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ATEE
Association for Teacher Education in Europe

Strategies employed by external facilitators to support and sustain communities of practice among teachers

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LeaFaP project <<https://www.leafap.eu/>>

- The study was conducted within the framework of the Erasmus+ LeaFaP (**Leading and Facilitating Professional Learning Communities in Schools towards an Inquiry-based and Reflective Practice**)
- What is a PLC? “an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (DuFour et al., 2016, p. 11).
- Aim of the project: Enhance PLC leaders & facilitators’ competence to support PLCs around Europe with an aim to increase the quality of collaboration in schools.
- Justification: Facilitation processes have been found crucial for effectiveness and sustainability of teachers’ communities of practice/PLC (e.g., Margalef & Pareja Roblin, 2016; Marsh et al., 2015).



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LeaFaP project activities

- Literature review on PLC facilitation & leadership
- Investigation on leaders' and facilitators' competencies, practical needs, and difficulties connected to PLC support
- Conceptual framework for PLC leading and facilitation
- Learning outcomes
- Guidelines
- Activities with activities to equip PLC leadership & facilitation for inquiry and reflection
- Self-run modular training for promoting PLC leadership & facilitation for inquiry and reflection

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The study

- This study reports the strategies employed by facilitators when supporting communities of practice of in-service teachers in Andalusia (Spain).
- Five focus groups were conducted, each comprising four to six facilitators of schoolteachers' teams.
- Data were analysed through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Findings: Strategies used by facilitators

- Group work strategies designed to enhance collaboration and group interactions, thereby establishing an essential environment for teacher learning.
- Knowledge-building strategies intended to advance teachers' pedagogical knowledge and assist in enhancing their practice.
- Reflection strategies associated with fostering occasions for both individual and collective reflection.
- Communication-facilitating strategies directed at enhancing and optimizing communication effectiveness within the group to ensure active participation of all members in the discussion.
- Strategies aimed at facilitating the bureaucracy inherent in formal collaborative development initiatives.

Discussion

- Although some the identified strategies align with those found in previous research in our national context (Margalef, 2011; Margalef & Pareja Roblin, 2016), others are specific to the professional context.
- Exploring the facilitators' strategies at a particular context
 - provides information concerning:
 - facilitators' roles when supporting PLCs/communities of practice
 - competencies that need to be enhanced to support PLCs/communities of practice and enhance the collaboration within schools
 - has the potential to inform programmes or initiatives to capacitate PLC/communities of practice facilitators (such as the LeaFaP project)

References

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To know more about the LeaFaP Erasmus+ project





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