



Article

# Supporting All Educators to Take Part in Teacher Professional Learning for Inclusion

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**Abstract:** In the process of ensuring inclusive education, teachers' individual roles are shifting towards collaborative practice, involving sharing tasks and expertise among a wide range of educational professionals. Policies for inclusion have resulted in a sense of urgency among universities to better educate teachers for inclusive practice. Yet, the tools to support this demand appear to be quite limited, or do not address the gaps in teacher professional learning identified in the research. Proceeding from the outcomes of a policy review on teacher professional learning for inclusion in Europe, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education explored the use and relevance of the Profile of Inclusive Teachers, developed in 2012, for all education professionals. This paper reports on the approach and the main findings of a study conducted in collaboration with European countries, leading to a new and complementary Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning developed in 2022. The new Profile is built upon the initial 2012 Profile for pre-service teachers and aims to include all education professionals in teacher professional learning opportunities for inclusive education. Findings highlight the Profile's core values and areas of competence and the essential features of competence development for inclusion. The paper concludes with recommendations for the collaborative use of a shared competence framework for inclusion and the role of universities offering teachers professional learning for inclusion.

**Keywords:** teacher professional learning; inclusive education; university pedagogy; policy



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## 1. Introduction

In an era where competition and measurement of academic outcomes are dominant in a number of education systems, the role of universities and other pedagogical institutes in providing appropriate teacher professional learning (TPL) to support teachers, in all stages of their careers, to commit to and implement inclusive education, becomes crucial. Inclusive education is understood by the 31 member countries of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education as the provision of high-quality education for all learners in their community alongside their peers [1]. Inclusive education concerns all teachers and higher education institutions offering opportunities for initial teacher education (ITE) and teacher continuing professional development (CPD), including induction programs and in-school learning programs.

For example, according to the literature, there are significant gaps in policy concerning TPL for inclusion. Firstly, although attention is given to initial teacher education for inclusion, the professional continuum covering all teachers (i.e., beginning and experienced teachers, mentoring and support teachers, school leaders, and teacher educators) is not equally addressed. Moreover, a growing number of other education professionals are involved in the implementation of inclusive education. This presents university education departments, teacher education colleges, and schools operating as professional learning communities with the challenge of considering wider groups of professionals, to ensure that all education stakeholders, including specialists, engage in career-long competence

development for inclusion [2]. Secondly, TPL policies do not always reflect a deeper understanding of diversity and inclusion. In many European countries, TPL for inclusion primarily focuses on educating teachers to “manage” learners with disabilities, instead of taking into account all learners vulnerable to exclusion [3]. Thirdly, while collaborative practice (e.g., between schools and universities) is acknowledged as an effective way to promote TPL, it is not sustainably supported by policy [4]. A new approach is needed to allow for a more continuous and in-depth reflection on the values and competences needed for inclusion within and around the teaching profession. In addition, the policy itself must reflect upon the promotion and sustainability of TPL opportunities for all education professionals involved in order to address these gaps.

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency) has developed a number of tools to support TPL for inclusion, both at the policy level and at the community and school levels. At the policy level, a policy self-review tool [5] allows countries to envision and monitor TPL for equity and inclusion. At the community, school, and teacher levels, a new competence framework, the Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning [6], supports universities, pedagogical institutes, and schools to collaborate in the design and implementation of TPL opportunities for education professionals and enhance their capacity for implementing inclusive education. It complements the Profile of Inclusive Teachers [7], originally developed in 2012 as a foundational instrument for pre-service teachers. This paper reports on the development of the Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning by the Agency. This development was preceded by a study examining the TPL policies of 26 European countries in terms of vision, goals, continuum of support, capacity building, funding, and monitoring [8].

