

AMERICA FOR BULGARIA

**ASSESSMENT OF THE SHORT-TERM RESULTS OF THE
EDUCATION LEADERS' TRAINING PROGRAM AND THE
PRINCIPALS' TRAINING PROGRAM**

**FINAL REPORT
VOLUME #1 - REPORT**

Submitted by:

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The current evaluation report focuses on the short-term results of the Education Leaders' Training Program (ELTP) and the Principals' Training Program (PTP). The key objective is to provide an unbiased look at the outcomes of these two programs and assess what changes they have resulted in.

Supporting good teaching and efficient school leadership are among the priorities of the America for Bulgaria Foundation (ABF) in the Bulgarian education sector. Through these two programs, ABF is improving the professional qualification of teachers and principals by equipping them with new skills and practices, thus also contributing to the improvement of Bulgarian school education.

As a result, during the last few years, 74 teachers and 90 principals in total have participated in the programs.

Year of the Training Program	ELTP Number of Teachers Trained in the U.S.	PTP	
		Number of Principals Trained in Bulgaria	Number of Principals Trained in the U.S.
2012	10	n/a	n/a
2013	14	n/a	n/a
2014	18	33	10
2015	15	30	15
2016	17	27	15
Total	74	90	40

The present study is structured around the following key aspects, through which it responds to the research questions posed by ABF:

- Quality of both programs;
- Effect on participants' professional development;
- Effect on the school community (teachers, students, parents and other stakeholders).

In addition, the evaluation checks if the following hypotheses are true:

- *More tangible results are achieved in schools where more teachers have participated in the program.*
- *The constructive and active involvement of the school principal is a key factor for the expected overall positive changes at school level after participation at ELTP.*
- *The program could have more results if continuous professional support is provided to the participants.*

The performed research also served for collecting examples of teaching and assessment practices applied as a result of the ELTP (Annex 1 in Bulgarian language only).

Several case studies were produced to additionally highlight some key trends and aspects revealed during the evaluation (Annex 2). These focus on the following topics:

- DO NUMBERS MATTER? - A Case Study of How the Number of Trained Teachers is Linked to the Effect at School Level;
- DO LEADERS MATTER? - A Case Study of How the Constructive and Active Involvement of the School Principal Affects the Positive Changes at School Level;



- STAYING ON TOP OF THE GAME - A Case Study of How Continuous Professional Support Ensures Sustaining and Multiplying the Positive Results from PTP and ELTP;
- STANDARD DEVIATION OR ECCENTRICITY - A Case Study Dedicated to Outliers.

In addition, the report is accompanied by supporting data for ELTP (*Annex 3*) and PTP (*Annex 4*) to include: Comments evidencing change among students (ELTP); Topics which ELTP participants feel most competent to train other pedagogical specialists; Recommendations from ELTP participants; Evidence of the effect on students from implementing the School Innovation Plan (SIP) (PTP); Purpose of the SIPs (PTP); Results from applying the SIPs – examples (PTP); Details on each established PLC (PTP); Comments evidencing the occurrence of results of the establishment of PLCs (PTP); Topics which PTP participants feel most competent to train other pedagogical specialists; Recommendations from PTP participants. Please note that Annexes 3 and 4 are in Bulgarian language only.

The evaluation combined a number of data collection tools and analytical techniques. A thorough examination of the existing documentation and relevant data was conducted. The document review analyzed the programs’ rationale, framework and application, as well as the context within which the ELTP and PTP were implemented.

The field work included conducting comprehensive on-line surveys among ELTP and PTP participants, in-depth interviews with selected participants, school visits (combined with interviews) and on-line survey among non-participants. Information on some quantitative aspects of the performance of the field work is presented in the table below.

Field work	ELTP (number or percentage of respondents)	Non-participants (ELTP) (number or percentage of respondents)	PTP (number or percentage of respondents)
Online surveys			
Target	74	148	90
Response rate	68 (92%)	187 (126%)	86 (96%)
In-depth interviews			
Target	18	n/a	19
Completed	14 (78%)	n/a	12 (63%)

HEADLINE FINDINGS

The evaluation revealed that the majority of the teachers and principals who took part in the programs qualify ELTP and PTP as “excellent” in terms of logistics, content, format and objectives. Most of the participants declared that these two initiatives are better than any other qualification programs they took part in. Alumni also described the programs as practice-oriented, encouraging the development of a unique educational community, inspiring, motivating, transforming, exceeding initial expectations, meaningful and engaging.

The transnational format of ELTP was highly appreciated. Most participants believe that the training program conducted in the U.S. is of tremendous value and consider school visits as a unique opportunity for direct observations and sharing experience with fellow American colleagues. As to PTP, the added value of the overseas component was qualified by the alumni as very useful. However, due to the fact that not all participants were selected to travel abroad and the fact that the training sessions at Bank Street College is only one part of the principals’ program, this aspect seems not to be of such great importance for principals, as it is for teachers.

ELTP was the key to acquiring modern pedagogical practices, improving teachers’ assessment competences, as well as learning how to use technology in class. Participants learned how to apply learner-centered concepts such as Understanding by Design (UbD), Project-Based Learning (PBL), Authentic Assessment, the Six Facets of Understanding and Professional Learning Communities (PLC),



Protocols and Rubrics. All methods acquired during the training program are applied in participants' teaching practice, which makes the program highly purposeful. ELTP contributed to building a cohort of education leaders who are early adopters and pioneers of innovation and it also transformed their beliefs and values. As a result of the program, participants rethought the way they teach and realized that every teacher could and should be an education leader.

PTP led to change in participants' leadership practices through improving their strategic planning skills, helping them realize their role as "inspirers", enhancing their collaboration with teachers and encouraging them to start active collaboration with fellow principals. The majority of the PTP participants apply in their practice the key methods and tools they have acquired during the training sessions, among which are School Innovation Plans (SIP), Professional Learning Communities (PLC), Protocols, Project-Based Learning (PBL), Interdisciplinary Lessons and UbD. As one of the most pragmatic things taken away from the training program, the majority indicated that they now have enhanced skills to plan realistic objectives for the school development. The biggest effect of the PTP seminars on the participants seems to be changing principals' beliefs and behaviors.

An aspect which deserves additional attention and efforts is to further train teachers and principals on how to efficiently register and measure change among students before and after a new method is introduced.

Reportedly, most students perceive positively the introduction of new teaching practices and among those with biggest effect are PBL, application of technologies in class and students taking over the responsibility for their own performance (authentic assessment, rubrics, etc.). From the information collected during the evaluation, it can be concluded that ELTP led to engaging all parties in student-centered learning, where enhancing students' critical thinking skills is at the focus of teachers' efforts.

The School Innovation Plans appear to have important value for the strategic development of the school, have an effect on the whole school community and all PTP participants who have implemented their plans state that such effect has occurred also at students' level. Each plan is a unique document which is developed in line with a given school's needs, goals, challenges and context.

Professional Learning Communities exist at schools where principals took part in the PTP, are fully functioning and vibrant. The total number of teachers involved is 1,380 and the total number of students affected is 30,745¹. The biggest effect from their establishment is the exchange of experience and the establishment of a collaborative environment. In addition, PLCs turn out to be among the most powerful instruments to disseminate PTP and ELTP results and ensure impact is achieved at system level.

Protocols are used by a large proportion of the PTP alumni, all of whom find this instrument useful for conducting structured discussions and communicating effectively with colleagues on topics of key importance to the school.

A large proportion of both programs alumni continue their cooperation with ABF, declare desire to take part in follow-up training events and even express willingness to train fellow colleagues.

The dissemination of the programs' results among fellow teachers and principals was carried out through various means and channels and has reportedly reached 38,439² educators across the country (the average number reached by ELTP respondent is 279 people, whereas the average

¹ As part of the PTP online survey, principals were asked to indicate the number of teachers and students who took part in each PLC they have initiated so far. The figures in the report are the total values obtained by adding up the numbers provided by the participants within the online survey. It might be assumed that these are non-unique numbers, hence the big figure.

² During the online surveys, respondents were asked to declare the indicative number of people that they have told about their participation in the program. The total value provided by ELTP respondents is 18,985 and the total value provided by PTP respondents is 19,454, hence the overall total is 38,439. It might be assumed that these are non-unique numbers, hence the big figure.

number reached by PTP respondent is 226 people). The results of the survey among non-participants clearly show that the majority of these teachers have not only been informed of the program as such, but also apply a number of the methods and tools attributable to the ELTP training curriculum.

Despite the efforts and investment made by ABF, Bulgarian teachers and principals are facing a number of challenges which might to a certain extent affect the manifestation of the ELTP and PTP results. Among these are the outdated school infrastructure, the lack of technological innovations in the classroom, the ineffective collaboration with other institutions (such as the Ministry of Education and Science and Regional Education Authorities), the lack of unified vision about what the key priorities in education should be, the lack of autonomy of principals and certain social attitudes towards non-conventional practices introduced at school. To address the above mentioned challenges and upgrade further their professional skills, the majority of the teachers and principals rely on ABF for continuous support and even expanding the training curriculum to also include topics of National importance, such as "Innovative Schools" and "21st Century Skills".

While the number of trained teachers per school does matter, this appears not to be the most important prerequisite for achieving wider impact. It is extremely positive that more than one teacher in a given school has been trained under the same qualification program (thus ensuring certain synchronization of the efforts to enhance the quality of education in a given institution), however, what seems crucial is how this person applies what has been learned (quality), how he/she disseminates to colleagues and multiplies the results (exploitation), as well as whether the school leadership supports innovation and progress (sustainability).

Good leadership is one of the most important prerequisites for change to happen and innovation to be introduced at school level. Without the support of a principal who is also an inspiring leader, it appears that the impact from any qualification program or funding would be either rather limited, or could not occur at all.

In addition, in order to achieve sustainable and long-term impact it is not enough to launch a one-off initiative targeting a specific issue or need. Without the continuous support and all the other initiatives implemented by ABF, it is highly likely that ELTP and PTP had remained at the level of any common qualification program offered at National level. Placing these two programs in the context of the Foundation's comprehensive strategy to enhancing the quality of education in Bulgaria is what expands their positive effect and ensures maximum results.

During the evaluation, some outliers occurred among teachers and principals, whose responses somehow appear distant from the opinions expressed by the majority of participants. Nevertheless, their number, as well as the scope and size of deviation is so insignificant, also taking into account the overall high response rate and the sustainability in the common trends, that the above mentioned outliers could mainly serve as examples of individualities rather than a basis for any significant conclusions or recommendations for improvement to be made.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The efforts to build a cohort of skilled and forward-thinking principals and teachers to be sustained and continued through expanding the size and scope of the offered qualification programs;
- Training program on how to effectively present and share best practice experience to be organized for principals and teachers;
- ABF to cooperate with National education authorities in relation to new initiatives such as "Innovative Schools", in order to expand the achieved so far effect and ensure ELTP and PTP results are further exploited;
- ABF to train ELTP and PTP participants or equip them with tools to register, monitor and measure the effect achieved as a result of applying innovative methods and practices at school level;



- ABF to consider direct observations of students' behavior and performance as a result of the application of certain methods acquired by PTP and ELTP participants. For this purpose specific indicators to be monitored and measured (at least twice over a suitable period of time) to be set.
- The foundation to investigate the potential benefit and opportunity to support primary teachers as well;
- ABF to consider reintroducing some form of transnational experience for at least some part of the participants in its new training programs for teachers and principals;
- ABF to investigate the possibility and benefit to also train some of the experts at regional education authorities, thus ensuring that the impact of the programs for teachers and principals would be supported when results are applied in practice;
- ABF to conduct regular needs assessment among its target beneficiaries, in order to ensure that its programs correspond to National and Global trends.
- ABF to introduce explicit requirements and guidelines for participants on how to ensure the visibility of the programs and acknowledge the benefit as a result of the funding received.



II. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Scope of the Evaluation

The scope of the evaluation is to conduct an unbiased assessment of the short-term results of the **Education Leaders' Training Program** (ELTP) and the **Principals' Training Program** (PTP) in order to comprehend the achieved positive effect at different levels.

The Programs

In 2012, the **ELTP** was implemented with the intention to support 10 secondary school teachers at public schools in Bulgaria to participate in US-based programs and experience the best educational and institutional practices.

In 2013, ELTP involved 14 secondary school teachers travelling to the U.S. for a dynamic three-week training program, including academic sessions, followed by a practicum at NYC schools.

In 2014, the ELTP component involved 18 secondary school teachers whereas the format of the training program remained unchanged. In 2014, for the first time the **PTP** component, targeting school principals, was launched with the aim to involve 33 principals from around the country in two program stages: a one-week workshop in Bulgaria for all participating principals and an exchange program in the United States in the Fall of 2014 for 10 principals who submit the most rigorous School Innovation Plans.

In 2015, both programs remained unchanged in terms of objectives and format. The number of trained participants were: 15 ELTP participants and 30 PTP participants, of which 15 traveled to the US.

The number of trained participants in 2016 were: 17 ELTP participants and 27 PTP participants, of which 15 traveled to the US.

As of January 2017, 74 Bulgarian teachers (in five cohorts) and 90 school principals (in three cohorts) have participated in ELTP and PTP.

Evaluation Objectives

The main objectives of the assignment are to:

- **Document, evidence and assess the short-term results of ELTP and PTP;**
- **Check if the following hypotheses are true:**
 - The effect of ELTP at school level depends on many factors, including the number of teachers participating in the program: with one teacher, the effect dwindles down very quickly; with more teachers participating in the program the possibilities for getting more tangible improvements/changes/innovations grow;
 - The constructive and active involvement of the school principal is a key factor for the expected overall positive changes at school level after participation at ELTP;
 - The program could have more results if continuous professional support is provided to the participants.
- **Collect examples of teaching and assessment practices that the teachers apply as a result of the training program (ELTP);**
- **Produce several case studies of the outliers and of a typical response.**



III. EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

To perform the evaluation to a high-quality standard, we have used a combination of carefully selected methods. Integrating quantitative, qualitative and participatory tools is a highly efficient approach for data collection and performing the evaluation in a manner that ensures maximum validity of the findings and conclusions. We have identified, registered and measured quantifiable effect of the programs, as well as provided an explanation of the processes and factors that yielded these outcomes.

Document Review

A thorough examination of the existing documentation and relevant data was conducted during the initial stage of the evaluation. The document review analyzed the programs' rationale, framework and application, as well as the context within which the ELTP and PTP were implemented. The document review was crucial for the effective design of the data collection tools, as well as the subsequent analysis and evaluation.

