SIRIUS

BUILDING PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY CONCERNING THE EDUCATIONAL POSITION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN REPORT

Report with recommendations December 2013

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Professional capacity of schools refers to the quality of teachers as well as the school leader and other school staff. The definition of Bender Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton and Luppescu (2006) who view professional capacity as one of the fundamentals of school improvement reads as follows:

> "While parents are their children's first teachers, the school faculty holds the keys that unlock students' intellectual development. To raise student achievement so that most students attain high academic standards requires profound changes in teachers' capacities—their content knowledge and pedagogical skills and their abilities to work well with others. We refer to this combination of human and social resources as professional capacity. To elaborate, professional capacity encompasses the quality of the faculty and staff recruited and maintained in a school, their base beliefs and values about responsibility for change, the quality of ongoing professional development focused on local improvement efforts, and the capacity of a staff to work together as a cohesive professional community focused on the core problems of improving teaching and learning." (Bender Sebring et al, 2006, p. 12).

Taking this definition as a starting point, a variety of activities have been organized in 2012 and 2013 in the area of professional capacity focused on the educational position of students with a migrant background. The current report summarizes these activities. In combination with an overview of the literature, we will draw a set of conclusions and formulate the main recommendations in this particular area.

The second chapter summarizes the Sirius activities regarding professional capital and their results.

The third chapter will combine recommendations from the literature on professional capital, professional learning communities in urban settings and the Sirius activities into a set of five general recommendations that will be the basis for the Sirius agenda in this particular area in the near future.

2. SIRIUS ACTIVITIES

This chapter summarizes the activities that were undertaken by the Sirius members. The first paragraph describes the results of a survey, the second paragraph summarizes the three peer reviews and the third paragraph presents the main findings of a meeting for policy makers on the topic of professional capital.

2.1. Survey

Main question

A survey was conducted among the Sirius network countries as part of work package 2 on schooling, intending to answer the following question:

"What are policy measures and policy plans that aim to strengthen the professional capacity of schools concerning the educational position of children with a migrant background?"

Method

In June 2012 a questionnaire was sent to all the national coordinators of the network. By September 2012, the national coordinators of Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and The Netherlands completed the questionnaire. The survey distinguished between five different topics: 1) policies directly aiming at capacity building among teachers, 2) capacity building among parents and school-community relationships, 3) capacity building among school leaders, 4) policy programs that have multifocal points and 5) policies aiming to increase and strengthen the migrant teaching force.

Results

The results showed that most policies focus on the teachers (more specifically on second language learning) and the teaching and learning environment. Much less attention is paid to capacity building among school leaders or among parents and school-community relationships.

It seems that most countries agree that proficiency in the language of instruction is conditional to being successful in school. Some activities on increasing capacity in teaching a second language are organized during initial teacher training, but more are inservice courses or professional training modules. Relatively

innovative (or unique) seem to be the attempts at combining second language and mother tongue learning and the introduction of content and language integrated learning.

Most policies that focus on the teaching and learning environment result in an offer of professional development modules that attempt to train general practical skills of individual teachers or skills in dealing with ethnic/cultural differences. Some countries take an integral or school level approach, and some countries develop expertise centers, e.g., in the form of networks between universities and teacher training institutes. Additionally, programs are developed with a multitude of aims and activities that vary according to each country. Some combine a focus on second language learning and the teaching and learning environment, whereas others describe measures taken by the MoE where the MoE decrees a general framework or set of principles and in some cases requires schools to ask for funding for additional support. Finally, policies were described that aim to increase and/or strengthen the numbers of teachers from migrant backgrounds. These vary from job advertising in specific media to supporting networks of migrant teachers to quotas for teachers from migrant backgrounds.

Regarding the plans for policy development, in six of the Sirius countries, policy development is uncertain, two countries are continuing and developing on a relatively small scale and two countries are strengthening and innovating their policy activities. Policies are being developed into at least two different directions: 1) continued attention for second language learning, and 2) policies aiming to establish a shift of focus towards individual pupils' needs.

Recommendations

On the basis of the comparison between the literature and the responses from the Sirius countries, a number of recommendations are formulated. Given the careful nature of the comparison, logically the recommendations are tentative and are meant to serve as one source of input for possible directions for policy development in the future. The recommendations are phrased in general terms, and need to be developed in more detail.

The first general recommendation for all Sirius countries would be to develop more coherent capacity building policy programs. The survey responses mentioned many different offers of training modules for teachers in a variety of different skills, but very little school level or national level policy programs in this area. Given these results, we want to recommend to develop coherent policy programs that focus on the "whole" teaching and learning environment, including teacher skills, but also teaching materials and assessment methods.

