

# **Teaching English in Multicultural Classrooms programme**

# Understanding Behaviour as Communication of Unmet Needs – Non-Violent Communication



# **Teaching English in Multicultural Classrooms programme**

**Report**

Report prepared by the British Council in Poland as an evaluation of the professional development programme for teachers and teacher educators of English: 'Teaching English in a Multicultural Classroom'.

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Warsaw, March 2025.

# Contents

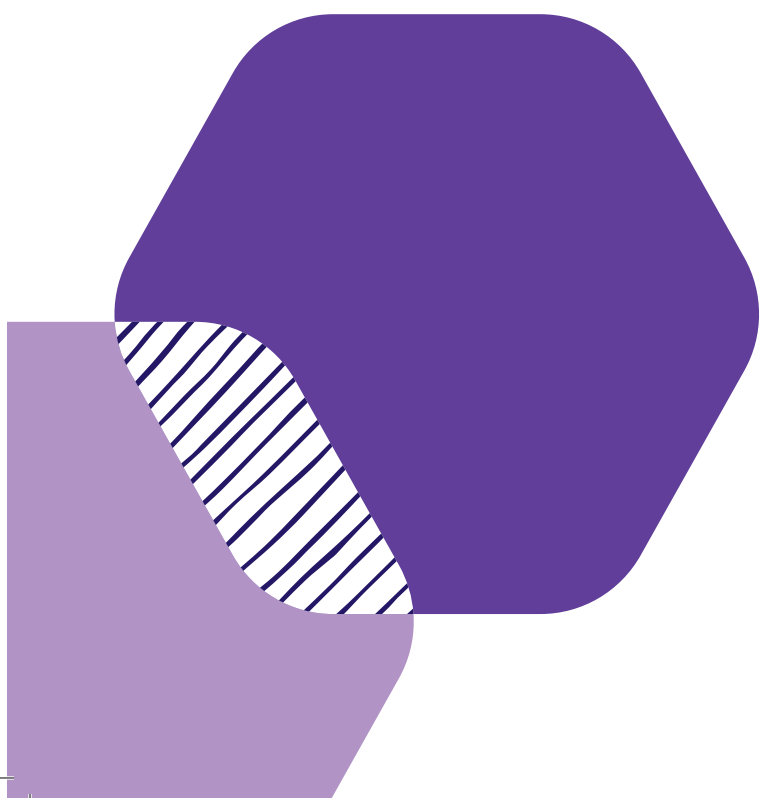
<b>1. Executive Summary</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. Key Outcomes</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3. Challenges</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4. Recommendations</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5. The Context</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6. The Content</b>	<b>10</b>
Core Modules	10
Online Content Block	11
<b>7. Participant Group Profile</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>8. Multicultural Aspect in the Context of Inclusion</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>9. Key Insights</b>	<b>16</b>
Positive Outcomes	16
Challenges	17
Recommendations for Further Training Needs	18
<b>10. Conclusions</b>	<b>19</b>

# Executive Summary

The “Teaching English in Multicultural Classrooms” teacher development programme was initiated by British Council Poland, in collaboration with Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji (ORE), as a response to the challenges identified at the “Empowering Education: Understanding Teachers’ Needs in Multicultural Classrooms” conference held in Warsaw in December 2023. The conference, which addressed the impact of the influx of Ukrainian refugees on the Polish education system following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, emphasized the need for teacher professional development, inclusive pedagogies, and the promotion of multicultural and multilingual classroom benefits.

The programme, delivered between October and December 2024, was designed to equip educators with strategies to foster inclusion as a fundamental right for all learners. It focused on key aspects of inclusive education, such as creating safe and welcoming classroom environments, managing challenging behaviours, and understanding trauma-informed teaching. Structured in a hybrid format, the programme included two face-to-face training sessions (October and December) and five live online reflection sessions. This design allowed participants to implement and reflect on their learning in real time, enabling them to cascade the knowledge and skills in their own professional contexts.

The 24 participants, including teacher advisors, consultants, university lecturers, and school teachers, represented diverse educational institutions across Poland. This diversity enriched discussions and facilitated the exchange of best practices. By December 2024, the programme had impacted over 170 teachers and 200 students through cascading efforts, including workshops, webinars, and interactive activities promoting inclusion.



