

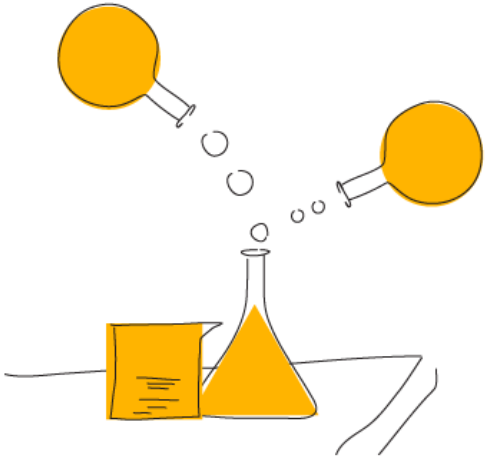


Building a road to quality on the example of professional learning communities

OA STEP BY STEP – WHO ARE WE AND WHAT DO WE DO?



The Open Academy *Step by Step* is a network of experts that empowers educators and child-care workers as well as other professionals, institutions, families and communities to ensure the well-being of every child, provide the best development opportunities and learning experiences, as well as to develop children's awareness of social justice.



Our mission is to introduce, promote, advocate and support innovative and quality practices in education as well as other practices needed to ensure the well-being, development and learning of children and youth.

4 FORMS OF COOPERATION EXISTING IN THE FIELD OF TEACHING AND LEARNING AMONG EDUCATORS (ADAPTED FROM LITTLE, 1990; JOLLY, 2008.)

- informal conversations
- individual assistance
- professional meetings
- professional learning communities



WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY ?

- a social group of new and experienced educators who come together over time for the purpose of gaining new information, reconsidering previous knowledge and beliefs, and building on their own and others ideas and experiences in order to work on a specific agenda intended to improve practice and enhance student learning (Cochran-Smith and Lyle, 2011)

VISION **COOPERATION** **REFLECTION**

WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY ?

VISION

- What do we want to create?
- What kind of a kindergarten/school do we wish to become?
- What kind of a kindergarten/school do we want for our children?



WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY ?

COOPERATION

- creating an atmosphere of trust, interdependence, and pleasant interactions

•openness (all group members are invited to express ideas, thoughts, emotions, and reactions)

•sharing (members offer materials and resources to each other in order to help each other achieve goals)

•acceptance (positive communication with members of the team on their contribution)

•support (recognising strengths and capacities of the team members)

•cooperative intentions (it is expected that all team members cooperate for the purpose of achieving common goals).

(Wald and Castleberry, 2000).

WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY ?

REFLECTION

- Where are we now?
- How good are we with respect to what we want to be?

The goal of reflection is instead of the usual thinking about everyday practice to learn ways to actively ponder teaching and look for new ways to improve its quality.

CHANGES, CHANGES…



- change in PD – in activities and materials but also in knowledge, behavior, attitudes, beliefs

THINGS THAT HAPPEN IN SITUATION OF CHANGES

1. Do something they are not used to and thereby feel **awkward, uncomfortable, self-conscious.**

2. At first, people think about what they have to give up and then about what they will get. People **complain for what they loose**.

3. Feel **lonely**, even though others undergoing the change.

4. People **can deal only with a certain amount of change**. Remember that a certain amount of change is acceptable, but too many changes can be devastating.

5. People are at **different levels of readiness for change**. This is neither good nor bad. Do not label people or judge them.

6. People will realize that they **do not have enough help**. They'll find that they need support. Sometimes you will also find that some of them use more sources of help than you think they need.

7. When the pressure is lifted, people **go back to their old behaviors**. This is natural. Continue to provide support to peopl.

