



Teachers **I**ntercultural **C**ompetences
as **K**eystone to **L**earning in **E**urope
(TICKLE)

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Partner Summary

In current paper you can see the aims and the theoretical background of TICKLE project in Estonia. The overview of according activities and outcomes is presented. People and institutions involved are listed. Contribution to the national and EU policies is indicated. Plan for the future is stated.

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1. Project Objectives in the participating country

Our main aim is to encourage the use of didactic tools for strengthening the students' intercultural competences in teacher training.

The objectives are:

To deepen future teachers' understanding of issues of intercultural competences

To demonstrate them the importance of promoting social and emotional skills

To support planning to "teach" intercultural competences

2. Project Approach

is based broadly on modern principles of inclusiveness and sustainability in education (Banks & Banks 2004, Bennet 2006, Hofstede 1991, Intercultural Learning 2000, Niemi 1999, Tuomi 2001 etc.) and on principles of teacher professional identity (Beijaard & et al 2004, De Benoist 2004, Furlong & et al 2000, Goodson 1997, Robson 2006, Ruus 2005, Van Dijk 2005 etc.).

In the center of the TICKLE project activities are student teachers and their professional growth.

The role of the teacher alters with changes in society. In Estonia the person once perceived as the custodian of a single sided culture and responsible for distributing book knowledge has become an independent professional who is expected to teach pupils in a multicultural democracy in a multicultural learning environment and to support individual personal growth and development of all pupils with different backgrounds.

Also the Standard of Professional Competence of Estonia includes the inculcation of humanistic and democratic values (such as the need for civil society, respect for the individual, tolerance), the management of cultural diversity and the management of multiple personal identities (national, local, professional).

The issue of identity (also professional identity) as a paramount concern has, generally, emerged in Estonia due to increase in personal liberty and civil rights associated with “the return to the west” and the dissolution of the old network.

Only teachers with strong and positive professional self-esteem and self-awareness can support and create supportive and positive learning environment for every child in spite of their cultural, social, religion etc. background. Subject knowledge and mastery in teaching methods are also very important.

Learning about methods of teaching intercultural competences helps student teachers to become redier for the actual learning environment in Estonian schools.

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3. Project Outcomes & Results by now

- We built a team of teacher educators for creating a concept of intercultural competences in pre-service teacher training in Tallinn University
- We investigated what the term *multicultural learning environment* mean in Estonian schools and for students in University (results presented on Estonian workshop in Arnhem)
- We implemented the structured interview and the feedback sessions
 1. To give students the opportunity to reflect on their understanding of the teaching profession in the modern world, including understanding of and managing on multicultural learning environment.
 2. To give students feedback about their reflection in order to support their understanding about teacher profession in multicultural context.
 3. To strengthen student teachers and teachers professional self-confidence and self-awareness and hence to reinforce their personal attitudes to their own cultural identity and to professional responsibilities, including responsibility of creating supportive intercultural learning environment for every pupil (see Appendix 1).
- We know more about methods and activities to teach and learn about intercultural competences
- We implemented several methods and activities into the teacher training courses in order to evaluate their efficiency

4. Partnerships established within the participating country

Department of Teacher Education, Centre of Pedagogical Practice and Department of Primary Education of Tallinn University are working on this project.

Expertise of Ministry of Education and Science and the National Centre of Language Immersion is involved.

5. Names and roles of Staff involved in the partner country

Inge Timoštšuk – head of centre of Pedagogical practice, project coordinator in Estonia

Ene Liiberg – assistant of project coordinator

Anne Uusen – associated professor of Primary Education, subject teacher educator

Mai Normak – head of the Department of Teacher Education, primary teacher educator

6. Plans for the Future until end of project period

We are planning to describe 4 more effective learning activities in teacher education to develop the students' intercultural competencies.

7. Contribution to EU policies

Inge Timoštšuk was invited as expert by Council of Europe to the IV Consultation table "Diversity and induction of new teachers"(October, 15.-16. 2008, Tallinn).The knowledge and experiences accumulated during the TICKLE project were used.

8. Contribution to national policies

The principles formulated during TICLE activities about the teachers' intercultural competencies in Estonia are partly implemented into the National Strategy of Teacher Education (2008-2013).

9. Dissemination activities

We are reporting about the project activities and results on the meetings of the Board of Teacher Education Coordinators of Institutes of Tallinn University.