Furthermore, some of the essential elements as emphasized by the literature should be strengthened: this concerns professional capacity to combine second language with mother tongue learning, content and language integrated learning, organization of positive classroom climates and high expectations, it concerns an increase of parent involvement and strengthening of school-community relationships and, finally, it concerns the professional capacity of school leaders.

We noted that none of the countries mention systems that make sure there are sufficient qualified teachers. This point refers not only to the number of teachers in urban schools or minority schools, but also to the quality of these teachers. In that sense, it refers to the issue of teacher licensing and

credentialing requirements particularly for teachers that work with migrant students. We would recommend to further explore possible systems that 1) assess and 2) support development of teacher competences in classrooms with students from migrant backgrounds.

2.2.   Peer reviews

A Peer Review can be defined as a systematic examination and assessment of the performance or practices of a specific unit of governance by a group of other units of the same level and range. The ultimate goal is to help the reviewed unit to improve its policy making, adopts best practices and comply with established standards and principles. The examination is conducted on a non-adversarial basis and relies heavily on mutual trust among the peers involved in the review, as well as on their shared confidence in the process. The Peer Review exercise results in a report that assesses accomplishments, spells out shortfalls and makes recommendations.

Every peer review has a common procedure, which consists of three main phases. The preparatory phase consists of background analysis and of some form of self-evaluation by the country/project under review. In the consultation phase the Peer Review Visit takes place. This part contains a tour of the premises (on-site visits), observations and interviews with different groups of stakeholders (such as civil servants, policy makers, teachers, principal, mentors, parents, students, researchers etc). In the assessment phase a draft of the final report, which comprises an analytical section, where the project performance is examined in detail and individual concerns are expressed, and an evaluation or summary section setting forth the conclusions and recommendations. The draft report is shared and discussed with the Peer Review Team and with the reviewed country and may make adjustments it considers justified before the draft is submitted to the members of SIRIUS and the European Commission.

In total, three peer reviews were conducted each focusing on different topics regarding professional capacity building. The results of the three peer reviews are described below.

2.2.1. Zagreb, Croatia, October 2012

Background

A team of eight peers from the Netherlands, Austria and Croatia examined the implementation of the International Teacher Leadership project (ITL) in an elementary school in the northwest suburb Podsused-Vrpaće of the capital of Croatia, Zagreb. The peers were invited by the Network of Education Policy Centers (NEPC) and the Forum for Freedom in Education (FSO) to inform the school, funders and policy makers on the effectiveness of the initiative, the ITL methodology as well as the possible ways of making it a systemic and replicated practice for other communities in similar circumstances. The school specially wanted to learn how to (possibly) improve and sustain the initiative.

(more details in the peer review report, Tudjman, 2012).

Picture. The peer review leader explaining the interview process in a school in Zagreb

Some remarks

The teaching profession in Croatia is often mentioned in the context of its low material and social status in society compared with other employees in public institutions and teachers feel they have to constantly 'prove' the relevance of their profession to the public as well as to the authorities in order to be recognized as one of the main stakeholders of the education system. Croatian teachers generally believe that teacher training programs should be improved and more focused on specific teaching competencies and practical experiences in order to provide all key competencies for prospective teachers (Zgaga, 2006).

The International leadership project (ITL) is using the approach of school developmental action planning in order to empower school teachers to systematically plan, conduct and monitor their activities. The program is interesting because it influences the structure and culture of teaching in Croatian schools. The ITL project seeks an alternative perspective of teaching which recognizes that teachers' sense of self-efficacy and empowerment are the key to innovation and improvement. Teachers who participated were very satisfied and would like to continue working with ITL with teachers who have not completed the program. However, funds are lacking.

The peer review team recognized that a lot of attention in the project was given to the Roma children. However, the team felt that the parents should be involved (education in language and parental involvement) as well as other Croatian children (for understanding Roma culture). Parents and schools should be partners in education; all partners are needed in working towards an inclusive school society. For this, it is also important that teachers who followed the ITL workshops transfer their knowledge to other teachers and make good use of the already available data.

Another remark that was made by the peer review team was that a lot seemed to depend on a small number of persons; getting more people involved reduces the chance that knowledge disappears when key persons e.g., switch jobs.

The ITL projects turned out to give room for working on social cohesion projects and building school – parents – community partnerships. This is important, because going from an inclusive school structure to

an inclusive society means that other life-spheres are waiting outside to be taken on, such as home, leisure and care with the help of other professionals in tackling segregation and isolation.

