

## National Report Sweden

### Perspectives from a school authority for teacher education at university and the perspectives on PLCs

After having collected data and experience from cooperative practice in universities among student-teachers, the question leads to the transition from the university education into their first teacher employment in schools. There are several expectations and needs that can be identified when reflecting on the university practices from the side of school practice and the responsibilities for the school system.

One important observation is that student-teachers are not used to act as professionals, as they do not have formally developed professional skills that are needed for teachers. Teachers as professionals are supposed to analyse their own teaching and the learning results of their students. They have to be able to make adjustments on their own daily teaching practices in order to improve their pupils' learning outcomes. Early career teachers who have just graduated and started working in schools are novices in the sense that are not used or trained to fill in this professional self-reflection. Thus, it is important to discuss these demands and improve the necessary skills with student-teachers as early as in their university studies and then afterwards at school. Of course, student-teachers are well trained or are at least practiced to discuss scientific work through an analytic perspective, but they rarely relate it to the school practice in an academic approach with a theory-practice connection, even though this may differ from the view that is needed for the day-to-day work in schools. It is the sense of self responsibility and the level of reflection procedures that differ in the university context and in the school context.

A second aspect that can be accomplished at university already in student-teachers training and serve for a good start in teaching at school for novice teachers is to gain high competencies in communication. New teachers will meet a school culture that is either highly developed, and they need to be able to adapt to it quickly in order to get along well with the processes, or in which communication is not embraced, yet, and part of their engagement can contribute to developing the communicative culture. If student-teachers transition from universities to schools with elaborated competencies in communication, they can contribute to the development of the communication in the team and towards the pupils.

If then early career teachers join a school in which teaching staff is already organized in PLCs, it is helpful that, from the beginning, they are familiar with the special structures and focused collaboration. University studies can provide them a head start in it practicing and reflecting on PLC work. University studies have also the potential to make them strong and more confident on the knowledge they bring into school (as they recently graduated). Adopting the idea of “you have something to say,” university classes could get them trained to not only analyse on their level of knowledge but also learn to see through the eyes of teachers what their knowledge could help for, what others appreciate from it and where they, as early career teachers, can bring in a basis for mutual learning. The more experienced teachers they work with have finished their university studies some time ago and since then new scientific results or new theoretical perspectives have been developed. If student-teachers feel that what they bring in a school environment is worth hearing, their later participation in PLC at school or just the cooperation with others would be less humbled and more confident.

Of course, the teacher team in which the new staff members join has to also be open to these new learning possibilities, meet the new colleagues and be a part of the team. It could be a

directors' job to facilitate this coming together and the recognition of benefit to all. It is an inviting tune that they can ask the more experienced teachers into.

If student-teachers are prepared for the focused learning community they can be a gain for those schools that do not have established the PLC system. Since it always turns out to be a long journey to good PLC work, everybody, including the new teachers need to come in and put some effort in it. If student-teachers have learned to take this kind of responsibility they can better meet the expectations of a PLC. It is their path in the future.

The experience in cooperation within university is that the sequential structure and the rhythm of turns make it a bit difficult to establish learning communities among student-teachers. A long-term arrangement that connects student-teachers for a longer period of time would bring them closer to the reality in school. Also, at the moment practicing PLC-based cooperation is not part of the university studies and that makes it less easy to find students who participate in PLC on their own interest. One has to make participation in PLCs attractive and then can help them experience it and realize that it is rewarding: when one gains their questions, be allowed to ask questions, get help, get confident. The idea is that student-teachers get familiar with PLCd and by that gain trust in the method.

It might not be necessary to start with PLCs at university right at the beginning, but at least about two years in their studies it would make sense to arrange PLCs continuously for the rest of their education. The fact that there are different lecturers who are responsible with different interests for their classes, it provides a need to set up an overall PLC structure for student-teachers.

However, the chance is that a student-teacher and later an early-career teacher who is part of a PLC with other teachers will be more capable to be on his/her own and fix things. For teachers working in a PLC, this is the chance to analyse their own missing skills, ask themselves the right questions for reflection and accept that one is not the best every day. If university did preliminary education in PLC like the cooperation they invest in, this would result in a kind of bridging for a better arrival in schools. Then, early career teachers would be integrated better, feel more connected with the school team and would be less endangered to quit the job in a short period of time.