



ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ, ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ  
ΑΘΛΗΤΙΣΜΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΝΕΟΛΑΙΑΣ



ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΙΚΟ ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ  
ΚΥΠΡΟΥ

# TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMME

**A GUIDE FOR**  
PLANNING | IMPLEMENTATION | SUPPORT





# TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMME IN SCHOOLS

**A GUIDE FOR**  

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PLANNING  

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IMPLEMENTATION  

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SUPPORT  

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CYPRUS PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE, 2022

ISBN 978-9963-0-9210-9

## Citation:

Eracleous, M., Kouppanou, A., Paparistodimou, E., Pitzoli, M., Savva, P., Stavrou, C., & Hadjitheodoulou-Loizidou, P., (2022). *Teachers' Professional Learning Programme in Schools. A Guide for Planning, Implementation and Support*. Nicosia: Cyprus Pedagogical Institute.



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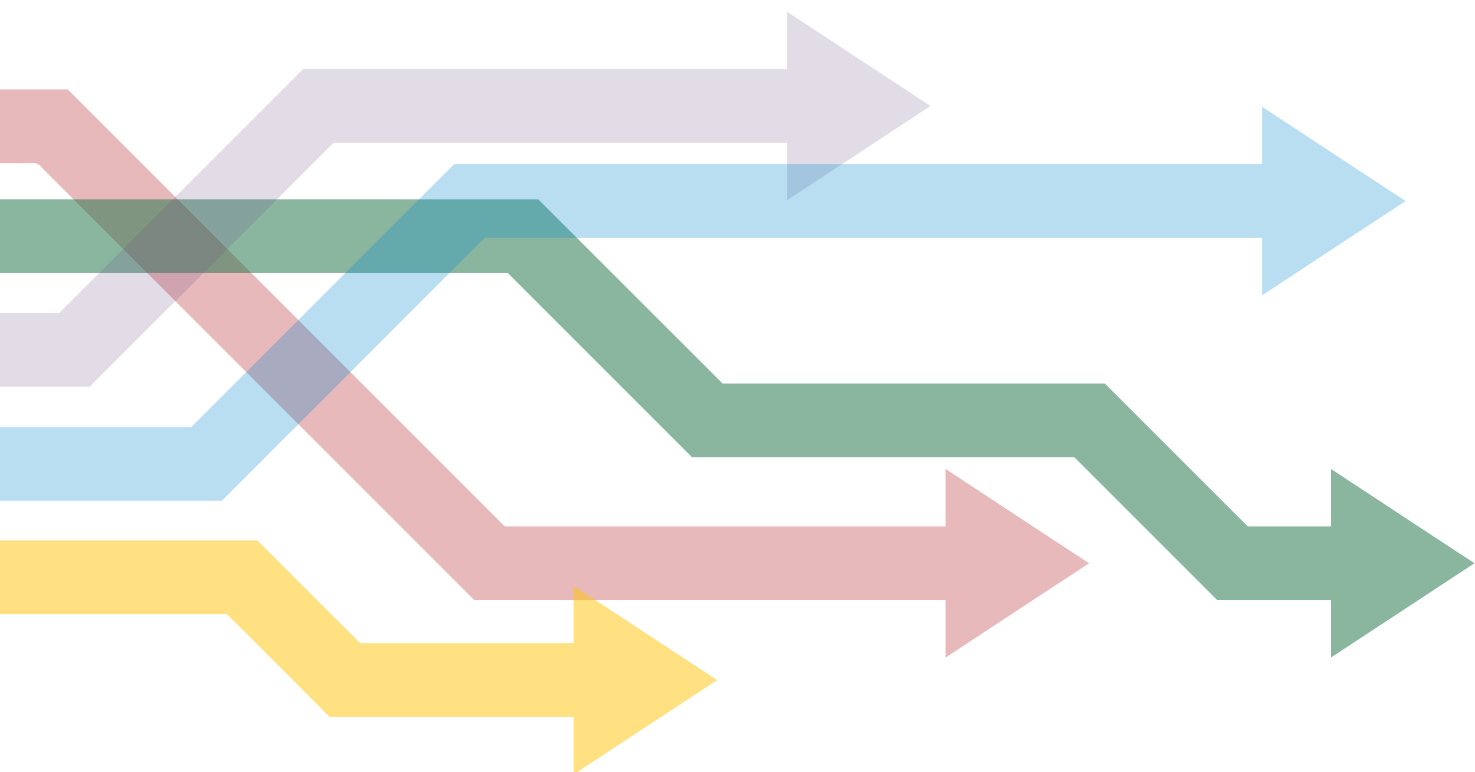
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# Foreword

Professional learning constitutes one of the main policies of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth to modernize our educational system and improve the role of the teacher as an active professional.

Based on the relevant Decision of the Council of Ministers (d. 19/08/2015), the teachers' professional learning is organized and coordinated by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, which is the official implementing body for this policy. The shift from the principles and components of teacher training and professional development, to those of professional learning, indicates a substantial transformation that mandates the teacher to be at the centre of of his/her learning process, responsible for

the transformation of his/her teaching practice and his/her professional identity.

Professional learning is promoted, mainly, within the school, based on the particular needs of teachers and in relation to the specificities of the school unit. Each school chooses a topic of focus, based on the needs of its teachers for professional learning and the specific situation (specific setting of the school, student population, parents, etc.) the preparation and materialisation of the Action Plan for professional learning is carried out through the specified processes of needs analysis, training and materialisation of the Action Plan for the teachers' professional learning, as well as the reflective reporting of the implementation.



It is recommended that the Action Plan for Professional Learning has common goals with the wider School Unit Improvement Plan, of which it is a constituent part. The schools participating in the intensive Professional Learning Support Programme (PLSP) receive support from officers of the Pedagogical Institute, while the rest of the schools rely on their own resources for the planning and implementation of the programme.

The aim of the Professional Learning Programme is the development and implementation of an Action Plan, that will meet the training/ learning needs of teachers within the school unit and is based on the needs and particularities of each school. In addition, school teachers are required to undertake actions thus applying theory to practice. This gives the opportunity for the creation of synergies among teachers and transforms the

The Guide which you hold in your hands is intended to support your work by providing guidance in the planning, implementation and evaluation of a professional learning programme.

Through the different perspectives presented in each section, you will learn about the history of the professional learning policy in the Cypriot education system and internationally, the specific principles of an effective professional learning programme and the process of reflection, which is a fundamental requirement of success. Moreover, the sections present the stages of planning and implementation of the programme, in addition to providing a detailed description of participant actions and the tools that can be used at each stage of planning and materialisation of the programme. Aiming to provide an accurate depiction of a professional learning programme, the Guide is complemented not only by literary references, but also by the experiences of teachers who have implemented the programme as illustrative examples.

I welcome the publication of the Guide and hope that it will be used creatively in your daily work, offering new horizons for your educational philosophy and practice.

**Dr. Athena Michaelidou**  
Director of the  
Cyprus Pedagogical Institute

# Introduction

Since 2015, a pathway of continuous planning, implementation and evaluation has led to the new policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth for the lifelong professional learning of educators in Cyprus.

The Teachers' Professional Learning policy is based on research data and effective practices that call for the contextualised learning of teachers, that is learning which occurs within the school setting and takes into account the specific needs of teachers and the syllabus they are required to teach, as well as the professional learning communities in which they participate or may create. Such an approach encourages the continuous participation of teachers in enriched learning opportunities, in differentiated educational

plans and applications, but also in reflective practices that shape both their work as well as their professional identities.

The active involvement of teachers, through decision-making and actions that determine the direction, planning and application of their learning demonstrates a clear emphasis of the professional learning policy. To this end, each school focuses on a topic that concerns its teachers and seeks through the preparation of a relevant Action Plan for Professional Learning – which constitutes part of the wider School Unit Improvement Plan– to create learning opportunities for teachers, thus allowing the differentiation of their daily practice, but also contributing to the improvement of student learning outcomes.



The Guide you have in your hands is intended to support your work by providing guidance in the planning, implementation and evaluation of a professional learning programme at your school. With this perspective, each section of the Guide seeks to focus on a separate aspect of the programme and aims to:

- Briefly outline the *history of the professional learning policy* in the Cypriot educational system and internationally (Section 1)
- Discuss *the specific principles* of an effective professional learning programme, which can *also serve as pillars and criteria for the planning, implementation and reflection* processes of the programme (Section 2)
- Outline *the programme's pathway*, with a detailed presentation of the stages of planning and implementation (Section 3)
- Clarify how programme participants can contribute in accordance to their role, such as *the coordinator (school), the teachers (school), the school principle and the programme facilitator* (Pedagogical Institute) (Section 4)
- Discuss *the tools* that can be used at each stage of planning and implementation of the programme (Section 5)

- Support *the planning and implementation of a professional learning programme in all schools*, including schools which are part of the Professional Learning Support Programme of the Pedagogical Institute
- Encourage teachers who wish to organize their professional learning *on an individual level*, even if it is only applicable to them alone and their classes.

This Guide is the result of literature research but also of the experience accumulated from years of implementing the Professional Learning Support Programme. The Guide is also a consequence of the reflection of the Pedagogical Institute itself on the philosophy and the ways of designing and implementing the Programme. For this reason, you will come across relevant examples, descriptions and tools that seek to clarify the relevant theory and research, and make the pathway of a programme discernible. As part of the dynamic process of continuous reflection and improvement, we encourage you to send your suggestions regarding the use of the Guide, but your general comments on the planning and implementation of professional learning, to the Professional Learning Programme e-mail address <sup>1</sup>.



# 1

PROFESSIONAL  
LEARNING IN THE  
CYPRUS  
EDUCATIONAL  
SYSTEM

# 1 PROFESSIONAL IN THE CYPRUS EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

*The shift from training and professional development to professional learning constitutes the teacher an active learner.*

Teachers face dozens of questions and dilemmas during their professional lives, while they are continuously required to make decisions on issues of teaching, methodology, classroom administration, etc. A professional learning programme that recognizes this circumstance, will seek to include structured active learning, opportunities, as well as processes, actions and activities that will increase the professional knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers so that values and beliefs are altered whilst also improving student learning (Bleicher, 2014). The transition from teacher training and professional development - is offered by an external agent, through pre-designed programmes

- towards professional learning constitutes the teacher as an active learner who transforms his/her teaching practice (Easton, 2008). This shift in terminology is accompanied by a shift towards professional learning models that are characterized by an increased professional autonomy and aim to mobilize teachers and make a positive change in their practice (Kennedy, 2014). With this reasoning, therefore, changes are made in the philosophy, as well as in the policy related to the professional learning of teachers in Cyprus, and thus, from 2015, this policy is established, as explained in the subsection below.

## 1.1. A new view of professional learning

Teacher training in Cyprus has focused for years on the development and delivery of training programmes through conferences, workshops and centrally-organized trainings (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015; Hadjitheodoulou-Loizidou et al., 2015), whilst the evaluation of these actions focused on the degree of satisfaction of the participants. However, this approach prevented the identification of which of these actions actually had a positive effect on teachers' work (Guskey, 2002).

In the period 2011-2014 the Pedagogical Institute sought the develop and offer School Based Seminars. This focus was based on the model of Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002), according to which reflection and mobilisation play a critical role in teacher change (Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, 2013).

Subsequently, in the school year 2014-2015 an attempt was made, within the framework of the School Based Seminars, to apply action research methodology, under the scientific supervision of Professor Sofia Avgitidou (University of Western Macedonia), in a first small-scale setting, with the participation of thirteen (13) schools of Primary, Primary and Secondary General Education (Avgitidou, 2015a), aimed at transferring the learning process

of teachers in their environment of action, i.e. school.

At the same time, in March 2015, in the context of educational reforms in the Cypriot education system, the Teachers' Professional Learning Scientific Committee adopted, to a large extent, the conclusions and the reasoning of this first application (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015). The report submitted by the Scientific Committee led to the decision of the Council of Ministers (2015) for the establishment of professional learning, according to which the school becomes the centre of training and the Pedagogical Institute the official training body.

