 L SE)

The Programme Leader at Case study E also raised policy as an issue:

I think one barrier or one challenge that I find very much is driven by I suppose policies or you know the NCCA, National Council for Curriculum Association, I mean they I think have been equipping providers with lots of guidelines and information about how to deliver inclusive education in ITE. However I think the real challenge is about what's in vogue in education at the time. And I think that many of the policies are not followed through with real I suppose knowledge and skills toolkits to deliver to our teachers. Quite often you might get some great memos of promises of great guidance that are coming from the National Council for curriculum development, but ... quite airy fairy guidelines and there's no real practical useful example we can implement in our programme. (E1 Prog Lead)

This programme leader's perception, that there is a paucity of practical guidance on initial teacher education for inclusion<sup>11</sup>, lends support to the view that there is a need for professional development opportunities for teacher educators in relation to developing more inclusive teachers.

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11 Guidance from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is available at: <http://www.ncca.ie/en/>

#### 4.5.4 Diversity and the student teacher cohort

One final observation is that all of the case study sites noted a significant lack of diversity amongst their student teacher cohorts and felt that this was an area earmarked for improvement in terms of attitudes to diversity. Case study sites were cognisant of wider moves by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to address this situation through the *Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH)* as a part of the *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019* (DES 2015) where one of the main aims is to increase access to ITE for members of targeted groups:

- entrants from under-represented socio-economic groups and communities
- entrants with disabilities
- mature entrants
- members of the Irish Traveller community
- students entering on the basis of a further education award

Staff participants in this study felt that a movement in this direction would be very welcome in terms of expanding the diversity of ITE cohorts for the benefit of all learners, in ITE and in schools.

#### 4.6 Summary

This section on the research findings forms the single most substantial component of this report. We have presented in detail our interpretation of the data for each individual data set to formulate our initial findings.

Many elements of the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers are evident throughout the programme documents. This is encouraging, showing a clear emphasis on promoting the core values associated with inclusive teaching, such as valuing learner diversity. This positive approach was reflected in both the student survey and interview data, strengthening our finding that many Initial Teacher Education programmes in Ireland are addressing this aspect of preparing inclusive teachers.

Most programmes organised content on inclusive teaching in discrete modules, whilst some aimed to embed it across the ITE curriculum. There was evidence from staff and students about how aspects of inclusive teaching were addressed through subject-specific pedagogy, through school experience placements, and through student research projects. However, we were able to obtain detailed accounts of how inclusive teaching was embedded across an ITE programme as a whole in only a few cases. Interestingly, a number of teacher education staff noted that the recent changes in ITE had not necessarily allowed the development of additional content on inclusive teaching, as further constraints were introduced by the requirements for additional school experience and other areas of mandatory content.

Whilst student teachers showed a broader understanding of inclusive education – for example in the survey data – there was evidence in the programme documentation of a tendency to emphasise a narrower conception of inclusive teaching as focused on learners with special education needs. Those students who identified themselves as on specialist pathways on SEN tended to describe their programmes as beneficial for teaching *all* learners due to an increased practical focus.

Some areas of competence within the EASNIE Profile were particularly well represented in the documentation, perhaps reflecting more well established elements of the ITE curriculum. So 'Teachers as reflective practitioners' was strongly present across the programme documents. On the other hand, some areas which received weaker emphasis could be seen – rightly or wrongly – as better addressed after ITE, as NQTs or within the continuum of teacher education. So 'Working with parents and families' and 'Working with a range of other educational professionals' were less strongly represented. The EASNIE Profile itself frames the areas of competence as a 'foundation for further development within induction and later continuous professional development' (EASNIE, 2011, p. 9); and this issue of balance was raised in the staff interview data.

It is clear that many students sense a degree of disconnection between the theoretical and practical elements of their experiences of Initial Teacher Education in relation to inclusive teaching. In general, this reflects a common theme in teacher education internationally, one which has energised a longstanding trend towards stronger partnerships between ITE providers and schools. However, in our project, this finding relates to particular questions about enacting inclusive practices, in both the student survey and interview data.

There seems to be a degree of mismatch between staff and student perceptions in this area. For example, there is extensive coverage in the programme documents of 'Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes', probably reflecting the Teaching Council's requirement for mandatory content on differentiation. Yet this does not necessarily translate into student teachers reporting that they feel well prepared in terms of developing appropriate skills for implementing inclusive practices. At the same time, whilst there is strong coverage of 'Conceptions of inclusive education' and to a lesser extent of 'The teacher's view of learner difference', these areas of competence seem to be addressed largely in terms of attitudes and beliefs or knowledge and understanding, with much less attention paid to the associated skills and abilities for implementation.

There were some intriguing absences in the data. So, for example, it was interesting to find that nearly half the student survey respondents reported personal experience of special educational needs or disability prior to their studies. Yet there were few references in the data, if any, to this potentially valuable resource being drawn on to support students' learning in relation to inclusive teaching. Likewise, challenging deterministic notions of learners' fixed abilities is central to the development of inclusive pedagogies and is a feature of examples of radically redesigned ITE programmes in the literature. However, in our data the emphasis on this aspect was relatively weak.

There was clear support for the provision of additional professional development opportunities on inclusive teaching for teacher educators, in both the staff survey and interview data. Staff with particular expertise in the area of inclusive education were typically not confident that their colleagues were always well placed to support student teachers in engaging with inclusive practices in schools. This represents an area for further exploration through later phases of the project.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

A central theme which continually re-emerges throughout the data and across the literature, is the way in which inclusive education is understood as relating primarily to issues of special educational needs and disability, or to a broader approach encompassing diverse learners. A key point of reference for the research team is the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers (EADSNE, 2012), which clearly articulates inclusive teaching in terms of engaging with all learners, not restricted to those identified with special educational needs or disability. We would argue that this shift in focus is best understood as a process, or perhaps through the metaphor of a journey, in which policy makers, statutory agencies, teacher educators, schools and teachers are moving at varying rates and from different starting points. This is not a simple linear process with a clear end point; rather, it involves continual adjustment and repositioning which is evident for example in revised or updated definitions and guidance for teacher educators. There is a sense of a 'gravitational pull' however, in which the legacy of inclusive education as starting from disability, together with the prevailing policy context and resource allocation procedures, continually reasserts the dominance of special educational needs as almost a default frame of reference. The overall picture emerging from the data, reflecting the wider literature (Pugach and Blanton, 2012), is one in which initial teacher education programmes are engaging with the notion of inclusive teaching, but are often at a relatively early stage of development in terms of resolving how best to prepare student teachers for inclusive practices in the classroom with diverse learners.

The findings of the first year of the project – Phases 1 and 2 – are summarised below in relation to the first four Research Questions as framed by NCSE. The fifth Research Question will be addressed in the Final Report, in identifying lessons for teacher education in Ireland.

For each Research Question, we list the key themes which have emerged from analysis of the data, indicating which data source(s) they are derived from.

It is also important to note that questions 1) and 3) are posed in relation to the terms 'inclusive/special education' or 'special educational need', indicating an emphasis on special educational needs as a focus for inclusive teaching. However, questions 2) and 4) refer to the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers, which adopts a broader approach to inclusive teaching with diverse learners. This approach reflects a process of change and development in thinking which is evident across the education system.

## 5.1 Research Question 1: What are the components of inclusive/special education within initial teacher education (ITE) programmes in Ireland for primary and post-primary teachers?

The data that relate to this research question were primarily our own analysis of programme documentation, and information provided by the Teaching Council [documentary analysis]; our survey of teacher educators; and staff interviews. Our approach enables us to draw conclusions about the range of approaches taken to providing components of inclusive education within ITE programmes. Overall, the documentary analysis and the staff survey data both indicate that programme content broadly concurs with the content of the EASNIE Profile for Inclusive Teachers (EADSNE, 2012). The core values of the profile are evident throughout the programme documentation and in the responses of teacher educators, albeit with some variation in emphasis across different aspects of the Profile, and in terms of the relative emphasis between attitude, knowledge and skills for each Profile element.

### **Inclusive education as SEN-focused versus engaging diverse learners**

Within the programme documentation, special educational needs was the most common frame of reference used for inclusive teaching, and tended to dominate overall in relation to the broader approach to inclusion and diversity taken in the EASNIE Profile.

There is significant variation evident in the formulation of programme modules that address issues in inclusive education and the extent to which inclusive education is stressed as an overall approach. All programmes of course meet the Teaching Council requirements for providing components related to inclusive education, typically through mandatory modules which frame inclusive education within a broader approach to addressing issues of social justice. A small number of programmes are narrower in their view and focus very specifically, and exclusively, on psychological and SEN perspectives.

However significant emphasis on special educational needs was evident within the approach taken to inclusive education overall, including in modules based on aspects of educational theory. As noted, the categorisation of module content in the documentary analysis (see Figure 6, Section 4.1.1) indicated that the most common approach to coverage of inclusive education was in the form of input on special educational needs, with the least common being in the form of modules explicitly focused on a broader approach to inclusive education.

Elective modules were available addressing aspects of special educational needs in some programmes; and there were a small number of programmes offering a specialist pathway in this area. There was considerable variation in the extent to which subject-specific modules incorporated elements related to inclusive education or special educational needs, for example presented in terms of approaches to differentiation.

In a similar vein, the analysis of open text responses in the staff survey (Section 4.2.2) indicated variation between teacher educators who articulated a 'narrow' view of inclusion which focused on SEN and disability in some responses, as opposed to others who gave a 'broader' view of inclusion related to overall conceptualisations of difference in others.

### **Discrete versus permeated content**

Based on our analysis of programme documentation, programmes vary in terms of both the modules that address issues of inclusive education and the extent to which inclusive education is stressed as an overall approach.

In the staff survey, there is considerable variation in whether inclusion is considered as being delivered in discrete modules as opposed to being infused or permeated across the curriculum. The Teaching Council's analysis of the content of the pro formas (for primary programmes) produced similar findings, in terms of weighting, prevalence, rationale and content of 'inclusive education' modules (see Appendix 2). However, the presentation of specific SEN content is clearer, with modules explicitly focused on topics in SEN, together with clearly stated elements of SEN in Inclusive Education and Psychology modules.

Analysis of the staff interviews sheds further light on the thinking of teacher educators. A number of interview responses indicate that, for some teacher educators, although permeated content is not yet embedded across programmes, it is seen as the next step in the developmental curve of ITE. Staff report here, and in the staff survey, that there is some good practice in this regard and that they are working on developing the permeated nature of content on inclusive and special education (Loreman, 2010).

### **The relationship between university and school placement elements of programmes**

A key issue was the relationship between taught programmes and practical experience in schools. In the staff interviews, respondents saw placement as a central plank in inclusive education. In the staff survey, a number of responses indicated that inclusive practice is embedded in the requirements for school placement, encompassing claims for an approach aimed explicitly at 'all learners' rather than 'differentiation' being something presented as additional. In other staff survey responses, 'embedding' followed input on categories of SEN on the university phase of the programme, or focused on differentiation. Based on this, and given the mismatch between positive attitudes to inclusion and lack of staff confidence in relation to various areas of competence on the EASNIE profile in the quantitative data from the staff survey (Section 4.2.2), it is reasonable to suggest that there may be issues for some programmes in terms of how positive aims for developing inclusive teachers are translated operationally in the design and implementation of school placement.

## 5.2 Research Question 2: Do the recent changes to ITE prepare newly qualified teachers to be inclusive as identified by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) profile of inclusive teachers?

The data relating to this research question derive from the documentary analysis and from student and staff surveys and interviews. It should be noted that the documentary analysis and interview data were analysed qualitatively and that a quantitative interpretation of programme content cannot be inferred from the coding of text.

### Programme design and the EASNIE Profile

As noted, the documentary analysis shows that in a number of respects the programme documents do tend to reflect significant elements of the EASNIE Profile for Inclusive Teachers. The core values of the profile are evident to a significant extent throughout the documents.

Taking into account the caveats noted in the methodology concerning qualitative versus quantitative interpretations of content, presenting the four core values ('valuing diversity', 'supporting all learners', 'working with others' and 'professional development') in terms of separate areas of competence provides us with an indicative understanding of the document content. While the area of 'working with others' appears to be underdeveloped within document content, 'effective teaching in heterogeneous classrooms' dominates. It is also clear that developing teachers as reflective practitioners has a strong 'presence' within ITE content.

### Overall approach and capacity to deliver

The quantitative elements of the staff survey most strikingly highlighted an overall difference between whether respondents felt that the key heading areas related to the EASNIE Profile were important and the extent to which they felt these were covered in sufficient depth/staff were confident in covering this area.

This 'disconnect' between intentions and overall approach and the actualities of implementation in practice in the staff survey, also resonates with the documentary analysis, one of the salient points of which was the identification of variations between the specification of overall aims and intentions, and the operationalisation of these aims and intentions in terms of actual programme content – see Section 4.1.2. The documentary analysis revealed significant variation in the extent to which different dimensions of the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers are addressed, for example for the core value on concepts of inclusive education. In relation to conceptions of inclusive education, and teachers' views of learner difference, attitudes and beliefs are more heavily documented than skills and abilities. This finding was echoed in the student interview data, where students often expressed a degree of dissatisfaction in their preparedness in terms of skills and abilities to implement inclusive practice, whilst reporting a strong emphasis on addressing appropriate attitudes and beliefs.

### **The impact of the extension of programmes**

In the staff survey, the analysis of the open text responses indicated that for a number of providers, a variety of constraints and process issues had meant that, in their perception, the extension of programmes had not led to an increased impact in relation to inclusion and diversity. However the staff interviews indicated that, in other cases, the programme extension had allowed for the provision of contrasting school placement experiences that enabled student teachers to experience more diversity in terms of pupil cohorts. In the staff interviews, expanded placement experience was seen as most important for consecutive programmes. However, other staff interview responses noted difficulties of locating quality placements and ensuring placement diversity, due to the increased pressure to locate school placements resulting from the programme extension. Some respondents in the staff interviews also reported that the additional requirement to increase school placements had impacted negatively on the time available for programme content related to inclusive education. Thus although our analysis shows that there clearly is potential for the programme extension to allow for a greater impact in relation to inclusion and diversity, this was not always realised in practice, to some extent due to constraints within the system.

