



Developing an In-service Training for Inclusive Classroom Practices (DISTINC)

Final Report

Public Part

Project information

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Executive Summary

Developing In-service Training for Inclusive Classroom (DISTINC) Practices is a European Union project, financed by the European Union Lifelong Learning Programmes, Comenius Multilateral Projects. Together with the six partners from five countries, namely Belgium (BE), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), United Kingdom (UK), and Turkey (TR), it aims to develop an in-service training program for primary school teachers to improve skills and knowledge on inclusive classroom practices, particularly for children with special educational needs (learning difficulties and/or disability, and challenging behaviours). Within the lifetime of the project, a series of activities were conducted, from determining the specific and current needs of primary school teachers who have a variety of children with different needs including children with learning difficulties and/or challenging behaviours, to the development of training programme and its implementation.

The Consortium was formed of four higher education institutions that have expertise in inclusive practices in general, learning difficulties and challenging behaviours, additional expertise in curriculum development. Two remaining partner organizations (primary school in UK and local authority for education in Turkey) were mainly responsible to enable implementation and dissemination to wide range of schools and beneficiaries at local, national and EU level. Main outcomes of project are unique in-service training program; consisting of TIE training modules, a trainers' manual, training materials and a web site. The expected impacts are change of perception, knowledge and attitude in teachers and an accessible in-service training program for primary school teachers of children with learning difficulties and challenging behaviours.

Initially, the need analyses were conducted in each partner country by administering a questionnaire to the target group roughly to 2000 teachers. Considering the results of the needs analysis and former studies in the literature, the modules of the in-service training program, the TIE (Training in Inclusive Education), which is a 30-hour in-service training program were developed. Target group of the TIE is primary school teachers and the children with learning difficulties and/or challenging behaviours (with no serious intellectual, sensory, or motor impairment), who are at risk of educational failure.

During development stage of the program, initially, the training module was tested by the partner institutions. The partners trained minimum five teachers (trainer of teacher (TOT)) then, these TOTs trained other minimum five teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of the TIE in each partner country. Eventually roughly 380 teachers (more than in the project proposal) benefited from the training program.

Furthermore, a project website (www.distinc.eu), a brochure, a poster, and four e-newsletters in each partner's language were published. A kick-off meeting and plenary meetings between the project partners were done. Additionally, the dissemination activities i.e. press bulletin, press launch, seminars were organized besides the final conference.

As for the sustainability of the project, the following initiatives have been taken:

- i. Involving policymakers(both on the level of national and provincial boards)
- ii. Organizing in service training in partner countries
- iii. Developing new international LLP project proposals
- iv. Developing new national projects involving the implementation of DISTINC project
- v. Organizing summer courses
- vi. Up-dating the web page continuously
- vii. Promotion of the outcomes by means of conferences, press coverage, etc.

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1. Project Objectives

The objectives of DISTINC project are to;

- Determine the specific and current needs, knowledge, skills attitudes and perceptions of primary school teachers who have a variety of children with different needs, including children with special educational needs (SEN).
- Make teachers more aware and more competent in dealing with a variety of children with SEN in their classrooms.
- Make teachers understand the principles of inclusive education, to increase their inclusive practices and self-efficacy.
- Make teachers more competent, to increase their sense of competence (self-efficacy), in dealing with different needs, particularly in dealing with children with behaviour problems (or challenging behaviours) and children experiencing difficulties with learning, in particular with reading.
- Increase the academic, social, and self-regulatory competencies of children at risk of educational failure because of learning difficulties and behaviour problems, and decrease the risk to drop out, to underachieve, or to be referred to special education schools.
- Promote European co-operation in teacher training in inclusive practices, exchange of experiences regarding inclusion and mutual understanding.
- Develop a unique in-service training programme, to train target class-room teacher trainers who will themselves train target classroom teachers.
- Disseminate the training programme and exploit its modules to wider regions.

There are two main target groups of the project:

- Primary School Classroom Teachers
- Children with special educational needs (specific learning difficulties and/or – disability, and behaviour problems) who are at risk of dropping-out and educational failure, for whatever reason (social or neurobiological or both), who do not have an immediately apparent serious intellectual, sensory or motor impairment.