Field Work

The field work included conducting comprehensive **on-line survey among all ELTP and PTP participants, in-depth interviews with selected participants, school visits to selected schools and on-line survey among non-participants.**

The **on-line survey** was rolled out to all ELTP and PTP participants. Out of the 74 ELTP participants in total, we received 68 completed and 5 partially completed questionnaires. For the PTP program the statistics are: 86 fully completed and 1 partially completed questionnaire out of 90 potential respondents.

The response rate for both surveys was very high - 92% for ELTP and 96% for PTP, which gives us confidence that the collected information demonstrates in a thorough manner what the achieved short-term results of both programs are.

Once the on-line surveys were closed down and the results were reviewed by our team, we were able to select a number of participants for **in-depth interviews** with the aim to collect more qualitative information to complement the quantitative aspect of the evaluation. In total 26 in-depth interviews were conducted (12 ELTP participants and 14 PTP participants). School visits were conducted simultaneously with in-depth interviews.

In parallel, an **on-line survey among non-participants** of the ELTP program was carried out to examine the dissemination and multiplication of the program's results among teachers in Bulgaria. The target response rate for the survey was double the number of ELTP participants, i.e. 148 responses. As a result of the survey among the ELTP participants, we received the contact details of 78 unique non-participants with whom information about the program was shared. In addition, we sent out the survey to 46 principals with a request to distribute it among teachers from their schools. We received 187 completed questionnaires in total. The target response rate was exceeded, allowing us to analyze how ELTP short-term results emerged also among teachers who were not direct beneficiaries of the program and thus evaluating the potential for long-term impact at National level.

IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The ABF evaluation objectives were assessed through systemizing and analyzing the findings of the performed research, a process which can be summarized as follows:

- Assessing and documenting the **short-term results** of ELTP and PTP by:
 - Analyzing the **quality of both programs**;
 - Analyzing the **effect of both programs on participants' professional development**;
 - Analyzing the **effect of both programs on the school community** (teachers, students, parents and other stakeholders).
- Checking if the following **hypotheses** are true:
 - More tangible results are achieved in schools where more teachers have participated in the program.
 - The constructive and active involvement of the school principal is a key factor for the expected overall positive changes at school level after participation at ELTP.
 - The program could have more results if continuous professional support is provided to the participants.
- Based on the performed research, we have collected **examples** from all ELTP respondents of the teaching and assessment practices they apply as a result of the training program.
- We have also produced several **case studies** to highlight some key trends and aspects revealed during the evaluation.

IV.1. EDUCATION LEADERS' TRAINING PROGRAM

The latest TALIS report³ shows that teachers in Bulgaria are among the most experienced in Europe with an average of 22 years of professional experience, which is mainly due to the fact that less than 20% are younger than 40, while approximately 45% are age 50 or older.

This also means that the majority of Bulgarian teachers acquired their initial teaching qualification in times when a pedagogical degree followed upon attending a limited number of teaching hours and taking a content-based exam.

In the years of socialism all universities taught one and the same Theory of Education, and the emphasis fell on academic content rather than learning outcomes – knowledge, skills and competences, which resulted in the same transmission model reproduced in the school practice.

Hence, in Bulgaria, there has been a need for high-quality continuous teacher training programs for a long time. Moreover, improving the quality of teaching and teaching skills is currently the key objective⁴ of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science.

It is the Education Leader's Training Program (ELTP) that introduced a number of Bulgarian teachers to the latest pedagogical innovations in the U.S., as well as fostered professional collaboration between outstanding Bulgarian and U.S. teachers, which to a great extent contributed to filling the above mentioned gap during the last few years.

³ TALIS, The OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), 2013 (The survey is issued every five years)

⁴ National Strategy for the Development of Pedagogical Staff 2014-2020



IV.1.1. QUALITY OF THE PROGRAM

The assessment of the quality of the program answers the following **research questions**:

How participants perceive the program?
What is the added value of the overseas component of the program?

The majority of the participants consider the ELTP as a unique, bespoke and highly effective program whose quality is outstanding.

The results of the conducted online survey among ELTP participants show that the majority of the respondents qualify the program as "Excellent" (*see Table 1*). The results lead to the implication that **the administration of the program was very effective and all organizational matters were handled to a high-quality standard**. It is important to highlight that during in-depth interviews, participants stated that the "Logistics" aspect was impressive, compared to all other programs they had taken part in and this explains its top ranking.

Table 1: Participants' Assessment of the Quality of ELTP (percentage of respondents, n=73)

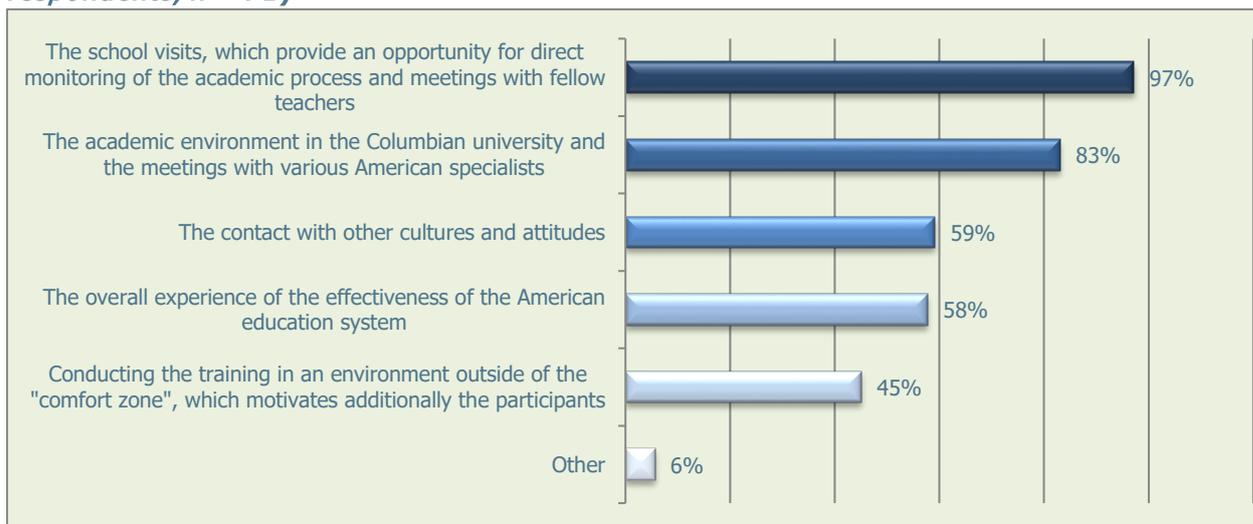
	2 Poor	3 Average	4 Good	5 Very good	6 Excellent
Logistics	0%	0%	0%	7%	93%
Format	0%	0%	0%	11%	89%
Objectives	0%	0%	3%	15%	82%
Content	0%	0%	1%	18%	81%

Participants shared additional insights into why they consider the ELTP of such excellent quality and the most popular reasons were that the program is: **practice-oriented; encouraging the development of a unique educational community; inspiring; with clear objectives; well-organized and implemented; allowing for on-the-spot visits and observations.**

In comparison to other qualification programs for teachers, 78% of the respondents believe that **ELTP is more useful than all other such programs**, 19% think that ELTP is more useful than some of these other programs, only two participants consider ELTP at the same level and none of the respondents marked ELTP as less useful than all other programs. Taking into account these results, it may be concluded that **ELTP is perceived as the best qualification program among its alumni.**

Almost all participants (97%) believe that **the training activities taking place in the US is important for achieving greater impact**. The largest proportion of respondents (*see Chart 1*) believe that these are the **school visits in the U.S.**, followed by the academic environment at Columbia University and the contact with other cultures and attitudes. As it appears, the transnational format of the ELTP was of tremendous importance to the alumni, who **attribute a large proportion of the program's success and usefulness namely to the fact that the training activities take place abroad.**

Chart 1: Added Value of the Training Program Conducted Overseas (percentage of respondents, n = 71)



IV.1.2. EFFECT ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Through evaluating the effect on professional development, the following **research questions** are answered:

What have the participants learned at the training program at Columbia University in New York?

What are the new or improved methods and practices that ELTP participants have introduced to their teaching practices as a result of the program, if any?

What changes, if any, have occurred in the beliefs and behavior of the ELTP participants, i.e. relationship with their colleagues, relationship with the students, motivation, desire to continue to learn, to mention a few things? Analyze the reasons if no changes have taken place.

What other type of support would be helpful to the ELTP trainees once back to the country?

Ongoing professional development keeps teachers up-to-date on new teaching methods, emerging technology tools for the classroom, new curriculum resources, and more. The best professional development is ongoing, continuous, experiential, collaborative, and connected to working with students and understanding their needs.

The effect ELTP has on participants' professional development is of key interest to the evaluation. In interpreting the collected information, it is important to bear in mind the self-reporting nature of the survey responses. For example, teachers' account on the impact the program has had on their development represents their own perceptions and is not part of a separate assessment of the effectiveness of this declared improvement of knowledge, skills and competences. Nevertheless, teachers' perceptions are extremely important, as these can be expected to influence their behavior.

To establish the effect ELTP has had on participants' professional development, the following **indicators** are analyzed:

Learning Outcomes⁶

⁶ A detailed description of what a learner knows and is able to do at the conclusion of a training course - *Designing and Assessing Courses and Curricula, Third Edition, 2008. Robert M. Diamond. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA*



When analyzing what participants have learned at Columbia University, it is essential to register what new knowledge, skills and competences they have acquired as a result of their participation in the ELTP. In addition, it is worth mentioning that all potential participants went through a thorough selection process during which all candidates were asked to elaborate on what they anticipate to learn during the training sessions, thus ensuring that the program’s objectives and content address individual expectations. Therefore, it may be concluded that what respondents indicated as being acquired as a result of their participation in ELTP corresponds to their own professional development aspirations and skill gaps.

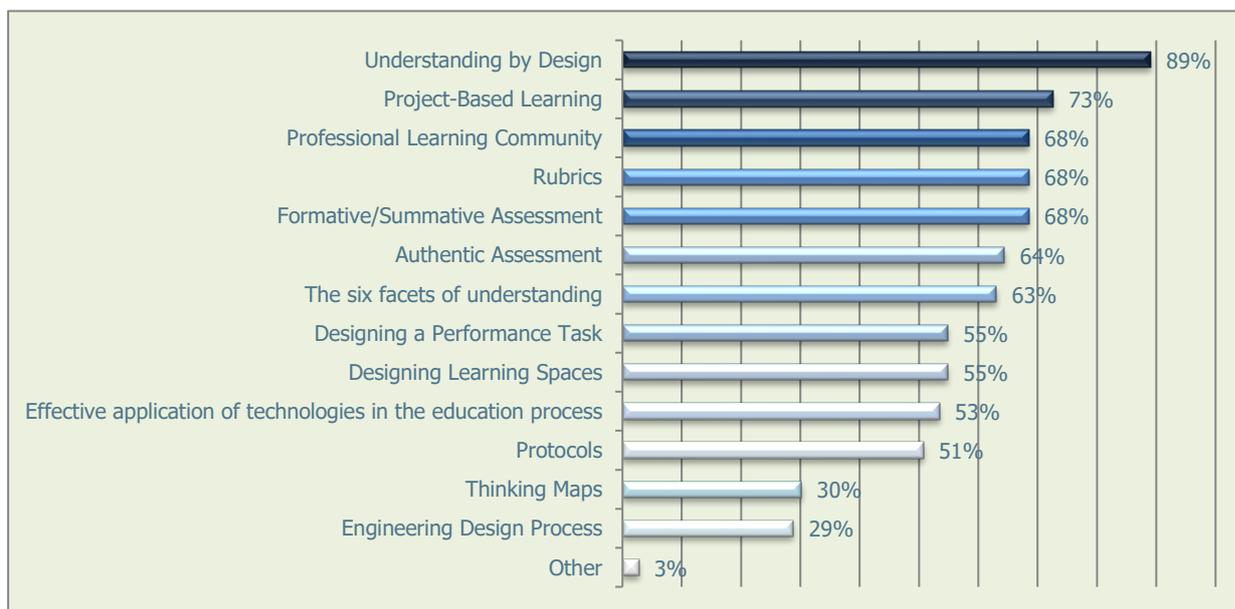
As Table 2 illustrates, there is certain balance between the new knowledge and skills reported as acquired at Columbia University, with **“modern pedagogical practices for designing the learning process”** leading the rank. These results are not surprising since the ELTP is designed to a large extent around the principles of **Understanding by Design (UbD)**⁷.

Table 2: What Participants have Learned at Columbia University (percentage of respondents, n = 73)

I acquired modern pedagogical practices for designing the learning process	82%
I improved my skills to set and assess expected learning outcomes	70%
I learned how to use technological instruments for a more effective learning process	64%

When knowledge and skills were formulated as concrete methods, practices and tools which were acquired as a result from teachers’ participation in the program, the same trend is confirmed, with UbD as the top answer (see Chart 2).

Chart 2: Acquired Methods, Practices and Tools (percentage of respondents, n = 73)



As it could be seen from the chart above, among the top answers is also **“project-based learning”**. During in-depth interviews it became clear that many participants have heard of this method before they even knew about ELTP, however, the majority declare that only after they took part in the program did they understand what project-based learning really is and most importantly - how to properly apply the method in class.

⁷ The Understanding by Design® framework (UbD™ framework), promoted by Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins, offers a planning process and structure to guide curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Its two key ideas are contained in the title: 1) focus on teaching and assessing for understanding and learning transfer, and 2) design curriculum “backward” from those ends.



During in-depth interviews most respondents admitted that before they took part in the ELTP they did not know anything about **rubrics**, the **six facets of understanding** and **protocols**. Acquiring new knowledge about how to apply the above mentioned tools means that teachers enhanced their skills to:

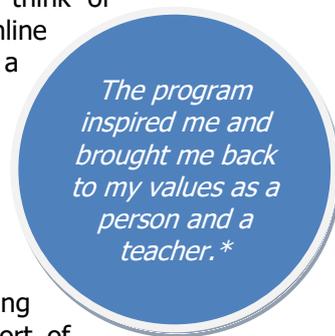
- develop coherent set of criteria for students' work that includes descriptions of levels of performance quality on the criteria;
- ensure students have a deep understanding of the idea or concept that is thought;
- structure professional conversations or learning experiences to ensure that meeting, planning, or group-collaboration time is used efficiently, purposefully, and productively.

At the same time, the majority of the interviewed teachers declared that the professional learning communities (PLCs) are very similar to the so called methodological unions (known and functioning in Bulgarian schools for many years), therefore are not so new to them. Nevertheless, the detailed instructions on how to implement and take the most out of a PLC provided during the training program were declared highly useful.