The pilot implementation that followed and the deliberations of the Monitoring Committee on the various aspects that were included in the decision of the Council of Ministers of 2015, led to a request to the European Commission's Committee of Experts for technical assistance. The report submitted by the Committee recommended the continuation of the application of teacher professional learning in schools, which it characterised as a policy of "developmental nature" (IPA / SRSS (EC), 2017, p. 3). Based on this information, a new decision by the Council of Ministers was adopted in July 2017. The new decision of the Council of Ministers (2017), defined that in order to improve the quality



of teacher education, as well as the learning outcomes of students, all schools of all levels would be required to prepare and implement an Action Plan for teachers' professional learning, as it constitutes an integral part of the wider School Unit Improvement Plan. The aim of the teachers' professional learning policy is to create professional learning communities within the school.

In this way, the teacher professional learning was for the first time in the Cyprus educational system officially decentralised. This policy reflects a shift towards democratic professionalism (Kennedy, 2014) in the Cyprus educational system that generally encompasses numerous elements of centralisation. The specifics of this policy are described below, as well as its similarities to teachers' professional learning policies adopted in other national education systems.

## 1.2. Uniqueness of the teacher professional learning policy compared to other policies in Cyprus and abroad

The teachers' professional learning policy constitutes perhaps the first official step towards the establishment of school and teacher autonomy, in an otherwise centralised system. This is further highlighted by the fact that the underlying objectives for the school year are not determined by the Ministry. Instead, each school is called upon to set its own goals, to formulate the School Unit Improvement Plan and, in that context to compose its Teachers' Professional Learning Action Plan Hadjitheodoulou-Loizidou et al., 2020).

This change is also in line with the action research rationale

that is at the core of the professional learning policy (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015). Action research forms the basic methodology of educational reform, precisely because at its core lies the principle of combining action with research, which in itself calls established practices and the status quo into question (Somekh & Zeichner, 2009). However, action research is not a method of performance monitoring as has been seen in several neoliberal governments (Zeichner, 2003; Somekh & Zeichner, 2009).

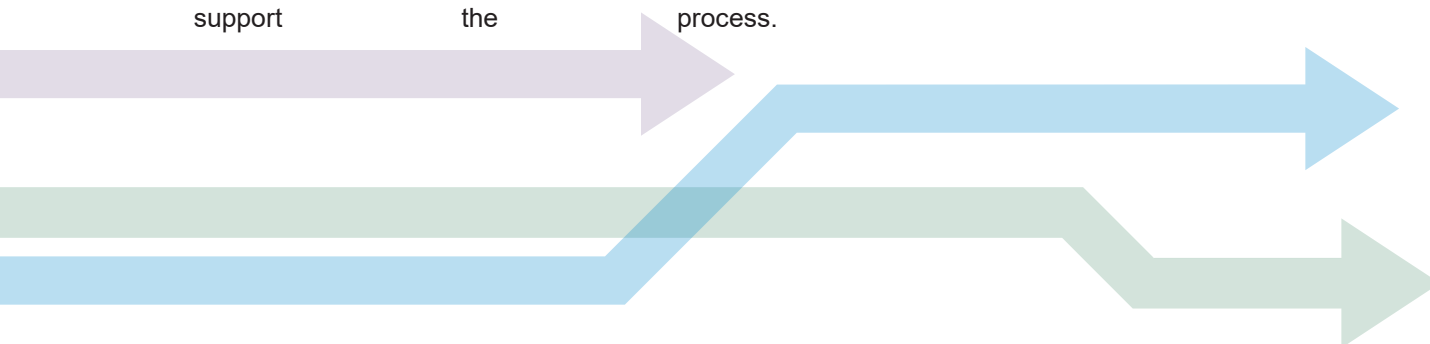
This is clearly stated in the decision of the Council of Ministers, which explicitly states that action research is not in any way connected to the performance evaluation of teachers (Council of Ministers, 2017).

This view is also reflected in the report of the European Commission's Committee of Experts, which was based on implementation data gathered during the 2016-2017 school year. The need for alignment and cooperation of all involved bodies of the Ministry in the direction of professional learning as well as the implementation of the relevant policy protocol is emphasized in the report (IPA / SRSS (EC), 2017). This protocol is characterized by a collective agreement towards the decision made by the school in the prioritisation of focal topics for the programme, which will also form the basis of the affinity by teachers to the selected topic. At the same time, it relies on the organization of focused training activities, such as seminars and workshops that are specifically designed to support the process.

The main goal is for the implemented actions to focus on students themselves, as they are the final recipients of any improvement-seeking intervention. This is mainly promoted through the actions of facilitators / supporters of the Pedagogical Institute, who not only are well versed in the processes but also understand the needs, appreciate the experiences and grasp the general setting where teachers work and are called to reflect upon, as acknowledged by the European Commission experts (IPA / SRSS (EC), 2017)

(Lange & Meany, 2013).

The professional learning policy was evaluated as dynamic and developmental, focusing on activities that not only have a practical application but also take into consideration the need for time and support in order to implement and to familiarize with the methodologies so as to instigate a change in the learning process.





In addition, this policy places emphasis on teachers' needs (their focus, analysis and meaning) and their transformation into elements of an Action Plan that is implemented through learning activities at the individual and / or group level, within or / and outside the school environment. It was also pointed out that reflection is of crucial importance, although should it become mandatory there is the risk of it remaining superficial. Simultaneously, the strengthening of the policy was proposed along with other methodologies beyond action-research, such as "lesson study" or the "quality teaching rounds" (IPA / SRSS (EC). 2017).

The practices applied in Cyprus are largely in line with those followed in other countries, such as Scotland (Donaldson, 2011), where there is also the opportunity for an aggregated review of professional learning both within the processes of the school unit but also through personal initiatives of the teacher for the promotion of personal learning and development.

In this case the goal is:

*Developing of teachers as reflective, accomplished and enquiring professionals who have the capacity to engage fully with the complexities of education and to be key actors in shaping and leading educational change (Donaldson, 2011, p. 4).*

Similarly, national education systems with successful OECD surveys, such as those of Canada (British Columbia), China (Hong Kong, Shanghai) and Singapore (Singapore), correlate teachers' professional learning with reflection and improvement of learning outcomes, in a cycle of continuous improvement (Jensen et al., 2016). In this process there are three (3) stages during which there is, initially, reflection on the intended level of learning of

the students. Then, the development of a differentiated educational practice is sought, which can achieve the intended learning outcomes and, finally, the evaluation of the interventions takes place. As reported by Jensen et al. (2016): "High-performing systems transform the improvement cycle into a culture of continuous professional learning that, in time, turns schools into true learning organizations " (p. 4). For the best planning of the improvement cycle, effective teacher professional learning is sought, based on the principles of adult learning, and "distinct roles are created to lead [to] professional learning" (ibid.). In addition, the need for the "development of teacher expertise

through school-based research that focuses on improving student learning ", while recognizing the responsibility of both teachers and school management "for their own professional learning, but also that of other teachers"(ibid.). Finally, the collaborative professional learning of teachers at all levels is strengthened in their daily activities.

In the next section (Section 2), the principles governing the Cyprus teachers' professional learning programme are presented in detail. These principles can serve as the pillars for the required planning, implementation and reflection needed for an effective teachers' professional learning programme at school.





# 2

PILLAR  
OF EFFECTIVENESS  
IN PROFESSIONAL  
PROGRAMME

## 2. PILLARS OF EFFECTIVENESS IN A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMME

This section describes the specific pillars of effectiveness of a professional learning programme. Following the presentation of published evidence for each pillar, a questions and answers section follows that can be used by schools and teachers (individually or on a group basis) as guidelines for

programme planning, implementation and reflection. Following the implementation of actions, the same pillars can be applied for the final assessment of the programme.

### 2.1. Focus on the active learning of the teacher

*A professional learning programme focuses on the active learning of the teacher.*

An effective professional learning programme is built around the needs, interests and desires of the professional, in this case the teacher, thus leading to "changes in teachers' practices and the improvement of learning outcomes" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, p. V). Moving away from teachers' *training* or *professional development* underscores the fact that *professional learning* is a process that focuses on the teacher and the school where he/she works,

while highlighting the personal nature of this relationship (Borko, 2004; Clarke & Hollingworth, 2002; Guskey, 2002).

The individual, as a professional, is on both sides of the professional learning programme, since as a teacher he/she critically reflects on and identifies his / her own needs, capabilities and interests, whilst at the same time does the same for

his/her students, and more generally for his/her school. Subsequently, the teacher sets appropriate goals, selects resources and procedures, and engages in training and other activities that aim to lead him/her to a differentiation of his/her daily practices. In this way, the professional learning programme creates and offers learning opportunities that are directly focused for teachers, lasting for more than one meeting and touching upon issues of professional identity.

The professional learning strategies in which a teacher may get involved are

many and include discussions with colleagues, study of educational materials, texts and student work, focus groups with experts, training and application of new methodologies and teaching approaches in the classroom, participation in action research, shadowing classroom practices of colleagues' etc. In this way, the teacher becomes an active, rather than a passive, participant in the planning of a programme that involves a diversification of his / her practices and a reflection of his / her own learning process.

### Questions about the effectiveness of the programme in terms of the teacher's active learning pillar

- Can the programme engage teachers in new and rich learning opportunities?
- Do teachers participate in the organization and materialisation of these learning opportunities?
- Does every learning opportunity contain elements of planning, reflection and redefinition?
- Are there available resources, learning opportunities and experts on the topic of focus for the school?
- Do these learning opportunities encourage teachers to collaborate in small and large groups, as well as network with other relevant individuals, bodies and organizations?



## 2.2. Encouraging reflection

*A professional learning programme encourages reflection at all stages of its planning and implementation.*

Individual experiences, attitudes and beliefs about teaching and learning distinguish teachers, in the same way as their ambitions and knowledge determine their personal philosophy evidenced in their teaching practice and professional identity. That being said, and although reflection is a continuous process of evaluating experiences and knowledge, and hence a process of change, teachers tend to think more critically when they encounter challenges, dilemmas or questions that cannot be easily answered. Reflection is, therefore, an important part of any professional's life whose action is not guided just by rigid technical knowledge (Schön, 1983). Hence, a professional learning programme encourages the process of reflection, so that the teacher can see his/her practice more clearly and adjust his/her learning theories and teaching practices.

In general, reflection is based on the philosophical thought of John Dewey, who argued that by deliberately examining the new experience, we are led to a behavioural change for

our future actions (Dewey, 1938). For that reason, currently

*Reflection is accepted as an integral part of the university education of teachers, both at the theoretical level, necessary for the understanding of teaching, and at the practical application level, noted by classroom practices (Beauchamp, 2015, p. 123).*

By the same token, a professional learning programme encourages individual and collective reflection at all stages of planning and implementation, so that teachers can critically reflect on their practices, needs and beliefs, revising them and the programme pathway.

Therefore, professional learning shares common principles with action research, with which it is often applied, thus enabling teachers to identify learning challenges, needs or opportunities. Moreover, teachers may describe these issues by collecting relevant

evidence, and proceeding to analyse it, taking corrective measures in the form of specific activities, which in turn will also be critically assessed. Consequently, a professional learning programme is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Rather it selects, analyses and plans for what is considered appropriate for the school and the teachers in that particular setting.

There are many and varied tools for reflection and critical thinking. Some of them include standardized observation and analysis of data,

reflective practice, daily diary recordings, and critical exchange of opinion between teachers (Leitch & Day, 2000; Schwind et al., 2012). Finally, it is worth mentioning that the process of reflection should take place at every stage of the programme and in conjunction with specific questions, goals and criteria. The process in itself is the learning process of teachers. It is not linear and can alter their professional identities.

### Questions about the effectiveness of the programme in terms of the reflection pillar

- Are there any concerns (at the individual or group levels) about the topics that the school might focus on within a professional learning programme?
- Are the topics related to the needs, interests, capabilities and actions of teachers, as well as the needs of students and the school?
- Do teachers have the opportunity to think about what they know about the topic, what they would like to learn, as well as about actions and possible results?
- Do teachers focus on their next action, the reason why it takes place and the pathway they follow in general by using the "What? - Why? - And then what?" methodology?
- Do teachers have the opportunity to collect data on the topic of focus, reflect on it, in order to refine it?
- Do teachers know how to get involved in a research activity or an investigative course related to the topic?