### **5.3 Research Question 3: What is the intended impact of the changes in ITE on outcomes for students with special educational needs (SEN), and do student/newly qualified teachers perceive their learning during initial teacher education makes an impact on outcomes for students with SEN?**

The data relating to the first part of this research question came from the documentary analysis and from the staff survey and interviews. However programme documentation and tutors tended not to express intentions of changes in ITE in terms of specific outcomes for students with special educational needs, but rather in terms of preparing teachers to include students with special educational needs. Thus there is more scope for reporting on the second part, where the most relevant data sets are the student survey and interviews.

#### **Student views on their programme**

Student interviews indicate that they feel very positive about their courses in terms of how they have developed their attitudes to inclusion. Concepts of inclusion which align closely with the EASNIE core values are clearly visible, permeating students' emerging professional identities. We find that students feel that they have a range of theoretical knowledges for developing as inclusive teachers, and that they locate valuable sources of learning in personal experience, their college input, and in their placement learning. As might be expected, they see many challenges to inclusivity (time, class size, management, testing and mismatches between school and college perspectives – see Section 4.4.3), but are not unduly surprised by their existence.

Despite their enthusiasm when talking about teaching, when invited to comment directly on their courses students can be very negative about what they see as missing practical skills input. Nevertheless, they do seem to appreciate that they are novices just about to begin careers in teaching, and that they will continue to learn in their NQT years.

### **The impact of specialisation**

In the student interviews, those who had opted for a specialist route within their ITE programme where a major focus on special educational needs was offered tended to see the balance of their curriculum as a particular advantage – they felt better equipped and were more confident (see Section 4.4.4). Interestingly, this was not usually expressed in terms of access to specialist knowledge about particular categories of special educational needs or disability; rather the distinctiveness of an ‘SEN’ specialism was characterised in terms of an additional focus on classroom practice. In this sense a ‘specialism’ in SEN was seen as enabling inclusive teaching for all learners. Turning to the survey data, we did not find any significant association between the experience of specialised routes and attitudes, knowledge and skills related to the EASNIE profile; however given that only 5% of the survey sample reported having taken a specialist route (primary), not too much weight should be placed on this finding.

Where students had experiences of specialist provision, albeit brief placements in some cases, they often described this in interview as having a substantial impact on their understanding of inclusive practice. This is supported by the student survey analysis where, for a number of elements of attitude and skills related to the EASNIE profile, there was an (albeit generally weak) association between students having had a placement in a special school and more positive responses concerning attitudes and skills.

In student interviews, a substantial proportion of students reported that they were involved in identifying their own placements, which was clearly backed up by the student survey responses as well; in some cases this may have constrained opportunities for tutors to plan the range of experiences available. In interviews, students reported that they encountered significant variation in the level of support they received from cooperating teachers, from substantial to minimal.

### **Students as Agents of Change**

The analysis of programme documentation highlighted a notion of teachers as agents of change (see section 4.1.4). In the student interviews, several students saw themselves as agents for change in their schools, particularly in terms of a need to challenge conservative pedagogic practice. This was linked to attitudes and beliefs related to the EASNIE profile core values which, although sometimes framed in terms of special needs, focus on difference versus diversity; the idea of supporting all learners; valuing diversity; and the emergence of a professional identity which challenges earlier views of difference (see Sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2).

### **Sources of Experience**

In the student interviews, many students cited particular modules as sources of learning which had impacted on their understanding of inclusion and their practical pedagogic knowledge. Interviews also indicated that in general students valued their placement learning enormously. Some felt that this was more valuable than their college learning, others valued the opportunity to connect theory and practice, while some felt that placement had not delivered well at all. Students’ favourable attitude to placement learning was reflected in the student survey, which showed nearly two-thirds of students valuing placement the most in terms of understanding about inclusive education.

Linked to this, analysis of the student survey showed a relationship between the range of students' classroom experience on placement and more positive attitudes to inclusion and greater confidence in their knowledge and skills. This is particularly strong in relation to experience of working with children with special needs on placement.

The student survey also highlighted that an unexpectedly high proportion – nearly half – of respondents had 'significant interactions with a friend or relative who has a special educational need or disability'. A similar proportion reported prior experience of working with children with special educational needs. The data suggest that, for example, students with personal experience of disability were more likely to engage in wider learning about effective inclusion. This is particularly interesting, as providing opportunities within ITE programmes for students to draw on their prior personal experience of difference and diversity may be important in enabling them to develop more inclusive practices (Baglieri, 2008).

### **Theory and Practice**

The student interviews indicated that in a number of cases there were tensions between student teachers' and pupils' expectations, between school and university perspectives, and between theory in the 'lecture hall' and practice in the classroom.

The documentary analysis and staff survey suggest that an important location within the ITE curriculum for content on attitudes and concepts related to inclusive education is in modules focused on teaching practice. Placement experience is clearly important for the acquisition of skills and knowledge for inclusive practice, such as skills and abilities required for teaching learners with special educational needs. Staff interviews indicated that a focus on providing a range of placement experiences in different settings was also underlined as important in developing students' skills for reflective practice.

However, across the data sources there was an absence of evidence that programmes were able to ensure that planned experiences of inclusive practice were provided for all students, which were systematically linked to critical reflection facilitated by tutors, and which were clearly linked to assessment strategies. In other words, we did not locate evidence of in-depth planning which related theory and practice and college and school placement elements of programmes from the perspective of inclusive teaching. Thus the question of how the ITE curriculum and school experiences are *aligned* is emerging as a key issue. We also discuss this theory to practice gap in relation to Research Question 4.

## 5.4 Research Question 4: What gaps are there in how current ITE programmes prepare student teachers to be inclusive as per the EASNIE profile of inclusive teachers and what aspects need to be strengthened?

The data drawn on for this research question are the documentary analysis and staff and student surveys and interviews.

### Theory to practice: practical skills

A degree of disconnect or misalignment is evident between teacher education programmes, and student teacher perceptions of skills input in relation to inclusive teaching. The documentary analysis reveals substantial coverage of content related to both knowledge and understanding and skills and abilities for the area of competence 'effective teaching in heterogeneous classes', within the EASNIE Profile. However, there is a consistent theme within the student interview data reporting a perceived lack of preparedness for inclusive teaching in terms of practical skills (see Section 4.4.4). This is also reflected in the student survey, with students identifying the following items most commonly as areas for improvement in college learning: more input on specific strategies and approaches for working with children with a range of learning needs, and more input on subject specific strategies for inclusion.

In interviews, students tended to refer to programme content where strategies may be taught on the ITE programme but which they found difficult to implement in practice in schools. Where students were able to articulate an alternative approach, this typically reflected a desire for closer alignment between programme and placement learning. So, for example, some student teachers expressed a wish for more workshop-style sessions where they could reflect on issues arising from their practice on school placement.

### Working with parents

In the programme documents (documentary analysis), the preparation of student teachers to work with parents and families appeared to be the least developed area of competence within the EASNIE framework. However this was not noted as a key area for improvement in the student survey responses.

### Diversity of experience on placement

In the student survey, the most commonly selected areas for improvement on school placement were opportunities to work with children with a range of abilities and needs, opportunities to observe good inclusive practice, and levels of support around dealing with challenging behaviour. Given the relatively low percentage of students who indicated significant placement involvement with teaching children with EAL and SEN, the rate of response for the first two items is not surprising (see Sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3). This also links with the concerns expressed in the staff interviews about the difficulty of finding diverse school placements; and with the analysis of the student survey data which shows some moderate correlations between experiences of diversity on school placement and students' attitude, knowledge and skills related to the EASNIE profile.

The concerns about further support for behaviour management in the student survey also link to similar concerns noted in the student interview data (see Section 4.4.3).

### **Staff development**

A significant issue emerged relating to the need for teacher educators to have access to opportunities for professional development in the area of inclusive teaching. As noted, the staff survey clearly indicated a mismatch between the importance teacher educators placed on inclusive teaching, and the degree of confidence they expressed in their capacity to deliver it. The staff interviews echoed this and suggested a degree of disconnection between those academics with particular expertise in this area and their subject-specialist colleagues. For example, where specialist tutors gave a more in-depth account of their perspectives on embedding approaches to inclusive pedagogy across programmes, they tended to express a lack of confidence that this understanding was consistently shared by all colleagues. The student interview data suggest that student teachers sometimes see teacher educators as stressing the importance of inclusive teaching, without providing detailed guidance on how to enact inclusive practice, or as providing 'textbook' examples of strategies which they found difficult to implement in schools; as noted, the student survey similarly suggests a desire for more practical skills related to enacting practice.

## **5.5 Issues arising**

The next phase of the research will aim to develop a deeper understanding of how well prepared this cohort of student teachers feel to engage with inclusive practices, as they become newly qualified teachers. We will seek to understand how as NQTs they reflect back on the fit between their university and school-based experiences of ITE; how their new school contexts shape their engagement with inclusive practices; how their understandings of inclusive teaching develops; and how well supported they feel in this regard. Additional statistical analysis of the student survey data in combination with the NQT survey data, together with longitudinal analysis of the student and NQT interview data, will enable us to refine our findings further.

At this early stage it is possible to indicate some emerging issues for teacher education that we will wish to reflect on through further data analysis. Clearly, there is a need to examine opportunities for greater alignment between university and school-based learning experiences. Our findings point to the importance of enabling collaborative working, with support for critical reflection on planned opportunities for inclusive practice. Likewise, the assessment of inclusive teaching practices is likely to form a key influence on how deeply a commitment to inclusive teaching is embedded across ITE programmes. This is in turn linked to the configuration and planning of school-based support for student teachers.

In our data, teacher educators have also pointed to the need for further learning opportunities for them in relation to inclusive teaching, particularly for spaces for more effective collaboration between colleagues with subject specialist and inclusive education backgrounds.

## 5.6 Final comments

It is important to note that this report contains data and analysis based on the first two phases of the project only, and that our responses to the research questions will be further refined following the incorporation of Phase Three and Four data which tracks students into their first and second NQT years. In addition, ITE in Ireland is in a period of transition, and our analysis should be understood in that context. In this final section, we discuss key issues to emerge from our project so far in the context of the national and international literature. We note resonances between our findings and those of other researchers, which will feed the next phases of the project.

Ireland's move to an extended ITE resulting in a Masters qualification, for those who pursue postgraduate consecutive programmes, has been in part prompted by a range of research pointing to the value of developing teachers as reflective practitioners who are active researchers, able to develop and learn from their experiences in the field (DES, 2012; Villegas, Ciotoli, & Lucas, 2017). This general development has also been advocated and supported by bodies such as the Teaching Council (Teaching Council, 2013). One important aspect of this extension of ITE was the creation of potential opportunities for a greater variety of placements, and longer and more in-depth experience of school cultures; the value of this kind of experience has been highlighted by a number of researchers (NCATE, 2010). The central role of placement experience is also underlined in an indicative shift in language from school practice to placement experience in the Teaching Council's reconceptualisation of ITE (Teaching Council, 2011a, 2013). However our initial analysis indicates that, whilst there is in general much good practice, particularly in relation to the fostering of positive attitudes to inclusion, including for many students an understanding of their potential role as agents of change, the promise of this shift towards alignment and integration between placement and university experience has yet to be fully achieved. Similarly, in at least some cases, systems issues particularly related to the capacity to locate diverse student placements in school, may also restrain the full potential of the extension of ITE in Ireland.

Our research questions necessarily focus on programmes but, of course, learning in ITE takes place in the overall context of school cultures and policy systems, and these exert an influence on the student and NQT experience. Considering these wider systems highlights the need for a more complex understanding of the situation and our data. So, for instance, although we might look for gaps in provision, and the data reported above do sometimes suggest gaps – for example, some students reported that they had lacked input in their programmes on how to deal with specific disabilities – we need to understand their comments in the broader context of their ongoing learning and experience.

We found that all stakeholders had positive attitudes towards developing the practices of inclusive education. This was reflected in significant synergies between the programmes and the EASNIE profile across a range of data sources and a general commitment towards addressing inclusive education in ITE. However, we know from international research that ITE students do not always make connections between their university experience and what they can learn in practice, and may see university 'input' as inadequate (Allen, 2009; Bullock & Russell, 2010; Goos *et al.*, 2009). In line with this research, we found that students were sometimes critical of

their programmes in relation to what they saw as the omission of courses on specific skills in inclusive practice that they needed in placement. However, we also found strong evidence of a commitment to inclusive education that students drew on in terms of expressing confidence in being able to develop their practice through their own future learning. They were also positive about the research element of their programmes, providing evidence for the value of changes to ITE instigated by the Teaching Council (2011b). From this point of view, we can point to success in the programmes in terms of enabling students to develop an attitude of a reflective practitioner/teacher researcher with a confidence that they had the skills to explore their own practice and develop new skills.

In interviews, students also saw themselves as agents of change, advocating and addressing inclusive education in their placement experiences and in their future practice. Underlining the fact that ITE programmes do not operate in a vacuum, their comments on this issue tended to arise in the context of the constraints that they encountered in placement. They reported on mismatches between the positions taken by their tutors in college elements and practice in school and their consequent ability to put inclusive pedagogy into practice. This situation is not unusual – as the literature on placement shows, placements can be variable, and students might struggle to reconcile mixed messages from university and schools (Holmes Group, 1986; NCATE, 2010). ITE takes place in both a local and a national context, and needs to equip students to work in those contexts: the next phase of this project will explore how NQTs navigate and negotiate in the school context, and how they bridge between their university experience and their learning as NQTs. This resonates with McIntyre's (2009) reflections on the difficulties of enacting inclusive pedagogy within teacher education.

