

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN TEACHING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN FRANCE, GERMANY, DENMARK, AND SCOTLAND

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Abstract Contemporary teaching, among other things, emphasises the importance of inclusive education for students with special educational needs (SEN). The prerequisite for promoting inclusive teaching is an adequately trained teacher. The aim of this paper is to present and analyse the teacher professional development systems and programs for working with students with SEN. France, Germany, Denmark, and Scotland were sample countries selected for the analysis, all of which have high-quality SEN teacher training systems. The analysis identified certain similarities regarding legislation, decentralisation of in-service teacher training systems, heterogeneous platforms, program types, program content, program holders, lecturers, forms of teaching, teaching methods, and formalisation of in-service training certification for teachers. Based on the analysis results, it is necessary to consider possibilities for implementation of the identified examples of good practice from the sample countries in Croatia, considering the contextual factors.

Keywords:

teachers,
teacher training,
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students with
special educational
needs,
France,
Germany,
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1 Introduction

Educational professionals have numerous tasks, among which one promotes inclusive education for students with special educational needs (hereinafter SEN). The ability to perform such a task implies several competences teachers do not acquire adequately through their initial education, especially considering the rapid expansion of knowledge in teaching and educating students with SEN. Given the above, teachers are compelled to partake in lifelong training activities. For example, the analysis conducted by Vukelić, Zovko, and Vlah (2020) confirms that initial teacher education is deficient in the number of class hours dedicated to the topic of ADHD. This paper aims to present and analyse professional development systems and programs that enable teachers to improve their competences for working with students with SEN in four countries – France, Germany, Denmark, and Scotland. The analysis components are the organisation of the system, legislation, and the duration, content, teaching methods, and forms of teaching in SEN teacher training programs. The countries above are examples of good practice because their legal regulations clearly define teacher professional development, and they offer various teaching programs and methods, which were the reasons for selecting the four countries for this analysis.

2 Professional Development in Teaching Students with SEN in France

Teacher education in France incorporates a three-year undergraduate study program and an additional two-year teacher education program (MEEF) that combines theoretical instruction and practical work in classrooms under the mentorship of university professors. MEEF offers teacher specialisation in the field of student inclusion (e.g., INSPE – Institut national supérieur du professorat et de l'éducation, Université de Nantes, 2021). After their initial education, teachers in France can attend various forms of teacher training on SEN.

Teacher training in France is further specified and defined by the law For a School of Trust, which stipulates teachers devoting 18 hours of the school year to pedagogical counselling and support and 9 hours to professional development (Journal officiel de la République française, 2019). Furthermore, teacher education and training for developing and improving the competences necessary for working with students with SEN is also regulated by the School Adaptation and Schooling

of Students with Disabilities (ASH) (European Commission, 2018). Teacher training in France is defined by the National Training Plan (PNF), based on which local administrative districts create an Academic Plan for Continuing Training (PAF) (European Commission, 2018). One part of the PNF is dedicated to promoting inclusive school policy, including 13 topics related to inclusive education (Ministère de l'éducation nationale de la jeunesse et des sports, 2020b).

2.1 Initial Teacher Education and SEN Teacher Training

Although the French Republic is divided into departments, the entire country is very centralised along with its bodies responsible for making decisions about teacher professional development. However, each decision is implemented by units within regions, departments, counties, cantons, cities, and municipalities.

Even during their initial education, teachers are trained to work with students with SEN by attending a six-hour module dedicated to inclusion. Teachers are also offered specialisation in inclusion during the second year of their graduate studies. The teaching methods used in initial education programs are presentations, experimentation, observation, critical review, collaborative and cooperative learning, action research, practice analysis, and creating and using a digital workplace.