2. Project Approach

During the last decades, a worldwide movement towards inclusive education has been taking place with the aim of providing equal educational opportunities for all children to reach their academic, emotional, social and physical potentials to the highest levels. However, many of these children still often drop out of the educational system, or underachieve, due to various reasons including learning difficulties and behaviour problems.

A number of countries have adapted their laws, in order to make education more inclusive towards individuals with different needs, but practice is lagging way behind policies: teachers have a hard time in dealing with a diversity of students' needs and performance levels. The largest group of children experiencing barriers of learning often have an "invisible disability": they may have an unrecognized learning disability or often present a behavioural challenge or have difficulties with attention. They often drop out of the educational system, or underachieve.

Additionally, classroom teachers lack necessary training and skills to provide appropriate practices for these students. As a result, many students with learning difficulties or challenging behaviour cannot benefit from classroom practices. Consequently, it is crucial for classroom teachers to be prepared to use the most effective methods, strategies, and techniques for in regular classroom settings.

In this context, the DISTINCT project aims to develop an in-service training program for primary school teachers to improve skills and knowledge on inclusive classroom practices, particularly for children with special educational needs (learning difficulties and/or disability, and challenging behaviours).

After an extensive literature survey, a questionnaire for assessing the needs of the teachers was developed. This questionnaire is a research part of the DISTINCT project that aims to determine the specific and current needs of primary school teachers who have a variety of children with different needs, including children with learning and/or challenging behaviours.

The questionnaire was applied to almost 2000 teachers. By analyzing the results of the questionnaire, the needs analysis report for each partner country and consequently a general one was prepared.

Based on the needs analysis report and research on the topic, the contents of five training modules (In-service Training in Inclusive Classroom Practices) were drafted.

The training of teachers (TOTs) was carried out and a follow-up meeting with those teachers was done accordingly. During the trainings, all the five modules were introduced, the activities of modules were implemented and were concluded through discussions, sharing of experience and thoughts, and finally giving feedback on the module materials and activities. During the whole course of training time, the activity materials and presentation handouts were distributed to teachers.

The next stage of the project was testing the effectiveness of the Training in Inclusive Education. The TOTs trained other minimum five teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of the TIE in each partner country. Eventually roughly 380 teachers (more than in the project proposal) benefited from the training program. In order to assess the program, pre and post tests were applied, the focus group discussions were realised. Considering those feedbacks, the training program was modified to its final version by making necessary adaptations.

In order to reach the project goals, required strategies (management, evaluation, dissemination and exploitation) were developed at the beginning of the project. In the light of those strategies a project management handbook, a quality and evaluation plan and a valorisation plan were prepared.

A project management handbook was prepared to give the DISTINCT Consortium specific guidelines for project management and the realization of project activities including: a detailed work plan of each activity and partners' roles for each WP, delivery timing, management strategy and indicators that could inhibit the project's proceeding. The handbook also includes internal monitoring procedures and tools, means of communication among partners and financial rules. A steering committee (SC) was formed with one member from each partner in the coordination of the project coordinator.

A quality and evaluation plan was prepared that included quality and evaluation strategy, performance indicators and evaluation objectives and methodologies. The plan includes three tasks, namely internal evaluation; evaluation of Training Module (TIE); evaluation of results for further implementations, impact and transferability. An evaluation committee (EC) was formed with one member from each partner in the coordination of the work package leader.

A valorisation plan was prepared, in order to determine the project valorisation strategy, to describe different tools to utilize according to the specific target group features and to define planning and responsibilities. The main goals of the valorisation plan are to obtain the largest impact of the results, in the partners' countries, and beyond, to increase the project's visibility and promoting the project's objectives, results, products, state-of-the-art.

As for the sustainability of the projects, all the actors in the project area were included in the project stages and furthermore all partners contacted with the educational policy makers (on the level of national ministry, provincial and city education boards). The international final conference was a significant opportunity for the promotion of the outcomes of the project.

Furthermore, the partners prepared EU LLP project proposals which focus on in-service training of teachers and the topic of inclusive education classroom practice, and finally a KA-4 transversal dissemination project was prepared in the area of inclusive assessment, hence oriented at changing the assessment methods and systems. A summer course (with 12 parallel courses) as eligible for a Comenius/Grundtvig individual mobility grant, will be held in Paris from 30/6/13-11/7/13 and 120 applications have been received.