REASONS FOR RESISTING CHANGE

- the goal of change is unclear
- perceived need for change (relationship between perceived strengths and weaknesses of change)
- pon-involvement in change planning
- poor communication about change
- stakes are high (emotional, intellectual, physical)
- inadequate reward
- little opportunity for change with existing values in the organization
- key people do not support change
- inadequate support

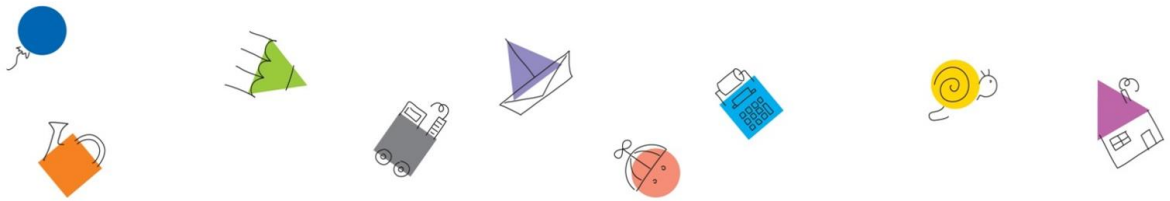
HOW IS IT OFTEN BEING HANDLED?

- using power
- manipulating
- ignoring the resistance
- negotiating
- blackmailing
- persuading
- giving up too early
- blaming others when the change does not happen



HOW COULD IT BE HANDLED?

- maintain clear focus on the short-term and long-term goals
- accept resistance – avoid reacting impulsively, understand the language of resistance
- respect the one who is in resistance - listen with interest to what the person is saying, telling the truth
- stay calm – to analyse the intentions of the person who is resisting
- join the resistance - working together, bending the rules, finding common topics and possibilities



HOW TO MOTIVATE CHANGE?

6 Sources of Influence

Level	Motivation	Ability
Personal	Source 1 Making a personal choice on why s/he would want to change his/her practice. **Examples:** Making choices about what is really important in one's life. Discovering new passions or making new commitments.	Source 2 Having the knowledge and skills of what to change and how to implement the change. **Examples:** Being more capable of producing a new behaviour based on training, reading, watching, etc. where the person develops new understandings and/or skills that make change possible.
Social	Source 3 Providing encouragement and reinforcement from colleagues to make changes. **Examples:** Harness peer pressure. Find opinion leaders who can lead change or new people who can demonstrate new skills. Providing opportunities to engage in professional dialogue with others such as a mentor, or in a learning community. Planning and reflecting in groups.	Source 4 Helping others develop the knowledge and skills on how to support others to change. **Examples:** Teach people how to communicate more effectively, give feedback, provide opportunity and help be more reflective.
Structural	Source 5 Providing reinforcement by designing rewards and asking for accountability. **Examples:** Providing new ways to document performance. Valuing processes not just results. Using evaluative feedback and not just summative. Rewarding through acknowledgement those who contribute to change.	Source 6 Providing norms, materials, budgets and time/space that promote everyone's ability to do their job. **Examples:** Providing standards, principles, examples. Providing materials that support people. Ensuring that people have time to meet, discuss professional development strategies and outcomes of activities.

What about the sources of influence in your case?

Influencer: The Power to Change Anything
Patterson, Grenny, Maxfield, McMillan & Switzler, 2008

WHY BECOME A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY?

- Positive impact on children and families

'Thinking about children and what is really necessary for them, and not what is important for the practitioner/teacher'.

- Strengthening and empowering each other

'In the learning community we have the opportunity to talk, discuss, and think together, while in other forms of cooperation we are more passive listeners'.

- Experiencing ownership and increased motivation

'PLCs help practitioners/teachers to manage their own professional development both by deciding on the area of their practice they want to improve and by deciding dynamic of change. In this way, they change the system in a bottom-up way.'