The Intercultural background of learning and teaching was discussed on the 6th International Conference of Sustainable Development, Culture and Education "Collaboration on Education for Sustainable Development" on June 4-7, 2008 in Eskisehir, Turkey by Inge Timoštšuk (title of the presentation "Coping of student teachers in influencing pupils study environment").

General idea of implementing the interview and the feedback about the future teachers` professionalism was presented on the ECER Conference "From Teaching to Learning" on 10- 12 September 2008 in Gothenburg, Sweden by Inge Timoštšuk and Mai Normak (title of the presentation: "Developing Support Systems to Promote Student Teacher Professionalism", in attached file).

The cultural components of Estonian future teachers professional identity was discussed on the ECER Conference "From Teaching to Learning" on 10 September 2008 in Gothenburg, Sweden by Inge Timoštšuk (title of the presentation "Identity Statements of Student Teachers in the Initial Stage of Teacher Training Characterizing Environmental, Cognitive and Relationship Mechanisms"

The most important dissemination activity was the III TiCKLE meeting held in Tallinn.

10. Tools already developed

Structured interview and feedback session about future teachers` professional identity (Appendix 1).

Appendix 1

FILE CARD for TICKLE Tool

Presented at the Eger Conference

From National TICKLE Team:

Tallinn University, Estonia

Name of the tool

Structured interview and feedback about professional identity of student teacher

Author /Person responsible:

Inge Timoštšuk (head of center of pedagogical practice)

Anne Uusen (assistant professor of primary education)

Aim of tool/ Brief overall description of aim of the tool in steps towards intercultural competences of teachers

The aim is to encourage the use of reflection and self-assessment by students.
The objectives are:

1. To give students the opportunity to reflect on their understanding of the teaching profession in the modern world, including understanding of and managing on multicultural learning environment.
2. To give students feedback about their reflection in order to support their understanding about teacher profession in multicultural context.
3. To strengthen student teachers and teachers professional self-confidence and self-awareness and hence to reinforce their personal attitudes to their own cultural identity and to professional responsibilities, including responsibility of creating supportive intercultural learning environment for every pupil.

Approach

(based on the scientific background of Beijaard and & (2004), De Benoist (2004), Furlong and & (2000), Goodson (1997), Robson (2006), Ruus (2005), Van Dijk (2005) etc.)

The role of the teacher alters with changes in society. In Estonia the person once perceived as the custodian of a single sided culture and responsible for distributing book knowledge has become an independent professional who is expected to teach pupils in a multicultural

democracy in a multicultural learning environment and to support individual personal growth and development of all pupils with different backgrounds.

Also the Standard of Professional Competence of Estonia includes the inculcation of humanistic and democratic values (such as the need for civil society, respect for the individual, tolerance), the management of cultural diversity and the management of multiple personal identities (national, local, professional).

The issue of identity (also professional identity) as a paramount concern has, generally, emerged in Estonia due to increase in personal liberty and civil rights associated with “the return to the west” and the dissolution of the old network.

Our student teachers` attitude to issue of multi- or intercultural learning environment is a bit different – because of our political history – as in modern western societies. There is rather strong confrontation between two nationalities, Estonians and Russians (or Russian speaking population) in one hand, but in other hand almost total tolerance towards all the other nationalities or cultures in Estonia. Therefore we cannot concentrate in teacher training to single tools or methods or “tricks” for preparing future teachers for teaching in intercultural classroom, but we have to reinforce students` own personal and professional identity to broaden and intensify thereby also their own cultural identity.

Only teachers with strong and positive professional self-esteem and self-awareness can support and create supportive and positive learning environment for every child in spite of their cultural, social, religion etc. background.

Target group, which could use the tool

Teacher educators

Teacher students

Main methods used

Structured interview,

Structured feedback

Description of the implementing the tool in major steps

The steps of the implementing a structured interview and feedback

Design of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to explore student's attitudes to teacher identity through responses to questions about different pedagogical problems or situations. Model answers were based on the specifications of the National Teacher's Standard of Professional Competence of Estonia (2006) and the evaluation criteria for pedagogical practice of Tallinn University (2002). The theoretical background of these regulations is based broadly on modern principles of inclusiveness and sustainability in education (Banks & Banks 2004, Bennet 2006, Hofstede 1991, Intercultural Learning 2000, Niemi 1999, Tuomi 2001).

The questions tried to cover as many aspects of teacher professionalism as possible and were divided into four major sections:

The teacher's role in society

The following questions were asked about the teacher's role in society:

What do you think the school expects of you as a future teacher?

What do you think the Republic of Estonia expects of you as a future teacher?

What do you think the European Union expects of you as a future teacher?

