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Introduction

This manual is intended for school and administration teams interested in implementing ProW. It is also intended for: (a) trainers, coaches, facilitators to support coaching activities related to ProW at school and national level, (b) coordinators and administrators to provide an overview of the content and process of ProW coaching to others. Information and resources will be shared from real-life situations as well as through internet resources. Manual roadmap will include an overview of coaching in ProW, theoretical background of ProW for coaches, effective coaching skills, coaching meetings, classroom-based coaching, and non-classroom-based coaching.

The importance of professional development

Professional Development (PD) is crucial for ECEC teachers, allowing them to update their knowledge, to deepen their understanding and to branch their skills. Thus, proving ECEC teachers with continuous PD opportunities can be seen as a key long-term strategy to promote ECEC quality (Hamre et al., 2017).

Several meta-analyses have shown the positive effects of participating in PD opportunities for ECEC quality (Egert et al., 2018; Egert et al., 2020; Markussen-Brown et al., 2017; Werner et al., 2015).

Activity 1

Think about one of your best learning moments as professional.

What did the moment look like? How did you feel?

Professional development formats and delivery modes

PD opportunities can occur either through formal and informal means. While formal PD opportunities refer to structured trainings, informal PD refers to collaboration with colleagues (Mowrey & King, 2019).

Specifically, structured or formal learning opportunities (the traditional approach) tend to occur in structured learning environments with a specified curriculum (e.g., graduate courses, workshops, or courses). Most of the times, these PD opportunities goal is to update ECEC teacher's knowledge and skills. Many European countries require their teachers to attend such activities on a regular basis. This is the most widely used form of PD.

Informal learning opportunities do not follow a specified curriculum. They are mostly individual activities (reading books, classroom observations), collaborative activities such as conversations with colleagues and parents, mentoring activities, and/or teacher networks and study groups. This form of PD is usually not mandatory, but rather at teachers' own initiative, meaning that teachers independently organise the learning process, determine

their learning goals and strategies. These opportunities are often embedded in the classroom or school context, allowing teachers to reflect on their daily practices and to learn from their colleagues on-site.

Staff engagement in collaborative professional practices, an avenue for informal learning, is positively associated with their participation in structured training. Structured training and collaborative practices go hand in hand, creating opportunities for ECEC staff to develop their skills through both formal and informal channels. Studies have pointed to the reciprocal interactions between informal learning and formal PD opportunities (Mowrey & King, 2019; Page & Eadi, 2019). Results from Mowrey and King (2019) indicate that informal connections between leaders and educators can also lead to formal learning opportunities across sites and sectors. Also, Page & Eadi (2019) revealed that formal coaching programs in Australia also lead to informal learning by promoting collaboration among teachers, in informal meetings, discussions and sharing ideas about how to implement strategies learned during the PD course.

PD programs can differ greatly on their key features, namely duration, format, and content. Interestingly, studies have shown that PD opportunities that include coaching have a particularly positive effect on ECEC quality (Egert et al., 2018; Markussen-Brown et al., 2017). However, the available literature has mixed findings regarding most of the PD opportunities key features. Thus, there is no single model of PD that shows clear benefits over the others key ingredients. Nevertheless, the connections to teachers' workplace seems to be a transversal key ingredient in successful PD opportunities.

Working conditions

Activity 2

What are the three most important features of the work environment for your well-being?

Working conditions are crucial for teacher well-being (Penttinen, et al., 2020; Wolf et al., 2018), ECEC process quality (Cassidy et al., 2016; Eckhardt & Egert, 2020; Hu et al., 2017; Resa et al., 2017; Shim, & Lim, 2017), and for the uptake and effectiveness of PD (Bayly et al., 2020; Bove et al., 2018; Connors, 2019; Williford et al., 2017). Working conditions comprise job demands, job resources, and job rewards, as systemized on Figure 1, and detailed below.



Figure 1. Dimensions of working conditions.

Job demands

As working with children is the core of an ECEC job, spending time with children brings well-being to staff. Nevertheless, non-contact time (time without children) is crucial for several tasks, such as planning, exchanging with parents and colleagues, or documenting. However, not all ECEC teachers are provided with non-contact time (OECD, 2019, 2020a, 2020b). This can lead to feelings of frustration, emotional and physical exhaustion, and feelings of guilt, loneliness, and insecurity.

