PROFESORES NOVELES EN RELACIÓN CON LAS NECESIDADES EDUCATIVAS ESPECIALES DE ALGUNOS DE SUS ALUMNOS: UNA SÍNTESIS.

BEGINNING TEACHERS CONFRONT SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN SOME OF THEIR PUPILS: A SYNTHESIS[1]

Claudie RAULT (Fr)
(Translation by Hugh Gash and Jean-Pierre Croisy)
Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres de l'Académie de Versailles

RESUMEN :

En este artículo se presenta el contexto, la fundamentación, la metodología y los resultados de un estudio europeo.
En primer lugar, se analizaron las necesidades identificadas por los profesores de las muestras. En segundo lugar, se llevó a cabo una investigación-acción, cuyo objetivo consistió en modificar las estrategias didácticas de los profesores noveles.

PALABRAS CLAVE :

Profesores noveles. Necesidades educativas especiales.

ABSTRACT :

This paper shows the context, the foundation, the methodology and the results of an european study.
Firstly, the needs identified by teachers of the samples are shown. In the second place, an action-research, whose objective was to modify the didactic strategies of the beginning teachers, was made.

KEYWORDS :

Beignning teachers, Educational special needs.

---

1. - THE CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE WORK

The present study grew out of reflections on a previous study with the title: *"Learning difficulties: what types of help in and out of class?"* by Rault, Molina, & Gash (2001), research based on primary teachers' ideas about, and educational responses to, children's school difficulties.

The conclusions of that study indicated that the teachers' ideas concerning causes of school failure were linked mostly to factors external to teaching. The teachers referred to either pupil's deficiencies, or family or social problems, or less often, poor teaching conditions in the school.

If these teachers did not consider themselves responsible for their pupils' failures, most of them however did feel concerned about the pupils' long-term success, without always agreeing on the types and methods of help that could be available to them. We noted great diversity concerning the perception of teachers' roles and personal and professional involvement putting in place specific responses. The importance and the type of help that can be brought by families and outside agencies, whether or not the agencies are institutional partners, are also perceived in many different ways.

The origins of this diversity would be interesting to investigate along with the diversity of teachers' ideas concerning the origins of learning difficulties, but it must also be put in relation to the human and structural resources available, as well as to the official institutional position on this theme in each country. In fact, this needs to be made clear in the context of the history of each educational system. Two strong points come out of that study:
> - the conceptual and institutional environment of teachers is a decisive element in their position regarding the success of their pupils;
> - understanding the processes of learning allows the teacher to better understand the importance of the quality of the attention paid to pupils, the diversity of educational approaches, the quality of classroom interaction, and the capacity to work in partnership. Also found important was the place that must be given, from pre-service through in-service education, to taking account of pupil's special educational needs.

Our aim in this new study is to find out how beginning teachers, both in primary and secondary education, can take charge of the diversity of special educational needs of their pupils, and how they understand the support available to help them. A first phase of this project, (Rault, 2004), allows us:
> - to define the concepts used;
> - to establish the comparative status of the legal and institutional context for inclusive education in schools in each country in the study;
> - and to study the place given to education about special educational needs in the teacher education programmes in each country.

A second phase consisted of a research action project in each country. This allowed:

- data collection using a questionnaire given to students at the end of pre-service education;
- and data based on beginning teachers' discourses during their first or second year of teaching.

In addition to the summary presented here, each national team published results of the work it had carried out. Their work constitutes the other chapters in this volume.

2. - THE METHODOLOGY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE STUDIED

2.1. - The questionnaire data collected at the end of pre-service education

The data were collected using a questionnaire given to intending teachers at the end of their last year of study. The project partners in the project constructed the questionnaire. Its aim was to enrich the context of the action research, to describe the teachers' representations about special educational needs, to assess their feelings about the relevance of their pre-service education, to propose a framework of analysis for a follow-up study, and finally to be able to make comparisons between the different countries.

After collecting information about the issues cited above, four open questions were asked:

1. In your practice, you have met pupils with special educational needs. What were they?
2. Can you give at least one example showing us how you dealt with and analysed the difficulty and what were the solutions you were able to suggest?
3. On this occasion, did you feel you needed additional in-service courses or help? If so, explain.
4. During your pre-service education, what were the courses and educational approaches that were particularly helpful?

Initial content analysis of the responses gave a specification of categories allowing a subsequent comparative analysis of results.[2]

---

[2] The categories are presented in the Appendix.

Table 1:
Numbers of teachers by country by school type

	Kinderarten Age < 6ans	Primary school de 6 à 11/12ans	Middle school de 11/12 à 14/15 ans	Secondary school Age >14/15 ans
Spain	80	43		
Ireland	50			
Italy	11	34	35	20
France	76		60	
Portugal	28	38	35	
Brazil		50		50

2.2. - Data collected from beginning teachers during their first or second year of their professional work

Each educational institution organised data collection from beginning teachers in ways determined by their links with schools, and the constraints on the project team within these institutions. The teachers participating in this research were in charge of their classes for less than two years. The ways this work was done were diverse:

- responses to questionnaires;
- development and use of evaluation profiles;
- use of teacher journals;
- discussions between teachers and teacher educators, in the form of meetings to analyse professional practice;
- observations by teacher educators in the form of class visits, followed up by an interview with the teacher;
- support that might be in the form of a in-service course;
- support using web based discussions.