There are structured programs with a professional certification that are especially prominent, like the Professional Aptitude Certificate to Inclusive Education Practices (CAPPEI) and the university graduate program. Such programs include preparing teachers for working with students with many types of SEN (cognitive impairment, poor spatial and temporal awareness, difficulties in oral and written expression, motor skill disorders, perception and attention deficits, social communication disorder, autonomy disorder, hearing impairment, visual impairment, autism spectrum disorder). The program's specifics, designed by the National Institute of Training and Research for the Education of Young People with Disabilities and Adapted Teaching (INSHEA), are activities and teaching methods that include writing article abstracts, case studies, analyses of documents, and critical reviews.

2.2 SEN Teacher Training Programs

An SEN teacher training program worth mentioning is the CAPPEI, consisting of four courses organised in modules. The four courses last a total of 400 hours, during which teachers acquire the theoretical foundations of the education of students with SEN, elective modules, practical classes, and the nationalisation of the program. The CAPPEI program includes three exams that cover teaching students with SEN, reflective teaching, presentation and elaboration of documentation created based on teaching students with SEN, and student self-reflection before a committee on their role and competences in inclusive education (Le Bulletin officiel de l'éducation nationale, 2017).

Some forms of professional development offered by training and research institutes in inclusive education are higher education programs like the university graduate program. The duration of such a program is three weeks (a total of 105 hours). In order to obtain a diploma, the student is required to pass a written exam during each session and write article abstracts, case studies, analyses of documents, and a critical review. Also, the same institutes offer numerous training courses for teachers and expert associates who work with students with SEN in schools (Formation Continue – Catalogue 2020/2021, 2020).

Furthermore, teachers in France have the opportunity for professional development through online platforms of the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports (Eduscola, Inclusive School Cap). Such platforms are designed to provide tools for the assessment of and learning about the needs of students with SEN and to offer methodological and content individualisation according to precisely defined SEN. These platforms also organise training (e.g., topic: Managing students with attention deficit disorder) and offer the locations of the nearest training programs for teachers in their closest geographical area (Ministère de l'éducation nationale, de la jeunesse et des sports, 2020a).

3 Professional Development in Teaching Students with SEN in Germany

Initial teacher education is dual and takes place at faculties of pedagogy and education within higher education studies (undergraduate and graduate studies lasting between 8 and 14 semesters) and practical work in a classroom environment (lasting between 12 and 24 months) organised by an institute for teacher education. After both parts, students take the state licence exam. During their undergraduate and graduate studies, students can choose a teaching career in SEN (European Commission, 2020d). After initial education, teachers in Germany are offered various forms of in-service training in SEN.

It is worth emphasising that teacher training in Germany is regulated by the legal regulations of the Federal Republic of Germany, which apply to the entirety of Germany, but also by the legal regulations of individual federal states in Germany.

According to the Law on Teacher Training and Examination in the State of Brandenburg (Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für das Land Brandenburg, 1999) and Teacher Training for the School of Diversity (Die Stimme der Hochschulen, 2015), in-service training must take into account the inclusive requirements of education.

3.1 Initial Teacher Education and SEN Teacher Training

One of the specificities of the German education system, and thus the teacher professional development system, is decentralisation. Legislative recommendations are issued at the national level, but there is a strong autonomy among the federal states regarding the organisation of the initial education and the professional development of teachers.

Through their initial education, teachers are offered adequate professional development in SEN if they choose to work in schools with students with SEN. Future teachers improve their competences through two courses on the pedagogy for SEN with a total value of 120 ECTS credits (90 + 30). Some of the topics the courses cover are the following: students with intellectual disabilities, learning difficulties, behavioural disorders, speech therapy, hearing impairment, and motor skill disorders. Teachers can also improve their competences for working with

students with SEN through a preparatory service that strengthens their practical skills (Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München – Münchener Zentrum für Lehrerbildung, 2020).

Furthermore, Germany has a structured vertical organisation of teacher professional development for working with students with SEN through what they term advanced studies, which are organised as four six-month courses. Advanced studies enable formal progress in the level of education and significant strengthening of competences for working with students with SEN. The teaching methods and forms of teaching used in the training programs include lectures, seminars, study groups, conferences, study trips, in-course assessments, online courses, working with students with SEN, independent learning, writing a diagnostic report, and writing and presenting case reviews. The content of advanced studies includes didactics and inclusion, social framework of inclusion, basics of inclusive pedagogy, and involvement in the context of quality and school (Universität Koblenz – Landau – Zentrum für Fernstudien und universitäre Weiterbildung, 2020).

