International Teacher Leadership

The 3rd meeting of the ITL Project Team



Belgrade

27-28 November 2009

Preface

This document is not a research report; it is a record which helps those who participated in the 3rd ITL Project Team meeting to recall the event and what was discussed. It helps to include those team members who were not there and to ensure a minimum of shared information within the team. It also serves the purpose of helping to develop a sense of ourselves as a team – to get to know each other and to develop a shared understanding.

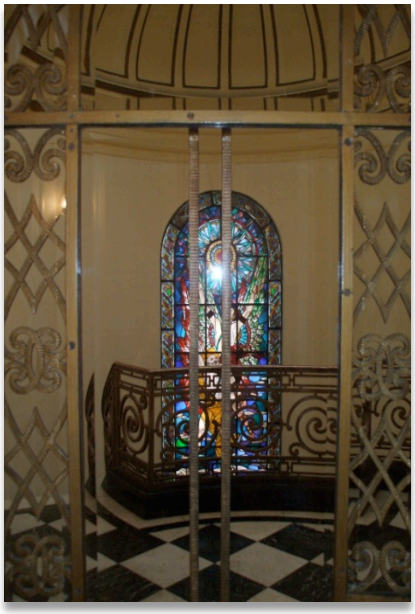
Acknowledgements

We would like to express our thanks and gratitude to Gordana Miljevic for arranging and hosting this conference and to the Open Society Institute for funding it.

Day 1: Friday 27th November

The venue for the project team meeting

We used a beautiful building, The Aeroklub building, in the centre of Old Belgrade for our meeting. We had the use of an amazing conference room which was part of a restaurant so were also kept well-nourished.









Who was there?

- Petia Kabakchieva and Boyan Zahariev from Bulgaria
- David Frost, Amanda Roberts, Sheila Ball and Vivien Wearing from Cambridge
- Ljubica Petrovic from Croatia
- Suzana Kirandziska and Ljilana Sahardtska-Panova from Macedonia (FYR)
- Viorica Postica and Rima Bezede from Moldova
- Milica Vukcevic and Milica Krulanovic from Montenegro
- Eugen Palade and Lidja ?? from Romania
- Ljiljana Levkov, Jelena Vranjesevic, Gordana Miljevic and Tinde Kovacs-Cerovic from Serbia
- Igor Repac from Slovenia
- Andrea Soldo from Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Bela Zsolt Gergely from Hungary



I am Milica Vukcevic and I work as a pedagogue in a primary school and as an assistant at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niksic in Montenegro.

I am Milica Krulanovic from Montenegro and I also work as a pedagogue in a primary school and as an assistant at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niksic in Montenegro.



I am Ljiljana Sahardtska-Panova and I also work in Skopje

I am Suzana Kirandziska and I am Executive Director of Foundation for Educational and Cultural Initiatives “Step by Step” in Skopje



I am Jelena Vranjesevic and I teach in the department of education at the University of Belgrade

I am Eugen Palade and I work for Centre Education 2000+ in Bucharest

I am Boyan Zahariev and I am programme director of the Governance and Public Policies Programme of the Open Society Institute in Sofia



I am Ljiljana Levkov and I teach at the department of education at the University of Belgrade and for the Ministry of Education



I am Ljubica Petrovic and I work for the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes which is part of the Ministry of Education in Zagreb

I am Gordana Miljevic and I am a programme director with the Open Society Institute (OSI)

I am Bela Zsolt Gergely and I work for the OSI in Budapest



I am Igor Repac and I work for OSI in Slovenia

I am Andrea Soldo and I work for a social research NGO called proMente based in Sarajevo



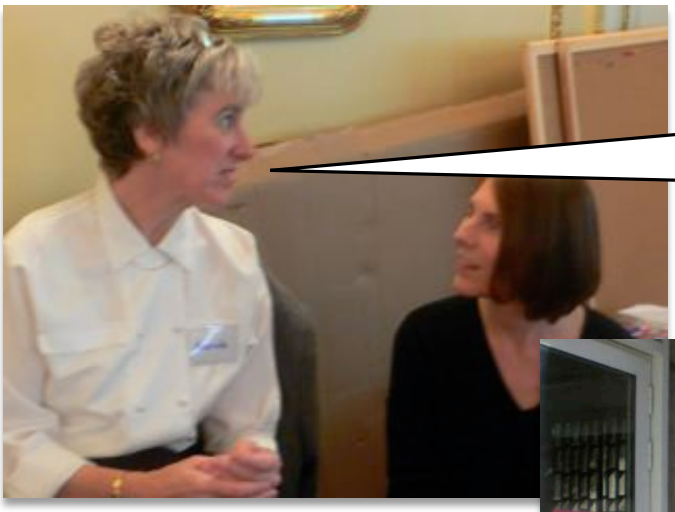
I am Tinde Kovacs-Cerovic and I am Secretary of State for Education in Serbia

