

# TEACHER EDUCATION AND INCLUSION: CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR THE APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

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# From ITE to Inclusive Practice...

- Significant commitment in place in Ireland to prepare new teachers for inclusive practice
- Change has taken place within the context of both an EU and international commitment to inclusive education

# The Challenge Before Us

- As they take their places in their own classrooms, how do we assure that Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) are afforded the best opportunities possible to build on what they have learned at university and sustain an inclusive teaching practice?

# From Teacher Preparation to Practice: An Age-old Challenge

- Practice shock
- Idealism v “reality”
- Early professional anxiety for NQTs
- Gulf between preparation and practice as a near universal phenomenon in teacher education

# Our Dominant Practice: A Brief Recap



# Bridging the Gulf by Breaking the Mold

- ⦿ The challenge before us is how to redesign and restructure the transition from university preparation to the classroom for new teachers
- ⦿ The focus on inclusive education is a perfect opportunity to do so, as it stretches how we view core commitments to diversity and pedagogy

# Some Signs of Progress

New Approaches	Potential Impacts
Redesign of ITE around inclusion	<i>Improving theoretical and practical ITE experience for NQTs</i>
<b>Droichead:</b> Acknowledging developmental stages of teaching career	<i>Providing induction support to improve the ongoing early career learning of NQTs and increase retention</i>
Local partnerships	<i>Improving school placements for ITE students</i>
<b>COSÁN:</b> Acknowledging practicing teachers as lifelong learners	<i>Improving the practice of veteran teachers through continuing professional development</i>

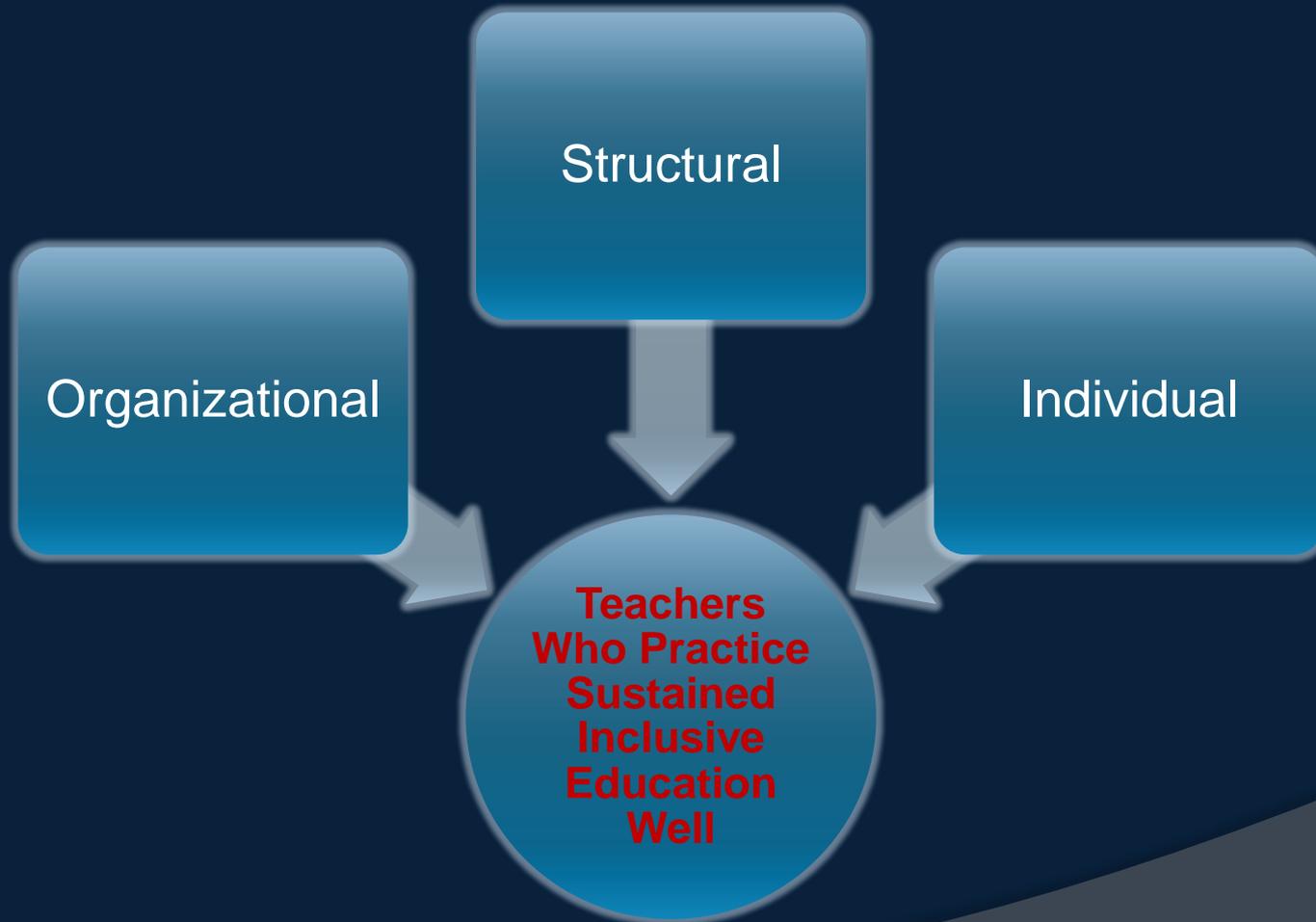
# Research Resources for Moving Toward More Inclusive Schools