Changes in Beliefs⁸

While concrete knowledge and skills are of key importance to find out what the effect of the ELTP is on teachers' professional development, the change in beliefs is not to be neglected either. It has been proven that the root of behavior change and building better habits is one's identity and each action one performs is driven by the fundamental belief that it is possible. Therefore, our evaluation examined this aspect through analyzing how the program affected the way participants think of themselves and the world around them. According to the results of the online survey among ELTP participants, around 2/3 of the respondents declare that as a result of their participation in the program they:

- **rethought the way they teach their students** (73% of respondents);
- **rethought their assessment practices** (66% of respondents);
- **realized that every teacher could and should be an education leader** (62% of respondents).



The results above demonstrate that the achieved change in beliefs among teachers also corresponds to the program's key objective - "building a cohort of **education leaders** who will become early adopters and pioneers of **using new technology in the classroom**, as well as **implementing the most innovative approaches** to pedagogy in Bulgaria".

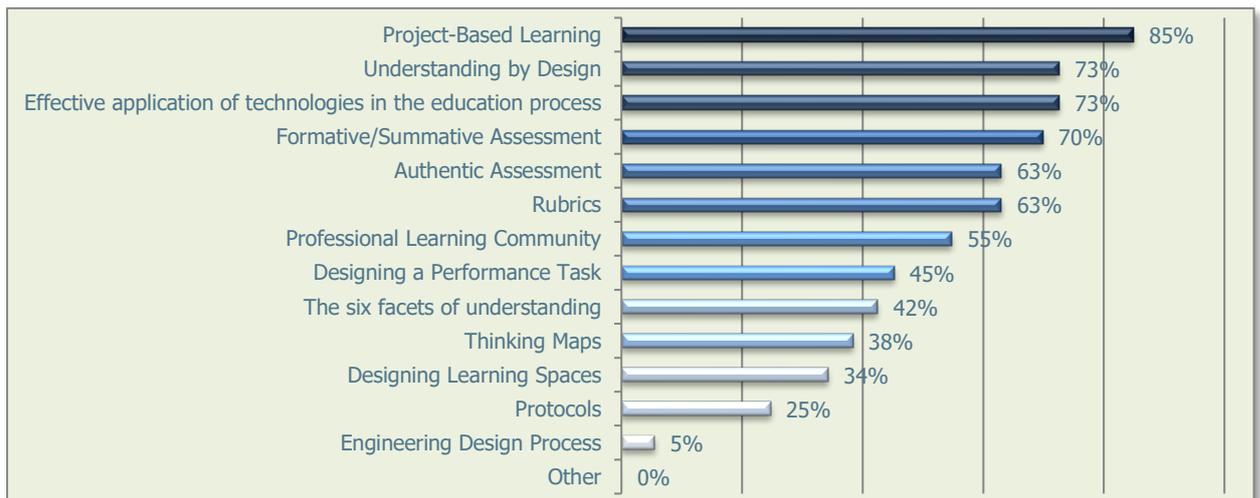
Application of Acquired Knowledge (Changed Behavior)

To ensure that what has been learned at Columbia University has real effect on teachers' professional development, it is important to also analyze which are the new or improved methods and tools that ELTP participants have introduced to their teaching practices. During in-depth interviews it became clear that **project-based learning (PBL)** is among teachers' "favorite" and most easy to apply approach, which also contributes to it being a top result (*see Chart 3*).

⁸ For the purpose of the evaluation when we discuss beliefs, we mean "the mental acceptance of and conviction in the truth, actuality, or validity of something":

* Teacher at school in big town

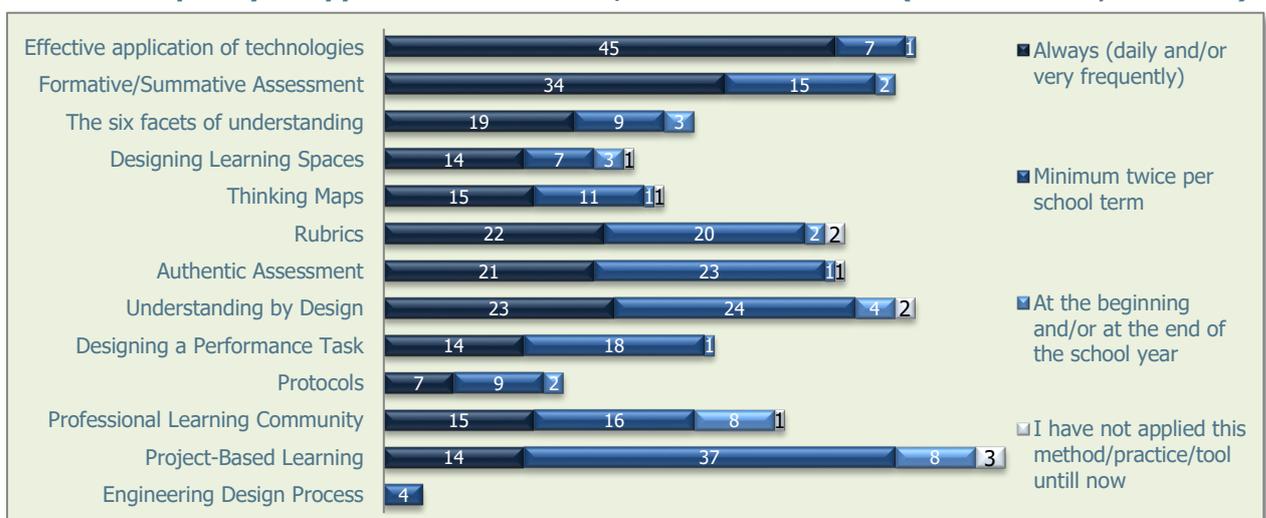
Chart 3: Applied Methods, Practices and Tools (percentage of respondents, n = 73)



When reviewing the results from the online survey among participants, we have taken into consideration the assumption that some respondents might have acquired but were not able to apply certain methods, tools or practices, hence, the differences in the results (compared to numbers in Chart 2). Additionally, many participants explained that often there are barriers to introducing a certain method which requires additional resources, such as time, extra materials, collaboration with fellow colleagues or the principal.

To establish the effect on teachers' professional development, we also analyzed the **frequency** of application of each method, practice or tool that respondents have indicated as used in their teaching practice. As it could be seen from the results below (*see Chart 4*), the majority of teachers **most often apply technologies in class, formative/summative assessment and understanding by design**. It is also interesting to note that the gap between those who apply a certain method, practice or tool very often or at least twice every school term and those who have only applied once or twice a given method (*number of teachers applying often vs. number of teachers applying rarely*), is quite big, leading to the implication that **what has been learned and acquired as result of taking part in the ELTP has indeed become part of most teachers' behavior and everyday practice**.

Chart 4: Frequency of Application of Methods, Practices and Tools (number of respondents⁹)



⁹ With regard to this indicator the chart shows number of respondents rather than percentages, as different samples apply to different methods, depending on how many respondents replied they use the given method at all.

As part of the online survey, each respondent was asked to supply at least one example of practice he/she applies as a result of taking part in the ELTP. These could be found in a Compendium enclosed with the current report (see *Annex 1*).

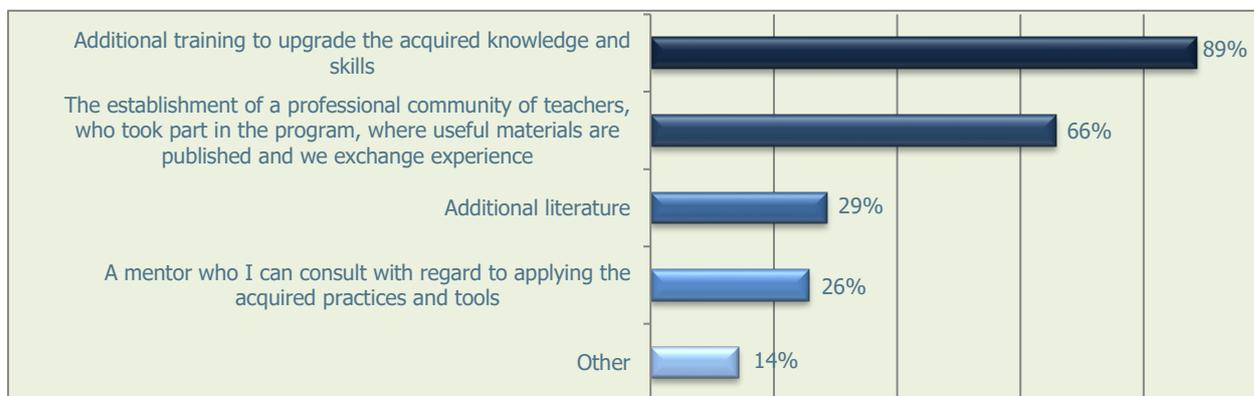
During the research teachers were required to elaborate in more detail on how exactly they apply a certain method/practice/tool and the following trends emerged:

- teachers **tend to combine and adapt different methods and tools** to achieve bigger effect and address the specific needs of their own students;
- teachers **changed the way they plan a lesson** and now **dedicate a lot more time to organizing their teaching activities and the learning process**;
- a large proportion of **teachers apply Backward Design**¹⁰.

Additional Support Needed¹¹

To identify their current needs, the participants were asked to specify what type of support they need from ABF after the end of the program in addition to the support they already receive from the Foundation. The aim is to find out if there are some other types of support, which ABF could consider in case a decision is taken to further expand the programs and initiatives running at the moment. Out of 67 respondents in total, 35 teachers declared they need additional support and 32 stated they do not. With regard to the type of support needed, the majority of teachers declare they would appreciate **follow-up training** events to further enhance the knowledge and skills acquired at Columbia University.

Chart 5: Type of Support Needed by Teachers (n = 35)



Among other responses given, as well as the information gathered during in-depth interviews the following stood out:

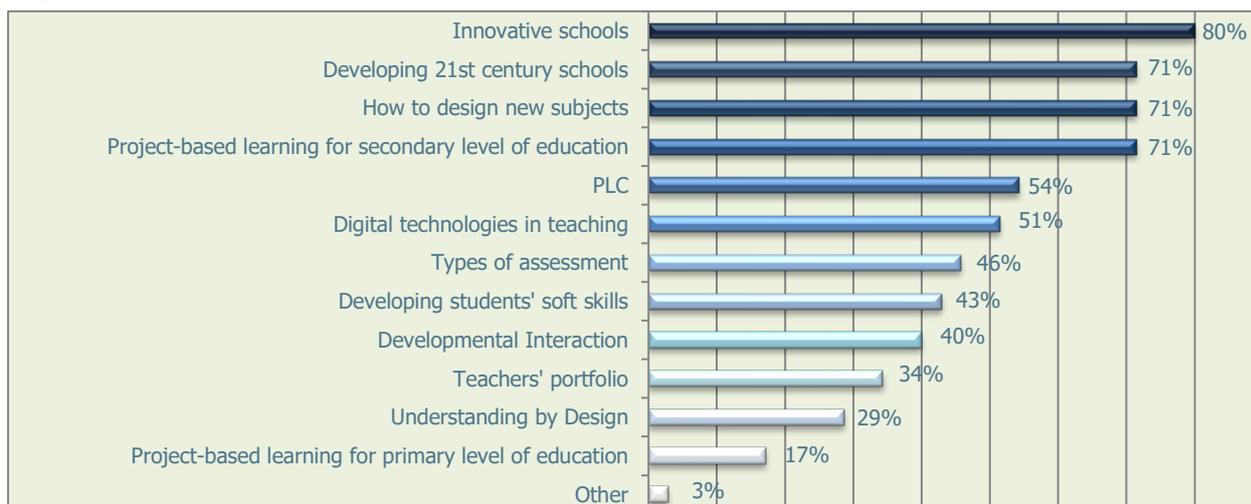
- **increase in the number of trained** by ABF teachers at National level;
- **expanding the training program to also include other teachers** (who were not ELTP participants) **from the same school**;
- ABF to make **school visits, observe lessons** and **provide feedback**;
- **alumni meetings**;
- **instruments to assess the effect** of the applied methods and practices on students.

In relation to what **type of training** program the ELTP participants would like to take part in, a large proportion of the teachers mention **"Innovative schools"**¹², **"21st Century Skills"**¹³, **"Project-based learning for secondary schools"** and **"How to design new subjects/curriculum"**(see *Chart 6*).

¹⁰ A method of designing educational curriculum by setting goals before choosing instructional methods and forms of assessment

¹¹ For the purpose of the current evaluation, we have collected teachers' own views on what they need to additionally support their practice. Teachers' views about their development needs are to be distinguished from an external assessment of these needs.

Chart 6: Desired Topics for a Follow-up Training Programs (percentage of respondents, n = 35)



All of the above leads to the suggestion that Bulgarian teachers, or at least ELTP participants, see **ABF as a source of innovation**, expect the Foundation to **fill in certain gaps** and keep **up to date with National and Global trends in the field of education**.

IV.1.3. EFFECT ON THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Through evaluating the effect on the school community, the following **research questions** are answered:

Are the teachers using the practices and methods for assessing students' achievements that they were exposed to during the training program?

Have the trained teachers reached out to other teachers? How many teachers were reached out? At the same school or not only? Provide evidence for how that has happened.

Have the ELTP trainees had any impact on the teaching methods and practices of other teachers? At the same school or not only? Provide evidence. What were the trainees able to do together with other teachers?

What is the initial impact of the new teaching methods and practices on the students of the ELTP trainees?

What are the perceived barriers to perceived change?

How many of the teachers trained under ELTP are still working as teachers? What has happened to those who no longer teach at school?

In line with the scope of the above research questions, the current evaluation focuses on three key groups of individuals: students, fellow teachers (non-participants in the ELTP) and other stakeholders. Given that a long-term effect is accumulated over a number of years, taking into account the objective of the present research (to assess short-term results), as well as due to some other limitations (e.g. ELTP

¹² In 2016, a new initiative was launched by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science, called "Innovative Schools". The concept of innovative schools is designed around the idea that these institutions will be models of modern schools in which students will improve their learning outcomes, develop critical thinking and creativity through innovative learning processes, teaching methods, school leadership, and curricula.

¹³ The term 21st century skills refers to a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are believed—by educators, school reformers, college professors, employers, and others—to be critically important to success in today's world, particularly in collegiate programs and contemporary careers and workplaces.