A potential source of students' positive attitudes to inclusive education might be the fact that, as the student survey data indicated, a large proportion reported knowing someone with a disability, although equally it is also possible that students with this sort of experience were more likely to respond to requests to engage with interviews and online surveys. Nevertheless, this is interesting in the context of research that suggests that there is a lack of diversity in ITE students across a range of territories. International evidence from several countries shows that the teaching profession itself remains homogenous relative to the heterogeneity of the student population (e.g. Hartsuyker, 2007 in Australia; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005 in the US). In Ireland nearly all student teachers are white and from the majority nationality and ethnic group – research by Keane and Heinz (2016) reported that 96% of the postgraduate post-primary entrants in 2013 identified as 'white Irish' in terms of ethnicity and in 2014 the figure increased to 98.3% (the increase largely attributed to the extension and therefore financial cost of the period of initial teacher training). As these researchers observe, addressing the gap between the student teacher/teacher body and the broader society is far from a simple matter of recruiting a greater diversity of applicants ethnically. It is also, crucially, about critically reviewing selection and admission practices. Some steps to consider this issue have been taken this year by the HEA, as already noted in this Report, in the form of its *Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH)* as a part of the *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019* (DES, 2015). This initiative is designed to not only attract students from minority backgrounds into teaching but to support them appropriately while learning to teach. Based on our particular findings, we might conclude that programmes could draw more on students' personal experience and incorporate it into their learning.

Furthermore, a significant emerging issue, across the staff survey and interviews, is the recognition by teacher educators that programme staff were not always equipped to support learning in all areas of inclusive education. They were aware of the need for further professional development in this area, and staff with particular expertise in inclusive education tended to support the notion of creating spaces for collaboration and reflection with colleagues (Florian, 2012). In this respect, we draw attention to the EASNIE profile recommendation that preparing inclusive teachers is the responsibility of all teacher educators (EADSNE, 2012, p.11). Teacher educators also recognised the existence of mixed messages for students between HEIs and the practices of the schools, and as noted above, this is an issue which programmes might directly address.

Overall, ITE programmes in Ireland address inclusive education as a significant element of their programmes in terms of the ethos of the programmes themselves, as well as in their approach to the development of inclusive attitudes, skills and knowledge. There are some important emergent issues around aligning college learning with placement experience in terms of maximising the development of inclusive practices. Our analysis so far shows that ITE in Ireland has many of the building blocks in place for developing more inclusive teachers, together with the potential to move further along this trajectory, subject to inevitable system constraints. Data collected on NQTs in the later phases of the project will allow us to refine and develop our understanding of both ITE and the continuum of development for beginning teachers, leading, we hope, to identifying lessons for future development.

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## 7. Appendices

### 7.1 Appendix 1: EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers

**Table 12: Profile of Inclusive Teachers: core values and areas of competence, with attitudes/beliefs, knowledge/understanding and skills/abilities exemplars**

Core Values	Area of Competence	Attitudes and beliefs	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities
1. Valuing Learner Diversity	1.1 Conceptions of inclusive education	<p>... education is based upon a belief in equality, human rights and democracy for all learners;</p> <p>... inclusive education is about societal reform and is non-negotiable;</p> <p>... inclusive education and quality in education cannot be viewed as separate issues;</p> <p>... access to mainstream education alone is not enough; participation means that all learners are engaged in learning activities that are meaningful for them.</p>	<p>... the theoretical and practical concepts and principles underpinning inclusive education within global and local contexts; ... the wider system of cultures and policies of educational institutions at all levels that impacts on inclusive education. The possible strengths and weaknesses of the educational system that they work in have to be acknowledged and understood by teachers;</p> <p>... inclusive education is an approach for all learners, not just those who are perceived to have different needs and may be at risk of exclusion from educational opportunities;</p> <p>... the language of inclusion and diversity and the implications of using different terminology to describe, label and categorise learners;</p> <p>... inclusive education as the presence (access to education) participation (quality of the learning experience) and achievement (learning processes and outcomes) of all learners.</p>	<p>... critically examining one's own beliefs and attitudes and the impact these have on actions;</p> <p>... engaging in ethical practice at all times and respecting confidentiality;</p> <p>... the ability to deconstruct educational history to understand current situations and contexts;</p> <p>... coping strategies that prepare teachers to challenge non-inclusive attitudes and to work in segregated situations;</p> <p>... being empathetic to the diverse needs of learners;</p> <p>... modelling respect in social relationships and using appropriate language with all learners and stakeholders in education.</p>

Core Values	Area of Competence	Attitudes and beliefs	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities
	<p>1.2 The teacher's view of learner difference</p>	<p>... it is 'normal to be different';</p> <p>... learner diversity is to be respected, valued and understood as a resource that enhances learning opportunities and adds value to schools, local communities and society;</p> <p>... all learner's voices should be heard and valued;</p> <p>... the teacher is a key influence on a learners' self-esteem and, as a consequence, their learning potential;</p> <p>... categorisation and labelling of learners can have a negative impact upon learning opportunities.</p>	<p>... learners can be used as a resource to facilitate learning about diversity for themselves and their peers;</p> <p>... learners learn in different ways and these can be used to support their own learning and that of their peers;</p> <p>... essential information about learner diversity (arising from support needs, culture, language, socio-economic background etc.);</p> <p>... the school is a community and social environment that affects learners' self-esteem and learning potential;</p> <p>... the school and classroom population is constantly changing; diversity cannot be seen as a static concept.</p>	<p>... learning how to learn from differences;</p> <p>... identifying the most appropriate ways of responding to diversity in all situations;</p> <p>... addressing diversity in curriculum implementation;</p> <p>... using diversity in learning approaches and styles as a resource for teaching;</p> <p>... contributing to building schools as learning communities that respect, encourage and celebrate all learners' achievements.</p>

Core Values	Area of Competence	Attitudes and beliefs	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities
<p>2. Supporting All Learners</p>	<p>2.1 Promoting academic, practical, social &amp; emotional learning of all learners</p>	<p>... learning is primarily a social activity;</p> <p>... academic, practical, social and emotional learning are equally important for all learners;</p> <p>... teachers' expectations are a key determinant of learner success and therefore high expectations for all learners are critical;</p> <p>... all learners should be active decision-makers in their learning and any assessment processes they are involved in;</p> <p>... parents and families are an essential resource for a learner's learning;</p> <p>... developing autonomy and self-determination in all learners is essential;</p> <p>... the learning capacity and potential of each learner has to be discovered and stimulated.</p>	<p>... understanding the value of collaborative working with parents and families;</p> <p>... typical and atypical child development patterns and pathways, particularly in relation to social and communication skill development;</p> <p>... different models of learning and approaches to learning learners may take.</p>	<p>... being an effective verbal and non-verbal communicator who can respond to the varied communication needs of learners, parents and other professionals;</p> <p>... supporting the development of learners' communication skills and possibilities;</p> <p>... assessing and then developing 'learning to learn skills' in learners;</p> <p>... developing independent and autonomous learners;</p> <p>... facilitating cooperative learning approaches;</p> <p>... implementing positive behaviour management approaches that support learner's social development and interactions;</p> <p>... facilitating learning situations where learners can 'take risks' and even fail in a safe environment;</p> <p>... using assessment for learning approaches that take account of social and emotional as well as academic learning.</p>

Core Values	Area of Competence	Attitudes and beliefs	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities
	<p>2.2 Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes</p>	<p>... effective teachers are teachers of all learners;</p> <p>... teachers take responsibility for facilitating the learning of all learners in a class;</p> <p>... learners' abilities are not fixed; all learners have the capacity to learn and develop;</p> <p>... learning is a process and the goal for all learners is the development of 'learning to learn' skills, not just content/subject knowledge;</p> <p>... the learning process is essentially the same for all learners – there are very few 'special techniques';</p> <p>... on some occasions, particular learning difficulties require responses based upon adaptations to the curriculum and teaching approaches;</p>	<p>... theoretical knowledge on the way learners learn and models of teaching that support the learning process;</p> <p>... positive behaviour and classroom management approaches;</p> <p>... managing the physical and social environment of the classroom to support learning;</p> <p>... ways of identifying and then addressing different barriers to learning and the implications of these for teaching approaches;</p> <p>... the development of basic skills – in particular key competences – along with associated teaching and assessment approaches;</p> <p>... assessment for learning methods focussed upon identifying the strengths of a learner;</p> <p>... differentiation of curriculum content, learning process and learning materials to include learners and meet diverse needs;</p> <p>... personalised learning approaches for all learners that support learners to develop autonomy in their learning;</p>	<p>... employing classroom leadership skills that involve systematic approaches to positive classroom management;</p> <p>... working with individual learners as well as heterogeneous groups;</p> <p>... using the curriculum as a tool for inclusion that supports access to learning;</p> <p>... addressing diversity issues in curriculum development processes;</p> <p>... differentiating methods, content and outcomes for learning;</p> <p>... working with learners and their families to personalise learning and target setting;</p> <p>... facilitating cooperative learning where learners help each other in different ways – including peer tutoring – within flexible learner groupings;</p> <p>... using a range of teaching methods and approaches in systematic ways;</p> <p>... employing ICT and adaptive technology to support flexible approaches to learning;</p>

Core Values	Area of Competence	Attitudes and beliefs	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities
			<p>... the development, implementation and effective review of Individual Education Plans (IEP) or similar individualised learning programmes when appropriate.</p>	<p>... using approaches to teaching that are evidence based to achieve learning goals, alternative routes for learning, flexible instruction and the use of clear feedback to learners;</p> <p>... using formative and summative assessment that supports learning and does not label or lead to negative consequences for learners;</p> <p>... engaging in collaborative problem solving with learners;</p> <p>... drawing on a range of verbal and non-verbal communication skills to facilitate learning.</p>
<p>3. Working With Others</p>	<p>3.1 Working with parents and families</p>	<p>... awareness of the added value of working collaboratively with parents and families;</p> <p>... respect for the cultural and social backgrounds and perspectives of parents and families;</p> <p>... viewing effective communication and collaboration with parents and families as a teacher's responsibility.</p>	<p>... inclusive teaching as based on a collaborative working approach;</p> <p>... the importance of positive interpersonal skills;</p> <p>... the impact of inter-personal relationships on the achievement of learning goals.</p>	<p>... effectively engaging parents and families in supporting their child's learning;</p> <p>... communicating effectively with parents and family members of different cultural, ethnic, linguistic and social backgrounds.</p>

Core Values	Area of Competence	Attitudes and beliefs	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities
	<p>3.2 Working with a range of other educational professionals</p>	<p>... inclusive education requires all teachers to work in teams;</p> <p>... collaboration, partnerships and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers and should be welcomed;</p> <p>... collaborative teamwork supports professional learning with and from other professionals.</p>	<p>... the value and benefits of collaborative work with other teachers and educational professionals;</p> <p>... support systems and structures available for further help, input and advice;</p> <p>... multi-agency working models where teachers in inclusive classrooms co-operate with other experts and staff from a range of different disciplines;</p> <p>... collaborative teaching approaches where teachers take a team approach involving learners themselves, parents, peers, other school teachers and support staff, as well as multi-disciplinary team members as appropriate;</p> <p>... the language/terminology and basic working concepts and perspectives of other professionals involved in education;</p> <p>... the power relationships that exist between different stakeholders that have to be acknowledged and effectively dealt with.</p>	<p>... implementing classroom leadership and management skills that facilitate effective multiagency working;</p> <p>... co-teaching and working in flexible teaching teams;</p> <p>... working as part of a school community and drawing on the support of school internal and external resources;</p> <p>... building a class community that is part of a wider school community;</p> <p>... contributing to whole school evaluation, review and development processes;</p> <p>... collaboratively problem solving with other professionals;</p> <p>... contributing to wider school partnerships with other schools, community organisations and other educational organisations;</p> <p>... drawing on a range of verbal and non-verbal communication skills to facilitate working co-operatively with other professionals.</p>

Core Values	Area of Competence	Attitudes and beliefs	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities
<p>4 Personal Professional Development</p>	<p>4.1 Teachers as reflective practitioners</p>	<p>... teaching is a problem solving activity that requires on-going and systematic planning, evaluation, reflection and then modified action;</p> <p>... reflective practice facilitates teachers to work effectively with parents as well as in teams with other teachers and professionals working within and outside of the school;</p> <p>... the importance of evidence-based practice to guide a teacher's work;</p> <p>... valuing the importance of developing a personal pedagogy to guide a teacher's work.</p>	<p>... personal meta-cognitive, learning to learn skills;</p> <p>... what makes a reflective practitioner and how personal reflection on and in action can be developed;</p> <p>... methods and strategies for evaluating one's own work and performance;</p> <p>... action research methods and the relevance for teachers' work;</p> <p>... the development of personal strategies for problem solving.</p>	<p>... systematically evaluating one's own performance;</p> <p>... effectively involving others in reflecting upon teaching and learning;</p> <p>... contributing to the development of the school as a learning community</p>

Core Values	Area of Competence	Attitudes and beliefs	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities
	<p>4.2 ITE as a foundation for ongoing professional development</p>	<p>... teachers have a responsibility for their own continuous professional development;</p> <p>... initial teacher education is the first step in teachers' professional lifelong learning;</p> <p>... teaching is a learning activity; being open to learning new skills and actively asking for information and advice is a good thing, not a weakness;</p> <p>... a teacher cannot be an expert in all questions related to inclusive education. Basic knowledge for those beginning in inclusive education is crucial, but continuous learning is essential;</p> <p>... change and development is constant in inclusive education and teachers need the skills to manage and respond to changing needs and demands throughout their careers.</p>	<p>... the educational law and the legal context they work within and their responsibilities and duties towards learners, their families, colleagues and the teaching profession within that legal context;</p> <p>... possibilities, opportunities and routes for further, in-service teacher education, in order to develop knowledge and skills to enhance their inclusive practice.</p>	<p>... flexibility in teaching strategies that promote innovation and personal learning;</p> <p>... employing time management strategies that will accommodate possibilities for pursuing in-service development opportunities;</p> <p>... being open to and proactive in using colleagues and other professionals as sources of learning and inspiration;</p> <p>... contributing to the whole school community learning and development processes.</p>