Recommendations

The peer review recommended to take a system approach and longtime view when implementing projects in schools: involve all children, involve the community and take a sustainable school improvement approach. Monitoring and research is vital in this process: these belong to a learning attitude and will help to move towards defining the (SMART) goals, making adjustments to the project and will help obtain funds, because results can be shown.

Sustainability is important for each project because all the choices we pursue and all the actions that we make today will affect future processes. Sound decisions need to be made in the present in order to avoid limiting the choices of Roma generations to come. The peers recommended to take the following points in consideration:

- Make sure that the whole process does not depend on one person and a few high quality trainers.
- Consider a train the trainer approach, so that more trainers are equipped for the job/ workshops.
- For a better cooperation between schools, projects etc., finding allies is critical.
- Parent involvement needs consistent focus (father role): parent involvement is essential.
- Nourish the teachers that are involved: they are the ambassadors and your professional capital.
- Focus on Roma children who followed the course: keep them on track (before the drop out at the age of 12).
- Keep testing language skills before and during school career with the Roma pupils.
- Look outside the school, include the Roma Community.
- Start class observations to monitor what happens in practice: do Roma pupils perform better etc.

2.2.2. Antwerp, Belgium, January 2013

Background

The Centre for Migration and Intercultural Studies of the University of Antwerp organized a peer review for SIRIUS in two schools on the implementation of the Equal Education Opportunities (EEO) policy in Antwerp. Two schools for secondary education were visited in the peer review. The main question was *how* the schools use the EEO funding to create optimal learning and development chances for pupils with a migrant background. Besides that the peers also took a closer look at the differences between these schools and what schools do with parental involvement and teachers' professional development. From the SIRIUS network a team of ten peers examined the implementation of the (EEO policy).

(more details in the peer review report, Tudjman, 2013a).

Picture. The peer review team preparing interview questions in Antwerp

Some remarks

Due to the EEO policy the schools obtain extra hours to employ more teachers. Therefore, the number of pupils in each classroom is small. This makes it easier for teachers to take all needs and capacities of each pupil into account and adapt their lessons accordingly. This support is essential for newcomers and other students with special needs. Probably because of this extra care combined with an emphasis on teacher team work, the teachers are enthusiastic about their profession. Peer reviewers perceived positive teacher attitudes towards the schools and the students.

There seemed to be an issue concerning the administrative tasks involved in the EEO policy funding. The peers do not question the importance of action plans and reports, but stress that these plans should facilitate the implementation of the policy in the school and not be an obstacle for the performance of the duties of the professionals.

The peer-review team noticed there are no pedagogical guidelines within the EEO policy to develop intercultural education in the school. The schools know that they get funding for extra hours because of the low socioeconomic background of their students, but they do not get any advice on how to support intercultural coexistence in the school and help the educational success of all their pupils. Along the same line, the peer reviewers have some concerns regarding the encouragement of immigrant students to live and show their cultural backgrounds. It seemed that the school want their students from migrant backgrounds to adopt the culture of the countries' ethnic majority group. Examples of this are the forbidden use of mother-tongue and the headscarf.

Nevertheless, in one of the schools, the peer reviewers noted a pedagogical project to set up a multicultural coexistence and an intercultural dialogue by organizing a variety of multicultural activities. They are carried out punctually and as extracurricular and leisure events to involve parents and neighbors and to motivate the children. This seemed to be a good starting point for introducing intercultural education in a more profound way.

The parental involvement in both schools appeared to be very low. Although peer reviewers did not have a chance to speak to parents, they do not seem to participate actively in their sons and daughters academic education and they let school manage all the aspects of it. However, if the children do not perceive

interest for their education at home it can result in a lower incentive to study and a poorer school belonging.

The peer reviewers noted the importance of reconsidering the education system; currently, it is very difficult to move between educational tracks due to the large differences in their programs. The peers think that such a rigid system causes more inequality because it classifies the students' aspirations from an early age and with little chance to change.

Finally, the peer reviewers underlined some the interviewees remarks that EEO policy seems to increase segregation. The concentration of minorities in some communities of Antwerp, and the argument to choose for nearby schools, results in a high density of children with an ethnic minority background in some of the schools.

A final remark was made about teachers professional development. The two schools differed in their focus on PD. In one school it was part of the school policy, it was obliged and structured and in this school some of the EEO policy was spend on extra PD. In the other school, however, it seemed the management did not encourage the teachers to professionally develop to a large extent.