### *1.1. The Need to Involve All Education Professionals*

To build capacity for inclusion, research suggests that TPL policies and practices should cover the continuum of professional learning opportunities, connecting initial teacher education, induction, and continuous professional development [9]. Studies have shown positive outcomes of new models of professional learning for inclusion, e.g., more complex thinking about diversity and a more critical inquiry approach among educators, by linking opportunities for critical reflection in initial teacher education to professional learning activities such as lesson study or action research for in-service teachers [10–14]. By engaging in meaningful practices, TPL for inclusion entails a broad area of educational professionalism, extending to all practitioners who work alongside teachers and to those who work in partnerships with schools. It enables educational staff to grow, not only in self-efficacy in teaching diverse classrooms, but also in collegial support, shared responsibilities, and in leadership roles in developing inclusive education [13,15,16]. Including mentoring teachers, special education, and learner support teachers among other teachers widens the pool of educators to align teacher professional learning with educational reform and policy demands for inclusion [4,17–20].

This vision is supported by international and European policy reports, which emphasize the need for TPL opportunities for diversity and teacher support for change throughout a teacher’s career via classroom-based, collaborative research and teachers’ participation in professional networks [21,22]. When it comes to the inclusion of learners who are vulnerable to exclusion, including those with disabilities, policy stresses the value of TPL for the inclusion of all staff to increase classroom support and share responsibilities [23,24]. Moreover, the shortage of teachers in many European countries and a particular need for teachers from diverse backgrounds is a major barrier to building capacity for inclusion [25]. Last but not least, there are relatively few long-term partnerships between universities and schools that target school leaders, although they are as equally important as other TPL initiatives [26].

### 1.2. *The Continuing Need for Professional Goals for Equity and Inclusion in Education*

In addition to a vision of career-long and broadly oriented professional learning, TPL must be underpinned by a vision of equity [5]. As part of the development of inclusive education systems, TPL policy must be aligned with a wider rights-based policy framework [27]. International bodies, such as the United Nations and the European Union, remind policymakers to take a holistic view of inclusion [28]. In order to advance on the commitments to develop inclusive and equitable quality education systems in which the needs of all learners are met, as outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 4 [29] in the UN Convention of the Rights for Persons with Disabilities [30], and in the Council Recommendation on common values, inclusive education, and the European Dimension of Teaching [31], an overarching view of inclusion is needed. While within and across countries, many pathways to a teacher qualification exist, it is crucial for policymakers to be aware of ambiguous views of inclusion [32]. To promote a cross-sectoral discourse and to empower all staff for diversity, policy for TPL must be underpinned by the core values and competence frameworks that reflect the assumptions needed to develop inclusive learning environments [33,34].

One of the reference frameworks for teacher competences for inclusion and diversity developed in Europe for initial teacher education is the Profile of Inclusive Teachers [7]. The Profile is important for stakeholders in initial teacher education as it sets out the essential values for inclusion that can inform the development of undergraduate university programs:

- Valuing learner diversity;
- Supporting all learners;
- Working with others;
- Personal professional development.

The Profile also sets the associated areas of competence to prepare teachers to work in inclusive settings.

The Council of Europe developed a competence framework for diversity, which explicitly highlights teachers as agents of intercultural dialogue [35,36]. Both competence frameworks aim to reinforce the argument that inclusive education is the responsibility of all teachers and teacher educators, and that, guided by value-based competences, initial teacher education becomes a model of democratic participation and dialogic communication. Since its publication, the Profile of Inclusive Teachers has inspired ITE and CPD courses [35,36]. However, its impact on policy development is limited, as a number of countries still view TPL for inclusion as only linked to developing teachers' capacity to educate learners with disabilities, rather than preparing them to support all learners, including those who are vulnerable to exclusion [37].

### 1.3. *The Need for a New Approach*

At present, there is some evidence of promising new partnerships and collaborative projects aimed at enhancing professional learning for inclusion. Various pathways of initial teacher education exist, sometimes overlapping with in-service learning pathways [13,14]. Additionally, induction programs and CPD show innovative models of TPL for inclusion, including international mobility programs [32,35,38–41]. However, gaps in TPL perpetuate teacher concerns regarding inclusive education and may put a burden on the collaboration required among all education professionals. These gaps indicate a lack of vision or ambiguity regarding TPL in the context of inclusive education. The need to develop tools to guide policy in TPL for all education stakeholders at any stage of their career initiated a process of revisiting the Profile of Inclusive Teachers by the Agency and its member countries [7]. The process was framed around a broad research goal of identifying the essential features of a competence framework for inclusion and its wider use among educators developing inclusive learning environments. More specifically, the following questions guided the process:

- What kinds of professional standards exist for different professionals working together in inclusive education?