- Ainscow's work on building inclusive schools/The Inclusive School Index
- Florian's work on expanding what we think of as "normal" in the classroom

# The Big Caveat

- ⦿ On its own, ITE will never be powerful enough to serve as the principal force for change toward a more inclusive practice of education.
- ⦿ Such deep seated change will require *intentional, systemic structural change across sectors.*
- ⦿ In the absence of such change, whether a new teacher is well supported in sustaining inclusive practice will always be dependent on local circumstances, good will, and good luck.

# The Key: **Deep** Structural Change



# What Might Such Structural Change Look Like?

## ◎ New, strategic alliances

- “...a different kind of organizational structure, supported over time by enduring alliances of all the institutions with a stake in better professional preparation for school faculty” (The Holmes Partnership Trilogy, 2007, p. 98).

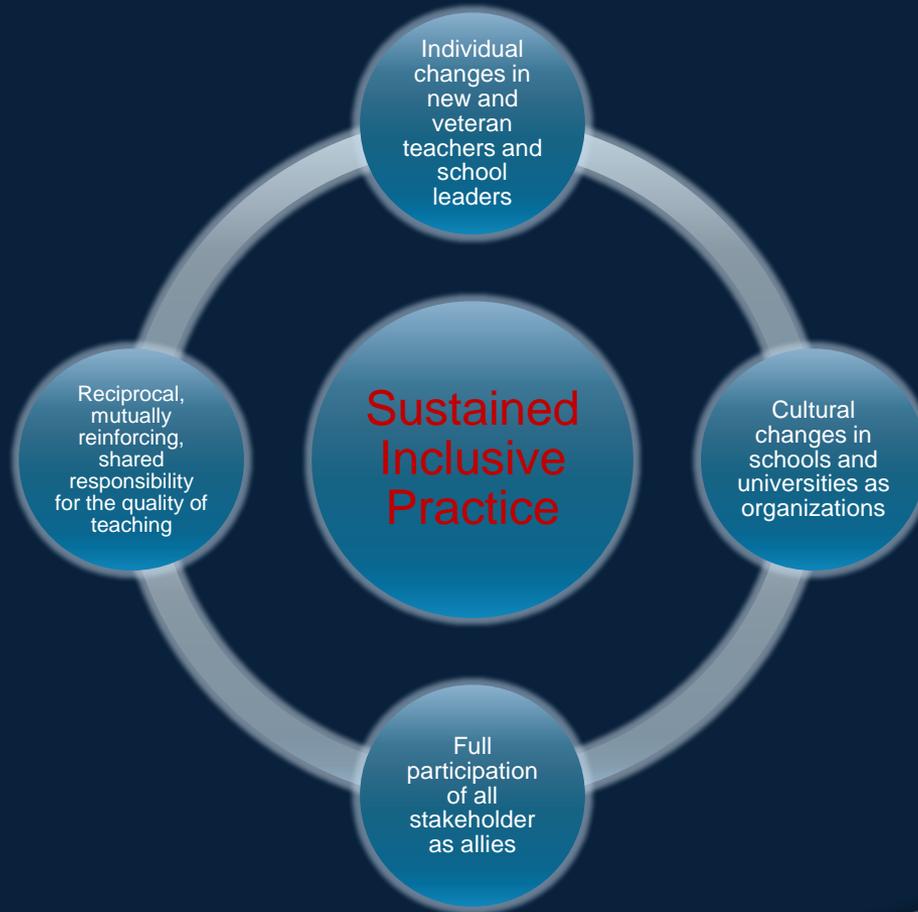
# Mutual Responsibility Toward Common Gain

- “School districts, preparation programs, teachers unions and state policymakers must form strategic partnerships based on the recognition that none can fully do the job alone. Each partner’s needs can be better met by defining clinically based teacher preparation **as common work for which they share responsibility...**” (NCATE, 2010, p. 6).

