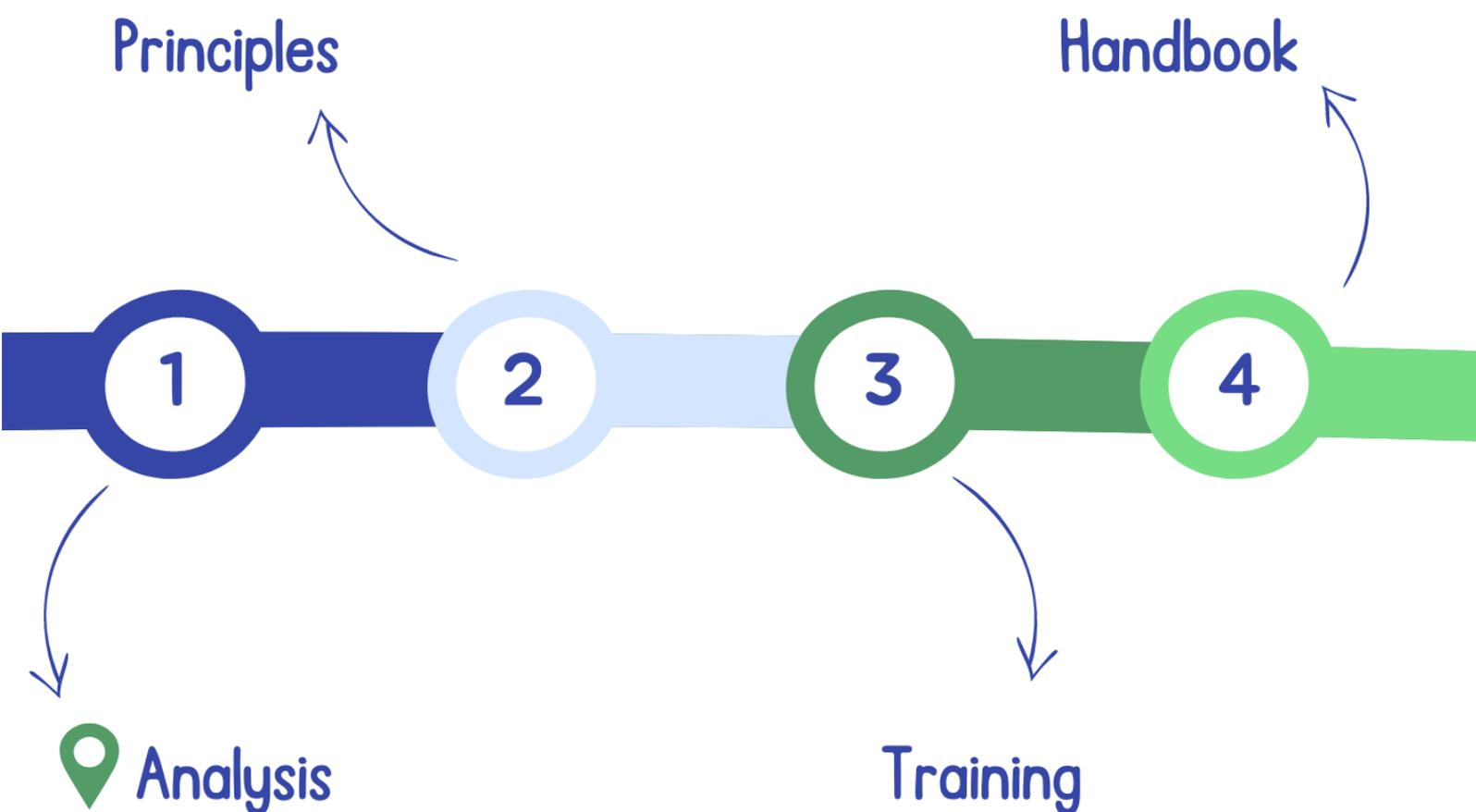


piqet *Country analysis*

Existing Practices for the Recruitment and Professional Development of Continuous Professional Development Educators in Croatia



Authors: Marina Matešić, Iva Sviben, Bojana Gotlin

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Table of Contents

- 1. INTRODUCTION.....4
- 2. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT4
- 3. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF CPD EDUCATORS.....5
- 4. CPD EDUCATORS' PATHWAYS: FROM RECRUITMENT TO EXCELLENCE6
- 5. CONCLUSIONS.....8

I. INTRODUCTION

In this document we present the existing practices for the recruitment, selection, and professional development of continuous professional development (CPD) educators in early childhood education and care (ECEC) and primary education in Croatia. CPD framework in Croatia is also shortly presented to provide context. This overview is based on literature and policy review and survey with relevant CPD stakeholders.

