

C U R S O S   E   C O N G R E S O S

*Santiago de Compostela*  
7-9 de julio de 2021

Libro de resúmenes

# La educación en Red. Realidades diversas, horizontes comunes

XVII Congreso Nacional  
y IX Iberoamericano  
de Pedagogía



EDICIÓN A CARGO DE  
Miguel A. Santos Rego  
Mar Lorenzo Moledo  
Anaïs Quiroga-Carrillo

UNIVERSIDADE  
DE SANTIAGO  
DE COMPOSTELA

publicacións

La educación en Red.  
Realidades diversas, horizontes comunes  
XVII Congreso Nacional y IX Iberoamericano de Pedagogía

Santiago de Compostela

7-9 de julio de 2021

LIBRO DE RESÚMENES

CURSOS E CONGRESOS DA  
UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

N.º 262

La educación en Red.  
Realidades diversas, horizontes comunes

XVII Congreso Nacional  
y IX Iberoamericano de Pedagogía

Santiago de Compostela

7-9 de julio de 2021

LIBRO DE RESÚMENES

EDICIÓN A CARGO DE  
Miguel A. Santos Rego  
Mar Lorenzo Moledo  
Anaïs Quiroga-Carrillo

2021

UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA



# Professional Learning Communities for Student Teachers: Possibilities according to the Erasmus+ TePinTeach Project

**SANCHIDRIÁN BLANCO, CARMEN**  
**BARRIOS ESPINOSA, MARÍA ELVIRA**  
*Universidad de Málaga (España)*

**THEURL, PETER**  
*University College of Teacher Education Vorarlberg (Austria)*

## Contextualisation

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are internationally acknowledged to foster school development and pupils' achievement (Admiraal, Schenke, De Jong, Emmelot, & Sligte, 2019).

The Erasmus+ project "Professional Learning Communities as a means for bringing teacher professionalization in teacher education" (TePinTeach) is being currently developed by five European universities (Weingarten, Trondheim, Vorarlberg, Nicosia and Málaga) and one school authority (Linköping) with experience in teacher education and in setting up and accompanying PLCs. The partners had previously worked together in the "Heads Using Professional Learning Communities" (HeadsUP) project where we learned that, for a real understanding of PLCs, personal experience of this strategy for professional development is essential. This experience could then be provided early in their formal preparation (Kansteiner et al., 1999) so that student-teachers could become familiar with PLCs during their teacher education courses at the university (Kansteiner, Stamann, Buhren, & Theurl, 2020).

Although a number of teacher development initiatives are being currently implemented, encouraged and recognised by the different educational authorities and also promoted within individual schools which have some common elements with the notion of PLCs, PLCs are not a widespread teacher development modality in Spain. In fact, leaving aside those who participated in the HeadsUP project, neither the students nor the teachers/head-teachers who were questioned in order to elaborate a national report within the framework of the project had ever heard about this concept. This project promotes PLCs in teacher education and shows the possibilities for practising teachers to also benefit from a combined PLC of student teachers and mentors. The impact of the project is expected to reach the student teachers -so that they get familiar with PLC work and practice it in their university program and hopefully later for their further professionalization- and also mentors, heads and teacher trainers who are not yet familiar with PLCs.

## Description of the experience

The present paper focuses on the activities developed within the framework of this project in Málaga and Vorarlberg. The first activities within the project have been:

a) establish student teachers PLCs (SPLCs)

b) elaborate a National report (NR). This NR includes both a list of needs that need to be addressed by the program training programme and their indicative solutions, and identifies chances and risks of future cooperation of student-teachers and mentors in a PLC.

a) As the main aim of the project is bringing the knowledge of PLC work into university methodology by experiencing and reflecting on students PLCs, we have set up SPLCs and accompanied them to provide the chance for these students to experience this form of collaborative learning. We have started collecting the experiences of fifteen students who were in the last in their last internship period (this period lasts 15 week) of the Primary Education Bachelor's Degree (Málaga). The need for initiatives like this was confirmed by the findings obtained already as most of the students admitted that they had no or quite limited formal preparation for further professional development. As far as the University of Málaga is concerned, the main problem is to fit the SPLC model into the established Practicum system (Allen & Wright, 2014). In Austria a group of six students in their first year of Primary Education Bachelor's Degree and in their first internship period will work in a SPLC.

b) In order to obtain data for the NR, in Spain and Austria, we have used interviews, questionnaires and focus groups organized according to interest areas:

- Fifty-five students were asked both in a group interview format and through a questionnaire;
- three mentors were interviewed and two completed an online questionnaire;
- nine primary and two secondary headteachers whose schools receive student teachers each year were interviewed in a focus group format; and
- twenty-five university teacher trainers of both primary and secondary student teachers were interviewed in a focus group format.

The NR includes relevant information about the current status of learning opportunities for student-teachers (university phases/internship phases) in the contexts of PLCs in the following aspects from the perspective of the different focus: Concepts of cooperation, learning communities...; what is being practiced in which levels (university, schools etc.); benefits they see; difficulties they encounter, and what they would like to have in the future to improve their learning opportunities in PLCs.

## Conclusions

Taking into account that we are just in the first year of the project, it is still early days for drawing conclusions. Overall, the experience has been positive although its impact has been certainly limited. There seems to be a need for initiatives like this as pre-service teacher education practicum is often not good enough (Ulvik & Smith, 2011).

Evaluation data provided by different stakeholders (academic and school mentors, head teachers and student teachers) seem to indicate that the project is worthwhile and relevant, as it connects collaborative learning and long-life professional development, two key ingredients to improve quality professional development (Ulvik, Helleve, & Smith, 2018). The participants were also particularly appreciative of the opportunities for discussions and reflection –an essential feature of PLCs– as it is difficult to experience real collaborative work, share personal experiences about teaching and learning, and discuss educational issues deeply within large groups.

## References

- Admiraal, W., Schenke, W. De Jong, L., Emmelot, Y., & Sligte, H. (2019). Schools as professional learning communities: what can schools do to support professional development of their teachers? *Professional Development in Education*. doi: 10.1080/19415257.2019.1665573
- Allen, J. M., & Wright, S. E. (2014). Integrating theory and practice in the pre-service teacher education practicum. *Teachers and Teaching theory and practice*, 20(2), 136-151. doi: 10.1080/13540602.2013.848568
- Kansteiner, K. et al. (2019). *Heads Using Professional Learning Communities. Leadership development meets school development. Manual*. Retrieved from <https://sites.google.com/site/plcheadsup/deliverables?authuser=1>

- Kansteiner, K., Stamann, C., Buhren, C. G., & Theurl, P. (Hrsg.) (2020). *Professionelle Lerngemeinschaften als Entwicklungsinstrument im Bildungswesen*. Weinheim Basel: Beltz Juventa.
- Ulvik, M., Helleve, I., & Smith, K. (2018). What and how student teachers learn during their practicum as a foundation for further professional development. *Professional Development in Education*, 44(5), 638-649. doi: 10.1080/19415257.2017.1388271
- Ulvik, M., & Smith, K. (2011). What characterises a good practicum in teacher education? *Education Inquiry*, 2(3), 517-536. doi: 10.3402/edui.v2i3.21997