- What are the essential features of a framework for professional learning to support all education professionals in developing the knowledge, attitudes, and skills for inclusion?
- What core values and areas of competence are considered relevant to competence development for inclusion for all education professionals?
- How do existing frameworks meet the essential features of competence development for inclusion?

## 2. Materials and Methods

Based on the literature [42], a teacher professional learning for Inclusion policy review [5] was developed, which was used for the mapping and analysis of TPL for inclusion policies in Europe. Twenty-six countries [8] (p. 14) participated in the mapping exercise. Mapping grids reviewing each country's TPL policy were prepared by the authors. The grids were updated by policymakers working at the Ministry of Education. A final synthesis report was prepared by the authors and was approved by each collaborating country [43].

Based on the findings of the policy analysis, a more focused study was set up to respond to the need to set clear goals for TPL for inclusion along a continuum of support. This study was set up as a small-scale participatory activity, building upon the Profile of Inclusive Teachers [7]. It was supported by a conceptual working paper and a survey among policymakers. The conceptual working paper was prepared by Lani Florian, who acted as an external academic consultant to outline the rationale and to raise the questions to explore in order to review and/or develop a competence framework for inclusion. Equally important was the conceptual basis for the Profile of Inclusive Teachers and the extensive project work to account for its framework of core values, areas of competence, and suggested attitudes, knowledge, and skills [7]. In addition, all European Agency member countries were invited to participate in an online survey for policymakers. The survey contained an introduction, a glossary, and two sections addressing, for different professionals, the use of sets of professional standards for inclusion (standards, learning outcomes, competence frameworks, or other goals) and the use of the Profile of Inclusive Teachers in particular, and the relevance of the Profile's framework of core values and areas of competence.

Leading on from this work, policymakers and teacher education experts from six countries (Belgium Flemish Community, Cyprus, Finland, France, Greece, and Sweden) who indicated they had in some way used the 2012 Profile of Inclusive Teachers, were engaged in a series of five online focus group meetings and workshops. The online meetings focused on the relevance and the potential use of a shared profile for all education professionals at different system levels, as defined in the Agency's ecosystem of inclusive education systems [44]. In this view, TPL for inclusion is one of the key systems of inclusive policy and practice that impact learners. Its structures, processes, and outcomes are situated across different levels of the education system: the individual professional level, the school team level, the community level that fosters collaboration between a broader range of stakeholders, and the national/regional policy level. Meetings took a systematic approach, exploring a competence framework's relevance and use at each level of the ecosystem model. Focus group meetings addressed the levels of the individual teacher and of policymaking and were guided by the framework of the Profile of Inclusive Teachers, the survey results, and the literature on TPL for inclusion. The workshops were prepared using vignettes illustrating the use of a competence framework for inclusion at the school and community levels. The analysis followed an iterative approach, building upon former project outcomes in each meeting, and was supported by an external expert who acted as a critical friend. Analysis of all activities fed into the development of a renewed Profile. Participants were invited to review and comment on the interim drafts of the full Profile, and Agency team members and member country representatives were invited to review the final draft of the Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning.

### 3. Results

This section focuses on the results of the survey and participatory study reviewing the Profile for Inclusive Teachers for wider use among all education professionals. Regarding the first question on professional standards for inclusion for different professionals, survey results will be preceded by the critical findings of the policy analysis. Next, the essential features identified for the design, review, and alignment of competence frameworks for inclusion for cross-sectoral, career-long, and multilevel use will be described. Third, the core values and areas of competence will be identified for a competence framework for inclusion for different educators. Based on the analysis of the aggregated findings of the survey, focus group meetings, and workshops, a renewed framework for competence development for inclusion will be presented, comprising core values and areas of competence (which include suggested attitudes, knowledge, and skills). Finally, alignment with key features is discussed.