Recommendations

To improve and get better results out of EEO funding, the peer reviewers made the following recommendations for both schools:

1. *Introduce the topic of migration in the school curriculum.*

The peer review team believes that curricula should take into consideration the current situation of the Flemish society, which is formed by individuals coming from several cultures. To build a sympathetic attitude towards people from a different ethnical background it will be important to give information about the different cultures that live in Flanders, the main reasons to immigrate to another countries, the situation and difficulties of migrant people and their contributions to the development of the country.

2. *Offer teacher training in interculturalism, teaching methodology with ethnical minorities and home language of the pupils.*

To support intercultural coexistence it is fundamental that teachers and counselors learn about different cultures and the management of successful interactions between them. it is also important for teachers to become familiar with specific methodologies to teach children with migrant backgrounds and to solve possible conflicts and cultural issues.

This includes attention for mother tongue teaching. The right to one's own language is important in enabling students to develop a strong positive self-image.

3. *Increase the participation and the realistic aspirations of the parents.*

It is important to involve the parents in school activities so the school can bring the communities together. Also, to empower them to have high and realistic academic objectives for their children.

4. Make informed choices in the implementation of EEO

The peers support the EEO characteristic that schools have a certain amount of freedom in implementing the EEO funding. We recommend for schools to look closely to what already is being done in their school, at evidence based practices in the case of schooling for immigrant children, and then decide where EEO funding can make a difference in their own situation.

2.2.3. Oslo, Norway, November 2013

Background

During the Peer Review in Norway, peers were invited by the National Centre for Multicultural Education (NAFO) to visit a teacher training college in Oslo (HiOA) and two secondary schools in a small coastal community (Larvik).

The main question of the peer review was:

What is the role of NAFO in providing support to teacher training institutes and schools across Norway related to migrant education? And how can this role be enhanced?

NAFO is the center for multicultural education in Norway and is set up as a division of the Ministry of Education. NAFO provides direct support to schools that are specifically assigned to NAFO ('focus schools') and who need support with the education of children who have no or limited Norwegian language skills. The support is provided in the form of training for schools and teachers, organizing gatherings for schools and provision of resources for teachers through its website. NAFO also tries to bring together all the relevant institutions to collaborate and design programmes that are suited to the needs of migrant children.

(more details in the peer review report, Kambel, 2013).

Picture. The peer review team, and representatives of policy makers, NAFO and schools

Some remarks

Norwegian schools turn to both NAFO and the teacher training college at HiOA for advice on multicultural or linguistic issues. NAFO and HiOA have a good relationship and collaborate in developing programmes, they exchange information and are on the same page with regard to supporting children from migrant backgrounds. At the teacher training institute, NAFO organizes conferences and seminars for students, NAFO also maintains a website that students consult when they need resources for the class. And, as mentioned before, NAFO gives scholarships to migrant students. NAFO also provides ideas to master's students on topics for research. However, the work of NAFO seems to focus more on the schools then on the teacher training programme itself.

The support of NAFO for both schools that were visited by the peers consists of organizing gatherings where schools can share what they are doing to support language minority children. The schools can also ask advice and NAFO comes in and gives trainings. The NAFO website is used frequently by teachers, who find the resources very useful, but would like to have more. An advantage of being a focus school for NAFO is that some of the support is free. Other schools have to pay for all of NAFO's services.

Both schools were positive about the support they were receiving from NAFO, but said it was not enough and that they would like more. For Mesterfjellet, which is facing a merger with two other schools, they would like NAFO to come in and educate all the teachers of the new schools. They also want teachers to focus on language in every subject (not just during the language classes) and felt that NAFO could help with that.

The peer review revealed that an important element of the success in Larvik is the dedication of the schools who foster a genuinely positive and warm approach of their students. With the help of NAFO, effective programmes have been designed that make sure that children acquire the necessary academic Norwegian language skills, but which are flexible enough to allow the students to move to the mainstream classes as soon as they are ready (the Combination Class). The peers were impressed by this, as well as the course provided to give migrant students a space for reflection about their identities as 'cross cultural kids' within Norwegian society (Flex-id). This clearly successful approach, should serve as a good practice and should be replicated across Norway and extended to all schools, not only the NAFO focus schools.

