

**EFFeCT**

European Methodological  
Framework for Facilitating Teachers'  
Collaborative Learning



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Erasmus+ Programme  
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# **CASE OF GOOD PRACTICE**

**(School and Regional Level)**

**Collaborative Teacher Learning at Broceni  
Secondary School (Latvia)**

## PORTRAIT

Broceni Secondary School is interesting example of change taking place in society and at the same time in the school and surrounding community. Since late 1990 Broceni Secondary School has been active to participate in different professional development activities for teachers and also to change school's culture in general. From school with rather little connected instruction programs in Russian and Latvian language it has become integrated and inclusive school with diverse programs and joined activities.

Broceni Secondary School has also played important role in development of the educational strategy of Broceni Municipality. Being the only secondary school in the municipality it has developed cooperation with other schools in the municipality. Instead of trying to enrol more students from surrounding rural schools (what is rather typical in the situation when school are competing for the number of students) Broceni assists small schools in developing their specific qualities which help students before secondary level develop and mature better in their communities and then to join secondary school for more successful learning and socialization.

The team of the Broceni Secondary School believes that “a good school can leave an impact on the development of the municipality and vice versa, municipality members can promote development of a good school”. This is why they have put so many emphases on the cooperation with the community including adult learning activities and professional development opportunities for teachers.

Evaluating their activities Broceni Secondary School team has identified some success and areas for improvement.

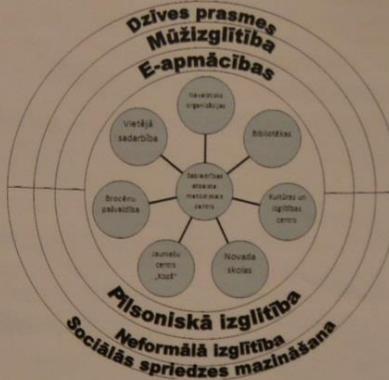
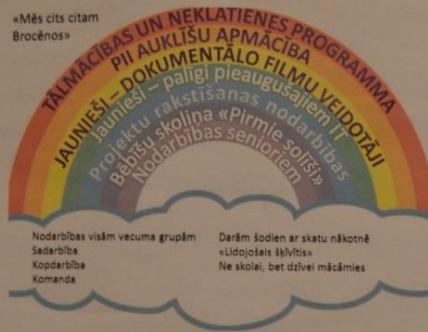
Success	Issues to Be Addressed
Successful choice of teachers who are able to arouse interest and motivation in students of different age groups	How to promote interest even more in those target groups who need new knowledge and skills most of all?
Relaxed and free learning atmosphere where students feel comfortable	How to address people and where to place the information on opportunities of learning so that it can reach the target audience?
The school is open to different age groups; stereotypes on the school have been broken in the community	How to learn as much as much possible about the community needs for classes?
Opportunity to learn new practical knowledge and acquire new skills	How to motivate local people to be aware of their need to acquire new knowledge and skills?
People of different age groups have an opportunity to communicate	How to achieve that people's interest in opportunities of getting new knowledge would remain intact and would not fall during the whole course?



# Business card of the school

## Mēs cits citam Brocēnos

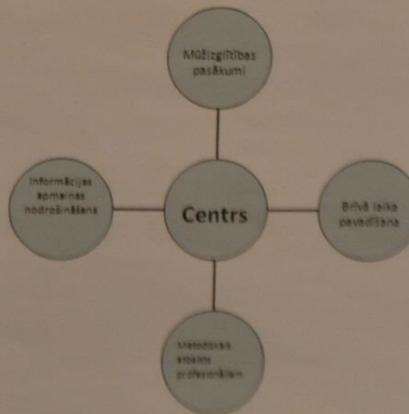
«Mēs cits citam  
Brocēnos»



- Atbalsts vispusīgai personas attīstībai ikvienā vecumā
- Atbalsts daudzveidīgu prasmju apgušanai uz pielietošanai
- Atbalsts iekļaujošas, saliedētas, pilsoniski un sociāli aktīvas sabiedrības spēcināšanai

- Stiprinājām :** solodaritāti , kopības un partnerības izpratni
- Vairojām** savstarpējo atvērtību un uzticēšanos
- Paaugstinājām** vietējo resursu efektīvu izmantošanu

- Integrējām :**
1. Zināšanas ar praksi
  2. Mācību vidi ar kopienu vidi
  3. Sacensību ar sadarbību
  4. Personiskās intereses ar sociālo atbildību



Additional resources about Broceni Secondary School:

<http://www.iac.edu.lv/the-main-projects-and-activities-implemented-by-edc/grassroots-europe/the-basket-of-good-deeds-breaks-stereotypes-in-broceni-latvia/>

<http://www.iac.edu.lv/the-main-projects-and-activities-implemented-by-edc/grassroots-europe/learning-to-learn-a-latvian-way-of-escaping-school-routines/>

Documentary film: 2nd Bell for School of Change  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdIaD\\_JCANK](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdIaD_JCANK)

## CONTEXT

Broceni Secondary School (Brocēnu vidusskola)<sup>1</sup> is an educational institution established by Broceni Municipality Council. It is located in Broceni, a town near Riga – Liepāja highway in approximately 100 km from Riga, the capital city of Latvia. Broceni Municipality is situated in the South –West part of Latvia and it consists of Broceni town and four rural territories. 3040 inhabitants had declared their place of living in Broceni town on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 2016.<sup>2</sup> Broceni town is an administrative center of the municipality and there are many institutions located there – Broceni Secondary School, two kindergartens, culture and educational centre, library, sports center, ice hall, Sports School for Children and Youth, Youth Centre of Broceni Municipality “Kopā” (Together), post office, medical centre, pharmacy, shops and local enterprises. There are many opportunities for children, youth and grownups to spend their spare time and also engage in community activities. Broceni is attractive with their beautiful surroundings – woods, lakes and rivers, beautiful outdoorrecreation places.<sup>3</sup>

Broceni Secondary School used to be the largest school in the Saldus district in 1998-2008 with approximately 600 students. In 2009 after administrative reform when Saldus district was divided, Broceni Secondary School became the only secondary school in the newly established municipality and became a leading organization in development education strategy for the newly established municipality. Brocēni Secondary school used to be the school with separated Latvian and Russian language of instruction streams, now integration has taken place. Among other innovations school has developed long-distance leaning programs including the one serving students from Latvian families living abroad.