I am Lidja and I am a school principal in Bucharest



I am Petia Kabakchieva. I am a sociologist at the University of Sofia and I have been involved with OSI before



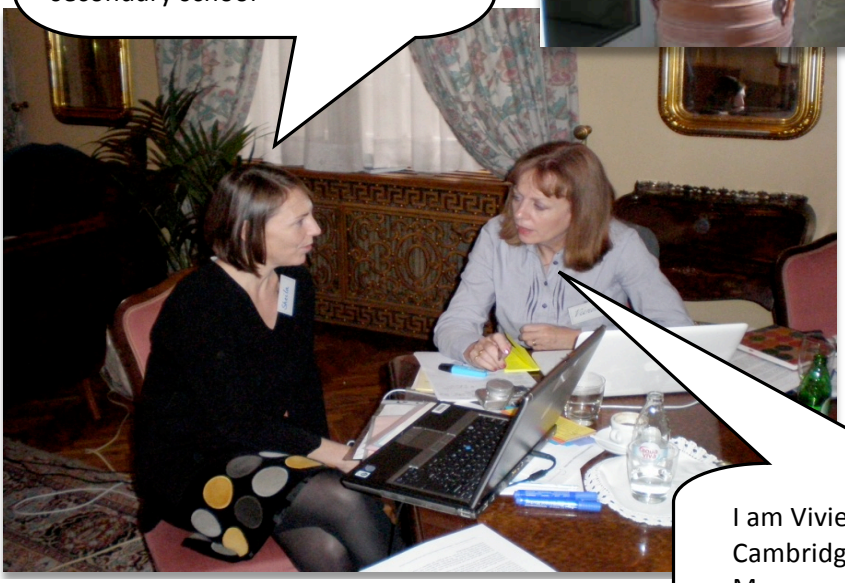


I am Amanda Roberts from the University of Hertfordshire in the UK and I am part of the ITL project coordination team



I am Sheila Ball and I am one of the HertsCam Network tutors. I work for the local education authority and I also work as an assistant headteacher in a secondary school

I am David Frost from the University of Cambridge and I direct the ITL project.



I am Vivien Wearing and I work for Cambridge as the HertsCam Network Manager. I recently retired as an assistant headteacher of a secondary school in Hertfordshire, UK

Welcome and introduction

Gordana Miljevic welcomed us to Belgrade and reminded us of our purpose which was to learn more about the ITL project.

Amanda Roberts led us in an activity to help us to introduce ourselves to one another and to learn something about our hopes for the meeting. David thanked everyone for coming, shared with us the aims of the meeting and made a few comments about the task ahead of us.

The aims of the project team meeting

The meeting was arranged in order to provide new partners with an induction into the project. Specifically it was designed to:

- enable new partners to understand the ITL project as it has developed so far
- provide a forum to raise and discuss questions, issues and concerns
- clarify the nature and location of materials / resources
- support new partners in planning their intervention and research programmes
- enable us to get to know each other as colleagues

Activity 1: Rationale for the project

David provided an overview of the project. He gave a brief presentation to focus our minds on the main purpose of the project and why teacher leadership is important for educational reform.

He began by showing us photographs of the other team members from Greece, Croatia, Portugal, UK, Spain and Turkey who were already part of the project. He then moved on to talk about his vision for awakening the giant of teacher leadership, making reference to papers which had been circulated prior to the meeting. This presentation asked us to think about extended professionality and how teacher leadership could help us to achieve this. It focused our minds on the main purpose of the project and why teacher leadership is important for educational reform.

Activity 2: Developing an understanding of teacher leadership

Ljubica Petrovic led us in a structured workshop which was informed by papers circulated in advance. The purpose of this activity was to try to establish a shared understanding of the concept of teacher leadership and to develop our understanding of how it relates to school improvement and educational reform. We worked in groups and noted our thoughts on flip charts under four headings: What is teacher leadership? How does teacher leadership relate to school improvement? What are the barriers to teacher leadership in your country? What are the supports for teacher leadership in your country. The points raised are shown below.



What is teacher leadership?