# Key Outcomes

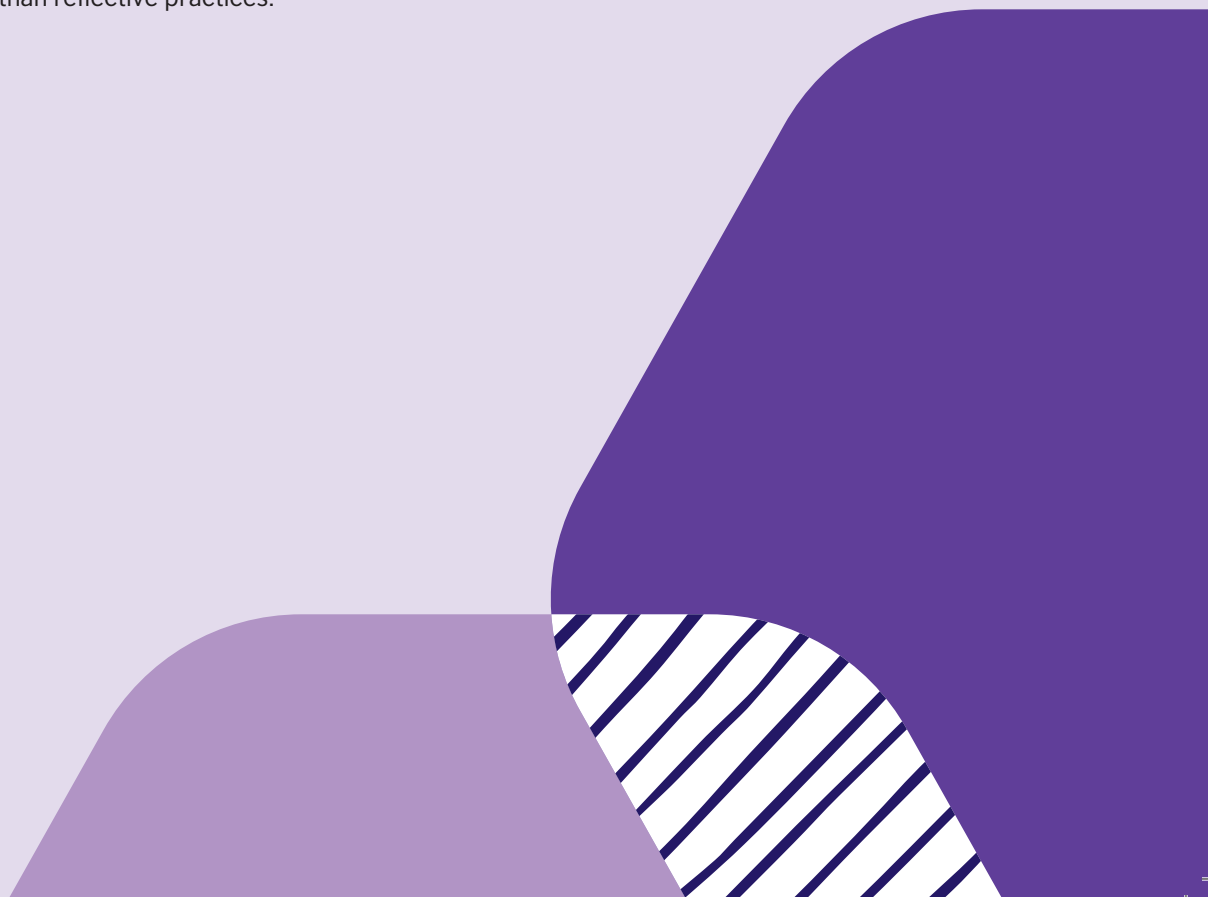
The programme yielded several positive outcomes:

- **Enhanced Awareness of Inclusion:**  
Participants developed a deeper understanding of inclusive practices, reflecting on unconscious biases and exploring strategies to create inclusive classroom environments.
- **Establishment of Professional Networks:**  
Connections formed during the training fostered ongoing collaboration, idea-sharing, and mutual support.
- **Cascading Impact:**  
The programme content was successfully disseminated to other educators and students, expanding its reach and promoting systemic change.

# Challenges

Despite its successes, the programme encountered challenges, including:

- Encouraging emotional engagement with abstract concepts such as unconscious bias.
- Participants’ initial expectation for prescriptive solutions rather than reflective practices.
- Addressing systemic barriers to inclusion within the education framework.
- Overcoming the misconception of inclusion as an added burden rather than an integral teaching approach.





# Recommendations

To further enhance the impact of future training initiatives, the following areas were identified for development:

- Advanced training on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- Strategies for engaging with parents of SEND learners.
- Support for teacher wellbeing and mental health.
- Creating a database of lesson plans and sample video lessons showcasing inclusive practices.
- Training on integrating AI tools to support personalized learning.
- Advanced modules on positive discipline and fostering student motivation.
- Further Development of Multicultural Teaching and Learning Skills
- Raising awareness of Mediation competencies
- Use of Mother tongue in a language classroom.
- Practicum for teacher educators in lesson observation.

To achieve maximum effectiveness, a two-tiered approach to training is recommended: foundational courses on inclusive pedagogies followed by advanced training focusing on values and skills that actively promote inclusion. Recognising that inclusion is often narrowly understood, these programmes should emphasize its broader application to all learners, not just those with additional needs.

This programme has demonstrated the potential to empower educators in navigating multicultural and multilingual classrooms, fostering inclusive practices, and addressing the challenges of diversity in Polish education.