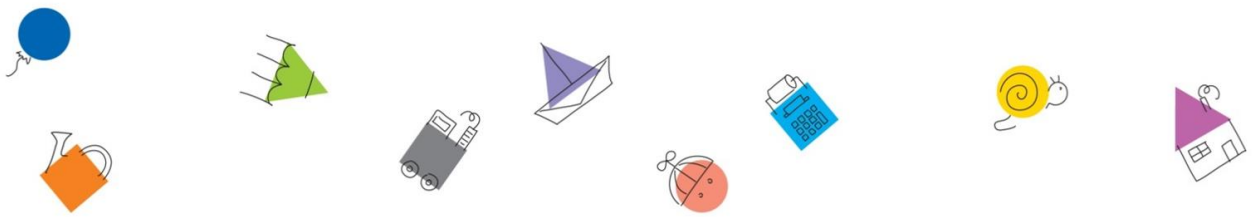
- Developing a collective story

positive changes in the institutional atmosphere

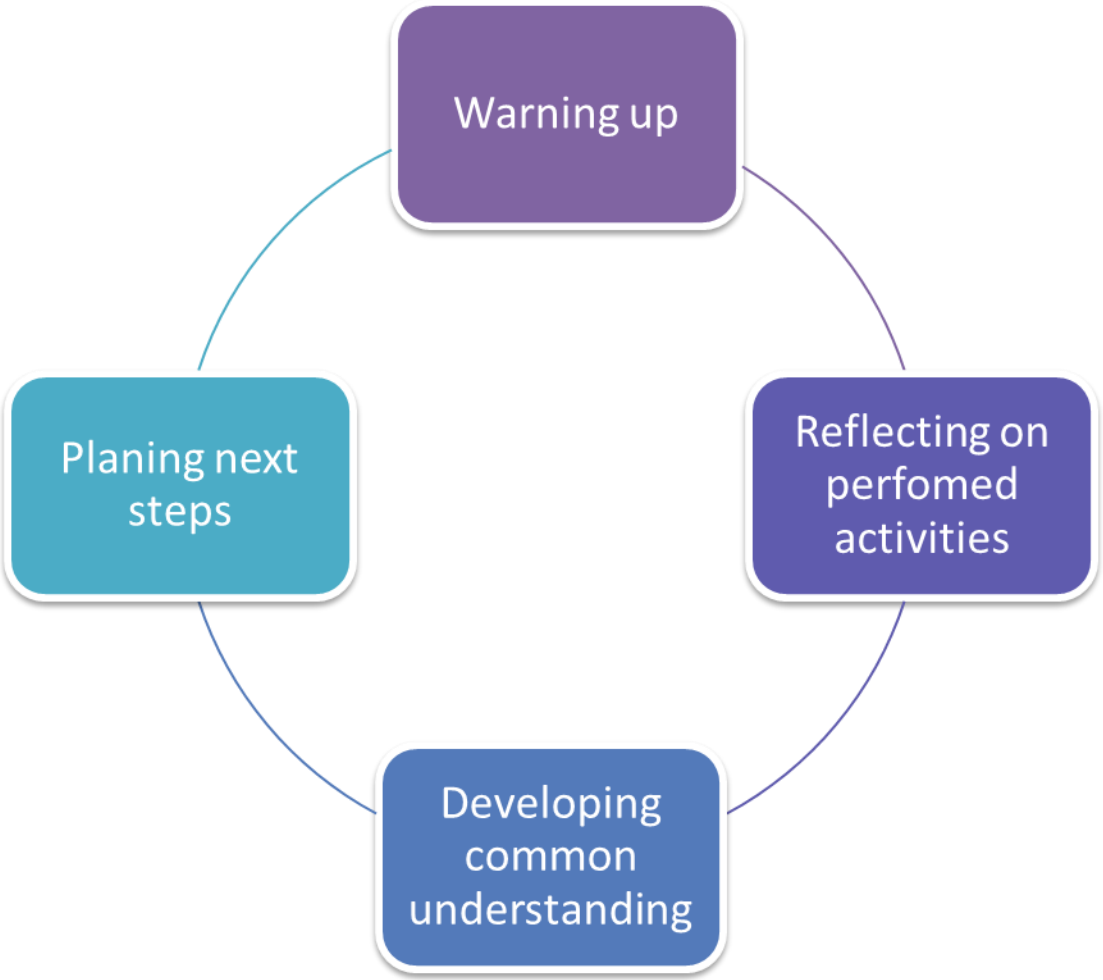
STRUCTURE OF PLC MEETINGS

Expected outcomes of the first two meetings:

