



Speakers

Julius Rix, Kerstin Merz-Atalik

Julius Rix 0:01

OK. Welcome to the ED-Ted video podcast where we delve into the transformative work of the ED-Ted project. ED-Ted is an Erasmus Plus cooperation partnerships project dedicated to creating a robust European professional network and fostering communities among higher education teacher educators. Our goal is to support teacher educators and their professional development as they address critical issues of equity and diversity throughout teacher education programmes. In today's episode, we are thrilled to welcome Professor Kasten Mats Atalik from the University of Education Ludwigsburg. She's a renowned expert in inclusive education and at the same time, a dedicated advocate for equity in teacher education. Together, we'll explore developments in inclusive teacher education in Germany. Stay tuned for an insightful conversation to advance equity and diversity practices in teacher education. So, Kerstin, you have been closely involved in the process in recent years. Can you report on key developments in Germany with regards to inclusion and teacher education on a macro level?

Kerstin Merz-Atalik 1:05

Thank you for the friendly introduction and your kind words about my work and my expertise. Yes, I've been involved into many working groups related to the transformation processes to implement inclusive education in the teacher education programmes in Europe or in Germany. Into the over the last 20 years, I was part of projects of commissions of selection processes of new projects in Germany. So I think about 20 years I'm following the development of inclusive education teacher programmes in Germany. The first project I was involved was from 2009 to 2011, the Teacher Education for Inclusion project that was run by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. The goal of this project was that we were developing a profile for teachers that could be introduced into every curricula or student programme in all the different European countries. I think it's very famous in some of the European countries, the profile for teacher education from the European Agency. But that was probably my first experience with trying to implement or to transfer an idea, a concept into the discourse in Germany. So when we were, when the project was finished, we had these I think it's 10 pages of a profile with concrete competences that teachers should develop in their teacher education programme according to an inclusive education system. It's not separating between special Ed teachers or general Ed teachers or primary or secondary Ed teachers. It's a concept that is addressing all teacher education programmes.

Kerstin Merz-Atalik 3:12

We had the opportunity to introduce the profile to the standing conference of the Ministries of Education in Germany. As you probably know, Germany has 16 different federal States and the education lies under the responsibility of the individual federal States and also the teacher education programmes. So we were invited to Berlin to introduce the profile for teacher education to the 16 different education ministries and we were very proud and we had, we were hopeful that it would be giving an impulse to the transformation into the different federal states. But until today, I would say that there is no direct impact of that profile into any of the different teacher education programmes in Germany. Probably sometimes an indirect like that some of the colleagues who were involved into the into the development of a teacher education programmes were relying their own work back on the profile of teacher education. It is widely used in the in the scientific community, the profile, for example, to evaluate or to compare the different teacher education programmes between the universities in Germany, for example. But I think on a policy level is it has never had the same implication or effect than in other European countries, for example in Scotland. In Scotland it was the framework was used as a framework to develop all the different teacher education programmes, to develop standards for teacher education, for inclusion. It was even introduced into the ongoing training of teachers, not only at the universities. So it has, it had a very bigger impact that we have had with it in Germany.

Kerstin Merz-Atalik 5:24

And this is kind of one problems that we have in Germany, that we don't have a discourse on a, on a macro level between the universities and the persons who are responsible for the teacher training programmes, not comparable to other European states or internationally. Then another example, I was a member of a steering Commission in the federal state of Baden Württemberg, where we developed a curriculum for an inclusive education module that should be introduced into all the teacher education programmes in our federal state. We've worked I think for eight months, a group of 18 people and I think we can still be very proud of our results about the module and the competences that we have selected or used to to have this module. But since it was not integrated into the new curricula for the teacher training as an obligatory module, it was just integrated as an attachment. So it's attached to the framework for the teacher education programmes in Baden Württemberg and therefore it is kind of optional how the universities or the universities of education are transferring it or introducing it into their own teacher education curricula programmes. This fact is a problem that we have in Germany that there are only recommendations instead of clear standards for the subject inclusion – also in the school system, the education system for inclusive education, but the same at the universities, in the teacher education programmes. So there is a lack, in my point of view, there is a lack in standards for inclusive education on the level, on a macro level.

Kerstin Merz-Atalik 7:31

[Schwelka et al.], some colleagues considered that for the implementation of inclusive education, there should be a the national, the policy on the national level should take over a leading role. I don't see that leading role in our nation in Germany. I miss that. In the case of inclusive education, very often the information that we get is that it is dedicated to the federal States and that the federal states are in the responsibility to develop it. So what we have is only recommendations from the standing conference of Ministries of Education or from the conference of the higher education institutions. They developed a shared paper, but it's, it has it just, it's not standards, it's just a, a recommendation to address the subject of inclusive education in the teacher education programmes. I also used to be the provost or the vice director of our university for six years and was responsible for the new teacher education programme when it was changed in 2015. And I was very ambitious about the opportunities

to to effect the change in our own university. But it was the same situation. My role was just probably giving information, showing them the frameworks under which we should work in the teacher education programmes. But it was mainly in the decision of the working groups and the, the, the faculties, the department that we have, how they introduced it directly into the programme. So as you see, there's a lack of standards on the national level that leads into a lack of standards on the nasal level. And again, there's because of this lack, there is no impact on the institutional level or organisational level. So my, I, I could only link it back my work to all the different recommendations, but there were no standards or no clear, even no clear concepts about how it should be introduced.

