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2014-1-BE02-KA201-000432

Tool nr. 071 - material

Developed by: AlmadaForma, Portugal

Name of the material

CCFR light version

Sources

Hammersley (2002) Bolhuis and Kool (2012)

Purpose of the material

- Provide a quick, simple and complete reading of the three pillars of the project;
- Make the teachers understand in an easy way the objectives of the project and of the training course;
- Motivate the teachers to these subjects by provide them a simple document as a starting point of academic reading documents.

Material

- Computer/laptop with internet connection - www.linpilcare.eu
- Copies of the CCFR - light version document

How you can use this material in your practice

This document should be used as part of an introductory process.

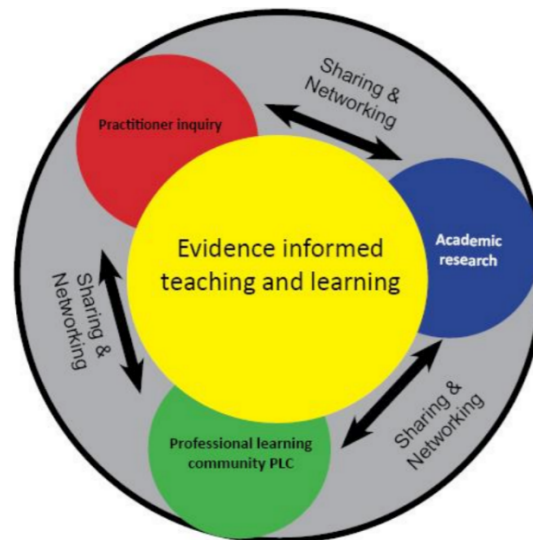
Debrief - reflection and metacognition

Feedback on the use of the tool

- This document was used in training sessions.
- The light format allows to summarize the information about LINPILCARE project and addressed throughout the training in a faster and more concise, sistematic reading of subjects.
- This version was made at the suggestion of teachers, who indicated in the presentation of the CCRF that the document was somehow a difficult and long one, and it would not be easy to work with it.



Common Conceptual Frame of Reference



Pillar 1: Practitioner inquiry

What is practitioner inquiry?

Practitioner inquiry (or: action research; teacher research; classroom research; teacher inquiry; teacher self-study) is defined as systematic, intentional study of one's professional practice for seeking change by reflecting on his/her practice (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993; 2009). Action research is a form of inquiry that enables practitioners everywhere to investigate and evaluate their work. They ask, 'What am I doing? What do I need to improve? How do I improve it?' (McNiff and Whitehead 2006).

Teaching and inquiry must be intertwined to one another, blurring distinction between teaching and inquiring. Inquiry is not understood as a line but as a circle (Dana, 2013).

What is the connection between student learning and learning Teachers?

The teaching practice cannot be considered effective unless it promotes the participation of students and consequently their learning. The criteria used by teachers in the teaching-learning process should be co-constructed, that is, should include elements of practice that result from evidence and the responses of the students face to the learning process (Timperley, 2011).

The questioning and the construction of knowledge must be understood as a cycle, which aims to promote student outcomes (Timperley, 2011), showing a link between student learning and learning developed by the teacher himself.



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Pillar 2: Professional learning community

Starting from the practice

Participation in professional learning communities (PLC) becomes important (OECD, 2014). A professional learning community can be defined as “a place where teachers inquire together into how to improve their practices in areas of importance to them, and then implemented what they learned to make it happen” (Hord, 1997). So a PLC starts from the practice. Inquiry is used to structure the practice and participants return to the practice with what they learned in the PLC.

It is acyclical working method, focused on improving the own practice. The powerful collaboration that characterizes professional learning communities is a systematic process in which teachers work together to analyse and improve their classroom practice. Teachers work in teams, engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions that promote deep learning. This process, in turn, leads to higher levels of student achievement (DuFour, 2004). PLCs serve to connect a group of professionals to do just what their name entails - learn from practice (Dana and Hoppey, 2015).

There is evidence that teachers’ participation in well-functioning PLCs is indeed worth the effort. PLCs have the power to change school culture, teacher impact and student achievement. In regards to culture, PLCs cultivate collective responsibility, as well as leading to reflective dialogue, and faculty empowerment (Southeast Regional Educational Laboratory, 2007).