3.2 SEN Teacher Training Programs

In Germany, teacher professional development is organised and conducted by in-service training institutes, state academies, scientific institutes for in-service training (European Commission, 2020a), state and local school authorities, school offices, centres for school quality and education, universities, higher education institutions, and schools. These institutions conduct teacher training both onsite and online through several days of formal lectures, workshops, seminars, practicums, discussions, study groups, conferences, study trips, and in-course assessments. Also, every school can register for teacher training in various topics that are offered and organised by a particular institution. While attending all the above courses, teachers are exempted from teaching obligations with full pay, which is approved by the school principal or the competent school body (European Commission, 2020a). Some of the topics they cover are as follows: ADHD, psychological counselling for autism spectrum disorder and socioemotional difficulties, qualifications for special education, basics of diagnostic procedures in SEN, children's self-regulation, inclusive settings, inclusion, managing heterogeneity, and educational inequality (Universität Kassel – Zentrum für Lehrerbildung, 2020; Zentrum für Schulqualität und Lehrerbildung (ZSL), Baden-Württemberg, 2020).

Universities also offer multiannual teacher training in inclusive education. One such example is the University of Potsdam, which offers teacher training lasting two and a half years. The program consists of 26 modules, and each module consists of 15 hours of seminars, 15 hours of working with a group of students, independent learning, writing two seminar papers, writing a diagnostic report, and writing and presenting two case reviews (Institut zur Weiterqualifizierung im Bildungsbereich an der Universität Potsdam, 2020).

The most structured formal teacher professional development system in Germany are advanced in-service training modules in inclusion. Each module contains four six-month courses (one semester each), and each course consists of four smaller modules, totalling 15 ECTS credits. After completing all obligations and activities, the participant receives a Certificate of Advanced Studies. This system enables a vertical possibility of advancement because after acquiring the certificate, it is possible to further improve one's skills and obtain a Diploma of Advanced Studies worth 30 ECTS points, a Master of Advanced Study worth 60 ECTS points, and a Master of Science worth 90 ECTS credits (Universität Koblenz – Landau – Zentrum für Fernstudien und universitäre Weiterbildung, 2020).

4 Professional Development in Teaching Students with SEN in Denmark

Initial teacher education in Denmark spans eight semesters of a professional undergraduate study program conducted at university teacher training programs. The program ends with completing a final bachelor project (European Commission, 2020c). Compulsory courses and specialisation prepare future teachers for working with students with SEN (Københavns professions højskole, 2020). After initial education, teachers in Denmark are offered various forms of in-service training on SEN.

The Danish Union of Teachers emphasises that all Danish schools must have qualified employees who advise teachers and that all Danish teachers should have the opportunity to continuously develop their competences for working with students with SEN (Danmarks Lærerforening, 2019). The Act of Higher Education (adult continuing training system) emphasises that improving personal and

professional competences is the primary purpose of in-service training, which is necessary, since teachers work in a rapidly changing inclusive educational environment (Lovtidende, 2017).

4.1 Initial Teacher Education and SEN Teacher Training

Compulsory courses within initial education prepare future teachers in Denmark for working in an inclusive environment. Teachers also have the opportunity for additional training in inclusive practice by choosing some of the modules on offer. The teaching methods and forms of teaching used are interactive lectures, presentations, project work, practicums, observation, research, case studies, and work in study groups. Through lectures, practicums, seminars, and independent learning, the graduate studies enable teachers to understand various dimensions of inclusive education, improve interventions for inclusion, run educational institutions, and conduct scientific research (Københavns professions højskole, 2020).