On the other hand, some national initiatives have been taken i.e. the partner consortium in BE were awarded by the Ministry of Education, for a 1 year in-service teacher training project on the topic of "differentiating in the classroom for learners experiencing barriers to learning", where the DISTINCT training materials will be used. The project coordinator together with the project partner, ILMEM has been working on an in service training for the target group of the project by using training materials that were developed in the scope of the project.

Nevertheless, the web site and the e-bulletins are significant media for the exploitation of the project outcomes.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The main outcomes of the project are:

- i. *Questionnaire*: In order to determine the specific and current needs, knowledge, skills attitudes and perceptions of primary school teachers who have a variety of children with different needs, including children with special educational needs, a questionnaire was developed. After the experts developed the questionnaire in English, it was translated into national languages and a pilot study was conducted by using a structured interview form with elementary classroom teachers. The questionnaire consisted of four sections:
 - Demographic information
 - Experience with learning difficulties (LD)/challenging behaviours (CB)
 - Dealing with learning difficulties and (LD)/or challenging behaviours (CB)
 - Current and future needs

The participants of the research were teachers working in public primary schools, teaching children from grades 1 to 6, while the age of the pupils was not a determining factor. Partner countries have carried out the research on samples the size of which varied (although in the assumption the minimum sample size was supposed to be 50 participants), the territorial range was also different from country to country. Eventually the number of teachers to whom the questionnaires were administered reached almost 2000.

- ii. *Needs Analysis Report*: All the data were collected on the basis of “The Needs Assessment Questionnaire” which was developed with the collaboration of all partners of the project. In order not to cause any uncertainty, it was decided to analyse the questionnaires for each partner country separately, since the number of teachers participated in this survey was not common for each country. By analyzing the results of the questionnaire in each partner country, initially the needs analysis report for each project country was prepared. Then a general needs analysis report was gathered. In spite of the existing differences in the educational systems, it can be said that there are large similarities between the participating groups of teachers from countries participating in the project.
- iii. *In-service Training Program*: The end product of the Project is an in-service training program in inclusive education for primary school classroom teachers. The training program consists of the following modules:
 - a. Module 1: General Knowledge about Inclusive Practices
 - b. Module 2: Inclusive Classroom Practices
 - c. Module 3: Challenging Behaviour: “What do we know?” “What can we learn?”
 - d. Module 4: Initial Reading and Writing Difficulties
 - e. Module 5: Difficulties in Fluency and Reading Comprehension

- iv. *Training Guide:* The training guide in 5 languages includes a manual which was consist of 5 different modules and each modules included knowledge and training materials related to the subject, power point presentations for the teachers, handouts related to the given subject, specific strategies and techniques for each module.

- v. *Project website:* A project website (www.distinc.eu) was prepared and published. The website is the major communication and dissemination tool. It includes the project objectives, work plan, partnership description, public deliverables, private area for partners, etc. It addresses all project target group, beneficiaries and all actors interested.

- vi. *Project brochures:* In each partner countries' language a project brochure was prepared and printed. The project brochure includes the project objectives, background, target groups, project outcomes, partners information, etc.

- vii. *Project posters:* In each partner countries' language a project poster was prepared and printed. The project poster includes the project objectives, project outcomes.

- viii. *E-newsletters:* In each partner countries' language, four e-newsletters were prepared and submitted to the data-base of each partner. Additionally, it was uploaded to the project website.

- ix. *Strategy documents:* In the beginning of the project, required strategies (management, evaluation, dissemination and exploitation) were developed. In the light of those strategies a project management handbook, a quality and evaluation plan and a valorisation plan were prepared.

4. Partnerships

In the DISTINCT project, there were initially six partners from five countries, namely Belgium (BE), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), United Kingdom (UK), and Turkey (TR). The DISTINCT Consortium was formed of four higher education institutions that have expertise in inclusive practices in general, learning difficulties and challenging behaviours, additional expertise in curriculum development. Two remaining partner organizations (primary school in UK and local authority for education in Turkey) were mainly responsible to enable implementation and dissemination to wide range of schools and beneficiaries at local, national and EU level.