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<sup>1</sup> Read more at <http://www.brocenuvsk.lv>; <http://parmainuskolas.lv/category/kurzeme/broceni/>; <http://parmainuskolas.lv/en/category/kurzeme/broceni/>

<sup>2</sup> Latvijas iedzīvotāju skaits pašvaldībās. Data of Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, 01.01.2016. Available: <http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/sakums/statistika/iedzivotaju-registrs/> (accessed 22.01.2016.)

<sup>3</sup> Broceni Municipality Website. Brocēnu un novada vēsture. Available: <http://www.broceni.lv/kategorija/v%C4%93sture> (accessed 22.04.2016.)

Since late 1990 school has been active in different national projects and education innovations improving teaching methodology skills in general and in specific subject areas, such as social study curriculum development, environmental studies, citizenship education, global/development education etc. During such long-term projects teachers' cooperation skills and motivation to engage in team work has increased significantly laying bases for the future work.

However not all teachers have been involved in the implementation of projects and therefore the level of experience as well as attitudes towards innovations varied and sometimes developed challenges for successful work of the school. Cooperation among teachers working with the same students (in the same classroom teaching different subjects) has been insufficient and it was decided to focus on improving collaborative learning of teachers. It was also decided that cooperation with other secondary schools outside the municipality is needed to provide wider potential for intellectual and professional growth of teachers.

For study year 2015/2016 Broceni Secondary School offers several education programs – primary education program, special primary education program for children with study problems, general secondary education programs for day studies and distance studies. 559 students were registered at Broceni Secondary School in the beginning of the study year 2015/2016 and there were 61 pedagogical staff members, of whom 48 worked as teachers.<sup>4</sup>

In its self-evaluation report the school describes its special features, such as modern physical and study environment, which promotes learning, participation in the long-term initiative “Change Opportunities for Schools”, supported by the Soros Foundation – Latvia (SFL), acting as an innovative experience school promoting methodological support for teachers, being health promotion school with long experience, availability of modern technologies in the study process, education of life skills as one of the priorities, motivation system for students, well equipped dorms, broad offer of extracurricular activities, school as multifunctional centre for local community etc. Among school values the following are mentioned – professional teachers, openness to innovation and experiments and project experience.<sup>5</sup>

Teachers improve their professional knowledge and skills in different ways: by attending trainings in their specific subject area, by improving their knowledge in the fields of information technologies, pedagogy and psychology, as well as by mutual exchange of experience both at the school level and with colleagues in other educational institutions in Latvian and abroad. Teachers participate in the study trips to learn and exchange experience, attend conferences, workshops and participate in different projects at local, regional and national level. For their activities and contribution to promote and facilitate

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<sup>4</sup>Brocēnu vidusskola. Pašnovērtējumam ziņojums, 2016.pp. 3., 5. Available: <http://www.brocenuvsk.lv/dokumenti/> (accessed22.04.2016.)

<sup>5</sup>Brocēnu vidusskola. Pašnovērtējumam ziņojums, 2016, pp.5.-6. Available: <http://www.brocenuvsk.lv/dokumenti/> (accessed22.04.2016.)

education quality teachers of BroceniSecondary School have received acknowledgments of the Ministry of Education and Science and Municipality Council.<sup>6</sup>

To ensure good quality education for their students, the school itself involves in different activities and supports teacher further education. According to the self-evaluation report of the school at the beginning of school year there are individual meetings of teachers and school management, where opportunities for teacher professional growth and achievements are discussed as well as the necessary support. If necessary, school also organizes trainings and workshops for its teachers. It is emphasized in the self-evaluation report that “many teachers think that one of the most effective further education forms is further education opportunities at the school level, which the school successfully ensures”.<sup>7</sup> Same was evident also in conversations with the school representatives.

The school also promotes cooperation of students and teachers with different institutions in the municipality and local inhabitants by organizing different activities and by engaging in activities organized by others. Since the school actively involves in different projects, project partners are part of broad cooperation network. The projects are implemented both by school and by non-governmental organizations (NGO) established in the school - “Student Parliament of Broceni Municipality” and “Kamols”.<sup>8</sup> Similar to other schools, which were involved in the SFL initiative “Change Opportunities for Schools” (2009 -2013), BroceniSecondary School also greatly appreciates this experience and its contribution to the development of school and teachers.

The main aim of the projects was to develop BroceniSecondary School as a resource for community development. Their main activities wereworkshops of film making to document local history, development of the blog run by local people and historical exhibition, open-doors days in the municipal institutions including schools, improvement of school’s offered secondary education distance learning programs, life learning programs for diverse groups of local people, establishment of e-consultation system for students (which significantly influence teachers work and relationship with students), training program for junior staff of preschools, establishment of new NGO Broceni Development Organization, inhabitant surveys for development of municipal development plan etc.<sup>9</sup>

All these diverse activities have proven themselves to be very closely connected with teachers’ job and self-perception as teachers, as their both provided opportunities and required constant learning within and outside formal school setting.

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<sup>6</sup>Brocēnu vidusskola. Pašnovērtējumam ziņojums, 2016,pp. 16., 40.-41. Available: <http://www.brocenuvsk.lv/dokumenti/> (accessed 22.04.2016.)

<sup>7</sup>Brocēnu vidusskola. Pašnovērtējumam ziņojums, 2016, p. 41. Available: <http://www.brocenuvsk.lv/dokumenti/> (accessed22.04.2016.)

<sup>8</sup>Brocēnu vidusskola. Pašnovērtējumam ziņojums, 2016, p. 44. Available: <http://www.brocenuvsk.lv/dokumenti/> (accessed22.04.2016.)

