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English ITIDE Pilot Study Report



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1 Introduction

This report for the UK was produced as part of the European Commission Erasmus+ funded ITIDE Project. It presents the findings from the pilot study conducted in England to investigate the experience of using the 'complex needs' online training materials. It is intended that these findings should be used to inform decisions about any changes that should be made to the materials before they are launched.



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2 The Pilot Study

Method:

To examine the experience for learners of using the suite of ITIDE online training materials in special educational needs (SEN), a pilot study was conducted using a sample of the materials. Participants were recruited either through school or teaching alliance training days, by contacting those who had taken part in the stakeholder survey, or because they were students on ITT courses where the materials were being used in teaching sessions. The first two groups were invited to take part following an introduction to the materials during a teaching alliance training day. The students attended face-to-face teaching sessions on SEN where they were introduced to the training materials and shown how to access and interact with the materials online. School staff invited to take part in schools and the training alliance were given the opportunity to study the materials further in their own time and then complete an online survey hosted on Survey Monkey. Students received the same questionnaire asking for their perceptions of the materials and suggestions for improvements, but they received a paper copy to complete at the end of the session.

Materials:

Participants in the pilot study were given access to a sample of the ITIDE online training materials. The sample modules were:

Module 2.2: Communication and Interaction

Module 3.4: Emotional well-being and mental health

These modules were chosen because both topics are of particular interest and concern to professionals at the moment.

Participants:

Only ITT students who had had face-to-face teaching sessions and who completed paper questionnaires returned them. 37 paper questionnaires were returned, 11 of which were from level 4 students on the Early Childhood Education course who were about to go out on their first block placement following serial days in school and a holistic placement. The remainder were from level 6 students who had just completed the course and attained a BA (Hons) degree with recommendation for QTS in Primary Education 5-11.

Findings:

Table 1: Range of special educational needs experienced by participants.

Service-user group	Number of participants
Speech, language & communication needs (SLCN)	19
Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)	22
Moderate learning difficulties (MLD)	17
Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD)	8
Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties	9
Specific Learning Difficulties (dyslexia, dyscalculia) (SpLD)	19
Social and Emotional Difficulties	22
Diagnosed mental health illness	3
Visual impairment	14
Hearing impairment	14
Multi-sensory impairment	4
Physical disability	5

It can be seen from the table above that the student participants had experienced a range of special educational needs in placements in mainstream schools in England and in other experience. They are most likely to meet children with SLCN, ASD, MLD, SpLD and social and emotional difficulties and therefore need to be prepared to teach these children inclusively. It is also likely that children will present with additional needs in more than one category.

Participants had worked with pupils across the full primary age range from 4 to 11 years. Some had experience outside that gained through the course with children in secondary school or those below the age of 3 years.



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3 Training needs and expectations

Participants were asked what they wanted from the training before it started. The majority who responded to this question indicated that they wanted more knowledge about SEN (46%, n=17). In addition, participants indicated that they were hoping for strategies to use in the classroom (10%, n=4) or resources (5%, n=2). However, there was a high rate of non-responses to this item.

Table 2: Participant ratings of how far the training had met their expectations

Having completed the pilot study, participants reported that the training materials met some of their needs/expectations (n=17; 46%), or met all their expectations or exceeded them (38%, n=14).

Themes	Count	%
Did not meet any of my needs/expectations	1	3%
Met some of my needs/expectations	17	46%
Met all my needs/expectations	8	22%
Exceeded my needs/expectations	6	16%

Qualitative comments about what they liked or what met their expectations included the range of resources covered, and that the materials were online and freely accessible so that they could return to them. The video clips were also commented on favourably.

