



The VALUE learning paths: pilot Slovenia

AIMS

What are the aims of the VALUE learning paths? What do you hope to reach at the end of the VALUE learning paths?

The aims are:

- developed path for professional dialogue between preschool teachers and assistants;
- developing shared understanding of pillars of pedagogical process (Grosuplje: creativity in combination with ISSA principles of quality; Vavta vas: Inclusion, diversity and values of democracy);
- strengthen collaboration between preschool teachers and assistants;
- recognizing the role of both professionals in achieving the quality of work in the department;
- development of strong professional learning communities (as supporting network) in both pilot sites.

METHODS

How do you want to reach these aims? In which way will you support the pilot school to reach the aims?

The VALUE CPD path in both environments is developed for the whole staff-preschool teachers and assistants together.

In pilot Grosuplje on the process level we are modeling development of PLCs with “developmental group” (11 leaders of PLC’s and preschool administration, who have role of inner consultants for PLC leaders). On monthly reflective meetings with PLCs leaders and kindergarten administration we are reflecting process in their PLC’s and supporting them with new/additional methods for development of shared understanding and leadership skills and new strategies for encouraging dialogue between members of PLC preschool teachers and assistants,

In Vavta vas on regular monthly reflective visits, we are supporting all 3 leaders of PLC with leadership skills and new strategies for encouraging dialogue between members of PLC preschool teachers and assistants.

In both sites there is strong emphasis on formative assessment through self-reflection of the process. All ECEC professionals are encouraged to develop their professional



reflective diary to document and reflect their professional development in respective period. In both sites we put strong emphasis on creating safe environment, both on the reflective meetings with developmental group and also within PLC's.

PROCESS

Specific on preparation phase

- Who was involved?

We developed call for proposals in which we identified criteria for selection of the preschools:

- High level of motivation of kindergarten's leadership and all staff;
- Preparedness for researching, testing and creating a common path of understanding between different profiles of professional staff in kindergarten, work on professionalisation - forming a path of continuous professional development of all professional staff in kindergarten;
- Priority to be given to those kindergartens that show greater diversity in their employment structure (according to the employment profile - Roma assistant, followers of children with special needs, gender, cultural and ethnic background ...) and those who do not yet have a joint pathways / strategies of professional development of all professional staff in kindergarten.

Call was distributed to the Network of preschools and primary schools. 4 preschools applied. Upon identified criteria, 2 sites were chosen.

In both sites, the whole kindergarten professional staff is included.

- How many times did the trainers meet with the trainees?

The trainers met with the managers of the two kindergartens twice (plus telephone calls). In both kindergartens, we organise a kick-off meeting with the whole staff in Vavta vas and with the developmental team in Grosuplje.

- What was the content of the meetings? What was discussed?

At the meetings with the managers we decided on and develop the overall implementation plan, agree on concrete issues such as a timetable, meeting places. In addition, the learning process and the managers' roles were discussed.

At the kick-off meeting, staff of kindergarten received the same information as the managers, and had the opportunity to ask questions, discuss the project.

- Which methods were used?



Used was participatory approach, which engaged all participants in shared dialogue and developing common understanding of the aims of developing CPD path. Participatory approach also resulted in strong ownership of all included participants.

- **Did this lead to activities or specific output?**

The preparation phase led to development of a clear picture of the whole project, tasks and responsibilities of each partner. It contributed to main motivation and readiness for work.

- **How do you document this phase?**

We have text of call for proposals, kindergarten's letters of interests, minutes of both kick-off meetings.

- **Where there any unforeseen things that happened? If so, which / how come / how did you cope with them?**

No.

Specific on the learning and action phase

- **How was the learning and action phase designed? Is it based on a specific professional learning approach? Is it designed as courses, meetings; internal, external?**

We are using/implementing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) within preschools as a school-based professional development model using ISSA's Quality Resource Pack https://www.issa.nl/quality_pack

Goals of the PLC:

- professional development of preschool teachers into competent, reflective practitioners,
- building supportive environment that enables professional development,
- building shared understanding of pedagogical concepts, quality of practice etc,
- mutual appreciation and sharing experiences, knowledge, skills, doubts, etc.

PLC is guided by leader of PLC (one of the professionals from the kindergarten).

We model the approach of PLC: learning to lead PLC by participating in it.



Besides of meetings in PLC, we are delivering additional trainings on specific topics relevant for professional development, such as: professional portfolio.