**Table 13: Mapping of EASNIE Profile for the Survey [showing derived survey questions]**

	Areas of the Profile				
	Core Values	Areas of Competence	Attitudes & beliefs	Knowledge & understanding	Skills & abilities
<p>Identified Key EAS-NIE statements</p> <p>And derived Survey questions [shown in red]</p>	<p>1 <b>Valuing Learner Diversity</b></p> <p>learner difference is considered as a resource and an asset to education</p>	<p>1.1 <b>Conceptions of inclusive education</b></p>	<p>... education is based upon a belief in equality, human rights and democracy for all learners;</p> <p>... inclusive education is about societal reform and is non-negotiable;</p> <p>... inclusive education and quality in education cannot be viewed as separate issues;</p> <p>... access to mainstream education alone is not enough; participation means that all learners are engaged in learning activities that are meaningful for them.</p> <p><b>Q1</b> Inclusive education is about equality for all learners not just those with special educational disabilities</p> <p><b>Q2</b> Most children with special educational needs can be included successfully in mainstream schools</p>	<p>... the theoretical and practical concepts and principles underpinning inclusive education within global and local contexts;</p> <p>... the wider system of cultures and policies of educational institutions at all levels that impacts on inclusive education. The possible strengths and weaknesses of the educational system that they work in have to be acknowledged and understood by teachers;</p> <p>... inclusive education is an approach for all learners, not just those who are perceived to have different needs and may be at risk of exclusion from educational opportunities;</p> <p>... the language of inclusion and diversity and the implications of using different terminology to describe, label and categorise learners;</p> <p>... inclusive education as the presence (access to education) participation (quality of the learning experience) and achievement (learning processes and outcomes) of all learners.</p> <p><b>Q3</b> I understand that there are debates about the use of language to label or categorise learners</p> <p><b>Q4</b> I understand that some schools are better than others in supporting inclusive education</p>	<p>... critically examining one's own beliefs and attitudes and the impact these have on actions;</p> <p>... engaging in ethical practice at all times and respecting confidentiality;</p> <p>... the ability to deconstruct educational history to understand current situations and contexts;</p> <p>... coping strategies that prepare teachers to challenge non-inclusive attitudes and to work in segregated situations;</p> <p>... being empathetic to the diverse needs of learners;</p> <p>... modelling respect in social relationships and using appropriate language with all learners and stakeholders in education.</p> <p><b>Q4a</b> My own beliefs and attitudes are not relevant as to whether I can achieve effective inclusive practice [Reverse]</p>

## 7.2 Appendix 2: Teaching Council Overview of Inclusive Education Elements in ITE programmes (Primary)

### Introduction

This narrative offers an anonymised account of the inclusive education elements in both concurrent and consecutive primary education programmes. The information has been drawn from pro formas submitted to the Teaching Council for professional accreditation purposes. These pro formas describe programmes under a range of headings, e.g. programme aims and design, module descriptors, school placement etc. A desk-based analysis, utilising a key word search was conducted across modules in an effort to capture elements pertinent to inclusive education. The key terms used were:

- Inclusive Education
- Inclusive Learning Environments
- Differentiation
- Learning Difficulties
- Special Educational Needs
- Pupils with SEN
- High and Low-incidence disabilities
- Learning Support
- Challenging Behaviour
- Educational Disadvantage
- Intelligence
- Diversity

### Findings

All programmes, whether concurrent or consecutive, offer modules pertinent to inclusive education. These vary in respect of rationale, credits, content, prescription (mandatory/optional) and location within the programme (i.e. year/semester). Aside from the sheer variety of approaches taken to incorporating inclusive education elements in the respective programmes, perhaps the most striking issue here is one of weighting and prevalence. For consecutive programmes this is perhaps somewhat less, with almost all programmes offering a similar number of mandatory inclusion-related modules, although the total weighting does differ (5–30 ECTS credits). Similarly, in respect of concurrent programmes the weighting differs greatly in respect of such modules (20–50 ECTS credits) as does the number of modules offered (4–16).

### **Mandatory 'Inclusive Education' Modules**

All programmes feature specific 'inclusive education' modules as a mandatory element, but the rationale and content of some differ. Some of these modules conceptualise inclusion as accounting for the needs of limited groups, i.e. two refer specifically to SEN and those designated as disadvantaged, while three programmes limit inclusive education almost exclusively to addressing the needs of children identified as SEN. The remainder offer a broader consideration, e.g. accounting for ethnicity, family structures, gender, and the overarching role of human (and indeed children's) rights. But overall even within those broader modules designated as 'inclusive education', there is focus on SEN, the identification of same and the pedagogical approaches by which such needs might be addressed. These same mandatory modules also vary with regard to weighting (3–7.5 ECTS<sup>12</sup>credits) and timing within programmes. No concurrent programmes offer such modules in year 1, but throughout years 2–4; while consecutive programmes offer modules in both years 1 and 2.

### **Other Modules with Inclusive Elements**

All programmes also offer a wide range of mandatory and optional modules that, although not immediately identified as pertaining to 'inclusive education', arguably address inclusive principles. Again these modules differ with regard to credit weighting, content, prescription and timing within the programme. Weighting varies greatly (1.5–20 ECTS credits) with most carrying 5 ECTS credits. Such modules are scheduled throughout programmes, i.e. in years 1–4 concurrent and 1–2 consecutive. These modules fall into broad categories, i.e. SEN (specific), curricular subjects, psychology and child development, behaviour management, social and historical foundations, and school placement. Seven programmes include modules dealing with the socio-psychological foundations of inclusion and its application to the field of SEN, including theoretical underpinnings, disability studies, and the study of identity, intelligence, and personality. Many modules also pertain explicitly to special education, enabling students to study legislation and guidelines in respect of same, the process of identification and pedagogical implications. Prior to school placement, six programmes schedule preparatory modules with inclusive elements, but again with a significant emphasis on SEN. Behaviour management is a feature of five programmes, as is the study of inclusive education (and SEN) in broader sociological, political and/or historical tracts, included in six programmes. The theory and process of differentiation is an explicit feature in four programmes, though it undoubtedly features in the many pedagogy-specific modules which are present in all programmes. Finally, a limited number of programmes connect inclusive education explicitly to curricular content, e.g. literacy (2), arts (2), physical education (1), and religious education (1).

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12 The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is used in 46 European countries. ECTS is based on the assumption that 60 credits measure the workload of a full-time student during one academic year, and each ECTS credit stands for around 25 to 30 working hours (Sahlberg 2010, p.3).

## **Conclusion**

This desk-based analysis utilised a keyword search of submitted pro-formas to identify elements pertinent to inclusive education in primary ITE programmes. The key terms took account of expanded notions of inclusion, accounting for diverse populations, and those specifically focused on pupils with special educational needs. Significant variance exists between programmes, with regard to module rationale, content, design and weighting. While this account provides a useful starting point for further research, the review and accreditation reports, setting out commendations and recommendations on each accredited programme, will provide more comprehensive background information for the research team. These can be accessed on the Teaching Council's website.

### 7.3 Appendix 3: Teacher Education Statistics

Taken from DES (2012, pp.16-17)

Providers of ITE programmes for Primary and Second-Level Teachers					
Teacher Education Graduate Statistics					
Primary	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Undergraduate Concurrent Qualifications (B.Ed.)					
Marino Institute of Education	88	84	70	83	85
St Patrick's College Drumcondra	357	375	365	358	360
Froebel College of Education	63	70	66	75	61
Mary Immaculate College B.Ed. + B.Ed. Psych	360 + 0	397 + 27	353 + 34	377 + 24	407 + 31
Church of Ireland College	27	30	28	33	29
Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Primary)					
Marino Institute of Education	42	39	72	92	51
St Patrick's College Drumcondra	96	170	160	169	59
Froebel College of Education	36	30	57	60	32
Mary Immaculate College	50	94	136	135	59
Hibernia (Cohort 1) + (Cohort 2)	226 + 246	250 + 244	252 + 280	310 + 337	338 + 375
Total Primary	1,591	1,810	1,873	2,053	1,887
Post-Primary	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Concurrent Qualifications					
University of Limerick	199	200	237	224	204
National College of Art and Design	9	16	11	14	9
Dublin City University	10	19	17	35	43
St Patrick's College Thurles	0	34	31	32	35
Mater Dei Institute of Education	70	58	56	65	54
St Angela's College Sligo	28	42	39	40	49
University of Dublin – Trinity College Dublin (B.Mus.)			9	10	10

Providers of ITE programmes for Primary and Second-Level Teachers					
Teacher Education Graduate Statistics					
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology				10	14
University College Cork				41	46
National University of Ireland, Maynooth (first cohort of grads due in 2012 – approx 25 grads – BScEd)					
National University of Ireland, Galway (first cohort of grads due out 2012 – BA in Maths and Ed)					
Diploma in Post-Primary Education					
University of Limerick	90	87	128	74	88
University College Dublin	117	136	106	223	205
National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG)	212	165	208	201	195
NUIG – Diploma Iarchéime Oideachais		43	34	41	27
National University of Ireland Maynooth	138	130	159	142	133
National College of Art and Design	16	20	20	18	18
University of Dublin – Trinity College Dublin	131	149	120	131	117
Dublin City University	0	64	35	39	42
University College Cork	195	205	215	190	231
Cork Institute of Technology		27	25	29	28
Limerick Institute of Technology	26	28	30	30	28
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology				19	N/A
Hibernia College (first cohort of grads due out in 2013)			N/A		
<b>Total Post-Primary</b>	<b>1,241</b>	<b>1,423</b>	<b>1,480</b>	<b>1,608</b>	<b>1,576</b>
Overall Total (Primary + Post-Primary)	2,832	3,233	3,353	3,661	3,463

## 7.4 Appendix 4: The provider survey

[Questions 1 and 2 concern identifiers/consent]

3. Please enter your Course or Programme Title from the drop down list
4. Please enter the Phase (i.e. Primary or Post-primary) from the drop down list
5. Please enter the subject area for your programme or course e.g. Mathematics.  
(If your programme or course is a general Primary course then enter General.)
6. Please enter your Role within the Course/Programme. e.g. Course/Programme Leader or Module Leader for Professional Studies
7. How are issues of inclusion and diversity addressed within your course/programme?  
Please include information on specific modules and on components that may run across the course/programme.
8. Which of these components are mandatory for all students and which are optional?
9. How does the inclusive education content of your programme relate to school placement experience?
10. How has the recent extension in the length of your programme impacted on how inclusion and diversity are addressed?
11. What is the intended impact of these changes on outcomes for children with identified learning needs, when your current students become NQTs?
12. How do you feel your programme might develop in the future in enabling students to become more inclusive teachers?

The following areas are taken from a suggested 'Profile of Inclusive Teachers', developed by the European Agency for Special Needs & Inclusive Education. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements for your ITE programme by clicking on the appropriate button, thank you.

13. Concepts of Inclusive Education

This relates to wider theoretical conceptualisations of inclusion and diversity, such as how we might think about difference in society, and the key concepts for inclusive education covered in your programme.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
This area is relevant for all my students					
This area is covered in sufficient depth					
Staff are confident in covering this area					

14. Developing the teacher's view of learner difference

This relates to the notion that differences between learners are to be recognised and responded to positively in the classroom, and refers to how ITE students are encouraged to value learner diversity as a resource and an asset to education.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
This area is relevant for all my students					
This area is covered in sufficient depth					
Staff are confident in covering this area					

15. Promoting academic, practical, social and emotional learning for all learners

This relates to how ITE students are encouraged to have high expectations for all learners' achievements, including where the learning capacity and potential of each learner has to be discovered and stimulated.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
This area is relevant for all my students					
This area is covered in sufficient depth					
Staff are confident in covering this area					

16. Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes

This relates to understanding how teaching strategies can be developed that will address barriers to learning and help all learners to achieve their potential, including through differentiation and personalising learning.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
This area is relevant for all my students					
This area is covered in sufficient depth					
Staff are confident in covering this area					

17. Working collaboratively with parents & families

This relates to collaborative working with parents and families by engaging them as partners in the learning of their children, and how ITE students are encouraged to show respect for the culture, social backgrounds and perspectives of parents and families.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
This area is relevant for all my students					
This area is covered in sufficient depth					
Staff are confident in covering this area					

18. Working with a range of other educational professionals

This relates to understanding that collaboration, partnerships and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers and how ITE students are encouraged to work effectively with other professionals to meet the individual needs of all learners.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
This area is relevant for all my students					
This area is covered in sufficient depth					
Staff are confident in covering this area					

19. Teachers as reflective practitioners

This relates to methods and approaches for evaluating one’s own work and effect on the learning of children; and approaches to improving one’s own practice through the process of reflection. It involves understanding teaching as a problem solving activity that requires on-going and systematic planning, evaluation, reflection and then modified action.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
This area is relevant for all my students					
This area is covered in sufficient depth					
Staff are confident in covering this area					

20. Initial teacher education as a foundation for ongoing professional learning and Development

This relates to the concept that initial teacher education is a foundation for learning that needs to be developed further on graduation and that teachers can take responsibility for their own ongoing professional development. It involves understanding teaching as a learning activity where being open to learning new skills and actively seeking information and advice is seen positively.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
This area is relevant for all my students					
This area is covered in sufficient depth					
Staff are confident in covering this area					

21. If you have any further comments about the areas covered in this questionnaire relating to Initial Teacher Education for inclusion, please let us know here.

22. If you have any further comments about your programme and how inclusion is embedded within it, please let us know here.