The project partnership had been formed according to specific needs for the development, implementation, testing and valorisation of the training module (TIE). As it requires academic knowledge and experience in inclusive education, BULLC's academic staffs are the leader of consortium in module development. UA, for its experience in disability studies, EU projects in inclusion (daffodil & includes) and inclusive/cognitive education; SWSPIZ, for its experience in developing educational materials for schools and UE-CIEP, for its strong tradition on training teachers, in-service training teachers, were all bring in the know-how, expertise and resources for developing TIE. This way, an academically approved unique teacher training module was produced.

From aspect of reaching teachers of inclusive classroom practices, NPPS and ILMEM brought in the opportunity of addressing a wide range of target group; teachers of children of diverse intercultural background and disabilities, which made the module a reliable and valid one. NPPS, with student profile of 90 different ethnical background, which over 190 children on Special Needs Register and with a "school cluster" structure in Haringey Borough, was in constant cooperation with 11 primary schools within its region. ILMEM, as local authority for education, has a network of 1644 primary schools, 25260 classroom teachers working under its conduct.

The NPPS has been involved in several problems in the end of first year of the project. The government decided to convert some Haringey schools into academies-under private control. The NPPS and another school eventually complied with the government wishes and they have been converted to become an academy with a charity called AET taking ownership from. Under those circumstances the NPPS was obliged to withdrawal.

All involved organizations have vast experience in LLP projects and are capable of fulfilling project tasks successfully. BULLC has coordinated and participated different LLP projects. SWSPIZ has coordinated 2 LLP ComMLP. UA has coordinated 2 ComMLP on inclusive education. UE has been involved in 3 ComMLP and ILMEM has established, initiated and took part in many such consortia.

The advantages of multi-country partnership in DISTINCT project include diversity, universal values, extensive literature survey, experience with different groups, various applications in partners' countries, special know-how. Such a multi-country partnership was not only significant for multilateral outcomes, but also for the integrity of the European partnership.

The partners and their roles in the work packages that they lead are summarised below.

(P1) Boğaziçi University Lifelong Learning Centre (BULLC), TR

www.buyem.boun.edu.tr - Role of the P1 in the Work Packages

WP1: Project Management

- Management work teams were selected.
- Project management plan & WP Gantt Chart were drawn up.
- Management of project activities, financial and administrative issues.
- Financial cost statements and reports were prepared to be sent to the EC.
- The Kick-off meeting was organized and participated.
- First, Second, Third & Final Plenary Meetings were participated.
- Monitoring tools were drawn up.
- Monitoring data were collected.
- Progress and final reports were prepared.

WP4: Development of Training Modules

- The exchange of needs analysis results and contents with partners were coordinated.
- Training Modules cooperating with all partners were developed.
- Training materials (Training manuals and teaching materials) were developed.
- Edit in module 3, 4 and 5 and contributed in module 1, 3, 4 and 5.
- Due to the withdrawal of the NPPS, BULLC covered needed language check for the products accordingly.
- The training products were translated into Turkish.
- Organized and attended internal and related Skype meetings.

WP5: Training of Trainers

- Training for Trainers organized to 23 teachers. Due to the withdrawal of the NPPS, BULLC increased the number of teachers for the training accordingly.
- The Training for Trainers for the implementation of ICP training modules were prepared and planned.
- The Trainers for the upcoming WP6 –Testing the ICP were guided.
- Language check of module, training material and manual, due to the withdrawal of the NPSS.
- The training materials were translated into Turkish.

WP7: ICP Assessment and Revision

- Coordinate the WP.
- Feedback data from teacher trainers and classroom teachers were collected.
- Feedback data was analyzed and reported.
- The ICP training module to its final version by making necessary adaptations was modified.
- The necessary language adaptations on final version ICP modules were made.
- Based upon feedback given by partners, the teachers' guide has been completely reworked from May 2012-January 2013, in 5 language versions. The international editorial committee was composed and met regularly via Skype, and constantly via e-mail. A dropbox system was set up to work jointly on the files.