Recommendations

On the basis of the interviews and observations, the peers formulated four recommendations:

1. Address heritage language and culture of immigrant children

What would make the NAFO programmes even stronger, is when the other side of the coin would also be addressed, namely the heritage language and culture of the children. The programmes initiated or supported by NAFO seem to place most or the only emphasis on learning Norwegian, but there seems little recognition of the value of the linguistic and cultural diversity that the students themselves bring with them. The students who were interviewed for instance, had never considered it an advantage to be bilingual or trilingual. This is most likely the result of laws and policies of the Ministry of Education, but

this could perhaps be an area which NAFO, together with the local policy makers and the schools, could develop more.

2. Extend existing programmes to native Norwegian students

Another way of addressing different sides of the same coin, is to extend the Flex-id programme to Norwegian students, who also need to learn how to make sense of their various identities; as Norwegians and as global citizens. Further, by involving Norwegian students in the special programme for the linguistic minority students, as suggested by the latter, the mutual integration may be enhanced. For example Norwegian students may serve as 'social guides' for newcomers.

3. Organize collaboration between schools, teacher training institutes and NAFO

Schools who need support with linguistic minority students can seek help from both NAFO and from the teacher training college at HiOA, which they - with the noted exception of schools in Oslo - frequently do. NAFO and HiOA work closely together on this. There are several ways in which NAFO could further strengthen its role however, both at the national level, and in working together with the teacher training college. NAFO works closely with schools, which means that they have first-hand knowledge of what is going on inside the schools. This could help HiOA to strengthen its programmes and ensure that the curriculum is streamlined with what is needed in the schools. NAFO could play a role in particular with strengthening the Norwegian language skills of the bilingual bachelor students. For example by creating a programme similar to the flexible Combination Class offered in Larvik. Offering a course like Flex-id to all teacher students at HiOA, may also be an effective way to enhance students' self-reflection within a culturally diverse environment which Oslo is rapidly becoming.

4. Support student teachers (from migrant backgrounds)

With regard to the students at HiOA, NAFO should increase its visibility at the teacher training college: provide more information about what NAFO does, opportunities for research (especially for the master's students) and about the scholarships NAFO provides to bilingual students. Another (strong) recommendation from the bilingual students is helping them with job placement, particularly with the bilingual students who have received scholarships from NAFO. Using its network and contacts within schools who work with bilingual teachers, NAFO would be well positioned to assist graduates with placement. The same is true for assisting HiOA in creating a more culturally diverse teaching staff.

2.3. Policymakers meeting

In December 2012, a meeting was organized for policy makers in the Sirius network countries. The meeting took place in Rotterdam and was attended by ten countries, most countries sent their national coordinators and a policy maker. The title of the meeting was: "Policies in the Sirius countries on professional capacity building with a focus on improving the educational position of migrant children." One of the main goals of the meeting was to exchange information on policy issues on each of the Sirius countries in the areas of professional capital and to discuss possible directions for policy development.

The meeting lasted one day. In the morning the report was presented and two lecturers presented different topics with regard to professional capacity. Furthermore, the countries all presented their national policy issues. In the afternoon the group chose to discuss four topics exchanged their issues and discussed how Sirius can support policy development in the near future.

This summary mentions the main topics from the discussion in the four thematic groups as well as possibilities for Sirius to further develop policy in this area. For more details we refer to the report (Tudjman, 2013b). The basic questions read as follows:

What are the main policy issues in national contexts?
What can the Sirius network do to help, promote etc?

The participants indicated they wanted to discuss four issues, which (therefore) can be considered as the most important areas of policy development: second language learning, teaching and learning environment, school community relationships and licensing and credentialing. Below the main topics are listed for each of these issues.

Second language learning
Risks are in various European countries:
- Lack of money and initiatives to pay serious attention to it.
- There is a gap between the political discourse on language skills and what is needed and the real situation in practice ('on the ground')
- There is a lack of attention to language support and poor performance

Content is that:
- Some countries support mother tongue language education (f.i. Scandinavian countries)
- Some have a symbolic presence
- Other countries have neither
- Some countries organize bilingual classes/education as a response to immigration or on basis of long heritage
- Initial teacher training does not always include Second language training (SLT).
- it is unknown how many teachers have SLT skills.

Sirius can do:
- Keep different options of mother tongue language and SLT education on the agenda
- Investigate SLT status in different (Sirius) European countries.

Teaching and learning environment
Important in the learning and teaching environment:
- Friendliness, teachers motivated.
- High expectations of students.
- Common goal of all the activities
- Safe environment
- All staff cares about the students
- Different cultures are involved. And valued. Intercultural approach.

Sirius can do:
- Best practices collection and to examine the impact of it.