## 7.5 Appendix 5: The student survey

### About you

1. Where are you studying?  
[drop-down menu of institutions, including 'other']  
1a) If you selected Other, please specify:
2. Are you on an undergraduate or postgraduate programme?  
Undergraduate  
Postgraduate
3. Are you on a primary or post-primary programme?  
Primary  
Post-primary
4. What is your chosen subject specialism?  
[drop-down menu of subjects, including 'other']  
If you selected Other, please specify:
5. What age are you?  
20-23  
24-26  
27-30  
31-40  
41-50  
51-65
6. Are you  
Female  
Male

7. What is your experience of working in schools generally prior to the course?  
(Please tick those that apply)
- None
- I have worked in a school as a special needs assistant
- I have worked in a school in a voluntary capacity (teaching)
- I have worked in a school in a voluntary capacity (non-teaching)
8. What type of school(s) have you worked in prior to starting the course (Please tick all that apply)
- Early Years
- Primary
- Post Primary
- Further Education
- Not Applicable
9. What is the total length of time that you have worked in schools prior to starting the course? (Please tick one)
- Less than 3 months
- 3 months to 6 months
- 6 months to 1 year
- More than 1 year
- Not Applicable
10. What is your experience of working specifically with children with special needs, in a school or other setting, prior to starting the course? (Please tick those that apply)
- None
- I have worked in a mainstream school with a child/group of children with special needs
- I have worked in a special school
- I have worked in a summer scheme with children with special needs
- Other
- 10a) If you selected Other, please specify:

11. What is the total length of time that you have worked with children with special needs prior to starting the course? (Please tick one)
- Less than 3 months
  - 3 months to 6 months
  - 6 months to 1 year
  - More than 1 year
  - Not Applicable
12. Have you had significant interactions with a friend or relative who has a special educational need or disability?
- Yes
  - No
13. Do you consider that you yourself have a special educational need or disability?
- Yes
  - No
- 13a If yes, give more details if you would like to
14. Which of the following types of schools have you had placements in during your course (Please tick all that apply)
- Rural Primary
  - Urban Primary
  - Rural Secondary
  - Urban Secondary
  - Voluntary Primary
  - Voluntary Secondary
  - Special School
  - Community Comprehensive
  - Education Training Board
  - Centres for Education
  - Other

15. Thinking across all your placement classes, did you have involvement with small group and 1:1 classes as well as your main class?

To a very significant extent

To a significant extent

To a limited extent

Not at all

16. Thinking across all your placement classes, did you have involvement with team teaching?

To a very significant extent

To a significant extent

To a limited extent

Not at all

17. Were all your school placements (i.e. which schools you would go to) decided upon by you?

All of them

Some of them

None of them (i.e. your college chose them)

18. Did you spend time at an alternative placement during your course (Please tick all that apply)?

Special School

Residential School/High Support Unit Detention School

School out of my phase e.g. post-primary if you are on a primary course

Other Setting

No I did not have an alternative placement

19. If you had an alternative placement, how long was it for?

Less than 1 week

1 week to 3 weeks

More than 3 weeks

Not Applicable

## About your course

20. Thinking across all your placement classes, did your school experience overall give you the opportunity to teach:

		To a very significant extent	To a significant extent	To a limited extent	To a very limited extent or not at all
1.	Children from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds				
2.	Children with different levels of social disadvantage				
3.	Children with English as an Additional Language				
4.	Children with Special Educational Needs				

21. Understanding of Inclusion Section 1

Please tick one answer on each line to show how much you agree or disagree with each statement:

		Strongly agree	Agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Inclusive education is about equality for all learners not just those with special educational disabilities						
2.	Most children with special educational needs can be included successfully in mainstream schools						
3.	I understand that there are debates about the use of language to label or categorise learners						
4.	I understand that some schools are better than others in supporting inclusive education						
5.	My own beliefs and attitudes are not relevant as to whether I can achieve effective inclusive practice						
6.	Categorising and labelling of learners is a positive tool for learning						
7.	I understand how to include children with a range of cultural, linguistic and social backgrounds in the classroom						

		Strongly agree	Agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8.	The fact that children learn in different ways is a positive for learning overall in the classroom						
9.	I feel confident in dealing with the needs of different learners in the classroom						
10.	It's not possible to expect all learners to achieve high standards in mixed ability classrooms						
11.	I understand about typical and atypical child development in relation to social and communication skills						
12.	I feel confident in implementing positive behaviour management approaches that support social skills development in the classroom						
13.	The learning process is essentially the same for all learners and there are very few "special teaching" or "special pedagogy" techniques						
14.	I understand how to identify different barriers to learning and how to tailor teaching to address these						
15.	Flexible learner groupings are not as effective as grouping or setting by ability						

## About your understanding of Inclusion Section 2

### 22. Understanding of Inclusion Section 2

Please tick one answer on each line to show how much you agree or disagree with each statement:

		Strongly agree	Agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	My school needs to be responsible for ensuring that I undertake professional development in inclusion						
2.	Effective collaboration with parents and families is important in ensuring that children learn well in class						
3.	Effective inclusive education requires all teachers to work in teams						
4.	I feel confident in communicating with and engaging parents and families in supporting their child's learning						
5.	I understand how to work effectively with other professionals involved in education						
6.	I understand the concept of a reflective practitioner and how it relates to my work as a teacher						
7.	I feel confident in communicating and collaborating with Special Needs Assistants						
8.	I am confident that I can engage in personal learning about effective inclusion						
9.	Reflection on practice is a key part of achieving effective inclusive practice						
10.	The work that teachers do in the classroom should be strongly informed by evidence						
11.	I understand the opportunities that are available for me to develop my knowledge and skills in inclusive practice as my career progresses						

23. This survey has asked you to think about your attitude, knowledge and skills in relation to inclusive education. This question is about how well your course covered these areas.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Inclusive education was covered well in my course						

24. Please rank which part of the course helped you understand about inclusive education the most, by ranking them 1, 2 or 3 where 1 is most and 3 is least.

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) in any single column.

	1	2	3
College elements of the course			
School Placement			
Things outside your course experience such as discussions with family or visits to schools as a volunteer			

24a. In terms of what you learned from the college elements of the course, was the most useful input from

A particular module or set of modules

Input across the programme

Other

24ai. If you would like to give more detail on what was the most useful input please do so here:

## Developing your course

25. In what ways could your school placement be further developed in helping you to include all children in the classroom (please tick all that apply)

Opportunities to work with children with a range of abilities and needs

Opportunities to work with children with mild or moderate learning needs

Opportunities to work with children with severe learning needs

Opportunities to observe good inclusive practice

Level of support from my university tutor in helping me develop inclusive practice whilst on school placement

Level of support from my school in helping me develop inclusive practice whilst on school placement

Level of support from my co-operating teacher in helping me develop inclusive practice whilst on school placement

Level of support around dealing with challenging behaviour and meeting children's emotional needs

Other

- 25a. If you selected Other, please specify:

26. In what ways could your college experience be further developed in helping you to include all children in the classroom (please tick all that apply)

More input on attitudes and understanding in relation to inclusive education

More input on specific strategies and approaches for working with children with a range of learning needs

More input on understanding typical and atypical development in children

More input on subject specific strategies for inclusion

More emphasis on inclusion across different areas of my taught programme rather than in just one or two modules

More input on dealing with challenging behaviour and meeting children's emotional needs

Better integration between university based and school based elements of the programme

Other

- 26a. If you selected Other, please specify:

## 7.6 Appendix 6: The student interview guide

### Preamble/Introduction – (setting the scene with a focus on the pupil as learner)

1. Tell me about your school placement experience to date (how many schools, what kind of schools, who chose the schools, the student profile ... )?
2. What kind of student(s) do you think of when you hear the phrase 'inclusive education'? [PROMPT: Disability, Disadvantage, Learning Difficulty, Gifted ... ]
3. How would you describe an 'inclusive teacher'? What are the benefits/challenges associated with striving to be an inclusive teacher?
4. Which part(s) of the course cover inclusive teaching? How is it approached? What has been most helpful? How well has the course prepared you to be an inclusive teacher?

### Your Teaching Approaches

5. Tell me about the most recent classes you have taught? (% with SEN ... Any individual withdrawal, small groups or team teaching?)
6. Have there been any particular situations in your teaching placement where inclusive education issues came up? What did you feel about this, and what did you do?
7. Can you give an example of a pupil benefiting from your inclusive practices (as a result of what you learned during the course)?
8. Can you think of times when the whole class has gained from activities you planned with the aim of including particular pupils?
9. What are the benefits and challenges for teachers trying to put inclusive education into practice?
  - i. Have there been any occasions when you found that doing what you hoped to do or had been advised to do in college turned out to be challenging at school?
  - ii. What aspects of differentiation do you find most challenging personally? [PROMPT: e.g. planning and assessment, implementing and review/ measurement of progress]
  - iii. What are the benefits and challenges of having diverse learners in your classroom or the school?
  - iv. What about the benefits and challenges in relation to particular groups of learners such as those identified with special educational needs?
10. Do you differentiate for students openly or discretely? Can you think of an example?
11. Where do you go when you want to know more about differentiating learning for students?

### **How your Course and your SP setting Support You in becoming an Inclusive Teacher**

12. Which aspects of the course have been most important to you in helping you become an inclusive teacher?
13. How well do you feel you are prepared to be an inclusive teacher?
14. Do you have conversations with school staff about inclusion (such as co-operating teachers/LS/Resource personnel/year tutors/school management/SNAs)?
15. Who have you learned most from in relation to inclusive practices? In what situations?

### **Your own perspective on inclusion**

16. Do you perceive yourself as having a responsibility to teach all students in your class?
17. What would you see as the benefits/challenges of diversity in a school and classroom situation?

### **Perspectives of Key People associated with your learning**

18. What happens when you experience conflicting views, within a school, on inclusive education during school placements?
19. Do you think college and school personnel have the same view of the inclusive teacher? In what ways are their views the same or different?

### **Thinking Ahead**

20. Can you give some examples or suggestions for improving your course (including school placement), based on your experience, that would help you to teach all students in your setting?
21. What do you see as the challenges to you personally as you develop as an inclusive teacher?/How would you see yourself developing into the future as an inclusive teacher – what do you think you will need by way of further support and professional development? Where will you access this?
22. Are there any further issues you would like us to bring up in this interview or that you thought we should ask you about?

## 7.7 Appendix 7: The staff interview guide

### INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION FOR INCLUSION (ITE4I) RESEARCH PROJECT SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR ITE STAFF AT CASE STUDY SITES

#### Introduction:

Thanks, refreshments; review **Information Sheet**; repeat offer of copy of report and invitation to dissemination event; interviewees will be given opportunity to amend transcript; sign **Consent Form**.

#### Initial Questions

1. Tell me about your role in your teacher education programmes.
2. What are the components of inclusive education within your Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes?
3. What is the intended impact of the recent extension of ITE programmes on outcomes for school students with special educational needs (SEN)? If a postgraduate programme, what difference have you noticed since moving from a one year to a two-year model?
4. Could you give some examples of key texts you see as seminal or that might illustrate your approach to inclusive teaching to your students (suitable for staff who are directly involved in delivery).
5. On how well prepared students are to become inclusive teachers
6. On how ITE programmes might develop further in relation to inclusive teaching
7. On how ITE staff might be supported to develop programmes in relation to inclusive teaching & what forms of CPD for teacher educators might be welcomed.

#### Survey follow-up:

8. Our survey data is saying that ITE staff see the importance of inclusive education issues as very important but also commented that some staff may not be as confident in addressing these issues. What are your thoughts on this?

#### Documentary analysis follow-up:

9. Invitation to comment on issues highlighted in documentary analysis for their own HEI.

### Issues arising from Phase 1:

10. *Research-informed ITE*: To what extent is research on inclusive pedagogy or inclusive practice regarded as part of the research-base that is core to the ITE curriculum?
11. *Reflective practice*: How is reflective learning linked to inclusive practice within your programme?
12. *'Permeated' content*: How successful is 'permeation' of content related to inclusive teaching across the ITE curriculum? How far is it linked to assessment?
13. *'Discrete' content*: How successful is content on inclusive teaching when delivered in discrete modules? Are these mandatory or optional? [Where optional, how far does this create a sense of inclusive teaching as a 'specialism' within ITE?- use this question for primary ITE providers with specialist options.]
14. *School & University Partnership*: To what extent and in what ways is learning at University and in school placement linked in relation to inclusive education?
15. *Student teachers' views of learner difference*: How are student teachers encouraged to see learner difference as an asset rather than a problem? How do student teachers see learner difference and how is it framed for them on their programme?
16. *Promoting learning for all*: Do student teachers have assumptions about the fixed abilities of learners? If so, how are they challenged on your programme(s)?
17. *Working with others*: How does your programme address areas such as working with parents/families and other professionals in relation to inclusive education?
18. *Teacher Identity*: To what extent is the identity of the beginning teacher framed as a teacher of all children, including those with identified SEN?
19. Do you notice national (Irish) identity as an issue within student teacher cohorts? How is it significant for inclusion?
20. *Constraints experienced by teacher educators*: Are there constraints in how you address inclusive education on your programme(s)? [For instance relating to recent changes to ITE in terms of length of programme, programme prescription (literacy/numeracy might be an example)]

### Invitation to comment more generally

21. Any other issues they may feel are relevant

## 7.8 Appendix 8: Methodological details

### 7.8.1 Documentary analysis

Document analysis is complex and often goes unexplained (Bowen, 2009). However, we aim for explicitness here, taking the view that methodological and epistemological approaches in research on inclusive education are of great importance (Slee, 2006), since they contribute to the integrity and cohesion of the research and clarity over the meaning of the term 'inclusive education' itself.

We chose to use NVivo to support the analysis, partly to enable more effective management of the large data set which the project generated. NVivo also enables researchers to make 'visible' thematic connections between different sources of data, and provides a means of recording conceptual and theoretical knowledge generated in the course of the analysis across a large team<sup>13</sup>. As Bazeley and Jackson (2013, p. 270) stress 'multiple perspectives on the analytical process can add tremendous strength to an investigation' and such an approach reflects our interpretative stance and research ethos.

Our initial approach to the documentary analysis was to familiarise ourselves with the structure and content of the documents and allow different perspectives to emerge within the team as to what parts of the documents were valuable for our research purposes. The initial coding frame for document analysis was *concept-driven* (Schreier, 2013), based on the categories in the EASNIE profile for inclusive teachers (2012), and reflecting the importance of the profile in the research questions. Moreover, since the publication of the EASNIE profile (2012), several researchers in the field have used it as a frame of reference for their research.

We should stress that the use of an *a-priori* coding frame did not restrict our documentary analysis, as we remained open and vigilant to aspects additional to the profile in the programme documentation. On the contrary, we adopted an interpretative approach with a view to generating knowledge in order to meet in some way 'the need for further research to support teacher educators to prepare student teachers to become confident and capable professionals' (Black-Hawkins & Amrhein, 2014). So that, although our initial analysis was based on an *a-priori* coding frame, we also allowed new codes to emerge from the document content: as Schreier notes 'qualitative content analysis typically combines varying portions of concept-driven and data-driven categories within one coding frame' (2013, p.173).