Table 2:
Types of data collection by country

Spain	30 teachers, working in different public primary schools in the provinces of Huesca and Zaragoza were investigated using questionnaires during their first year of teaching
Ireland	7 teachers in their first or second year of teaching in a disadvantaged area in Dublin produced action research diaries and were visited by teacher educators. These teachers also worked in a network with other schools and used a web site listing different support systems. In addition, by means of an evaluation of St Patrick's College's educational programmes, more than 600 questionnaires sent to graduates were analysed that provided a context to the action research data collected
Italy	The research was conducted with five teachers at both primary and secondary level in two schools. Meetings with teachers, teacher educators and outside experts were organised. A work diary, questionnaires and evaluation profiles were produced. The teachers were invited to observe a child in their classes with special educational needs. These teachers were supported by a group of teacher educators.
France	9 teachers from primary and secondary levels were studied in depth. A group of 26 teachers in primary school, in their first year of teaching, took part in an analysis of their teaching as part of an in-service programme. A group of 30 second level teachers in an alternating pre-service education programme, (alternating school to education institution), was observed to analyse their professional practice. This analysis included class visits by the teacher educators.
Portugal	3 beginning teachers working in primary schools and 4 teachers in the 3rd cycle of basic school in Bragança kept a school journal. Observations and a follow-up were undertaken by the teacher educators. The process used was designed to: - encourage reflection about special educational needs, the types of help available, and the work that was done - to organise for certain pupils, either an adjusted curriculum, or an individual curriculum, or an individual learning contract between the pupil and the teacher
Brazil	10 beginning teachers of the primary school and 5 studying to be primary teachers kept a school diary and each received three observation visits by the teacher educators in this research

3. - TEACHERS' IDENTIFICATION OF PUPILS' NEEDS

3.1. - Ways teachers identify difficulties

If there are general tendencies we can identify, the institutional context in each country plays a determining role in the process of identifying the difficulty. In the first instance, it seems to be the case that for young teachers - pupils having special educational needs have a legitimate place in ordinary classes even if they recognise that

these pupils create difficulties for them. Further, even though aware of the need to welcome these pupils and of the need to provide more specific approaches for them, the teachers feel ill prepared to identify and analyse the difficulties that they meet. Most of them fall back on personal observations that are not systematic, most often intuitive, and do not use any specific approach or tool.

These observations generally take account on the one hand of classroom behaviour, and on the other of results from assessments, which are better for locating the pupil in terms of average performance than for identifying and analysing the particular difficulty experienced by the pupil. The subjective dimension of this evaluative approach is important in the sense that young teachers take their ideal imaginary pupil as a reference point. The bigger the distance from this model, the more difficult it is to teach.

These considerations invite comparative reflections:

- in Ireland, where since 2002 the Department of Education and Science (DES) and St Patrick's College have put in place an induction programme for beginning teachers one of the aims of which is to promote differentiation in curricular activities and also emphasises assessment of the children's learning, the teachers seemed at ease in the first phase of this programme. We should add that the culture of systematic evaluation is traditionally more present with the "Anglo-Saxons";

- in Portugal, the process of evaluating the difficulties and the needs of pupils is part of an institutional approach that involves their being taken in charge by teachers. It's a *Local team of coordinated educational support* that is in charge of needs evaluation and which defines the nature of the types of help needed (simple differentiation, adjusted curriculum, or alternative curriculum). This practice seems to introduce unfortunate secondary effects like linking, systematically and exclusively, functional deficiencies and school difficulties. On the other hand, in this context the teachers in ordinary classes feel either helpless, or not concerned, about the analysis of the school difficulties of their pupils;

- in France, where national evaluations allowing the identification and analysis of some of the difficulties met by the teachers have been instituted at different levels of schooling, none of the young teachers in this study made reference to them. This attitude signals an absence of a culture of diagnostic evaluation which is accompanied by a fear of early stigmatisation of the pupils concerned, in particular in the case of young children. One can also notice that the use of these national evaluations has not been built into the system, at each year and at all levels, and this has not encouraged the teachers to give these tools all the formative use that could be made of them;

- in Italy the educational autonomy given to schools has allowed educational services to identify the problems and find the cultural resources and materials to respond. This context has underlined the importance of the role of the head of school and of the professional investment of teachers in the schools' life. Pupil evaluation organised by each school, is made with reference to a national framework. In future these teachers will be helped by a National Institute (INVALSI) responsible to promote specific ways of evaluating and being responsible for pupils' needs.

3.2. - Indices of difficulty identified by the teachers

The difficulties identified by the teachers are located in two big domains, on the one hand classroom behaviour and attitudes and approaches in relation to learning, and on the other, the level of learning achieved in different curriculum areas.