As summarized in Figure 2, teachers can be overwhelmed by assuming multiple roles and tasks. It is common that they spend several hours on various different activities during contact time, have an extremely demanding workload and are expected to take on much administrative. The frequent lack of resources, the elevated number of children they must attend to, the tiredness that results from managing group behavior, from addressing parent concerns, and from accommodating children with special needs, are also important additional sources of stress.



Figure 2. Possible sources of stress for ECEC teachers.

Activity 3

Imagine you are to begin a PD in a school and find that:

Leader is mostly absent and there are no clear guidelines for group work. Teachers develop their own work within classrooms, with no time to meet other teachers, plan or discuss joint activities.

In this dilemma, identify:

- Barriers
- Facilitators
- Strategies

Job resources

Job resources include teacher's collaboration with colleagues, the support they receive from their leaders, their performance feedback and their perceived autonomy (OECD, 2019, 2020a, 2020b) (Figure 3). When ECEC settings provide teachers opportunities to collaborate among them, the staff frequently works together to a shared plan and vision, engaging in frequent discussions to share ideas, materials, experiences, giving and receiving feedback, etc. in these centers, leaders encourage cooperation between all staff members and make assigns responsibilities. Teacher's feedback can also occur on their own classroom and practice, aside from the feedback from their colleagues already mentioned. For instance, teachers can be encouraged to make daily/ weekly notes about positive comments that children and/or families make regarding their work (e.g., make note if a child says she loved the way the teacher read a specific story). Also, it can be useful for teachers to train fixing up SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-limited), which could reduce their feelings of frustration and enhance their sense of productivity and success. Also, actions that promote teacher's autonomy are an interesting job resource. For instance, when the

teacher fixes partnerships with the community around them, their sense of agency can be enhanced and children's experience in the classroom can also be greatly improved.



Figure 3. Job resources

Job rewards

Generally, teachers in the ECEC sector receive lower salaries compared to other levels of education/jobs requiring a similar level of education and training, and ECEC teacher's tend to have low satisfaction with salaries (OECD, 2019, 2020a, 2020b) (Figure 4). Also, there are important inconsistencies across public and private sectors (OECD, 2019, 2020a, 2020b). Careers are often "flat", with limited opportunities for career progression, with jobs in the ECEC sector offering limited possibilities (OECD, 2019, 2020a, 2020b).



Figure 4. Job rewards

Other aspects

Another important aspect of working conditions is job satisfaction, or the way the staff feels valued by society (OECD, 2019, 2020a, 2020b). Overall ECEC staff is satisfied and believe their work is valued by children and parents, but not by society. The caring dimension is much more acknowledged by society than the role ECEC teachers play in child learning, growth, well-being, and development later in life.

Connecting working conditions and professional development

In practical terms, setting the conditions for PD is crucial. Research has shown that ensuring a set of conditions is critical for the success of PD opportunities, as summarized in Figure 5 and as follows:

- Having paid time for professional development is of essence (Bove et al., 2018)
- A positive school climate helps teachers to make the most out of PD (Bayly et al., 2020)
- ECEC staff whose salary covered basic expenses is more likely to collaborate in PD opportunities (Mowrey & King, 2019)
- Teachers with low levels of work-related stress and high levels of autonomy are more likely to engage in PD opportunities (Bayly et al., 2020; Mowrey & King, 2019)
- Centers implementing high quality collaborative procedures are more likely have staff with collaborative relationships (e.g., exchange of resources among teachers) (Schilder, Broadstone, & Leavell, 2019)



Figure 5. Important aspects to take into account when setting the conditions for PD

Five key features that make PD effective

A conceptual framework for effective PD suggests five key features that make professional development effective—content focus, active learning, coherence, sustained duration, and collective participation (Barr et al., 2015; Desimone & Garet, 2015) (Figure 6). Evidence supporting the five features comes from cross-sectional studies longitudinal studies, and literature reviews of qualitative and quasi-experimental studies. Further, some recent randomized control trials have documented the success of such PD across different ages and subjects.