- A way to empower teachers to be more creative
- Directed to students' needs and understanding
- Professionalism and support
- A new approach in education – not just learning but also solving problems collectively
- A way of raising self-esteem and self-confidence
- An opportunity for teachers to become independent and to make decisions
- Students learn to work in groups
- A friendly school, flexible
- Directed to community needs
- Curiosity and creativity
- Open to invitation
- Interactive learning
- Teaching is a calling not just a job
- Be both: an agent of change at all levels
- Initiate and implement the action and the change
- Being the ally to students and parents (family)
- Bringing dignity and pride in teachers' profession
- 'Life-long challenge'
- The process of improving professional practice
- Diversification of education offers
- Being reflective, exploring, innovative
- Not being afraid of making mistakes
- Being ready to change

How does teacher leadership relate to school improvement?

- It sits at the very core of school improvement
- Responsive school, flexible curriculum
- Addresses the needs of children
- Directly it means a new approach in learning or teaching or common work leading to student learning/system learning, school learning
- It is good for teacher's development and diversity
- It can improve the accountability
- It generates positive friendly atmosphere and critical thinking
- It challenges the role of principals and improves the participative management.
- Cooperative model of power versus hierarchical
- The teaching process becomes more interesting.
- It contributes to team building /better teacher community at school level
- Strengthens local community – school relationships

What are the barriers to teacher leadership in your country?

- Low social and economic status of teachers' profession
- In-service teacher training doesn't empower them to be 'leaders'
- Strong centralized system of education
- Lack of motivation and self-trust that they can be the agents of change

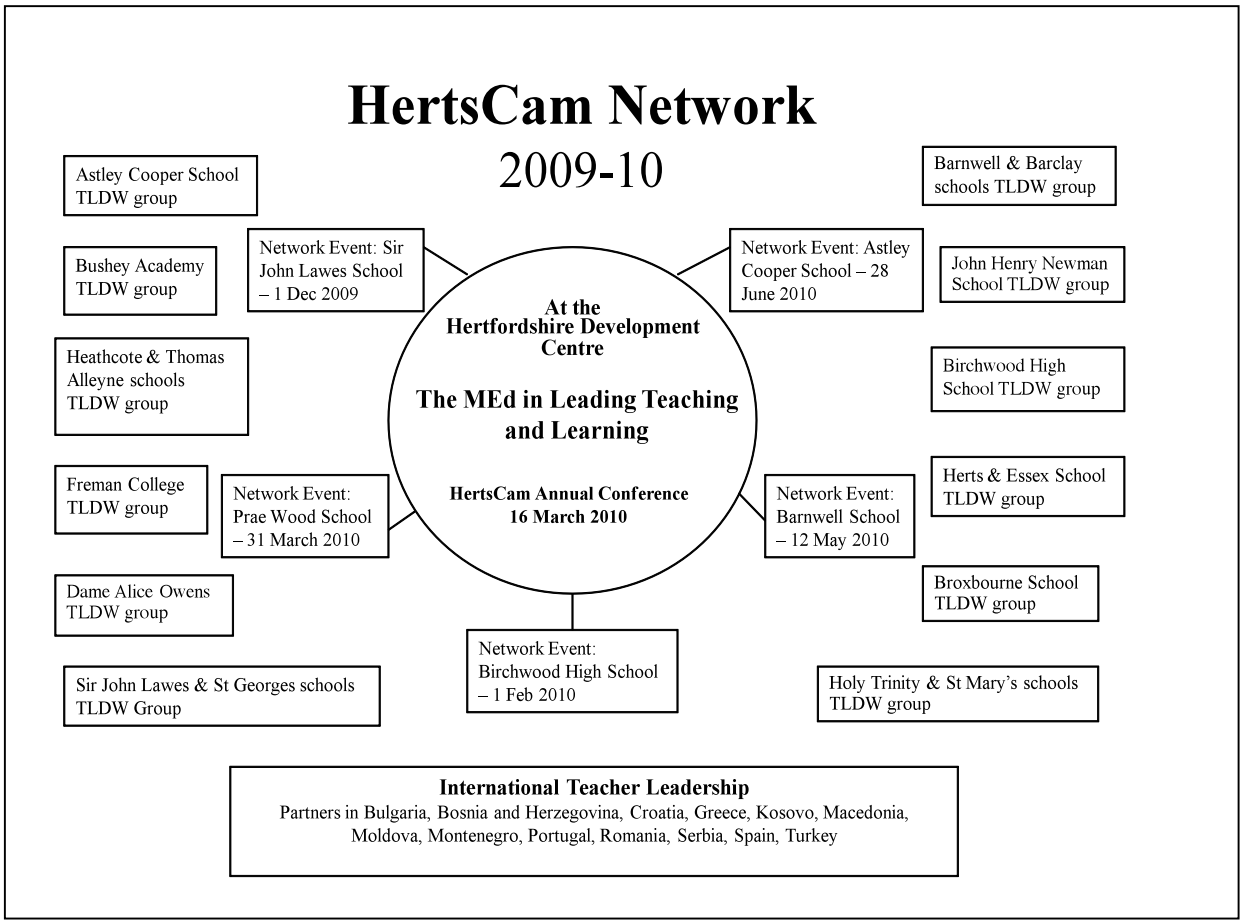
- Too many reforms in the past, so teachers are disorientated
- Centralisation – Bulgaria
- Assessment focusing on reproduction
- Lack of professional support system
- School management does not encourage teachers as leaders
- Lack of reliable feedback information on the quality of teaching/learning process (external and self evaluation)
- Orientation towards learning, not towards skills.
- The principal feels threatened so s/he will be opposed to teacher leadership
- Very centralised system – Moldova
- Assessment system and school inspectorate impose limitations, the teachers could not be innovative
- The teachers in Bulgaria and Romania have low status and self-confidence
- Very strict regulation of the teaching process
- Compliance with rigid regulation
- Lack of support in the working environment.

