

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN MALTA

A culture for
change



A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Teachers in Malta are currently being faced with significant changes in the education system which they inhabit:

- changes in a selective, tripartite system of schooling after 11+ to a mixed-ability approach
- the introduction of banding
- the introduction of co-ed classes in the state sector
- an increasingly diversified pupil population
- an increasing amount of migrant students

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

- This calls for further upskilling and a commitment to change one's pedagogical approach to reflect these new reforms
- The Maltese teacher population is also characterised by a reform fatigue

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

- The DQSE hence acknowledges the need for creating spaces where teachers can learn and enhance their professional status, in order to build their capacity to address these curricular and day-to-day challenges, and in order to allow them to lead more effective teaching and learning.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of opportunities for teachers in Malta to engage in professional learning:

- INSET and PD sessions organised by the DQSE
- professional collaboration within schools (like curriculum development time in the primary sector, and subject meetings with HoDs in the secondary sector)
- Scholarships, sabbatical leave and study leave
- further certification, particularly at Masters Level and in School Leadership
- distance learning courses with foreign universities and Higher Education institutions
- participation in EU funded projects such as eTwinning and FP7 projects

CHALLENGES

There are also a number of challenges which may undermine opportunities for teacher professional learning:

- a highly centralised system
- lack of variety of learning opportunities
- face-to-face training is not always accessible (teaching load; highly feminised profession)
- lack of professional learning communities in school; lack of professional dialogue
- many teachers say that they don't have time to reflect, and they have no spaces to nurture a critical stance towards their own teaching – no culture of peer learning, critical friend, team teaching.

GOOD PRACTICE

There are also a number of positive experiences. One particular research study with Science and Mathematics teachers (PRIMAS) has given the space for teachers to meet, discuss, implement and evaluate.

The project was based on a pedagogy of inquiry-based learning, where teachers were given space to meet regularly for a period of two years. Participating teachers reported that they tried out different teaching methods and evaluated the response of the learners.

THE LEARNING OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

With the implementation of the LOF, it is being recognised that teachers need to engage in further learning and to collaborate amongst themselves. In particular, they need to redimension the way they plan their lessons, the way they assess their students, and the way they address different learning needs.

This calls for a change in the way we regard teacher professional development, and allow CPD opportunities through:

- virtual environments
- professional learning communities
- support from more experienced teachers, SMT and peers in the same subject or area
- bigger investment in training courses, seminars and workshops which are directly relevant to teachers' needs and which can feed back into the classroom
- an evaluation of teachers' learning needs, and the way these PD opportunities are addressing them.

THE WAY FORWARD

Upcoming opportunities:

- Train the Trainer programme (including TNA)
- School-based mentoring
- Strengthening the link between the Faculty of Education, schools and training providers
- A continuum of teacher professional learning starting from initial teacher education, induction and in-service. The MTL programme proposed will help support teachers in these three phases.