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<sup>13</sup> Researchers engaged in analysis keep an organised record (by using memos) of their ideas and analytical choices. These are accessible by all team members and support discussion about methodological decisions.

During the first phase, all members of the team were involved in a process of skimming, reading, and interpretation (Bowen, 2009) by reading one or two documents and making notes with reference to the following four key, inter-related questions:

1. What versions of and perspectives on inclusion and the inclusive teacher are implicit and explicit?
2. How do these versions and perspectives vary across the database and can any trends be identified in relation to type of programme (primary/post-primary; consecutive/concurrent)?
3. How do the version(s) of inclusion in these documents align with the version that is evident in EASNIE?
4. What, if any, are the 'silences' in the documents and what, if any, are additional concepts?

The documents from six providers were each read by two researchers in order to allow comparison of ideas over the interpretation of the document content and each reviewer summarised their overall analysis on a 'Review Record' Sheet. All notes were imported into NVivo as annotations to the pro-formas. In addition, each researcher identified parts of the documents that could be coded under the themes of our basic coding matrix. Such a process allowed us to see whether there is an adequate level of coding agreement between researchers. Checks of inter-coder agreement during the research process are often seen as an indicator of the reliability of the coding process, but as Bazeley and Jackson (2013) emphasise 'reliability testing for inter-coder agreement does not, in itself, add to the strength of your conclusions'. We acknowledge the importance of having some consistency in coding and for that reason we shared our views on the coding process and the rationale behind our differences, and we revisited that process along the way. Nevertheless, our methodological stance recognises that the criteria of reliability and validity in qualitative analysis have to be addressed not only in the performative aspects of the research activity, but also in the presentation of the methodological choices that add to the clarity and comprehensiveness of the analysis and interpretation.

We considered the use of quantitative content approaches by examining the frequency of key words in the documents (see suggested key words in Table 14), but we decided that such an approach provided a rather fragmented overview of the content and nature of the programmes under scrutiny. Considering the risk of de-contextualisation of data in the process of categorising related fragments in document analysis, we concluded that by reading the whole document we would obtain a better view of how the passages are located within it. However, the use of comparative keyword analysis between large bodies of texts allows fast identification of points of difference between them (Silverman, 2011) and we did this by comparing the frequency of relevant words in the pro-formas.

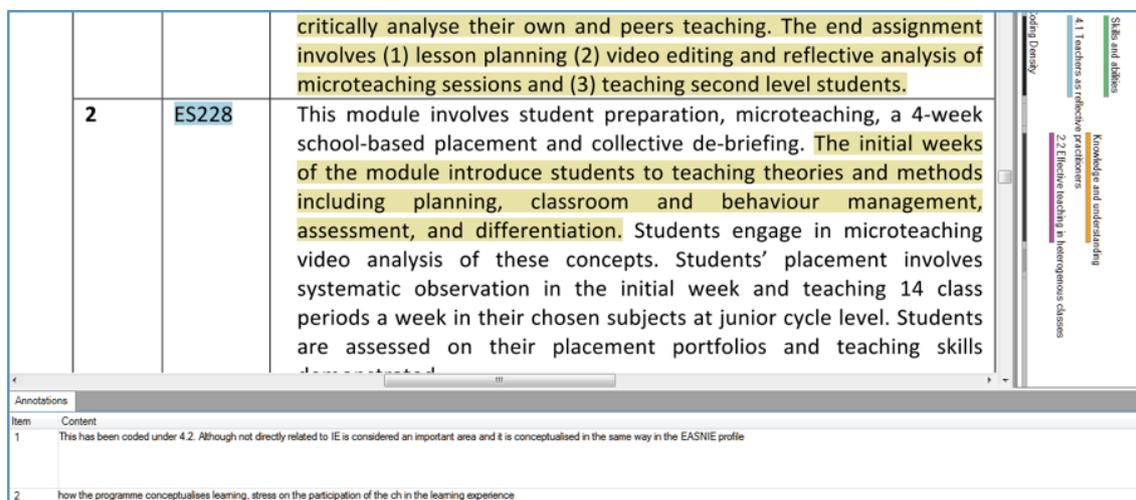
**Table 14: Suggested key words for text search**

inclu*	(learning) outcomes
difference	knowledge
values	special
vision	reflect*
mission	pedagog*
goals	divers*
community	change?
principles	democracy?

We decided that such an approach could not allow us to draw any definite conclusions regarding the differences between the programmes, but it allowed an initial identification of relevant themes for exploration.

The NVivo coding process was also supplemented by analytical annotations (see an example of the coding and annotating process in Figure 24).

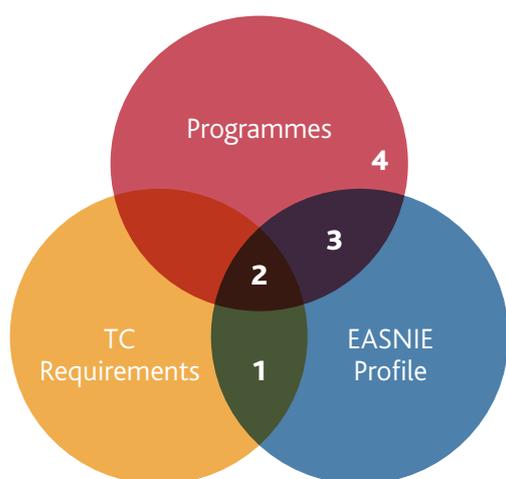
**Figure 24: Application of Basic Coding Matrix, and annotations in NVivo**



Finally, in the case of the specific documents under scrutiny, the notion of intertextuality was central in our interpretative stance. As Atkinson and Coffey point out, documents refer to other documents and 'the analysis of documentary reality must, therefore, look beyond separate texts and ask how they are related' (2004, p. 86). In our analysis, the fact that the production of the particular documents was in response to Teaching Council requirements, and for specific purposes, has to be acknowledged and taken into account in our interpretation. Moreover, the inter-relation with another text – that of the EASNIE profile – was evident in our interpretative view. Hence, our interpretative and analytical approach has been developed within this space of textual interrelation.

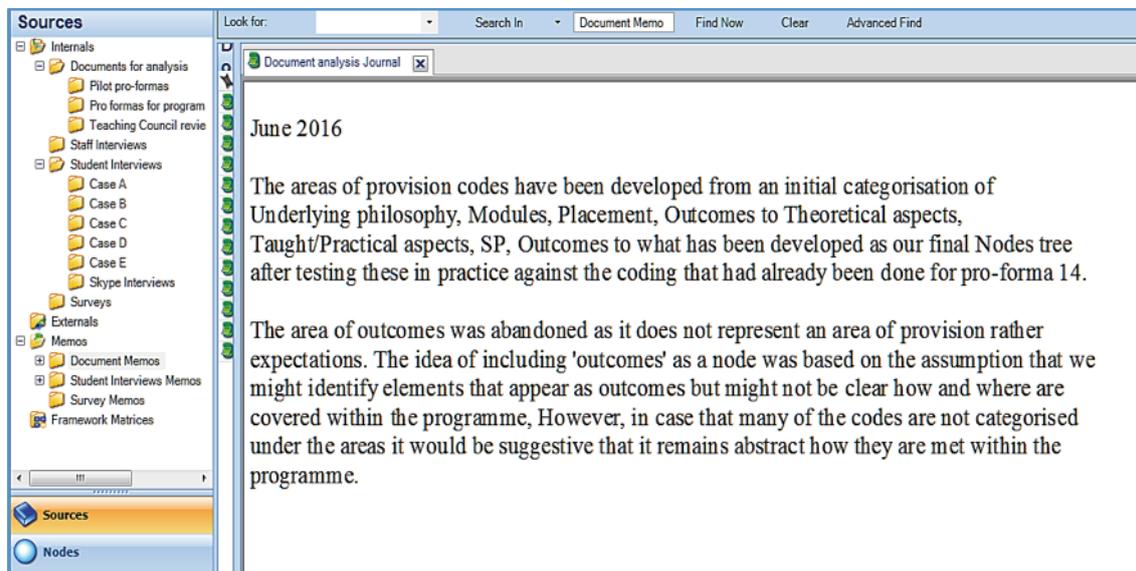
Recognising the background to programme documents suggested that we should analyse the relationship between the EASNIE profile and the Teaching Council requirements. Consequently, we also coded the Teaching Council document, using our basic coding matrix in order to identify the extent to which areas of competence according to the EASNIE profile are met within Teaching Council requirements for ITE providers. This analysis suggested that Teaching Council requirements included elements from all areas of the EASNIE profile, so it was not unexpected that we identified elements of all areas within the pro-formas. Our conceptual framework for interpreting the document content thus focuses on the meeting points of the three documents which constitute the basis of our documentary data and analytical tools. Our interpretation developed around areas of interrelation between these texts, but also around questions about how they inform discussion for inclusive education within ITE provision. The numbered areas (1-4) in Figure 25 represent the conceptual *territory* of our interpretative approach delineating the document content in relation to the issues we explore. Hence, our interpretation takes place within a specific *territory* in reference to the content of the documents and does not cover the whole document content. This interpretative view enables us to attribute meaning to the document content in relation to the research questions.

**Figure 25: Interpretive framework for document analysis**



1. Elements of EASNIE profile that constitute TC requirements (Is anything missing?)
2. How these requirements are met within the programmes (overall philosophy and teaching approach, modules, placements etc.)
3. How are EASNIE profile elements missing from the TC requirements covered?
4. What is additional to the EASNIE profile?

In exploring not only what elements of inclusive education are apparent in the documented provision, but also *how* these elements are covered within the programmes, we undertook a further sweep of coding in which we identified Areas of Provision. The process of developing new codes for this exercise involved prolonged discussion and 'testing' of the new NVivo coding nodes. An example of the process of developing new codes and of recording them can be seen in Figure 26, which illustrates the NVivo memo recording coding choices and rationale.

**Figure 26: Recording the process of creating new codes in memos**

### 7.8.2 Interview analysis

Our analytical approach for interview analysis involved identifying in advance the categories we felt would enable us to answer our research questions and allow us to make connections with other sources of data. However, the development of the codes and the final coding node 'tree' was based on a thorough content analysis of three interviews by two researchers who identified themes and tested and re-tested suggested codes. For example, we knew in advance that we were interested in the 'Sources of AKS' but specific categories emerged from the interview content as follows:

- University
- Placement
- Personal experience
- Balance of sources
- Other

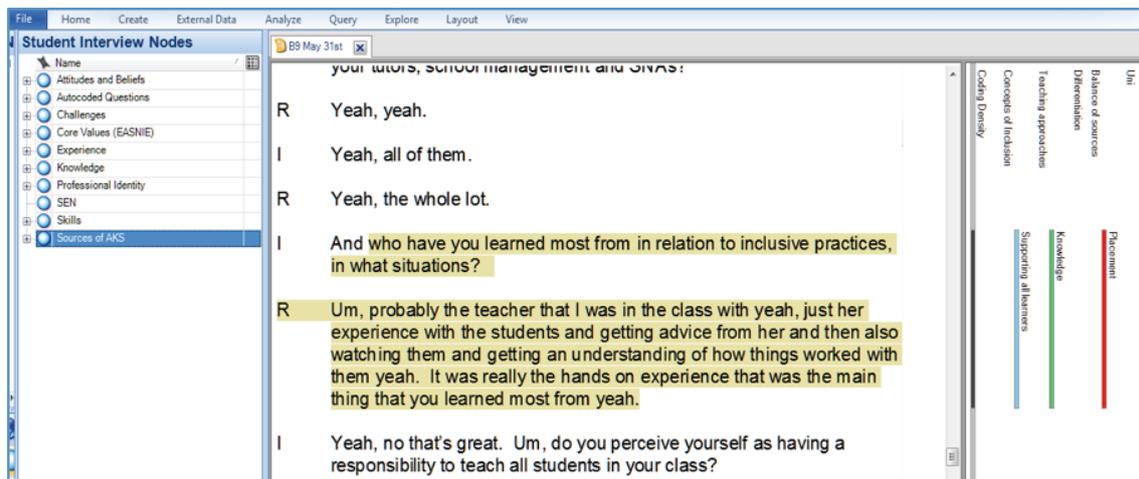
Roulston (2013, p. 308) stresses that 'qualitative analysis emphasises the importance of remaining open to what is in the data, rather than simply applying concepts imported from literature'. The process of identifying themes in order to generate sub-codes and new codes was recorded in NVivo memos, providing evidence and points of discussion within the team for the decisions made and our methodological rationale. This process resulted in a coding 'tree' that was shared with the research team in order to allow different views to emerge. While time consuming, this process was necessary in examining our theoretical stance and the analytical possibilities it engendered, adding rigour to the analysis. As a result, we decided to add one more layer of codes to capture the EASNIE core values. This decision took into consideration our aim not to use EASNIE as a measure for the 'inclusiveness' of the ITE provision, but as an analytical tool.

Hence, we employed the EASNIE core values from the point of view that this would allow us to triangulate themes across the different data sources. However, we decided to keep only the three general (out of 4) categories:

- Valuing Diversity,
- Supporting all learners, and
- Professional Development.