#### 3.1. *The Need for Guiding Competence Frameworks for Equity and Inclusion*

One critical finding of the policy analysis led to the process of exploring, reviewing, and updating a competence framework for inclusion. As a manifestation of the discontinuity of TPL opportunities for inclusion along a professional's career and the narrow focus on special educational needs, the policy analysis found little evidence of the use of competence frameworks for inclusion and equity along the continuum of professional learning. For initial teacher education, policy frameworks state general competences that all teacher graduates are expected to have, including learning outcomes that refer to learner diversity, or distinguish between general and specific competences, such as the identification of individual needs or collaborative practice. Universities autonomously decide on the content of ITE degrees and a separate or integrated approach to inclusive education topics. Induction is not obligatory in many countries, and no reference is made to competence areas for the mentoring of beginning teachers. For in-service teachers, countries either state competence areas to work with 'all learners', e.g., managing linguistic diversity or working with learners at risk of drop-out (Belgium Flemish community, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, United Kingdom Wales), competences for teaching learners categorized as having 'special educational needs' (France), or do not state competence areas at all to underpin TPL opportunities. Specialist teachers are generally expected to have a qualification in special education or some kind of specialization in special and/or inclusive education. For school leaders, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Malta, Portugal, and UK Wales refer to competence areas for inclusion as part of school-based teacher in-service learning opportunities or collaboration with universities for pre-service student practice. There is little information on the professional development of teacher educators on inclusive education topics. In general, teacher competence frameworks vary across countries, and their impact on TPL for inclusion differs. In most countries, it is unclear whether policy considers inclusive education competences in TPL. Moreover, it is unclear to what extent competence frameworks that take into account inclusive education and equity are used in TPL collaborative practice beyond initial teacher education. For example, many pilots and projects supported by policy exist, which offer opportunities for TPL for inclusion, but these are also fragmented, attended on a voluntary basis, and temporary.

The survey added more information on the use of professional standards (standards, competence frameworks, learning outcomes, or other professional goals). In seventeen European countries/regions (Belgium Flemish community, Belgium French community, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Malta, Netherlands, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden), either one policymaker from the ministry replied, or two to six policymakers and experts in education collaborated, to provide a well-informed response to the survey questions. The indicated use of professional goals focusing on all learners is as follows: 74% for in-service teachers, 65% for pre-service teachers, 57% for support teachers, 55% for school leaders, 49% for specialists, 39% for mentoring teachers, 35% for teacher educators, and 29% for teaching assistants. Nine countries (Spain,

Iceland, France, Malta, Finland, Greece, Serbia, Hungary, and Slovenia) confirmed the use of ‘a set of shared professional goals covering the work of all professionals involved in inclusive education’, but more detailed responses show a mixed interpretation of the question, with reference to shared activities rather than sets of professional goals. All but one country agree that all education professionals could benefit from a shared framework, and fourteen countries agree that education professionals working in inclusive settings share a professional identity as inclusive educators, even though not all professionals listed in the survey—teacher educators, teaching assistants, and specialists—have a teaching qualification. A shared professional identity for educators working in inclusive schools is supported both as a goal and an outcome of a whole-school approach in which all professionals share a vision of diversity as enriching the education process for all.

Based on these findings, half of the countries’ policies lack a clearly defined, guiding framework for TPL for inclusion to address all educators, including, in particular, beginning teachers, teacher educators, school leaders, specialists, and teaching assistants. The Profile of Inclusive Teachers was examined to consider if it could fill the gap and form the basis for the professional learning of teachers and other professionals in the field of inclusive education. The findings suggested that the Profile’s use could inform policy development on competences for education professionals at all stages of TPL and at different levels of the education system: for individual teachers, at the team or school level, the community level, and the policy level. The argument was reinforced by a conceptual working paper [27] highlighting the need for TPL for inclusion to be underpinned by core values for inclusion and the evidence of inclusive pedagogy as a basis for competence development, rather than offering segmented professional learning opportunities and specific professional qualifications for inclusion.