# The Context

The teacher development programme “*Teaching English in Multicultural Classrooms*” was organised as a direct response to the challenges identified at the conference “Empowering Education: Understanding Teachers’ Needs in Multicultural Classrooms” held under the British Council auspices in Warsaw, Poland in December 2023. Convened in the aftermath of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the conference addressed the issues arising from the profound impact of the influx of Ukrainian refugees on the Polish education system and developed a list of recommendations ‘to enhance the educational experience and promote inclusivity’. Among the key recommendations from the conference were the continuous professional development for teachers along with the introduction of multicultural teaching techniques, the communication of the benefits of multicultural and multilingual classrooms, the sharing of best practices among schools and teachers, and the use of English as a potential medium for integration.

In line with the recommendations, British Council Poland in partnership with Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji (ORE) initiated the teacher development programme focusing on working in multicultural and multilingual classrooms. The programme aimed to alter the current perception and increase the educators’ awareness of inclusion as a basic right of every learner, and introduce the strategies and techniques to promote inclusion in the increasingly diverse classroom settings. The content of the programme was designed to facilitate the participants’ deeper understanding of the aspects of inclusion and inclusive pedagogies, trauma-informed teaching, ways of managing challenging student behaviours and creating physical and psychological safety in the classroom. By the end of the programme, the participants were expected to be prepared to cascade the content in their regional educational context. The approaches, strategies, methodologies and pedagogical instruments which were introduced, discussed and practised during the programme can empower the English teachers in their navigating the challenges of multicultural and multilingual education, creating and fostering an inclusive ethos in classrooms and schools thus enhancing the education in Poland.

The programme was delivered in three blocks: a two-day face-to-face training in October followed by a practical block with five live online facilitated weekly reflection sessions, and a three-day face-to-face concluding training in December 2024. The rationale behind the hybrid programme structure ensured that the participants had a chance to start cascading the knowledge inclusive techniques and instruments introduced in October sessions in their local contexts, share and reflect on the experience, get feedback and, if necessary, professional support at the weekly live online meetings with their peers and the programme trainers. The meetings combined the educators’ reflection and the trainer’s input on key professional trainer skills the educators were supposed to apply cascading the programme content.

Overall, 24 educators participated in the programme. Among the participants were English language methodology consultants and English teachers at primary, secondary, vocational, and tertiary levels from across Poland. The diversity of the areas of specialist professional expertise provided for in-depth meaningful discussions, productive cooperation and rational action planning during the programme.



# The Content

The programme comprised three core modules focusing on various dimensions of inclusive practices, supplemented by an additional online content block aimed at enhancing the educators'

professional skills. The entire programme spanned **45 hours**. Below is an overview of the content organisation structure:

## Core Modules

### Module 1:

#### **Creating the Inclusive Classroom (6 hours)**

The content provides the participants with a clear understanding of inclusion within their unique educational context. They become more aware of the issues surrounding inclusion, including the ability to identify those who are often excluded from education and the barriers that prevent inclusion in schools and classrooms. Through self-reflection, participants enhance their self-awareness and critically examine their own unconscious biases and filters. They also explore opportunities to improve the inclusive ethos of their classrooms and schools and gain practical strategies and techniques to create a welcoming and supportive environment for all learners experiencing skill-building activities.

### Module 2:

#### **Dealing with Challenging and Distressing Behaviour (6 hours)**

During this module, participants will work to understand the concept of behaviour as a form of communication and will be introduced to the neuroscience underlying learning and behaviour. They will develop an awareness of how trauma affects both learning and behaviour and enhance their ability to self-regulate in stressful situations. Additionally, participants will explore effective strategies for managing challenging behaviour and learn to use language in ways that motivate learners and de-escalate conflict in the classroom.

### Module 3:

#### **The Safe Classroom (6 hours)**

This module provides an opportunity for the participants to develop strategies to manage their own feelings as teachers and strengthen their ability to self-regulate. They will recognize the impact of secondary trauma and burnout, as well as understand the importance of safety in learning environments and how to recognize when students feel unsafe. Participants will learn to identify the key elements of a safe classroom for both students and teachers, explore ways to create physical and psychological safety in the classroom, and implement strategies for fostering such an environment. Finally, they will gain creative techniques to support students in expressing and exploring their feelings during difficult situations.

## Online Content Block: Community of Practice & Educator Skills Development (10+10 hours)

The series of five live online meetings provided participants with opportunities to deepen their understanding of key professional skills essential for cascading inclusive teaching practices.

- **Session 1. Action planning (2 hours)**

The participants focused on action planning, equipping participants with the ideas and tools to establish effective cascading processes and conduct a comprehensive needs analysis to tailor their approaches.