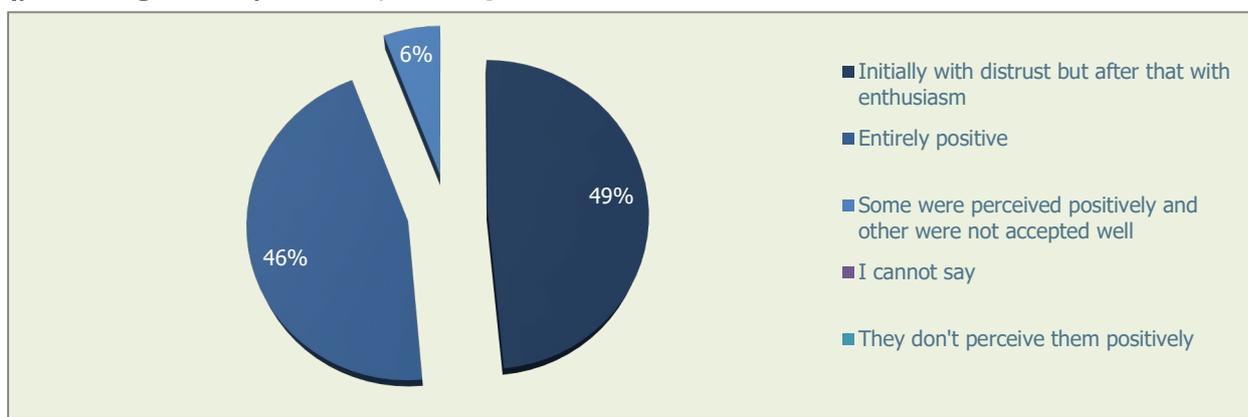
participants not formally required to measure effect among their students; no initial levels of achievement or performance being captured and registered), the present report focuses on ELTP participants' perceptions and observations with regard to how students react and perform as a result of being exposed to new methods/practices/tools acquired by their teachers in the U.S. The effect on non-participant fellow teachers has been captured through analyzing ELTP alumni statements on how they disseminate and multiply program results, as well as through surveys distributed directly to those fellow colleagues who were somehow informed by ELTP participants about the program and its outcomes.

Effect on Students

When it comes to students' achievements and performance, research suggests that, among school-related factors, teachers matter most. When it comes to student performance, a teacher is estimated to have two to three times the impact of any other school factor, including services, facilities, and even leadership¹⁴.

To capture the emerging short-term results of ELTP, all participants were asked a series of questions on students' reaction to the application of new approaches/concepts/tools and the achieved effect. Teachers were asked to elaborate on students' perception of newly acquired methods to which they were exposed as a result of their teacher's participation in the program (*see Chart 7*).

Chart 7: Students' Perception of the Application of New Methods/Practices/Tools (percentage of respondents, n = 68)



As it could be seen, the majority of respondents claim their students either **accept the new approaches entirely positively or with enthusiasm after overcoming the initial distrust**. Despite the fact that only four respondents stated that there was certain ambiguity among students, it is interesting to see which methods were accepted well and which not and what the reasons behind the negative perceptions are:

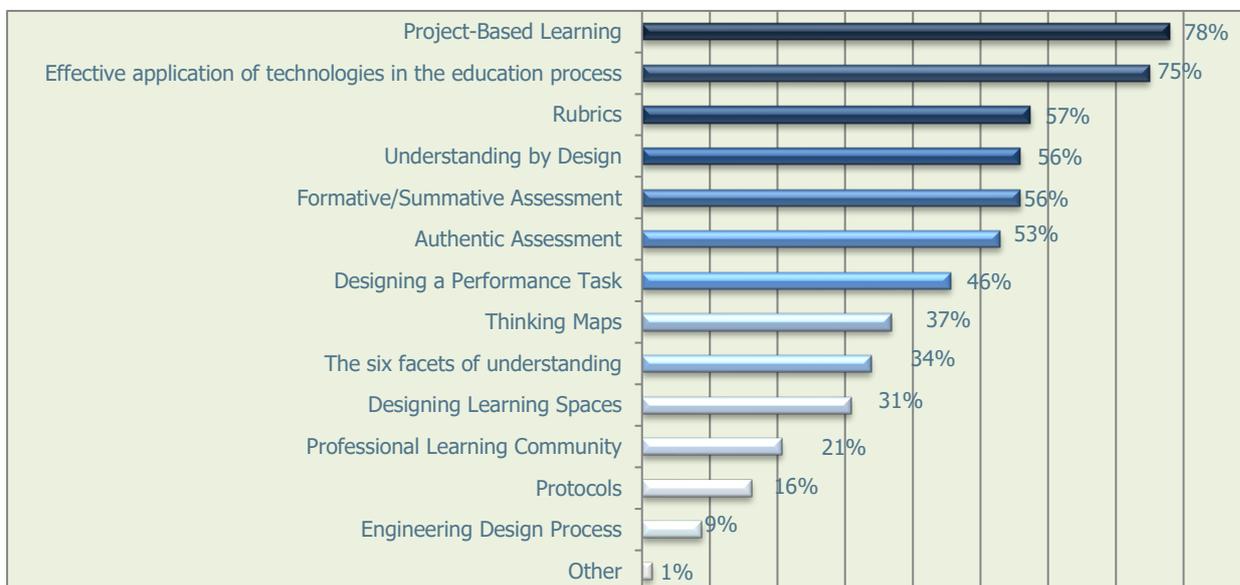
- 😊 The initial idea of diversifying teaching methods and techniques, as well as enhancing students' engagement, which takes them out of their common passive role;
- 😊 Students approve the interactive teaching and assigning homework online;
- 😊 Students are enthusiastic about the introduction of "Thinking Maps", curious about "Redesigning the learning space", interested in "Project-based learning";
- 😊 Students like learning by doing, using various online resources, knowing the criteria applied when assessed, backward design.
- 😞 Some students do not like the idea of being taken out of their "comfort zone";
- 😞 Some methods require investing more time and resources on behalf of teachers and students compared to conventional methods.

¹⁴ Teachers Matter: Understanding Teachers' Impact on Student Achievement. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2012. https://www.rand.org/pubs/corporate_pubs/CP693z1-2012-09.html.

As a key reason for any negative perception, three out of four respondents in total indicate that “maybe students did not understand the meaning and benefit of the application of the given method/practice/tool”.

All but one teacher (67 out of 68 ELTP participants) **observe change among their students, as a result of the application of a specific approach or tool.**

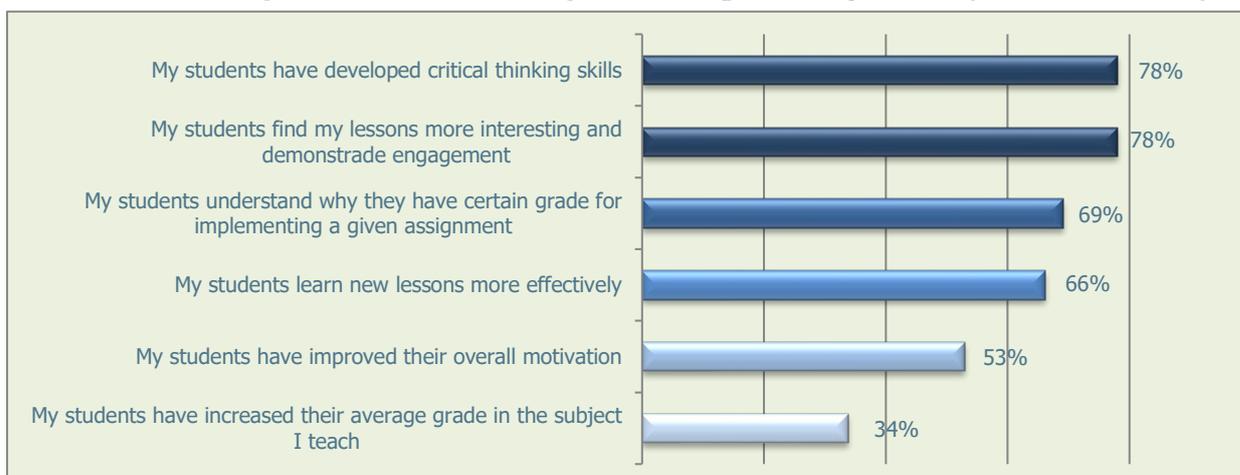
Chart 8: Methods/Practices/Tools as a Result of which Change is Observed (percentage of respondents, n = 68)



As it could be seen, according to teachers, it is “project-based learning” which causes biggest change among students, followed by “effective application of technologies”, “rubrics”, “understanding by design”. These results lead to the conclusion that **change among students is directly linked to increasing the interactivity of the learning process** (introduction of innovative methods and technology) and **students taking over the responsibility for their own performance in class** (enhanced assessment process). Taking into account the objectives of the ELTP, it is clear that the reported effect definitely coincides with the initially planned objectives of the program.

The study has looked deeper into the observed changes and find out how they were manifested.

Chart 9: How Change is Manifested among Students (percentage of respondents, n = 68)





Interestingly, teachers rate the increase in attainment levels (average grades) as the least prominent manifestation of change, whereas “**how students feel and think**” (find lessons more interesting and develop critical thinking skills) are among the top answers. This phenomenon might be due to reasons, such as:

- Teachers are not formally and systematically measuring and monitoring students’ attainment levels (grades, performance, progress) before and after undertaking the ELTP training program in order to be able to declare and evidence concrete change in this direction and attribute it to the program;
- Student's grades could already be at the top end of the ranking scale, therefore there is little room for improvement;
- Traditionally, the Bulgarian education system predominantly focuses on developing basic skills and assessing attainment levels, with less emphasis on developing soft skills. The American programs fill this gap through equipping teachers with the right tools to cater not only for grades;
- It is easier and less resource-consuming to observe change in perceptions and behavior, than to formally register and monitor quantitative indicators dependent on various factors;
- Students’ attainment levels are linked to various factors, some of which are outside teacher’s competencies (e.g. social and family context, personal motivation, interrelation between education requirements, curriculum and students’ interests and aspirations, etc.).

Students’ success and wellbeing should be a teacher's number one priority and while for some students success will be getting a good grade, for others, it might mean increased involvement in class. Taking into account ELTP’s ultimate aim – “**to engage all parties in student-centered learning**”, it may be concluded that the **reported short-term results among students match entirely the program’s mission and objectives.**

In order to strengthen the above-mentioned suggestions, ELTP participants were also asked to provide **evidence** in the form of more information on how they judge on the manifestation of each type of change that they had previously indicated as having occurred. Detailed answers could be found in **Annex 3.1** of the current report.

During in-depth interviews teachers were also required to elaborate on the following topics: Information on students (level of motivation, success stories, challenges, needs, effect); Methods for student motivation (engagement, critical thinking, etc.); Application of new technologies; Student assessment practices.

The following trends emerged:

- It is **challenging to motivate today’s students**, especially if the formal National Education Standards, Requirements and curriculum are to be strictly followed;
- The majority of **students appreciate knowing how their knowledge is assessed** and taking active part in the evaluation process;
- Developing **critical thinking skills** and **increasing students’ engagement** are among the most difficult but rewarding tasks.
- Most **teachers are willing to apply new technologies in class, but not all of them feel confident enough** to do this (insufficient skills, lack of resources, lack of time, etc.)

Effect on Fellow Teachers

To establish the effect on fellow colleagues we first examined (through the online survey among ELTP participants) with whom information about the program was shared then cross-checked with non-participants the collected data (through a dedicated survey), as well as gathered information on which skills and methods have been multiplied and are now applied by those non-participants despite the fact they were not direct beneficiaries of the program. **All ELTP respondents stated that they have**



shared information about the ELTP with their fellow colleagues. Each participant was also asked to indicate how exactly and with what frequency they disseminated the acquired knowledge and skills.

Table 3: Means, Channels, and Frequency of Dissemination

Available answers	How exactly did you share the acquired knowledge and skills with you colleagues? (percentage of respondents, n = 68)	How many times did you share the acquired knowledge and skills? (number of times shared)
During an informal chat with colleagues in my school	94%	1,254
During a presentation/seminar/meeting in my school with colleagues from my school only	91%	309
Through practical training programs led by myself and organized for fellow teachers	49%	172
During a seminar dedicated to various topics in front an audience not only from my school	47%	785
During a formal meeting with fellow teachers from different school in the region and/or across the country	44%	132
During an event organized by the local Regional Education Unit	25%	118
Other	16%	22

As to the total number of individuals with whom information about ELTP has been shared, the results are really impressive - **68 ELTP participants declare that they have disseminated the program's results among 18,985¹⁵ fellow colleagues in total.** These numbers suggest an extremely high potential for long-term impact that the program could have at system level in the years to come.

As previously mentioned, a survey was released among non-participants whose contact details were either provided by ELTP participants or were reached with the assistance of school directors. Out of 187 respondents, **71% of the non-participants declared they have previously heard of ELTP,** whereas 29% stated that they have not. However, to the question whether they know about a given method/tool/practice (the list used in this question replicates the one used for ELTP participants as it corresponds to the program training curriculum), of the 29% who stated that they have not heard of the ELTP program, only 35% stated that they have never heard of any of the mentioned methods/tools/practices.

Of the 71% of non-participants who stated that they have previously heard of the ELTP, 56% declare they have heard of it from a colleague who took part in the program and 32% declare that they have heard of it from the principal of their school. This leads to the implication that **there is intensive information sharing about the ELTP at school level.**

To the question how information about ELTP was shared with them, the top answers are "during an informal chat with colleagues in my school" and "during a presentation/seminar/meeting in my school with colleagues from my school only". These results lead to the suggestion that some non-participants might have learned new approaches from an ELTP participant without even knowing it, some were briefed informally and others were informed in a more structured manner, but **most importantly the majority of the respondents are aware of and apply certain ELTP methods and tools.**

With regard to what type of information about ELTP was shared with them, most respondents declare: "General information about the program" and "Program content and objectives, as well as some methods/practices/tools, which were acquired during the training".

¹⁵ During the online survey, ELTP respondents were asked to declare the indicative number of people that they have told about their participation in the program. It might be assumed that these are non-unique numbers, hence the big figure.



It is interesting to note that non-participants who attribute their knowledge of certain methods to information received on the ELTP, indicate that the methods and tools they have been mainly informed of are “project-based learning (PBL)” (45% of the respondents) and “professional learning communities (PLCs)” (27% of the respondents). During in-depth interviews ELTP participants were asked to share some views on how their colleagues perceive the new methods and tools introduced as a result of the training program and the following trends were captured:

- **Fellow teachers are mostly resistant to change** and need time to accept any new knowledge;
- The majority of **fellow teachers cannot see a reason why they should change their methods until they see a demonstration of the positive effect** a new approach could have on students;
- **The principal is the key “medium” to multiplying the effect** of the ELTP or any other teachers’ qualification program among the whole school community.