3.3. - Classroom behaviour and attitudes to learning

Concerning behavioural problems, while some activities that disturb class functioning are well known (physical and verbal aggression, moving about), other attitudes – even if only slightly disturbing – that signal disinterest, or no motivation in school work are also regularly cited as a central problem for the young teachers. These attitudes are most often linked with emotional difficulties that can be attributed to the negative effects of a difficult social and family context. These behaviours are, in a more or less systematic way, attributed to a cause exterior to the school.

The analysis of the answers of the Italian teachers allows us to differentiate the observations of pupils at different school levels:
- in the kindergarten, the attitudes described relate mostly to the social behaviour of the pupil: impulsivity, aggression, and concentration problems. They are often perceived as emotional problems, showing the determination of the child to be noticed and recognised by the adult;
- in the primary school the emphasis is mostly put on the attitudes related to school learning: lack of self esteem, inability to notice competencies, lack of autonomy and absence of motivation;
- in lower secondary school, the teachers emphasise a lack of interest in school that they relate to the difficulties of pre-adolescence. This leads to conflict, physical aggression towards other pupils and verbal aggression towards teachers;
- in upper secondary school, teachers' attention was focussed on difficulties expressed in the emotional and socio-relational spheres.

On this matter, the French team noted that the process of adolescence finds a resonance or mirror image in the relation that the second level teaches have themselves with their own teacher education institution. It may be possible to specify, in relation to teachers, a process of professional adolescence.

3.4. - Insufficient mastery of curriculum domains

Mastery of the curriculum is generally the first indicator noticed by the teachers who see it as a priority to transmit knowledge and competencies defined in the official curricula. This view is however, more nuanced in our sample of Italian teachers.

For many teachers, it seems that it is the heterogeneity of pupils' school performance that constitutes the first difficulty. These difficulties are mostly identified through the summative evaluations normally carried out in the classroom. They are often associated by the teachers, to a pupil's deficiency or a functional disturbance, obvious or not proven (mental deficiency, dyslexia …) that may lead to difficulties of

comprehension or abstraction, to a lack of concentration and attention, or to specific difficulties in language.

Concerning this last aspect, it is interesting to note differences in the importance of language difficulties in the countries sampled. If the French teachers, at all levels, and the teachers in Aragon in Spain consider poor language abilities as a major factor in very many pupils' school difficulties, the teachers in other countries do not agree. They see it most often as a problem relating to children for whom the first or material language is not that used in the school (the delay between the language of the school and of the family) or else, they consider language as a learning area like the others. This finding leads to the thought that what is meant by the phrase *"language mastery"* in France and Spain covers, essentially, competencies perceived elsewhere as relating to another domain such as organisation, or the structure and the expression of thought.

This comment leads to an interesting reflection on the place that is allocated to the first language in the development of cognitive processes. In addition, generally the teachers rarely associate a child's school failure with the faulty solutions or ineffective cognitive approaches tried. What is most often cited is a lack of trying, or poor motivation described as not trying, particularly when talking about older pupils.

The analysis of the Irish teachers responses allows us to notice the disconcerting effect of unpredictable reactions by non-compliant pupils, who are seen as not behaving as expected. This finding, also found in the other countries, shows how important is the idea of the "ideal pupil" in the mind of all teachers: a disciplined pupil, who is obedient, quick, responsible and interested, a long way from the "real pupil". The young teachers, and sometimes the less young, have a hard time forgetting this ideal pupil, who if s/he existed, would come along and say how good this teacher was. Whatever the cause, it is clear that the pupils who present with difficulties also put their teachers in difficulty and the solutions proposed for their needs are the proof.

4. - RESPONSES GIVEN BY THE TEACHERS

While the dominant feeling is a lack of specific competencies and of know-how on the part of the young teachers, in all the countries concerned, their responses mostly point to the conviction that it is their task and their responsibility to respond to their pupils special needs. This finding is decisive and already points to a positive development in comparison to our earlier results. Another essential element, and largely shared by the teachers, is being convinced that these pupils have real potentialities that the school must develop.

Concerning the data collected, one can distinguish two big axes, on the one hand the personal educational approaches of teachers in their classes, and on the other, their turning to help from different partners or support systems.

4.1 Turning to help from support partners and support systems

Everybody emphasised "individualisation" and "personalisation" without making it clear whether this is about the pupil's personal work, or a personal relationship between

pupil and teacher, or of the development of an individual educational programme in respect of a pupil. Complementary information is needed to allow us to distinguish between the different approaches proposed:

- the tutorial is indistinctly indicated;
- the Spanish and Portuguese teachers emphasise the importance given to information that can be collected from pupils, on observation of classroom behaviour and the analysis of their difficulties in order to establish a "programme of personal work" which can take the form of an "adjusted curriculum" or of an "alternative curriculum";
- the Portuguese teachers make reference to the adjustment of educational materials, the time spent in class, and to the practice of evaluation, they insist also on the importance of enhancing pupil/teacher interactions;
- the French and Brazilian teachers talk more often of "individualised projects" and of "differentiated education";
- the Italian teachers refer to "new approaches principally focused on motivations, interests and achievements of pupils";
- and finally, help given by the teacher "outside school time" is also cited (Ireland, Brazil).

