



# Learning together- supporting network for professionals in Slovenia

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Step by Step Centre for Quality in Education

# • Educational Research Institute



The central research institution in Slovenia for research in education undertaking basic research, development and applied projects on issues of current interest in all sectors of education and related areas.

Established in **1965** by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia; in **1995** obtained the status of the public research institution (independent research institute).





# Research Centres

- Centre for Discourse Studies in Upbringing and Education
- Centre for Social and Anthropological Studies in Upbringing and Education
- Evaluation Studies Centre
- Centre for Philosophy of Education
- Centre for the Examination of Cognition and Learning
- “Step by Step” Centre for Quality in Education
- Centre for Applied Epistemology
- Infrastructure Centre



# Centre's Mission

*We enable all children to gain **access to high-quality** education and care and **fully realise** their unique potential.*

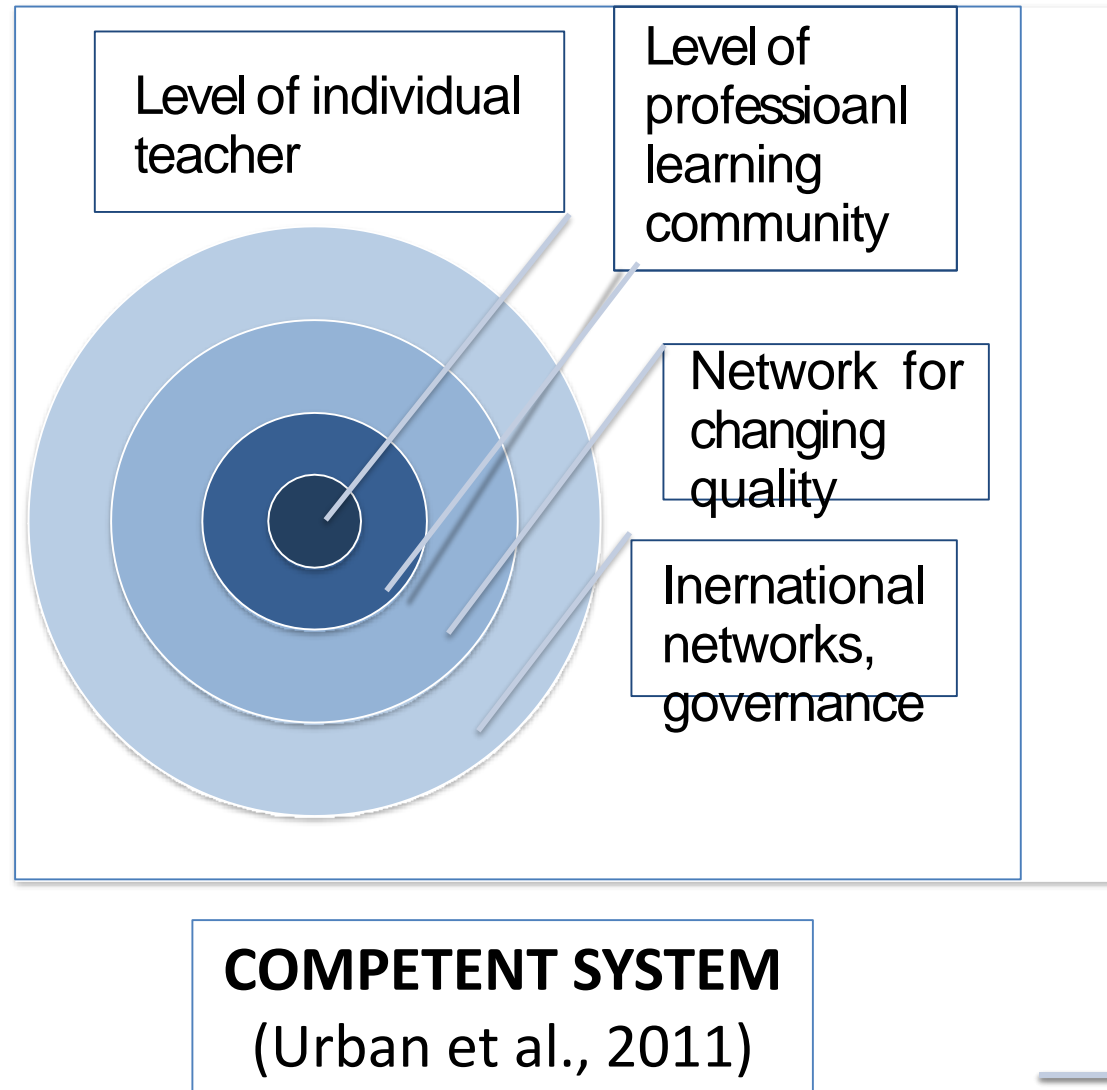
# Centre's content directions



- equal opportunities
- principles of democratic civil society
- children's and parents' rights
- contemporary knowledge of the child's development and learning