## 2.3. Demonstrating the dynamics of the teacher's professional identity

*A professional learning programme demonstrates the dynamics of the teacher's professional identity.*

Personal and professional experiences interact in complex ways that shape the professional identity of any teacher. For this reason, Schwind et al. (2012) argue that "personal and professional life inform each other" (p. 225), while Goodson and Cole (1994) report that the personal and professional lives of teachers' mutually overlap "influenced and made meaningful by factors and conditions inside and outside the classroom and school" (p. 88). Therefore, personal and professional identities are difficult to separate. However, it should be emphasized that the professional identity of the teacher is mainly influenced by the fact that the teacher belongs to the collective of the teaching profession. The teacher performs multiple roles related to his/her profession, within the school unit (as a teacher, colleague, scientist, researcher), within the educational system and outside it, but also within the wider community too (Hadjitheodoulou-Loizidou et al., 2020).

Hence, it becomes clear that professional identities, in addition to being multidimensional, are fluid

as they are influenced by social and educational developments, education theory, policy and practice, but also by smaller-scale changes within the school context

(Goodson & Cole, 1994; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999).

As Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) summarize: "Identity is not something one has, but something one develops throughout one's life" (p. 107). This fact does not diminish the importance of professional identity, which can act as a lens through which the teacher interprets and recognizes himself/herself as a specific person who exists and acts within a specific context (Gee, 2001).

Based on that, an effective professional learning programme encourages reflection on issues concerning the professional identity of its participants. The very process

of reflection can lead to the empowerment of teachers, since: "Reflection allows not only the investigation of practice, but also the control that one has in one's own practice" (Coke et al., 2015, p. 473). In general changes in practices, through gaining expertise in new topics, approaches and methodologies and the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, brings about changes in the views and attitudes of teachers. This strengthens motivation, self-efficacy, autonomy, leadership competencies and, as a result professional identity (Mowat & McMahon, 2019).

### Questions about the effectiveness of the programme in terms of the *dynamics of the teacher's professional identity pillar*

- Are there any concerns (at the individual or group levels) about teachers' professional identities, in the form of the following questions:
  - What are the facts, experiences, knowledge, interests that define who I am as a teacher? What do I want to strengthen or change and how do I achieve that?
  - What is my educational philosophy? What is my personal view on teaching and learning?
  - What roles do I play in the classroom and which ones at school?
  - How do I want to differentiate in general?
- Are opportunities made available for a teacher to take on new roles, such as that of the Professional Learning Programme Coordinator, but also others that relate to his/her own learning and that of other teachers?
- Is the school management model adaptable to allow for the above variations?



## 2.4. Focus on the school setting

*A professional learning programme focuses on the school setting.*

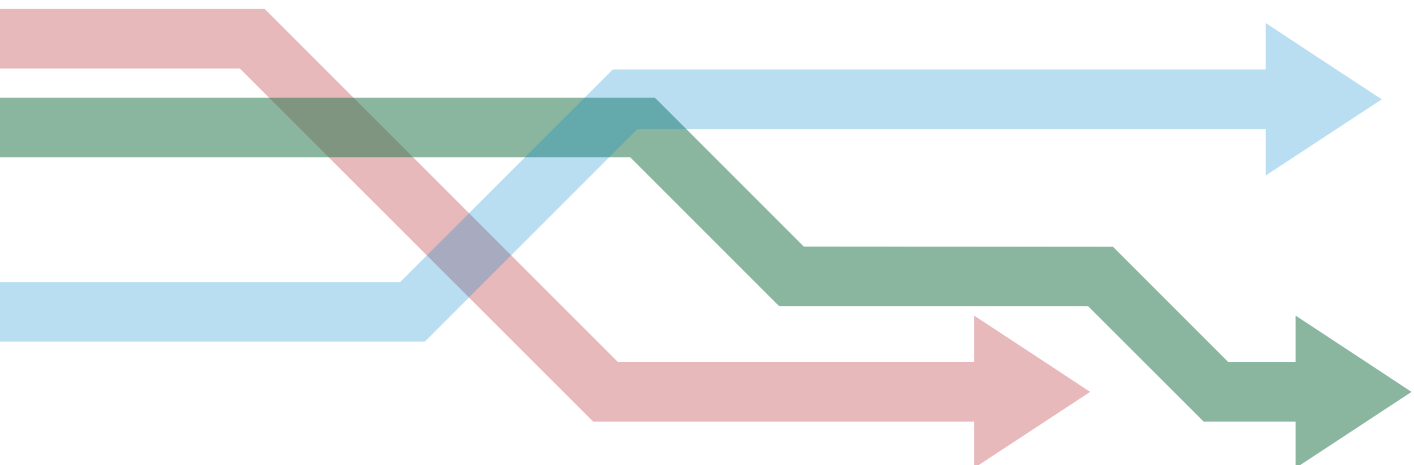
A professional learning programme is characterized by the processes founded in educational ecosystem, both in its base (students, teachers) as well as in its highest ranks (school management, educational system). This means that focus is placed on the specific school unit and to the teachers who work there, since they are the people who know best the main needs, priorities and capabilities of the setting.

The school setting is very important for the dynamics that develop between teachers, as well as for the climate, culture and priorities of the school (Goodson & Cole, 1994). Furthermore, the setting affects the daily practice of teachers, as well as

their beliefs about their professional identity. The environment, expectations and other influencing factors have a particular impact on the individual professional identity of any teacher (Reynolds, 1996). This is because teachers tend to interpret their environment, which in turn informs the construction of their professional identities. For these reasons, it is very important in a professional learning programme for teachers to have a clear picture of their setting (management / leadership style, learning culture, school climate, collaborative tendencies and interaction networks) and how the topic of focus correlates with this setting and with themselves.

### Questions about the effectiveness of the programme in terms of the *school setting pillar*

- Are there any concerns (at the individual or group levels) about the topic of focus of the professional learning programme in relation to the school setting?
- Is the topic of the programme related to the needs, interests and actions of the teachers, but also to the needs of the students and the school?
- Is there a culture of learning and collaboration that allows the successful running of the programme? How can these aspects be improved?
- Does the school provide (through cooperation between management and staff) facilities, to enable the materialisation of necessary activities as well as promoting the formulation further opportunities of collaboration and learning?
- Do teachers have the opportunity to collect data on the topic that concerns them, to analyse and reflect on it?
- Are conditions for the organisation and materialisation of the programme present throughout the year, with the possibility of future continuation?
- Are there any concerns about finding resources and collaborations?





## 2.5. Strengthening collaboration, networking and creating professional learning communities

*A professional learning programme enhances collaboration, networking and the creation of professional learning communities.*

Collaborative action models, analytical discussions, shadowing teaching practices of colleagues, setting common goals and sharing professional knowledge have proven to be important factors for lifelong professional learning of teachers (Boyle et al., 2005; Hofman & Dijkstra, 2010; Shulman & Shulman, 2004). However, the culture of the detached teacher whose actions are confined to the boundaries of the classroom, remains strong. In contrast, a professional learning programme enables school staff to move from an individual model of professional activity, to a group model as common goals are set by teachers regarding desired changes for the school and their classes. This will eventually allow them to move towards the creation and functioning of a professional learning community (Tam, 2015).

Through the professional learning programme, teachers make decisions about

their professional life, thus considering themselves as participants in lifelong learning activities. From this perspective, teachers are able on the one hand to be trained in new areas of pedagogical knowledge and on the other hand to contribute with their own knowledge to actions within the school community and their classroom, in addition to the training of their colleagues. As reported by Shulman and Shulman (2004) "A successful teacher is a member of a professional community and is ready, willing and able to teach and learn from his/her teaching experiences" (p. 259). For the achievement of this goal, a school must consider cooperation to be a



priority, thus enabling the development and functioning of one or more teams of teachers, connected by common goals and aspirations. Moreover the provision of expertise by staff members should be encouraged.

The exchange of views and experience, cooperation, joint planning, co-teaching and peer-to-peer courses, as well as reflection on common goals, the programme progress and activities, can lead to the development of camaraderie and collaboration, but also more generally in changes to the climate and culture of the school. Furthermore, it can

allow the creation of collaboration networks beyond the school unit, possibly with other schools, specialists, teachers and organizations. As stated by

*Networks that focus on self-reflection, that exploit subgroups and networks meetings with a strong content focus, that stimulate enthusiasm and are instructive, that build a community of teachers and that make room for application of new materials/methods in the classroom, are the most promising ways for professional development and job motivation (p. 1031).*

### Questions about the effectiveness of the programme in terms of collaboration, networking and the creation of professional learning communities pillar

- Are there any concerns (at the individual or group levels) about the ways in which classes as well as the school can be transformed into learning communities?
- Is there a willingness to plan and implement actions and processes that encourage the cooperation between teachers, but also among teachers with other stakeholders such as students, parents, the community, the academic community?
- Are there possibilities for creating groups of teachers focused on the same topic, goal, content or approach?
- Are there opportunities to create groups or networks of teachers, where some participate as trainers and others as trainees?
- Have opportunities for reflection on the above been created?
- Is there time, capacity and desire to organize the above?



## 2.6. Encouragement of teachers at the individual level

*A professional learning programme encourages teachers who wish to organize their own professional learning.*

Taking into account the pillars of effectiveness of a professional learning programme, a teacher can proceed to plan and implement of his/her Professional Learning Action Plan that may concern himself/herself exclusively, as well as his/her class, focused on the pillars that have already been mentioned, i.e. the following:

- active learning of the teacher,
- teacher reflection,
- change of teachers' professional identities,
- school setting,
- collaboration, networking and the creation of professional learning communities.

### **Questions about the effectiveness of the programme in relation to the individual organization of professional learning pillar**

- What is my topic of concern / focus? What is the school's topic of concern / focus? How can they be connected?
- How do I want to differentiate my teaching practice? What do I need to know? From whom can I learn it?
- What learning strategy can I implement in order to acquired the knowledge I desire? Can I participate or collaborate with a colleague?
- Can I attend a relevant lecture? Can I read something relevant and present / discuss it in the staff meeting?
- Once I have been trained, what actions will I plan / implement / change in my classroom?
- How can I monitor the effectiveness of the variations or interventions I would have implemented?
- In which direction will my next step / goal take me? What else can I learn? How can I share my





# 3

STAGES OF  
PLANNING AND  
IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE PROFESSIONAL  
LEARNING SUPPORT  
PROGRAMME OF THE  
PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE

# 3 STAGES OF OF PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT PROGRAMME OF THE PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE

The Pedagogical Institute, in the context of implementing the Consolidated Teacher Professional Learning Policy (Council of Ministers, 2015, 2017), offers the Professional Learning Support Programme (PLSP). The Programme is structured along the principles that govern effective teacher professional learning programmes, which were presented in Section 2 of this Guide.

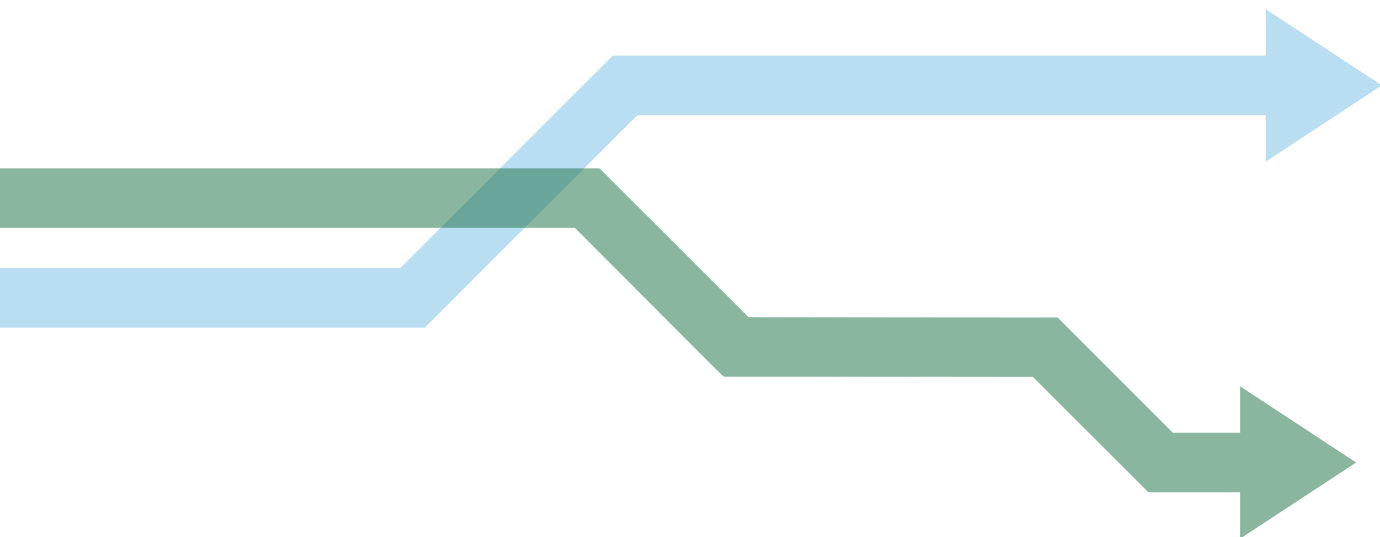
In PLSP, the school cooperates closely with the Pedagogical Institute, having throughout the school year, support from an officer of the Institute, who acts as a facilitator. This person undertakes to facilitate or support the school in its efforts to promote teacher professional learning and works closely with the person (or persons) who coordinate the Programme within the school

(school professional learning coordinator).