While CPD of practitioners in ECEC and primary school education in Croatia is strictly defined as a work obligation or condition for advancement in positions and organized through one-time events such as lectures, there is a consensus that this is insufficient in both conception and practical implication. Different analysis on national level point to the need for continuous and intensive CPD with both internal and external quality assurance frameworks put in place, including CPD educator competencies (in selection and support provided by CPD providers).

In our analysis we found that most of the CPD providers do not uphold elaborate criteria for recruitment, selection or CPD of their educators. There is also scarce literature and policy guidelines on any quality standards pointing at the need for developing framework on both national and other levels. However, some CPD organisations do take steps towards setting standards of recruitment as well as provide professional development of their educators.

2. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Framing and defining continuous professional development at the country level

Continuous professional development (CPD) of practitioners in ECEC and primary education in Croatia is defined as an obligation or condition for advancement in positions. The latest changes of regulation for school education provide more advance definition of CPD as individual and organised development in pedagogy, psychology, digital, management or policy related skills relevant for the efficient and high-quality educational work in schools. In definitions, it is recognised as continuous activity that includes diverse processes such as training, practical assignments, feedback and taking responsibility for one's own lifelong learning and development of competences. Regulations on CPD for preschool practitioners lack any further details. Still, moving beyond the definition, the provisions in both areas place CPD solely in the area of work requirements and at best list one-time types of events that are counted towards promotion. Teacher Training Agency (AZOO¹), under whose jurisdiction are preschool and school practitioners training and licensing, is also in charge of their CPD and organises or sponsors CPD events. Regulation however also allows for PD events to be organised by other stakeholders without specifying further on any quality standards. There is no official list of CPD providers, no accreditation or criteria for organisations or educators involved in PD events.

¹ www.azoo.hr

National Strategy for Education, Science and Technology (2015) lists improvements in CPD of practitioners as one of its main goals stating how CPD educators often lack appropriate qualifications and competences and are insufficiently trained (e.g., in adult learning). The Strategy mandates agencies to “define and organise programmes for psychological, didactical-methodical, andragogical, and additional subject related life-long learning education and development of practitioners” (measure 1.1.4.). In 2019-2020 AZOO assessed its professional development services and found: inadequate presence and engagement of the staff in monitoring trainees’ transformation and growth, a need for diversification of the events (including continuous coaching and mentoring, practicing, interaction and getting feedback, the importance of PD communities (peer-learning), and finally the evaluation of PD events. Although AZOO already introduced an evaluation questionnaire (in which one question was related to the quality of educator’s work), the assessment found it was not enough and that AZOO should put in place a more elaborative toolkit or framework that would include tools for evaluation of all different kinds of events. This toolkit should include impact assessment of a PD event, ways how to map needs for and plan future PD events, should measure entry and exit (both right after and with time span in between) competencies of teachers involved in a PD event.

3. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF CPD EDUCATORS

3.1 Framing continuous professional development of CPD educators at the country level

There is no mention of selection, recruitment or CPD of CPD educators neither in legal nor policy documents in Croatia. State mandated agency, mostly concentrated on providing one-time PD events, does not state publicly how quality of CPD educators is assured or what kind of support they are receiving. From available web content (regulations such as acts, ordinances, and internal documents such as the statute), it is not clear how CPD educators engaged by AZOO to hold CPD events are selected and recruited (or if there is any procedure in place). Based on available information on the actual CPD events, hired CPD educators are mostly university professors or other area experts, making the criteria of professional qualifications and profile assumingly most relevant. There is also no information on whether there is any training for educators, or other kind of support for improving their skills is provided. The quality assurance of CPD events consists of the evaluation form asking about relevance and novelty of the content, fulfilling the expectations and needs of the trainees, useful for one’s PD, effectively lead and well organised, applicable in practice, leads to improvement of practice, with one with one question asking about appropriateness of the trainer teaching methods. It is further not clear how this evaluation is used in quality assurance overall, or specifically in training and support to CPD educators.

3.2 Continuous professional development of CPD educators in literature review

There is scarce research on quality of CPD or CPD educators work in Croatia. Martinko, Matković and Živčić (2010) surveyed adult education teachers needs for quality CPD and found they were particularly concerned with some competences of the CPD trainers, such as motivation. Bilač and Tavas (2011) found that half of all the teachers involved in the survey expressed dissatisfaction with PD events organised by the agencies, claiming it was solely driven by promotion regulation and not oriented towards their needs in teaching, such as continuous and intensive mentor support in classroom. Although not mentioning CPD educators directly, they did pinpoint a need for a different type of support they require from them. Žužić (2012) surveyed practitioners in 2012 and similarly found that they needed mentorship and supervision as a form of quality CPD. All and all, it can be concluded that recruitment, selection and CPD of CPD educators as a part of quality assurance of the CPD in general remains a blind spot of both policy and research in Croatia.

