

Teacher Teams and Schools Become Leaders to Disseminate Innovative Practice

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Essence of the Problem

- ❖ The key focus of the new curriculum introduced in Latvia in 2016 lies on transition to a competency based learning
- ❖ Previous research on the reforms introduced in 2006 revealed that changes enter the classroom at a very slow pace
- ❖ The process of changing the paradigm highlights the following problem: how can innovative experience of teaching and learning be disseminated further?
- ❖ The school needs a community of teachers that are willing to face, implement and reflect on the changes

Teacher as a leader

«The ability of a person to bring about changes among teachers and teaching»

M.Fullan

How is teacher learning organized?

- ❖ Teachers' practical knowledge is constructed by the teachers in the context of their work integrating experimental knowledge, formal knowledge and personal beliefs
- ❖ Traditionally a science subject teacher was educated as a teacher of a single subject (chemistry, physics, biology)
- ❖ In order to make changes happen, teachers have to be immersed in their own and their colleagues' practice during analyzing and reflecting on it
- ❖ The PROFILES project has triggered substantial discussion regarding promotion of inquiry-based science education by enhancing the science teachers' self-efficacy and sense of ownership

Experience from teacher learning through collaboration

- ❖ In the western world different teacher collaboration groups and networks have been operating at least since the 1980's. Latvia took the first steps in this field quite recently
- ❖ In 2011 there was a clear need to seek alternative ways of facilitating dissemination of the new teaching approach, ideas and changes, and sustain the progress achieved during the previous projects
- ❖ National joint collaboration network of schools with innovative experience (NCE, CSME, local municipality, school team – 4 science&math teachers and deputy head)

Network of schools with inovative experience



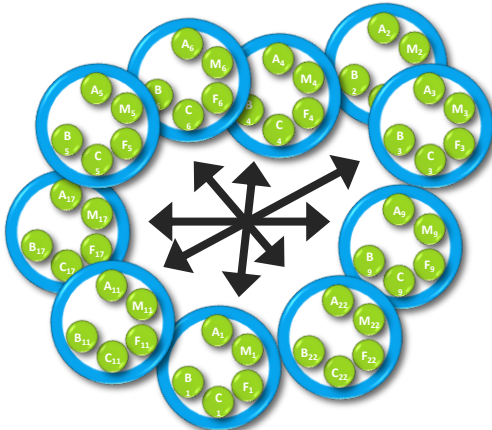
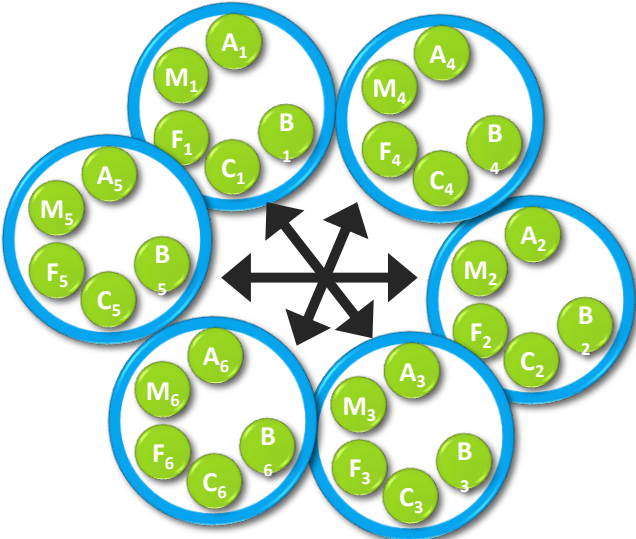
National networking

E X P E R T S

↕
SCHOOL
TEAM

↕
REGIONAL GROUP
OF NATIONAL NETWORK

↕
NATIONAL
NETWORK



The developed teacher learning model within the network

- ❖ If we want to train teachers to collaborate among themselves, we must first address their skills of acting as “agents of change” or leaders disseminating innovative experience
- ❖ A continuous professional learning model (PLM) for teachers with an emphasis on teacher collaboration for professional learning was developed within the teacher collaboration network
- ❖ PLM focuses on joint observation in a real-life classroom and lesson analyses in network regional groups
- ❖ PLM consists of a set of regular workshops over the period of a school year. It is based on the philosophy that change arises from a teacher’s immersion in one’s own and his/her colleagues’ practice (*observe – reflect – write – discuss*)