The research also showed changes in the pupils' attitudes towards learning: "using co-operative learning" (Ireland, Brazil), "expressive activities like role-play, reinforcing the pupils' autonomy, developing self esteem, and developing the ability to appreciate school achievements"(Italy). The teachers also used approaches that emphasise "active learning approaches" (Ireland).

Another approach emphasised the personal relation that the teacher established with the pupils: "being firmer" or "being more flexible" (France), "being firmer", "more attentive", "closer" (Brazil), "striving to establish an educational relationship based on confidence and support" (Italy), "empathy" (Portugal), "dialog with the pupil" (France and Italy), and "educational contract" (France).

So, while teachers perceive as essential the personal relation established between pupil and teacher, it seems hard to describe its nature. This leads to lots of uncertainty about the best attitude to adopt.

4.2. - Asking for help from support partners and support systems

The following proposals are generally cited by all the teachers but some are mentioned more often:
- initial support is sought from the "teaching team" in the school and the emphasis is put on "team work" (Italy and Brazil);
- help from "specialist teachers with a specific expertise", which could give information to the pupil, and advice but also, regularly, provide help to the pupil (Ireland, Brazil, France, Spain);
- calling on "social services" and on "health services", thought by others as not sufficiently developed or not really accessible by teachers (Ireland, Portugal, Brazil);

- encouraging "work with families as partners" is cited by all the teachers, with the exception of French teachers, even if this latter group consider the parents as implicated in the origin of the difficulties experienced by their pupils and if the school system strongly encourages closer links with families.

The teachers, as a whole, would like to benefit from specific supports which could bring to bear different partners, but they usually find it difficult to meet them and to use them on account of their small numbers or their lack of availability.

5. - NEEDS EXPRESSED BY TEACHERS

5.1. - Courses on special educational needs

The teachers in this study most often find their pre-service education courses in this area to be lacking and would like improvements made:

5.2. - Better preparation to work with children of different ability levels

- "more value placed on pupil diversity" (Italy)
- "a more extensive approach on the diversity of pupil needs" (Portugal)
- "more emphasis on courses on special educational needs" (Portugal and Spain)
- "courses on approaches to specific types of support and on the development of individual educational projects" (Italy, France), and on "classroom organisation and group dynamics" (Spain).

5.3. - Teaching approaches and psychology re-examined

- "deepening the understanding of the learning process" (Brazil)
- "additional work with curriculum contents and methods" (Italy)
- "a more integrated and cross disciplinary approach to teacher education" (Portugal)

5.4. - An approach with a better blend of theory and practice

This request was unanimous.
- "Teacher education should be built on a continual blend of theory and practice, which must be present right through the whole process, and related to classroom practice" (Portugal)
- "This blend could inform case studies, discussions with specialists, and be brought to bear in difficult classes" (France)

The value of participating in action research, like that undertaken in this present study, is also mentioned in each county as an interesting approach for teacher education.

Other more specific points appear and are linked to specific institutional contexts:
- "teacher education on special educational needs should also be useful for kindergarten teachers" (Portugal)
- "academic recognition for in-service education by universities" (Ireland)

5.5. - Encouraging partner relations

Everyone perceives this need, it is most clearly expressed by some who indicate that they look forward to professional relationships in an expanded partnership:

"We need to work more closely with different colleagues and use a common language, have the same level of urgency about our work and seek solutions together for the problems we meet. It is important to build strategies of partnership. We are happy to bring our pupils to psychologists or to speech therapists, but teachers need better contacts with these professionals. It's the same issue with the relationships with families, we need to build a network allowing us to look together for a common strategy to bring better support to pupils" (Brazil);

If outside help is asked for, neither "must it dominate" (Italy), nor "remove the teachers from their role" (Portugal). This support can take the form of "help to develop and guide projects" (France), or a "laboratory for projects allowing better diffusion of innovative practices" (Italy);

In all these cases, these supports must "promote the types of school learning at the heart of the class" (Brazil), however they must be concerned as much with the pupil's social as school context.

The data collected in this study should be viewed in the institutional context of each country with its different partnerships and slightly different functions. The teachers' also seemed to call for help from the partners to allow them to better deal with the difficulties they meet in their classes.

6. - FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS.

These findings and proposals are the result of the reflection undertaken in each national team on the basis of their analyses of reactions of beginning teachers participating in this study.

In general, preparation for welcoming children to school and for beginning effective schooling of all pupils in ordinary schools seems generally accomplished, even if in certain countries, like France and Brazil, this aspect is not yet sufficiently planned for in initial teacher preparation. In any case these are contemporary issues implicated in global processes of democratisation and of non-discrimination. It remains, however, to determine when and how to respond to the pre-service needs felt and expressed by the teachers.

On the other hand, one finding was common to many participating countries: the difficulty, indeed the institutional impossibility, to organise a follow up of young professionals by their pre-service educators while they were in their first jobs in schools. This has the consequence that links cannot be made easily between pre-service education and in-service needs.