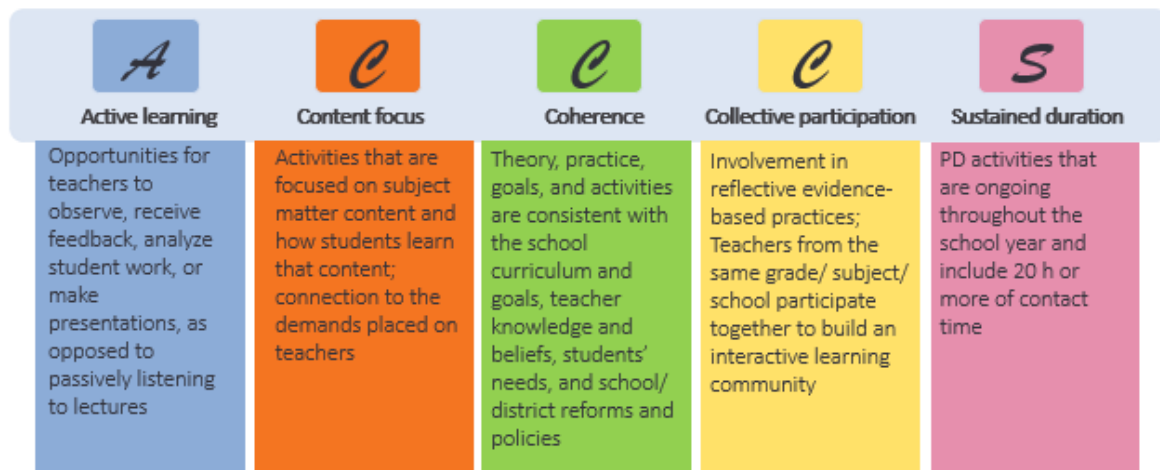


Figure 6. Framework for effective PD.

Active learning

Active learning refers to opportunities teachers have to observe, receive feedback, analyze student work, or make presentations, as opposed to passively listening to lectures. It implies engaging learners in actually doing things and thinking about the learning experience, often involving group work and demanding learners to engage in higher-order thinking. It includes a practical component and dynamic learning approaches, building on learners' active involvement (Hodges, 2018).

Active learning integrates three primary components:

- Communication of information and ideas usually consists of students receiving content (via reading, direct instruction, etc.). Nevertheless, students should also be engaged in their own process of learning via activities and discussions.
- Learning experiences can then be divided into two types: a) "Doing" experiences, during which students participate and attempt the skill or activity we want them to learn (e.g., attempting to moderate a group discussion about kindness) and "Observing" experiences, during which students observe something related to the topic they are learning about (e.g., a video of a teacher brainstorming with children about what being kind means)

- Reflection, consisting of providing students with opportunities to reflect on their learning as individuals or in discussion with others. These reflection-based activities make room for important connections between the learning environments and practical support of student metacognition (“thinking about thinking”) within instructional activities.

Content Focus

Content focus has been suggested as an important feature of PD (e.g., Pak et al., 2020). Content focus should be adjusted to local needs and to teacher’s daily activities (Pak et al., 2020). Thus, activities should have connections to the demands placed on teachers on their daily experiences and should focus on a specific content and on how students learn that content. It is crucial that teachers have the opportunity to reflect regularly on real day-to-day practices, on the content they have to share and on the demands they have to respond to. Also, practice should be integrated into theories and goals.

Coherence

Theory, practice, goals, and activities should be consistent with the school curriculum and goals, teacher knowledge and beliefs, students’ needs, and school/ district reforms and policies. Responsiveness to the context/setting (centre-embedded) must be guaranteed. Also, it is very important to strengthen teamwork.

Collective participation

Collective participation refers to teacher’s involvement in reflective evidence-based practices. For instance, ECEC teachers from the same school can collaborate to build an interactive learning community. For an effective collective participation, several aspects should be minded: establishing positive relationship between mentors/consultants and teachers; having specific feedback and/or individual guidance; asking for advice should be encouraged. Team collaboration should be encouraged.

Sustain duration

PD activities that are ongoing throughout the school year and include 20 h or more of contact time seem to be particularly positive opportunities.

The importance of relationships and collaboration

Team collaboration and the relationship between mentors/consultants and teachers is of essence. Team collaboration comprises joint time (including social), opportunities for joint discussion and reflection, and opportunities for sharing. Relationships between mentors and teachers should be based on respect and active listening.

Respect

Showing respect through communication is key to developing relationships, career progression and making the most of the work environment (Grover, 2014; Rogers, 2018; Rogers & Ashforth, 2014;). Whether you're pitching an idea, or just engaging in regular conversation with a director or peer, respect and communication are essential — and not just in terms of cultural practice, but in terms of common courtesy and making connections.