The teacher training system in Denmark is parallel to the initial teacher education system. However, future teachers can only join the formal in-service training system after a certain level of initial education. Academic, graduate, and master's teacher training levels have equal credit values – 60 ECTS credits. This organisation of the system is undoubtedly one of Denmark's most important specificities in teacher professional development (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2009).

4.2 SEN Teacher Training Programs

Formal teacher professional development is organised through a structured in-service training system¹. After teachers graduate, they can further attend an academic (Academy Profession Degree), graduate (Bachelor's Degree), and master's level (Master's Degree). All three programs yield up to 60 ECTS credits. These three forms of teacher training should not be confused with the Danish initial education system, whose titles are very similar or almost the same in English – vocational education (Academy Profession Degree) worth 120 ECTS credits, university

¹ Based on the private correspondence with the Department of Professional and Vocational Higher Education of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science and with the Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science, both institutions issued such a statement.

undergraduate studies (Bachelor's Degree) worth 180 ECTS credits, professional undergraduate studies (Professional Bachelor's Degree) worth between 180 and 240 ECTS credits, and graduate studies (Master's Degree) worth between 120 and 180 ECTS credits. It is important to emphasise that all the aforementioned professional development programs enable teachers to improve their skills in inclusive pedagogy by training in the field of theory and practice of special pedagogy, scientific research in this field, and special pedagogy (Børne-og undervisningsministeriet, 2020).

Also, teachers can improve their skills in inclusive education through courses and online education, through teamwork, presentations, workshops, simulations, practicums, academic programs, programs for developing teacher competences, and counselling organised by governmental and non-governmental organisations and Danish universities.

5 Professional Development in Teaching Students with SEN in Scotland

Initial teacher education in Scotland is organised as a four-year (eight semesters) undergraduate combined program leading to an honorary degree in primary education (European Commission, 2019), within which students can specialise in inclusive practice. During the third year of the program, students attend an advanced education module twice a week regarding inclusion and a specialisation module dedicated to inclusion worth 40 ECTS credits. In the eighth and final semester, students conduct research closely related to their chosen specialisation (University of Stirling, 2020). After graduation, teachers undergo a probation period (lasting 190 days or, more flexibly, 270 days) to register with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (2020b). After initial education, teachers in Scotland are offered various forms of in-service training in SEN.

Teacher professional development in Scotland is based on the Teaching Scotland's Future (TSF) program, and the Strategic Board for Teacher Education (SBTE) regulates the implementation process of TSF recommendations (European Commission, 2020b). One of Scotland's founding documents in the field of teacher training was published in 2001 titled Teaching Profession for the 21st Century, which recommends that teachers attend training for 35 hours in one year (United Kingdom Web Archive, 2001) through programs organised by local communities,

their collaborating associations, schools, and universities (The General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2020a).

5.1 Initial Teacher Education and SEN Teacher Training

Initial teacher education in Scotland is organised through a four-year undergraduate combined program in which students can choose an advanced education module and a specialisation module for inclusive practice (University of Stirling, 2020).

The lifelong learning and professional development of teachers in Scotland are regulated by law. All institutions perceive teacher professional development to be necessary for the intensive transformation of the educational process and almost compare its importance with the importance of initial teacher education.

Education in Scotland is highly inclusive . This statement is confirmed by the fact that teacher training on inclusion is implemented through initial teacher education where, as part of four-year undergraduate teacher studies, there are compulsory courses and entire modules, whose content is inclusive education.

Teachers are trained through accredited courses and workshops, lectures, seminars, self-evaluation, action and research learning, school visits, collaborative learning, participation in working groups, planning and implementation of interdisciplinary learning, experiential learning, reading and self-education, online learning, professional conferences, problem activities, discussions and group learning, case studies, videoconferences by leading experts, and documentaries. Teachers also improve their competences by writing review papers and professional papers and conducting scientific research. One of the specific forms of teacher training is modular learning with a badge that involves logbook keeping (The General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2020c).