If some causes can be attributed to institutional ways of working and to ways of organising pre-service education, other causes can be linked with the position and status of different actors, and with national conceptual variations.

6.1. - Pre-service education

Clearly pre-service education plays a central role in awareness raising and also in acquiring useful and necessary competencies for beginning teaching.

6.1.1. - The process of pre-service education

- **A plan of pre-service education centred more on the learner, whether a pupil…**

Pre-service education should allow in equal degree understanding of pupil learning and understanding of the process of teaching (Brazil and France). In this perspective, it seems wise, in relation to pre-service teacher education, to promote "processes of pupil learning" in comparison to "processes of teaching" (Italy).

- **…or a teacher…**

Giving a place to the learning dimension supposes "not highlighting the previous schooling and personal history of anyone" (Italy), "to become aware of ingrained prejudices, in particular the image of the ideal child that we all possess, and to work starting from the preliminary representations to allow them to develop" (France).

- **…and on a dialectic approach what is both particular and universal**

In relation to the problems that concern us, to know about the diversity of pupils in public education, "a reflection is needed on the respective emphasis of the particular and the general" (Brazil). "The dialectic, between the heterogeneity of the whole class on the one hand and of special needs on the other, invites a rethinking of practices which while emphasising the importance of recognising each child's specific needs, can find ways of working with groups of children (France).

6.1.2. - Pre-service courses

- **Disciplinary and scientific knowledge**

Some types of courses, so-called "academic", which are deemed important for some and much less important for others, like developmental psychology for children

and adolescents, the psychology of learning, or teaching specific disciplines - require emphasis in specific ways in different countries.

- **Integrative and thematic approaches**

We should note especially, that these integrative and cross disciplinary approaches allow a better focus on the question that centrally concerns us here: "in pre-service education, it is the integrative approaches (in particular those in modules that are thematic) that allow beginning teachers to get a grip on ways of identifying and taking account of pupils' educational needs" (France). These are often activities presented in very specific pre-service educational modules, relatively marginal in relation to the more academic modules: "most teachers' required pre-service education is acquired in lectures, seminars or specific courses, focussed on certain aspects of educational difficulties, and they also have access to documentation about particular points" (Spain). It is important to note that these courses which are marginal, optional and not integrated in the compulsory course are insufficient to allow the development of real learnings in the young teachers.

- **Mastering professional techniques**

In any case the cause which seems to have been predominant concerns everything that allows pedagogical differentiation and which presupposes knowing about:
  - developing and using appropriate and suitable tools that allow observation and diagnostic and formative evaluations;

    - put in place learning and teaching approaches;
    - develop and use "special curriculum approaches" or "individual projects";
    - managing the learning dynamics of heterogeneous groups;
    - developing competencies in relation to language mastery;
    - facilitate relational competencies between pupils and their expressive abilities (through dialogue, role play…).

6.1.3. – Approaches to pre-service education

There are some major principles that emerge from the propositions made by the national teams:

- **the articulation between theory and practice**

    - During pre-service education, it seems necessary "to have a really formative experience with pupils with special needs and not just simply contact with them. This experience should take place with a teacher experienced in this area" (Spain).
  - "The process of learning and of constructing knowledge, that requires contact, questioning and a critical spirit, is only possible in the context of a theoretical-practical dialogue and, from this, traditional didactic-pedagogical activities need to be replaced with this type of dialogue (Brazil)."

- "It is necessary to take account of theoretical elements even in the daily teaching activities. In planning pre-service education of teachers one must be explicit about how theoretical knowledge influences the ordinary daily activity of the teacher (Italy)".

- Having strong theoretical references is important because it allows teachers to exercise an epistemological vigilance characterised by constant questioning, explicitly on the knowledge transmitted in the school and on basic reference knowledge (Brazil). If the connection between theory and practice is unanimously affirmed, it seems also that the separation, more or less strong depending on the country, between the terrain – that is the schools, and the institutes of pre-service education, often are a major obstacle to relating theory and practice effectively.

- **the benefits of exchanging experiences and sharing**

Sharing ideas with colleagues requires being open to cooperation, but also knowing how to locate oneself in a group of professionals whose goals and competencies are clearly identified:

- "The work on communication between professionals and parents should be developed. It is necessary to be clearer in teacher preparation about the different types of help available in the school so that the teachers can work more effectively in the class (Ireland)."

- "The lack of confidence of beginning teachers in respect of knowledge of support services is alarming. This problem could be resolved perhaps by explaining practically the aims and functions of these services during initial teacher preparation (Spain)."

- Working in a team with other professionals requires knowing one's professional place in the team, but it seems that this is very often not the case. – "The young teachers do not know well the school organisation within which they work, and are not clear about the roles of the different people in the school, including their own roles" (France). This lack of knowledge is a fundamental handicap in the building of professional links based on the legal status and professional competencies of the different types of teachers in the school.

6.2 - In-service education

"It is important to distinguish between what can be reasonably learned in an improved initial teacher education programme and what should be part of an induction programme for beginning teachers supported by suitable in-service education (Ireland)."