School community relationships
Dynamic schools link up proactively with:
- Community organizations (joint teacher training; issues of qualifications or supplementary; school teachers and specialists' knowledge)
- Families (literacy in home language; parents specialist knowledge; parents as experts)
- NGOs (citizenship; teacher training; policy mentoring; raising awareness)
- Social services (improving conditions)
- Local business (job market reality, practice, expert knowledge)
- Networking (linked to other schools, also transition schools, and research)

Sirius can do:
- Advocate for open school policies
- Facilitate relations between schools and other actors
- Support national partners to promote such strategies at a national level.

Licensing and credentialing
Focused in their group on the situation in the Netherlands, Belgium and Lithuania.
- None have a system, in the Netherlands and Lithuanian there is a special license for children with special needs.
- We need a registration system in the Netherlands that does not blame and shame, that also examines basic teacher skills for the rural area versus the city area. A system that helps to improve quality and image of teachers.
- Belgium does not yet know how, many schools believe that they cannot do a lot, schools often blame poor results on the children.
- Lithuania works with a junior, medior and senior system (a career system) that supports professional development .
- Estonia has a good registration system for teachers

Sirius can do:
- Lobby on implementing good registration systems.

2.4.   Conclusion

The Sirius activities have addressed a variety of topics regarding professional capital using different methods. Combined, the activities give an overview of the state of the art regarding policies on professional capital in the Sirius countries. Of course not all of the possible topics have been discussed into detail, and given the importance of the topic we conclude that continued attention is needed. In the final chapter with conclusions and recommendations we will outline some of the ideas to further develop Sirius activities on professional capital building.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

In this final chapter the recommendation as put forward in each of the activities will be summarized under five general headings. The theoretical notions on professional capital, professional learning communities in urban settings and networks of practice as described for example by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), Muijs et al (2004) and Payne (2008) are used to frame the recommendations.

3.1. Professional learning communities

A number of recommendations from the peer reviews in Zagreb, Antwerp and Oslo make a reference to teachers as professionals. In Zagreb the peers noted the following: Make sure that the whole process does not depend on one person and a few high quality trainers, consider a train the trainer approach, so that more trainers are equipped for the job/ workshops, nourish the teachers that are involved: they are the ambassadors and your professional capital, and start class observations to monitor what happens in practice. In Antwerp, it was recommended to focus on teachers by suggesting to offer teacher training in interculturalism, teaching methodology with ethnical minorities and home language of the pupils. Moreover, it was also recommended to make informed choices as regards the implementation of EEO: to combine a close look at what already is being done in schools, and evidence based practices in the case of schooling for immigrant children. Finally, the peer review in Oslo suggested to support student teachers, especially from migrant backgrounds.

Addressing teachers as professionals is one of the main ideas in the book of Hargreaves and Fullan on professional capital (2012). They make a plea for improvement of the teaching profession instead of focusing on individual teachers. "The most abused educational research finding these days is this: the quality of the teacher is the single most important determinant in the learning of the student". An individual focus on teachers does not help to improve the teaching profession.

One of the most promising ways of stimulating the development of professional capital is by implementing so-called professional learning communities (PLCs). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) describe professional learning communities as consisting of three elements 1: communities, working in groups with collective responsibility, committed to improvement, respect and care , 2. learning: learning your way out of problems instead of quick fix solutions, commitment to improving student learning and well-being, problems are addressed through organizational learning, 3. professional: improvements and decisions are informed by science and statistical information (but not dependent on), guided by experienced collective judgment. A literature review of Lomos et al (2011) concludes that the concept of PLC needs further conceptualization but there seems to be a general agreement on five characteristics which are similar to the elements as distinguished by Hargreaves and Fullan: 1. Reflective dialogue: the extent to which teachers engage in professional dialogues about specific educational issues 2.

Deprivatization of practice: teachers observe one another's classes with the aim of giving and receiving feedback 3. Collaborative activity: temporal measure of extent to which teachers engage in cooperative practices 4. Shared sense of purpose: the degree to which teachers agree with the schools mission and its operational principles 5. Collective focus on student learning: mutual commitment of teachers to student success.