<sup>9</sup>Website of SFL initiative “Change Opportunities for Schools”. Brocēnu vidusskola kā kopienas attīstības resurss. Available: <http://parmainuskolas.lv/category/kurzeme/broceni/> (accessed22.04.2016.)

## METHODOLOGY

Broceni Secondary School is chosen as a case of good practice in collaborative learning of teachers both at school level and regional level as one of the most active, creative and innovative Latvian regional schools with long history of purposeful improvement of its performance. The management of school and its teachers are open to new ideas and approaches for improvement of education process and has broad experience of cooperation with different stakeholders. Broceni Secondary School was also one of the most successful and visible examples of school development as a resource for community development in the SFL initiative “Change Opportunities for Schools”, during which school implemented different innovative and creative initiatives, developed and established its network of cooperation partners providing new learning and engagement opportunities for teachers.

Another feature of the Broceni Secondary school is growing level of reflection on their work and using results of such reflection for planning following activities. Teachers learn to cooperate and share in safe, encouraging atmosphere starting to become resources for each other and so becoming less dependent on outside experts who “come, deliver their presentations or workshops and leave”. One of the latest initiatives taking place for the second school year already is regular workshops where teachers from different content areas work together to identify pockets of opportunities for synergies and enhanced teaching and learning.

History teacher of Broceni Secondary School who has been also the director of several school’s projects and has become part-time leading education specialist at the municipality level Laura Miķelsone very well describes school’s philosophy and attitude towards joint and collaborative learning: “Our opinion is that the school cannot stay only at school level; we have to go outside school and as much as we can cooperate with all institutions we can cooperate with, so that the school wont *boil in its own juice*.” For example, if school organizes lectures for its teachers, it always invites colleagues from other schools, so that the network of interested persons would be as broad as possible, which could also provide wider access to new information and knowledge: “(..)although we (our school or municipality) pay for this lecture, we still invite colleagues. I think that is it an example of successful cooperation that we don’t work only by ourselves, that we don’t sit on our treasure box but share with it.”

Therefore it is important to mention that the good practice that is described in the next chapter on collaborative learning at school level also includes cooperation with other schools in the municipality. Being the main initiator, coordinator and implementer of professional development and cooperation activities in the region is Broceni Secondary School it also organizes activities only for the benefit of its own teachers.

Also to provide as much information as possible of successful activities of Broceni Secondary School for ensuring improvement of its teachers’ knowledge and hence improvement of the whole study process, collaborative teacher learning at regional level is described with two examples of good practices implemented in the school.

In order to get information on good practices of Broceni Secondary School in the field of collaborative teacher learning both at school level and regional level, the analysis of available literature and internet resources was carried out, as well as telephone interviews with Olita Țitvinova, Deputy Director of Broceni Secondary School in the field of education, and Laura Mișelone, history teacher of Broceni Secondary School and education specialist of Broceni Municipality.

Since in the case of Broceni Secondary School report includes one good practice of collaborative learning at school level and two practices at regional level, this report includes several step backs from the research guidelines regarding length and sequence of the report sections. Such sections as “Context” and “Methodology” and also the Portrait of the school is provided for Broceni Secondary School followed by several descriptions of specific cases of teachers’ collaborative learning.

At first good practice at the school level is described in the section and afterwards two practices at the regional level. In order to describe good practice examples more clearly sections “Practice” and “Learning” are combined and they are followed by sub-sections “Participation”, “Depth”, “Equity”, “Facilitators” and “Barriers”. One of examples of good practices of regional level is described in more detail but the description of the other is shorter and more focused, because this practice involves new experience and is only at the beginning of its development. Therefore it was not possible to obtain all of the necessary information in the requested amount; especially the information about participation, depth, equity, facilitators and barriers was very limited. Meanwhile this experience seemed to us interesting and promising, so it was decided to include it in the case studies.

Such approach was chosen to illustrate how a school can become more significant player in the professional development at the wider area both looking for their own benefit (wider pool of knowledge and experience etc.) and increasingly seeing themselves as a part of professional community with responsibilities towards local community and wider society.

## **SCHOOL LEVEL**

This chapter describes practice implemented at Broceni Secondary School, which activities involved collaborative teacher learning at school level including activities also at regional level. In addition to review of the main activities of this practice this chapter also includes description of the impact this practice had on teacher and other involved stakeholder joint collaboration and learning and on the knowledge all of the involved participants gained.

## **PRACTICE AND LEARNING**

Broceni Secondary School works as Innovative Experience School (further - IES) since school engaged in the national program “Improvement of Quality of Teaching in Natural Science, Mathematics and Technology Subjects” and project “Math and Natural Sciences” in 2005. IES works at several levels and changes can be characterized in the

performance of 1) students, who become more active participants of study process, 2) teachers, who more effectively use modern teaching methods and technologies, professionally reflect on their work and analyze it, professionally share their experience with teachers of other schools and 3) school management, which is leader of the change in the learning process. The main tasks of IES is to spread the basic ideas of the reform and implement them into action in its own school and to share experience with teachers of other schools by assisting in planning and organizing lessons and using additional resources and technologies, in that way increasing student interest in natural sciences.<sup>10</sup>

In order to implement tasks of IES, Broceni Secondary School works as methodological center, which organizes open lessons in the subjects of natural sciences and math, workshops for exchange of experience, activities for students, parents and local inhabitants and also provides individual consultations.<sup>11</sup> When describing school's activities in the network of IES, Olita Ļitvinova, Deputy Director of Broceni Secondary School in the field of education and coordinator of the school in the IES network, admits that activities take place both in the form of teacher collaboration at the school level and in the form of cooperation with other schools in the municipality and their personnel.