6.2.1. - In-service education as professional development

In-service education is perceived mainly as the essential vehicle that permits teachers to pursue and deepen their acquisition of competencies to respond to the individual special needs of their pupils. The teachers are therefore clearly responsible for their pupils and really involved in the educational environment. In the long term, an effective in-service education programme is needed that is the result of reflection, questioning and evaluation. Also, pre-service teachers should be encouraged to think of

their education as a process that will continue throughout their professional lives (Ireland).

6.2.2. - Promoting continuous reflection

"Teacher education should be understood as a continuous process consisting of learning to learn, learning to think, learning to be, through diverse interactions, in order to integrate knowledge in a socio-theoretical-practical reflexion. This type of professional development should be beyond breaking down knowledge, mechanical procedures, passive routines, and dampened curiosity (Brazil)."

6.2.3. - Teacher as actor and researcher

"The findings coming out of this research show again that teacher preparation, behind the desk, as Paulo Friere characterised it, should be replaced by learning in and for activity, following project methodology (Portugal)".

"Professional knowledge should be built, in a continuous way, through research, dialogue, and rigorous scientific approaches. It should take into account the teacher's practice, building on *epistemic curiosity* and be stimulated by critical reflection and action (Brazil)."

"The universities and other institutions should be involved more centrally in the in-service education of teachers by proposing initiatives or theoretical reflections linked with daily educational practice, educating through using observation techniques, teaching tools adapted to specific educational needs, in putting in place concrete educational procedures that can be evaluated by qualitative and quantitative methods (Spain)". This presupposed integrating the beginning teachers in research programmes, that we can describe as carefully defined financially supported development-innovation programmes.

"Action research is identified as the best method, in the context of in-service education, because it is the result of effective and lived educational experience; it should be supported by reflective practice that allows teachers to appreciate their work without the risks of a pedestrian empiricism." (Italy).

In addition, action research encourages creating reflective groups focussed on the knowledge necessary for good practice. These groups should also be places for reflective discussion and criticism. They should aim, by de-contextualisation, to generalise practical knowledge, and so allow this knowledge to transfer to diverse situations.. We can then build "a community of practices of the teaching world" in continuous evolution" (Italy).

6.2.4. - The decisive importance of specific in-service activities carefully targeted and institutionalised

"In-service education should be organised and structured so that all teachers can learn something about special educational needs, and not in the form of elective options offered as part of an in-service programme presented as a selection of individual choices from a list of proposals." (Portugal)

"It is clear that the model of in-service education that is being proposed here, in tight cooperation with the universities, requires both a profound change in the mentalities of university boards and resolute support from the educational administration (Government). If the universities continue to remain self-focussed and if the educational administration (Ministry, local or national) considers in-service teacher education unimportant and to be left to the free choice of each teacher, one can understand why our teachers express a loss of confidence in this type of in-service education." (Spain)

6.2.5. - The risks of an absence or an insufficient education

"The absence of education, of supervision and of resources, relating to specific educational needs could provoke amongst teachers a rejection of pupils with specific educational needs." (Portugal)

"The emphasis is placed here on the importance of in-service education in relation to special educational needs. It should be relevant, coherent and on account of this be one of the important and decisive conditions for pupils with these needs to have quality schooling. Actually, research has shown that the presence of children or young people with special educational needs in a class, when the teacher has not been prepared for this and there is no support, results most often in reinforcing pre-existing negative ideas about special needs, and so produces a situation that is unhelpful to children in difficulty (Gash, Guardia Gonzalez, Pires & Rault, 2000).

7. - IN CONCLUSION, SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

The collaborative work of teacher educators and beginning teachers using action research has allowed insight into school work, to reflect, to discuss in both national and trans-national groups and to make recommendations. In the perspective of the best response to pupil's special educational needs, there are a number of strong and consensual points of agreement concerning an evolution in the conception of teacher education and the practices of teacher educators.

7.1. - Defining common reference principles

7.1.1. - Reaffirming the values and principles basic to the school's mission

Teacher education must explicitly reaffirm the values and principles basic to the schools' mission and without which no particular attention might be paid to pupils with special educational needs:

- to open to democratisation and quality teaching to allow each future citizen to participate fully in the life of the democracy;
- to make pupils aware of and to live the principle of non-discrimination
- to affirm the dimension of individuality by respecting universal principles of human rights
- to create a social desire to live together and of a humanism of difference

7.1.2. - To approach the profession of teachers in its complexity

To efficiently inscribe their activities in this perspective, teachers need to be helped to perceive the complexity of their task through a systematic approach allowing them to see their mission in its different dimensions: the historic and political, the institutional and legal, the cultural, the social and the affective. This presupposes that they know how to locate themselves, as professionals, in contexts of diverse situations and with many different types of partners.

One task, too often ignored in teacher education, is how to introduce pre-service teachers to important ethical and philosophical references, and to understand fully how schools work and what resources are available to them there as professionals.