Relevant for Sirius is that it turns out that one of the characteristics of effective urban schools is professional learning communities. In their review on factors in the improvement process of schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, Muijs et al (2004) conclude that the key factors are: a focus on teaching and learning, leadership, an information rich environment, positive school culture, learning communities, continuous professional development, involvement of parents, and sufficient external support and resources. Their concept of learning communities is similar to the PLC concept as described by Hargreaves and Fullan. Muijs et al (2004) describe how teachers and administrators in learning communities continuously seek and share learning and act on what they learn. Schools with learning communities (learning schools) are characterized by the presence of reflective dialogue, teachers work collaboratively, take collective responsibility for student learning, and work continuously to improve teaching practices. Muijs et al argue that learning schools are more effective in encouraging student achievement. The building of small teams that engage in school improvement activities, increases teachers' sense of belonging and minimizes alienation.

The recommendations as put forward in the peer reviews seem to refer to different aspects of the concept of PLCs as distinguished in the literature. We therefore follow the recommendation as put forward by Hagreaves and Fullan, which is to considering teacher as professionals and implement PLCs in order to increase professional capital in schools. More specifically, schools in urban areas should be facilitated to organize collegiality in coherent and focused ways, to support teachers to collaborate and observe each other's classrooms , to reflect on and improve their practices with a central focus on student learning.

3.2.   The teaching and learning environment

In his book with the somewhat gloomy title "So much reform, so little change. The persistence of failure in urban schools", Payne (2008) discusses what is needed in the urban teaching and learning environment. He summarizes the literature on high-impact instructional programs in urban context and in the so-called the Big 6:

1. Instructional time protected or extended
2. Intellectually ambitious instruction
3. Professional communities (teachers collaborate, have a collective sense of responsibility)
4. Academic press combined with social support
5. Program coherence (e.g., institutional focus, are we all on the same page?)
6. Teacher quality, diagnostic ability

Some of characteristics refer to teacher professionalism and PLCs as described in the first recommendation: professional communities and teacher quality, the others refer to the learning

environment and instruction itself. Payne concludes that implementing each of these six characteristics will produce learning gains of one month or more.

A variety of recommendations stemming from the survey as well as the peer reviews can be linked to these Big 6. For example, one of the main general recommendations based on the survey results was to develop coherent policy programs that focus on the "whole" teaching and learning environment, including teacher skills, but also teaching materials and assessment methods. The report on the survey also mentioned the importance of the positive classroom climates including high teacher expectations as well as the inclusion of migrant teachers. A number of recommendations on the basis of the three peer reviews also referred to the teaching and learning environment. The peer review in Antwerp for example recommended to Introduce the topic of migration in the school curriculum. Moreover, in Oslo, it was recommended to extend existing programmes to native Norwegian students.

In short, we recommend a focus on the teaching and learning environment in order to improve the educational position of migrant children. This implies a coherent combination of instructional practices and content that is challenging for students as well as relevant.

3.3. Language diversity

In the OECD report "Closing the gap for immigrant students" (2010) it is argued that teachers and school leaders need diversity training and more expertise in second language learning. The know-how in the school in this particular area determines the quality of education for migrant children in the school. It is argued that, first and foremost, proficiency in the language of instruction is essential for school success. This means that teachers need to be competent in dealing with language diverse classrooms. The OECD report recommends a clear and explicit language policy for the entire education system. This includes: a centrally developed curriculum with a strong focus on implementation issues at the school level, making sure there are sufficient numbers of qualified teachers, quality assessment materials for language competence, early language stimulation and parental support in language learning, a focus on the academic use of language, integrating language and content learning, support for newly arrived students at a later age and valuing and validating mother tongue proficiency.

The results of the survey strongly supported the OECD recommendation to strengthen professional capacity to combine second language with mother tongue learning, content and language integrated learning. The peer review in Oslo also arrived at this recommendation: address heritage language and culture of immigrant children. Furthermore, it was one of the topics of the policy makers meeting where Sirius was asked to keep different options of mother tongue language and SLT education on the agenda and investigate the status of second language teaching status in different (Sirius) European countries.

In short, the literature as well as the Sirius activities result in a recommendation to keep focusing on language diversity. This implies supporting the development of expertise in the different groups of actors (teachers, teacher trainers, school leaders etc) as well as the development of instructional and materials and didactic methods to cater for the needs of students whose mother tongue is different than the language of instruction.

3.4.   Open schools: partnerships with parents and communities

The peer review in Zagreb suggested to look outside the school, include the Roma Community as well as stay consistently focused on parents as parent involvement is an essential factor in school success of children. Parent involvement was also a factor in Antwerp where the recommendation was to increase the participation and the realistic aspirations of the parents. The peers in Antwerp noted that it is important to involve the parents in school activities so the school can bring the communities together. Also, to empower them to have high and realistic academic objectives for their children.