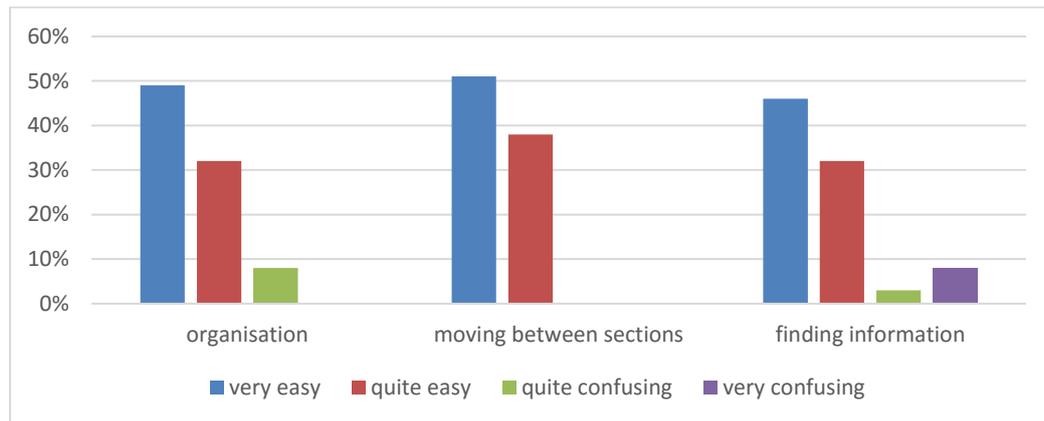
When asked what did not meet their expectations, the most raised comment was that being introduced to the materials earlier in the year would have been helpful.



4 Experience of the ITIDE training materials

Participants were asked to rate the organisation and content of the training materials. Figure 1 indicates ratings about how easy or confusing the organisation of the materials was, as well as moving from section to section and finding information.

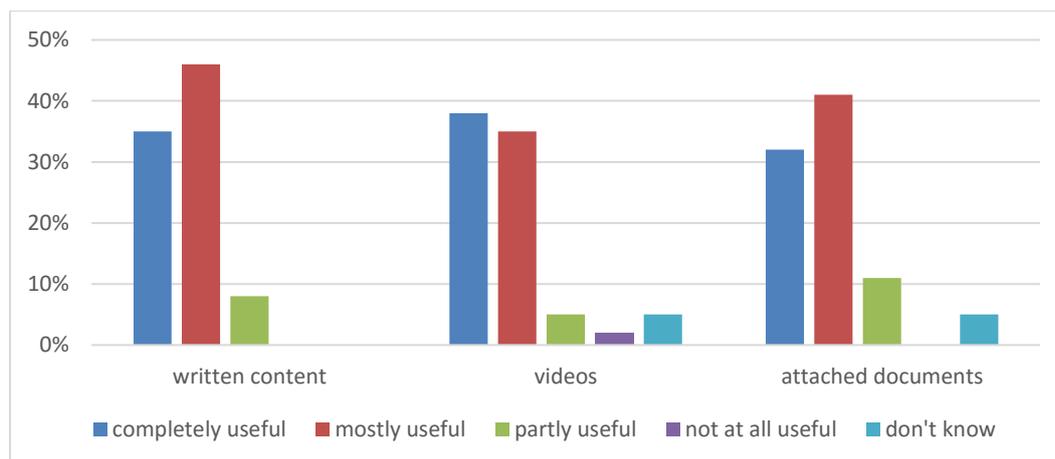
Figure 1: Ratings for the organisation, ease of movement and finding information in the materials.



This indicates that most of the participants found the materials easy to navigate through and could find information.

Figure 2 shows how useful participants found the written content, videos and attached documents.

Figure 2: Ratings for the written content, videos and attached documents.



Most participants then found all elements of the content useful to some extent.

5 Impact of the ITIDE online training materials

Participants were asked a number of questions designed to elicit information about likely future engagement with the materials and potential influence on their teaching practice.

