

Event Report TeacherED

TeacherEd: Capacity building of education employers through the promotion of teacher induction programmes

1st Peer Learning Activity

“Socialisation and sustainability – how can education employers better integrate early career teachers as active members of school communities through induction programmes?”

20-21 February 2023 | Porto (Portugal)

The European Federation of Education Employers and the PLA co-host, Portucalense University, were honored to inaugurate the first Peer Learning Activity within the "TeacherEd" project about "Socialisation and sustainability – how can education employers better integrate early career teachers as active members of school communities through induction programmes?". This event took place in Porto (Portugal), on 20-21 February 2024, bringing together experts in the field of education to explore the challenges and benefits of integrating new teachers into school communities.

The primary objective of this event was to find solutions aimed at creating more effective integration programs, fostering better integration of novice teachers into school communities, and thus reducing turnover rates. To achieve this, we had the privilege of welcoming Dr. Hannah Grainger Clemson, an independent researcher, who shared her in-depth research on the reasons, formats, and content of teacher integration programs across Europe and beyond.

"We can't expect teachers to be resilient if we don't support them sufficiently."



Thanks to the hospitality of the Portucalense University, we delved into the advantages and challenges of integration programs, launching our first conference day with enthusiasm under the warm welcome of Sandra Fernandes, Assistant Professor at UPT.

After short round of introductions, we initiated the conference with a fascinating discussion with Michelle Attard Tonna, Deputy Dean at the Faculty of Education (University of Malta), and Hannah Grainger Clemson, Project Researcher, exploring "International Perspectives on Teacher Induction." We addressed the complex challenges of teacher induction, including the increasing need for collaboration, pressure from international standards, inadequate support for teacher resilience, and school cultures that hinder professional development.

“The world is a small village, when you talk with others, you realise common challenges.”

Michelle Attard Tonna explained that in Malta the trained mentors are employed. Nevertheless, it remains essential to foster a culture of sharing and a strong professional identity to overcome these obstacles.

Following the discussion between Michelle and Hannah, a coffee break was organised by Sandra and her remarkable team on the university premises. Subsequently, we engaged in a group activity aimed at fostering exchanges among guests from various backgrounds to reflect on the advantages and challenges of successful integration and to share examples and experiences from their own educational systems.

During these exchanges, several important points were raised: teacher unions play a crucial role in protecting rights and working conditions but can also hinder classroom observation. Training programs vary significantly, from 6 days in the Netherlands to 30 ECTS in Malta and are paid to encourage participation. Mentoring is deemed essential for beginners, requiring relationship-focused approaches. Networking from the outset of induction and promoting collaborative teaching are considered crucial. Furthermore, workload relief at the beginning of the career is recommended, as well as locally adapted transition and ongoing mentoring.



To conclude our enriching morning, just before lunch in the canteen at the University Portucalense (UPT), Hannah Grainger Clemson presented the findings of her survey on "Study on New Teacher Induction," which garnered over 275 responses. Through this study, we observed the multiple benefits of these programmes: they enable novice teachers to develop their professional identity, acquire essential pedagogical skills, and receive the necessary support to succeed in their careers. For example, the Austrian programme assigns each novice teacher a mentor for a year, providing personalised support and professional guidance throughout their first year of service. However, these initiatives are not without challenges. Studies reveal significant variations in the frequency and scope of mentoring, as well as gaps in terms of formal mentor qualification, as observed in Norway. Despite these challenges, induction programmes remain essential to ensure the success and fulfillment of new teachers in their professional journey.

"Learn to grow"

In the afternoon, we focused on how to enhance the capacity of school principals and what recommendations can be made to improve the induction process for new teachers. To understand national context, a presentation was given by Maria Flores Fernandes, a professor at the University of Minho, who highlighted the Portuguese approach to induction.

Professor Maria Flores Fernandes stressed the importance of fostering a collaborative culture within schools, where experienced educators mentor and support their novice colleagues. By promoting knowledge sharing and professional collaboration, schools can create a supportive ecosystem that encourages continuous learning and growth among all staff members.

Furthermore, Professor Flores Fernandes emphasized the need for ongoing professional development opportunities tailored to the specific needs and challenges faced by new teachers. By offering targeted training programs and resources, educational institutions can empower novice educators to build confidence, refine their pedagogical skills, and navigate the intricacies of the classroom with greater ease and effectiveness.

Ultimately, Professor Maria Flores Fernandes's insights underscore the critical role of effective leadership, collaborative engagement, and ongoing professional development in fostering a nurturing and supportive environment where new teachers can thrive and contribute meaningfully to the educational community.

After the intervention, we undertook a new activity focused on supporting the role of the school principal and school development. Participants were tasked with addressing several questions, including: How can external institutions such as universities provide better support to schools and employers to improve the motivation and development of early-career teachers?

And finally, we had the honor of bringing together three prominent figures for a panel discussion on teacher induction programs. With the expertise of Eusébio André Machado, Professor at the University Portucalense, Liliana Fernandes teacher in a school Agrupamento de Escolas de Alberto Sampaio and Eva Fernandes, junior researcher in University of Minho, to share with us their challenges, best practices, and developments in this vital process for our future education.

“The project is not just about finding solutions, but also identifying problems and challenges.”

The second day of our event was marked by a visit to the primary school Escolas de Matosinhos in Porto, offering the 1st Peer Learning Activity. The participants had the opportunity to exchange ideas on how to improve the integration of new teachers. After an informative visit, a final group activity was organised to reflect on how to implement the ideas discussed in Participants' national contexts.

The recommendations from this session highlighted the importance of strengthening the skills of school principals, formalising initial teacher education programs, and fostering collaboration among different stakeholders in the education system.

In conclusion, the event organised under the auspices of the European Federation of Education Employers and Portucalense University highlighted the challenges and opportunities of integrating new teachers into the school community. Through the commitment and collaboration of participants, this event was more than just an academic meeting; it embodied a true momentum of innovation and progress for education in Europe.

As we conclude these inspiring exchanges, we are driven by the desire to translate our ideas into tangible actions in our own educational communities. The next Peer Learning Activity set to take place on 25-26 September in Miskolc (Hungary), promises to be a key milestone in this quest for progress and educational innovation.

