

Analysis of interviews – main points

(Intellectual output 2 – LeLeNet project)

This analysis is referred to as Intellectual Output 2 of the project Leading Learning by Networking (LeLeNET). You can find more about the project at <https://lelenet.net/>.

It serves as a basis for the questionnaire focused on the educational needs of head teachers in the partner countries as well as for a draft state of arts regarding school/teacher networking.

All together 14 group or individual interviews with 29 head teachers were conducted in February and March 2018. We used the pre-agreed interview schedule with the following topics:

- linking networking with teaching and learning;
- topics for networking;
- teachers' motivation for networking;
- the role of head teacher in networking;
- the benefits of networking;
- head teachers' strategies for supporting and sustaining networks;
- limits, challenges and head teachers' needs.

The aim of collecting data by the use of interviews with head teachers from basic schools (ISCED1 + 2) is to provide the basis for the questionnaire and inform the contents of the training modules. Although our intention is to focus on networking in the field of inclusive education, we did not want to limit the respondents to it. Therefore this specific topic cannot be identified by respondents in all partner countries.

The complete document consists of a brief description of methodology, the results of the analysis, suggestions for the content of the training modules, and the summary which also comprises the situation related to networking in the partner countries.

The overview of reports describing the situation related to school networking indicates that networking within and among schools is a relatively common feature and a growing trend in all partner countries. It seems that the complexity of challenges and changes is seen as contributing to this development. It is also evident that networking is understood as an important strategy to promote school development and a leading principle for teachers and schools to learn from each other. In some cases (CZ, SE) collaboration among schools and/or with external agencies is explicitly worded in official documents.

School networks as described by partners, have been often initiated by external agencies as a response to current challenges. Pupils' results are one of those. SE partners, for example, refer to declining result on PISA, and UK partners to "measured performance (Examination and SATS results and OFSted inspection)." BE partners also report about external pressures for closer collaboration among schools, such as a requirement for developing a number of transversal competencies among pupils and students which will require more cross-curricular and project-based work. Similarly, CZ partners state that "networking and mutual support are ways in which Czech schools can react to the requirement for inclusive education." In SI school networks have become "ever more popular by educational politicians" in the case of initiating changes and/or large-scale reforms in different areas.

Different projects are seen as the most common triggers for networking, such as Networked Learning Communities (UK), ESF and other EU-funded projects (CZ), or Networks of Learning Schools (SI). There is also strong evidence about school-based projects focused on school improvement by networking in all partner countries. They have been developed as a response to different challenges schools are facing. Inclusive education has been mentioned by CZ and SE partners. In SI networks have been employed also in the case of initiating and piloting large-scale reforms, such as modernization of vocational education, curricular and organisational reform of basic education, setting and implementing national school quality system.

Different actors initiate and support networks in the partner countries at the national level, such as: National Agency for Education (SE), National College for School Leadership (UK), National School for Leadership in Education and National Education Institute (SI), Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (CZ). In the case of specific initiatives, other agencies and/or organisations are mentioned by CZ and UK partners. BE partners do not report about specific recent support.

For the purpose of this analysis 14 group or individual semi-structured interviews with 29 head teachers were conducted in 5 countries. The results of the interview analysis indicate that head teachers are very much inclined to networking among teachers within and also among schools as they realise its potential for professional development. They report a variety of networking topics, such as development of curriculum and teaching methods, development of pupils' competencies, development of school leadership etc. Teachers, according to interviews' responses are autonomously as well as controlled motivated for networking. Head teachers therefore have to be motivators as well as facilitators of networking within and between schools using different strategies, such as fostering school culture for networking, being a role model, initiating and sustaining networks. Being aware of the potential of teacher networking for their professional development as well as school improvement head teachers report several challenges and needs they are facing in their practice related mainly to establishing preconditions for teachers networking. Interestingly

one of them seems to be head teachers networking while they also state that there is still no sufficient level of collaboration culture in schools, head teachers feel they have a lack of knowledge in terms of networking and networking topics, there is a lack of resources, teachers' motivation as well as policy support.

Suggestions for the content of the training modules:

The analysis of the interviews indicate that the following topics may be included in the training modules:

- the nature and benefits of networks for improving teaching and learning;
- (organisational) conditions for effective networking;
- head teachers' role in initiating, developing and sustaining networks;
- motivation for networking at head teachers' and teachers' level;
- building and fostering the culture of networking (related to the previous items).