

### **What were the conditions and steps taken that have contributed most to the success of the measure?**

The main factor that helped introduce this unit at national level was the perception of the need for preparing teachers to address diversity in their classrooms by both the education system and ITE providers. This was the result of the development of a movement towards inclusive education through activities from NGOs and lecturers so that, even if not everyone agreed, the Faculty of Education declared itself in favour of inclusive education. This process was also part of a political process in which the two major political parties declared themselves in favour of rights of persons with disabilities for equal opportunities and inclusion in mainstream education (Bartolo, 2010). Within this context, it became possible to convince ITE providers that preparing teachers for diversity is a priority, and that it is both an issue of theory and practice. Other crucial elements for effective implementation of the unit include:

- Teacher educators must be experts in inclusive education, and particularly culturally responsive education and differentiated teaching;
- The project assignment that students are to implement during their teaching practice should be clearly explained;
- Theoretical sessions should engage students actively and include group and individual exercises on the identification and assessment of student needs, on setting individual educational goals, and on the organisation and resources needed for differentiated lessons;
- Following teaching practice, students should have tutorial sessions in which they present their project and reflect on their experiences.

The Maltese experience suggests that effective measures for educating teachers towards respecting and responding to the various student diversities do not stand on their own. They need to be part of the development of national awareness of the injustice of discriminatory attitudes, of an understanding of the values of dignity and human rights, and of the development of the education system and whole school policies and practices towards more inclusive education.

### **Which stakeholders were involved in identifying needs and in the planning and design of the measure?**

The University of Malta

### **How are the different people involved in implementation being supported (e.g. do they receive specific training?)**

The unit was developed following the work of two experts in inclusive education, and to the leadership of the Department of ITE for primary education that welcomed the introduction of the unit in the regular ITE curriculum. Over the past ten years, the unit has made use of a Teacher's handbook (Bartolo et al., 2007a), as well as a Tutor's manual (Bartolo et al. 2007b), which were developed through a Comenius 2.1 project (2004-07) coordinated by the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta.

### **What have been the obstacles to introducing the measure? How have they been addressed?**

The main challenge for the sustainability of this unit is the readiness of the ITE provider to include a four-ECTS unit of this type in the regular ITE curriculum. This is particularly the case in shorter ITE programmes such as one-year post-graduate training, where the input on pedagogy related directly to the teaching of a specific subject takes up most of the programme, while teacher educators may not give priority to diversity.

## **What has been the impact of the measure?**

As part of the Unit activities, student teachers have to report on the impact of their project on the school pupil identified and on their own professional development. According to these reports, there were varying levels of success in helping pupils to achieve the learning targets, and engage in academic learning. Furthermore, better interactions with peers and development of a greater sense of belonging to their classroom were reported. The only formal evaluation of the measure was undertaken by the lecturer with one of the cohorts of 49 students who reported several positive impacts: (1) recognising student diversities; (2) understanding and implementing an IEP; (3) reducing fear of and gaining familiarity with learner-centred approach; (4) gaining skills in planning and implementing modifications to their lessons to meet individual student needs. The main strength of the measure is that it blends theory and practice. Emphasis is put on differentiated theory and practice, mainly based on the approach by Tomlinson (2014). The main weakness is that the students are not followed-up specifically by the teacher educator during their teaching practice (apart from having student teachers' reports on their practical assignments), and rely on other teaching practice supervisors. Ideally, the lecturer would visit the student teachers at least once during their teaching practice. The unit has been implemented since 1996, but will be transferred from a four-year B.Ed. programme to a two-year post-graduate Master's programme, following the change of Malta's ITE structure. Because of this transfer, the unit faced the reduction of ECTS offered. Furthermore, the unit will become an official part of student teachers' school observations and teaching practice with supervisors or mentors supporting the students to recognise difference and address it effectively during teaching practice. The practice (observation and participation in teaching) is planned to last during whole year, different issues such as assessment, goal setting, lesson adaptation and practice evaluation will be performed. However, at the same time there are concerns that diffusing diversity into practice placements and in subject pedagogy will cause the current coordinated delivery from specialised teacher educators lose its specific focus on diversity.

### **Further info (website, contact person e-mail, organisation details)**

Contact persons: Dr Paul A. Bartolo Associate Professor University of Malta Email: [paul.a.bartolo@um.edu.mt](mailto:paul.a.bartolo@um.edu.mt) Tel: +356 2340 2927 Dr Colin Calleja Head of Department, Inclusion and Access to Learning, Faculty of Education University of Malta Email: [colin.calleja@um.edu.mt](mailto:colin.calleja@um.edu.mt) Tel: +356 23402554

### **Relevant documents, photos or videos**

References Bartolo, P.A., 'Preparing teachers for diversity', Malta Review of Educational Research, 6, No. 1, 2008, pp. 1-14. Bartolo, P. A., 'The "process" of teacher education for inclusion: The Maltese experience', Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, 10 No. s1, 2010, pp. 139–148. Bartolo, P.A.; Hofsaess, T.; Mol Lous, A.; Ale, P.; Calleja, C.; Humphrey, N.; Janikova, V.; Vilkiene, V.; Wetso, G., Responding to Student Diversity: Teacher's Handbook, University of Malta, Malta, 2007a. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236618492\\_Responding\\_to\\_Student\\_Diversity\\_Teacher's\\_Handbook](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236618492_Responding_to_Student_Diversity_Teacher's_Handbook). Accessed 15.12.2016. Bartolo, P.A.; Hofsaess, T.; Mol Lous, A.; Ale, P.; Calleja, C.; Humphrey, N.; Janikova, V.; Vilkiene, V.; and Wetso, G., Responding to student diversity: Tutor's Manual. University of Malta, Malta, 2007b. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/29750792\\_Responding\\_to\\_student\\_diversity\\_tutors\\_manual](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/29750792_Responding_to_student_diversity_tutors_manual). Accessed 15.12.16. Bartolo, P. and Mallia Borg, F., 'Country Report – Malta', European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2011. Available at:

<https://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/Teacher-Education-for-Inclusion/country-info#country-reports> Bartolo, P.A.; & Smyth, G., 'Teacher Education for Diversity'. In: Swennen, A. and van der Klink, M., (eds.), *Becoming a Teacher Educator*, Springer, The Netherlands, 2008, pp.117-132. Humphrey, N.; Bartolo, P.; Ale, P.; Calleja, C.; Hofsaess, T.; Janikova, V.; Mol Lous, A.; Vilkiene, V.; Wetso, G., 'Understanding and responding to diversity in the primary classroom: An international study', *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 29, No. 3, 2006, pp. 305–318. Tomlinson, C.A., *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners*, 2nd Edition, ASCD, Alexandria, VA, 2014. University of Malta, 'Study Unit Description PRE2806 Responding to diversity in the primary classroom', University of Malta, Malta, 2015. Available at: <http://www.um.edu.mt/educ/studyunit/PRE2806>. Accessed 15.12.16.