

Project: NELCA 2023-2026

Project number: 2023-1-SK01-KA220-HED-000158697

Evaluation Report

The NELCA project (2023-2026, project number: 2023-1-SK01-KA220-HED-000158697) is a natural sequence of the successful ULCA project (2020-2022, project number: 2020-1-SK01-KA203-078306), the main idea of which was to implement a student-centred approach in schools. Harmony Academy linked this approach with its own philosophy of Learn & Lead, which emphasizes the self-development of the teacher, his or her ability to lead and manage themselves and at the same time positively influence the school environment. This connection has become one of the characteristic features of the ULCA project. The NELCA project builds on this experience and takes it even further: from the individual teacher to the entire school community. The aim of the project is not only to introduce new teaching methods and strategies but especially to create an environment in which every student will be able to develop his or her potential.

Due to its comprehensive focus on linking the student-centred approach with the Learn & Lead concept, systematic teacher self-development, mentoring and the transformation of the school into a learning organization, this is a relatively unique project in the Slovak educational environment. The project connects schools, universities and educational organizations in the international Erasmus+ environment with the aim of transforming school culture, not only developing individual pedagogical skills. It initiates the creation of a network of schools that can implement this philosophy at the level of the entire organization and in which education is a natural process for students but also for adults, in accordance with the idea of lifelong learning. It is the strong support for cooperation between schools, teachers and school leaders that gives the project its uniqueness.

The project's output document is the methodological framework "ULCA Mentoring Support with Learn & Lead Innovation", which transforms the traditional model of monitoring and assessing the work of teachers into a model of supporting their professional development, primarily through mentoring, reflection and experiential learning. Here, the teacher is not understood as the subject of level evaluation of his or her performance, meeting set standards or identifying shortcomings. The new model shifts the teacher's control to his or her development and the mentor is not an evaluator but a partner in professional growth. The model highlights the importance of cooperation and joint reflection between the teacher and the mentor. It emphasizes ongoing feedback, the aim of which is to support teacher development. While traditional approaches are oriented towards meeting external standards and passing on professional recommendations, Learn & Lead Innovation (LLI) perceives mentoring as a process of continuous professional growth. The model uses Kolb's cycle, which means connecting direct teaching experience with phases of reflection, understanding and subsequent application of new knowledge in practice. The key element here is the Learn & Lead approach. This approach is based on the intrinsic motivation of the teacher, his or her personal responsibility and the development of his or her pedagogical identity. It includes specific principles of 9 + 0-0, which expand the professional growth of the teacher by the dimension of self-reflection, intuition and emotional resilience. Through structured dialogue and practical tools such as portfolios or diaries, the teacher becomes an autonomous guide of his or her own development. The whole system aims to create a sustainable learning culture,

where professional growth does not arise from external control but comes from a deep inner understanding.

The aforementioned principles of 9 + 0–0 represent a holistic framework that connects the professional development of the teacher with his personal awareness, values and inner setting. The model provides a structured process of self-development, from identifying a challenge, through formulating a vision to reflecting and integrating the acquired experiences. At the same time, it connects the teacher's inner experience with their pedagogical practice and supports the harmony between their actions, values and personal understanding. The emphasis on the meaning of the activity performed, supportive relationships and the 0–0 principle, based on gratitude and healthy self-compassion, contributes to internal motivation, resilience and long-term sustainable professional growth. While traditional mentoring focuses primarily on the development of pedagogical skills, Learn & Lead also supports the development of professional identity, values and self-awareness through the 9 + 0–0 principles. Mentoring thus becomes a process of "living the learning" in which the teacher goes through a similar learning experience that he or she subsequently creates for his students.

Mentoring in the Learn & Lead approach uses a set of interconnected methodological tools that support reflection, self-awareness and professional growth of the teacher. The tools are designed to accompany the individual phases of the experiential learning cycle: from gaining experience through reflection and understanding to applying new knowledge in practice. An important part of the process is the ULCA teacher observation sheet, which focuses on the qualitative aspects of the learner-centred approach and provides evidence-based reflection.

A deeper analysis of teaching practice is followed by the Learn & Lead lesson analysis template, which uses questions based on the LLI values to support understanding of the course and outcomes of teaching. Ongoing reflection on development is supported by a teacher learning diary, in which the teacher records observations and experience from teaching and mentoring sessions. The ULCA action plan template, based on a cycle of experimentation, reflection, adjustment and subsequent application of acquired knowledge, is used to plan and implement changes in teaching practice. A professional portfolio also plays an important role, systematically documenting the teacher's growth, acquired knowledge and evidence of professional development. Continuity of learning is supported by mentor-teacher dialogue forms, which help structure conversations in accordance with individual phases of learning. The whole process is complemented by reflective questions based on the 9 + 0–0 principles. These questions guide a deeper dialogue about professional challenges, vision, obstacles, personal meaning or gratitude and create space for the development of professional identity and personal awareness. Together, all the tools create a comprehensive support system that helps the teacher develop his or her practice consciously, systematically and in accordance with the principles of lifelong learning. They lead the teacher to a deeper understanding of his or her own practice, beliefs and emotions. Thanks to this, mentoring focuses on the development of the teacher's entire personality and supports meaningful and, in particular, internally motivated changes.

The benefit of the project thus goes beyond the level of the individual and the school and has a much broader impact on the education system and other areas of social practice. Teachers gain tools for systematic reflection on their work, which can lead to higher

professional satisfaction, resilience and quality of teaching. Creating an environment in which they are active participants in learning is particularly beneficial for students. Student-centred teaching supports critical thinking, collaboration, independence, responsibility for one's own learning and other competencies necessary for life in contemporary society. At the school level, the project can contribute to building a culture of cooperation, trust and shared learning. Mentoring becomes a tool for professional development, not control, which supports open communication, sharing of experiences and the introduction of pedagogical innovations. Schools are gradually turning into learning organizations capable of responding to the changing needs of students and society. In the Slovak educational environment, the development of competencies that are in line with current trends in educational policy at both the national and European levels is coming to the fore. Through international cooperation and exchange of experience, they can contribute to the dissemination of innovative approaches in education and the creation of professional communities across countries.

The project confirms that systematic mentoring and reflective pedagogical practice can significantly contribute to teacher development, the quality of education and the transformation of schools into learning organizations. However, the principles on which the project is based have the potential to go beyond the field of education itself. The emphasis on reflection, mentoring, learning from experience, collaboration and personal development can also be used in the fields of management, social services, healthcare and the non-profit sector. The Learn & Lead model can serve as a framework for the development of individuals and teams wherever it is important to connect professional competencies with personal growth, values and the ability to learn from one's own practice. From this perspective, the NELCA project can be seen not only as an educational project but also as a model supporting the development of learning communities and organizations that are able to reflect on their activities, adapt to changes and create an environment that supports the growth of individuals and entire teams.

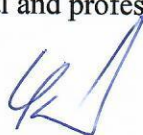
The credibility and quality of the Learn & Lead approach is also confirmed by its acceptance by an international consortium of partner organizations. They participated in its co-creation, verified its functionality in practice and subsequently began to implement it in their own schools. This experience not only points to its practical usability, however, it also strengthens the professional credibility of Harmony Academy as a creator and carrier of innovative solutions in education.

Given the proven benefits of the project in the area of teacher, school and educational community development, it can be positively assessed that the project represents a well-designed and sustainable model of lifelong development with the potential for its further expansion and adaptation in various educational and professional environments.

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