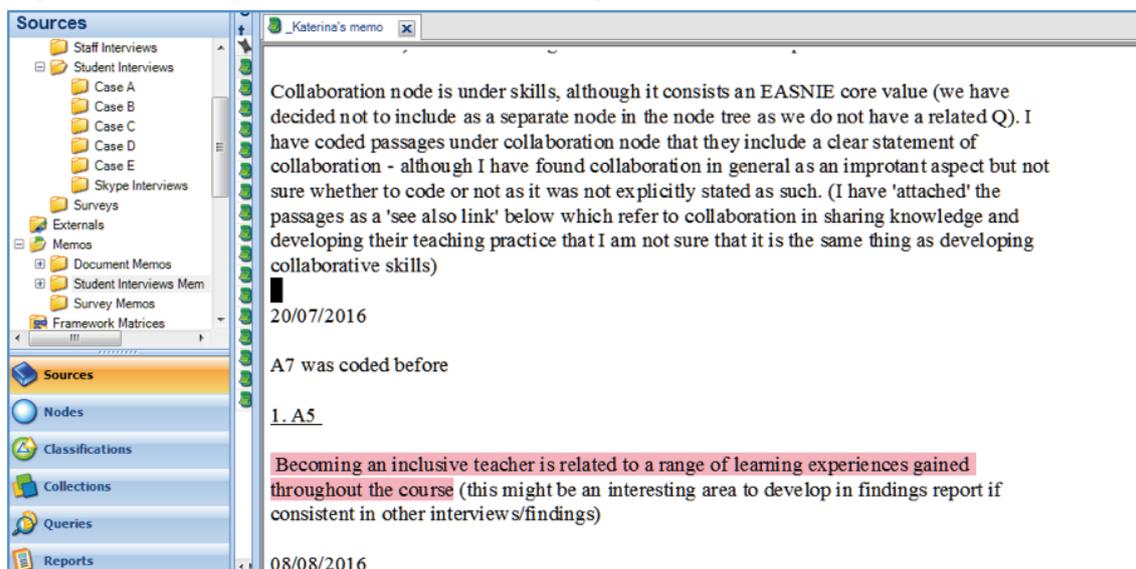
The 'Working with Others' core value was not included as the interview data did not provide any clearly related themes. An example of multiple coding can be seen in Figure 27 where it is clear that the highlighted passage is coded as Knowledge (AKS), Supporting all learners (EASNIE area of competence) and Placement (Sources of AKS).

**Figure 27: Interview coding**



However, we are still in the process of reorganising our codes in order to refine the final coding matrix as we undergo an iterative process in our analysis by reading, coding, reflecting, writing, sharing and then revisiting the analysis process. An example of that process can be seen in Figure 28 which shows a memo illustrating how reflecting on the meaning of the interview data can result in reorganisation of the coding structure. Two team members worked together in the interview analysis process using NVivo and recording their choices and suggestions in separate Memos, with coding later merged into the same NVivo database.

Figure 28: Using memos to record coding choices



### 7.8.3 Student survey analysis

The data were cleaned, and some open text responses were coded, and missing records eliminated. The total sample after cleaning was 437 responses with 430 complete or near complete responses.

Initially, descriptive statistics generated directly from the BOS tool were examined by the research team to indicate any interesting trends. The response rates of particular choice responses for the questionnaire were then inspected and, where these were low, some choice responses were concatenated. A Pearson chi squared cross-tabulation analysis was then undertaken. This is a statistical test which evaluates how likely it is that any observed difference between two sets of data arose by chance – for example if the proportion of people who report that they like a particular soft drink (variable A) differs significantly between people of different ages (variable B). This test produces a measure of that difference such as  $p = 0.05$  which indicates that the likelihood of the pattern of relationship found between A and B would happen by chance – in this case as 1 in 20 (0.05).

A. Based on the research questions and the inspection of descriptive statistics, items of interest were identified for the rows in the analysis. These items are the demographic, background and school experience elements of the survey.

1. Provider (Where are you studying)\*
2. Undergraduate or Postgraduate
3. Primary or PostPrimary
4. Chosen Subject Specialism\*
5. Age\*

6. Gender
7. What is your experience of working in schools generally prior to the course?
8. What type of school(s) have you worked in prior to starting the course\*?
9. What is the total length of time that you have worked in schools prior to starting the course\*?
10. What is your experience of working specifically with children with special needs, in a school or other setting, prior to starting the course\*?
11. What is the total length of time that you have worked with children with special needs prior to starting the course\*?
12. Have you had significant interactions with a friend or relative who has a special educational need or disability?
13. Do you consider that you yourself have a special educational need or disability?
14. Which of the following types of schools have you had placements in during your course\*?
15. Thinking across all your placement classes, did you have involvement with small groups and 1:1 classes as well as your main class?
16. Thinking across all your placement classes, did you have involvement with team teaching?
17. Were all your school placements (i.e. which schools you would go to) decided upon by you?
20. Extent of experience on school placement with:
  - 20.1a Children from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds
  - 20.2a Children with different levels of social disadvantage
  - 20.3a Children with English as an Additional Language
  - 20.4a Children with Special Educational Needs
- 23.1a Inclusive education was covered well in my course.
24. 2 Please rank which part of the course helped you understand about inclusive education the most, by ranking them 1, 2 or 3 where 1 is most and 3 is least
- 24a. In terms of what you learned from the college elements of the course, was the most useful input from
  - Opportunities to work with children with a range of abilities and needs\*
  - Opportunities to work with children with mild or moderate learning needs\*
  - Opportunities to work with children with severe learning needs\*

Level of support from my school in helping me develop inclusive practice whilst on school placement

Level of support from my co-operating teacher in helping me develop inclusive practice whilst on school placement

Q25/26 Improvements to the course:

More input on attitudes and understanding in relation to inclusive education\*

More input on specific strategies and approaches for working with children with a range of learning needs\*

More input on subject specific strategies for inclusion

More emphasis on inclusion across different areas of my taught programme rather than in just one or two modules

Level of support around dealing with challenging behaviour and meeting children's emotional needs\*

More input on dealing with challenging behaviour and meeting children's emotional needs\*

\* Indicates items where some content elements were concatenated.

B. The items identified for the columns in the analysis were those elements of the survey which focused on the student's understanding of knowledge, attitude and skills as indicated by their responses on the survey for questions Q21 – "Understanding of Inclusion Section 1" and Q22 "Understanding of Inclusion Question 2" (Please refer to appendix 5).

The following Q21 and Q22 sub elements were specifically identified, based on a review of the descriptive statistics that highlighted areas of particular interest:

21.2; 21.3; 21.5; 21.6; 21.7; 21.8; 21.9; 21.10; 21.11; 21.12; 21.13; 21.14; 21.15; 22.4; 22.6; 22.7; 22.8; 22.10; 22.11

For example, Q21.2 – "Most children with special educational needs can be included successfully in mainstream schools", and Q21.3 – "I understand that there are debates about the use of language to label or categorise learners".

Please refer to appendix 5 for a description of each item.

For items with multiple response possibilities, cross-tabulations were undertaken independently for each response. For example, for Q10, type of experience working with children with special needs – the possible answers were a. None, b. I have worked in a mainstream school with a child/group of children with special needs; c. I have worked in a special school; d. I have worked in a summer scheme with children with special needs; e. Other.

As each respondent can choose one or more of these answers, it would not make sense to compare them against each other in a simple cross tabulation. Rather, each response item is compared independently. Thus b. – I have worked in a mainstream school with a child/group of children with special needs – is treated as a dichotomous variable with values “yes” has had such experience and “no”, has not had such experience. In other words, a separate comparison is performed for each element a–d, and for each of these comparisons those respondents who ticked this item are compared to those who did not tick this item.

Overall, therefore, the analysis aimed to identify where demographic details and experience prior and during the course was significantly associated with any variation of perception of attitude, skills and knowledge as related to the EASNIE profile.

From this initial Pearson chi square analysis, cross-tabulations which were significant at  $p < 0.05$  were identified and listed. For these cross-tabulations, correlation analysis was then individually undertaken. Correlation analysis gives a measure of the strength of the relationship between two variables. Using the example given above, the p value indicates the likelihood that the relationship would happen by chance. The correlation statistic gives the strength of the relationship, i.e. to what extent people who are older are more or less likely to like the soft drink product. This is expressed usually as a value between 0 and 1 with a value of 1 indicating that as variable a increases, variable b directly increases.

Various types of correlation statistic were used, depending on the survey item configuration as follows:

- For cross-tabulations where both items were for ranked (ordinal) data – i.e. Likert type scale items or other rankings such as extent of experience working with children with SEN in placement classes – the Spearman’s rank correlation statistic was used.
- For cross-tabulations where one item was for ranked data and one was for dichotomous nominal data (e.g. Gender or Primary vs Postprimary) then the Cramer’s V correlation statistic was used.
- For cross-tabulations where one item was for ranked data and one was for multiple nominal data (e.g. type of provider) then a linear regression analysis was used to identify variations in correlation.

Cramer’s V gives a measure of association between 0 and 1 (i.e. the extent to which there is a variation in the trend between the two dichotomous items and the dependent variable). Spearman’s gives a measure of how well the items match to a monotonic relationship (i.e. the extent to which as one item increases so does the other), and gives a value between 0 and 1. Statistical tests were undertaken using the STATA data analysis package. The significant cross-tabulation tables and the appropriate statistics are available on request. The UCL Institute of Education Social Science Research Unit advised on the use of the appropriate tests and on the analytic approach in general.

## Correlations between items on the Student Survey

### Analytical Approach

For each item analysed for Q21 (Understanding of Inclusion 1) and Q22 (Understanding of Inclusion 2), correlations which were significant at  $p < 0.05$  are presented in a table which shows the strength of association. Thus each table indicates which demographic, background or school experience survey item correlates significantly with the Understanding of Inclusion item.

Correlations which indicate moderately strong or stronger associations are in bold, and for all items the correlation statistic is noted – with V indicating Cramer’s V and Sp rho indicating Spearman’s Rho. For example, for Q21.2, we can see that students with more experience of teaching children from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds are “moderately” more likely to agree (Sp rho = 0.35) that children with SEN can be successfully included in mainstream classes.

Given a sample of over 400, we would expect the survey to be sensitive to picking up moderate or stronger correlations.

### Correlations

Note: Correlations not presented here can be assumed to be non-significant.

### Q21.2 Most children with SEN can be successfully included in mainstream classrooms

**Table 15: Q21.2 Most children with SEN can be successfully included in mainstream classrooms**

Tabulation to Element	Strength of Association
More time in Community Comprehensives	V=-0.17
More experience teaching children from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds	<b>Sp Rho = 0.35</b>
More experience teaching children with SEN	Sp Rho =0.18
More highly rank college elements of the course in fostering understanding of inclusive education	Sp Rho =0.12
More highly rank importance of elements outside their course in fostering understanding of inclusive education	Sp Rho = -0.15

Note that negative values, e.g. the last item indicates that as one item increases in intensity, the other decreases. So for this item, students who more highly rank the importance of elements outside their course in fostering understanding of inclusive education, are slightly less likely to agree that children with SEN can be included in mainstream classrooms.

### Q21.3 Debates about the use of language to label or categorise learners

**Table 16: Q21.3 Debates about the use of language to label or categorise learners**

Tabulation to Element	Strength of Association
Female students compared to male students	<b>V=0.23</b>
More experience teaching children from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds	Sp Rho = 0.18

There are few studies which have reported directly on gender and attitudes to inclusion, and this is an interesting finding, however the lack of a sustained pattern of association across other Q21 and Q22 items makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions.

### Q21.6 Categorising and labelling of learners is a positive tool for learning

**Table 17: Q21.6 Categorising and labelling of learners is a positive tool for learning**

Tabulation to Element	Strength of Association
Primary students compared to Postprimary students	V=-0.18
Students who have worked in a summer scheme with children with special needs prior to starting the course	V =0.1

## Q21.7 Understanding how to include children with a range of cultural, linguistic and social backgrounds in the classroom

**Table 18: Q21.7 Understanding how to include children with a range of cultural, linguistic and social backgrounds in the classroom**

Tabulation to Element	Strength of Association
Primary students compared to post-primary	<b>V=0.2</b>
Students who had placements in urban primary schools	V=0.17
Students who had placements in urban secondary schools	V=-0.18
Students who had placements in special schools	V=-0.16 (borderline significance)
More small group and 1:1 experience on teaching placement	Sp Rho = 0.12
More experience of working with children from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds	<b>Sp Rho = 0.3</b>
More experience of working with children with different levels of social disadvantage	<b>Sp Rho = 0.26</b>
More experience of working with children with EAL	<b>Sp Rho = 0.25</b>
More experience of working with children with SEN	<b>Sp Rho = 0.32</b>
Students who more highly rank the importance of college elements of their course in fostering understanding of inclusive education	Sp Rho = 0.11
Students who more highly rank the importance of elements outside of their course in fostering understanding of inclusive education	V=-0.18
Students who said that they wanted more input on inclusive education	Sp Rho = 0.11

### Q21.8 The fact that children learn in different ways is a positive for learning

**Table 19: Q21.8 The fact that children learn in different ways is a positive for learning**

Tabulation to Element	Strength of Association
Students who have not had any prior experience in schools	$V=-0.17$
Students who have had prior experience in a special school	$V=0.17$
More experience of working with children with EAL	Sp Rho = 0.13
More experience of working with children with SEN	Sp Rho = 0.18

### Q21.9 Feeling confident in dealing with the needs of different learners in the classroom

**Table 20: Q21.9 Feeling confident in dealing with the needs of different learners in the classroom**

Tabulation to Element	Strength of Association
Female students compared to male students	$V=0.23$
Students who have not had prior experience working in school	$V=-0.20$
More experience of working with children with EAL	Sp Rho = 0.20
More experience of working with children from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds	Sp Rho = 0.23
More experience of working with children with SEN	Sp Rho = 0.32
More experience of working with children with different levels of social disadvantage	Sp Rho = 0.15

Again, there is a paucity of studies on gender and attitudes to inclusion, but nevertheless the first item is an interesting finding. Further analysis of the interview data by both primary vs post-primary and by gender could further illuminate this finding. Again, for 3 out of 4 measures of diversity of school placement, there was a moderate correlation with this item.

## Q21.10 It is not possible to expect all learners to achieve high standards in mixed ability classrooms

**Table 21: Q21.10 It is not possible to expect all learners to achieve high standards in mixed ability classrooms**

Tabulation to Element	Strength of Association
Postgraduate students compared to undergraduate students	V=0.18
Post-primary students compared to primary students	<b>V=0.21</b>
Male students compared to female students	V=0.18
Students who have not had prior experience of working with children with SEN	V=0.17
Students who have had prior experience of working in a mainstream school with children with SEN	<b>V=-0.24</b>
Students who have had prior experience of working in a special school	V=-0.16
Students who have had placements in rural primary schools	V=-0.18
Students who have had placements in urban primary schools	V=-0.19
Students who have had placements in rural secondary schools	<b>V=0.21</b>
Students who have had placements in special schools	V=-0.19

For this item, there are some moderate correlations in respect of prior experience. We might expect that prior experience working with children with SEN would be positively correlated with attitude to inclusion. However, looking at the full item set, it is probably more interesting to note how little moderate or stronger association there is between prior experience and attitude, knowledge and skills in relation to inclusion.