The formal type of teacher professional development includes acquiring a postgraduate certificate after 12 months of in-service training, acquiring a postgraduate diploma after 24 months of in-service training, and acquiring a master's degree after 36 months of in-service training. The content of these programs prepares teachers to work with students with SEN (inclusive pedagogy, dyslexia, autism, visual impairment, hearing impairment) (University of Aberdeen, 2020).

The specificity of the Scottish teacher professional development system is the existence of the governmental organisation The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), which creates and edits the teacher register in Scotland, defines professional standards for all teachers, defines accreditation programs in initial teacher education and teacher professional development, advises the Scottish Government in the field of education, and maintains the quality of the teaching profession in Scotland through rigorous regulatory processes. This type of organisation that focuses on the quality of the teaching profession and teacher competences is necessary in every modern country (The General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2020c).

5.2 SEN Teacher Training Programs

SEN teacher training programs in Scotland are implemented through numerous teaching methods and forms of teaching. All teachers registered in GTCS are required to attend in-service training regularly based on an annual training plan and to keep records with material evidence. GTCS has created a series of measures that enable teachers, schools, and local communities to obtain formal recognition and awards, which encourages teachers to attend in-service training programs intensively, and also encourages universities, schools, associations, non-governmental organisations, and local communities to create quality teacher training programs (The General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2020c).

Professional development programs leading to formal certification include programs, where teachers can obtain a postgraduate diploma, postgraduate certificate (90 ECTS credits), or a master's degree (180 ECTS credits). The programs are combined with workshops, lectures, seminars, problem-based learning activities, discussions, and group learning (Moray House School of Education and Sport, 2020; University of Aberdeen, 2020).

As part of the Education Scotland government agency, the National Improvement Hub enables school staff to improve their skills and student learning outcomes by offering self-evaluation frameworks, resources for research, teaching, evaluation, examples from practice, and support through online learning. The form of specific training offered by this organisation is modular learning with a badge that includes logbook keeping, which can be helpful for a school employee during employment

and professional advancement, validation of the training process by GTCS, and professional discussion (Education Scotland, 2020).

6 Conclusion

This paper presents examples of good practice regarding teacher professional development in special educational needs. The paper emphasises the differentiation of the educational systems in four European countries and presents an analysis of the systems and teacher professional development programs for working with students with SEN, focusing on their positive characteristics.

The *Table 1* compares the systems and programs for SEN teacher training in the four countries analysed.

Table 1: Comparison of elements of SEN teacher training systems and programs in France, Germany, Denmark, and Scotland

Elements of the teacher training system	France	Germany	Denmark	Scotland
Organisation of the system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - possible formal teacher training for working in inclusive education - possible different types of additional training organised by governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - vertically organised state and local school authority - highlighting jurisdiction of each school authority - certain federal states also have vertical formal teacher training - possible different types of additional training organised by governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - parallel and vertical formal teacher training after initial teacher education - possible different types of additional training organised by governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - vertical formal teacher training after initial teacher education - possible different types of additional training organised by governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations
Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - centralisation of legal regulations (only minor decisions under local government regulation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - decentralisation of legal regulations (central state laws provide only frameworks for teacher training) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - centralisation of legal regulations (only minor decisions under local government regulation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - centralisation of legal regulations - the teacher agrees with the school principal on an