# Developing Teachers for High Level Inclusive School Practice as Reciprocal, Mutually Reinforcing Activities

- ⦿ Schools as *funded* sites of mutual improvement for inclusive teaching and teacher preparation
- ⦿ ITE students as schoolwide resource and responsibility (beyond 1 to 1 placements)
- ⦿ Practicing teachers as essential faculty for ITE (in university and school settings)
- ⦿ Mutual enactment and study of pedagogies that support inclusive education through action research, professional learning communities (e.g., differentiation, flexible grouping, Universal Design of Learning, culturally responsive teaching)

# What Deep Structural Change Will Require



# The Challenge of “Getting There”

## Six Proposed Starter Tasks

1. Study and generate new designs for teacher preparation
2. Build a network of school partnerships
3. Build a community of learners across stakeholders
4. Interrogate the meaning of diversity
5. Create new teacher leaders as boundary spanners for inclusive practice
6. Resource the work

# Task 1: Study and Generate New Designs for Teacher Preparation

- ⦿ Set short-term timeline for studying new, bold, ambitious designs for restructuring the relationship between teaching and teacher preparation
- ⦿ Launch cross-stakeholder study groups to engage in joint learning and generate possibilities for breaking the mold
- ⦿ Hold sharing meetings across smaller groups

# Task 2: From Isolated School Partners to a Network of School Partnerships

- ⦿ Build high profile, robust collaborations between ITE and schools to support inclusive educational practice as a non-negotiable part of pre-service policy
- ⦿ Possibility of triads among ITE programs, and “regular” and special schools, with goal of fully integrated schools
- ⦿ Launch high profile, vertical Networked Improvement Community (NIC) across all projects (e.g., Irish Inclusion Network?) to help advance the redesign of teaching and teacher education around inclusion

# Task 3: Build a Community of Learners

- ⦿ Through Networked Improvement Community, engage in regular, high visibility discourse and action to develop and sustain new partnerships for the improvement of teaching and teacher education
- ⦿ Identify/create practical tools to facilitate a rich discourse of inclusion
- ⦿ Address the complexity of the task of preparing teachers for inclusion in relationship to diversity, instructional skills, and collaboration

# Task 3: Build a Community of Learners (cont'd)

- ⦿ Dedicate special issue(s) of journals, across stakeholders, to disseminate new concepts and examples of new partnerships for inclusion
- ⦿ Dedicate sustained strands, over time, in publications and conferences, on concepts related to inclusive education in the context of new partnerships to provide ongoing learning and sharing across multiple stakeholder dissemination opportunities

# Task 4: Interrogate the Meaning of Diversity

- Preparing teachers for inclusion requires a solid understanding of the full picture of diversity and that many pedagogies cross diversity needs. It cannot be a trade-off of some diversities versus others (Pugach & Blanton, 2012).
- Diversity spans *social class, ethnicity, gender, and disability* (Drudy & Kinsella, 2009) and many other social markers of identity.
- All students reflect multiple diversities and have intersecting social identities.
- Disability is inconsistently part of the diversity discourse (Pugach et al., 2014); divisions still exist.
- Given the demographic changes that exist in Ireland, it is critical to engage in sustained dialogue and elevate the discourse around diversity, and to clarify the nuances regarding disability as an instance of diversity.

## Task 5: Create New Teacher Leaders as Boundary Spanners for Inclusive Practice

- Build a *high profile* cadre of prospective special education teacher leaders *based on recruiting highly successful general education teachers*
- Launch *Teachers in Residence for Inclusion (TRI)*—making practicing teachers an integral part of Initial Teacher Education

# Task 6: Resource the Work of Transformation

- ⦿ **Out of the silo**: Study and action on how existing, multiple funding sources intersect with and can be marshaled toward inclusive education (SEN, DEIS, diversity, Droichead, COSÁN, Teachers Union, etc.)
- ⦿ **Identify intersections** in all new grant-related funding opportunities and include line-items oriented toward inclusive education for a small number of common initiatives that break the mold (e.g., TRIs)

# Task 6: Resource the Work (cont'd)

- New resources

- “One approach used in medicine is the fusing of funds for patient care and the training of residents in teaching hospitals” (NCATE, 2010, p. 23).

# The Challenge Ahead

- ⦿ It will take political choices and national will to fund such a transformation.
- ⦿ The degree to which this happens reflects the depth of the commitment to achieving a truly sustainable, inclusive educational system for current and future generations of students—where every student is not only included socially, but is able to experience success in learning.

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