In case that the professional learning programme implemented by the school is not supported by the Pedagogical Institute, the school can follow the steps described in this section, taking into consideration the resources it itself can provide for the operation of the programme and the roles teachers can undertake regarding planning, coordination and implementation. Additionally, the school can utilize of any other collaborations it holds with institutions (e.g. universities), or other programmes of the Pedagogical Institute, such as School-Based Seminars, Parent Seminars, Optional Training Seminars, Teacher Days or Two-Day Teacher Days.

The stages of the PLSP, as presented in Figure 3.1, but also in the description that follows, largely reflect action research methodology. It is due to this that basic principles are followed, such as needs analysis, multiple perspective exploration, matching of needs with actions, and of course the support of the reflection process. At the same time, and/or depending on the school setting, another or elements of another methodology can be chosen, such as 'quality teaching rounds' or 'lesson study', i.e. encouraging the cooperation of small groups of teachers to plan, attend classes, and reflect on them (e.g. Potari et al., 2010; Warwick et al., 2016; Bowe & Gore, 2017). The utilisation of multiple rather than a single methodology for dealing with any issue or research question is something

which often reinforces the needs that arise within the school. In general, the exploratory procedures applied in the context of the PLSP may not faithfully apply all the elements of a single methodology but constitute a selection from one or more methodologies, in accordance to the exact setting found at each school. Indeed, Robson and McCartan (2016) state that the combination of methodologies is perfectly justified and/or desirable, in some cases, as it addresses the issue more comprehensively, compared to the use of a single methodology. There are, however, some milestones in the action research process, as applied in the PLSP of the Pedagogical Institute and these are extensively detailed, accompanied by relevant examples in the remainder of the Section. There is also an indicative timeline that is usually followed and can be seen below.



## STAGES OF THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT PROGRAMME

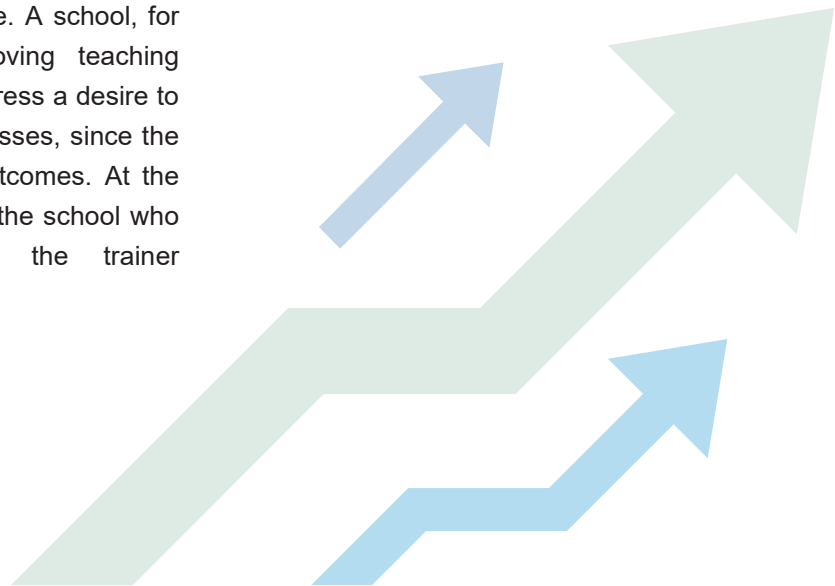


Figure 3.1: The stages of the PLSP (Adapted by Avgitidou, 2015a)

### 3.1. Needs analysis - Description of the issue

A school is made up of network nodes and connections. Each teacher constitutes a node, placed in the wider network, however having his/her own unique position and his/her own connections. This means that there are many issues that concern the school as a whole, but also that these issues can be differentiated and interpreted differently by each teacher. From this perspective, defining a topic for teachers' professional learning purposes is a dynamic process of negotiating individual and collective needs and capabilities. The aim is to balance needs at the collective and individual level, to take into account both teachers' professional concerns as well as other factors, such as the specifics of the learning and school setting. Furthermore, the definition of a topic may result from the ability of the teachers themselves to contribute to a topic, due to their professional expertise. A school, for example, may focus on improving teaching practice because its teachers express a desire to engage in relevant learning processes, since the students present low learning outcomes. At the same time, there are teachers in the school who can take on the role of the trainer

but also the coordinator of a relevant programme. The first step of any professional learning programme is to reflect on the issues that concern the school and its teachers, analyse the needs of teachers in the area of professional learning whilst pursuing a topic that takes into account all the above factors. In this way, the school can be identify a clear goal that will be the basis for the development of an Action Plan for Professional Learning. Key prerequisites for success are initiating a pathway that will meet the needs and goals of both the teachers and the school, thus creating opportunities for collaboration and networking under a common vision.





## EXAMPLE

Teachers were faced with a variety of problems at school: low learning outcomes, student behavioural issues, lack of communication with parents etc. In the first meeting with the facilitator from the Pedagogical Institute, the importance of categorizing and prioritizing issues was emphasized, and then focusing on one issue each year. Focusing on one issue helps the school to direct its forces and have visible results in the long run. In many cases, in fact, the improvement of the school in one issue has a positive effect on other issues as well. As the discussion progressed, it became apparent a teacher needs analysis was necessary, and it was suggested to use one of the needs analysis methods recommended by the Pedagogical Institute for the Programme, found on the relevant website of the Institute. The main goal of the school was to come up with a specific and mutually understood formulation of the issue that concerns the teachers. When the process started, the teachers recorded many issues, which, at first, seemed different from each other. For example, conflicts during breaks, student behaviour, non-adherence to school rules (e.g. not bringing their books or studying), bullying, late attendance, lack of respect for the teacher, low learning outcomes. Teachers then identified links between these issues and grouped them into two broad categories:

"School climate" and "learning outcomes", with the majority of teachers being preoccupied with school climate issues. In this way, the issues were prioritized and the school climate emerged as the most prevalent issue. The continuation of the discussion focused on the need for further narrowing down of the topic and the teachers decided to focus on the improvement of student relations between themselves, as well as the relations with teachers. During the discussion, the teachers pointed out ways in which the issue of the classroom and school climate, especially in terms of relationships, is linked to learning outcomes. The whole discussion, which gave everyone the opportunity to voice their thoughts, enabled the teachers to view the perspectives of others. This led them to identify the improvement of relationships as a priority for their professional learning, simultaneously recognizing however the other factors that would be left behind were relevant to this topic as well.

### 3.2. Research - Data Collection - Redefining the issue

A key feature of research action is its participatory and collaborative nature. The main objectives of collaborative action research are to ensure the understanding and participation of all stakeholders, as well as the integration of all ideas and expectations at every stage of the research process (Schensul & Schensul, 1992; Cohen & Manion, 1994; Patton, 2015). Adopting the principles of collaborative action research, the PLSP of the Pedagogical Institute seeks to explore the perspectives of all involved parties, giving a voice to teachers, students and parents. The triangulation of perspectives helps achieve a deeper and more complete understanding of the issue of focus (Taylor, 2000). At the same time, the participatory nature of this process promotes democratization, thus allowing the division of responsibilities, the destruction of entrenched attitudes and makes everyone visible.

Once the needs have been analysed and the school has decided on the topic of focus, which will constitute the core of teacher professional learning, it is important, on the one hand, to move the topic from a general to a more specific and practical context, in addition to exploring the perspectives of other stakeholders. The attribution of meaning is not so much to arrive at a common definition of the topic, but to understand the personal views of the participants, the multiple

perspectives, including those of students and/or parents, and to engage in a critical dialogue that will provide more specific directions for the Programme pathway.

Especially for teachers, such a process aims to bring to the surface everyone's views on the topic which they are concerned about, e.g. "learning outcomes" or "relationships within the school". Thus providing the opportunity to highlight different aspects, convergence or dispersal of opinions, and to point to possible areas of focus for the exploratory process that will involve the whole school. This process of meaning development, as a discussion and exchange of views between colleagues on an important topic, is a form of critical dialogue that can strengthen affiliation towards a professional learning community, as it raises common concerns, fosters relationships, encourages interaction and the creates the foundation for future collaborations.

Both the process of meaning development and the exploration of the perspectives of the other stakeholders (e.g. students, parents) contain the element of reflection, as the different views and theories voiced, through the prism of other stakeholders, can trigger a process of revising theories, practices and interpretations of the particular setting.



## EXAMPLE

After the needs analysis, the teachers, school management and facilitator from the Pedagogical Institute agreed that the issue at hand was learning outcomes. The aim of the second session of the staff with the professional learning facilitator was to attribute meaning and content to the term "learning outcomes". In the discussion the teachers tried to define what "learning outcomes" meant for each of them. This turned out not to be an easy process, which came as a surprise to the teachers as they had taken it for granted that when they had each identified this issue, that they were all referring to the same thing! Two teachers talked about the results in the written essays, another about the participation of students in the learning process in general, one teacher referred to formative assessment, two others to the results of international research and one teacher to the Curriculum success and proficiency indicators. In a school where almost all teachers raised "learning outcomes" as an issue that concerned them and their professional learning, they found, by simply comparing their personal views with each other, they did not mean the same thing. Despite the disruption, the teachers realized through the discussion the importance of different perspectives and how important their own view may be. This view can be made even more productive if the views of students and their parents are heard. That is why the teachers decided, in the first phase, to explore the students views on teaching and learning. The teachers came to understand that knowing the views of other stakeholders is enlightening, even if these are contrary to their own views, since the fundamental objective in the professional learning process is not to agree with everyone but to understand the disagreement by acknowledging different perspectives. This discussion established the need for obtaining a common theoretical foundation regarding the issue that concerned them.

The person providing the training may be a teacher with relevant expertise or experience in the topic. If this is not the case,



## EXAMPLE

The topic of student responsibility was identified as the topic of focus for the school, and the training was set for October. The previous discussions between the facilitator from the Pedagogical Institute, the professional learning coordinator, the head teacher and the teachers had highlighted the need for practical solutions to the problem, i.e. for something that would act as a mutually understood "agreement" between students and teachers.

The facilitator communicated several times during this period by telephone, via e-mail and in person with the trainer, so that the intervention could meet the specific needs of the teachers. The facilitator conveyed to the trainer the different views of teachers on the issue of student responsibility, as well as their need to define from the beginning a framework, both in terms of theory and practical application of what student responsibility means. At the same time, the facilitator informed the trainer about the views of the students, as were revealed by the investigation of their views on the matter. In the discussions on which might be the most valuable way to approach the topic, the trainer, an educational psychologist, suggested a holistic approach to responsibility should be sought, that would include teachers and/or parents. However, it was feared that this may provoke reactions.

During the training meeting, the teachers expressed reservations about what they heard from the trainer, stating that as a third party "from outside [the school]", or "from an office", cannot appreciate the school setting. Their attitude changed when they heard the trainer convey, sometimes verbatim, the views they themselves and the students expressed during the previous stages of the programme. The trainer suggested practical, realistic and easily applicable and measurable ways to monitor and improve the attitude of students in relation to responsibility, and it became clear that the training meeting had been developed by taking into account all the information provided by the facilitator. Towards the end the trainer alluded to the need of teachers themselves towards the notion of responsibility. This troubled the teachers, however they did not react negatively, whilst they were generally positive towards the suggestion of exploring the view of parents on this issue as well.