(P2) Istanbul Provincial Directorate for National Education (ILMEM), TR

www.istanbul.meb.gov.tr - Role of the P2 in the Work Packages

WP6: Testing the ICP Training Module-TOTs

- Coordinate the WP.
- Classroom teachers were selected as participants.
- Official invitation were sent to the related schools for classroom teachers' contribution to ICP training for inclusive education (TIE) in local base.
- Teaching materials in inclusive education for guidance to trainers were provided.
- The ICP training was conducted.
- Feedback after the implementation was provided.

(P3) Academy of Management (SWSPIZ), PL www.swspiz.pl - Role of the P3 in the Workpackages

WP3: Needs Analysis

- Coordinate the WP.
- The needs analysis questionnaire by P1 and partner countries were developed.
- The questionnaires administered to 57 classroom teachers.
- The results of needs analysis reports for each partner country were collected and written.
- The needs analysis report was prepared and finalized.

(P4) University of Antwerp, Study Centre for inclusion & Enablement (INCENA), Faculty of Medicine, Centre for Primary & Interdisciplinary Care, BE www.sclm.ua.ac.be - Role of the P4 in the Work Packages

WP8: Dissemination

- Coordinate the WP.
- Composition of a local expert committee involving 4 higher education teacher training colleges : Plantijn, Artesis, Karel De Grote, Artevelde
- Sending information (newsletter, brochure) to a database of 1800 e-mail addresses
- Presentation at international meeting of "Pathway to Inclusion" Comenius project Brussels on Jan 27th 2011
- Presentation of Distinc project at national directors' meeting in Blankenberge (Febr.10) (N=40)
- Presentation of Distinc project at international summer course in the Netherlands (Zwolle, 3-14 July 2011) (N°= 150)
- Presentation of Distinc project at National meeting of working group on Action & Needs-based working at school, Gent, Sept 15th 2011 and Sept 13 2012 (N= 600)
- Presentation of Distinc project at local in-service training (Sept 30th)
- Coaching 10 inclusive schools
- Training special needs teachers during 3 x ½ days (Nov. 2010 & 2012) at the Artesis bachelor programme in "mediation techniques" (N=19)
- Training teachers & support staff during 12 days at the University of Antwerp post-graduate programme in Cognitive Activation (Feuerstein programme); (N= 14)
- Meeting with directors of regular and special education school board of City of Antwerp and Child Guidance Centre (march 2012)

- Project submitted in December 2012 to Ministry of Education, to implement Distinc in school year 2013-14; approved in march 2013
- Copyright issues: every module editor was responsible to “clear” copyright issues in the text of the Teachers’ Guide, as well as in the training materials (powerpoints) Permission to quote was asked to several contributing authors.
- Proposal discussed with partners about exploitation of Teachers’ Guide and DVD: DVD and paper guide should not be separated. Guide was published by Bogazici University Press in Istanbul. It will be printed on demand. Prices of the different language versions are different from country to country. Digital version of manual and DVD are not completely distributed for free, but for a small fee, covering costs of copying and sending. Excerpts of manual will be published on the website, but not completely.

WP9: Exploitation

- Coordinate the WP.
- Contributed National Exploitation Conference Guide
- First National Exploitation Conference was held in December 2011.
- Second National Exploitation Conference was held in January 2013.
- Promotional materials to the key actors at national level and at key thematic conferences were delivered.

(P5) Noel Park Primary School (NPPS), UK www.noelparkprimary.net - Role of the P5 in the Work Packages

WP5: Training of Trainers

- Due to the withdrawal of the NPPS (P5) some of the roles and tasks which were supposed to be covered by the NPPS are transferred to the project coordinator and other beneficiaries.

(P6) University of Evora Research Centre on Education & Psychology, PT

www.uevora.pt - Role of the P6 in the Workpackages

WP2: Quality and Evaluation

- Coordinate the WP.
- Evaluation Committee was set up.
- Evaluation Plan was draw up.
- The record grid/sheet of each meeting was draw up and filled in.
- Questionnaires were designed and submitted.
- Data entry and analysis at national level was prepared.
- Focus groups among national learners were fixed up.
- Kick-off, First, Second, Third and Final Plenary meetings’ Evaluation Reports were written.
- Evaluation and assessment reports were prepared.