- **Session 2. Handling conflicts (2 hours)**

The participants explored conflict-handling skills developing self-awareness by identifying personal triggers (“hot buttons”) and distinguishing between needs and wants in conflict situations. They also engaged in hands-on exercises to generate creative solutions and practised verbal techniques to defuse conflicts effectively.

- **Session 3. Powerful and inclusive questions and questioning techniques (2 hours)**

The participants were introduced to the power of inclusive questioning techniques and peer

coaching elements, enhancing their ability to facilitate reflective discussions and encourage deeper thinking.

- **Session 4. Enhancing listening skills for more effective communication (2 hours)**

The focus shifted to active listening, where participants examined different levels of listening, practised acknowledging others to build rapport, and explored strategies for being more mindfully present in interactions.

- **Session 5. Providing positive and constructive feedback (2 hours)**

The session centred on the benefits of positive and constructive feedback, emphasizing the key principles of effective feedback and offering participants practical, hands-on experience in delivering meaningful and supportive evaluations.

This structured blend of in-person modules and online content followed by practical assignments ensured comprehensive skill development, reflection, and practical application for educators.



# Participant Group Profile

The programme was delivered to a diverse group of educators, including 16 teacher advisors and consultants, two university lecturers and six school teachers representing 15 places from nine Voivodeships of Poland: Dolnośląskie (Jelenia Góra, Wrocław), Kujawsko-Pomorskie (Aleksandrów Kujawski), Lubelskie (Lublin), Lubuskie (Gorzów Wielkopolski), Mazowieckie (Siedlce, Warsaw), Opolskie (Opole), Podlaskie (Białystok), Śląskie (Bielsko-Biała), and Warmińsko-Mazurskie (Elbląg,

Ełk, Olsztyn). The participants' professional experience varies from less than three years to more than ten years in their respective contexts. The vast majority are employed as full- or part-time English teachers in primary and/or secondary schools and combine the teaching job with teacher training, school supervision, advising and facilitating English teacher professional development in these educational settings. This distribution is reflected in the charts below:

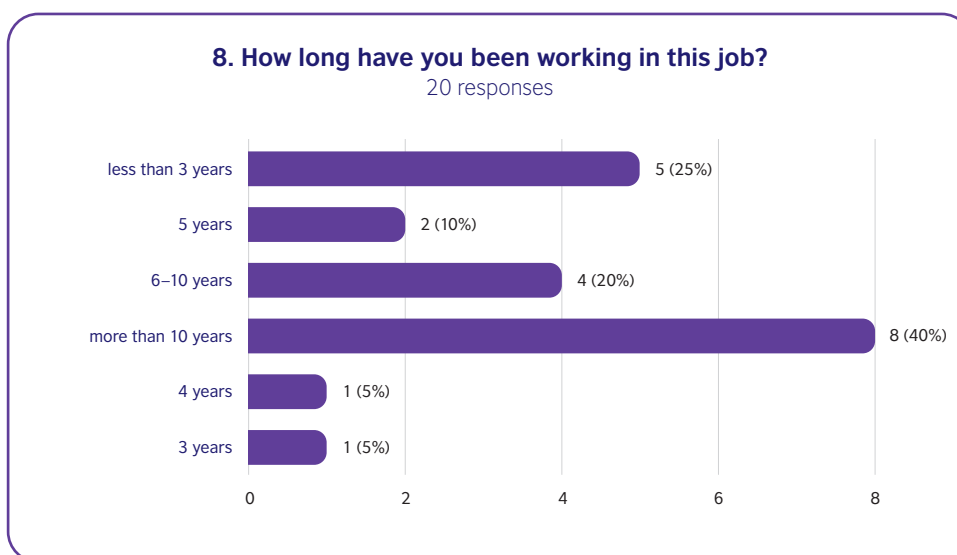


Table 1. The chart shows the professional experience of the programme participants in years.

**13. What kind of schools do the English teachers work at?  
Tick the appropriate boxes**

20 responses

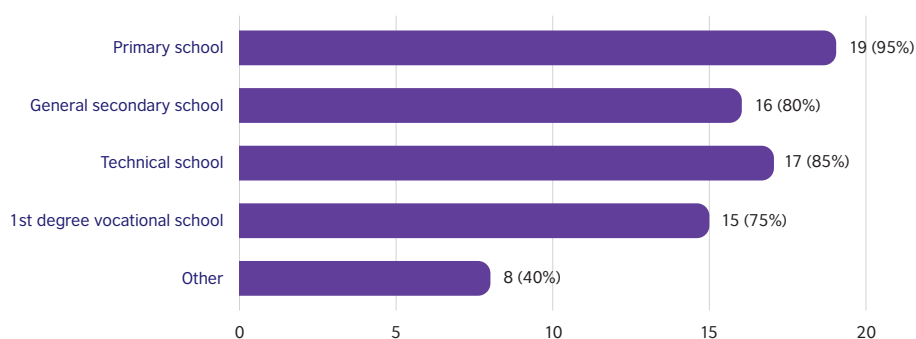


Table 2. The chart demonstrates the diverse professional areas of the programme participants.