## Q21.11 I understand about typical and atypical child development in relation to social and communication skills

**Table 22: Q21.11 I understand about typical and atypical child development in relation to social and communication skills**

Tabulation to Element	Strength of Association
Primary students compared to post-primary students	<b>V=0.27</b>
Younger students compared to older students	Sp Rho = 0.12
Placements in early years settings	V=0.17
Placements in primary settings	<b>V=0.20</b>
Placements in rural primary schools	<b>V=0.21</b>
Placements in urban primary schools	<b>V=0.21</b>
Placements in urban secondary schools	<b>V=-0.28</b>
Placements in community comprehensive schools	<b>V=-0.28</b>
Students who have had more involvement with one to one and small group classes on placement	V=0.13
Students who have had more involvement with team teaching on placement	<b>Sp Rho = 0.21</b>
More experience of teaching children with EAL	<b>Sp Rho = 0.15</b>

The correlations with primary versus post-primary students is interesting and possibly addresses something of a gap in the literature on this type of comparison. Further analysis of the interview data by age phase may help to further illuminate this area. Again it is likely that the correlations by school type are confounded by the higher level difference between age phase for this item – in other words, as primary students are overall more likely to agree, we would logically expect students who have had primary placements to be more likely to agree than those who have had secondary placements.

### Q21.12 I feel confident in implementing positive behaviour management approaches that support social skills development in the classroom

**Table 23: Q21.12 I feel confident in implementing positive behaviour management approaches that support social skills development in the classroom**

Tabulation to Element	Strength of Association
Primary students compared to post primary students	<b>V=0.20</b>
Female students compared to male students	V=0.17
Placements in urban primary schools	V=0.16
Placements in voluntary secondary schools	V=-0.16
Placements in urban secondary schools	V=-0.16
Placements in community comprehensive schools	<b>V=-.026</b>
Students who have had more involvement with one to one and small group classes on placement	V=0.13
Students who have had more involvement with team teaching on placement	Sp Rho = 0.12
More experience of teaching children with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds	<b>Sp Rho = 0.24</b>
More experience of teaching children with EAL	<b>Sp Rho = 0.21</b>
More experience of teaching children with SEN	<b>Sp Rho = 0.25</b>

The previous comments in relation to primary versus post-primary also apply here and again we see that there is a moderate correlation between 3 out of 4 measures of diversity on school placement and this item.

## Q21.14 I understand how to identify different barriers to learning and how to tailor teaching to address these

**Table 24: Q21.14 I understand how to identify different barriers to learning and how to tailor teaching to address these**

Tabulation to Element	Strength of Association
Prior experience of working with children with special educational needs in a mainstream school	V=0.17
Prior experience of working with children with special educational needs in summer scheme	V=0.18
Placements in community comprehensive schools	<b>V=-0.23</b>
Students who have had more involvement with one to one and small group classes on placement	V=0.12
Students who have had more involvement with team teaching on placement	Sp Rho = 0.11
More experience of teaching children with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds	Sp Rho = 0.19
More experience of teaching children with different levels of social disadvantage	Sp Rho = 0.16
More experience of teaching children with EAL	Sp Rho = 0.19
More experience of teaching children with SEN	<b>Sp Rho = 0.26</b>
Students who felt that college elements of their course helped them understand about inclusive education	Sp Rho = 0.11
Students who felt that things outside of their course helped them understand about inclusive education	Sp Rho = -0.11
Students who wanted more input on inclusive education in their course	Sp Rho = 0.16

Again, the broad pattern is for correlation between measures of diversity on school placement and agreement with this item, but this is only at moderate level for special educational needs. This could be considered in light of the descriptive survey analysis and the analysis of the interviews which suggest that many students do not feel prepared in terms of skills for working with children with identified barriers to learning – thus indicating that further experience on placement with this group leads to greater confidence in knowledge and skills.

## Q22.4 I feel confident in communicating with and engaging parents and families in supporting their child's learning

**Table 25: Q22.4 I feel confident in communicating with and engaging parents and families in supporting their child's learning**

Tabulation to Element	Strength of Association
Prior experience of working with children with special educational needs in a mainstream school	V=0.16
More experience of teaching children with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds	Sp Rho = 0.16
More experience of teaching children with different levels of social disadvantage	Sp Rho = 0.13
More experience of teaching children with EAL	Sp Rho = 0.17
More experience of teaching children with SEN	<b>Sp Rho = 0.20</b>

The association between experience working with children with SEN and communication with parents is interesting. Again further analysis of interview data may illuminate this area.

## Q22.6 I understand the concept of a reflective practitioner and how it relates to my work as a teacher

**Table 26: Q22.6 I understand the concept of a reflective practitioner and how it relates to my work as a teacher**

Tabulation to Element	Strength of Association
Postgraduate students compared to undergraduate students	<b>V=0.23</b>
Female students compared to male students	V=0.19
More experience of teaching children with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds	Sp Rho = 0.16
More experience of teaching children with different levels of social disadvantage	Sp Rho = 0.13
More experience of teaching children with EAL	Sp Rho = 0.17
More experience of teaching children with SEN	<b>Sp Rho = 0.20</b>

Again there is a paucity of literature on differences between undergraduate and postgraduate roots and attitudes, knowledge and skills in relation to inclusion. We could speculate that the greater overall experience of postgraduate students means that they are more likely to be able to assimilate and make sense of the concept of the reflective practitioner. Again, the broad pattern here is for correlation between experience of diversity in the classroom and this item, although this is only moderately correlated for special educational needs.

## Q22.7 I feel confident in communicating and collaborating with Special Needs Assistants

**Table 27: Q22.7 I feel confident in communicating and collaborating with Special Needs Assistants**

Tabulation to Element	Strength of Association
Postgraduate students compared to undergraduate students	V=0.17
Primary students compared to post-primary students	V=0.18
No prior experience of working with children with special needs	<b>V=-0.22</b>
Prior experience working with children with SEN in a mainstream school	V=0.19
Placements in rural primary schools	V=0.16
Placements in urban primary schools	<b>V=0.21</b>
Placements in rural secondary schools	<b>V=-0.25</b>
Placements in special schools	V=0.17
More experience of teaching children with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds	<b>Sp Rho = 0.20</b>
More experience of teaching children with different levels of social disadvantage	Sp Rho = 0.18
More experience of teaching children with EAL	<b>Sp Rho = 0.22</b>
More experience of teaching children with SEN	<b>Sp Rho = 0.35</b>

It is interesting, although perhaps not surprising, that students with experience of working with children with SEN prior to the course are more confident in collaborating with SNAs, although perhaps the even more interesting finding, as noted, is that overall, so few items had any significant or moderate association with prior experience.

The positive and negative correlation with school setting may again reflect higher level confounding between primary and post-primary students.

Again, for 3 out of 4 measures of experience of school diversity, there was a moderate correlation with this item.

## Q22.8 I am confident that I can engage in personal learning about effective inclusion

**Table 28: Q22.8 I am confident that I can engage in personal learning about effective inclusion**

Tabulation to Element	Strength of Association
Prior experience of working with children with special needs in mainstream schools	V=0.17
Prior experience working in a special school	V=0.19
Students who have had significant interactions with a friend or relative with SEN	<b>V=0.20</b>
Placements in urban secondary schools	<b>V=-0.20</b>
Placements in rural secondary schools	<b>V=-0.25</b>
Placements in special schools	V=0.-18
Students who have had more involvement with small group and 1:1 teaching on placement	Sp Rho = 0.13
More experience of teaching children with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds	<b>Sp Rho = 0.21</b>
More experience of teaching children with different levels of social disadvantage	Sp Rho = 0.16
More experience of teaching children with EAL	
Sp Rho = 0.14	
More experience of teaching children with SEN	<b>Sp Rho = 0.30</b>

Again, for 2 out of 4 measures of experience of working with a diverse cohort in the classroom there is a moderate correlation with this element. Associations with type of secondary school are again likely to be confounded with a higher level association with phase. On this point, it is clear that overall the data points to primary students being more positive in terms of attitude, knowledge and skills in relation to inclusion than post-primary students although this is mostly at the level of a weak association.

## Q22.10 The work that teachers do in the classroom should be strongly informed by evidence

**Table 29: Q22.8 I am confident that I can engage in personal learning about effective inclusion**

Tabulation to Element	Strength of Association
No Prior experience of working with children with special needs in mainstream schools	V=-0.16
No Prior experience working with children with special needs	V=-0.19
Students who consider themselves to have SEN or a disability	V=0.19
Placements in urban secondary schools	<b>V=-0.20</b>
Placements in rural secondary schools	<b>V=-0.25</b>
Placements in special schools	V=0.-18
Students who have had more involvement with small group and 1:1 teaching on placement	Sp Rho = 0.13
Students who have had more involvement with team teaching	Sp Rho = 0.15

A similar pattern for phase of teaching is seen here as for a number of other items, here at moderate levels of association. It is also interesting that this is the only item where the attribute of considering themselves to have SEN is correlated, here at borderline moderate association, with any of the Q21 and Q22 items. However, given this single occurrence and relatively low numbers of students reporting having SEN overall, no strong conclusions can be drawn from this.

## Additional Attribute Data for Respondents

Note: Individual percentages are rounded to one decimal place.

**Table 30: Q14 Types of school placements**

Q14: Types of School on Placement		
Type of School	Number	Percentage of Respondents
Rural Primary	165	38.4
Urban Primary	199	46.3
Rural Secondary	103	24.0
Urban Secondary	146	34.0
Voluntary Primary	7	1.6
Voluntary Secondary	68	15.8
Special School	97	22.6
Community Comprehensive	42	9.8
Education Training Board	62	14.4
Centres for Education	12	2.8
<b>Other</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3.5</b>

**Table 31: Q15 Small group and 1:1 teaching experience on placement**

Q 15 Extent of involvement with small group and 1:1 teaching on placement		
Category	Number	Percentage
To a very significant extent	42	9.8
To a significant extent	128	29.8
To a limited extent	201	46.7
Not at all	59	13.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 32: Q16 Team teaching experience on placement**

Q16 Extent of involvement with team teaching on placement		
Category	Number	Percentage
To a very significant extent	46	10.7
To a significant extent	113	26.2
To a limited extent	195	45.2
Not at all	77	17.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 33: Q17 Students deciding on placements**

Q17 Extent to which school placements were decided upon by the student		
Category	Number	Percentage
All of them	146	33.9
Some of them	254	58.9
None of them (i.e. your college chose)	31	7.20
Total	431	100

**Table 34: Q18 Finding alternative placements**

Q18 Alternative Placements – these are placements of a short duration designed to give students an experience of aspects of the ways in which children learn and develop which contrast with typical mainstream school environments.		
Category	Number	Percentage
Special School	116	27.0
Residential School/High Support Unit	5	1.2
Detention School	0	0.0
School out of my phase e.g. post-primary if you are on a primary course	18	4.2
Other Setting	99	23.0
No I did not have an alternative placement	210	48.8

**Table 35: Q20.1 Opportunities to teach students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds**

Q 20.1 Extent to which school placements overall gave students the opportunity to teach students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds:		
Category	Number	Percentage
To a very significant extent	154	35.8
To a significant extent	163	37.9
To a limited extent	89	20.7
Not at all	24	5.6
Total	431	100

**Table 36: Q20.2 Opportunity to teach students with different levels of social disadvantage**

Q 20.2 Extent to which school placements overall gave students the opportunity to teach students with different levels of social disadvantage:		
Category	Number	Percentage
To a very significant extent	165	38.4
To a significant extent	140	32.6
To a limited extent	108	25.1
Not at all	17	4.0
Total	430	100

**Table 37: Q20.3 Opportunity to teach students with EAL**

Q 20.3 Extent to which school placements overall gave students the opportunity to teach students with EAL:		
Category	Number	Percentage
To a very significant extent	121	28.1
To a significant extent	126	29.3
To a limited extent	138	32.1
Not at all	45	10.5
Total	430	100

**Table 38: Q20.4 Opportunity to teach students with SEN**

Q 20.4 Extent to which school placements overall gave students the opportunity to teach students with SEN:		
Category	Number	Percentage
To a very significant extent	107	24.9
To a significant extent	159	40.0
To a limited extent	140	32.6
Not at all	24	5.6
Total	430	100

**Table 39: Q24.1 Which part of your course helped students understand most about inclusive education: College Elements**

Q 24.1 Rankings for Which Part of your Course helped students understand most about inclusive education: College Elements		
College Elements of Course	Number	Percentage
Ranked 1st	120	28.2
Ranked 2nd	159	46.7
Ranked 3rd	140	25.1
Total	m426	100

**Table 40: Q24.2 Which part of your course helped students understand most about inclusive education: School Placement**

Q 24.2 Rankings for Which Part of your Course helped students understand most about inclusive education: School Placement		
School Placement	Number	Percentage
Ranked 1st	264	62.0
Ranked 2nd	126	29.6
Ranked 3rd	36	8.5
Total	426	100

**Table 41: Q24.3 Which Part of your Course helped students understand most about inclusive education: outside the course**

Q 24.3 Rankings for Which Part of your Course helped students understand most about inclusive education: Things Outside of the Course: Discussions with family or visits to school as a volunteer		
Things outside your course experience	Number	Percentage
Ranked 1st	44	10.4
Ranked 2nd	100	23.7
Ranked 3rd	278	65.9
Total	422	100

## **7.9 Appendix 9: Membership of the Expert Reference Group**

The following colleagues kindly agreed to participate in an international Expert Reference Group for the project. They have provided invaluable advice, principally by email and in conversation at various research conferences, including comments on earlier drafts of this report in some cases. The research team is most grateful for their contributions in stimulating our thinking in relation to the international research agenda on inclusive teaching.

Professor Alfredo Artiles, Arizona State University

Professor Mel Ainscow, University of Manchester

Professor Jonty Rix, Open University

Professor Missy Morton, University of Auckland

Professor Lani Florian, University of Edinburgh

Professor Elizabeth Kozleski, University of Kansas

Honorary Professor Seamus Hegarty, University of Warwick



