BRIDGE 21
Community of Practice Handbook
In association with the Erasmus+ project: Teaching for Tomorrow (TfT)
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Introduction

1. A Community of Practice: A vision
2. Why create a community of practice?
3. Requirements for success
4. Supporting a community of practice
What is a “Community of Practice”? 

- A professional learning community that leverages community-type action/interactions/strategies to define a common purpose and direction for whole school change.

- A vehicle for collaboration, communication and shared ownership that allows teachers to use 21C skills in their professional life, both in and out of the classroom.

- A group of teachers who plan and reflect together in subject/mixed groups, where co-teaching and observation practices are encouraged.
Why create a community of practice?

• To develop a more value-based, student-centred and up-to-date model of education within the school
• To improve and stay current in teaching practices and approaches
• To lead by example: to model, for the students, practices of collaboration and teamwork and other 21C skills

• To improve engagement and motivation of the members within the school organization
• To meet the expectations of the local community - students, parents, and other education stakeholders
Requirements for success

- Clear goals and a common sense of purpose
- A core group of teachers and management leading the whole school
- Strong and supportive leadership structures
- Regular meetings: teachers, management, inter-departmental and year-group teams
- Core members leading the whole school in continuous professional development (CPD) afternoons/days
- Core members acting as role-models for colleagues and students
- Teachers sharing experiences online
Supporting a Community of Practice

Top-down - Management

- Find time and schedule “community” meetings in which you can introduce the ideas and discuss what and how things can be achieved.
- Encourage teachers to participate and learn from other teachers
- Provide an online space for sharing experiences

Bottom-up - Teachers

- At your community meetings you can advise each other and start promoting such lessons to the others.
- Encourage your colleagues to visit each other’s lessons to learn from, and give advice to, each other
- Encourage co-creation of lesson plans, resources, etc.
Teacher’s Guide

1. Getting Started
2. Individual teachers
3. Teams of teachers
4. Impact
Getting Started

- **Build** on good practice that already exists
  - Identify collective values and principles
  - Ensure there is quality leadership and strong goals

- **Define the aim of the project/community**
  - For example, “we want to...”
    - be up-to-date
    - shift of focus from individual academic achievement to collaborative teamwork
    - focus on Inclusive education
    - student-centred learning

![Goal*Plan*Success](image)

- Clarify **why** change is required
  - For example, “we want to...”
    - create a motivating, engaging and less-stressful environment
    - help everyone achieve their full potential
    - develop continuous learning and innovation for all
How to Start - Individually

- Get acquainted with the material offered in the Bridge21 Handbook / TFT webpage.
- Try to use some elements of the model in your own lessons.
- Consult and revise the handbook material again.
- Analyse what worked well and what elements need to be changed.
- Try different elements of the model several times.
- Ask students for feedback at the end of the lesson (what they would do differently to improve the results).
- Try all the elements during one day or week to experience the model.
- Improve your skills, concentrate your attention on more details (e.g. assessment, different learning styles, the usage of technology etc.).
- Try to have such lessons regularly.
Continuing as a Team of Teachers

- Find time for cooperating meetings with your colleagues (on average, every one-two months), where you can introduce ideas and discuss how they can be done.

- Demonstrate and model the method for your colleagues

- Encourage your colleagues to visit each other’s lessons to learn from and give advice to each other as TFT lessons can be used in every school subject.

- Use your cooperating meetings to review and discuss results of the lessons, give advice to each other and start promoting such lessons to the others.

- Ask for support from your school administration to encourage other teachers to participate

- All participating teachers should provide feedback on either the whole method or elements of it.

- Experienced teachers can start motivating the ones who are uncertain about using the new methods.

- Organise a project day for your students where the whole model is followed during one day; it can be one class of students experiencing the method in one subject or in different subjects.
The Impact

Through engagement in a community of practice, schools can experience several positive changes:

- A defined and shared mission, vision and values for the school
- The establishment of team meetings in year groups and/or by subjects
- Whole school continuous professional development opportunities
- More inclusive education
- A shift of focus from individual academic achievement to collaborative teamwork
Resources for Teachers

1. Theory of Change - Definition
2. Theory of Change - Guiding Questions
3. Sample Theory of Change
Completing a theory of change exercise is one useful exercise a school/group of teachers can do to begin to develop a community of practice.

A “theory of change is a theory-based approach to planning, implementing or evaluating change at an individual, organisational or community level... A theory of change articulates explicitly how a project or initiative is intended to achieve outcomes through actions, while taking into account its context” (Laing & Todd, 2015, p. 3).

A theory of change exercise can help describe or illustrate an organisation’s or project’s goals and its change process. It defines all of the necessary and sufficient conditions, or building blocks, and how they interconnect to achieve the long-term goals.
1. **What do you hope to change in your context**, through engagement in a community of practice?
   - Come up with a problem/change statement
   - What is the current situation with regards to this?

2. **Who are the stakeholders and beneficiaries?**
   - Who needs to change in order to address the problem?
   - Who will you need to work with and influence?

3. **What is the endpoint?**
   - What might it look like if the problem were solved? What do you want to see change?
   - How will you know you have been successful?
Theory of Change: Guiding Questions (cont’d)

4. How can a community of practice (CoP) help achieve these goals?
   • In what ways do you hope participation in a CoP can help?
   • What do you already do that we can learn from?

5. Barriers
   • What are the negative factors that might be barriers?
   • What action can you take to mitigate against these potential barriers?

A journey?

1. Where have we been?
2. Where are we now?
3. Where do we want to go?
4. How shall we get there?
5. How will we know we have arrived?
Theory of Change: Templates for Planning

Theory of Change
Shows the big picture with all possible pathways – messy and complex

Logical Framework
Shows just the pathway that your program deals with – neat and tidy

Planning
- Vision
- Mission
- Aims
- Objectives

Implementation
- Impact
- Outcomes
- Intermediate Outcomes
- Outputs

Evaluation

Inputs/resources
Background Research and References
Research