**Participants's jobs and responsibilities**

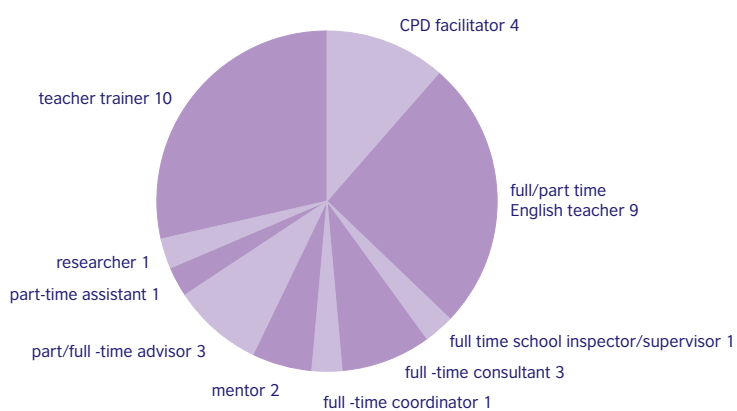
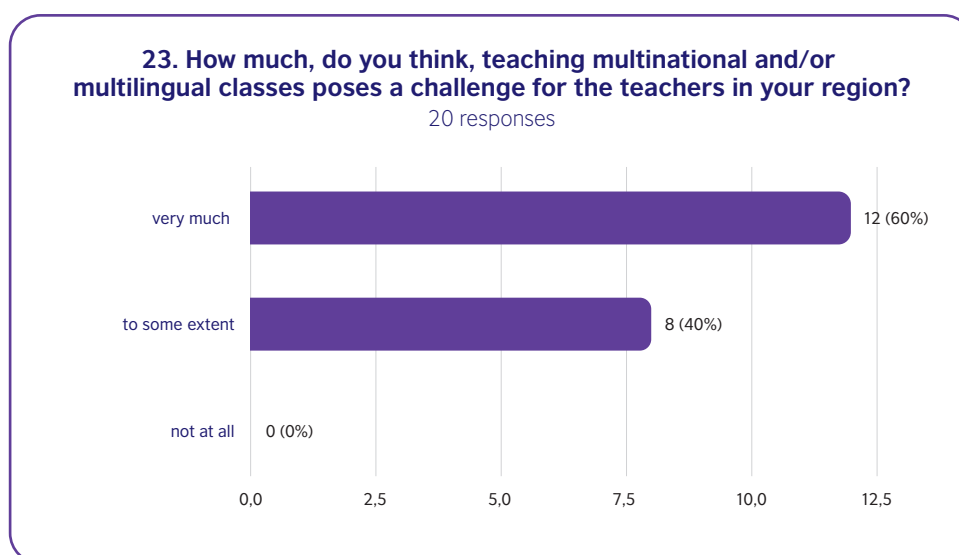


Table 3. The chart shows the scope of the programme participants' professional activities.

## Multicultural Aspect in the Context of Inclusion

In response to the pre-training questionnaire, participants indicated that most schools in their region host multicultural classrooms with students from diverse countries, particularly Ukraine, Belarus, and Vietnam. Eighteen trainees expressed the belief that foreign students are somewhat integrated into the Polish education system and all of them 'understand the Polish language' as the medium of instruction. The educators admitted demonstrating 'respect for all home languages' in their classes by often asking 'students whose native language is not Polish to give the equivalent in their mother tongue' or 'to tell the group about festivals or other interesting activities or daily routines in their country and planning to 'dedicate a significant part of my future classes to promoting linguistic diversity

and explaining how fascinating various languages may be'. However, when asked whether teaching multinational and/or multilingual classes presents a challenge for teachers in their region, 60% of respondents answered "yes, very much," while 40% said "yes, to some extent." Additionally, when asked about the challenges of creating an inclusive environment in schools and classrooms, 50% of participants indicated that it is a major challenge ("very much"), while the other 50% acknowledged it as a challenge to some extent. These responses underscore the significant demand for a teacher development programme that will introduce inclusion as a basic right of every learner and focus on strategies and techniques of working in multicultural and multilingual classrooms.



**Table 4.** The chart shows a need for teachers' professional development in working with multicultural and/or multilingual classes.