### *3.2. Essential Features of a Competence Framework for Inclusion*

The literature, policy analysis, and survey findings were used to support the focus group discussions and workshops on the relevance of the Profile’s framework and its possible use for individual professionals, teams, and policymakers, and to review the Profile’s suggested competences. In order to fulfill and finalize the review and updating process, seven essential features were identified as main principles for the development of a competence framework for inclusion and/or for the alignment of such a framework to existing frameworks or strategies for teacher professional learning, as shown in Table 1.

### *3.3. Relevance of Identified Core Values and Areas of Competence*

Survey results showed a high agreement on the relevance of the core values and areas of competence of the Profile of Inclusive Teachers [7], originally designed for initial teacher education only, to be extended to a competence framework for inclusive education for all educators.

For different professionals, agreement on the relevance of the core values varies from 95.5% to 99%. Agreement on the relevance of the areas of competence associated with the core values varies from 89% to 97%, with the lowest agreement for teaching assistants and specialists being in the areas of personal professional development.

Suggested new core values for all professionals were ‘understanding mental health’ and ‘multiculturalism’. For school leaders in particular, ‘leading the school environment toward multi-professional school and teamwork’ was added. Suggested new areas of competence were ‘hands-on approaches and experiences with vulnerable learners’ for all professionals, ‘digital literacy’, ‘learners’ rights to high quality education’, ‘working in emergency situations’ for all teachers, and ‘pedagogical innovations’ and ‘management of projects with a focus on equity, gender equality, non-discrimination and prevention of gender violence’ for school leaders.

**Table 1.** Essential features for the design or alignment of a competence framework for inclusion.

Essential Feature	Significance
1. Connecting education professionals	Inclusion in schools is complex, and teachers alone cannot be held accountable for its success. Inclusive practice is performed by teams of diverse professionals whose professional needs are related. A competence framework for inclusion aims to connect education professionals.
2. Encouraging team reflection	A competence framework for inclusion shifts the emphasis from self-efficacy to team reflection, collective professional learning, and team agency for inclusion. In professional learning communities and collegial relationships, it invites education professionals to discuss the meaning of inclusion and to share experiences and skills, lifting professional learning beyond training, empowering school staff for inclusive teaching, adopting a whole-school perspective, and developing a professional vision for inclusion.
3. Sharing a teacher perspective, sharing a whole-school view	For mutual understanding among education professionals, competence development for inclusion invites other professionals to take part in teachers' crucial tasks and to have conversations and reflections on teaching, co-teaching, and teacher support. Likewise, it invites teachers to look beyond the classroom and take a whole-school view in developing competence for inclusion.
4. Focusing on equity, focusing on all learners	To represent all learners, competence development for inclusion acknowledges different perspectives while focusing on quality education for all. It refers to intercultural dialogue and universal design, as well as specific skills. It allows education professionals to question, reflect upon, and re-imagine efforts to respond to diversity, aware of multiple forms of discrimination that marginalize and exclude groups and individuals.
5. Taking a holistic perspective on competence development	A competence framework for inclusion takes a holistic and dynamic view of competences, in which 'areas of competence' are the starting point for reflection and discussion among professionals. This notion cautions against an isolated and prescriptive use of competences, which are understood as complex combinations of knowledge, attitudes, and skills to be gradually achieved and revisited throughout a professional's career.
6. A professional learning tool for multilevel use	A competence framework for inclusion that reaches out to all education professionals has a place at all education system levels. The individual, school, community, and policy levels are complementary to raise professional capacity for inclusive education, inviting all education professionals to engage in inclusive professional learning communities.
7. A values-based approach	To ensure sustainable inclusive practice and effective dialogue among professionals, competence development for inclusion must reflect the shared values of inclusion. The core values 'valuing learner diversity', 'supporting all learners', 'working with others', and 'personal and collaborative professional development' underpin TPL for inclusion and inclusive professional learning communities more widely.