### 3.4. Planning - Implementation - Formative assessment of actions

After the training session(s), perhaps the most important part of the process follows, which is the planning and implementation of teacher professional learning activities. The goals and activities that correspond to sub-objectives, make up the schools' Professional Learning Action Plan, which is an integral part of the wider School Unit Improvement Plan (Council of Ministers, 2017). The overall responsibility for the Action Plan and monitoring of its implementation lies with the person designated as the school's Professional Learning Coordinator (usually the pedagogical advisor or assistant head teacher). In larger school units, it is particularly effective to set up a professional learning coordination team, which improves communication and procedure observation. For the construction and continuous (re)shaping of the Professional Learning Action Plan, the Electronic Professional Learning Portal is at the schools' disposal. Developed by the Pedagogical Institute, the Portal is an electronic tool that allows school units to register their goals, as well as the activities they will undertake in order to achieve these goals (see Subsection 5.1.).

The organization of an Action Plan helps the schools to follow rational and methodical steps

in order to promote the main topic that concerns the school unit, linking the activities noted in the Plan with the educational work that is implemented in the school, and hence with the schools' students. More specifically, the Professional Learning Action Plan of a school is a road map that brings together all the professional learning activities that are planned, under the topic of focus for the specific school, following the exploration of teachers needs, other stakeholder views (parents, students etc.) and school educational activities. A key element of the Action Plan is the correlation between objectives and activities in such a way so that the objectives describe the changes that teachers seek to see in students, and the activities present effective ways of achieving the set objectives.

The entire school unit is involved in the process of planning and implementation of the Action Plan. The training meeting(s) constitute a starting point (e.g. study of the minutes or notes from the training meeting), as they provide the opportunity to create a common theoretical framework and encompass the first suggestions for activities that will meet set goal(s). This "transition" from theory to practice is a critical



point in the pathway of every professional learning programme, as the active participation of teachers in every stage of planning, the collective decision-making and the development of equal collaborative relationships all contribute to the enhancement of acceptance, validity and effectiveness of the process. For the purpose of activity planning and practice implementation, each teacher is called upon to reflect which practice(s) would be useful to be applied, so that the goal(s) are achieved as systematically and collaboratively as possible. It is important for each teacher's action plan to be simple and feasible, expressing individual decisions that have taken into account the theory, practices that have been demonstrated, information from the exploration of other stakeholder perspectives (e.g. students) and elements of the school setting. The activities selected by each teacher should enable interaction with new theoretical and practical knowledge, whilst simultaneously providing implementation opportunities that will reach students in the context of the educational process. For the planning and implementation of activities, and depending on the school setting, it is recommended that teachers develop collaborations with each other in subgroups based on criteria (e.g. expertise, class supervisors, teaching classes of the same grade). The synergies in the subgroup should provide a positive framework for the actions of each teacher individually, as well as opportunities for individual and collective

reflection on the activities and practices implemented.

The activities chosen each time vary, as they are dependent on the topic of focus, the objective(s) set but also on the school setting. Nonetheless they are coordinated individual initiatives, or initiatives of smaller or larger subgroups and/or initiatives of the entire teaching association. A necessary element is the systematic individual and collective reflection of any activity implemented regarding their goal(s), implementation, effectiveness and overall contribution to the collective effort of the school, regardless of the type of activity (e.g. planning and teaching or co-teaching of lessons, experiential workshops for students and/or parents/guardians, participation of students in decision-making, development of strategies for addressing specific issues, actions to promote positive attitudes, etc.). It is important that individual and subgroup activities are shared and constitute reflection topics in broader teacher meetings, so that the experience accumulated is disseminated and teacher professional learning is further supported as a synergy with other colleagues in the school setting.

**EXAMPLE**

The school, having chosen differentiation of teaching as its the topic, set two goals, which it intended to pursue during the year. The first goal was to familiarize teachers with differentiation techniques and their application in the classroom. The second was to improve the students' response to the various activities / tasks in the classroom. For the planning and implementation of the schools' Professional Learning Action Plan, the teachers following relevant training meetings, their expertise and experience, and the age of the students, chose some differentiation techniques, which they would incorporate in some of their lessons during the year. Some formed small collaborative groups and others made their choices individually. Thus, each teacher defined either individually or in collaboration with others, a timeline during which the differentiation techniques would be applied in at least two lessons (of one or two teaching periods) in the class. At the same time, two teachers enrolled in an Optional Seminar of the Pedagogical Institute on the topic, in order to expand their knowledge and have the opportunity to be further trained. The school professional learning coordinator recorded the actions in the Electronic Professional Learning Portal, noting the planned time period for their implementation.

Reflection before action, during action and after action (Schön, 1983) is the essence of any professional learning programme, as it offers decision-making opportunities and the ability to formatively assess these decisions. Consequently, regular formative assessment of activities allows teachers to

constantly monitor their learning and enter into processes of reflection, reorientation and adjustment, as they can identify the pros and cons of implementing these actions, but also assess the degree of their effectiveness. This assessment forms the foundation





as to which actions need to be continued or repeated, which need to be amended or redesigned, and how, or which other actions should be added or removed from the Action Plan. Thus, the Action Plan can

be redesigned or supplemented throughout its implementation, a process supported by the Electronic Professional Learning Portal (see Subsection 5.1), which allows the updated Action Plan to be stored and printed after each amendment or addition.

## EXAMPLE

One school identified differentiation of teaching as a priority for the professional learning of its teachers. A small group of teachers jointly prepared a lesson plan, which they taught in the form of co-teaching to a class. The co-teaching was attended by another small group of teachers. At a meeting of a broader group of teachers, the lesson plan was distributed in hard copies. At the beginning of the meeting, participating teachers were asked to examine the lesson plan and to identify within it elements related to the topic of the school in the context of the teacher professional learning programme. A reflective discussion ensued: First, the teachers who had not attended the lesson expressed views on the activities and structure of the lesson, identifying elements that they found helpful in pursuing the school goal and elements which raised questions. Subsequently, the teachers who had attended the co-teaching presented their experience from the attendance, focusing on activities, which in their opinion, helped the students and on points that seemed to challenge the students. At the same time, where possible, they answered the questions of that their colleagues had voiced previously. Then, the teachers who planned and implemented the co-teaching commented on the rationale for selecting and building specific activities, indicating which activities the students responded to and where they found difficulties. Finally, the plenary discussed a) additional ideas for redesigning some activities and b) ideas for what could follow for this class, as a continuation of the specific lesson. The school professional learning coordinator posted both the lesson plan and the minutes of the meeting along with the suggestions on the Electronic Professional Learning Portal, so as to be available for use in the coming years.

Since decisions regarding professional learning activities need to be made in a timely manner and while there is still time for action, it is important for the school, as a whole, to conduct an interim evaluation of the actions implemented so far in the middle of the school year (February). The interim evaluation, which can be carried out, for example, by providing a questionnaire with relevant questions, gives the opportunity to investigate the extent to which the actions have assisted the whole effort, to find out how the teachers (or other stakeholders, such as students) experience the whole process, what changes they report and what suggestions they have for continuing or modifying actions. Therefore, the Action Plan may be formatively amended again

in the light of the interim report of activities and the reflective remarks of the teachers, hence enabling the further activation of the school staff as a professional community of teachers.

The planning, implementation and formative assessment of actions that seek to promote the goals set as a collective effort of the teachers of a school, does not prohibit the planning and implementation of individual actions that are differentiated on the basis of on any personal needs. Such an Individual Teacher's Professional Learning Action Plan may include actions that stem from particular needs and interests, as well as actions that relate to the topic the school has chosen and with the goals collectively pursued by the school.

### 3.5. Final report - Documentation of the results - Decisions for the next school year

The final evaluation of the whole effort is the basis for ascertaining what has been achieved in the school and to what extent, which needs have been met and which have not and, in general, to take stock of the progress of the programme. The process of the final report concerns the whole professional learning community, since the evaluation of what has been achieved in school and what should be its future course, that is, for the next year, are decisions

which only the school itself can take, based on the data and evidence it has collected. Key elements of this final evaluation, which can take place both on an individual and collective level are as follows:

- active learning of the teacher,
- teacher reflection,
- change of professional identities of teachers,
- school setting,



- collaboration, networking and the creation of professional learning communities.

In conclusion, it is emphasized again that the implementation stages are indicative. In reality it is a circular and not a linear process, in which each stage is fed back by the previous and feeds the next (Tsafos, 2014). The process is characterized by flexibility. Both the order and the duration of the stages need to be adapted to the

setting. The order and/or duration of the stages can be influenced by students' and teachers' perspective which may change through their participation in an educational activity, particular circumstances that may occur at the school and the interaction of roles (head teacher, Professional Learning Coordinator, Facilitator of the Pedagogical Institute).

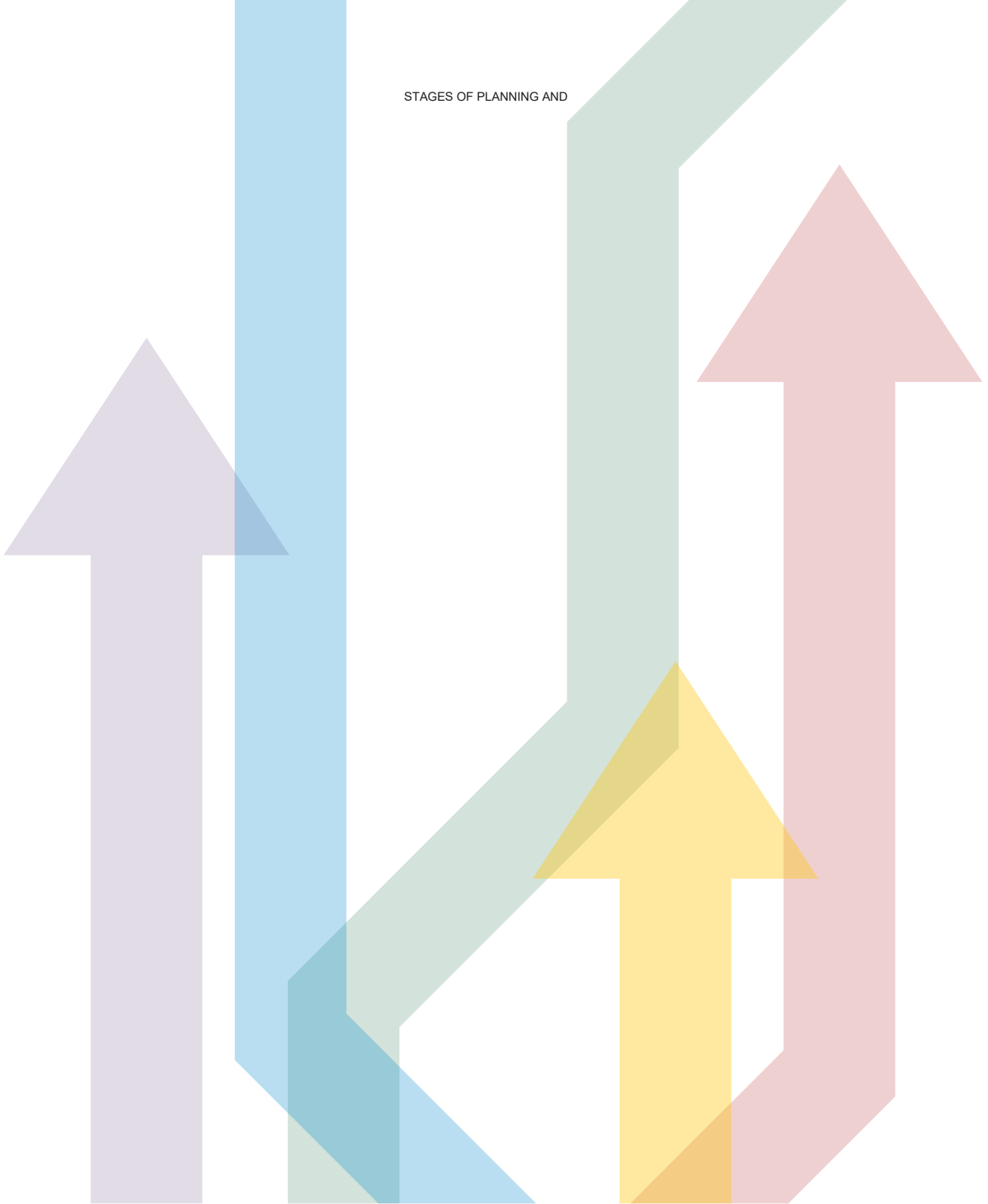
## EXAMPLE

A school has set as a priority for the whole year to improve the verbal expression of its students, as teachers had noticed that, in general, students had difficulty expressing opinions, observations, thoughts, interpretations, assertions and rarely used concepts and terms related to the various subjects. At the end of the year, the association discussed the issue of professional learning in a relevant meeting, while focusing on the following questions:

- A) What actions were taken at school, which seem to have promoted the improvement of students' verbal expression?
- B) What changes do teachers notice in the verbal expression of students in different subjects?