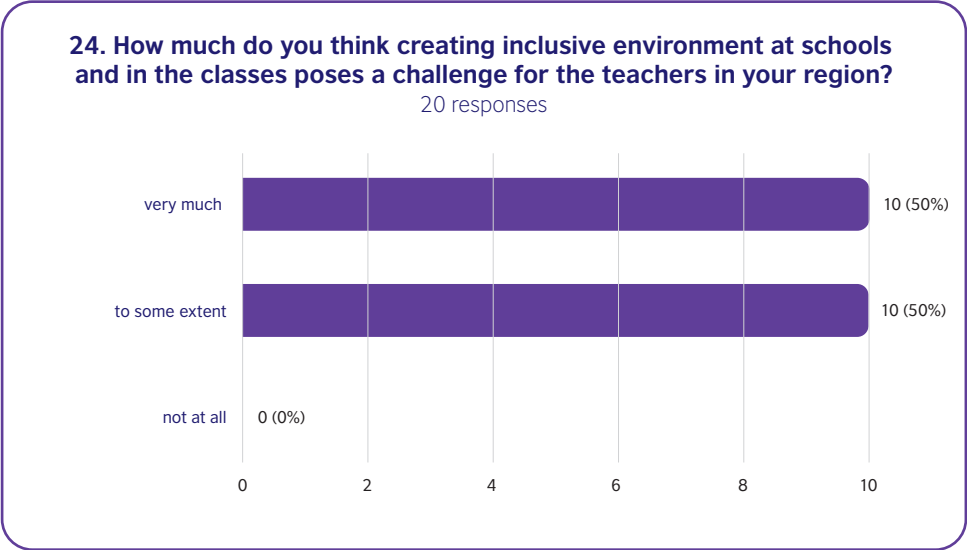


Table 5. The chart demonstrates creating inclusive ethos as a challenge for school teachers.





# Key Insights

## Positive Outcomes

### Establishment of a Professional Network

Over the three-month duration of the training programme, participants had ample opportunities to connect and build meaningful professional relationships. These connections were facilitated through in-person meetings, online live sessions, and informal interactions, including an active Messenger and WhatsApp groups, which exist even after the programme completion. This network provides an ongoing platform for collaboration, idea-sharing, and mutual support. Some of the participants said: *“One thing that I enjoyed about the training is the fact that there was an opportunity for us, teacher trainers, to share experience, challenges and problems”*, and: *“Good to see people (professionals) who care!”*. *“This training for me wasn’t only about getting a certificate!”*.

### Increased Awareness of Inclusion

By the conclusion of the training, it was evident that participants had developed a deeper understanding of inclusive practices. Many had begun to implement the ideas and strategies discussed during the sessions in their work with both teachers and students, demonstrating a tangible impact on their professional approaches. As mentioned by one of the participants: *“Inclusion helps also those who didn’t seem to need it. It doesn’t only promote empathy and social skills but may also show them their talents (buddy system)”*, and: *“I’ll start thinking more about my students’ needs”*, *“The training was packed with useful life hacks”*. *“Knowledge is needed to raise awareness”*.

### The Extensive Reach and Benefits of the Programme

By the conclusion of the training in December 2024, a total of **170 teachers** had been introduced to the key elements of the programme. This was achieved through a **cascading process**, wherein teacher advisors and consultants who participated in the training disseminated the content. The cascading process took various forms, including workshops, presentations, webinars, and discussions within teacher networks.

In parallel, approximately **200 students** engaged in activities promoting inclusion. These activities focused particularly on raising awareness of unconscious bias, providing students with opportunities to explore and reflect on this concept through interactive tasks. Reflecting on discussing the concept with her university multicultural class, a teacher participant shared it was an eye-opening experience for the students who suggested further investigation of the nature of unconscious bias and its impact on attitudes and relationships in a multicultural society.

Further initiatives are planned to expand the reach and impact of the training. These include demonstration lessons, workshops, and meetings within teacher networks. Additionally, a programme participant, affiliated with a Polish university, intends to introduce a course on inclusion within the humanities faculty, further embedding inclusive practices into academic education. This initiative has the potential to reach a significantly larger audience, including more teachers and future educators studying pedagogy.



## Challenges

### Bridging Rational Understanding and Emotional Engagement

One of the primary challenges encountered during the training was encouraging participants to truly engage with the topics on an emotional level, beyond merely discussing them in a rational or theoretical manner. This was particularly challenging given the intangible and abstract nature of some of the subjects covered, such as emotional regulation and unconscious bias. These topics, by their very nature, are difficult to quantify or define with precision, making it challenging for trainees to connect with them on a personal, emotional level. The goal was to facilitate a deeper, more experiential understanding of these complex issues, helping participants internalize and reflect on them in ways that went beyond intellectual comprehension. *"I enjoyed all the 'aha' moments I had during the training." "The session has broken my professional stereotype of distressing behaviour as challenging the teacher authority, but the new perspective has more questions than answers".*

### Expectation for Ready-to-Use Solutions

At the outset of the training, many participants expressed a desire for "ready-to-use" activities or prescriptive strategies, akin to a formulaic approach (e.g., "If X happens, I can do Y"). However, inclusive pedagogies are inherently complex and require a significant shift in mindset. These approaches necessitate a willingness to engage with deeper reflective practices rather than relying on straightforward, one-size-fits-all solutions. *"I'd like to get practical solutions for inclusive classes, I have a lot of students with ADHD, ASD, etc." "I'd like more practical things than theory, more activities, less reflection..."*

### Focus on Systemic Barriers

Participants frequently highlighted the need for systemic changes within the educational framework. Many felt that individual educators have limited power to effect meaningful transformation without broader institutional support. This perception underscored the challenge of balancing individual agency with systemic advocacy.