What are the supports for teacher leadership in your country?

- In service training
- Legislation
- School-based curriculum (30%)
- Teachers' professional associations
- Teachers' unions (Slovenia)
- NGO's (education)
- Mentorship
- Social-economic changes in the country (Moldova)
- International educational projects
- Next to none in Serbia, very low in terms of educational system and handed over to individual schools and principals
- Some provisions come from international projects
- A lot of projects at national and local level that involve school/teachers/schools
- NGO's support teacher leaderships
- The EU funds for development - Bulgaria
- Students' interest for another type of teaching instead of traditional one
- Support of mentor teachers, collaborative methods in school
- The new reforms in primary and pre-school education R of M
- Long life learning system
- The teachers understand that they should do something for themselves, to "save" themselves

Activity 3: Supporting teacher leadership in the UK

David led us through a brief presentation about how teacher leadership is supported through the HertsCam Network in England.

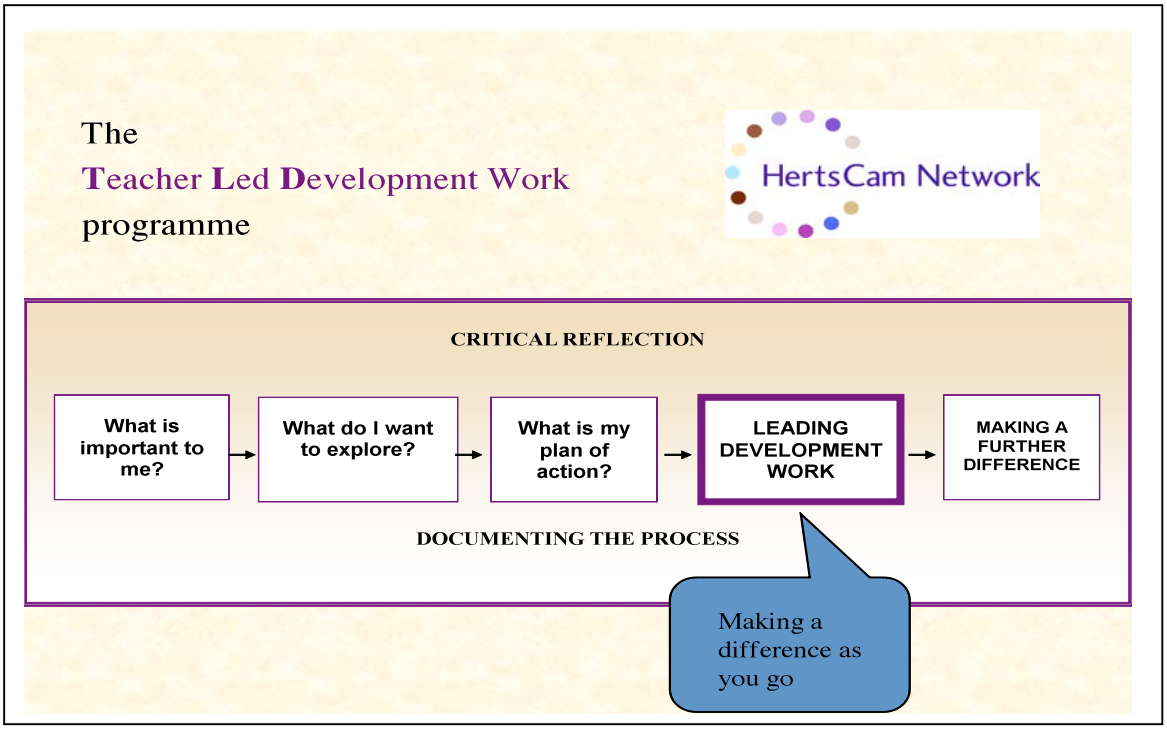


He described the partnership between the university, the local authority and the schools and how this had led to the formation of the Teacher Led Development Work programme and a masters course for teachers. He described the way the network had developed as a means to build a body of teacher generated knowledge together.

This presentation helped us to consider how teacher leadership could best be supported in the different contexts of the countries now joining the project.

Activity 4: The HertsCam TLDW programme

As an experienced leader of Teacher Led Development Work groups, Sheila Ball shared with us how the TLDW programme works in action and how it fits into the life of the school.



This slide was used to explain the step-by-step approach to the Teacher Led Development Work model.

Activity 5: The cultural context

Amanda led this activity which focused on a discussion of the cultural contexts of the teacher leadership initiative and to share this perspective within the research team. This is in part about the wider cultural / socio-political setting and the policy environment within which schools and teachers operate and in part about the way schools are organised and led.

In developing the international teacher leadership project we need also to consider the way in which professional cultures within schools are shaped by these factors and in turn they shape the way teachers' identities are constructed.

We discussed the analysis of the papers that team members had produced in advance of the Corinth meeting last May. Team members present in the Belgrade meeting agreed to produce similar papers so that we would have a full picture of the challenge that the cultural contexts present to the cultivation of teacher leadership.

Activity 6: The structure and goals of the ITL project

David led a short presentation in which he clarified the methodology of the International Teacher Leadership project and introduced some of the materials and tools which have been designed for use in evaluating and developing programmes.