7.1.3. - To challenge the strong normative expectations

In the everyday practice of the classroom, to conform faithfully to the demands of the established norms is to deny the diversity of pupils' own learning situations, and a priori, to walk away from seeking equality of opportunity. So it is therefore urgent, in the process of teacher education, to question the "streaming" and "ability groupings" communally taken as natural and unchangeable, and all too often seen by teachers as legitimate and reassuring.

At the same time, to deconstruct is not to destroy, it is to be able to question concepts, cultures, and habits of organisations that tend to classify individuals in categories which often become ghettos. It is to develop the capacity to recognize the other in each of us and not apart from ourselves. This presupposes also passing from the concept of integration to that of inclusive education which has a corollary to deny exclusion, whatever might be the motive, a deficiency, or specific personal difficulties, but also might be economic, social, or cultural factors … and to accord each child, to each young person, a right to be welcome in the heart of the school community and to benefit from personal educational help if this is needed to learn and grow.

However, paradoxically the school, which must be open to diversity, is also the place to build a civic community, and this double requirement obliges teachers to place themselves in an uncomfortable dynamic with permanent tension, *the individual and the universal, the particular and the collective, personal identity and shared culture.*

7.2. - A conception of teacher education

7.2.1. - Passing from the culture of vocation to the culture of profession

Teacher education should allow teachers to acquire a legitimate professional status that presupposes knowledge, technical know-how and professional judgment.

To do this one needs to:

- to make available, in line with theoretical references, tools and approaches, to observe, to make assessments, to identify needs and organise individualised programmes;
- to set up in-service courses where one learns to work more effectively: the possibility of joining an action research group can allow making hypotheses linked with theoretical ideas and knowledge, and to not only put in place new learning approaches but to evaluate them;
- to put in place a multidimensional analysis of one's professional situation, that is sufficiently distanced from one's practice;
- to permit teachers to become involved in a dynamic of professional exchanges with different partners. This presupposes the ability to listen as much as to talk: to be able to share methods and analyses to allow school development, in a desire to grow together; to make explicit methods and choices; to take account of the roles of the different actors, such as the parents, in a perspective of co-education.

7.2.2. - Construct a "professional personality" - to allow it to evolve and develop

In the activity of teacher education, one cannot ignore the development of a refined competence in the domains of discipline and teaching, it is also necessary to become more sensitive to others and to develop one's emotional intelligence.

The teacher is an individual with a very personal and multifaceted life experience. To value the individual in the educational community is a challenge underlined by Edgard Morin "The relation to the other is inherent to the relation to oneself." In fact, taking account of special educational needs depends on the way the teachers' needs are considered part of their professionalisation. To recognise teachers' uniqueness in teacher education, is to accept the idea that their experience determines the way teachers will invest in the profession and allows them to develop a "professional personality". This recognition introduces a mirror that shows an opening showing diversity and individuality and which facilitates practices allowing a match between the help offered to pupils and the needs that are really theirs.

Our action research has been significant because it allowed, in working with beginning teachers, to bring them significant help in relation to their needs. It allowed them to build competencies relevant to their needs. This type of induction process seemed also like an excellent educational tool that engaged each teacher, in an individual way, in a dynamic of development for their "professional personality".

7.2.3. - Plurality and continuity to characterise the process of teacher education

To transmit these values and put in place this conception of teacher education, it seems evident as a result of this work, and whatever the educational system in which each of us is involved, that these two transversal principles of plurality and of continuity must guide our activities as teacher educators. They are the guarantees of respect for personal diversity and also of the unity of a democratic educational project.

First of all, it is important to present a variety of approaches that allow an opening up, at the level of persons, of institutions and of ways of organisation: we need varieties of teacher educators and presenters, varieties of place and of contexts for teacher education and varieties of ways of presenting courses.

It is in fact essential that teacher education is undertaken by a variety of presenters (universities, practitioners, institutions..) which are not themselves limited by their specific time and space constraints. Each of these teacher educators must be able to contribute, with their own expertise, to a common educational programme which doesn't shy away from the complexity of reality.

On the other hand, teacher education must be considered as a dynamic process that develops throughout the whole career. Each person builds competencies on the basis of their own history and in diverse contexts as a life long continuous process. So it isn't desirable to propose courses that impose discontinuities between initial teacher preparation and in-service, or between theoretical and practical courses.

Finally, each teacher should be able to benefit from help, certainly at the beginning of their careers, but also at times where they find a need. This help should not be considered uniquely as a help and support to the teacher but also as an opportunity to give life to an effective process of research, of reflection, and of acquisition of new knowledge, as much for the benefit of the person being educated, as for the institution in which they work.

To prepare beginning teachers to take account of special educational needs is to help them build their "professional personality" and to allow them to master the complexity of a teacher's mission by learning to coordinate the many parts of the classroom so that it is whole. It is also to convince them that they contribute with those who work with them, to build a democratic society respectful of all its members.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Rault, C. (Ed.) (2004) *Diversités des besoins éducatifs: des réponses en Europe et ailleurs.* Paris: L'Harmattan.

Rault, C., Molina, S. & Gash, H. (Eds.) (2001) *Difficultés d'apprentissage: quels types d'aide ?* Paris: L'Harmattan.