### Clarifying the Scope of Inclusion

A considerable amount of time was spent addressing a fundamental misconception: that the discussions around inclusion were primarily about language or linguistic skills. The training emphasized that inclusion is rooted in the psychological dimensions of teaching and learning, necessitating dialogue about values, perceptions, and the unconscious biases that influence educators' interactions with diverse classrooms. *'I would like to spot that a student's disruptive behaviour is the result of trauma, not only a desire to play a role ex. of a class clown'.* Recognising and addressing these mental filters is critical to fostering an inclusive environment. *"Now I understand it's not only about different nationalities in the same classroom"*

### Challenging the Misconception: Inclusion as a Mindset, Not an Added Burden

At the start of the course, many participants shared a common misconception that inclusion was an additional component to be tacked onto an already full teaching workload. This view often resulted in resistance, with some perceiving inclusion as an extra responsibility rather than a natural part of their teaching and training practice. The programme aimed to challenge this mindset by highlighting that inclusion is not about adding more tasks or overhauling lesson plans. Rather, it focused on encouraging a shift in perspective – showing participants that inclusion is about adapting their approach to teaching and training, making it a seamless and integral part of their everyday classroom practices without increasing their burden. *"How do I cover the curriculum, if I have to personalise all the time?"*

## Recommendations for Further Training Needs

Based on the insights gathered from discussions with the programme participants, a needs analysis, and feedback from the post-course questionnaires, the following areas have been identified as priorities for future training events:

- **Understanding SEND Learners.** Training to deepen educators’ understanding of how learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) perceive the world and strategies to effectively support them in the classroom.
- **Engaging with Parents of SEND Learners.** Guidance on fostering effective collaboration and communication with parents of SEND students.
- **Further Development of Multicultural Teaching and Learning Skills.** Deepening knowledge of multiculturalism and multilingualism in the classroom, showing both their potential and challenges.
- **Mediation competencies.** Raising awareness of the mediation competencies and benefits of incorporating mediation activities in multicultural and multilingual environment.
- **Mother tongue in a language classroom.** Allowing the use of mother tongue to foster learning in a multilingual language classroom.
- **Teacher Wellbeing.** Professional development focused on strategies to support educators’ mental health and overall wellbeing.
- **Creating a database of lesson plans and sample video lessons.** Assembling and developing sample teacher training materials showcasing inclusive practices and other effective teaching methodologies, which can be shared with and utilized by other educators as examples of best practice or practical materials for developing teacher and teacher trainer’s professional competencies.
- **Inclusive lesson observation and feedback.** Practicum for teacher educators in lesson observation.
- **Integrating AI Tools in Support of SEND Students.** Training to incorporate AI tools in the classroom that might have the potential to provide personalized learning experiences

tailored to each student’s specific needs, helping educators address diverse challenges in real-time.

- **Training on Positive Discipline and Psychological Approaches.** Training to equip educators with strategies for implementing positive discipline techniques and understanding psychological elements that can foster a supportive and respectful classroom environment.
- **Motivation and Engagement Strategies.** Training on effective methods to boost student motivation, helping educators to implement strategies that inspire engagement and foster learning.
- **Duration of future trainings.** Given the sensitive nature of inclusion and the importance of fostering an emotional connection with the topic, it is recommended that future trainings be structured over an extended period rather than condensed into a single day or a few hours. This approach will allow participants sufficient time to process the information and fully engage with the principles of inclusion.
- **Implementing a two-tiered approach for future training programmes on inclusion, aimed at teachers.** The first level should cover the fundamentals of inclusive pedagogies, while the second, more advanced level, should focus on values and skills that actively promote inclusion within the classroom. This approach will ensure that training participants receive a comprehensive overview of each stage, allowing them adequate time to reflect on their beliefs.

It is important to recognise that the understanding of inclusion among school teachers in Poland may, at times, be somewhat limited. This understanding is often narrowly defined, with many teachers perceiving inclusion primarily as support for students with additional needs, rather than as an inclusive approach that encompasses all learners.