Kerstin Merz-Altalik 10:04

So I was not very happy that the working groups decided to implement only the obligatory credit points in 2015. The obligatory credit points are six credit points. It's two courses in the full teacher education programme. And as you probably know, Germany has the longest teacher education programme. So we have 8 up to 10 semesters, so five years and then an ongoing training in the preparatory service. This is very long compared to other nations. Yeah. We would need to do more research on inclusive education and for and the competences of teachers. And we should probably have a kind of model schools in the teacher training programmes because there's also a lack for the new teachers to have experience, to get experiences in inclusive teaching. Because for example, in Ludwigsburg, in our environment, there are some schools that are working inclusive, but they still don't have, for example, an interdisciplinary team. They don't have the the framework or the resources that they would have to need to have to have a real inclusive education system. So what we should try to develop, in my opinion, is to work together with model schools as a university in research and teaching and give every new student in the teacher education programme the opportunity to have a first sight of inclusive education in schools. This would be something I would like to develop.

Julius Rix 12:01

OK, so that sounds like there aren't many policies in place that that support teacher educators when it comes to inclusion. What exactly does this mean for teacher educators? So have they do they have any opportunity to be supported? And yeah, in in regards to inclusion and Germany,

Kerstin Merz-Atalik 12:26

Yes, I think the biggest problem is that they always only have the status of a recommendation. So and the recommendation means you can or you cannot. There is, there is a big variety of how the universities or the states, the federal states were taking over this recommendation. For example, we have even in Baden Württemberg, we have universities that were not only relying on the six credit points that are doing 20 or more credit points according to Inclusive Education. And there are also some structural changes in some federal states. So for example, you can do a teacher training programme with a bio degree. So you can be a primary Ed teacher and special Ed teacher or secondary Ed teacher and special Ed teacher. So even the structures are very discrepant between the different state, federal States. And I think we should start a discourse on the macro level about the experiences that we have with these different models and with with these different tensions. How we transferred inclusive education into the teacher education programme. There are some research projects that are comparing the impact of the teacher training into the competences and the self-awareness, self efficacy of teachers, for example, but it is not binded to the policy level. So research should also there's a Policy Research gap and the research practice gap or theory practice gap. And to to to get to a more cooperative work in

that field, we should have involve all different actors in the actor net, in an actor network, like policy representatives, the responsible stakeholders from the different school systems, unions, schools, experienced teachers. And to bring them together, from my opinion, we should have a national steering committee or a working group that is dedicated to the question, what kind of teachers do we need in the 21st century inclusive education system? So that should bring together all the different expertise that we have and should also force the research on getting knowledge: How should teachers be trained to be a good inclusive teacher?

Julius Rix 15:18

Yeah, I see. So you've listed a lot of difficulties that that might be problems for implementing inclusion in Germany. Do you see any opportunities to implement a better inclusion modules in teacher education?

Kerstin Merz-Atalik 15:43

Yes, I see it. For example, in my university, we have in the sports department, for example, there are some colleagues who themselves have worked already in an inclusive education system, who are doing research on inclusive education. And in their lectures and courses, you can see that the inclusive didactics is playing a huge role. While in other departments, other subjects, teaching subjects, the colleagues have no link to that, to that expertise and to that knowledge. And so it's not we, we shouldn't worry about it. You know, it's, it's obvious that they can't themselves develop this new field. And so I think we should in the, in the university management and in the, in the staff resources, finding staff resources, we could probably have a kind of how would I call that? So for example, if you're a, if you, if you're looking for a new staff in the university, university in Bolzano is doing this, for example, in Italy. So if someone is applying for a position at the university, he has to link his work to the to the development of inclusive education in the system. So he's asked in the interview, even before the interview that he has to, for example, to have an overlook about the profile of teacher education for inclusion, about the legislation of inclusive education in the system in South Tyrol. And so during the interview, he doesn't only has to speak about his research and what he was doing, he has to link his research, his teaching that he's going to bring to the university to the transformation process towards an inclusive education system. I think this could be a step that universities could take to get more awareness under their staff how relevant the subject is for the transformation process towards an inclusive education system. That's just one idea. Or probably having teaching corporations internationally. So for example, with countries that are have a more experienced inclusive education system, for example in the Scandinavian countries that you're doing a lecture or a course in a co-operation, in a teaching co-operation with the students there to share their expertise. Because when I asked my students in the lecture hall and I asked the 150 students in the lecture hall, who of you has already been going to an inclusive school in their own school time? It's under 150, probably one or two. But if I ask ask the same question in South Tyrol or in Finland or other countries when I'm doing presentations or lectures, I can see that most of them already are bringing this experience to their teacher training programme. And we need to bring these expertises together so that the students, our teacher education students, can have a profit from the background and from the knowledge and the experiences of students from other countries. That would be another idea, but I'm full of ideas. I could develop much more, but I think that should be enough for now.

Julius Rix 19:35

All right, thank you very much, and thank you for joining us on the podcast. I think it was very insightful to hear about your insights and your expertise. And I think we, yeah, we've, we've got a good look at inclusive teacher education in Germany and what is lacking and what

needs to be improved. Thank you very much for joining and we hope you found this episode interesting, thought-provoking. If you'd like to learn more about the ED-Ted project, you can visit the website at [info minus Ted dot EU slash at Ted](http://info-minus-Ted.eu/Ted) and stay tuned for our next episodes where we'll discuss other topics regarding equity and diversity and teacher education. Thank you very much.

Kerstin Merz-Atalik 20:24

Thank you very much.