

T5.2 Inventory and analysis of professional development and models related to inclusiveness

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In view of life-long learning there is a lot of attention for on-going and continuous professional development (PD) that can contribute to changing professionals'¹ competences and behaviour. In our comprehensive conceptual framework we distinguish three main components relating to the *who*, the *what* and the *how* of PD situated within the larger (organisational) context. The first component (who) encompasses the characteristics of the professionals and the context they work in. The second component includes the content of PD (what). Lastly, the third component focuses on the strategies and delivery modes (how) that are used to implement PD. In this transactional model, professionals' knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs are hypothesized to have a bidirectional relation with behaviour and practices, which is facilitated by enactment (the translation of new beliefs into action) and reflection. Although there are numerous review studies and meta-analyses into the effectiveness of PD that have identified some important elements, these studies have not fully addressed the underlying mechanisms of PD. Moreover, systematic research into PD aimed at cultural diversity, inclusiveness and multilingualism is currently lacking.

The current study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge base by investigating European PD initiatives that are either focused at the topic of cultural and linguistic diversity and inclusiveness or that are considered promising regarding the PD approach that is used (i.e. including team-based models of PD, using ICT in the intervention or targeting professionals working with hard to reach groups). A total of 81 PD interventions were included in the inventory covering information collected in ten countries: Czech Republic, England, Flemish Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Portugal. Three main components of PD were investigated: characteristics of the professionals and context, the content and the strategies and delivery modes. First, the results will be summarized according to these components, followed by a more integrated discussion of the main findings and conclusions.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROFESSIONAL AND THE CONTEXT

The majority of studies focused on (pre)school teachers as professionals and, relatedly, the type of institution mostly concerned a school setting. Only in about 20% of the interventions the professionals were working in social services, NGO's or other types of public or community services. In the majority of the cases the interventions were not aimed at professionals working with a specific target group. In case interventions were focused at professionals working with specific groups, this most often concerned generally disadvantaged groups, second language learners or Romani families. All of the interventions were focused on the level of the (para)professional, but in 29% of the cases someone at the management level was included as well.

A more in-depth look at the interventions for different types of professionals revealed some differential patterns. It appeared that interventions for professionals working in ECEC provisions and in NGO's focused mainly on knowledge and skills, whereas interventions for professionals working in primary and secondary education more often included a focus on attitudes as well. In addition, interventions for professionals working in social services more often included an emphasis on beliefs. The results showed that interventions for professionals working in primary

¹ In the current study *professionals* refer to agents working with children or families in informal or formal institutions, which could involve a wide variety of professionals such as teachers, social workers and paraprofessionals.

and secondary education more often (also) included a focus on multilingualism, besides cultural diversity or inclusiveness. This suggests that there appears to be less attention for multilingualism in interventions for professionals working with the youngest children and in social services. Another difference concerns the finding that interventions that were aimed at paraprofessionals or carried out in NGO's showed a stronger focus on practice rather than on theory in comparison to interventions for other types of professionals working in a school setting. Finally, interventions aimed at both paraprofessionals and teachers showed a larger variety in PD strategies. Specifically, coaching and reflection were more common, especially in combination with training.

The majority of interventions was universal and not targeted at professionals working with a specific group of children or families. However, the results indicated that interventions that were aimed at working with specific target groups (e.g., second language learners or Romani children) more often included a focus on beliefs and attitudes, besides knowledge and skills, compared to more general interventions.

CONTENT OF PROFESSIONALS DEVELOPMENT

A focus on knowledge and skills appeared to be the common denominator across the majority of interventions (78%). The most common combination of focus domains involved professionals' knowledge, skills and attitudes (38% of the interventions), followed by interventions targeting only knowledge and skills (24%). Overall, the results showed that the majority of interventions were both theory and practice based, but interventions targeting beliefs and attitudes were more often merely practice-based compared to interventions focusing on knowledge and skills. In addition, interventions focusing also on attitudes or beliefs more often relied on face-to-face delivery modes compared to interventions aimed at knowledge and skills only. Moreover, interventions aimed at attitudes and beliefs as well more often used reflection and/or coaching in addition to training compared to interventions targeted at knowledge and skills only. Lastly, interventions with a focus on attitudes were more often targeted at both the individual and the team, compared to interventions aimed at only knowledge and skills.

About 70% of the interventions addressed cultural diversity, multilingualism and/or inclusiveness. However, it appeared that a focus on diversity and inclusiveness was more common for professionals working in ECEC, NGO's and social services, whereas an additional focus on multilingualism was evident in primary and secondary school settings. Other topics included child development, general classroom quality or parent involvement. Further, it appeared that a focus on knowledge and skills was the most common across all topics. However, interventions aimed at child development had a stronger focus on professionals' attitudes compared to interventions aimed at parent involvement.