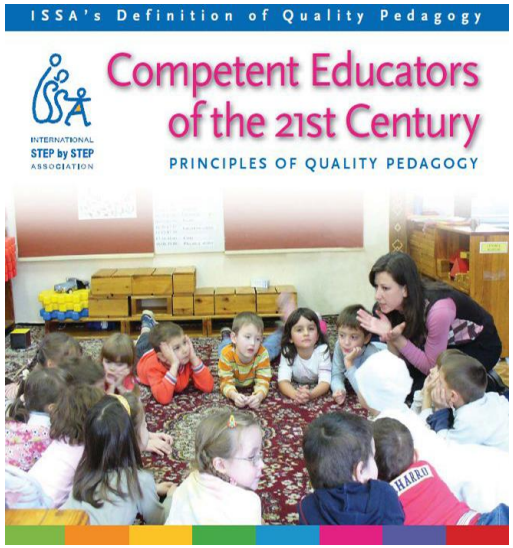
- agreement on the time and place of meetings and logistics
- setting norms of behavior
- determining the priority area for improving the quality of educators' work (according to Competent teachers / educators of the 21st century)
- developing the first individual plan to improve the quality of educators' work

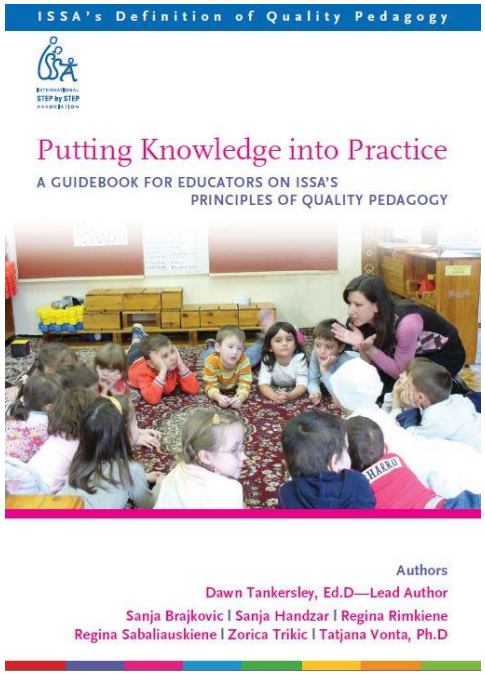


STRUCTURE OF PLC MEETINGS



RESOURCES USED DURING THE PLC MEETINGS







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PHASE II – REFLECTION ON PERFORMED ACTIVITIES

1. The educator who reports speaks briefly about the activities, impressions, dilemmas, and ideas for improvement. (10 min.)

2. Other educators ask questions, seek clarification.

3. Other educators offer their ideas for improvement, problem solutions, etc. (15 min.)

4. The educator has an opportunity to say which proposals she/he found useful. (5 min.)

5. Everybody has an opportunity to share opinions and impressions. (5 min.)

PHASE III – DEVELOPING COMMON UNDERSTANDING

- joint reading of articles, chapters from professional literature or research on learning and teaching
- short workshops on different strategies which can be implemented in the classroom
- very short expert lectures
- collegial observation of the work in the classroom (via video recording or 'live)
- self-evaluation of the quality of work
- joint exploration of problems, including considering and analysis of data, action research