When analyzing the effect on fellow teachers, it should be also taken into consideration that this is an ongoing process which can and will continue in the future. **ELTP participants** were asked to share whether they **would like to take part as trainers/lecturers in programs organized by ABF**. Out of 67 ELTP respondents, 54% **declare willingness**, 21% **would join under certain conditions** and 27% prefer not to. Details on the topics which participants, who are willing to take part as trainers in other ABF programs, feel most competent to train other pedagogical specialists in could be found in *Annex 3.2*.

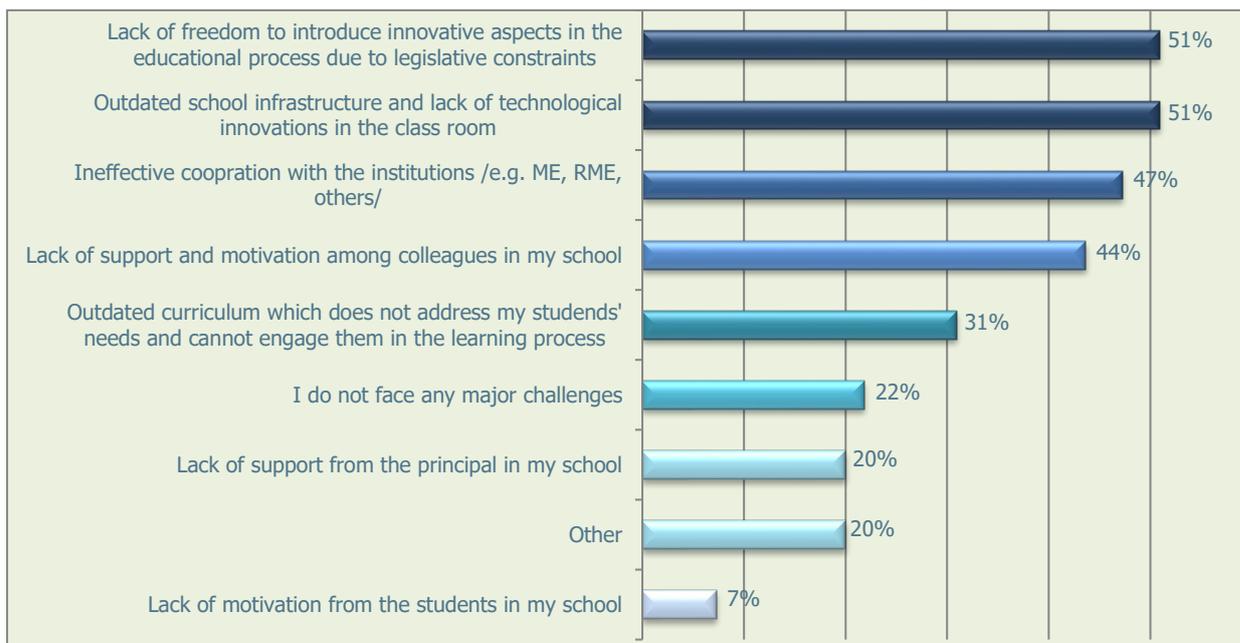
Effect on Other Stakeholders

For the purpose of the evaluation, the effect on other stakeholders is mainly analyzed through the data collected on challenges teachers experience in their everyday work (*see Chart 10*), barriers to introducing change in school (*see Chart 11*).

The evaluation makes a difference between challenges faced on a daily basis, which mainly affect teachers’ performance, motivation and efficiency, and barriers to change, which are more related to the obstacles (at system level) standing in the way of innovation. Therefore, respondents were asked to reply to two different questions and the results could be seen below.

As it could be seen from the chart below, a large proportion of the teachers consider as an issue the fact that they **are not always in a position to introduce new aspects in their everyday work with students**, followed by the **outdated infrastructure** and the **ineffective cooperation with other institutions**. The results suggest that if these challenges persist to exist and the size and scope of their effect on teachers’ performance is too high, the impact of the program might be also affected. Therefore, the ABF’s efforts to continuously support ELTP alumni through various complementing means and initiatives is most likely the best possible way forward to overcoming at least one part of the above listed challenges.

Chart 10: Challenges Faced by Teachers (percentage of respondents, n = 55)



Barriers to change are those obstacles which might hinder innovation. ELTP participants highlight that the **lack of a common vision for what the key priorities in the field of education** is the main aspect which might affect how new methods are introduced in a given school or practice. While this is an issue which is to a large extent in the prerogative of authorities, the results at least show what aspects need support at system level.

While the effect of the program multiplies through the work of fellow teacher and the achievements of students, other stakeholders appear difficult to be affected, which is most probably due to the subordinate position of teachers to all listed groups of institutions. Nevertheless, if the potential long-term impact of the ELTP reveals itself in the following years, there is high chance that the system would be eventually affected, since even in centralized education systems, change from beneath inevitably expands to higher levels.

Chart 11: Barriers to Introducing Change (percentage of respondents, n = 63)



Current Professional Status of the Trained Participants

Important to assessing the effect of the program, is also analyzing the current status of ELTP participants.

Table 4: Current Status of ELTP Participants (percentage of respondents, n = 67)

Teacher	75%
Deputy school principal	12%
I don't work in the field of education	6%
School principal	3%
I work in the field of education but neither as principal, nor as teacher	3%
Other	1%

As it could be seen from the table above, **the majority of the ELTP participants are still working as teachers**, meaning that to a large extent the effect of the program is still applied as anticipated. It is also very positive that eight participants have already become deputy principals and two – principals, which allows for results to be brought up to a higher level and the leadership aspect of the program to reveal its full potential. Moreover, currently one respondent is a senior expert at Regional Education Authorities and one other alumni representative is responsible for teachers' training and qualification, which presents an excellent opportunity for transferring the program results to a system level.

IV.2. PRINCIPALS' TRAINING PROGRAM

Principals play a vital role in setting the direction for successful schools and their continuous professional development is of crucial importance. It is the principal who is in a position to ensure that good teaching and learning spreads beyond single classrooms, and that effective practices are introduced and applied. More than ever, the principal of today needs to be seen as a source of inspiration rather than authority, a leader rather than a manager.

Contemporary school administrators play a daunting array of roles, ranging from educational visionaries and change agents to instructional leaders, budget analysts, facility managers and many more¹⁶. Bulgarian principals make no exception and school development in the country is directed towards a higher quality of education with management facing new tasks and challenges, which demands a lot of motivation, abilities and enthusiasm. To satisfy the high requirements and expectations of the society, today's principals are in need of comprehensive continuous professional training program, which corresponds to the latest trends in education and leadership practices.

The Principals' Training Program (PTP) is aimed at bringing the Bulgarian education system up to date with 21st century teaching technology and pedagogical methods, as well as building a cohort of principals who are committed to questioning the status quo and dedicated to finding the best ways to create an innovative and supportive school culture.

IV.2.1. QUALITY OF THE PROGRAM

The assessment of the quality of the program answers the following **research questions**:

How participants perceive the program?

What is the added value of the overseas component of the program?

¹⁶ Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005



The majority of the participants consider the PTP as extremely useful, inspiring and practice-oriented.

As it could be seen from the table, most PTP participants qualify the program as "Excellent" or "Very good". Of the four components (Content, Format, Logistics and Objectives), the highest-rated one is the "Logistics", followed by "Content" and "Objectives", which leads to the suggestion that **organizational matters and the training content were of high quality.**

Table 5: Participants' Assessment of the Quality of PTP (percentage of respondents, n = 87)

	2 Poor	3 Average	4 Good	5 Very good	6 Excellent
Logistics	0%	0%	1%	13%	86%
Content	0%	0%	6%	21%	74%
Objectives	0%	1%	8%	17%	72%
Format	0%	1%	6%	22%	71%

Participants also shared that the program is: **motivating; transforming; exceeding initial expectations; meaningful; engaging; has comprehensive positive effects on principal's personality and management style.**

Out of 87 respondents in total, 40 visited the U.S. after attending the training seminar in Bulgaria. Comparing the answers given in regard to the quality of the program by participants who have visited the U.S. as opposed to those who only took part in the Bulgarian training seminar, we observe some differences between the two groups (see tables below).

Table 6: Assessment of the Quality of PTP by Participants who have taken part in the US Component (percentage of respondents, n = 40)

	2 Poor	3 Average	4 Good	5 Very good	6 Excellent
Logistics	0%	0%	0%	15%	85%
Content	0%	0%	0%	13%	88%
Objectives	0%	0%	0%	5%	95%
Format	0%	0%	0%	13%	88%

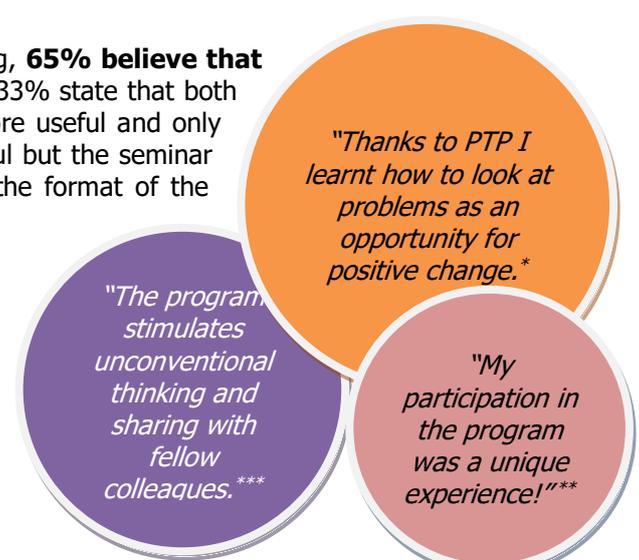
Table 7: Assessment of the Quality of PTP by Participants who have only taken part in the Bulgaria Component (percentage of respondents, n = 47)

	2 Poor	3 Average	4 Good	5 Very good	6 Excellent
Logistics	0%	0%	11%	26%	64%
Content	0%	2%	11%	30%	57%
Objectives	0%	0%	2%	19%	79%
Format	0%	2%	15%	21%	60%

As it can be seen, the scores given by the participants who visited the US are much higher than the scores given by the participants who only took part in the Bulgarian component. It can be concluded that the way participants perceive the quality of the PTP is dependent on whether they were selected to visit the U.S., or not.

Of the 40 participants who took part in the US training, **65% believe that both components combined are equally useful**, 33% state that both components are useful but the visit to the U.S. is more useful and only one principal declares that both components are useful but the seminar in Bulgaria is more useful. These results show that the format of the

* Principal at school in small town
 ** Principal at school in big town
 *** Principal at school in the capital

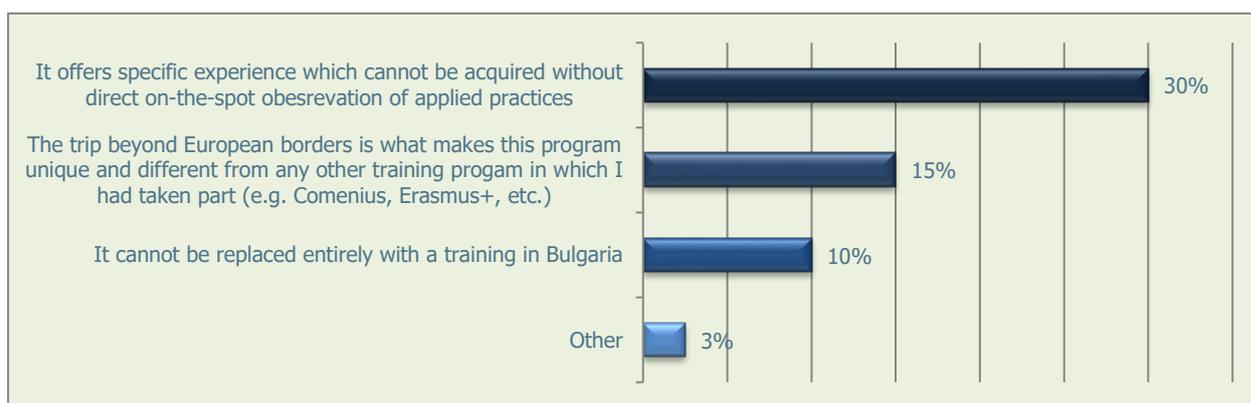


program (national seminars and transnational visits) was highly appreciated and those who were selected to visit the U.S. highly appreciated the opportunity for an overseas experience.

Those who believe that the transnational component is more useful highlight the reasons presented in Chart 12.

As it appears, the **on-the-spot observations to American schools were highly appreciated**, as well as the opportunity to visit another country. However, taking into account the overall results, **it cannot be concluded that participants in general prefer that the training program takes place overseas**. It is also important to note that unlike ELTP, where the knowledge of English language was a selection criterion, this was not mandatory for the principals' program. Simultaneous translation was provided during the whole visit to the U.S. which allowed many participants who do not speak English to take part in PTP.

Chart 12: Added Value of the Overseas Component (percentage of respondents, n = 40)



IV.2.2. EFFECT ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Through analyzing the effect on PTP participants' professional development, the following **research questions** are answered:

What is the biggest effect of the PTP seminars on the participants? What are the personal and institutional changes that have occurred as a result of the training program?

What has been the most pragmatic thing taken away from the PTP seminars?

What other changes have occurred in their leadership practices?

What has happened to the School Innovation Plans developed by the participants?

Which parts of the SIP have been implemented? Which were not? Are there trends across or within cohorts? Are there patterns in terms of obstacles reported by principals?

- Have they been implemented?
- How do the results relate to the number of teachers who have already been exposed to other ABF programs?
- Has the model been adopted by the school as appropriate for future improvements?
- Analyze the reasons if the School Innovation Plans were not implemented.

What has been the effect of the PLCs?

- Do PLCs exist at the school? Are they vibrant?

Are the principals using protocols and what for?

What additional support would the principals like/expect to receive?

Unlike many other countries, in Bulgaria there are no special training programs to prepare those willing to or about to become principals of their future role. The common practice is that at some point of their career some teachers become principals and their responsibilities literally change overnight. Of course



there are a few training opportunities available to newly appointed principals, however, none of these offers a comprehensive insight into what it is to be a leader, manager, administrator, visionary and at the same time foster innovation and support the introduction of up-to-date teaching practices. Therefore, the present evaluation focuses to a great extent on how the PTP affected participants' professional development.

To establish the effect PTP has had on participants' professional development, the following **indicators** are analyzed:

Learning Outcomes

When analyzing what PTP participants have learned during the training program, it should be noted that while all of them attended a seminar in Bulgaria, only those who developed the best School Innovation Plans were selected to carry out a visit to the U.S. (40 principals in total), which presumably enhanced further their knowledge and skills compared to their fellow alumni (47 respondents who have only attended the National training events).

Chart 13 below, illustrates what principals acquired as competences owing to their participation in the program. As it could be seen, the majority of the respondents (87%) stated that, among other competencies, as a result of their participation in the program they learned **how to establish professional learning communities (PLCs)**, followed by **supporting teachers in organizing and implementing multidisciplinary lessons** (74%) and **supporting innovation with regard to learning activities** (70%).