The focus group added to this list ‘the learner’s voice’ and the literature not previously included that could enrich the areas of competence [45–47]. Suggested additions were discussed with regard to the level of agreement and where they should be added to the Profile, i.e., at the level of the core values and areas of competence, or suggested knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

As a result, areas of competence differ slightly. The alignment of the new framework with the initial Profile’s framework is shown in Table 2. Minor differences in the outline of the competence framework are more clearly reflected in the lists of attitudes, knowledge, and skills suggested for each area of competence. It was decided to regard the new framework as complementary to the initial framework meant for pre-service teachers, to highlight its use along the professional continuum, and to address all education professionals.

**Table 2.** Alignment of the core values and areas of competence of the Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning (2022) with the core values and associated areas of competence of the Profile of Inclusive Teachers (2012).

Core Values, Profile of Inclusive Teachers (2012)	Areas of Competence, Profile of Inclusive Teachers (2012)	Core Values, Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning (2022)	Areas of Competence, Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning (2022)
1. Valuing learner diversity—learner difference is considered a resource and an asset to education	1.1 Conceptions of inclusion 1.2 Teachers’ views of learner difference	1. Valuing learner diversity—learner difference is considered a resource and an asset to education	1.1 Conceptions of inclusion, equity, and quality education 1.2 Education professionals’ views of learner difference
2. Supporting all learners—teachers have high expectations for all learners’ achievements	2.1 Promoting all learners’ academic, practical, social, and emotional learning 2.2 Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes	2. Supporting all learners—teachers and other education professionals are deeply committed to all learners’ achievements, well-being, and belonging	2.1 Promoting all learners’ academic, practical, social, and emotional learning 2.2 Support for all learners’ well-being 2.3 Effective teaching approaches and flexible organization of support
3. Working with others—collaboration and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers	3.1 Working with parents and families 3.2 Working with a range of other educational professionals	3. Working with others—advocacy, collaboration, and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers and other education professionals	3.1 Giving a true voice to learners 3.2 Working with parents and families 3.3 Working with a range of education professionals
4. Personal professional development—teaching is a learning activity, and teachers take responsibility for their lifelong learning	4.1 Teachers as reflective practitioners 4.2 Initial teacher education as a foundation for ongoing professional learning and development	4. Personal and collaborative professional development—teaching and supporting learners are lifelong learning activities for which teachers and other education professionals take personal and shared responsibility	4.1 Teachers and other education professionals as members of an inclusive professional learning community 4.2 Professional learning for inclusion builds on initial teacher education and the competences of other education professionals

### 3.4. Potential Use of the Profile for the Alignment of Existing Programmes and Strategies for TPL for Inclusion

An exploration of the possible use of the Profile along the different levels of the education ecosystem shows potential for multilevel use and, in particular, the relevance for collaborative professional learning for inclusion, based on related examples of collaborative practice. At the level of the individual professional, competence frameworks have a valuable role. The Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning may be incorporated in several pathways that lead to inclusive practice, irrespective of previous qualifications. However, even more, the Profile offers a tool to underpin collaborative professional learning for inclusion. Evidence of collaborative professional learning in schools and professional learning communities, as illustrated in the workshops, suggests a larger impact of a competence framework for inclusion when used as a tool for team development. Both at the school and the community level, a competence framework for inclusion, built upon the core values and areas of competence identified, has the potential to build capacity for inclusion, as demonstrated by three projects supported by research, university program development, and policy (Belgium Flemish Community, Cyprus, Sweden) [6]. In relation to this finding,

the goal of team agency was proposed, acknowledging that (teacher) self-efficacy and agency for change emerge within a facilitating context that fosters team reflection and the achievement of a shared professional vision. Finally, at the policy level, the process itself of developing a complementary competence framework that takes into account the essential features of competence development for inclusion was found to be particularly inspiring for policymakers and teacher educators to align existing frameworks with the core values for inclusion and with school and community needs.