Rresearch questions

- ❖ What skills have teachers developed through experience acquired from participation in network and CPD developed?
- ❖ What are characteristic categories of lead teachers and schools that actively participate in the national joint collaboration network?
- ❖ What are the main factors that help teachers and schools become real leaders?

Methodology of the Research. Participants

- ❖ The national network includes teacher teams from 22 schools representing 19 municipalities; urban and rural schools; 6 basic education schools and 16 secondary schools; 82 teachers, 22 school management representatives. 480 teachers from 149 schools in municipality level
- ❖ 8 coaches from CSME led workshops, provided feedback to the participants and developed the research
- ❖ Coaches are required to be well trained and prepared to conduct video trainings, multiple live lesson observations, jointly analyzed lessons, focus group discussions

Methodology. PLM within the network

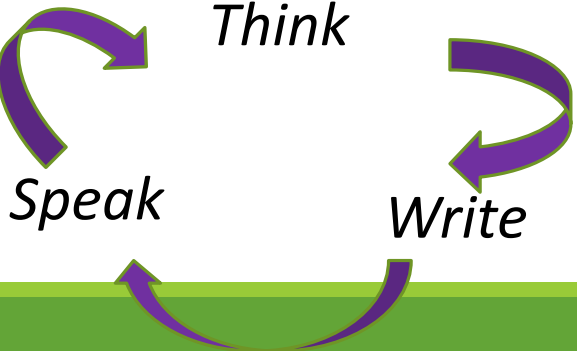
- ❖ The professional development program (80 lessons over two study years) included input sessions on a particular issue, a real-life observation of lessons with joint lesson analysis and reflection sessions
 - in regional groups (5-6 schools)
 - November 2011 – April 2013; 2 cycles of 5 workshops, each – in a different school
 - teacher as an effective teacher; teacher as a learner; teacher as a reflective practitioner; teacher as a leader
- ❖ School and teacher leadership will be manifested through the school team applying the acquired ideas in the local network, sharing experience with regional schools, and transferring the experience from the national network to the school as a whole

Teacher learning model

Lesson plans
Literacy
IT skills
...