So called “open lessons” are one of the mostly used successful practices, which are organized in the network of IES. Open lessons were used also before but then it was more as a tool for teachers' evaluation, for making conclusions on qualification and professional mastery of teachers. In the IES network new approach to open lessons is implemented which started already in some other projects putting emphases on support and learning, not judging. O. Ļitvinova tells the following about these open lessons and their impact on collaborative learning: “We have had open lessons in the school, when teachers, who were involved in the project – teachers of chemistry, biology, math and physics - invited colleagues to their lessons and afterwards we also analyzed these lessons according to the achievable result and focusing emphasis more and more from what teacher does at lessons to what students do. Then we have invited both leaders and teachers of the respective subject to these lessons from other municipal schools. We also went to teachers in the other schools in the municipality to observe their lessons thus gaining material and evidence to do this collaborative learning from each other by analyzing these lessons; in such way individual and collective learning is enhanced significantly.”

In addition to what O. Ļitvinova told it is possible to conclude that open lessons are directed to mutual learning both from the teacher, who shows his lesson, and also from the participants of the discussion, which takes part after the lesson, – other teachers, who give their opinion on methods used in this lesson, share their experience and suggest options to improve teacher's performance. It has been important to make a shift from criticizing to recognition of success, picking out interesting moments, asking for more background information about students and context etc. Such approach to lesson observation in Latvia started with the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking project implemented in late 1990 and early 2000 and the situation has changed from open

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<sup>10</sup>Website of Broceni Secondary School. Inovatīva skola. Available: <http://www.brocenuvsk.lv/par-skolu/inovativa-skola/> (accessed 22.04.2016.)

<sup>11</sup>Website of Broceni Secondary School. Inovatīva skola. Available: <http://www.brocenuvsk.lv/par-skolu/inovativa-skola/> (accessed 22.04.2016.)

rigidness to let other in the classroom to openness and willingness to hear colleagues' opinions and suggestions but maintaining it still needs support.

O. Ļitvinova thinks that the most important knowledge that involved participants get from these open lessons are related to teaching methods in broad sense: "(..) to look at that lesson deeper, not only in terms of "like", "don't like", "what liked", "what didn't like", but each action is analyzed – why exactly this kind of task was given, what was its impact on students, how does the feedback come from students, how are they taught to work in groups, joint cooperation of students, [skills] to defend their opinion. At the moment new competencies are related to, for example, teaching students in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade to collect data, to gather, to visualize. It was not practiced in 1<sup>st</sup> grade some time ago. Teachers see that it is possible to do those things also with first graders. It is the education of competences that causes us certain worries that in few years it will begin in whole Latvia. We have introduced our teachers with it already and they will be less afraid from the new ideas that will come." Thus opportunities to build teachers' mutual trust and space for cooperation lead to beneficial learning atmosphere for students.

Another important activity that Broceni Secondary School as IES does is organization of the workshops. O. Ļitvinova tells that also these workshops are organized not only for teachers of Broceni Secondary School, but also for teachers from other schools of Broceni and other surrounding municipalities: "Mostly we invite teachers of math and natural sciences, but actually now it can be a teacher of any subject, who can participate in the workshop. We share our theoretical knowledge that we have got from the Education Center of Natural Sciences and Mathematics of the University of Latvia (..) and then there are also particular classes for teachers where they play different roles and solve different tasks, for example, discuss the achievable result, what the student gets from it and why is it necessary." Although the form of workshop is to a greater extent directed to lecture of one person (sharing of knowledge), Olita Ļitvinova admits that by asking participants of workshop to contribute their own experience, mutual collaboration and learning from the experience of each other also take place. Both during workshops and after them during informal communication teachers share their knowledge and experience, tell about good practice examples that they use in their daily work, what kind of experience and knowledge they have obtained in other workshops or trainings, ask each other specific questions etc. More and more teachers realize that this informal communication is also extremely valuable part of professional development and require more active workshops and other forms of educational activities for teachers.

Working as IES Broceni Secondary School has also implemented activities for educating society and students. When describing this experience, O. Ļitvinova mentions the following examples: "(..)it is our tradition to organize society or family days at school and then teachers may show some episodes or play out a lesson with parents, so that they would understand how children learn nowadays, that they don't learn like they did in the past. (..) There was one project that [local enterprise] supported for talented children. Then teachers had classes both for students and teachers. It was in the summer during one week." In addition to these activities in the framework of IES popularization of different subjects take place by organizing competitions for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students from different municipalities in math and natural science subjects. Connecting such experience with teachers' learning it is important to emphasize that teachers gradually start to see

communication with families and wider society as beneficial for their teaching job and themselves as professional as such activities require to think more in-depth about goals and processes of such public lessons/activities as in that case teacher steps away from formal authority (vertical teacher – student relationship) and becomes more of an expert and interesting personality for other adults. It raises teachers self-esteem and encourages to practice more innovative approaches in the classroom settings as well.

## **PARTICIPATION**

Five teachers are involved in the IES team of Broceni Secondary School. They are the main initiators and organizers of the activities that take place regarding IES – open lessons, workshops and other activities and events. IES team jointly chooses topical themes and the target group for which to organize activities. Teachers distribute the themes among themselves, which they would like to share with others and each teacher gets deeper knowledge and information about its theme in order to give this knowledge to other teachers in the open lessons or workshops. Olita Țitvinova admits that the new knowledge and competencies are mostly spread by these five teachers but in the cases when representatives of Broceni Secondary School go on experience exchange trips to other schools of municipality, then accordingly teachers of that school are those, who show their lessons and share their experience, knowledge and application of new methods.

When telling about opportunities for other teachers to join this five teacher team, the representative of Broceni Secondary School admits that this five teacher team works together since Broceni Secondary School involved in IES network but she also mentions that the team is open to new enthusiasts, who would like to involve in promotion of cooperation and spreading of knowledge and experience: “(..) at the moment we have rather actively involved primary school teachers and we are not a closed group, anyone can come and involve. If we ask colleagues something, nobody has ever refused to involve, to help. Municipality organized a lot of competitions for teachers this year, primary school teachers were especially active to involve, also teachers of physics.”