The policy makers meeting took a more general viewpoint regarding the issue of parent involvement and suggested to advocate "open schools". Sirius was asked to somehow stimulate relations between schools and other actors and support national partners to promote such strategies at a national level.

Relations with parents and communities are considered to be important areas of expertise, as concluded in a recent literature review (Severiens, Wolff & Van Herpen, 2013). Urban teachers that succeed in engaging the parents of their diverse pupils as well as cooperate with community organisations on a basis of equality will further support school achievement in their urban schools.

In short, the recommendation we are making is to organize open schools in the sense that they become institutions that partners with parents and communities.

3.5.   Networks of expertise

In order to improve the educational position of migrant children, it is important for schools to develop as professional learning communities. This process can and should be done within schools themselves. However, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) describe a number of examples where schools collaborate to develop as networks of practice (clusters, networks or federations). They use the term co-opetition: collaborative competition (competition in a spirit of how we can outdo ourselves as well as the others, for the good of the whole), with collective responsibility (when teachers start to identifying with all students in the school). Such networks can be successful in the sense that the networks help increase school effectiveness, especially when the networks have a push-pull architecture. School can be pulled in by funding and professional inspiration and pushed by transparent processes of participation and collective visibility of results. Hargreaves and Fullan point at a possible pitfall: when the mandating networks take away the collective professional responsibility and autonomy. They state "Networked professional capital should be an energetic aspiration and normative expectation within a system's culture rather than a bureaucratically enforced mandate." (P. 141).

These ideas on networks of expertise link closely to the conclusion of the survey that it seems worthwhile to explore the effectiveness of networks of (migrant) teachers and the centers of expertise or networks

between universities, teacher training institutes and schools. These ideas also link to the peer review in Oslo in the recommended to organize collaboration between schools, teacher training institutes and NAFO.

Therefore, in the current report we repeat this recommendation to form networks of schools as well as networks of schools and centers of expertise. These networks will help to learn about the educational position of migrant children and consequently improve their position.

3.6.   Conclusions and future Sirius activities

The recommendations given above are general and need more detail related to the implementation context. One of the relevant contextual factors concerns the different perceptions of member states of the role of education in a multicultural society (EU, 2007, see also Severiens et al 2013). Teaching for diversity in countries where the school is considered to be an instrument to promote integration of migrants into the dominant society, is a different matter compared to teaching for diversity when schools are considered to be a reflection of the multicultural society and where all cultures valued equally. Furthermore, differences between national educational systems as well as systems of teacher training and professional development are relevant when the general recommendations are put into more detail. Sirius intends to organize a number of activities that help to further develop the recommendations into more detail.

In a cooperation between work package 2 on schooling and 3 on community projects, the topic of parent involvement will be taken up. We intend to collect a series of good practice examples on successful parental involvement either by schools themselves or on initiative of migrant organizations, NGOs or parents themselves from a number of European countries. This series will be used as a tool and basis for promoting discussions at different levels on the ideal and wished for role of parents in the education of their children and in relationship to schools.

Similarly, the topic of migrant teachers will also be addressed in 2014 in more detail by a combined effort in wp2 and wp3. We intend to give migrant teachers a floor to voice their thoughts and ideas on recruiting and retaining teachers from migrant backgrounds (focus of WP3) as well as the necessary teacher competences and possible ways to prepare for teaching in diverse classrooms (focus of WP2).

Finally, Sirius will organize activities focused on the topic of language diversity in WP2. One of the results of the citizenship report (a WP2 activity in 2013) (Issa et al, 2013) concerned the variety of ways in which the Sirius countries deal with language diversity. Some of the countries seem to have an assimilation point of view, and demand all their students to speak the national language (with no provision for mother tongue development). Other countries have a more inclusive point of view and provide for mother tongue instruction during school time. Some countries even have trilingual learning material. These differences between countries offer an opportunity to question positions and learn from each other. We intend to ask the Sirius member countries to collect and compare (innovative) language policies in education in a mapping exercise combined with two trilateral country meetings.

We repeat the final remark as made in the survey which was the first WP2 activity regarding professional capacity building for students with a migrant background. Even though five recommendations may seem like a short list, they are complex recommendations and strengthening policy development in all of these areas will not happen overnight. We need to develop a clear strategy and organize continued attention from all relevant actors (including networks such as the Sirius network). The above activities will help to achieve this, but will most certainly be not enough. Continued attention and actions after 2014 will be necessary to "promote and enhance the knowledge transfer among stakeholders in order to improve the education of children and youngsters from migrant background" which is the general mission of Sirius.

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