5. Plans for the Future

As for the sustainability of the projects, the following initiatives have been taken:

- Involving policy makers: all partners get in touch with the educational policy makers (on the level of national ministry, provincial and city education boards) in all phases of the project.
- Developing new international LLP project proposals: the partners from BE, TR, PL, PT and UK presented - together with other non-DISTINC partners - three Life Long Learning Projects to the EACEA in January and February 2013 : the “Open Doors” project (coordinated by Ghent - Belgium) is a Comenius network project which focuses on in-service training of teachers and the topic of inclusive education classroom practice; “Enablement+” (coordinator University of Antwerp – BE), a Leonardo multilateral development project, focuses on training educators and teachers in activation and inclusion of children with very severe dependency problems and multiple disability; finally “Connect-in” is a KA-4 transversal dissemination project in the area of inclusive assessment, hence oriented at changing the assessment methods and systems.
- Developing new national projects involving the implementation of DISTINC project: The partner consortium in BE presented a project to the Ministry of Education, for a 1 year in-service teacher training project on the topic of “differentiating in the classroom for learners experiencing barriers to learning”, where the DISTINC training materials will be used. The project has been approved and will be financed in 2013-14.
- Organizing summer courses: The partner from BE presented a summer course (with 12 parallel courses) as eligible for a Comenius/Grundtvig individual mobility grant, for a summer course in Paris from 30/6/13-11/7/13; 120 applications have been received.
- Organizing in service training in partner countries: The project coordinator together with the project partner, ILMEM has been working on an in service training for the target group of the project by using training materials that were developed in the scope of the project. ILMEM, as local authority for education in Istanbul, has a network of 1644 primary schools, 25260 classroom teachers working under its conduct.
- Commercialisation of the outcomes: A proposal discussed with partners about the exploitation of Teachers’ Guide and DVD. The printed guide and DVD should not be separated. The guide was published by Bogazici University Press in Istanbul. It will be printed on demand. The prices of the different language versions are different from country to country. Digital version of manual and DVD are not completely distributed with a small fee, covering costs of copying and sending. Excerpts of manual will be published on the website, but not completely.
- Up-dating the web page periodically: For the exploitation of the outcomes, the project web-site will be up-dated by the project coordinator, BULLC, periodically.
- Promotion of the outcomes by means of conferences, press coverage, etc.: For the exploitation of the outcomes, the partners are going to promote the outcomes by means of next conferences (i.e. 2013 World Congress of Psychological Counselling and Guidance in September 2013) and press coverage.

6. Contribution to EU policies

Implementation of inclusive practices has been one of the major issues in school settings, since many students with special needs could not benefit from regular classroom practices. DISTINC project is to help classroom teachers to be prepared to use the most effective methods, strategies, and techniques for inclusive practices, so as to promote their integration into mainstream education and training.

While national education strategies on inclusive practices are set in most member countries, common challenges are encountered, which await to be overcome. DISTINC project aims at elevating the quality of education, by developing a teacher training program, for primary education classroom teachers of students with special needs. Consequently, it will be allowing everyone the chance to participate in society and a key to growth and high intellectual capital which will contribute to the “Europe 2020” strategy by means of education and training.

Development of ICP training module, which is answering EU LLP policies in parallel to above mentioned priority, is creating new teaching approaches and provisions for children with learning /mild disabilities and helping to promote their integration into mainstream education and training. Through training of teachers in inclusive classroom practices, children with mild/learning disabilities get better chance in integrating into learning and training.

Despite the existing research, studies and previous projects in inclusive education, which member countries benefit from, EU teachers, still lack necessary knowledge and skills to provide appropriate practices for students with special needs. Thus, furnishing teachers with these knowledge and skills is an urgent and crucial need.

Collaboration among EU universities and schools is a way of enhancing education and jointly meeting needs of teachers. It promotes the sharing and transferring of knowledge and experiences among academicians and teachers at EU level. The collaboration in this project caused to further common project proposals and on-going communication.

The school visits done in each project partner country together with exchange of knowledge facilitated the better understanding of the education systems in the EU. Furthermore, this played a significant role to tackle the dilemma for inclusive education to promote the students’ integration into mainstream education and training and simultaneously create optimal conditions of learning for many different children, many of whom have learning & behaviour challenges.

EU partner countries in the DISTINC project involved in the key project actions which included; needs analysis, module development, experimentation, results dissemination and arranging of national events for the results exploitation, participation in international conferences.