The whole discussion led the teachers to question how to evaluate what was achieved by the students, how to evaluate any effort and improvement, and how to further promote this goal at the school. Based on the findings and the concerns raised, the issue of deciding on the priority issue that should be set for the professional learning of teachers for the next school year was raised. After relevant suggestions from some teachers, the plenary decided to deal with the formative assessment of verbal expression, in order to look for ways to monitor any changes in the issue and ways to further promote this skill in various subjects.

STAGES OF PLANNING AND





# 4

THE  
LEARNING  
SUPPORT PROGRAMME  
OF THE PEDAGOGICAL  
INSTITUTE:  
PARTICIPANT ROLES

# 4 THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT PROGRAMME OF THE PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE: PARTICIPANT ROLES

*Cooperation, founded on the basis of respect for variability in perspectives and pedagogical viewpoint of those participating in the PLSP, must be taken for granted.*

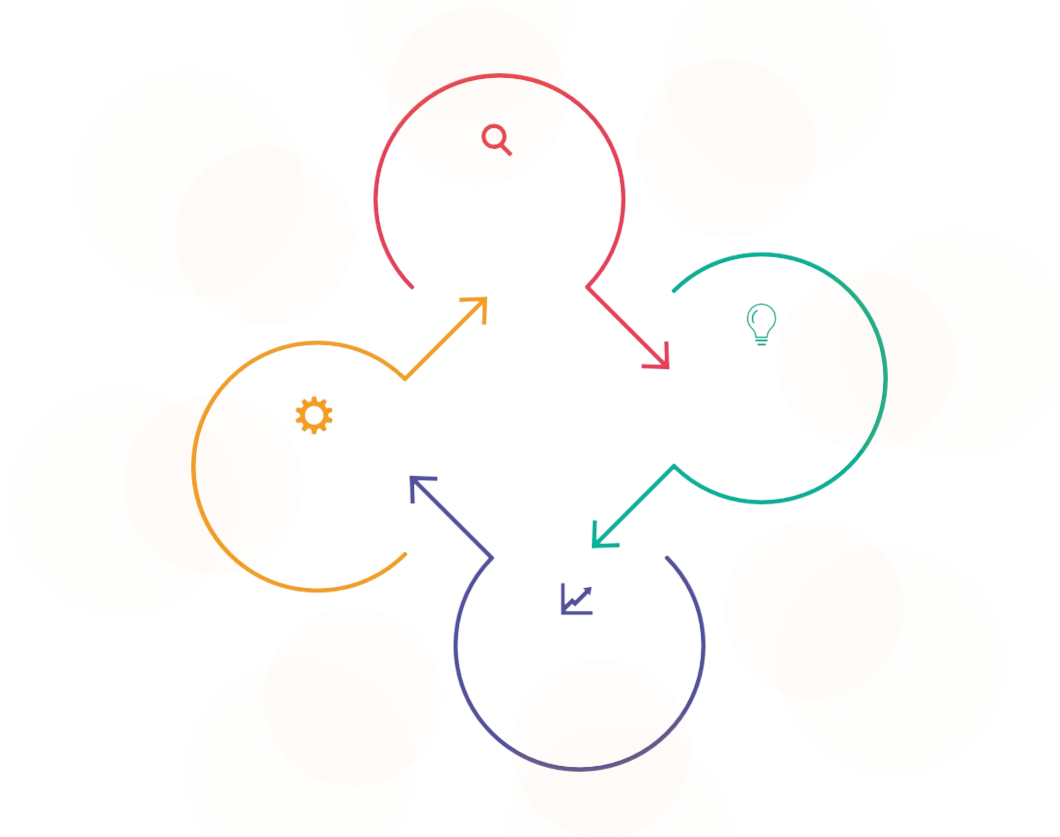
It is supposed that upon the decision of the teachers and the school management to join the Professional Learning Support Programme of the Pedagogical Institute, that on the one hand a democratic decision has been reached and on the other, that the head teacher and the coordinator jointly commit to working with each other in conjunction with the facilitator from the Pedagogical Institute and the teaching staff so that

planning and implementation for the achievement of the goal set by the school will have visible results and benefits for the school students.

Cooperation, founded on the basis of respect for variability in perspectives and pedagogical viewpoint of those participating in the PLSP, must be taken for granted. In a school, different personalities exist that function in various ways, focus on priorities and actions in their own unique way, and interact with

other personalities in any group within which they are required to work with. Various personality characteristics influence how one cognitively perceives, detects, evaluates, organizes and processes information or acts on information (Myers, 1962; Moutafi et al., 2003). It is important

to appreciate the role of visual aids in teamwork, such as the PLSP. Personality characteristics (Myers-Briggs, in Shelburne, 1988) furthermore influence personal preferences, who tend to lean towards Action, Structure, Meaning or Care, in a compass-like fashion (see Figure 4.1).



## ACTION

Let's do something!  
Let's try something!  
Just do it!

## STRUCTURE

What steps do we  
need to take?  
In how long? Who  
guides us? Who?  
What? When?



## MEANING

Why are we doing  
this? What is the  
point? I imagine, I  
produce, I create.

## CARE

We all need to feel good!  
We must care about  
emotions!

Figure 4.1: The compass of different teachers' personality styles in the PLSP teamwork exercise (Quinn, n.d.)

The Structure orientation presents emphasis on organization and the necessary steps that are required, the time that will be devoted, the space where the action will take place and the persons involved. Care focuses on emotions and the fact that everyone needs to feel good about participating in a professional learning programme. Meaning relates to the context and reasons why a change is implemented and the way in which each teacher understands and signifies the existing need for pursuing learning and adaption. Orientation towards Action refers to the incentive that motivates participants in a professional learning programme so that ideas can be implemented with the aim to truly experience the actions thus learning

and evolving. In a collaborative environment, such as that of a school professional learning community, it is important that the existing range of personality characteristics constitute stimulants so that each individual may realize the strengths and weaknesses of their own personality. Concurrently, it is important for each teacher to reflect upon their own ways of prioritizing or setting a particular focus present challenges to the wider group and how to make this process more understandable to others, thus promoting group cohesion and effective collaboration. The goal is, through continuous Care, to maintain the cohesion of Structure Action and Meaning (see Figure 4.2).

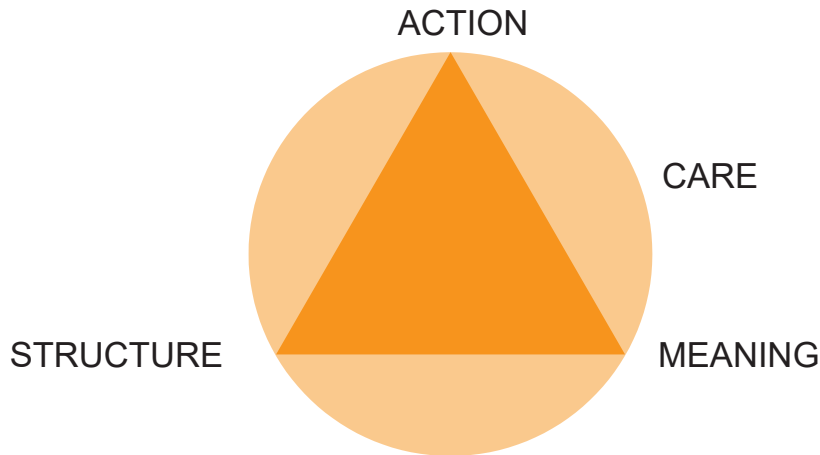


Figure 4.2: Personality interactions in the PLSP teamwork exercise (Quinn, n.d.)



In the context of the PLSP, the collaboration between stakeholders with different personalities and orientations highlights the importance of achieving a common and mutual understanding of concepts, and the importance of the three key roles. The teachers work with the Professional Learning Coordinator, the Head Teacher and the Facilitator in a democratic bottom-up process. These three roles are crucial for the shaping

of a culture of equal participation and the Programmes' success. In case the school does not participate in the PLSP, it can follow the steps described, distributing the responsibilities of the roles of the professional learning coordinator and the facilitator, as described below, to teachers.

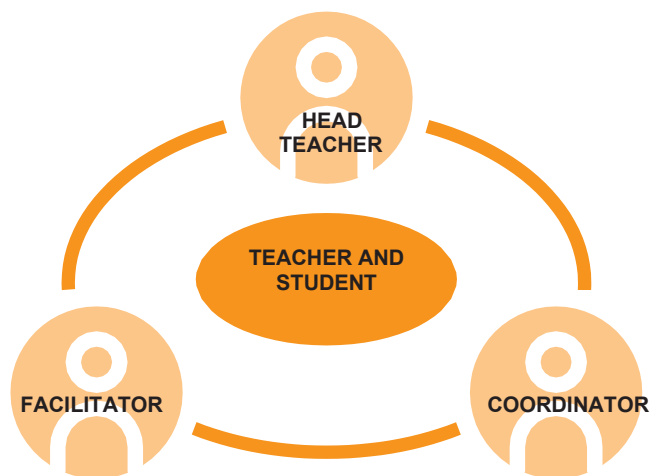


Figure 4.3: Roles in the PLSP Programme

#### 4.1. The school's Head Teacher

The *Head Teacher* of the school participating in the PLSP, whether undertaking specific tasks or professional learning actions or not is required to determine if the Programme constitutes just another obligation that the school

will actualize or if it will become part of the school vision and thus all school activities will fall under its "umbrella". To achieve this, the Head Teacher must:

- Strengthen and enhance the motivation of teachers

to participate in the Programme, and in learning opportunities contributing to any knowledge and experience they wish to`

- Make allowances for the participation of teachers in professional learning activities, e.g. making changes to the timetable`
- Create a positive climate that encourages the creation of relationships and collaborations between teachers`
- Monitor the school learning community and its progress`
- Promote the creation of groups of teachers who will act as nuclei for the continuation and expansion of actions, in the spirit of their own pursuit of continual learning with evidence-based views`
- Participate in individual and collective reflective activities concerning the type of learning being employed, the role of teachers, the impact on the school setting and the pathway of the Programme in general.

## EXAMPLE

The teachers of a small school that was facing challenges as a result of external factors decided to join the PLSP in order to focus on the pedagogical issues that concerned them. In collaboration with the facilitator, they jointly organized a lesson plan which they taught to their classes, in rotation, adopting elements from the quality teaching rounds "quality teaching and learning cycles" methodology. Reflective meetings followed each teaching observation class. This plan required great flexibility from the head teacher, who on the one hand changed the school curriculum in such a way as to give teachers the opportunity to participate in joint lesson planning, attendance of colleague classes and reflective discussions. The head teacher utilized the teachers who were not in charge of classes and undertook the organization of activities and teaching hours, in order to relieve the teachers of their respective duties. In this way the head teacher organized a flexible programme that allowed the implementation of the professional learning activities of the teachers.



## EXAMPLE

Forty (40) teachers served in a school that joined the PLSP. After the needs were identified and the topic was selected, the head teacher encouraged the creation of a team of six (6) teachers who would work with the coordinator and facilitator and be responsible for the first activities. These teachers collaborated with each other and planned the first professional learning activities of the school in their classrooms. They encouraged the other teachers to attend the activities, and then acted as "mentors" for other teachers, assisting them in the planning and implementation of activities. In this way, the teachers were given the opportunity to collaborate and act, according to their readiness.

### 4.2. The Professional Learning Coordinator

The *Professional Learning Coordinator* is the "soul" of the PLSP. The Coordinator is in direct contact with the facilitator (an Officer of the Pedagogical Institute) for the organization and coordination of the school activities and the teachers. He/she is a person with a pedagogical background that inspires teachers to take action, helps to include all perspectives, takes into account all views, deliberates and encourages teachers to reflect on the action taken. To achieve this, the coordinator must:

- Maintain good relationships with all school staff and be flexible;
- Encourage participation in the Programme and cooperation between teachers and between the teachers and the facilitator;
- Organize, coordinate and monitor the planning of school activities, while reflecting on them and informing the facilitator;
- Collect and process data during various stages of the Programme, presenting them in collaboration with the facilitator, encouraging reflection;
- Provide information and identify or create learning opportunities for colleagues;

- Support colleagues in the implementation of actions;
- Present the work of the school in educational activities of the Pedagogical Institute;
- Participate in educational activities organized by the Pedagogical Institute to strengthen his/her role.