Pillar 3: Easy access to the results of academic research

Evidence-based teaching

An important theme in evidence-based practice, as well as the third pillar of project Linpilcare, is about giving teachers easy access to the results of academic research. The notion of evidence-based teaching is sometimes interpreted as encompassing the belief that teaching practice should be directed by ways of working that have proven to be effective by scientific research. In project Linpilcare we like to emphasize that teachers are professionals and therefore should be (left) in charge of making decisions for their specific educational practice. However, we also believe that knowledge of relevant outcomes of educational research can, in a variety of cases, help them make better decisions. Perhaps it would be better to talk of evidence-informed teaching.

What do we mean by academic research in project Linpilcare?

Before discussing possible ways for teachers to ‘buy into’ academic publications, it is important to clarify what we mean by academic research. A secondary function of such a description within the context of project Linpilcare is that it, especially in a comparison with practitioner inquiry (pillar 1), could help by “demystifying” academic studies and researchers for teaching professionals.

It is important to understand that typifying academic research as opposed to practitioner inquiry can easily lead to oversimplifications and caricatures of both concepts. As Hammersley (2002), in a critical review of the concept of evidence-based education, states:

“... research knowledge is always fallible, even if it is more likely to be valid than knowledge from other sources. Thus, we are not faced with a contrast between Knowledge with a capital K, whose epistemic status is certain, and mere opinion, whose validity is zero.”

Bolhuis and Kools (2012) constructed a table depicting a continuum on types of knowledge construction, ranging from informal learning to fundamental scientific research, with practitioner inquiry somewhere in between. Table 1 shows the parts of the table relevant to the conceptual framework of project Linpilcare.



Table 1: Characteristics of practitioner inquiry, applied scientific research, and fundamental scientific research (part of an adapted and elaborated version of table in Appendix 1 in Bolhuis & Kools (2012))

	Extend of making explicit and regulation	Function and/or goal orientation	Actors: stakeholders and their roles	Outcome	Shared how and by whom
Practitioner inquiry as professional learning strategy	Explicit inquiry in one's own practice. Rules (regulation) under construction, thus under debate. Much borrowed from social sciences.	Goal: systematic data based construction of new insights in practice that help the researchers and others involved to improve their individual and/or collective practice	Professionals in education (teachers, school leaders) collaborating with - preferably all - stakeholders (e.g. students, parents) who are involved in the topic.	Professional performance based on insight in one's own specific practice. Insights collectively shared with those involved. Teacher professional development and school development	Shared by all stakeholders through involvement. Possibly inspirational for colleagues in and outside school by spreading information.
Applied scientific research	Research question is explicitly derived from practice. Rules and regulations of scientific research.	Goal: general knowledge about questions relevant for educational practice.	Educational researchers (with a focus on practice). Education: source of questions, field of research, possible further cooperation.	Researchers learn about their topic. They provide information on these outcomes in diverse media including social science journals.	Shared with schools where research was done and in general educational media. Shared in educational science (peer reviewed) journals, mainly with other researchers.
Fundamental scientific research	Explicit question from educational science. Rules and regulations of scientific research.	Constructing and testing theory, contributing to the scientific body of knowledge on education	Educational researchers Education: field of research Teachers, students, school leaders/boards, and others: data source	Researchers learn about their topic. They provide information on these outcomes in educational or other social science journals.	Shared in peer-reviewed journals, mainly with colleague researchers. In part popularized information in other media.



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Practitioner inquiry is always initiated and carried out by teaching professionals and is directly aimed at improving (understanding of) their professional practice. (Bolhuis and Kool, 2012)

Possible strategies (draft)

So far, the partners of project Linpilcare have considered several ideas and strategies in helping teachers bridge the gap between teaching practice and the results of academic research:

- Making teachers familiar with relevant search engines - In several countries projects were conducted to develop search engines that are connected to databases of academic research written for teachers. Sometimes these projects emphasize rewriting scientific publications to make them better readable for teachers; others are more aimed at making available existing archives of professional journals and the like in which academic research is discussed.
- Training teachers to read academic publications - As part of working in a PLC teachers could discuss together how to read academic publications: How are journal articles structured? And which parts of it are usually the most relevant to teachers? In project Linpilcare we could develop tools that help teachers to become familiar with academic writings and the way in which to read them.
- Questioning researchers - In some cases, instead of (or in addition to) reading publications, teachers could engage in dialogue with the author(s). This could be done by inviting researchers with expertise on the subject at hand from a local university into their professional learning community, or for instance by contacting them by email. Most teachers probably feel hesitant to directly contact a researcher, whereas researchers may be very willing to explain their writings or the key points of their field of interest to teachers.