4. CPD EDUCATORS' PATHWAYS: FROM RECRUITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

In order to better understand the factors contributing to quality implementation of CPD opportunities by CPD educators and further explore their in-service professionalization in the role of CPD educators, an in-depth survey was done in PIQET partner countries, Slovenia and Croatia (besides the wider international survey, described in the [PIQET Analysis: Existing Practices for the Recruitment and Professional Development of Continuous Professional Development Educators](#)).

Below, we present the key findings for Croatia.

4.1 Methodology

The survey aiming at mapping existing practices and mechanisms contained was built based on the following topic and themes:

1. *Continuous Professional Development Events and opportunities for professionals*
2. *Profile and titles of CPD Educators*
3. *Recruitment and Selection of CPD Educators*
4. *Support and Continuous Professional Development for CPD Educators*
5. *Monitoring and Evaluation of the work of CPD Educators*
6. *Principles or Standards to Ensure Quality of CPD Educators' Work*

The target group consisted of CPD providers, and these were identified as NGO CPD providers, national agencies, professional associations, individuals, and for-profit organisations. The survey was sent out to AZOO, other PD agencies and their branch organisations, and to all the known CPD event providers. OA Step by Step network of practitioners and school leaders in

kindergartens and primary schools (155 of them) were also asked to forward the questionnaire to the CPD providers in their networks.

The response rate was lower than expected. There were only 6 responses representing their CPD organisations. Neither of the agencies responded so web content analysis was conducted to provide information on their work, i.e., on state mandated PD system.

4.2 Key findings

4.2.1 Continuous Professional Development Events and opportunities for professionals

Among the respondents there were two NGO organisations oriented towards education policies and CPD of practitioners, one public agency in charge of digitalisation of education and CPD in digital skills of teachers, two educational research institute providing expert trainings, and 1 specialized adult education provider.

The types of CPD events they stated they offer were (listed in the order of frequency): seminars, conferences, roundtables, lectures, on-line modules, courses, micro-courses, one-time and continuous professional development events, collaborations on research projects conducted by experts and practitioners, digital skill programme and support in developing digital material.

4.2.2 Profile and titles of CPD Educators

Profile and titles of CPD educators the respondents listed were (listed in the order of frequency): lecturer, trainer, leader of the workshop, mentor (and on-line mentor), facilitators, research/expert, moderator, educator.

4.2.3 Recruitment and Selection of CPD Educators

Recruitment and selection criteria the respondents listed were most often: expert knowledge and credentials in that expertise (work or academic, years, references), followed by motivation, ability to relate to learners. One of the respondents also stated their organization put in place a framework that included different levels of trainers (based on their expert and training experience) and to that related selection and training criteria, but the criteria for these levels were not listed and are not made public.

4.3.4 Support and Continuous Professional Development for CPD Educators

For most of the respondents this is training of trainers, but some also add: continuous communication and regular meetings, capacity building, paid participation in events organised by others, supervisions, financial compensations, technical training, and upskilling.

4.2.5 Monitoring and Evaluation of work of the work of the CPD Educators

Majority of respondents listed that they use some form of evaluation forms for workshops, seminars and lectures they give, while some also ask for written feedback and interviews from

and with participants, as well as conversations and feedback from and with trainers (CPD Educators) themselves.

4.2.6 Principles or Standards to Ensure Quality of CPD Educators' Work

None of the organisations responded they used formal frameworks of quality for selection or CPD of CPD educators. One response included documentation that regulated training events, such as instructions of trainers, scenarios, process explained, learning outcomes, notes for educator and such, but in this response, quality assurance as such was seen through evaluation forms. Informal or other framework of philosophy of quality CPD educator work were listed as follows: European competence framework for educators, learner-centred approach, interactive method of teaching, learning-outcome oriented approach to training, constructivism, experience-based learning, instructional design (in e-learning material creation), open access education (all materials are freely available).

Final question asked the CPD providers to list any needs of CPD educators for quality work and some of the answers were: CPD, practical experience exchange with peer educators, quality training, supervision and peer groups, quality preparation training provided by CPD provider, support in digital upskilling of educators and transition to the new role of the educator in on-line learning.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In our analysis of the existing practices for the recruitment, selection, and professional development of CPD educators in early childhood education and care (ECEC) and primary education in Croatia we found that both research, policy, and practice within the CPD framework is underdeveloped, especially in terms of shared vision of quality standards for CPD educators.