## EXAMPLE

At the end of the school year, the school's professional learning coordinator attended the Professional Learning Support Workshop of the Pedagogical Institute. Well versed in the school setting, the coordinator appreciated that participating in the PLSP would help the school gain a holistic approach to the issue that concerned them. The coordinator informed the head teacher and discussed it with the school management team, thereafter bringing the issue to the teachers' association, thus obtaining the approval for the school's participation in the PLSP. The needs analysis was conducted in June with the prospect of implementation during the next year. From the beginning of the Programme, the coordinator sought that any decisions for learning or other actions would be taken with unanimous consent. The collaboration of the coordinator with the head teacher, who took care of the structure of the actions, the empathy demonstrated to all those involved as well as the collaboration with the facilitator for the content of the actions, acted as a catalyst for the positive outlook of professional learning in the school. Caring for the development of collegial and professional relationships between teachers, constant reflection and inclusion of perspectives from significant other stakeholders, students and their parents completed the puzzle of success.

### 4.3. The Facilitator of the Pedagogical Institute

The *facilitator* who works with the school on behalf of the Pedagogical Institute assumes the role of a critical friend in the process that takes place within the school. Since the facilitator works outside the school, he/she is required to understand the schools' context and environment,

to support and encourage the process of teacher professional learning, knowing exactly the stages of the specific professional learning programme. To achieve this, the facilitator must:



- Support and encourage school management and staff
- Collaborate closely with the school's management and the professional learning coordinator
- Follow specific steps (methodology), based on international research and literature,
- Encourage the use of external collaborators, school staff, resources, etc. for meeting the goals of the school based on the needs of teachers
- Act as a critical friend, which facilitates the reflection of teachers
- Participate in individual and collective reflective activities related to professional learning and encourage the creation of a learning community.

## EXAMPLE

The school applied for the PLSP for the first time. The teachers were concerned about student behavioural issues and student-parent relationships. In the first meeting that the facilitator had with the head teacher and the professional learning coordinator, it became apparent that they had met the facilitator on previous occasions related to the Curriculum of a specific subject. Thus, they believed the facilitator could help them by teaching demonstrations on that specific subject. The facilitator clarified that their role aims to support the process of teacher professional learning for a topic that they have chosen. Going into more depth, the facilitator explained that this is a collaborative relationship to support their learning process, to suggest methodologies and activities, training specialists with particular areas of expertise, and to contribute to the process of reflection, in order to achieve the goals of professional learning chosen by the teachers.

#### 4.4. The School Teacher

The *teacher* whose school participates in a professional learning programme has the opportunity to take part in the planning and implementation of a programme aimed at his/her own professional learning. To achieve this goal, the teacher engages in a number of individual and collective reflection processes, identifies his/her own needs and the factors that affect his/her own practice and prioritizes what he/she wants to learn or and share with other teachers. After the training activities, the teacher formulates his/her individual Action Plan by setting his/her own goals, plans actions (individually or collectively), differentiates his/her practices and monitors the impact that this differentiation has in his/her teaching and in student learning. Subsequently, the teacher then evaluates these differences and moves on to new goals and

actions. In general, a professional learning programme encourages the teacher:

- To reflect on issues that concern him/her - the different contributing factors, interpretations, causes and possibilities for action;
- To collect data so as to better understand the problem;
- To be aware of his/her beliefs and practices;
- To identify the help required for planning alternative proposals and practices;
- To implement differentiated practices and actions at the class and school levels;
- To collaborate with colleagues and other partners in different groups, activities and contexts;
- To plan and evaluate his/her actions.





## EXAMPLE

The topic of improving the school climate has been set by the school. Two training sessions have taken place and each teacher has prepared his/her individual Action Plan taking into account the data collected from students and what he/she learned from the trainings. To plan his/her actions, a teacher uses the communication with the facilitator and the feedback he/she has received. **Table 4.1** presents the Data Utilization Form (Avgitidou, 2015b), which records some classroom student data, comments and thoughts of the teacher, as well as feedback from the facilitator.

### WHAT DID THE STUDENTS SAY?

(Sources: survey, class discussion)

#### What I like about school:

- Teamwork exercise at home
- Hanging out with my friends
- Constructions
- Physical Education
- Break time
- The nice lessons
- The good relationship with the teachers
- That there are teachers I like

#### What I do not like:

- When they make fun of me →
- Fighting
- When they hit me
- Swearing/ using bad language
- Using nicknames

### HOW CAN I USE DATA AS A TEACHER? WHAT CAN I DO IN MY CLASSROOM?

I observe that their answers focus on 3 main axes:

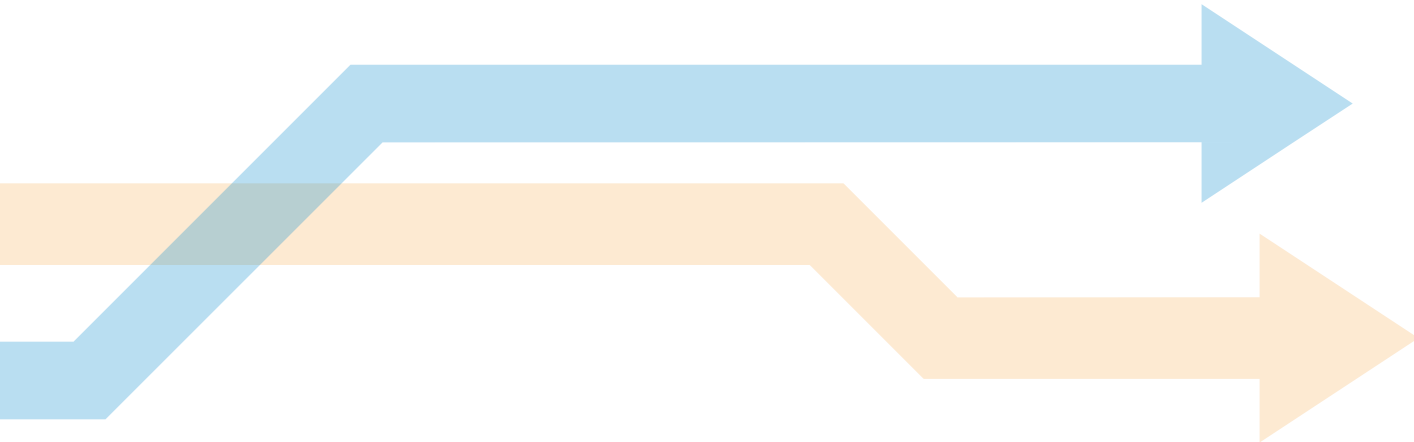
1. **Classroom activities**
2. **Break activities**
3. **Relationships between classmates**

In terms of classroom activities, already some teamwork is done which I will continue, because they seem to enjoy it, since it brings them closer to their classmates.

As for the activities at break-time, we can give more opportunities for everyone to play and feel part of the team.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When they don't hang out with me</li><li>• Too many rules</li><li>• The old building</li><li>• Building structural design and decoration</li></ul>	<p>In terms of their relationships... I am not sure what can be done beyond some discussions between us, which I feel do not accomplish as much as I would like.</p>
<p><b>FACILITATOR'S COMMENTS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Could you share with your colleagues what you do that you believe brings the students closer and helps in the bonding of the group?</li><li>• The fact that the students have a good relationship with some teachers is very positive. What are the characteristics of teachers that students like? How would this help the school staff?</li><li>• Are there activities, narrative stories on these issues that could show students the effects of such behaviours on a person?</li><li>• Very good suggestion for break time. We can see how to promote activities during break time that create team spirit and reduce competition.</li></ul>	

Table 4.1: Data Utilization Form





Subsequently, the teacher prepared his/her individual Action Plan. An abstract of the printed

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMME TEACHER'S ACTION PLAN

School Name: *WSS*

Teacher's Name: *WSS*

Class / Specialty: *WSS*

### Action 1

**Title:** Group assignments in Mathematics *(based on the data utilization form)*

**Detailed action description:** Students should be involved in group work at least twice a week during the teaching of the Mathematics lesson. Each student will have a specific role in the group (teaching differentiation). The group work will aim to contribute both to the relationships of the students and to the better understanding of concepts in Mathematics. The teams will change every fortnight.

**Additional training:** *(if I think I need it and in which area)* Training for group work and for the teaching differentiation in Mathematics

**Collaboration:** *(people within and outside the school with whom I intend to work)* Collaboration with affiliate classes, as well as with trainers who have visited the school previously.

**Timeline:** *(when I intend to implement the actions)* The action will be implemented between January-March.

### Action 2

**Title:** *(based on the data utilization form)* Break-time activities





# 5

TOOLS IN SUPPORT  
OF THE PROFESSIONAL  
LEARNING  
POLICY

# 5 TOOLS IN SUPPORT OF THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING POLICY

*The Pedagogical Institute assists schools in the development and monitoring of an Action Plan by their teachers.*

The Pedagogical Institute, in the context of implementing the decisions of the Council of Ministers regarding the Consolidated Teacher Professional Learning Policy (Council of Ministers, 2015, 2017), assists schools in the development and monitoring of an Action Plan by their teachers. This is done by creating an online environment that is available to all schools for all grades

whether they participate in the PLSP or undertake the development and implementation of teacher professional learning Action Plans on their own initiative. This online environment is called the "Electronic Professional Learning Portal" (<https://epaggelmatikimathisi.pi.ac.cy>) and entry requires a username and password, provided to each school for access to the electronic systems of the Pedagogical Institute.

## 5.1. The Electronic Professional Learning Portal as a tool for developing the school Action Plan

The Electronic Professional Learning Portal is a user-friendly online environment, accessible

to each school unit, as it allows them to document in a fast and easy way

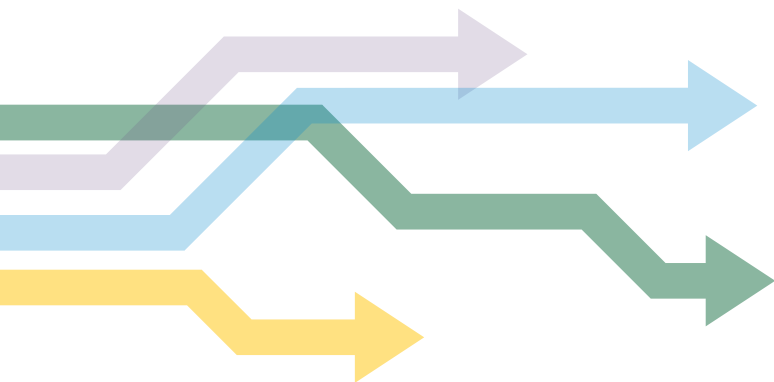
information relating to their teachers' Professional Learning Action Plan, to supplement, amend or delete data (e.g. actions) and to print the Action Plan at any time, as its planning and implementation evolves. Simultaneously, it allows the uploading of material that the school deems appropriate to keep as an integral part of the Action Plan (e.g. presentations, photographs, lesson plans, individual action plans). This material can be used for further school activities. Thus, each school has its own space and can post and amend information throughout the school year. In addition, through the Electronic Professional Learning Portal, the Action Plans of previous years are at each schools' disposal for printing. Also any material that has been uploaded / saved in past academic years can also be downloaded.

Each school can post key elements that form the structure of its Professional Learning Action Plan in its own space in the Electronic Professional Learning Portal. These elements are:

- The topic that the school selects as a priority (see Subsection 3.1.)
- The goal or goals that the school seeks to achieve in the context of teachers' learning (see Subsection 3.2.)
- The actions that the school plans or implements in pursuit of the goal or goals, with the possibility of adding, amending or deleting information as appropriate (see Subsection 3.4.).

At the same time, the Electronic Professional Learning Portal helps the schools in their effort to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan and the impact that the actions have on the school. Implementation monitoring can be achieved in various ways, any of which the schools can use, as mentioned below:

- A) Notes or Comments on the implementation or effectiveness of each individual action (e.g. school training, experiential workshops with students and parents, co-teaching of lessons).
- B) Interim Report in the middle of the school year (February) on the implementation of actions so far, with a series of indicative questions to reflect upon.