This slide presented the research aims.

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

International Teacher Leadership

International Teacher Leadership project

Research questions

How can we help teachers to exercise leadership?

How can teacher leadership support school improvement?

How can teacher leadership transform the education system?

Research partners:

Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Kosova, Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Turkey & UK

This slide portrayed the methodology of the ITL project – an action research approach that is designed to have immediate impact and build capacity for future work.



The outcomes of the project would not conform to the stereotype of 'research findings' but would have more concrete benefit such as:

- actual development of teachers' capacity
- development of the capacity to provide support
- production of a collection of tools and guidelines that could be applied in many countries
- a sustainable network of academics and other activists who can provide support for teacher and school development
- a sustainable network of teachers who can exchange ideas and build professional knowledge together across national boundaries

We ended this first day of our team meeting with a dinner in our hotel which provided us with an opportunity for a well-earned rest and a chance to get to know one another better.

Day 2: Saturday 28th November

Activity 7: Where are we now?

We began the second day of our meeting by giving colleagues the opportunity to raise any questions which they had in relation to what we were learning together the previous day. After sharing some thoughts we moved on to continue our exploration of teacher leadership.

Activity 8: Tools and materials

Sheila Ball led us in this workshop which was designed to enable us to explore some examples of the tools we use to support teacher leadership in HertsCam. We discussed tools such as vignettes. This one was used as a vehicle to explain the Teacher Led Development Work approach.

A vignette

John taught Maths and had only been teaching for 2 years. He was concerned that some students were obviously not engaged in Maths lessons. He wanted to find ways to liven up his teaching approach in the hope of capturing the attention of these students.

He had considered using a survey sheet to ask the students for their views about the activities they enjoyed best, but then decided against this on the grounds that, if the students had a negative attitude to Maths, their views would be limited to what they had experienced so far.

At a department meeting he explained his problem to his colleagues and gave them a proforma which asked them to list the 3 most effective teaching techniques or activities they had used. John collated these into a list and then went to see individual colleagues to get more detailed guidance where it was needed.

John then systematically tried out each of the strategies on the list. He used them in his teaching and evaluated each one by keeping notes of his own observations, asking students to fill in an end of lesson feedback sheet and occasionally asking colleagues to observe when they had a few spare moments.