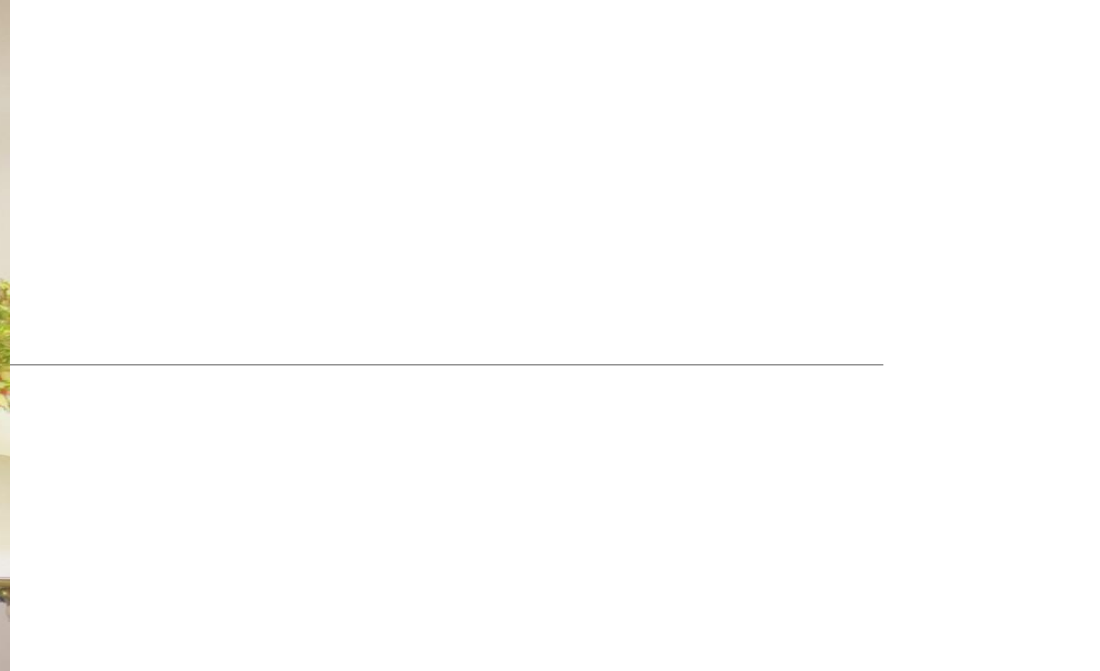


Community
Support
Trust



One day workshop plan

- ❖ Introduction. The goals. The procedure. The rules of work.
- ❖ Input about the focus of the workshop
- ❖ Observing of lessons (groups)
- ❖ Analysis and reflection about lessons
- ❖ Discussions
- ❖ *Analysis about analysis*
- ❖ Summary, conclusions, feedback



Lesson Observations



Methodology. Sources for data collection

- ❖ The impact of the network and CPD developed was analyzed through teacher questionnaires (2012, 74 resp; 2013, 82 resp; Likert scale 0-5 and written comments; R version 3.1.1 is used)
- ❖ Written feedback from teachers after workshops
- ❖ Teacher focus group discussions
- ❖ Documentation of the performance of school teams
- ❖ Structured interviews of school administration
- ❖ Transcripts from coaches' focus group discussions

Results and Discussion. What skills did teachers improve?

Teacher survey (2012, Cronbach's alpha 0.87; 2013 , Cronbach's alpha 0.94):

leading and analyzing lessons has helped them to become a more competent professional and to acquire the skills and assurance that are crucial for a good leader

Teacher skills to analyze and reflect on their practice

(highest evaluation 5 in Likert scale)

Category	Teacher skills	% of respondents
Analyze their practice	Evaluate their performance	43
	Have developed a need for immersion in their professional performance	77
Reflect together with colleagues	Receive feedback	46
	Observe and analyze the lesson	69
	Reflect on the idea and effectiveness of the lesson with their colleagues	59
	Provide feedback and recommendations	28

What skills did teachers improve?

- ❖ 45% of teachers from the survey admit improvement of their readiness to share ideas and experience
- ❖ 52 % point out the development of common values (teaching philosophy) and ownership which contributes to the development of leader skills (*a teacher as a leader*)
- ❖ Many teachers have never been exposed to leadership training, and they have to “break out” of their past practices, because opening of the classroom door to their colleagues has not been a common tradition in our practice

What skills did teachers improve?

Teacher A: *“A heated discussion broke out during analysis of a lesson. At the beginning I got extremely confused – how do I resolve this situation? However, I was able to concentrate and lead the discussion successfully. It was a great experience to learn how to lead any process in the desired direction toward the set goal (in the classroom and collaborating with other teachers)”.*

School deputy heads: *“Teachers have overcome their fear of seeing observers in their lessons because the follow up discussions are conducted in a professional manner and each party is open to learn”;*

“Teacher improvement is enormous! From “ordinary teachers” they have turned into confident classroom leaders with authority on the school and regional level”.