Evaluating activities and their effectiveness, allows teachers to assess their actions and progress. This assessment provides the basis for taking decisions about professional learning and re-orientation if necessary. Therefore, the Action Plan can be formatively modified in light of the interim report.

C) Final Report, submitted at the end of the school year (June), on the implementation of the Action Plan, with a series of indicative questions to reflect upon, in anticipation of next years' needs and goals for the school.

## 5.2. The website of the Pedagogical Institute as a repository of research materials and tools

The website of the Pedagogical Institute (<http://www.pi.ac.cy>) hosts information on teacher professional learning, recommended steps for its effective implementation, as well as options at the disposal of schools on ways of implementation, such as various programmes and seminars of the Pedagogical Institute.

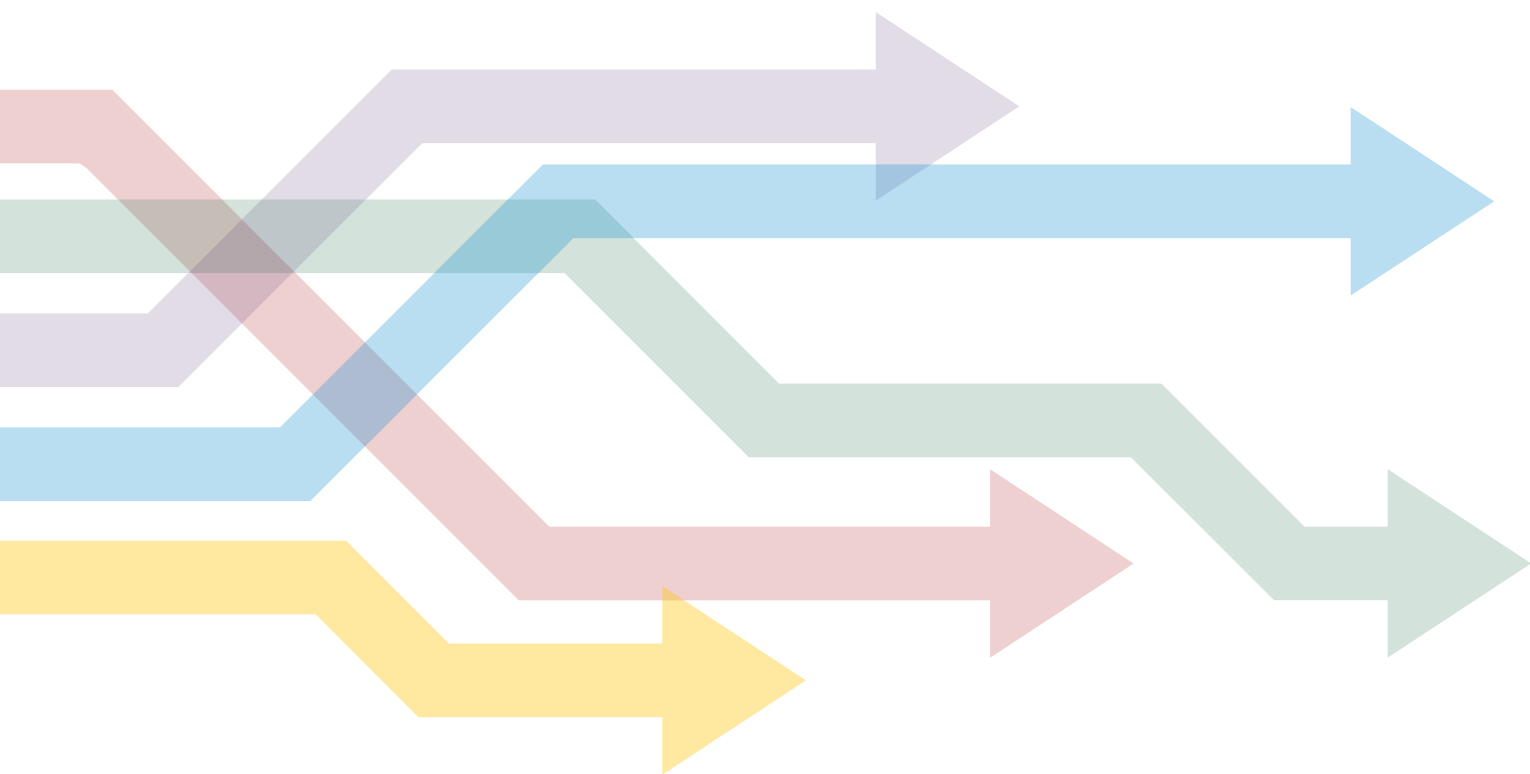
In addition, the website of the Pedagogical Institute, provides information about the Professional Learning

Support Programme of the Pedagogical Institute (PLSP), with references to action research methodology and provision of indicative tools for each phase of implementation of the Programme. Moreover, the list of participating schools per year is posted in addition to material developed for the Professional Learning Workshop held annually towards the end of the academic year and the work produced by each school (e.g. presentations, posters).

## 5.3. Indicative timeline of professional learning activities

The table below demonstrates an indicative timeline for a professional learning pathway within a school year. It must be highlighted that this timeline is indicative, and aims to create a framework for monitoring the progress of the PLSP on the basis of acquired experience

during the implementation of the Programme (Adapted by Avgitidou, 2015b). Participating schools in the PLSP have the support of the Pedagogical Institute, by means of their facilitator throughout the year for their activities.





## INDICATIVE ACTIVITY TIMELINE

**JUNE**  
(previous  
school year)

- Exploration and documentation of teachers' needs (selection, administration and analysis of tools or materialisation with other activities)
- Discussion and selection of the priority topic
- Choice of method(s) of materialisation (e.g. application to participate in the PLSP of the Pedagogical Institute)\*

*\* The applications for participation in the PLSP of the Pedagogical Institute are submitted from the previous school year following a relevant circular*

**SEPTEMBER**

- Appointment of a Coordinator or a PLSP team at the school
- Discussion for topic refinement and achieving a common understanding by all on the various aspects
- Further exploration of the issue through the collection of data (e.g. from students, by observation, from parents, etc.)

**OCTOBER**

- Analysis, documentation and study of the collected data
- Formulation of achievable and measurable target(s) for professional learning
- Action Plan: Updating the Electronic Professional Learning Portal (topic, goal(s), implementation method(s))
- Reflection and discussion of first thoughts for activities
- Formulation of specific training needs to understand the issue and to prepare appropriate activities
- Preparation and/or initiation of training sessions on the topic (suggestion: two training sessions in October-December)
- Informing the School Inspector and providing a linkage to the wider School Unit Improvement Plan
- Informing the Parents' Association about the topic (who may attend relevant seminars for Parents)

<p><b>NOVEMBER</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individualized Action Plan by teachers, taking into account the training sessions (actions and individual timeline based on personal conditions and choices, collaboration with colleagues)</li> <li>• Collection of individual action plans for scheduling school activities, based on the data collected and the training sessions</li> <li>• <u>Action Plan</u>: Updating the Electronic Professional Learning Portal about the planning of activities (type of action, date, etc.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>DECEMBER - FEBRUARY</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of subgroups that will work closely together for the planning and materialisation of activities</li> <li>• Planning, materialisation and formative assessment of school activities through reflection (e.g. lesson plans, co-teaching, activities within and outside classrooms, experiential workshops, informational meetings, etc.)</li> <li>• Collective reflection on the actions following the provision of information of all staff (e.g. in a pedagogical session)</li> <li>• Interim Report of activities, reflection and adjustment of subsequent actions</li> <li>• <u>Action Plan</u>: Updating Electronic Professional Learning Portal about implemented actions, the Interim Report and any amendments to subsequent actions</li> </ul>
<p><b>FEBRUARY - MAY</b></p> <p><b>MAY - IOYNIOΣ</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuation of planning, implementation and formative assessment of school activities through reflection</li> <li>• Final Report of actions through reflection</li> <li>• Feedback and decisions for next year</li> <li>• <u>Action Plan</u>: Updating the Electronic Professional Learning Portal with the final report and thoughts for the coming year</li> </ul>

Table 5.1: PLSP Timeline



# CONCLUSION

# CONCLUSION

Teacher professional learning is an ongoing dynamic process that aims to capitalise on the interests, questions, challenges and needs that a teacher may have and experiences daily in their specific work environment, and to turn these into learning opportunities.

The shift from the teacher training / development approach to that of professional learning highlights the important role that the teacher plays in the process, empowered to take initiatives and differentiate actions in pursuit of his/her own professional learning. Furthermore, professional learning underlines, through its constituent parts, the transformation of individuals and professional groups, circumstances and contexts.

Indeed, as a result of their involvement in these processes teachers must re-consider their beliefs, knowledge and practices' that is, elements that constitute, among others, their professional identity, while also exploring issues related to their professional environment and their students.

The professional learning process, as presented in this guide, has a dynamic and hybrid character, focusing on action, research and reflection through multiple and varied methodologies (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Reflection on a topic, at all stages of the process, aims to provide an as accurate as possible picture of the issue that concerns teachers through the employment of various research methods.

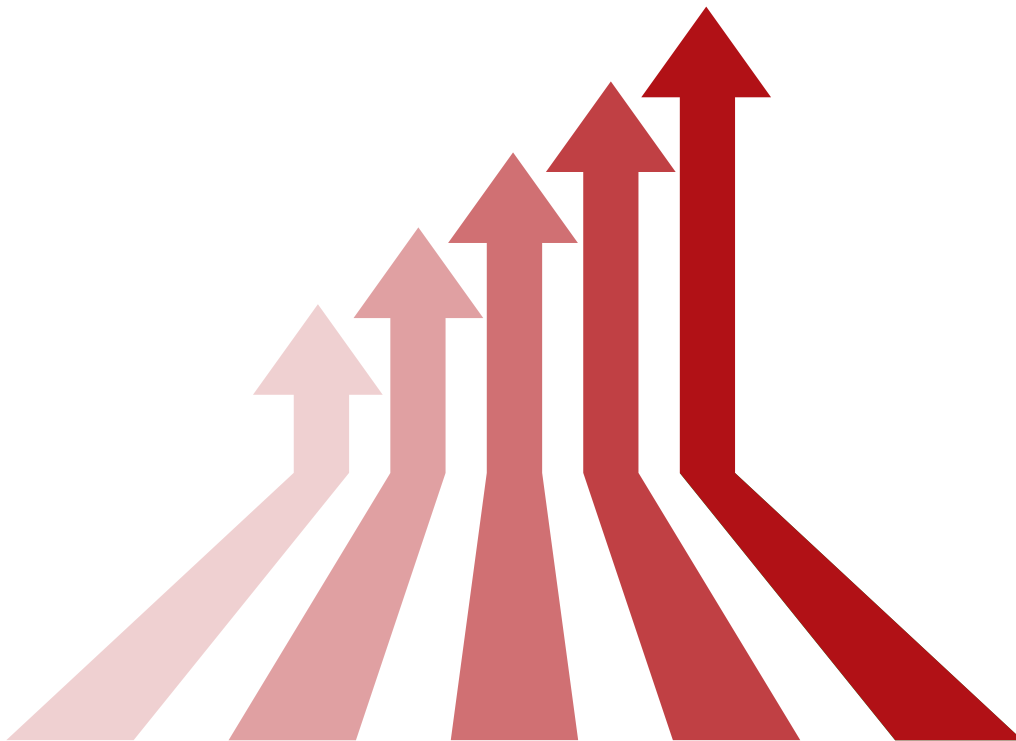
## CONCLUSION

This picture forms, at every stage, the basis for any further action hence, involving teachers in the planning of trainings that will provide them with relevant theoretical background, but also options for differentiated pedagogical and teaching practices.

The pillars that have emerged as indicators for the effectiveness of a professional learning programme focus, as we have previously mentioned, on the active learning and reflective thinking of teachers at all stages of the process. A critical review of, and hands-on involvement in the Programme's pathway coupled with the potent professional identities of teachers are likely to bring about opportunities for differentiation

in their specific setting. The process therefore contextualizes the teacher as a professional within a wider system, taking into account interactions between individuals and the environment, but also interactions of teachers in groups, subgroups and networks inside and outside the school, thus seeking to transform professional communities into professional learning communities.

It is hoped that this Guide will be form a tool that will strengthen the continuous and unwavering professional learning of teachers, as the intention of the Pedagogical Institute for collaboration, constructive dialogue and joint reflection is reiterated.





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