



# PESTALOZZI PROGRAMME



**School-based professional development**

**European Workshop**

**Dates**

**04/10/2016**

**Venue**

**Address : Riga   Country : LATVIA**

**Organisers**

**Valsts izglītības satura centrs (VISC)**

Submitted by :

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# Introduction

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The workshop “School-based Professional Development” in the framework of the Council of Europe Pestalozzi Program was held from 4th to 7th October 2016 in Riga, the capital city of Latvia. There were 30 participants representing 13 different countries that took part in the workshop. The workshop was organized by Valsts izglītības satura centrs (VISC) in cooperation with education expert Rolands Ozols who facilitated the workshop as moderator and key speaker along with other prominent guest-lecturers.

During the workshop the participants were able to learn:

- more about different school-based professional development approaches;
- what makes school-based professional development effective;
- how schools make it happen in Latvia;
- how to evaluate school-based professional development results.

## Main issues

When using the term “professional development” we usually think of participation at conferences, seminars, or workshops outside the school. However, it is considered that professional development occurring in school settings such as learning among members of a work team, discussions with colleagues, personal reading and research, lesson observations, or learning from peers (Mizzel, 2010) can be even more effective. In recent years, there is a growing interest for school-based approaches to professional development which are sensitive to the context in which teachers work. (Svendsen & Marion, 2013) School-based professional development approaches provide an opportunity for teachers to focus more on the needs of their students and as a result they lead to better students’ performance. This kind of professional development helps to create a culture of learning through the school. Teachers and school leaders who develop their competences on a regular basis demonstrate to students that learning matters and school is a place where both students and teachers can learn.

### *Different school-based professional development approaches*

There are a variety of school-based professional development approaches that are used within the school community. The workshop was structured around one of them – the number of teachers involved in the professional development and the methods which allow to provide such professional development:

- Methods that teachers can apply individually, e.g., personal reading; using student, parent, teacher questionnaires; students’ immediate feedback; attending courses, conferences, workshops etc.; microlearning
- Methods that can be applied in pairs, e.g., pair reading; using student, parent, teacher questionnaires; students’ immediate feedback; attending courses, conferences, workshops etc.; microlearning; peer methodologies; coaching; mentoring.
- Methods that are applied in groups/teams, e.g., group reading; using student, parent, teacher questionnaires; students’ immediate feedback; attending courses, conferences,

workshops etc.; microlearning; learning groups of teachers; diverse team meetings of the teaching personnel. Another aspect which was taken into account was the geographical distribution of the professional development: school level; municipality level; regional and/or national and/or international ones.

#### *Indicators for school-based teacher professional development*

The workshop focused on the principle that the main place where school-based teacher professional development takes place and where it can be assessed is a regular lesson. In terms of indicators it was perceived as the composition of the five main criteria that should be present within each regular lesson:

- o Goals and expected outcomes for the lesson – presence and ways to communicate to students;
  - o Practice of knowledge, skills and values, e.g., the content part of the lesson;
  - o Each student's level of engagement and the methodological part of the lesson;
  - o Strategies and methodologies used by a teacher to receive feedback about the lesson;
  - o Strategies and methodologies used by students to receive feedback about their work.
- Each of the indicators has different levels of presence during the lesson, but the main criteria for their assessment is the professional ability of the teacher to explain and to respond to three questions – what? (what did I/students do during the lesson? How did I/we do it during the lesson? Why did I/students do this? Or: why did I decide to build the lesson this way?)

#### *Pair and small group strategies to provide effective professional feedback*

##### **Pair and small group strategies to provide effective professional feedback**

There are several strategies that can be used to provide effective professional feedback. The participants practised two of them whilst discussing their professional experiences:

- Praise some points from the information you have just heard; b) Ask a few questions about the information; c) Offer another two or three ideas that could be used for the solution;
- Hamburger strategy – Compliment some points – Criticism or Offer another idea – Compliment some points.

As concluded by the participants, both of them are relevant and can be effective, but their practical use and effectiveness can be assessed only by the user him/herself taking into account the goal which should be achieved during the feedback-giving process.

#### *Diversity of methods to organize school-based professional development*

The workshop was structured in a way so that the participants could learn and experience a set of methods that can be used also working at school. The principle that was used to decide which methods to practice was based upon the general approach of the workshop - to practice individual, pair, small group strategies to provide school-based professional development.