When thinking of the further activities of IES team and opportunities to broaden its activities, O. Țitvinova says that at the moment there are plans to establish study groups, when each member of IES team would gather a group of certain teachers in that way organizing more intense cooperation and mutual learning than it is now. According to ideas there are at the moment these groups will be organized depending on the identified problems in the school which needs solution and respectively the participants of these groups will change according to the problematic issue, which can be any methodological problem evolved in the class or subject that needs a solution at the school level. In order to prevent the identified problem, someone from the IES team will take the initiative and address teachers, in that way forming a work group for solving particular issue. Olita Țitvinova gives an example: “I can address particular people, whom I attract to myself, about whom I care that we come together, that we discuss different things or maybe initiate some problem, that something doesn’t work well at school, how to promote it, either it is in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup>, or 7<sup>th</sup> grade at any subject. We would work with particular problem that the particular age group has.”

Olita Ļitvinova also mentions an example for activities of this kind of group that already took place at school: “To some extent this study group took place for us with one 7<sup>th</sup> grade, where there were several problems with student behaviour that disturbed learning process. Then we, teachers of this class, very often came together and worked. This is an example how these study groups could take place. We came together, formulated a problem, which this class had, teachers gave their suggestions how we could work. Two weeks passed, we came together again, discussed the success and failures, what to do further. According to this model any methodological problem could be solved in these study groups.”

This can be seen as a way to wider involvement of other teachers and extended openness of the core group established within the formal project implementation. From other evidence it can be also added that it is very big challenged with participation in the project to broaden feeling of participation to the level of the school rather than group of directly involved people.

### **DEPTH**

When describing motivation of IES team to work and organize different activities involving cooperation and learning, Olita Ļitvinova admits that members of the team have high sense of duty and responsibility to spread the knowledge they have obtained when participating in different projects and trainings: “The participation in projects for many years gives a certain duty and also responsibility for it, that investments have been put in us and we have to hand them further. So that it would not be that the knowledge is given only to some people, we have to work with other colleagues and share with them what we have learned.”

According to the view of O. Ļitvinova IES team members of Broceni Secondary School can successfully cooperate with each other and this cooperation has developed during many years, because the team with the same members has worked since the beginning of the IES initiative. She thinks that the team members have similar understanding of goals, ability to agree on common tasks for further actions and methods to achieve them, ability to support each other and jointly seek new creative solutions. She admits that in the work process there are sometimes arguments but they are always successfully solved and do not put barriers for further actions, actually they help to arrive to the best solution: “The main direction is absolutely clear to us all. Then we argue about some small issues, but those are arguments that help to move further. I think that during these years we have been together long enough [in order to be able to cooperate].”

According to the reflections and feedback from the participants an additional inspiration to continue their work and establish new forms of cooperation and learning IES team of Broceni gets from collaboration with IES teams from other Latvian schools. These teams go on experience exchange trips to each other in order to learn and get inspiration for further activities. As an example of good cooperation coordinator of IES team of Broceni mentions Vecumnieki High School: “(..)we have good enough cooperation with Vecumnieki High School in different forms. Vecumnieki are pioneers in Latvia in this field, they have the ability to inspire the teachers of surrounding municipalities and lift their spirits.”

## **EQUITY**

In the events organized by Broceni IES team any teacher can involve according to his or her wish to cooperate and get new knowledge. Usually those are public events and there are no restrictions for participation. Although these events are to a greater extent directed to math and natural science subjects, O. Ļitvinova admits that any teacher can participate despite the subject he or she teaches or the class group: “Anyone is welcome. It is not that only math or natural sciences, those are the subjects, who have started this initiative and so it continues.”

Meanwhile it is not so that all teachers are eager to participate. Some admit that it is difficult to find time to attend colleagues’ lessons as they are busy with their own work, some, as it seems still need some more direct encouragement from the school administration as a sign that this is what is expected from all teachers. Leaders of Broceni Secondary school have observed that the best motivator to join is an opportunity to observe what others do in safe environment followed by participation in more active form. Also students’ reactions might be motivating factor as they compare teaching styles of different teachers and demand more active and meaningful learning process.

In order to ensure that as many as possible teachers involve in events organized by IES team, very often they take place during school holidays or at the end of August- before the beginning of the new school year. Before these events there is publicly available information and any interested person can apply and participate.

## **FACILITATORS**

When describing factors facilitating events and activities organized by IES team, representatives of Broceni Secondary School firstly mention characteristics that IES team possess: perseverance and ability always initiate new activities: “We don’t relax, we have to keep the direction and we see that it is progressive and there are results, and we go and share with others”. As the next facilitating factor she mentions the support of Education Center of Natural Sciences and Mathematics of the University of Latvia, which encourages them to keep working and “doesn’t let us relax and fall back”.

This is quite common feature in long-term national scale projects in Latvia that leading organizations play crucial role in facilitating processes including experience exchange events etc. It is good in a sense that schools get to know each other and get used to communicate, seeing benefits in such actions. On another hand, as such facilitation usually goes hand in hand with some funding or at least covering costs for participation in the events, after the end of the project activities may decrease or vanish if local ownership and motivation is not developed strong enough. In case of Broceni O. Ļitvinova tells that the support of school and Municipality Council is important; local municipality has been also very closely involved in the projects implemented by Broceni Secondary school as thus helps to maintain good initiatives including them in the strategies and working plans of the municipality. Broceni Municipality Council even provides important financial support for IES team. The work of IES team at the moment is not voluntary as it was at the beginning of this initiative. Teachers, who participate in

this team, already for several years have a contract with Municipal Council and Education Centre of Natural Sciences and Mathematics of the University of Latvia and they get remuneration for their hard work.

The management of school is also always open to new, creative initiatives and supports both the initiatives of IES team and different events organized by it – both in their school and as well trainings of members of IES team in other schools.

As one more facilitating factor O. Ļitvinova mentions environment of school: “We have wonderfully equipped classrooms for physics, chemistry, biology and math. It happened during the first project and at that time Municipality Council was very supportive, we could organize remodelling, municipality improved all of our classrooms and equipped them with furniture. In terms of material things we are very well equipped. Each classroom has thatmultimedia equipment and any teacher can use in their lessons all kinds of materials.”