Scarce research and strategic guidelines, coupled with underdeveloped quality policies on the level of CPD agencies, gear the lack of standards of quality for CPD educators on a national level for all stakeholders. This was confirmed by the survey that found no standards of quality put in place in NGOs, institutes, or agencies.

In conclusion, we believe that a comprehensive approach to quality of CPD should be put in place and that this approach should include quality standards for recruitment, selection and CPD of CPD educators, to which end we offer this and other results of the [PIQET project](#).

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8. The Ordinance on Promotion of Teachers, Professional Associates and Headmasters in Elementary and Secondary Schools and Dormitories (OG, 2019)

Annexes

Below we present the practice of The Open Academy *Step by Step network of experts* that empowers educators and child-care workers as well as other professionals, institutions, families, and communities to ensure the well-being of every child, provide the best development opportunities and learning experiences, as well as to develop children's awareness of social justice. The existing practice is presented in a form of vignette.

Vignette of existing practices	
Country	Croatia
Name of the organization	Open Academy Step by step, Croatia
Type of organization	Non-governmental, non-for-profit, civil society organisation, in-service training institution.
Short description of the organization	<p>The Open Academy <i>Step by Step</i> is a network of experts that empowers educators and child-care workers as well as other professionals, institutions, families and communities to ensure the well-being of every child, provide the best development opportunities and learning experiences, as well as to develop children's awareness of social justice.</p> <p>The Open Academy is one of the twenty founding members of the International <i>Step by Step</i> Association (ISSA). Mission is to introduce, promote, advocate and support innovative and quality practices in education as well as other practices needed to ensure the well-being, development and learning of children and youth.</p>
Website	ABOUT US - Pučko otvoreno učilište - Korak po korak
Types of CPD providing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. trainings 2. peer and group observations with reflective discussion 3. mentoring institutions 4. facilitating professional learning communities (PLCs) 5. creating resources (books, videos, quarterly journal, guides, handbooks, picture books, dictionaries, activity cards)

Profiles/roles of CPD educators implementing CPD events	experts of diverse profiles such as ECEC and primary school practitioners (teachers), psychologists, pedagogues and special education professionals, principals, researchers and policy experts, community activists and others (more here).
Requirements for becoming a CPD educator	Requirements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relevant expertise in the field of CPD opportunity - familiarity and implementation of the Step by Step approach (shared vision of quality pedagogy and social justice in education and child care) - relevant qualifications and/or practical experience - motivation and engagement for change - competences needed for training adults/professionals in ECEC (familiarity of the context of learners, presentation skills, programme development and management, innovative, participatory, and learner-centered approach) - inclusive and diversity respectful mindset - orientation towards life-long learning.
Recruitment and selection procedures	Recruitment and selection process is as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) recruitment through the Step by Step network of kindergartens, schools, other organisations and individuals with which OA SbS conducts various initiatives (usually projects and trainings) 2.a) if potential educator is a practitioner, observation of practice (based on the Step by Step definition of quality), followed by reflection on observation 2.b) if not a practitioner, then introduction to the Step by Step approach, expectations and goals of a particular training is provided (usually through several meetings, sharing of resources or enabling training opportunities) 3.) induction: first time a potential educator is part of the education, they are shadowing a more experienced trainer, second time they lead parts of the training under supervision of a senior trainer and third time they work independently, with often a person from OA Step by Step office observing (at some of the steps) 4.) decision on future cooperation (mutual).

<p>Onboarding/deployment professional development for selected CPD educators</p>	<p>The onboarding/deployment process of candidates includes the following steps. If potential educator is a practitioner, the first step includes observation and reflection on practice. If not a practitioner, then a candidate is provided with an introduction to the Step by Step approach (usually through several meetings, sharing of resources or enabling training opportunities). Training opportunities include topics such as: Step by Step approach, reflexive methods, mentoring institutions, social justice training and other. Second step is induction: shadowing a more experienced trainer, then leading parts of the training and finally conducting training independently, under supervision from Step by Step staff.</p>
<p>Quality assurance mechanisms (delivered content, strategies, approaches, attitudes)</p>	<p>Besides being inducted through different mechanisms described above, all trainers are subjected to evaluation by participants after each training (written evaluation forms. Trainers also need to submit a report which includes their reflection on quality of training. Office staff occasionally attends trainings to observe and improve quality. Step by Step office also engages in the process of strategic planning every 5 year which includes evaluation, analyses, and action plan for quality of CPD programmes offered.</p>
<p>CPD of CPD educators: how is it organized and carried out?</p>	<p>The professional development of CPD trainers in the network includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● attending and presenting on conferences ● attending trainings ● reflective discussions after implemented trainings ● occasional group meetings (of trainer in similar training topics) ● individual consultations (before and/or after each implemented training) ● taking part in OA Step by Step project activities.