Interventions targeted at diversity or inclusiveness more often included a focus on beliefs or attitudes, besides knowledge and skills, compared to interventions aimed at multilingualism. This also relates to the type of PD strategy that was used. Interventions focused at cultural diversity and inclusiveness relied more heavily on reflection as PD strategy, whereas interventions aimed at multilingualism more often used a training approach.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND DELIVERY MODES

Training was still the most common PD strategy and was used in 85% of the interventions, followed by reflection (73%) and coaching (46%). This suggests that often a combination of

strategies is used of which a combination of training, coaching and reflection was the most common (38%), followed by a combination of training and reflection (24%). In fact, 70% of the interventions relied on more than one strategy. Interventions employing a single strategy mostly used training, whereas coaching was more frequently used in comprehensive interventions that also included training and reflection.

Interventions were mostly delivered face-to-face and also a combination with online delivery was rather common, but a solely online delivery of PD was infrequently reported. Following from this, the use of ICT was necessary at least to some extent in more than half of the reported interventions. The use of ICT ranged from organisational purposes (such as e-mail or website for information) to more elaborate and complex e-learning modules or entire Virtual Learning Environments.

The majority of interventions concerned individually focused PD or a combination with a team-based approach, but a solely team-based approach was less common (only 14% of the interventions). The interventions were implemented either by an internal person within the organization (30%) or it was a joint responsibility between an internal and external person (33%). Interestingly interventions that were implemented by an internal person more often included an emphasis on beliefs and attitudes, besides knowledge and skills, compared to interventions where an external person was involved. Also, interventions addressing cultural diversity and inclusiveness more often involved an internal person whereas interventions focusing on multilingualism only, more often had an external person for implementation.

A more detailed look at the patterns of results concerning the different strategies and delivery modes shows that interventions including training, reflection and coaching more often combined face-to-face and online delivery modes. In addition, these comprehensive interventions also more often combined an individually oriented with a team-based approach. Furthermore, the face-to-face delivery mode was most common for trainings, whereas reflection more often occurred using an online mode. Training was more often individually based, whereas reflection and coaching was more often applied in a combination of individual and team-based PD.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

First, the results illustrated the importance of reflection as strategy, which is aligned with the idea of continuous forms of PD. Reflection was more often used in combination with other strategies. However, also a few critical issues were raised concerning the use of reflection, such as having enough time. Another aspect relates to the way reflection is used and facilitated. In order to be effective, reflection needs to be critical and constructive, which requires a good support and facilitation of the reflection process.

Second, the findings showed that interventions focused on changing professionals' knowledge, skills and attitudes often used reflection as PD strategy while focusing both at the individual and team level of the organisation. For instance, interventions focused at cultural diversity and inclusiveness included a focus on attitudes using reflection and a combination of individual and team-based PD. It could be that diversity and inclusiveness are more sensitive topics compared to multilingualism that are likely to elicit (strong) feelings, opinions, values or norms from professionals. This might require more dynamic forms of PD, such as reflection, that involve the team as a whole, rather than a single professional and that incorporate a focus on attitudes besides knowledge and skills to change professionals' behaviour and practices. However, the combination of these three components was not equally common across the different topics of the interventions.

Interventions aimed at multilingualism, for example, more often focused only at knowledge and skills while using an individually based 'training only' approach. However, multilingualism might also be related to (strong) feelings, opinions, values and norms, although people might be less aware of this. The sometimes (strong) assimilationist approaches in (pre)school settings with often a negative attitude towards the use of the heritage language is an illustration of this, hence interventions focusing on multilingualism might also benefit from taking a broader approach targeting professionals' attitudes as well. Moreover, it seems important to establish a shared vision and common understanding on how to best support children's heritage language, which might require a stronger focus on joint reflection rather than only a knowledge and skills based training. Overall, the results showed that multilingualism was an understudied topic in interventions for professionals working with the youngest children. Given the importance of (first) language acquisition and the fact that a substantial amount of children is attending ECEC already from an early age, this points to the need for more PD initiatives focusing on multilingualism.

Lastly, the findings revealed a role for ICT in PD. However, it also seems that having a minimum of face-to-face contact remains important, particularly for reflection. The results of the inventory showed some examples of how ICT can be used for a variety of purposes, such as e-learning activities, video-based reflection, online exchange of practices and online tools for self-reflection. However, it seems that in-depth reflection might be more beneficial in a face-to-face setting, which can be done within a team of colleagues or other professionals. Hence, it seems worthwhile to explore the use of ICT to maximally facilitate professionals' learning, but also facilitate opportunities for collegial exchange in real life.

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