## **BARRIERS**

The representatives of Broceni Secondary School do not see significant barriers to successful work of IES team. The only hindering factor in her opinion is the big workload of teachers that does not allow them to involve in different activities in addition to their direct teaching duties. She has hopes for future that the teacher remuneration model will include paid time for activities that involve professional development: “We, teachers have rather big workloads at school and it is rather hard to deal with it in order to involve in additional activities, because any gatherings of this kind and problem solving takes additional time, which is not often available to us. It is one of hindering factors – those big workloads. Now there are plans for new remuneration model of teachers, then we are glad that there is one section, where it will be possible to include hours for teachers to work with problems of this kind, but [at the moment] we don’t have it.”

At the same time this opinion reveals that participation in the projects and professional development activities as well as time for mutual shared learning is still seen as an extra, not integral and compulsory part of teaching profession.

## **REGIONAL LEVEL**

This chapter gives an overview of two cases of good practices in collaborative learning at regional level implemented by Broceni Secondary School. During the activities of these practices the collaborative learning took place between teachers of different Broceni Municipality schools, pre-school education institutions and inhabitants of the municipality. In addition to the overview of the main activities of practices information is also given on how the particular practice facilitated teacher and other stakeholder collaborative learning and what kind of knowledge all involved partners obtained. Description of each practice is followed by information on participation, depth, equity, facilitators and barriers. As already mentioned in the chapter on methodology, one of the practices of collaborative learning at regional level is described very shortly due to the lack of sufficient information. Despite that it gives a good example of teacher efforts to

learn new things and improve learning process for students, and good lessons for other schools to develop similar activities.

### **The First case: collaboration of social science teachers in the field of global education**

#### **PRACTICE AND LEARNING**

The first case tells the story about participation and collaboration of social science teachers in the field of global education. Teacher group of Broceni consisting of three teachers from Broceni Secondary School and one teacher from Broceni pre-school education institution “Mūsmājas” was one of 21 teams of teachers from different regions in Latvia, involved in the project “Global Dimension in Social Sciences Subjects in Formal Education” in the fall of 2013. The aim of the project was to promote information, understanding and involvement of Latvian, Estonian, United Kingdom’s and Europe’s societies in the field of global (development) education with specific focus on increasing the awareness among young people about the interdependent world and to support their active engagement in creating fairer relationships in the world.<sup>12</sup>

School teams involved in the project in the two year period obtained deeper knowledge on content and methods of global education in order to apply them in the learning process and integrate content and philosophy of global education in Latvian schools.<sup>13</sup> During this project the task of school teams was “to introduce topics of global education in the daily agenda, cooperate with education policy makers in order to integrate global education in the formal education in the social science subjects, to develop and approve global education programs and study materials, to develop networks for cooperation.”<sup>14</sup>

The history teacher of Broceni Secondary School and the member of global education teachers’ team Laura Miķelsone emphasizes that after participation in the project this is already the second school year when school team continues to work independently applying collaborative learning and sharing their knowledge and experience with other teachers both during individual trainings and by organizing methodological days and other events on global education issues.

For example, teachers of school team develop education program for 7<sup>th</sup> grade students and train one teacher, who was not involved in the previously mentioned project in order to inform her on the global education approach and give her knowledge on working with global education topics and methods. Laura Miķelsone admits that “global education gives teachers opportunities to teach in more interesting and diverse ways: work interactively, use diverse sources of information, combine emotional and rational aspects,

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<sup>12</sup>Website of Education Development Centre. Globālā izglītība. Available:<http://www.iac.edu.lv/aktualie-projekti/globala-dimensija-socialo-zinat-u-macibu-prieksmetos/>(accessed 24.04.2016.)

<sup>13</sup>Website of Education Development Centre. Globālā izglītība. Available:<http://www.iac.edu.lv/aktualie-projekti/globala-dimensija-socialo-zinat-u-macibu-prieksmetos/>(accessed 24.04.2016.)

<sup>14</sup>Website of Broceni Secondary School. Projekti. Globālā izglītība. Available:<http://www.brocenuvsk.lv/projekti/globala-izglitiba/> (accessed 24.04.2016.)

go outside the classroom and welcome guests in classes, develop links between local, national and international.”<sup>15</sup>

The next example on applying global education approach in Broceni Secondary School is integration of one topic in several subjects. Taking into account the current events in the world, at school level global education team in cooperation with other teachers of Broceni Secondary School during one month integrated a topic of refugees in different subjects. Describing this experience Laura Miķelsone tells: “(..)in October we tried to introduce topic of refugees in our subjects so that students would learn about this topic from different aspects. It was very interesting: in Latvian language lessons they worked with the word “refugee”, learned about declinations, did all kinds of things from the language aspect. In physics they calculated the strength that is necessary for that person to travel by boat to Europe. Then in geography there was a topic why refugees choose Greece. In history we compared refugees in nowadays and in 1944.”

In order to implement this initiative, the school team at first shared their knowledge with colleagues on how to work with these global education topics, offered several prepared materials for inspiration, but as much as possible encouraged teachers to be creative and look for ideas themselves. When the “refugee month” ended involved teachers shared their experience on how they managed to implement this initiative, what kind of methods and activities they used, what were their successes and failures and thus learned from each other new methods and ideas how to teach students global education topics. According to the participating teachers the main benefits from including one topic in different subjects include several aspects of collaborative learning. “If they have introduced that activity, we also get those ideas from them, there is that feedback. In physics those tasks were developed so interestingly that we instantly (..)can take those ideas and develop similar tasks in the classes of our subjects. Or this method that it is possible to make a task, that it is not only that a teacher has to give this information to student (..), that these creative activities can be diverse.”