DIVERSITY OF METHODS THAT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL GROUP REFLECTION

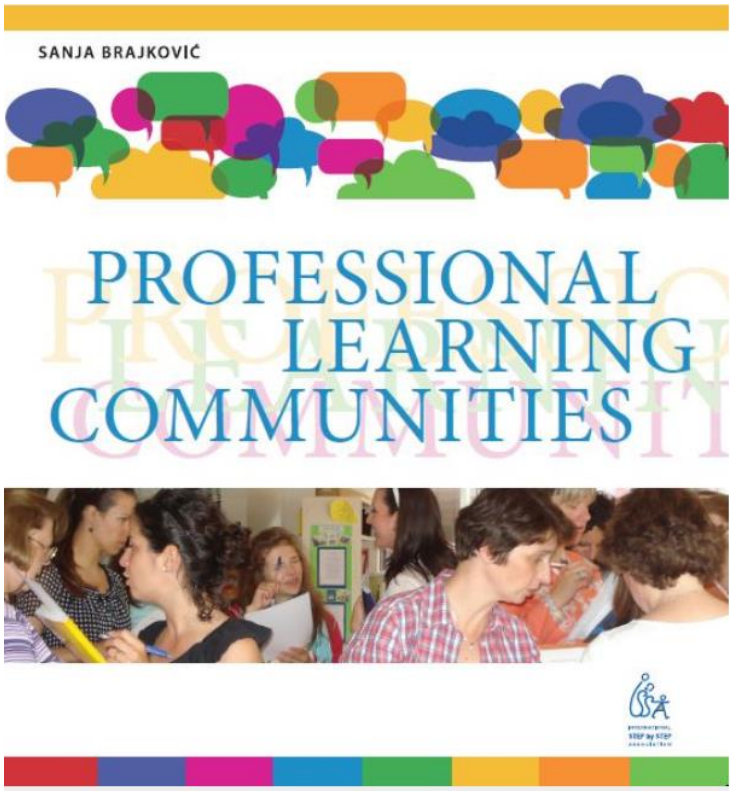


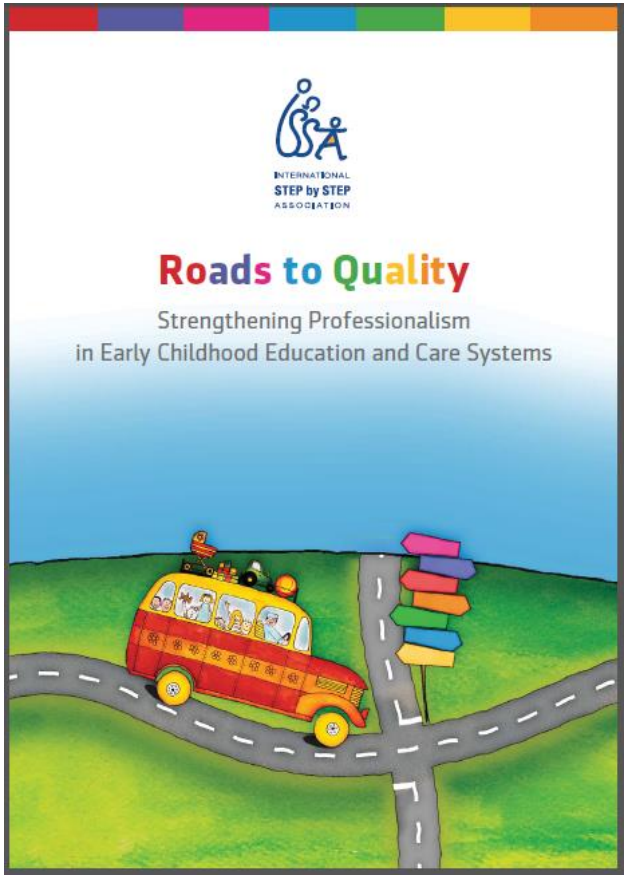
VIDEOCOACHING

Interactie in beeld, interactie in gesprek.