Here are a few tips for workplace communication that's both successful and respectful:

- Practice politeness, courtesy and kindness.
- Listen graciously. Be mindful that although it may be tempting to do a lot of talking, taking the time to listen is paramount.
- Avoid negativity. In the workplace, different ideas can arise, and sometimes it can be frustrating. However, it's not acceptable to insult or make fun of a colleague's idea. We can instead work on a constructive way to share our point of view and collaborate to address these issues.
- Talk TO people, instead of ABOUT people. If there is a problem with a colleague, the best way to address it is head-on. Sometimes, to avoid confrontation, we may tend to hold on to our dissatisfaction or share our feelings with a third party. The best way, however, is to clarify the problem that is causing discomfort directly with the person involved, constructively and respectfully.
- Don't overcriticize. Give specific and constructive feedback is important for people to grow. Focus on the positive and on aspects that could be improved.
- Treat people fairly and equally.
- Be emotionally empathetic. Try to be aware and acknowledge others' feelings, pick up on their cues and practice empathy.
- Value others' opinions. A variety of ideas, perspectives, backgrounds, and points of view is what makes a workplace multifaceted and push progress. Thus, make sure to value different opinions and encourage others' expression.

Active listening

Activity 4

In pairs, each person sits with their backs to each other. Participant 1 is given a simple picture. Participant 2 should not see it, and should have a blank sheet of paper and a pen/pencil. Participant 1 tries to describe the picture so Participant 2 can draw it. The activity can last up to 5 minutes. Participant 2 can ask any questions. The goal is to practice the skill of asking questions to seek initial information about the picture, listening to the answers, clarifying their understanding, and seeking further information. The activity can be conducted again, after a brief reflection, with participants changing roles (participant 2 now describes the picture and participant 1 tries to draw it and asks questions).

Example of picture:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/13A4nB_ijGS2Mj8zFAoDe_y5l57A1CJbv/view?usp=sharing

Communication skills, namely one's ability to clearly communicate ideas, are of key importance in the workplace. A critical aspect of communication is active listening, a soft skill that not only helps retain instructions, but also helps to build and maintain relationships (Robertson, 2005; Jonsdottir & Fridriksdottir, 2020).

A person with good active listening skills is able to focus completely on a speaker, understand and respond thoughtfully to the received message. Active listeners use verbal and non-verbal strategies to show the other person that they are attentive and interested, without following a script: their response is contingent to what the other person has said. Practice is often needed to improve the active listening skills, and these verbal and non-verbal techniques can help enhance this skills.

Non-verbal active listening skills:

- Nod. This hints the speaker, in a helpful and supportive manner, that what he/she is saying is understood and the message received.
- Smile. This tells the speaker you agree or are happy about the message they are conveying. It helps the speaker feels comfortable and encourages him/her to continue.
- Avoid distracted movements. Movements such as looking at the phone or watch can be interpreted by the speaker as a lack of focus, which can make the speaker feel uncomfortable.
- Maintain eye contact. Keep a natural gaze, nodding and smiling, conveys encouragement to the speaker.

Verbal active listening skills:

- Paraphrase. Summarize the key message of the speaker shows an actual understanding of its meaning. Additionally, this is an opportunity for the speaker to clarify or expand.
- Ask open-ended questions. This shows the listener understands the message and guides the speaker into sharing additional information.
- Ask specific probing questions. These questions elicit the speaker to narrow a broad topic or to provide more details about the shared message.
- Use short and positive verbal affirmations. This will make the speaker feel comfortable and shows involvement and understanding.
- Display empathy. When one shows compassion, the speaker understands that their emotions and feelings are recognized.
- Discussing comparable situations. This will communicate to the speaker that his/her message is understood, and it also helps building relationships.
- Recall previously shared information. This tells the speaker the other person listens carefully, retains information and links previous with new information.

Activity 5

In a quiet place, think of a specific discussion that you are regularly involved in (e.g., weekly meeting with a work colleague, daily family time around the dinner table). Imagine entering this discussion with the intention of actively listening first rather than being the first to do the speaking (e.g., asking questions to draw out more information, to clarify, and to confirm the meaning of what you are hearing; leading with a question such as "Any news?"). Keep rehearsing this image in your mind until you can easily visualize yourself listening actively to the other person. Once you've got a clear mental image of listening actively, reflect on the following questions:

- How would your relationship with that person(s) change if you regularly listened first?
- How would you change if you regularly listened first?

Record your thoughts on the notepad.

Finally, think about the next time you'll meet that person(s) for a regular discussion.

- What is one practical action that you can take at the start of your next discussion to listen to them first and allow them to speak?

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