Gash, H., Guardia Gonzalez, S., Pires, M. & Rault, C. (2000) Attitudes towards Down Syndrome, a national comparative study: France, Ireland, Portugal and Spain. *Irish Journal of Psychology,* 21, 203-214.

APPENDIX

Categories established after analysis of the contents of the questionnaires

QUESTION N°1
In your work, have you met pupils who have particular difficulties? What were they?
0. No response to the question
1. Indicators of difficulty mentioned by the teachers
1.0 No indicators of difficulty
1.1. Behavioural difficulties
1.1.1.Disturbing the class (aggression, physical violence, verbal violence, being agitated)
1.1.2.That do not disturb the class (being absent, being late, passive, closed in on himself or herself.)
1.1.3.Difficulty in involvement, making an effort (work not done, unmotivated)
1.2 Learning difficulties
1.2.0 School failure without analysis
1.2.1. Language mastery
1.2.2.Comprehension, abstraction
1.2.3. Mastery of curriculum areas
1.2.4. Relation to work (lack of autonomy, concentration difficulty, organisation……)
2. Details of explanations given
2.0. No explanations
2.1. Problems related to the developmental processes of the child or adolescent
2.2. Emotional problems
2.3. Deficiencies
2.3.1. cognitive problems (so language problems)
2.3.2. sensory problems
2.3.3. motor problems
2.3.4.sickness, health problems
2.4. Socio-cultural problems
2.5. Other problems extrinsic to the child
2.5.1.Disengaging from the family, voluntary or not, (because of death, separation, absence…)
2.5.2.Paid activity of the young person, parallel to school attendance
QUESTION N°2
Can you give us at least one example which shows how you have identified and analysed the difficulty and what solutions you have proposed?
0. Absence of response to the question
1. Way of identifying the difficulty
1.1. Not answered
1.2. From direct observation, without a specific analysis tool
1.2.1.Observation of behaviour and attitudes
1.2.2. Direct observation of the child's "level" of performance
1.3. From information accessed outside class
1.3.1. The pupil's file
1.3.2. Information from another person in the school
1.3.3. Information from another person outside the school
1.3.4. Information from the pupil's parents
1.3.5. Information from the pupil concerned

1.4. From evaluations made by the teacher
1.4.1. National evaluations
1.4.2. School evaluations
1.4.3. Evaluations made by the teacher

2. Analysis of the pupil's difficulty
Taking categories from question n°1
3. The solutions proposed by the teacher
3.1. None
3.2. Educational process
3.2.1. Analysis of practices
3.2.2. Organisation of individual help, tutoring, individualised teaching….
3.3. Change in personal attitude of the teacher (being more firm, more attentive, being closer….)
3.4. Help from colleagues in the school
3.5. Help from resources in or out of the school
3.5.1. With the aim of keeping the pupil in the class
3.5.2. With a view to removing the child from the class

QUESTION N°3

In this occasion, did you feel you needed more in-service or help? If so, what sorts?
0. Absence of a reply to the question
1. Needs beyond pre-service education
1.0. None
1.1. Unspecified needs expressed
1.2. Additional theoretical work (Psychology, Social sciences …)
1.3. Support in terms of "know-how"
1.3.1. Know how to analyse situations.
1.3.2. Know how in terms of how to respond to pupils' attitudes
1.3.3. Know how in terms of responding to learning difficulties (teaching strategies)
2. Requests for help
2.0. None
2.1. Unspecified needs expressed
2.2. To take better change of the pupils
2.2.1. From point of view of the school's teaching and learning team
2.2.2. From the point of view of educational advisors
2.2.3. From the point of view of professionals outside the classroom (psychologist, social worker, health service….)
2.3. To point the children in other directions
2.3.1. Knowledge about counselling procedures
2.3.2. Knowledge about special schools
QUESTIONS N°4
What are the pre-service courses that provided you with expertise in this domain?
0. Absence of a reply to the question
1. Support in terms of contents and processes learned during pre-service
1.0. None
1.1. Pre-service education: A course about teaching curriculum
1.2. Pre-service education: Understanding arising through analysis of teaching practice
1.3. Pre-service education A course about different teaching learning approaches
1.3.1. In general education
1.3.2.Theoretical courses or conferences …
1.3.3.Cross disciplinary thematic modules
1.3.4. In the course of writing a thesis
1.3.5. Reading professional books

1.4. Pre-service education: During work in school
1.5. In-service education

2. Support in terms of specific help
2.0. None
2.1. Discussions with teacher education staff (In France formateurs)
2.1.1 Discussions with an educational advisors (in France un conseiller pédagogique, un IMF…)
2.1.2. Discussions with a teacher educator (in France un tuteur de l'IUFM)
2.2. Discussions with other professionals
2.2.1. Discussions with other teachers (Des échanges avec des pairs ???)
2.2.2. Discussions with people working in the school you were doing your teaching practice
2.2.3. Dsicussions with other people
3. Outside support
3.1.Experiences outside of teaching
3.2. A professional activity before teaching
3.3 An earlier career