Elements of the teacher training system		France	Germany	Denmark	Scotland
		- additional legislation for teacher training for inclusive education (ASH)	- additional legislative recommendations for teacher training for inclusive education		individual training plan based on the state legal framework
Teacher training programs	Duration	- from 105 to 400 hours	- from 1 semester to 6 semesters; from 6 months to 3 years; from 15 ECTS credits to 90 ECTS credits	- 6 modules – total of 60 ECTS credits	- from 12 months to 36 months; from 90 ECTS credits to 180 ECTS credits
	Content	- cognitive impairment; poor spatial and temporal awareness; difficulties in oral and written expression; motor skill disorders; perception and attention deficits; social communication disorder, autonomy disorder; hearing impairment; visual impairment; autism spectrum disorder; learning; brain development; specific learning disorders; pedagogical implications of cognitive theories; neuropsychology; occupational therapy; assessment; tools for developing a collaborative network	- didactics and inclusion; social framework of inclusion; basics of inclusive pedagogy; inclusion in the context of quality and school	- planning and implementation of inclusive initiatives; development of inclusive culture; pedagogical knowledge and research; pedagogical practice; social and cognitive developmental disorders; social and scientific theoretical foundations; theoretical, institutional, and special pedagogical perspective on special education	- basics of inclusive pedagogy; basics of research in inclusive pedagogy; audiology and audiometry; foundations of international child protection; issues and strategies for assessment, teaching, and learning (visual impairment); language and communication; inclusion of children with hearing impairment; specific learning difficulties: dyslexia
	Teaching methods	- frontal form of teaching; practical classes (working with students with	- lectures; seminars; independent learning; tests	- combination of lectures, seminars, and project work through classes	- combination of workshops, lectures, (group) seminars, problem-

Elements of the teacher training system	France	Germany	Denmark	Scotland
	SEN); reflective teaching; presentation of documentation; teacher's reflection on their role in inclusive education and methodological and methodical knowledge in the field of inclusive education; writing article abstracts; writing case studies; document analysis; writing critical reviews		conducted at a school, online classes, or independent work at home	based learning, discussions, group learning, collaborative research, group projects

Firstly, the authors noticed an explicit and elaborate legal framework based on which the entire system is built. Framework decisions are stipulated at the national level, whereas specific legal regulations and implementation of local and national decisions are regulated through supervisory bodies at the local level.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasise the strong potential of initial education in teacher training on SEN in all countries analysed. This potential is realised through compulsory and elective courses but also through possible specialisation.

Moreover, heterogeneity of content, types, program holders, platforms, lecturers, teaching methods, and forms of teaching were observed in all analysed countries. Such a multidimensional approach considers the interests and potential of all teachers trained to work with students with SEN.

Likewise, in the analysed countries teachers receive certificates and diplomas at the end of the training program, which is very useful for employment or professional advancement. Formal certification is enabled thanks to the high level of structure and fluidity of the in-service training systems in the analysed countries.

In comparing the SEN teacher professional development systems in the four analysed countries (France, Germany, Denmark, Scotland) with the Croatian system, one notices a visible difference in the potential of initial education, structured in-service teacher training systems, training certification, variety of methods, and program holders of such forms of training.

Vukelić, Zovko, and Vlah (2020) point out that the initial education study programs attended by future lower and upper elementary school teachers offer a very small number of compulsory and elective courses and modules dealing with students with SEN and students with ADHD. Initial teacher education does not include a form of SEN teacher specialisation.

Furthermore, teacher training programs for graduate teachers in all fields, including the field of SEN education, are organised by the Croatian Education and Teacher Training Agency and the Ministry of Science and Education, which represent a strong centralisation of professional development activities. Such training programs usually last one day and do not result in formal certification that would have positive repercussions on the employment or promotion of teachers. For example, Croatia offers no teacher specialisation program for working in an inclusive environment, as provided by the CAPPEI in France, academic, graduate, and master's teacher training levels in Denmark, or advanced studies in Germany. It is the structured system in the analysed countries that enables high-quality SEN teacher training, as well as formal certification.

What needs to be emphasised is the poor utilisation of the potential of universities in in-service teacher training. In almost all four countries analysed, universities are the holders of teacher training, since they are the holders of the latest scientific knowledge that needs to be conveyed to the teaching community. Greater involvement of universities in the organisation of teacher training programs would raise the heterogeneity of platforms, programs, content, forms of teaching, and teaching methods.

Given the above, it is proposed that the conclusions on teacher professional development in the four analysed countries are implemented in the SEN teacher training system in the Republic of Croatia, considering the contextual factors. Indeed, the importance of initial education should not be neglected in training

teachers for working with students with SEN, which is a segment the analysed countries utilise very well.

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