Most respondents admitted that before they took part in the PTP they did not know how to organize interdisciplinary activities and what protocols are (in the sense the term is used in PTP). Nevertheless, unlike teachers for whom a lot more methods and practices were brand new before they took part in ELTP, principals claimed that they knew about many of the approaches presented during the PTP from their previous experience. On the other hand, **principals also admit that the training program was transformational and life-changing**. It appears that the PTP is a lot more perceived as affecting beliefs and behaviors, rather than simply equipping participants with tools and methods, which in fact is in line with the specific role of a principal where leadership competences matter the most.

With regard to what were the **most pragmatic things** taken away from the training program (*see Table 6*), principals indicate as top answer **"how to plan realistic objectives for the school development"** (30% choose this as their top answer), followed by "how to manage more effectively my school" (22%) and "how to introduce innovation in my school" (21%). It is important to highlight that despite the fact that **introducing innovation** is the third most popular "number one" answer, it is the most popular second most pragmatic thing taken away from the training program, which means that this knowledge is also extremely valuable and applied by the participants in their practice.

Chart 13: What Participants have Learned (percentage of respondents, n = 87)

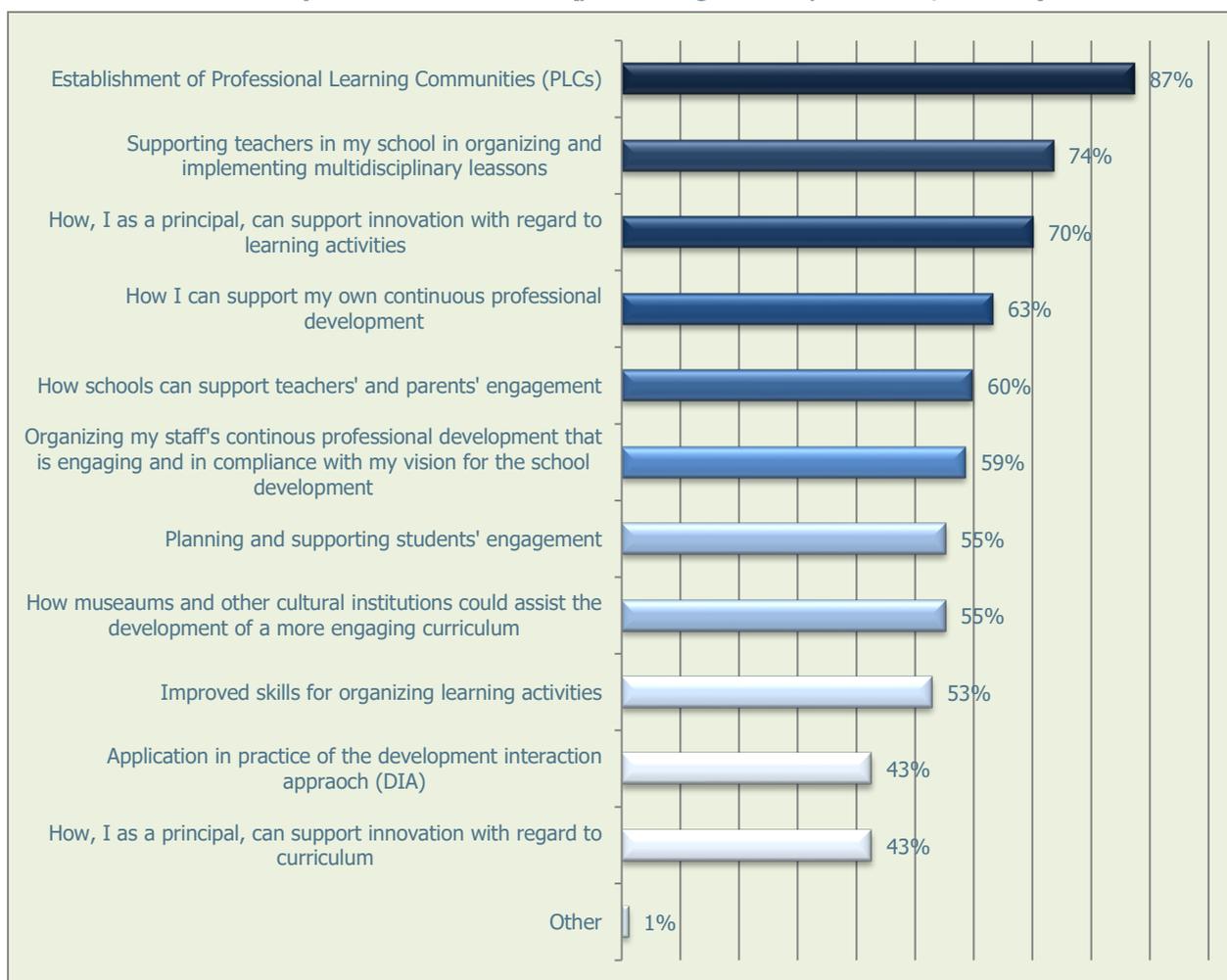


Table 8: Three Most Pragmatic Things Taken Away from the Program (percentage of respondents ranking various aspects of the PTP, n = 87)

	1 st most pragmatic	2 nd most pragmatic	3 rd most pragmatic
How to plan realistic objectives for the school development	30%	15%	16%
How to manage more effectively my school	22%	13%	15%
How to introduce innovation in my school	21%	33%	15%
How to collaborate with teachers	11%	18%	11%
How to use protocols	6%	10%	21%
How to apply new technologies in the learning and the administrative process	6%	8%	8%
How to monitor lessons	5%	0%	6%
How to transform local museums into natural partners of the learning process	0%	1%	3%
How to conduct more effectively parents' meetings	0%	0%	0%

Personal and Institutional Changes

In many countries, including Bulgaria, principals now have heavy workloads and many are reaching retirement. At the same time school leaders need time, capacity and support to focus on the practices most likely to improve student learning. The current evaluation examined how the PTP affected the personality of the participants and most specifically their beliefs, leadership style and collaboration practices. Furthermore, among the program's key objectives is to develop a cohort of principals "to lead the way in innovating, modernizing and improving the Bulgarian secondary education system".

The online survey among PTP participants revealed that out of 87 respondents (which is more than 90% of the PTP alumni) 85 **believe that the program led to change in their leadership practices.**

In addition, reportedly, PTP helped participants to:

- **realize that their role as an "inspirer" is equally important as their "manager" role** (75% of respondents);
- **improve their strategic planning skills** (61% of respondents);
- **start active cooperation with fellow principals** (61% of respondents);
- **collaborate better with the teachers in their schools** (55% respondents).

During in-depth interviews, participants also shared how the program affected the following areas of activity: introducing innovation in school (principal's role in the process, collaboration with teachers, barriers to change, presenting innovation to students and parents, monitoring the implementation); the use of new technologies (areas, type of technology, teachers skills to apply new technology); formulating and meeting strategic objectives.

There were a couple of trends that emerged from these conversations which could be summarized as follows:

- **the perception about what "innovation" is differs widely among participants which also affects the way they see their role in introducing innovation in school¹⁸;**
- PTP participants do realize **it is the principal who must initiate and support the introduction of innovative practices at school**, as well as monitor their implementation;
- the majority of the interviewed principals admitted **they do not apply a formal evaluation strategy¹⁹ to capture and measure the effect of introducing new practices, technology and/or methods;**
- new technology is introduced in schools (especially those funded by ABF through other programs and projects) but principals admit that **teachers still lack the skills to use technology in class;**
- after their participation in the program and with the support of ABF most **principals feel a lot more confident to set themselves ambitious goals and to plan strategically.**

Application of Acquired Methods, Practices and Tools

As part of the PTP principals were taught how to develop and apply a number of tools and methods. Therefore, the effect from acquiring and applying these in practice is also at the centre of the present evaluation and has been analyzed with respect to individual instruments. The change at school community level is discussed in section IV.2.3. EFFECT ON SCHOOL COMMUNITY (where below mentioned methods and tools are further detailed), whereas here the evaluation



*The program has taught me to be braver in thought and action.**

* Principal at school in big town

¹⁸ These variations are due to a few key factors, e.g. age (younger versus elder principals), size and scope of the school, personal experience of the given participant, etc. For some principals innovation is anything that is new for the local context and needs, whereas for others innovation must be something never applied before at national or at least regional level.

¹⁹ There are a few principals who can provide certain quantitative indicators to demonstrate how students' performance changed after the application of a certain method, but even they admit measuring entry and exit levels was not accompanied by any complex methodology which takes into consideration various factors affecting students' grades.



elaborates on the effects which occurred at professional development level. Below is an overview of which and how key methods/tools/practices have been introduced in participants' schools as a result of the program.

a. School Innovation Plan (SIP)²⁰

Out of 87 respondents, **79 principals declare their school has a SIP of whom 73 state they have implemented (realized) their plans.** These are rather promising results especially taking into account that participants were initially motivated to develop one such plan in order to visit the U.S. The large number of principals applying SIPs in practice means that this document has real significance for the development of their schools and is a tool which is practice-oriented, rather than one of the numerous administrative documents with no added value.

Those participants who have chosen not to have such plans highlight the following reasons: "we have another similar document", "we have other priorities at the moment", "the new National legislation in the field of education", "issues in relation to their professional status". Nevertheless, it should be taken into consideration that their share is rather low and in some cases these principals actually set strategic goals and describe the means to introduce new practices in school, but have chosen not to name the given document a SIP.

b. Professional Learning Community (PLC)²¹

With regard to PLCs, **90% of the respondents state that they have initiated one or more PLCs in their schools.** Those participants who have not initiated PLCs point out the following reasons: "we have other similar groups and communities in the school", "lack of time", "lack of motivation among teachers".

Since the number of PLCs could also speak for the effect of the program at personal and institutional level, below is a statistic in this respect (*see Table 7*). What makes an impression is that **the number of PLCs does not necessarily lead to a higher total number of affected teachers and students hence bigger impact.** Additionally, at some point (when a school has more than three PLCs) there is certain saturation and the numbers start falling down. This is most probably due to the fact that a given school has a limited number of teachers and students and increasing the number of PLCs could mainly lead to diversifying the topics, rather than expanding the quantitative impact.

Another useful information is that the **average number of teachers involved in one PLC is 8,** whereas **each PLC has direct effect on an average of 185 students.** Taking into account that the total number of teachers and students affected by the introduction of PLCs as a result of principals taking part in the PTP might not concern unique individuals only, the declared results are as follows - **PLCs affected 1,380 teachers and 30,745 students.**

Table 9: Detailed Data on Initiated PLCs, n = 78

	Percent of principals with a given number of PLCs	Total number of teachers taking part in the given PLC/PLCs	Average number of teachers taking part in one PLC only	Total number of students the given PLC/PLCs directly affect	Average number of students taking part in one PLC only
Principals with 1 PLC	97%	662	9	12,609	166
Principals with 2 PLCs	47%	324	9	6,212	168
Principals with 3 PLCs	29%	159	7	4,226	184

²⁰ A SIP is a strategic document highlighting what innovation, how and why it will be introduced in a given school, as well as what its expected effect would be for the school community and the overall school development.

²¹ A PLC is a group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students

	Percent of principals with a given number of PLCs	Total number of teachers taking part in the given PLC/PLCs	Average number of teachers taking part in one PLC only	Total number of students the given PLC/PLCs directly affect	Average number of students taking part in one PLC only
Principals with 4 PLCs	17%	103	8	3,163	243
Principals with 5 PLCs	12%	93	10	1,516	168
Principals with 6 PLCs	5%	21	5	2,385	596
Principals with 7 PLCs	5%	18	5	634	159
Overall AVERAGE			8		185

Out of 77 respondents, 76 principals declare they support the work of the PLCs in their school as follows:

Table 10: How Principals Support PLCs (percentage of respondents, n = 76)

I allow PLCs members to speak up during pedagogical councils or other teachers' meetings	78%
I allow enough time for conducting PLCs meetings within the weekly school schedule	72%
I ensure physical room for the meetings of the PLC	64%
Through additional remuneration	41%
Other*	12%

* As "Other" means to support the work of PLCs, principals mention their own engagement in the process.

The above directly affects participants' own professional development, as through supporting PLCs they develop skills such as: delegating tasks to others, communication skills, leadership skills, etc. As it appears from the results, teachers who take part in PLCs transform into leaders themselves and are encouraged by the principal to express views and ideas affecting the whole institution.

c. Protocols²²

Out of **86 respondents 72 state that they use protocols in school**. Those not applying this tool indicate as reasons the following: "lack of motivation among teachers to use them", "teachers do not accept easily this particular tool", "these are difficult to apply", "protocols are somehow restrictive".

d. Other Methods and Tools

During in-depth interviews other tools and methods that were often mentioned as applied are: **UbD, project-based learning** and **interdisciplinary lessons**.

It is important to highlight that in Bulgaria principals are obliged to teach a certain number of hours in addition to their managerial tasks, which means that they **apply all acquired methods both as initiators/supporters and as implementers**.

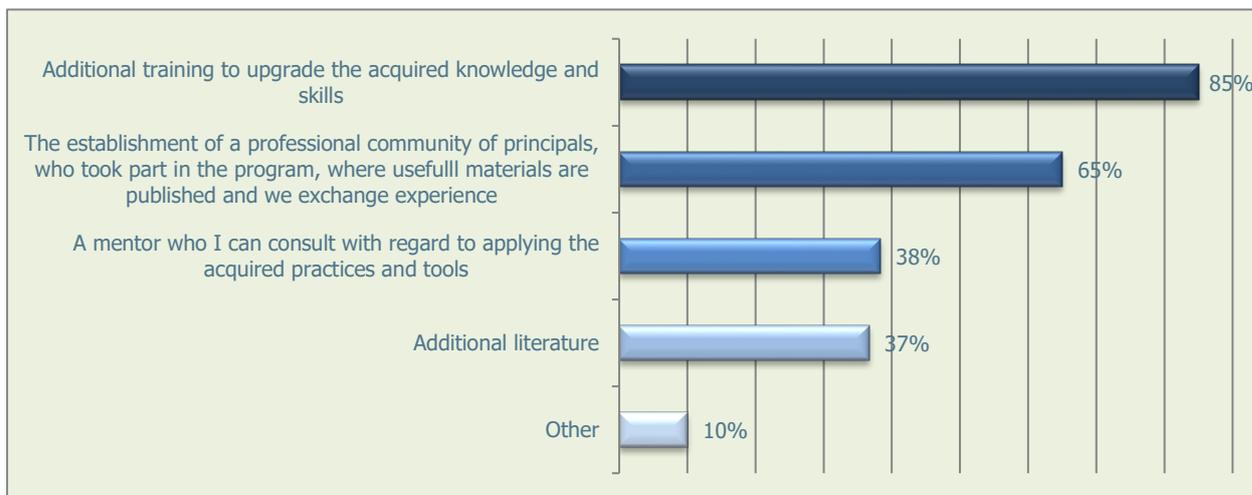
Additional Support Needed

Participants were asked to specify if and what type of support they need from ABF after the end of the program, in addition to the support they already receive from the Foundation. The aim is to find out if there are some other types of support, which ABF could consider in case a decision is taken to further

²² In education protocols are step-by-step guidelines—usually in the form of a simple one- or two-page document—that are used by educators to structure professional conversations or learning experiences to ensure that meeting, planning, or group-collaboration time is used efficiently, purposefully, and productively.

expand the programs and initiatives running at the moment.. Out of 86 respondents in total 60 principals declared they need additional support. With regard to the type of support needed, the majority declare they would appreciate **follow-up training** program to upgrade the acquired knowledge and skills.