A few months later, John was able to give his department feedback on the strategies he had evaluated in action. This was very informative for colleagues who had never tried some of the things on his list. The discussion about teaching repertoires in the department was very rich and enthusiastic, thus contributing to building capacity in the team and developing everybody's teaching repertoires.

Following this, John started to approach colleagues in other subject departments asking for their three best teaching techniques. He found that many of these ideas could be adapted for Maths lessons and it also stimulated discussion about teaching repertoires in a number of departments.

We also explored how to use them and how we might adapt and translate such tools.

Activity 9: Using the research tools

This session focused on the research activities that go with an action research design and referred to the package of tools which has been posted on the CamTools site – "Research tools and techniques".

There are 2 parts to the research dimension: one is the auditing of the school conditions and the other is the data gathering for monitoring and review and evaluation of the programmes of support while they are going on.

We looked at the brief account that Jo Mylles, another member of our team, had produced:

Vignette: auditing school conditions at Sir John Lawes School

The leadership team filled in the audit instrument. They did this in pairs at our recent leadership team conference. We spent an hour and a half on this in total. In pairs, members of the team filled in the instrument, giving examples in the boxes.

Jo Mylles then asked them to think of an incident, an activity, a place somewhere in the school or an image which they could use to describe to someone else not connected with the school what the learning community is like at our school. She gave them an example centred around the '8 am coffee club' in the staff room which happens every day.
The Art Faculty arrive at 8am and put on their freshly brewed coffee, they sit and talk together about teaching and learning and students. Gradually between 8am and 8.30pm other staff join in; they sit on the chairs of the settees, stand behind and chip into the discussions. This is not organised, it just happens and encompasses staff from all areas of the school. The staff share resources and ideas.

Another member of the team used the image of a bee hive where everyone is industrious and all sharing the same vision and working collaboratively towards it. Another new member of the team cited a staff conference shortly after he had begun working at the school. There had been a whole staff activity focusing on the Every Child Matters agenda. One of the music teachers sang a song and then colleagues were asked to work in groups to make up a rap around one of the outcomes of Every Child Matters. They all had to use a line in their rap which had been said by a pupil - 'If every child matters then show it to me'. The rap was then performed together one verse after another. The Deputy said that it gave a great sense of community and trust and that learning at the school involved everyone.

We talked about how we can download and adapt the research tools on the CamTools site. For example Judy Durrant in the South East of England had used the Audit Instrument but had also used Hofstede's Onion model to reveal the layers of meaning and behaviour within the school as an organisation.

Activity 10: Action planning – a workshop in national teams



Amanda led us in this activity which was designed to support teams in developing their own plans for intervention. We worked in national groups with members of the HertsCam team circulating to act as critical friends where needed. The results of national planning are shown below.

Moldova

- Already have a viable partnership to draw on
- Volunteer teachers - inner motivation
- Select 2 or 3 schools from different zones and different types and experience where teachers will be brought together for some activities and also each school will have an individual agenda
- Name: "Teacher Leadership: a new challenge for professional and personal development"
- Sign an agreement with each school
- Will offer accreditation
- Organise monthly activities
- Important for teachers to see and have professional exchange between the schools
- Organise a network
- Develop an action plan to create a clear picture of the project
- Will need some methodological support, material and financial support

Montenegro

- Pilot project with no accreditation
- Find volunteers from a few local schools
- 1 group of 10-15 people
- Find a pedagogue in the school who will work with the teachers once a month
- Introduce some materials and tools
- Find motivated teachers
- Cooperate with Cambridge
- Later find support from Bureau of Education
- Financial issues are a big problem

Macedonia

- Use current regional projects
- ITL can be used to build on what we already have
- Some selected volunteer teachers
- Work with the school support teams who work in schools
- Provide tools for these teams and teachers
- Good timing as ministry is developing their structures for supporting teacher development eg advisers, consultants
- Introductory session with mentors, advisers

Serbia

- Want to build a more sustainable project which will be an integral part of system
- Stakeholders: Department of Education, Psychology, Faculty teachers, Centre for Teachers' Professional Development, Belgrade Municipality
- Creating sustainable change – include teachers who will be mentors to be core group
- Offering programme to different schools and ask them to be volunteers
- Work as one group and work in own schools individually
- 2 or 3 persons per school to support each other
- 1st stage: up to 10 schools in Belgrade
- Criteria for involvement: small scale or integral to another project?