In what way do you think the 21st century teacher differs from the 20th century teacher?

Which qualities and attitudes do you think are essential for a teacher?

There are many diverse cultures in Europe. If you have experienced this, can you give an example?

What multicultural situations could you, as a teacher, come across? Can you give a specific example?

The teacher's role as a manager of the learning process

The following questions were asked about the management of learning:

What teaching skills do you have and what do you need to develop?

Can you give a specific example of how you have used your analytical, decision-making and organizational skills

'Teaching is management'; please comment

What management skills do you have and what do you need to develop?

Can you give an example of planning your teaching activities;?

It is claimed that a good teacher has a thorough knowledge of his/her subject; how can you tell if this is true?

How do you understand the statement 'learning occurs in a supportive environment'?

Teachers are expected to assess the work and development of their pupils; who do you think expects that and why?

The teacher's role as a supporter of individual growth

The following questions were asked about personal attitudes:

Which traits of your personality are most important for your teaching career?

What do you like most about being a teacher?

The teacher's role presents challenges that affect your daily life. Comment please

The teacher's job is complicated and affected by different situations and people. How can you maintain a balance in complex situations?

It is important that a teacher is trustworthy and positive. How do you demonstrate these qualities?

It is claimed that all children are different; where do you see these differences?

It is said that pupils take after their teacher. Comments, please

Imagine that you are working in a multicultural classroom. Do you need any special skills to manage the classroom? Please give examples.

The student's role as a learner

The following questions were asked to clarify how the students understood their own learning process:

How are your personal developmental goals related to your studies to become a teacher?

You intend to become a teacher. What do you have to do to achieve this goal?

In order to be a good teacher you need to have a clear idea of what a teacher is. To what extent do you feel you live up to this idea? In which areas do you need support?

How do you behave when, on your school placement, your supervisor criticizes your university teacher?

Application of the questionnaire with students

Seven students in their first year of studies for the MA Teacher Education degree completed the questionnaire in tandem with the interviewers.

Assessment of the student's answers

The researchers assessed the student's responses using (once again) the specifications of the National Teacher's Standard of Professional Competence of Estonia (2006) and the evaluation criteria for pedagogical practice of Tallinn University (2002). The purpose of assessment was to provide students with the opportunity to evaluate their potential for the job as well as to help them become aware of different roles. Readiness was evaluated on a 10-point scale (1 – complete lack of readiness, 10 – completely ready).

Feedback to the students and observation of feedback

Feedback was conducted a week after the questionnaire was completed. There were two interviewers and one interviewee together at one time. One interviewer commented on the answers the student had given and answered questions whilst the second interviewer observed the interview and made a record of the process. Behavior was observed in order to provide additional feedback about the student's interpersonal skills.

Description of the possible outcome of the tool

In respect of students it was revealed that: they assessed the feedback as very informative and useful. The questionnaire provides opportunities for grounding one's opinions and ideas.

Some examples:

“The idea of myself as a teacher feels strange and odd but not unacceptable. Talking about myself as a future teacher helps me to adjust to the idea”.

“The interview offered me more than I expected – later on I have found myself thinking about the questions. Again and again you remember something you had never thought of before”.

“The questions were interesting and encouraged me to reflect on them”.

The interview project is in absolute conformity with the aims of the teacher-training course in Tallinn University. It helps to improve the quality of communication with students, provides feedback on the content of subjects and supports the development of the teacher's role image. Some elements of the process described

have also been used in the entrance exam to teacher training courses in Tallinn University. We consider the implementation of the discussed method to be appropriate to career counseling for those students who need support in deciding whether to continue the MA studies in teacher training or in some other specialty.

Steppingstones, which should be kept in mind, while doing it

Interviewers themselves must have positive attitude and awareness towards cultural differences and intercultural learning environment in general.

Short Summary

The debate about the teaching profession concentrates primarily on the questions who is a good teacher and how to plan teacher training so that it best supports professional development. Becoming a teacher is a distinctive and not easily standardized process. Self-awareness could help future teachers set personal developmental aims and choose their learning strategies. One possible way forward is to implement activities based on personal approach e.g., the structured interview and individual feedback.

Work with individual students gave interviewers possibilities to influence their thoughts and values about their futures in the teaching profession. Questions asked gave the student teachers the opportunity to think about the different aspects and complexity of the teaching profession.

Infrastructure required

Room, what is comfort and big enough for privacy of two different interviewers and which is suitable and supportive for group work

Two qualified interviewers

Channels for informing students about possibilities of interview

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