# Step by Step Network for changing quality

- **continuously** from 2000
- **35-45 preschools**, elementary schools
- **over 1200 professionals** (teachers, assistants, pedagogues...)
- **„living organism“** (differentiation of approaches, responsiveness to the needs...)
- **sustainable**



# How?



Designing activities that are focused on :

1. **Directors, deputy directors**

2. **Leaders of PLCs**

3. **Professionals:**  
(pre-)school teachers, preschool teachers' assistants, pedagogues ...

- with **tools** that describe the quality practice of teachers and address the child's holistic development;
- with **continuous support** to the professional development of staff and the use of various professional development activities :
  - helping to develop self-assessment practice;
  - reflective discussions;
  - professional support in planning changes;
  - professional support for the introduction of changes;
  - monitoring the changes introduced;
  - further training and education programs
- through **networking** at national and international level

# The cornerstone of our professional development efforts

ISSA's principles of quality pedagogy. :

- Describes the principles of quality pedagogy and indicators of quality practices on seven in research and the analysis of good practices identified key areas in ensuring a quality process (*interactions, family and community, inclusion, diversity and values of democracy, assesment and planning, teaching strategies, learning environment, professional development*).
- Its purpose has been envisaged more as an instrument to build quality, not to define it in its entirety or from a single vantage point.
- A point for opening dialogue about practice and seeking improvement





# Professional Learning Communities

- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) within preschools as a school-based professional development model using ISSA's Quality Resource Pack

# Why we started implementing PLC

→ Teachers do not participate in creating their own professional development, there is no awareness/low awareness of planning their own professional development

→ Access to 'all the same'

→ No support in applying new information/knowledge.

The quality of process was not the subject of teacher meetings

There was no common vision of quality education at the preschool level

# Goals of the PLC

- professional development of preschool teachers → competent, reflective practitioners,
- building supportive environment that enables professional development,
- building shared understanding of pedagogical concepts, quality of practice etc,
- mutual appreciation and sharing experiences, knowledge, skills, doubts, etc.

„Unlike other professional training, after which you are a bit on 'speed' and then everything falls apart, I see PLC as a process. I see the PLC as a process that has started and will not stop after just one year ... We all fully feel the need, not just teachers, children, parents, the need for some important change in our education, and I think this is one of the ways because it changes opinion on teaching process and us as its actors. I think it's worth it and it does not have to give up.“

(preschool teacher)

# Who is who in PLC

- Coordinator- leader of PLC

- the coordinators' role is to *facilitate the teachers' co-construction of knowledge* using the *Quality Resource Pack* instead of being seen as the *expert on child centred practice* in the preschool.

If the coordinators are new to the Step by Step Network, they will attend the same introductory trainings with teachers, teaching assistants and even directors on what and why quality child-centred methods are important for children's and their families' educational experiences

# Professional support to coordinator

- Initial training on child centered methodology
- „School for coordinators“ (basics of PLC; how to manage/facilitate work in PLC, role of the coordinator, what is reflection and how enable reflection among members of PLC)
- every year: 2 days meeting/training/sharing- content based, focused on leading skills, methods how to work with the group, use resources for develop shared understanding (methods)
- 1 day visit in the preschool → observation, modeling peer observation; attending the meeting of PLC- observation and reflection
- 1 day reflection meeting for all coordinators
- 1 day final meeting- overview of the year



# Who is who in PLC

- Preschool teachers, preschool's teachers assistants- members of the PLC
  - Monthly meetings within the preschool-reflecting upon certain area of ISSA quality principles
  - Using different resources for generating professional discussions such as videos, professional literature, peer observations, etc.

Three elements are crucial for the development of professional learning communities, and are also incorporated in the structure of the work of the communities. These are: **cooperation, shared vision and reflection**



PEDAGOŠKI INŠTITUT