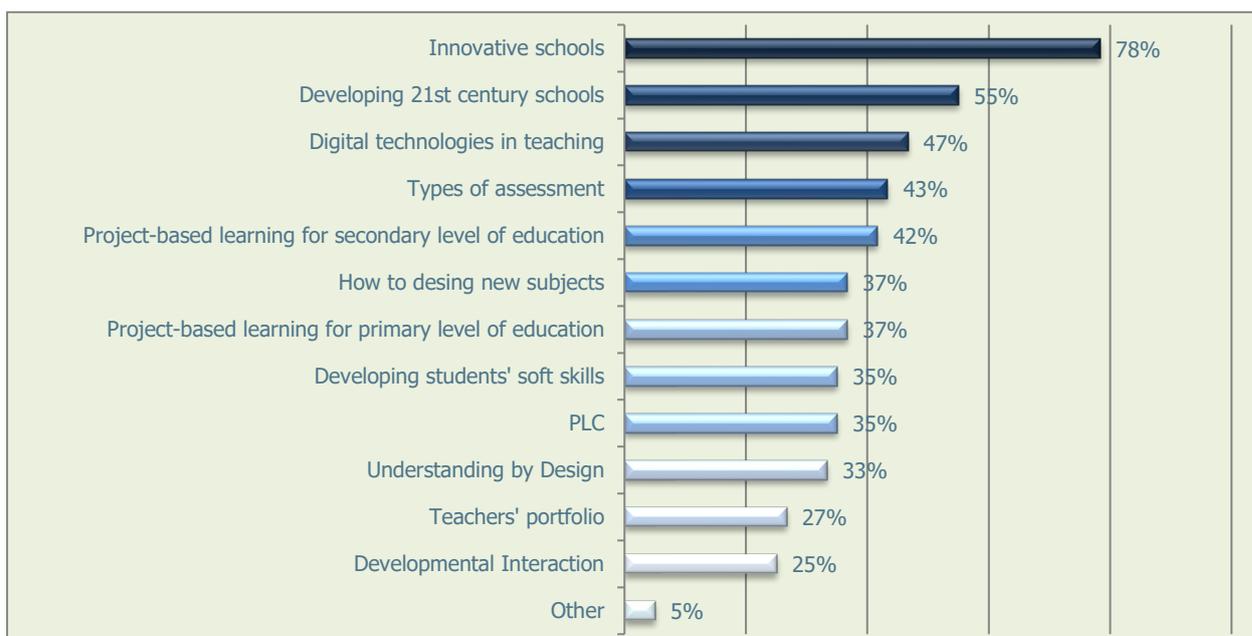
Chart 14: Type of Support Needed (percentage of respondents, n = 60)



During in-depth interviews participants expressed an opinion that ABF should equip them **with the right tools to measure the effect from introducing innovative methods and/or practices**.

In relation to what **type of training** activities PTP participants would like to take part in, a large proportion of the principals mention **"Innovative schools", "21st Century Skills", "Digital technologies in teaching"**.

Chart 15: Desired Topics for a Follow-up Training Program (percentage of respondents, n = 60)



The above leads to the suggestion that Bulgarian principals, similarly to teachers, see **ABF as a source of innovation** and expect the Foundation to keep **up to date with National and Global trends in the field of education**, nevertheless, unlike teachers, principals put the focus more on acquiring skills to introduce technologies in teaching practices, rather than methods - e.g. PBL, PLCs, etc.

IV.2.3. EFFECT ON SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Through evaluating the effect on the school community, the following **research questions** are answered:

Which parts of the SIP have been implemented? Which were not? Are there trends across or within cohorts? Are there patterns in terms of obstacles reported by principals?

-What are the major changes/effects?

-What has been the reaction of the students and teachers at the school and the community?

What has been the effect of the PLCs?

-What are the major benefits of the PLC for the participants?

Have the principals created a collaborative environment for the teachers, i.e. have they nurtured the establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLC), a major tool introduced during the principals' training program? What are the cultural tensions for them at Bulgarian schools?

What are the perceived barriers to perceived change?

When analyzing the effect of the PTP on the school community and in line with the scope of the above research questions, the current evaluation focuses on how the introduction of new methods and tools affects the whole school community. Due to the same limitations described with regard to measuring the effect of the ELTP, the present report focuses mainly on PTP participants' perceptions and observations with regard to how the school community reacts and performs as a result of being exposed to these new methods/practices/tools introduced by principals. Again, to comply with research questions, findings and analysis are presented per given tool/method.

School Innovation Plan (SIP)

The introduction of one such plan definitely has an effect on the whole school community, as this is a strategic document highlighting the school's priorities, as well as ways and resources to achieve these. Therefore, it is extremely positive that **all principals** who declared they have implemented (realized) their SIPs **state that they observe effect on students**.

To support their statements, PTP participants were asked to provide comments on **how they judge for the occurrence of such effect** and detailed information could be found in **Annex 4.1**. The answers given are always related to the purpose, topic and needs addressed with each SIP, therefore cannot be summarized or categorized.

Each SIP is a unique document which is developed in line with a given school need, challenge and/or context. Therefore, participants were also asked to explain what the **purpose** of their plan was/is. There are no specific trends observed, as indeed each principal chose a topic which is high on the agenda of his/her school at the moment when the plan was designed. Detailed answers of all PTP participants could be found in **Annex 4.2** and vary from addressing the needs of students with SEN²³, through increasing the quality of VET²⁴, to the introduction and use of new technologies, increasing students' attainment levels and many more. The collected information shows how the implementation of SIPs affects numerous aspects of school life, as well as various target groups.

In addition, PTP participants were asked to detail the **unique results** of the application of the SIPs in their school and information could be found in **Annex 4.3**. Results vary widely in scope and type, but what is observed is that each PTP participant has clear idea of what is attributed to the introduction of one such plan in the school and in most cases **reported results are directly linked to students' motivation, performance and attainment**.

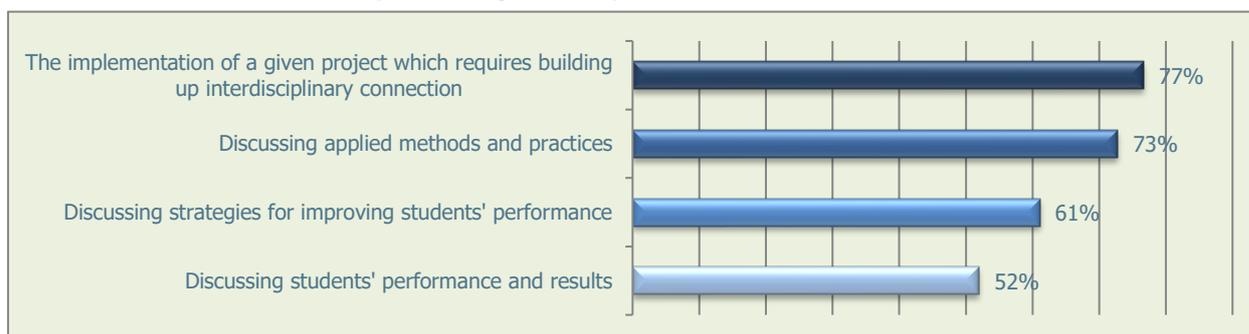
²³ SEN – Special Education Needs

²⁴ VET – Vocational Education and Training

Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

As highlighted in previous sections, PLCs were widely established across schools where the principal was a PTP participant. From the chart below it could be seen that their **purpose varies from a means to discuss methods and practices to the implementation of a given project.**

Chart 16: Purpose of PLCs (percentage of respondents, n = 78)



To complement the current evaluation report, **details on each PLC's topic, period of implementation, number of teachers participating and students affected** were collected and could be found in *Annex 4.4*.

As PLCs are not static and their proper functioning, as well as the effect they cause, require the collaboration of teachers in a given school, PTP participants were asked a set of questions in relation to **how this tool is perceived.**

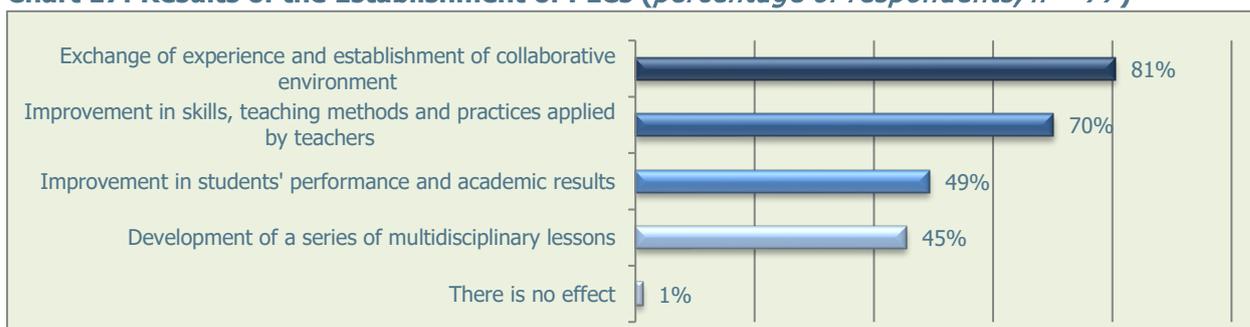
Table 11: Usefulness of PLCs (as perceived by principals and teachers, n = 77)

In your opinion how useful are PLCs for your school?	
3 - very useful	88%
2 - partially useful	12%
1 - not useful at all	0%
In your opinion how teachers participating in PLCs perceive these?	
They consider PLCs useful	77%
They apply PLCs but they are not convinced in their usefulness	16%
Other	6%
I cannot decide	1%
They refuse applying PLCs	0%
In your opinion how teachers NOT participating in PLCs perceive these?	
They are not convinced in their usefulness	39%
They show willingness to participate	27%
Other	14%
Indifference	10%

None of the principals who have initiated the establishment of PLCs in their schools consider this tool to be "not useful at all", however, among teachers applying PLCs there are still some who are not convinced in their usefulness, which might be attributed to the fact that they have been asked to join the community by the principal, but have not yet seen the positives of doing so. It is interesting to note that according to principals there are teachers who are currently not participating in PLCs but wish to join, which means that **the impact from applying this given tool is still to be fully revealed and is building up with time.**

PTP alumni elaborated on the **results** of the establishment of PLCs and below is a chart illustrating that among other positive effects, PLCs largely resulted in **exchanging experience and establishing a collaborative environment.**

Chart 17: Results of the Establishment of PLCs (percentage of respondents, n = 77)



Each respondent was then asked to provide **comments evidencing the occurrence of the indicated results** and detailed responses could be found in *Annex 4.5*. While the reported “evidence” is unique and cannot be systemized, as it varies from school to school, what is noticed is that in most cases **principals rely on observations and beliefs, rather than implementing a specific evaluation strategy which involves assessing the effect from the work of a given PLC, setting targets and measuring indicators. Yet, 10% of PTP participants claim that after the introduction of PLCs in their schools, even students’ results at National External Evaluation have improved.**

Protocols

Taking into account the nature of this tool, the effect of using protocols is expected mostly on the way teachers and principal communicate, collaborate and structure their discussions. As to protocols’ **usefulness**, below is a table which presents how these are perceived by PTP participants themselves and the teachers in their schools.

Table 12: Usefulness of Protocols (as perceived by principals and teachers, n = 72)

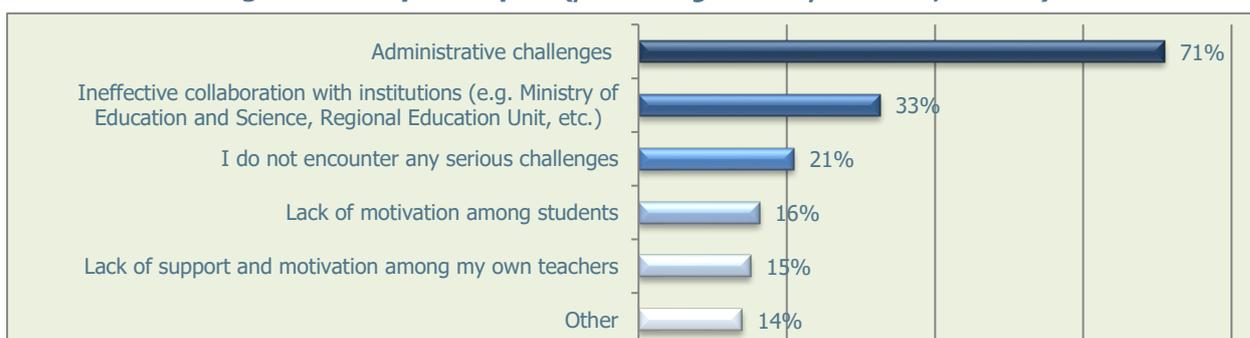
In your opinion how useful are protocols in your school?	Percentage
3 - very useful	63%
2 - partially useful	38%
1 - not useful at all	0%

During in-depth interviews it became clear that for many principals the use of protocols is a time-consuming task, as it requires a lot of preparation, as well as a lot of convincing among teachers that there is high benefit to apply such instrument in your daily work.

