

## **Traveling across learning cultures.**

### **Reflection over practice for professional development, and improvement in Erasmus+ „Culture of Learning“ project**

This document includes rationale for individual and collective critical reflective practice expected from participants of the project together with practical information about possible way of implementing small action research like process, which should happen before, during and after every study visit. It is expected that every member of the study visit will enrich the experiential learning process during visit through appropriately designed reflection process structured and reported in the style of the action research approach.

#### **WHY REFLECTION?**

The critically important habit of mind, impacting the process of the professional development, is critical reflection over our own practice, and also observing others, sharing experience and discussing it. One of the mechanisms allowing and supporting the reflection over educational practices within schools participating in the project is study visit.

In order to inspire the active involvement, intellectual effort and critical approach to our own assumptions and practices we propose that every participant of the study visit prepares the description of the personal case study describing learning that they experience during the visit and built upon reflection from the visit.

Reporting about this process should allow individual development because writing about our own experiences and conclusions enriches the quality of reflection, gives a chance to go back after a certain period of time, helps in comparisons and sharing with other co-workers and professional. In general it help to create the community of learners and to collect valuable experiences.

#### **WHAT IS EXPECTED?**

Every meeting, visit, conversation opens a door to the opportunity for learning, but not all turn to be a useful experience. In order to increase the probability of high quality learning during study visits and in order to raise awareness of the issues we face in schools we propose to plan a small individual action research project. All participants should ask a question before the visit and focus the inquiry during the visit on elements that are building the culture of learning or in other worlds the learning environments of our students and teachers themselves.

Participants have freedom to design, plan, organize and implement professional development that we participate in, but for development of coherency between our actions we believe the most productive approach would be to focus the individual inquiries, observations and reflections on elements listed in the material, which is a theoretical ground for our project – “The Nature of Learning”.

Moreover, we believe that one of the most beneficial strategies for reflection for professional development is action research – the strategy that allows for independent problem posing, selection of questions, methods, and strategies, practically oriented inquiry, and conclusions and recommendation that should serve right now and right here.

Action research might be defined as: *a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out.* Look –

think – act. For more elaborated explanation of the action research in teachers’ work please read: *Culture of Learning Challenge. Action Research Guide for Practitioners* prepared by our partner in the CoL project – University of Wales.

Based on the principle of shared, reflective practice, action research can lead to change; it builds a greater knowledge-base that can change the way we do things – whether it be improvements in how students learn, how we use ICT, how we help students develop skills beyond the classroom, how we assess progress, or curriculum developments. While action research is often understood as an individual pursuit, it can also be a collective endeavor involving groups of colleagues, institutions and organizations.

## HOW MIGHT IT BE DONE?

Please consider preparing your study visit case studies accordingly to typical action research scheme: act, look, think. Acting in our case is reading “the nature of learning” and thinking about your own practice, which should result in posing the problem and/or interesting and asking an important for teaching and learning question. Looking in our case is being actively involved in observation and conversation during study visit in order to find information (or maybe only hints, pieces of data) useful in answering to the questions stated earlier. Thinking in our case will be interpretation of findings collected during visit and preparing possible answer or just reaction to stated earlier problems and questions with conclusions and recommendation for our own practice.

The possible points of your case study: What is my “research” problem? Who is involved in the problem and how? What I want to know/achieve? What is the purpose of mine research? Why is it important? How the study visit might help me? What do you want to know? What question do you want to find the answer to? What do I see here within the area I defined? What practices do I see? What is beneficial and what is not? How different/similar is it to my situation? How do teachers here understand/talk about this issue? What element of your own practice/situation would benefit from improvement? What are your aims and objectives? What I want to use in my school? What does seem to be useful? What are my plans for future? The list is not final and also not all questions have to be asked. It is every person choice and responsibility.

We believe that the individual action research project should go through five defined steps:

- a) **before or at the beginning** of the study participants need to think about issue that he or she experience in the daily practice. This issue should be connected to teaching/learning or other important element of the school life and should something that is important to improve. It is also good if that issue is something that participants have influence on,
- b) next participants should **ask question/-s** that might help to solve the problem or improve that situation,
- c) the next step is **collecting information** during study visit (from observation and conversation with other professionals),
- d) **reflection** on usefulness – how this what we found might be used in specific participants’ situation?,
- e) implementation, the attempt to change a practice is the almost final step,
- f) and the last step is drawing **conclusions** from this what happened, sharing it with others and maybe raising a new issue and questions.

It is not obligatory that every report follows exactly the same structure, however we all need to prepare and present individual reports to all partners. It would be much easier if we understand each other while reading reports on the project website.