#### 4. Discussion

The findings clearly indicate trends and conditions for the development of professional standards or a competence framework for inclusion for all educators along their careers. Moreover, this study raises several questions for policy and practice to consider, as well as recommendations for further research. First, the lack of clarity on the existence and content of professional standards for inclusion along a continuum of TPL and for different professionals suggests that programs for different qualifications are not interconnected. University departments involved in preparing professionals for inclusion may consider collaborating on program design and the alignment of learning outcomes for inclusion and/or including professionals who do not belong to the teaching profession in educational courses. Taking into account also the intersecting markers of difference (e.g., dis/ability, ethnicity, language), universities could set the stage for interdisciplinary dialogue needed to build inclusive pedagogies [48].

Second, as an essential feature of the development of competence frameworks for inclusion, as well as the core values for inclusion, the goal of 'team agency for inclusion' emerged as a response to teachers' concerns about self-efficacy in inclusion. Acknowledging that teacher collaboration has the power to enhance collective teacher efficacy [49], sharing inclusive education competence development within a broader team above all emphasizes the shared responsibility of all, both at the classroom and school level [33,41]. Furthermore, it highlights that professional agency requires a focus on practices, not individuals [50]. By engaging in a deeper reflection on school practices, groups of individuals co-create knowledge [50]. Including school leadership and teacher educators' roles in this process may allow further development towards a school-wide vision for inclusion and competence development accordingly. In addition, the findings also highlight the centrality of the teacher's role and position in the process of developing inclusive learning environments. The concept of 'TPL for inclusion' confirms this point of departure but aims to open up and become an inclusive process addressing all education professionals. The emphasis put on the teacher requires further conceptual exploration of the relationship between 'team agency' and 'teacher agency' for inclusion. This may require new considerations for TPL for inclusion programs regarding individual and team feedback and assessment in different trajectories for teachers and/or other professionals.

Next, along with these features, alignment of the new Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning with the initial Profile's framework of core values and areas of competence allowed for new suggested competences within each area of competence, either expanding or deepening a specific area. This illustrates how the process of developing a competence framework, within a comprehensive view of competence development for inclusion, does not rule out changes to the lists of suggested competences to be fit for purpose. Further exploration and research, based on the findings presented, are recommended to support TPL providers in this process. Based on this study, the role of TPL for inclusion, if underpinned by a comprehensive competence framework for inclusion and supported by universities and policy, prevents fragmentation of TPL, offers continuity in pursuing inclusive education, enhances collaboration among all education professionals and underpins existing courses, whether general, intersectoral, or specialized, through a shared vision for inclusion.

Finally, it is suggested that the current activity has the potential to be built upon and further developed. First of all, this research was conducted by building upon existing

material rather than with a full design-based research cycle. Instead, a retrospective view on the use of the 2012 Profile of Inclusive Teachers was the criterion for participation in the focus groups and workshops, where vignettes were used to illustrate and discuss key elements and features. It would be of interest to follow up on the use of the Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning in cases of initial implementation. Furthermore, the survey questioned policymakers and experts in education departments, but did not include other sectors or practitioners. Refined results could be obtained by involving a multi-sectoral and multilevel perspective more broadly.

## 5. Conclusions

The need for a broadly oriented competence framework for inclusion was identified in a policy analysis on TPL for inclusion [8]. The results of subsequent activities, that is, a survey among policymakers on competence development for inclusion, followed by focus group meetings and workshops, confirmed the relevance of a value-based competence framework for all education professionals involved, as developed earlier for initial teacher education. The findings strongly suggest its acceptability in the context of collaborative professional learning throughout a professional career. A competence framework for inclusive education was eminently seen as a necessity for interdisciplinary collaborative professional learning for inclusion at the school and community level, hence the development of a new ‘Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning’ as complementary to the Profile of Inclusive Teachers. Furthermore, other essential features were identified that may guide local processes of competence development for inclusion and the alignment of professional goals to existing professional learning opportunities and educational practices in schools. A focus on equity, a holistic view of competences, connecting teams, and involving the wider community and policy, are among the key features to consider. The goal of team agency for inclusion emerged as a guiding principle for the organization of professional learning routes for inclusion. Universities and policy have a key role in the design and support of comprehensive routes for teacher professional learning to address the needs of all professionals involved in inclusive education.

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