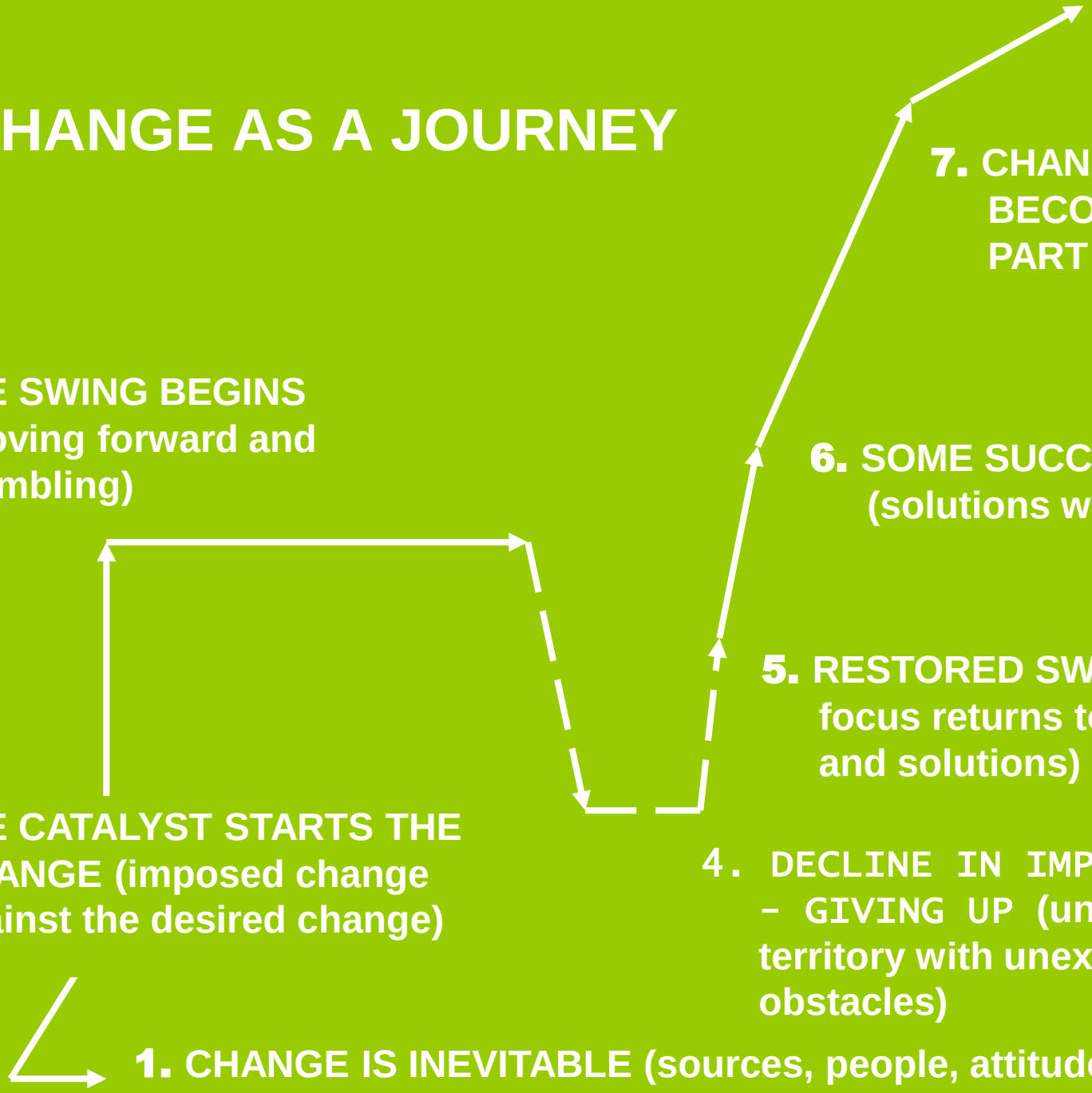
Peer observation followed by reflection

- they differ in the viewpoint of the proccess, basis of reflection, number of participants, regularity and duration of the meeting, structure of the proccess, tools used


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LEARNING
COMMUNITIES


INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION
Roads to Quality
Strengthening Professionalism
in Early Childhood Education and Care Systems

CHANGE AS A JOURNEY



7. CHANGE BECOMES A PART OF LIFE

3. THE SWING BEGINS (moving forward and stumbling)

6. SOME SUCCESS (solutions work!)

5. RESTORED SWING (the focus returns to vision and solutions)

2. THE CATALYST STARTS THE CHANGE (imposed change against the desired change)

4. DECLINE IN IMPLEMENTATION – GIVING UP (unfamiliar territory with unexpected obstacles)

1. CHANGE IS INEVITABLE (sources, people, attitudes)

CHANGE AS A JOURNEY

Steps on the journey	Feelings	Needs
Step 1: **Change is inevitable**	• Excitement • Frustration • Tension • Strong premonitions	• Feeling of need • Advice from expert • Example of success • Possibilites for disscusion • Confirmation of past work • Inspiration
Step 2: **The catalyst starts the change**	• Liberation from the old ways • Increased energy • Fear • Manipulation	• Information • Inspiration • Time • Leadership