Besides this “refugee month” in order to help students learn other topics related to global education, there were other events organized in the school on global current events and problems. For example, photo exhibition on children’s life in Kenya, study trip of 1<sup>st</sup> grade students to fast food restaurant “Hesburger” where children got information on the ingredients of hamburger and how healthy or unhealthy it is, different activities and events for celebrating World Water Day, global market, where children learned about different products that are imported in Latvia from other countries and options to prepare healthy meals using them and many others.<sup>16</sup> All of that required more cooperation from teachers and more internalized understanding of the goals and processes of learning both for teachers and students.

Since there is one person from pre-school education institution in Broceni global education team, school team has developed good collaboration also with pre-school education institutions in the Municipality, sharing with teachers of these institutions

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<sup>15</sup>Website of Broceni Secondary School. Projekti. Globālā izglītība. Available: <http://www.brocenuvsk.lv/projekti/globala-izglitiba/> (accessed 24.04.2016.)

<sup>16</sup>Website of Broceni Secondary School. Projekti. Globālā izglītība. Available: <http://www.brocenuvsk.lv/projekti/globala-izglitiba/> (accessed 24.04.2016.)

knowledge on global education approach so that it would be applied to children already at pre-school age and introduced in the education system as early as possible. Such approach strengthened mutual understanding among preschool and school teachers and improved transition for children from preschool to school.

In order to spread the global education ideas and approach school team not only shares their knowledge with other teachers but also organizes different events for inhabitants of Broceni Municipality. One of the examples is lecture course for senior citizens/retired personstaking place in the municipal library. At the moment global education team has developed a six lecture course which educates older generation of Broceni Municipality on globalization, urbanization, multiculturalism, healthy eating habits, mass media, migration, culture diversity.<sup>17</sup> In addition to this course school team organizes different campaigns and workshops, for example, during town festivals in that way spreading knowledge among inhabitants of Broceni Municipality of different ages and also getting new knowledge and improving skills of global education team on working with adult audience, which according to Laura Mikelsone is a great challenge to teachers. It is gradually understood by teachers that preparing lessons for diverse audiences makes teachers to think more deeply about the content and methods of teaching, increase the need to adjust activities to the needs of the learners and thus promotes professionalism of teachers what is beneficial also for students in the regular classrooms.

Taking into account the previously described activities and collaboration of global education team, it is possible to conclude that collaboration of social science teachers in the field of global education gives opportunities for teachers to cooperate with wider network of partners, which mainly involves teachers from different schools and pre-school institutions of the municipality, but in addition to that teachers collaborate also with many other municipal institutions which assistance is necessary to educate local community and organize different activities and events for students in order to learn about global problems and issues. Within such cooperation teachers, students and other people from local municipality learn new approaches of organizing learning process, new methods of presenting information to students and of integrating informal learning methods in the formal education process. Besides, teachers also improve their skills and methods to work with adult audience. This form of collaboration allows teachers to learn not only from the global education team but also from each other both in formal and informal environment where they share with each other their experience, knowledge, thoughts, reflections how to practically use global education approach.

## **PARTICIPATION**

Global education team consists of four persons: three teachers from Broceni Secondary School and one teacher from Broceni pre-school education institution “Mūsmājas” who gather around themselves other teachers who wish to involve in learning global education approach and implement it in their teaching subjects. It is confirmed by history teacher, “Yes, we are the core team, we are four people and we gather around other people. There is that core and then the next circle forms; those are people, who with our help and

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<sup>17</sup>Website of Broceni Secondary School. Projekti. Globālā izglītība. Available: <http://www.brocenuvsk.lv/projekti/globala-izglitiba/> (accessed24.04.2016.)

recommendations try to introduce these global education ideas in their subjects.” Teachers who initially may be interested in improving their knowledge and skills in teaching new content area gradually realize that in such collaboration process they improve their competences in much wider sense.

Mobilization of knowledge and expertise mainly takes place among global education team, because those teachers were involved in the previously mentioned project “Global Dimension in Social Sciences Subjects in Formal Education” where they learned this new education approach, which they further spread among other interested persons. Teachers of global education team meet twice a month in the meetings of school’s methodological commissions where they discuss and plan further activities. Extra meetings are scheduled before specific events to involve in detailed planning process and organization of further activities.

Other teachers’ involvement in learning process of global education approach and spreading its ideas has been increasingly active which again gives additional opportunities to learn from each other. According to the opinion of the core team other teachers desire and initiative to work in this field is well characterized by involvement in one challenging activity of global education: “Next good example was that we, 10 persons from school participated in the global initiative World’s Largest Lesson where these topics had to be linked with global aims, a lesson had to be prepared and performed. (..)I think that for the first time these 10 persons is a good enough indicator. It means that people think of introducing this global education in their subjects.”

## **DEPTH**

When describing mutual collaboration of global education team, Laura Miķelsone tells that it is very stable and has developed through many years: “We are very cohesive team, because these people, who we are together, we were together already in 2000, when there was [other] project on social sciences. As we started, we, the same people have stayed together all these 15 years and from time to time discussed teaching of social sciences – both methods and problems. It is not that we came together only for the project. That project gave us new perspective and opinion that it is necessary to review methods of teaching social sciences and teaching topics, all these programs, because practically in this subject everything get outdated very fast – the program, materials, examples. We have realized that we have to develop all this from the beginning.” The opinion of Laura Miķelsone leads to conclusion that the members of global education team are enthusiasts of their field, always ready to support each other and look for new creative forms of working together to develop and broaden the professional field they represent. It is essential that teachers do not count formally needed professional development hours but look for meaningful support and opportunities to share and engage in professional discussion. This core team of teachers is also more open to ask for help and support as they try to solve deeper and more complex questions about teaching and learning and see each other as resources.

## **EQUITY**

When global education team organizes activities and events for teachers or other target groups, any interested person can apply for them. For example, if an event is organized for teachers global education team publicly announces the topic and teachers who are interested in it apply. Teacher of Broceni Secondary School especially emphasizes that any teacher can participate in any event regardless of age group or subject he or she teaches. Accordingly it has a positive effect on collaborative learning: “If we talk more about that joint learning, then it is important that all events for teachers take place together for all teachers from all class age groups. We have not separated pre-school or sports school. In all events we participate all together, we all listen to the same lectures, we all participate in the same workshops and therefore very good collaboration develops between teachers of all class age groups.”