- **Who is involved?**

In both sites whole kindergarten staff (kindergarten teachers, assistants, leadership).

In Grosuplje we directly work with 11 leaders of PLC's and kindergarten's leadership (principal, vice-principals and counselor). In Vavta vas we directly work with 3 leaders of PLC.

- **How many times did the trainers meet with the trainees? How many times are you still going to meet?**

Grosuplje: Reflective meeting with leaders of PLC: 23.10. 2018, 11.12. 2018, 14.1. 2019, 6.2.2019; training on documenting the changes (professional portfolio) for the whole kindergarten staff: 19.11. 2019 (2 groups) and phone calls/meetings in between.

Vavta vas: Reflective meeting with leaders of PLC: 12.10 2018, 17.12. 2018, 13.2. 2019; observation of the PLC's meeting: 12.12.2018; training on documenting the changes (professional portfolio) for the whole kindergarten staff: 17. 12. 2018 and phone calls/meetings in between.

We are planning to have meetings in march, april, may and june in both sites.

- **What is the general content of the meetings? What is generally discussed?**

Reflection of the process in their PLCs.

- **Which methods for reflection and discussion are used?**

For reflection: individual professional reflective diary and PLC approach

For discussion: structured process, using PLC approach

- **Did this phase lead already to some activities, specific output, ongoing results?**

PLC leaders conduct meetings of their PLC regularly after each reflective meeting.

We support leaders with techniques and materials for the implementation of PLCs.

- **How do you document this phase?**

We have minutes from meetings in both sites, all involved professionals develop their professional reflective diary. We collect evaluation questionnaires after every meeting.

- **Where there any unforeseen things that happened? If so, which / how come / how did you cope with them?**

The process is developing according the plan.



CONDITIONS

In the document “VALUE professional learning path – draft framework” different conditions for supporting sustainable change are stated. At the transnational meeting in Denmark (March 2019) we would like to discuss some overarching themes that are related to these conditions. Please briefly describe the conditions that are crucial in your VALUE pilot and how you cope with them.

- Engagement: What are the needs of all ECEC-practitioners? How did the trainers discover these learning needs?
- Strong leadership: How are the school leaders involved in creating a collaborative approach between all ECEC-practitioners?
- Ownership: How do the trainers stimulate the ownership off the involved ECEC-practitioners?
- Facilitator: What is the role of the VALUE-trainer? What are crucial competences?
- Safe context: How do the trainers create a safe context for all ECEC-practitioners in the VALUE learning paths?
- Time for planning and reflection. Are there specific structural changes in the pilot schools concerning the organisation of the VALUE learning pats?
- Tailor made: How are the local context and the needs of the ECEC-centre taken into account?
- What after the project? – Are there already some ideas on how the VALUE process will be continued after this first year?
- Other crucial conditions that should be mentioned?

Any other crucial remarks on the VALUE learning paths?

The conditions that are crucial to the Slovenian VALUE pilot are:

- developed shared principles of collaborative work (similar process as in Wanda) upon which work in PLCs is based (e.g. engagement of all, motivation, active participation, save context)
- the importance of strong leadership
- regular meetings of PLCs



- importance of competent leader of a PLC

STAKEHOLDERS GROUP

Aim

What are the aims you want to reach with the stakeholders group?

Engage in dialogue with policy makers and relevant stakeholders; call to action

Participants

Who is part of this group?

Together with managers of the two kindergartens we have identified some key institutions/their representatives that should be included in the stakeholders group, e.g. representatives of Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, National Education Institute, National School for Leadership in Education, representatives of professional schools that educate future kindergarten assistants, representatives of faculties that educate future core practitioners, representatives of organisations that offer professional retraining (from one profession to profession of kindergarten assistant), principals of other kindergartens (in order to share their experiences).

Process

- How many times did the stakeholders group meet?

The meeting is planned for March 11th. Two other meetings will follow after the implementation phase.

- What was discussed?

It is planned to present project, work in pilot sites, and to facilitate a discussion with stakeholders.

- What were the results of the discussions – output?

We expect that stakeholders would recognise the needs of ECEC professionals and administrative staff for developing CPD path; we expect that stakeholders would make first step in direction of enabling conditions for CPD path.

- Where there any unforeseen things that happened? If so, which / how come / how did you cope with them?

n/a

- Any other crucial remarks on the stakeholders group?



Surprisingly high interest from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and from the National School for Leadership in Education.