# Conclusion

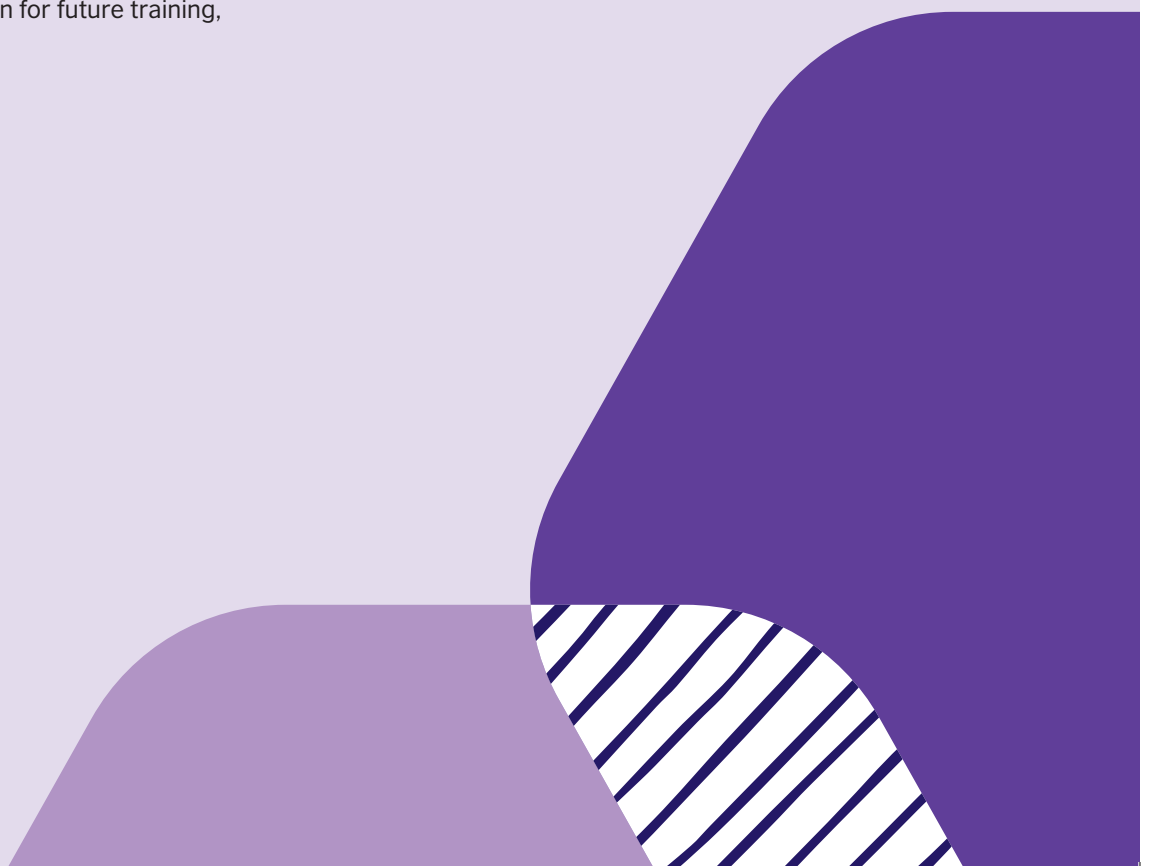
Teaching English in Multicultural Classrooms teacher development programme successfully addressed the pressing need for enhanced inclusive practices within the Polish education system. The programme provided educators with the tools and strategies to create welcoming and inclusive classroom environments. By equipping participants with the knowledge to understand and address barriers to inclusion, manage challenging behaviours, and foster physical and psychological safety, the initiative laid the foundation for sustainable change in diverse educational contexts.

The cascading model of the programme amplified its reach, extending the benefits beyond the 24 direct participants to over 170 teachers and 200 students. The establishment of professional networks and the sharing of best practices has further ensured the programme's lasting impact, creating a ripple effect across various educational levels in Poland.

However, the challenges encountered underscore the complexity of embedding inclusion into education. Misconceptions about inclusion as an added burden, systemic barriers, and the need for deeper emotional engagement with abstract concepts remain areas to address. These insights provide critical direction for future training,

highlighting the importance of fostering reflective practices, advocating for systemic changes, and continuing to emphasise inclusion as a mindset that benefits all learners.

Ultimately, the programme has made significant strides in reshaping educators' perceptions of multicultural and multilingual classrooms. By promoting a holistic approach to inclusion, it has empowered educators to become agents of change, championing diversity and equity in their classrooms and schools. With ongoing efforts and future initiatives building on this foundation, the programme has the potential to further transform the educational landscape in Poland, creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for all learners.





# The Inclusive Classroom

Module 1  
Creating the inclusive classroom

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## Annex 1

### Teaching 194

#### Reason for reflection

The student's progress in the activity

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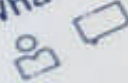
The student's progress in the activity

The student's progress in the activity

## 6 Reflection

Ask the participants to read the instructions in the participant booklet and take time to complete the table. Then divide a few participants to share some ideas and activities. Share participants for their contributions today.

### 6.1 What I take with me



15 mins

Look back through this book to remember what we did today. Fill in this table with ideas and activities from today.

Something I learned today	
Something that surprised me	
Something I'm going to try in my class	
Something that I will use to help me	



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