This approach is common at all events of education institutions organized in Broceni Municipality, hence the mutual collaboration, understanding and support is promoted: “When big meetings take place in the municipality, where leaders of education institutions gather, then also meetings are organized together for everyone and it is clear for everyone what happens in other schools in the municipality, what problems there are, what are the success stories, what kind of support is necessary to others. This communication develops very well there.”

Looking at the local demands special course on early years pedagogy and children’s development was developed two years ago for preschool teachers’ assistants, technical staff of the preschool. It was highly appreciated by the participants for gaining new knowledge but also for raising their value. During the course assistants asked many questions as they understood that teachers not always have acted according to the principles of the quality pedagogy. It was next task to help establish more equal relationship and cooperation among all staff members in the preschools. In the following years preschool teachers’ assistants have become integral part of the professional development events of the municipality.

## **FACILITATORS**

When describing facilitating factors of teachers collaboration in the global education team teacher of Broceni Secondary School mentions two main aspects: “Firstly, it is the personal enthusiasm of each individual, desire to learn something new, to change himself, to follow the new ideas and tendencies and at the same time popularize his/her subject and bring school values outside its walls.”

The second important factor, which promotes the success of this initiative, is moral and material support of school management. Laura Miķelsone admits that the management of school appreciates the significance of this initiative and always has provided the necessary support: “If there are reasonable demands, then they also help financially, find money both for the lecturer and transportation.”

## **BARRIERS**

Broceni Secondary Schoolteachers are optimistic and do not see significant barriers for successful work of global education team and activities organized in the framework of this initiative. Also such factors as limited financial and time resources, in their opinion are only excuses for inactivity.

The only real barrier they mention is “outdated thinking” of teachers which leads to orientation only to their subject, which was a common approach in the education system many years ago: “A barrier probably is that there are still problems to convince colleagues that we don’t teach student only our subject, but something more. (..) Yes, concentration only to their subject. I don’t think that nowadays financial resources could be a barrier, because, for example, it is possible to get materials, internet is endless and it is only your wish to do it.”

### **The Second case: Collaboration Workshops initiated by the Broceni Secondary School**

In the study year 204/2015 teachers of Broceni Secondary School started unprecedented form of cooperation and collaborative learning which was called collaboration workshops. Teachers of one subject from all age groups - pre-school, primary school, elementary school and secondary school – met there to discuss challenges related to the particular subject. Teachers from all schools of Broceni Municipality participated in these workshops.

In terms of organization issues these workshops were linked with methodological associations of the municipality, each of them organized its workshop. In total there were six workshops, which represented Latvian language, foreign languages, history and social sciences, mathematics, natural sciences and domestic crafts. In each workshop there were 18 – 20 teachers. Since teachers from Broceni Secondary School were initiators of these workshops meetings took place in Broceni Secondary School and Municipality Council provided financing for coffee breaks.

The aim of these workshops was to provide environment and promote discussions of teachers teaching same subject about content of education programs, sequence of implementation and teaching methods. Teachers in joint efforts evaluated teaching standards and programs in order to understand which topics in different class groups overlap and are there holes or gaps in knowledge of students, which mean that topics are not covered good enough and students lack necessary information, for example, what are the fields where primary teachers can blame pre-school teachers that students do not have the necessary knowledge and skills. Teachers not only identified problems but all together looked for solutions how to prevent them and shared with their experience. During this school year teachers purposefully work to ensure that the identified problems do not repeat.

When describing the collaborative learning which was a part of teacher activities in collaborative workshops, teachers admit that it mainly happened when teachers from different schools and class age groups shared their experience both about teaching content and teaching methods they use in their lessons and also about possible changes

that should be made: “On the one hand it is this sharing with experience, on the other hand it is this learning. For example, I as a teacher of secondary school say that I would like that a student, when he comes to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade knows state holidays. Then we think how we all together could achieve that he knowsthem by the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Then each teacher tells about their experience how they do it and then we jointly learn from that person.”

Laura Mikelsone who is among organizers of the collaborative workshops tells that she got good reviews from teachers involved in these workshops and most of them admitted that it was a very good learning and cooperation form. For example, primary school teacher of Broceni Secondary School admits that, “it is important for teachers of different class age groups and different schools to involve in joint discussions, to listen to each other, to understand that teacher is not alone with his problems and accept that it is possible to teach differently. If a teacher leaves the workshop with a smile on his face, then the ideas he got will make students smile and involve in activities.”<sup>18</sup>

## **PARTICIPATION**

As already mentioned before all interested teachers of one subject from different schools of Broceni Municipality and from different class age groups participated in the collaborative workshops. The main criteria for involvement were the teaching subject and teacher desire to participate and involve in joint activities. The workshop leader was the leader of methodological association of municipality, who accordingly organized the work of workshop. When describing the participation of involved teachers in the workshops, L. Miķelsone admits that it depends from teachers and their desire to involve: “As always, there will be some, who are silent, and some, who involve more.”

## **EQUITY**

It is clearly stated and communicated that any teacher could participate in the workshops. To ensure that meetings of workshops were more accessible, they were organized during school holidays providing information about time and place of the meeting in advance.

## **FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS**

When describing facilitating and hindering factors, a teacher of Broceni Secondary School speaks only about one important aspect: “Facilitating factor and at the same time hindering factor is the level to what extent a teacher is interested in solving the problem that is identified in his/her subject and teaching in general. If he is greatly interested, then his contribution to the group is big and significant, if he has come to the workshop to sit and listen then it holds back the practice.”

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<sup>18</sup>Website of SFL initiative “Change Opportunities for Schools”. Brocēnos notikusi pedagogu “Sadarbības darbnīca” sociālajās zinībās. Available: <http://parmainuskolas.lv/2014/11/brocenos-notikusi-sadarbibas-darbnica-socialajas-zinibas/> (accessed 24.04.2016.)