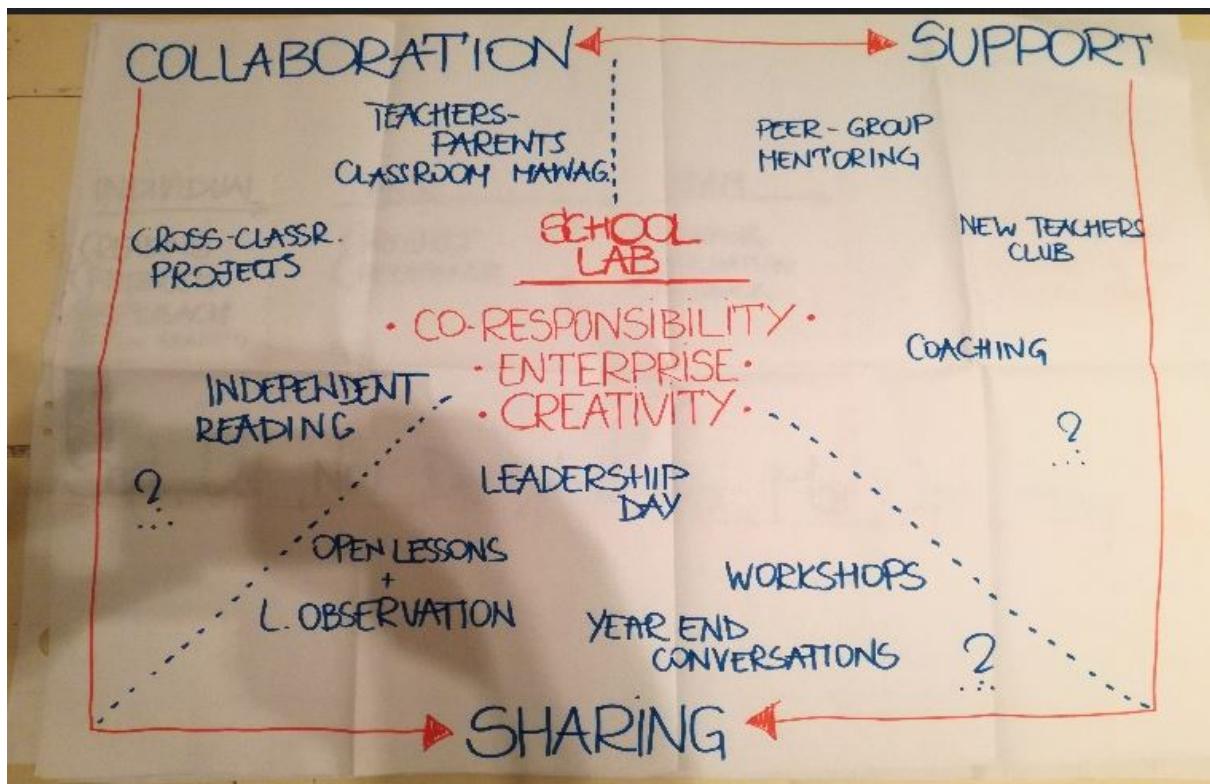
The following methods were used - The World Café (group), presentations (individual), small workshops (individual-pair-group), the national evening of the participants (individual and group), school visits (group), lesson observations (individual-pair), regular reflections about the topic (individual-pair-group) and methods of work undertaken by the participants of the workshop.

# Conclusions

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The workshop was rounded up with the following conclusions:

- o Professional development takes/requires time. It is very often happens that we expect the professional change to take place, but we have no time for it. There should be regular time for professional development for each teacher, otherwise the change is an occurrence, not the achieved result.
- o Teachers should receive professional feedback to develop professionally. Professional school-based development can happen if we have skilled supervisors who assist their teachers to develop professionally or we work to develop professional feedback-giving to each teacher at school. Without professional feedback, result is an occurrence, not the achieved result.
- o Professional development has three steps/levels: individual – pair – group or team. Although professional school-based development can be characterized differently, one way it can be structured is based on the number of people involved and the geographical level it covers (school, municipality, regional, national, international)
- o The most valued professional feedback/development is personally experienced. Teachers normally have too much information about others, which is too general, which is too rarely based on the personal experience, but more on generalizations. It seems that the thinking process of a teacher accepts more personalized experience of him/herself (first of all), then of a well-known colleague/s. Moreover, general information from the research and no matter at national or international level has little influence on the teacher professional development.
- o School-based professional development is not about right or wrong, it is about different ways how it can be undertaken and experienced. The amount of knowledge that the society has accumulated is so large that nowadays to structure it from the viewpoint – right or wrong - seems too inappropriate. Each method, each way of practice should be more focused to respond to three questions – what? (what shall we do?) How? (how shall we do?) Why? (why shall we do it this way?)





24 February 2017