- What would you say if a colleague seeking training asked your opinion of the ITIDE online training materials?
 - Definitely recommend them: 51% (n=19)
 - Recommend with reservations: 27% (n=10)
 - Not recommend them: 5% (n=2)
- Would you use the materials again?
 - Yes: 92% (n=34)
 - Maybe or no: 8% (n=3)
- To what extent do you think the ITIDE online training materials will affect your teaching?
 - I am likely to make a lot of changes to my practice: 27% (n=10)
 - I am likely to make a few changes to my practice: 57% (n=21)
 - I do not expect the materials to affect what I do: 5% (n=2)
- To what extent have the ITIDE online training materials affected your understanding of the needs of learners with SEN and intellectual disability?
 - My understanding has changed in a big way: 27% (n=10)
 - My understanding has changed in a small way: 57% (n=21)
 - My understanding has not changed: 3% (n=1)
- To what extent have the ITIDE online training materials affected your understanding of how to include learners with SEN?
 - I intend to include them much more: 30% (n=11)
 - I intend to include them slightly more: 32% (n=12)
 - I intend to include them the same: 27% (n=10)
 - I intend to include them less: 0
- Are you more confident in working with children with SEND after using the training



materials?

- I am much more confident: 14% (n=5)
- I am slightly more confident: 43% (n=16)
- I am neither more nor less confident: 32% (n=12)
- How do you feel about your skills in including learners with SEND alongside their mainstream peers after using the materials compared with before?
 - I feel much more skilled: 11% (n=4)
 - I feel a little more skilled: 62% (n=23)
 - I feel neither more nor less skilled: 11% (n=4)

These findings indicate that the relatively short training session using the ITIDE materials had a positive effect on participants' attitudes towards inclusion, and their confidence in their skills and ability to provide for learners with SEND.



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6 Discussion and recommendations

Training needs and expectations

The student participants in this sample were interested in gaining more knowledge and understanding of SEN and learning disabilities. They also wanted practical resources and strategies to use in the classroom. Results suggest that most of them had at least some of their expectations met through using 2 out of the 16 modules during one training session.

Experience of the training materials

Participants found the online materials relatively easy to use in navigating between levels, modules and sections within modules. Most found it easy to find information. The written content, videos and attached documents were all rated highly as being useful. Anecdotally, participants commented on how useful they found the videos and examples given. As students, they liked being able to access some academic articles and supporting documents from the website!

Impact of the materials

The participants reported some change in the extent to which they would expect to include SEN pupils in their classes, and that their confidence and skill in working with SEN pupils, for the majority, had changed in a positive direction. It would be interesting to see if the participants still felt more confident and skilled when teaching their own classes after the summer break, and if they accessed or recommended the materials to others at points of need.



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Conclusion and recommendations

Overall, the response to the materials was positive, with the participants deriving some value from the time they spent interacting with the materials.

The recommendations arising from this feedback are as follows:

- Inclusive education should be included in all ITT courses to ensure teachers are confident and skilled in providing for those with additional needs.
- Teachers need access to practical teaching strategies to support them in including SEN learners in mainstream classrooms.
- The legislative context module needs updating to include more recent and current legislation, including the latest version of the Code of Practice for SEND 0-25.
- It would also be useful to develop an introductory module on inclusion to feed into the ITIDE training materials to provide the context.
- Updating the materials to a format more in line with current pedagogical understanding of online training which would work on mobile platforms would be beneficial in ensuring the sustainability of the materials, but is outside the remit and scope of the current project.



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Changes made to the English version of the materials

1. To bring module 1.2: The Legislative Context up to date

This module was rewritten to take account of changes in legislation and the updated version of the SEN Code of Practice which have been brought in since the original complex needs materials were written. The changes have been incorporated into the materials available online at www.complexneeds.org.uk

2. Developing an introductory module on inclusion.

A new module has been developed, entitled 'Educational Inclusion in Europe'. This is set out in four levels like the original complex needs materials. It is intended that students, schools and other interested parties can access it to provide an introduction to the topic of inclusion and to the rest of the complex needs materials. Like the original materials, it includes written content, videos and attached documents.

The module will be used in teaching at Leeds Beckett University, and promoted through the same channels as the complex needs materials and ITIDE project outputs.

The module can be accessed here: <http://inclusion europe.wikispaces.com/>



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