Bulgaria

- Start small with 2 schools in Sofia, and Hulo (?) region
- Partnership with University in Sofia and OSI
- Can rely on academic expertise from University, experience with training teachers and OSI connections
- Already consulting in schools with minority students and so supporting schools who are already want help so we can use this as a warm up to support other projects
- Need to think about what to call it
- How to advertise it eg on websites, translating good academic papers, articles for newspaper – talk to our boss - a media guy
- Cambridge is something that will attract teachers
- Volunteers from 2 schools with different profiles
- Address the headteacher and municipality as we need their support
- Issue invitation and think about criteria
- Need a certificate for motivation – from University of Sofia
- How will teachers make evidence and self-reflection?
- Discuss how to make portfolio of students - a good way in
- We believe there will be more involvement of students and teachers as a partnership to engage in discussion about their practice to support each other's learning
- Provoke debate between student teachers, teachers and students
- Certificate to show that they have gone through a specific programme of work that gives them skills to be leaders in this process

Croatia

A comment from Ljubica: she had approached the Ministry about the possibility of accreditation. This is making slow progress. However, when she approached the schools they were motivated by the concept and were not worried about accreditation

Bosnia

- Our role can be in coordinating the key partners
- We can offer assistance, advice, help
- Need to assess what can be done for this to work e.g. Teachers Associations – but how to organise
- 1 or 2 schools in country?
- Contact with some Ministries of Education of selected schools and pedagogical institutes
- Partnership with pedagogical universities currently a weak link
- It is doable but I cannot go forward before assessing these issues

Romania

- Centre Education 2000+ will lead the project in cooperation with Faculty of Education and Science, Bucharest
- Best to start with schools already known: a Primary and High school in Bucharest
- 2nd stage might extend involving LAs and School Inspectorate
- Approach other stakeholders with results to show impact of success
- Extend mentoring system - only in rural areas at the moment use ITL methods in mentoring programme.
- Accreditation important aspect of our activity - teachers will be motivated
- Cambridge accreditation would be very useful but need local accreditation

Activity 11: The ITL team modus operandi

David led us in thinking through how we can work together as a team. The discussion included aspects such as Team Bulletins, the CamTools site, the management of the project, online meetings, team meetings next year, critical friendship and support, data collection and collaborative analysis and publications.

We discussed whether there is evidence of impact of teacher leadership and what is the nature of the evidence. Evidence has been collected for quality assurance processes but we now have more sophisticated research tools (as mentioned earlier) and these will be used to generate a good picture of impact in the ITL project. By January 2011 we need to report beginnings of impact using tools that have been developed.

The issues of metrics to judge impact was raised. David argued that the assessment of impact is complex. It is also a matter of helping teachers to recognise how their development activity can lead to impact in different ways e.g. pupils' capacity of how to learn, pupils' disposition to learning, and contributions to development of professional culture in school.

Case studies of schools in HertsCam show that over a five year period, they have become more sophisticated in developing strategies for improvement and of course, academic results have gone up and up. The programme is part of the process of change.