Characteristic categories of lead teachers

Categories	Descriptors
Ownership	Uses appropriate approach and strategies in practice in the lessons Develops new materials and examples according to the new idea
Continuous professional learning	Gets involved in long term learning teams Gets involved in practical studies targeted toward immersion
Regularly analyzes their performance and reflects on it	Accepts feedback and reflects on their performance Takes active participation in AR etc. groups
Readiness to share, openness	Invites colleagues to their lessons for observation and analyses Leads workshops, gives presentations etc. outside the school
Teamwork	Jointly plans, analyses, organizes and evaluates
Takes initiative to lead activities	Initiates and organizes regular teacher learning activities at the school and the region
Self-awareness, confidence	Demonstrates respect to colleagues' feedback

Characteristic categories of lead school

Categories	Descriptors
Learning community. Learning is:	Purposeful Effective Regular, continuous Involvement of most teachers
Collaborative school. Collaboration is:	Purposeful Inclusive, with tendency to expansion
Initiative to share experience	Welcomes colleagues, organizes events Organizes workshops with lesson observation and analysis for colleagues from other schools.

Characteristic categories of lead school

A deputy head: We are learning to open the classroom door, to reflect and not to be afraid if we make mistakes. We will continue to practice joint learning, collaboration lessons, observation, analyses and joint lesson leadership. We will reflect and discuss teacher progress in organizing learning in the classroom. We are certain that 10% of teacher work time must be allocated to efficient professional training.

Characteristic categories of lead school

Coach's notes after leading a workshop at school X in May 2013:

The progress of the school X team is obvious! Teachers from regional schools had a discussion on a high professional level: they asked questions, were willing to immerse themselves in the essence of the process, identify causes of problems in the analyzed lessons and model solutions.

Contributing factors for teachers to become leaders

- ❖ A teacher will grow into a **reflecting practitioner and leader** if he/she takes an active part **in the collaboration network on the national level and in the school team**
- ❖ The teacher CPD model operating **in the regional groups of the national network** has had the largest impact on the development of **leadership skills**
- ❖ Teacher activity, in its turn, in their own developed **local network** has had the largest impact on the improvement of **lesson analysis and mutual collaboration skills**

Contributing factors for teachers to become leaders

- ❖ The outcome depends on the teachers' own learning skills, willingness to get involved, to develop and to balance the individual development needs with the goals and needs of the team if the teacher, acquires ownership of the idea; if he/she accepts it and learns how to apply it in order to be ready to share the experience with others.
- ❖ A teacher L: *Change of thinking and attitude is the key. For it has been incredibly difficult to give up my old stereotypes. However, this year I have more or less succeeded to do that to an extent. It is my biggest benefit because I am not an optimist by nature, and I always tend to see the negative first, and only then I notice the positive. Together we learned to look at things differently. We learned to see the positive and this was huge for me. If you see the positive, it lifts you up and gives you strength to accomplish just about anything”.*

Contributing factors for teachers to become leaders

- ❖ School teams are described as the best facilitators for developing skills to provide feedback and recommendations to colleagues
- ❖ Teachers highlight the role of school management as a factor that has a significant impact on joint collaboration with colleagues
- ❖ Implementation of changes, acquisition of assurance and ownership takes time and a focused goal. School deputy head: *Continuous mutual experience exchange among teachers and piloting different teaching strategies create a lot more stable grounds for permanent changes.*

Conclusions

- ❖ On the national level of the school collaboration network, teachers improve their teaching, reflection and collaboration skills, and this helps them gradually become leaders working with other teachers
- ❖ A school that gets involved in the network can become a center of a learning cluster for other schools. A lead school is characterized by the presence of purposeful, effective, continuous learning activities attended by most teachers, regular teacher collaboration in implementation of changes, as well as initiative for regular organized experience exchange with teachers from other schools

Conclusions

High level leader - a teacher who:

- ❖ regularly analyzes and reflects about his/her own practice
- ❖ purposefully plans and addresses his/her professional development needs
- ❖ constantly develops new teaching materials for evaluation and use for other teachers
- ❖ opens the classroom door to colleagues for lesson observation
- ❖ involves other colleagues in a joint learning process
- ❖ collaborates with colleagues in jointly planning and developing activities within the school team
- ❖ shares his/her experience

Conclusions

The main contributing factors are the following:

- ❖ operation of a network CPD model
- ❖ success of the activities organized by the school
- ❖ strength of the school team
- ❖ support of the school management
- ❖ time for continuity of activity and outcomes as well as teachers' personal qualities and experience



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