CHANGE AS A JOURNEY

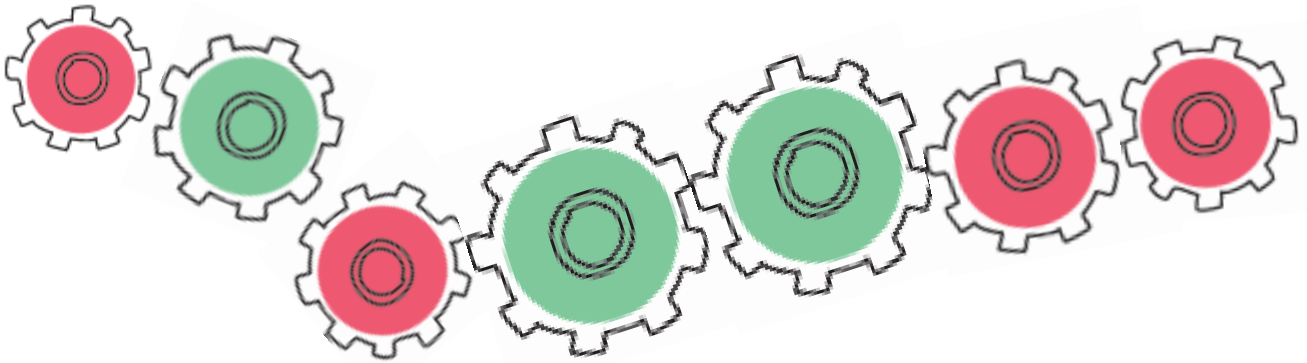
Steps on the journey	Feelings	Needs
Step 3: **The swing begins**	• Confusion • Excitement • Concern about possible mistakes • Insecuritiy	• Recognition of initial efforts • Ability to express concerns and learn new skills
Step 4: **Giving up**	• Incompetence • Fear of failure • Exhaustion • Despair	• Mentoring, leadership • Clear goals and actions • Time • Inspiration • Recognition for efforts • Support

CHANGE AS A JOURNEY

Steps on the journey	Feelings	Needs
Step 5: **Restored swing**	• A sense of commitment • Collegiality of others who have experienced failure • Liveliness	• Encouragement • Ability to share learned lessons • Ability to try new things
Step 6: **Some success**	• Excitement • Competence • Relief • Pride	• Ability to share • Time for planning

CHANGE AS A JOURNEY

Steps on the journey	Feelings	Needs
Step 7: **Change becomes a part of life**	• Fulfillment • Relief • Disappointment	• Official support • PD oppotunities • Correction and reflection



HOW TO MONITOR PROGRESS OF THE PLC'S?

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY REPORT

Date:

Kindergarten/School:

Facilitator:

Number of meeting:

List of members present at the meeting:

	Name and surname	Signature
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		

Short description of the meeting:
Description of meeting structure:
Resources used during the meeting:
Description of the PLC member's report on the implemented professional development plan (successes and challenges):
Observations linked to the group proccess:
Challenges during the meeting:

Evaluation by educators / teachers (average grades)

Productivity	
Orientation to the educator's work in the classroom	
Guidance/Leadership	
Communication between educators	

Educator's suggestions for the next meeting:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Facilitator's reflection:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Signature of the facilitator:

_____

TO CONCLUDE

HOW CAN ECEC LEADERS SUPPORT A CULTURE OF REFLECTION?

- organizational matters – time, space, adequate training for the facilitators
- motivating, giving feedback & recognition
- redefining focus & changing participants/members of the PLC’s
- encouraging networking of PLCs at the institutional & interinstitutional level (new ideas & insights, supervision moments)

TO CONCLUDE

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND PLCs – WHAT'S THE COMMON GROUND?

- **the PLC approach** - democratic and communitarian, vertical and horizontal collaboration and exchange is encouraged
- **inclusive leadership** - the feeling of 'belonging', being able to be your authentic self ('uniqueness'), a feeling of being part of the ' collective mission' of the organization.

RESULT: A diverse team helps participants learn from each other in an enriching way and better responds to the diversity of children and families.





Thank you for your attention!