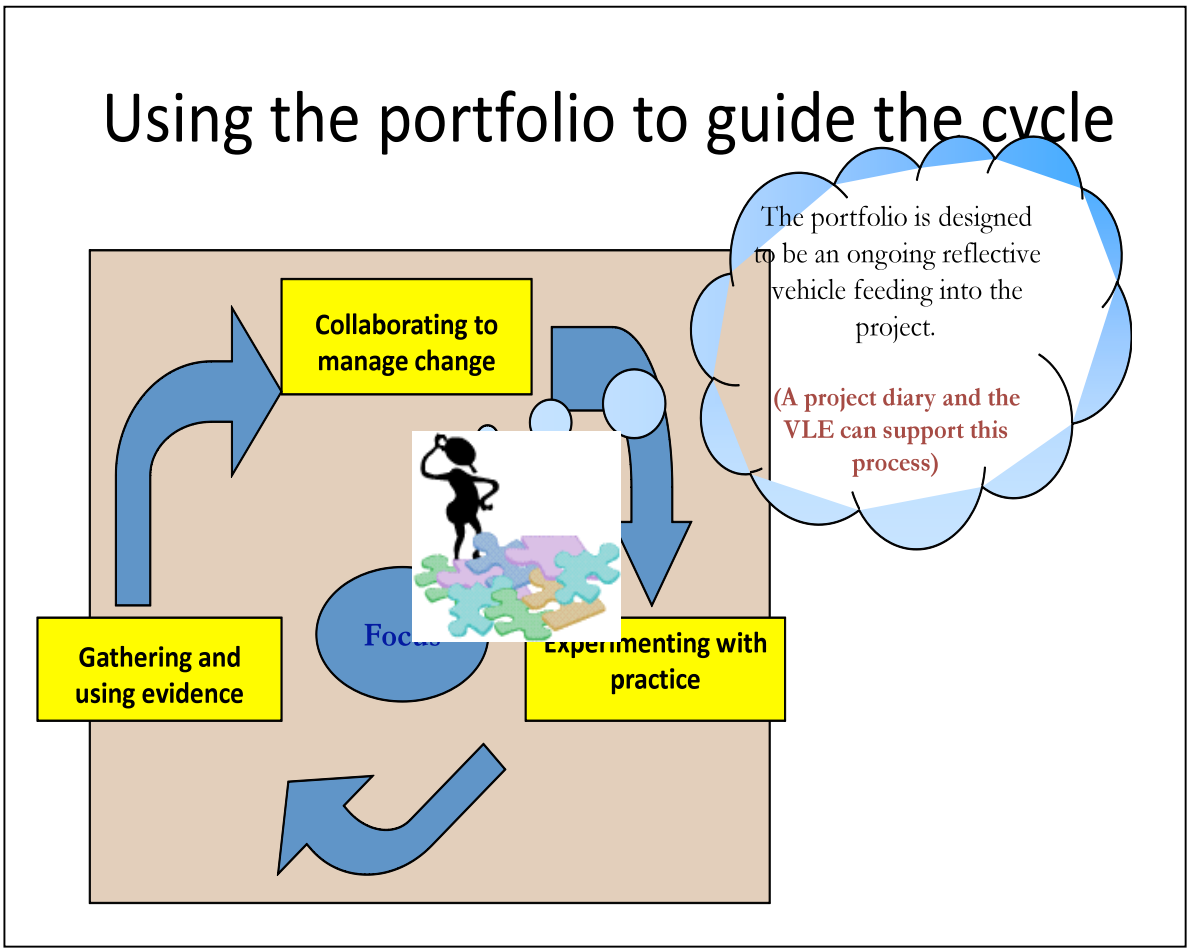
We discussed the important link between teacher leadership and school self evaluation. Teachers are asked to evaluate impact and keep evidence in their portfolios. It is something which runs from the beginning - planning for the impact that they want to achieve and evaluating impact on a regular basis. In the UK inspection has changed so that schools are judged on the effectiveness and validity of their self-evaluation.

Many teachers work with students to give them a voice e.g. How can I make my Maths lessons more interesting? Student voice is a strong part of self-evaluation.

Activity 12: Portfolios and certification

Sheila showed us materials to reveal how we can use portfolios as a strategy to support teachers' reflection and planning and how we can offer encouragement through certification.

We also explored possibilities for the development of accreditation locally. David mentioned the idea of an ITL project certificate – a draft of which he had posted on the CamTools site last August. We discussed this and agreed that it would be helpful to have such a certificate and that it could name all of the universities and other organisations that are represented within the ITL project team.



Activity 13: Funding: a presentation and questions and answers

David led us in thinking through how funding from EU / OSI can be used to support the local activity and the international work. We hope to fund such things as:

- Data gathering and supporting teacher leadership programmes locally
- International conferences
- Critical friendship visits
- Coordination of the research
- Networking

Possibilities for finding and financial support locally were also explored. We await the outcome of the EU grant application.

Activity 14: The next team meeting

Vivien (Wearing) helped us to clarify arrangements for the full Team Meeting to be held in Cambridge (28th-30th January 2010).

Activity 15: A review of this meeting

Amanda facilitated an activity in which we considered what we had achieved and posed final questions. The discussion was brief and we agreed that the meeting had been a great success and that we all now felt committed to the idea of teacher leadership and to our participation in the ITL project. We look forward to meeting again in Cambridge in the near future.

Informal activity: a traditional Balkan dinner

At the end of the conference, Gordana took us for a traditional Balkan dinner in a restaurant on one of the old cobbled streets of the Bohemian quarter of the old part of the city. The 'Three Hats' is named after an old folk song and we were delighted to learn more about this aspect of Balkan culture when a group of musicians arrived to serenade us. The meal began with plum brandy (Slivovitz) which is typical of the region and apparently originated in Croatia. The meal was a terrific success and helped us to get to know each other and develop a sense of friendship that is so important to the success of a project such as ITL.





And finally ...

After the close of the conference David, Amanda, Sheila and Vivien went on a conducted tour of some of the ancient sites in Belgrade. We really enjoyed learning more about this fascinating city.







At the airport David bought a bottle of Slivovitz to take home.