Challenges and Barriers to Change

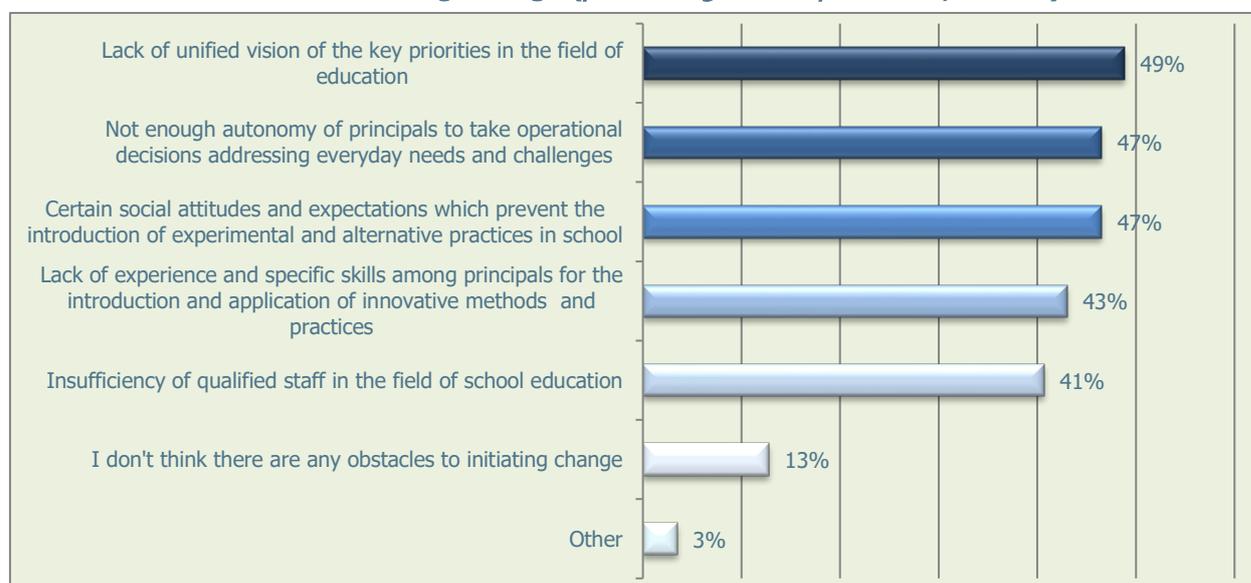
The effect that the PTP could cause is also directly linked to the challenges that principals face on a daily basis, as well as the barriers to introducing change. Below are two charts showing what these are, as perceived by the respondents to the online survey among PTP participants.

Chart 18: Challenges Faced by Principals (percentage of respondents, n = 86)



As it could be seen from the table above, principals are mostly facing **administrative challenges**, which affects their everyday work. It is interesting to note that this aspect is considered a real “burden” for them and all other potential aspects are lagging behind. What is positive is that not many respondents consider internal factors as challenges in their everyday work (e.g. motivation of teachers and students). This could suggest that principals are to a large extent in control of the factors they are directly responsible for and **have indeed transformed in better leaders**.

Chart 19: Barriers to Introducing Change (percentage of respondents, n = 86)



There is certain balance with regard to perceived barriers to change and it could be concluded that principals' views are to a large extent dependent on the specific context they work in, the needs of the school, students and parents.

Dissemination of Results among Fellow Colleagues

All PTP respondents declare that they have shared what they have learned during the training program with fellow colleagues. Below is a table presenting the dissemination means/channels used by PTP participants to promote the results of the program and the number of times information was shared through a given means/channel.

Table 13: Means, Channels and Frequency of Dissemination, n = 86

	How exactly did you share the acquired knowledge and skills with you colleagues? (number of respondents)	How many times did you share the acquired knowledge and skills? (number of times shared)
During an informal chat with colleagues in my school	73%	1,016
During a presentation/seminar/meeting in my school with colleagues from my school only	84%	342
Through a practical training event led by myself and organized for fellow principals	36%	176
During a seminar dedicated to various topics in front an audience not only from my school	43%	265
During a formal meeting with fellow principals from different school in the region and/or across the country	57%	343
During an event organized by the local Regional Education Unit	43%	265
Other	14%	89



As to the total number of individuals with whom information about PTP has been shared, the results are really impressive - **86 PTP participants claim that they have disseminated the program's results among 19,454²⁵ fellow colleagues.** These figures suggest an extremely high potential for long-term impact that the program could have at system level in the years to come.

To complement the analysis of potential dissemination means and channels, it should be also taken into consideration that PTP alumni could support ABF in training other pedagogical specialists. Therefore, participants were also asked to share whether they would like to **take part as trainers/lecturers in programs organized by ABF.** Out of 86 respondents, **50% declare willingness, 15% would join under certain conditions** and 35% prefer not to.

Details on the **topics** which participants, willing to take part as trainers in other ABF programs, feel most competent to train other pedagogical specialists in could be found in *Annex 4.6.*

IV.3. OTHER FINDINGS IN RELATION TO ELTP AND PTP

There are certain results which were registered without originally being sought after, or are dependent on various factors. Nevertheless, these effects complement the evaluation and reveal more comprehensively what long-term impact could be expected in the years to come. Therefore, this section is specifically dedicated to these outcomes.

IV.3.1. UNPREDICTED SHORT TERM RESULTS

While the dissemination of the ELTP results among fellow teachers is an anticipated result, the application of ELTP methods and tools among non-participants could be qualified as a "desired" but an "unexpected explicitly" effect. Therefore, this phenomenon was examined through the information collected via the online surveys among non-participants, where the following findings were registered.

The results of the online survey among non-participants show that **project-based learning, application of new technologies** and **PLCs** lead the chart of methods/practices/tools that are applied most by this group of teachers. PLCs wide application among non-participants could be attributed to the fact that ELTP participants have become instrumental for the establishment of such communities within their schools, which automatically multiplies the effect of the program since **PLCs** require and encourage collaboration among several fellow teachers hence **are powerful impact boosters and multipliers of results on their own.**

Similarly to ELTP participants, when asked which method causes **change among students**, the largest proportion of the 55 respondents, who claim they have never heard of the program but apply certain methods, indicate "effective application of new technologies" (36%) and "project-based learning" (22%). The majority of this group of non-participants explained that they know this change has occurred because their **students learn new lessons more effectively**, followed by students **finding lessons more interesting and demonstrating engagement.** As to the 132 respondents who admit they have heard about the ELTP, they also **see biggest change when applying "new technologies" (34%) and "project-based learning" (19%).**

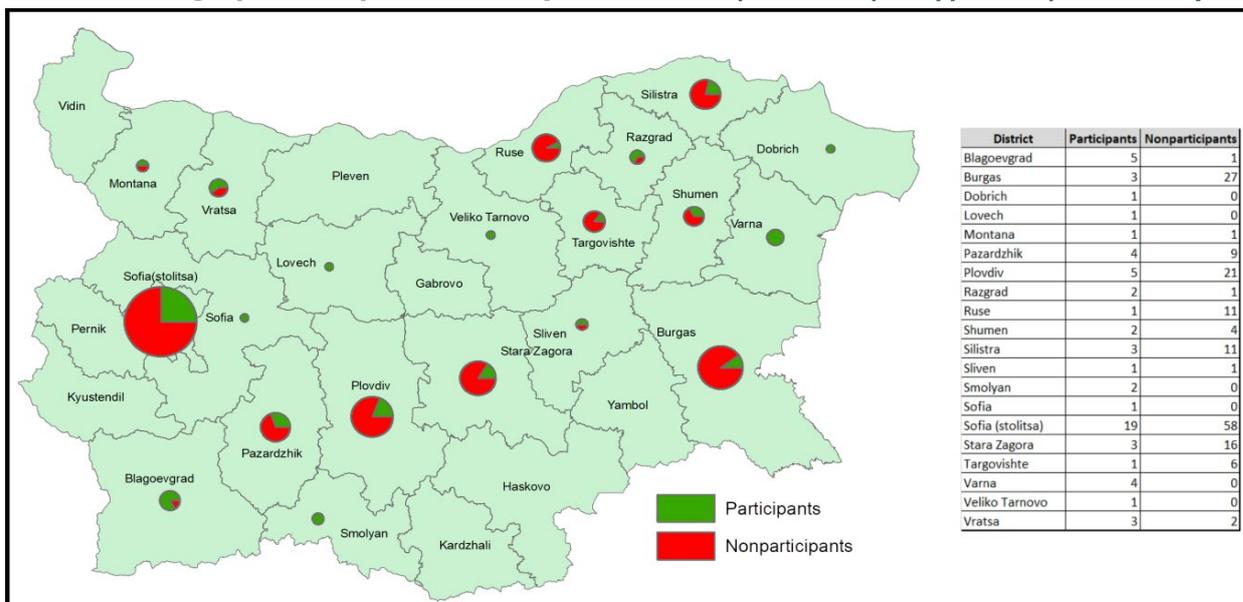
In order to complement the evaluation of how the effect of the ELTP multiplies below is some data on non-participants' job position, type of school, geographical location and age.

- The majority of respondents are **teachers** (89%);
- The majority of respondents are **from secondary schools** (91%);

²⁵ During the online survey, PTP respondents were asked to declare the indicative number of people that they have told about their participation in the program. It might be assumed that these are non-unique numbers, hence the big figure.

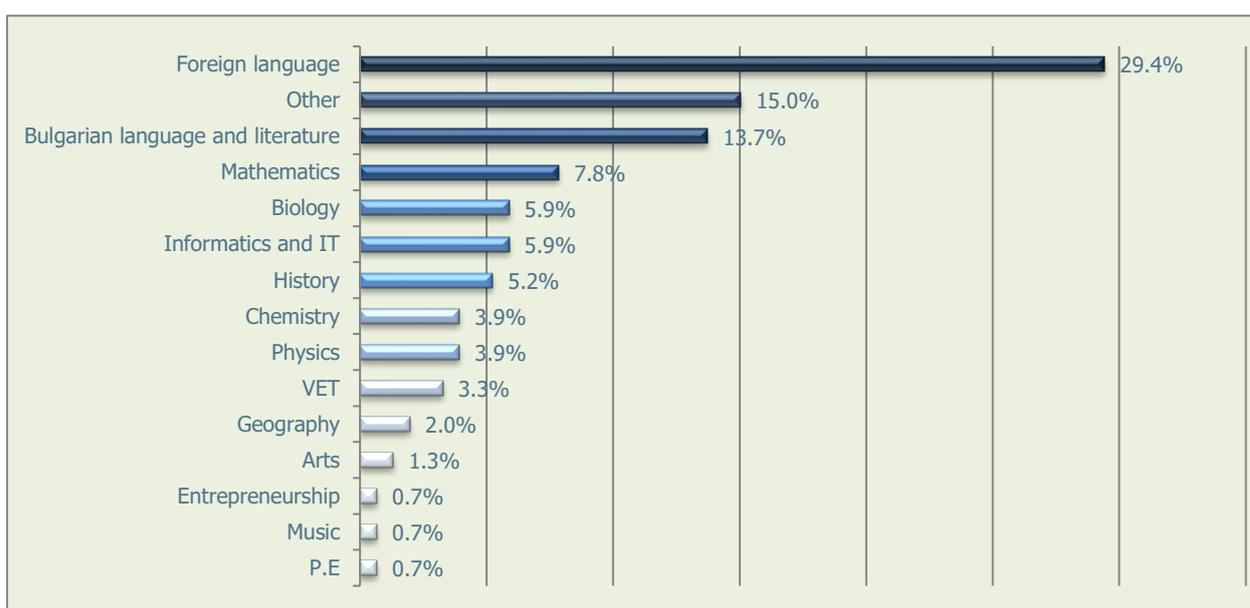
- Compared to ELTP participants, the geographical representation of the non-participants **covers 14 districts** (oblast) as shown in Chart 20;

Chart 20: Geographical Representation (number of respondents per type and per district)



- The majority of the non-participants are **above 40 years of age** (85%);
- The distribution per **subject** taught is as shown in Chart 21.

Chart 21: Distribution per Subject Taught (percentage of respondents, n = 153)



As it could be seen from the information above, the background of non-participants who have been informed of and/or apply methods/practices/tools that are thought as part of the ELTP is more diverse than that that of the ELTP participants. This leads to the implication that **the impact from the program is expanding in terms of quantity (number of people affected) and subject areas**. The trend in relation to age, occupation and type of school, where results are manifested, however, remains the same as among ELTP participants.

IV.3.2. DIFFERENCES IN THE RESULTS DEPENDING ON VARIOUS FACTORS

In line with the requirements of the RfP for the current evaluation, the report also examines how different aspects in relation to participants' background affect the manifestation of certain results. For the purpose of the assessment the indicators that are examined are as follows:

- Year of training program;
- Geographical location;
- Age and experience of the participants;
- Type of school;
- Subject thought (ELTP only).

ELTP:

The number of respondents from the different **years of training** are distributed as follows: 2012 – 7 participants; 2013 – 13 participants; 2014, 2015 and 2016 – 15 participants each. It is interesting to note that in relation to how the year of participation affected the results, there are a few key trends. While at the very beginning of the program the focus was more on acquiring teaching and assessment skills, in the last year of the ELTP, participants reported that they have mainly mastered competences with regard to formulating and assessing learning outcomes, as well as how to apply technology in class.

Moreover, it seems that in 2012, participants did not acquire that many methods/tools/practices, as during the years to follow (or at least this is what they report). While at the beginning of the program, Understanding by Design was an aspect which reportedly was not grasped by many teachers, during subsequent years, this became one of the key concepts participants attribute to ELTP. The same trend could be observed in relation to how various methods/tools/practices are applied. In relation to effect on students, participants from 2014 report "biggest change" compared to their fellow alumni, which might be attributed to the fact that these teachers have been applying a given method for the last couple of years and now observe the first signs of short-term impact.

With regard to additional support, the results show that alumni from 2012 and 2013 are less in need for support from ABF, whereas more recent participants declare they would appreciate continuous assistance in order to further upgrade their professional skills. Currently, the majority of teachers are eager to take part in additional training programs organized by the Foundation.

As to barriers to change, these also vary over the years. For example, if at the very beginning the key obstacle to introducing innovative practices in school, as perceived by teachers, was "the resistance of the society to new teaching methods", during the last few years the focus shifted to "the limited autonomy of teachers". In addition, with time, ELTP participants become more and more sensitive to the lack of common vision for the education sector in Bulgaria.

With respect to their **geographical location**, respondents are divided into teachers from large (over 200,000 population), medium (between 50,000 and 200,000 population) and small (up to 50,000 population) towns. It appears that for teachers from small towns the key competences are "assessment of students" and "leadership skills", whereas their fellow colleagues tend to apply more complex tools and concepts such as "the six facets of understanding" and "designing a performance task". As to UbD, PLCs and PBL, these are methods/tools applied a lot by everyone irrespectively of where they teach. However, teachers from small towns report project-based learning (PBL) as the method causing most substantial effect among students. Participants from small towns require more additional support not only in the form of a follow-up training program, but also report need for the establishment of professional community of teachers for sharing experience.

Respondents are divided into two groups depending on their **age** – up to 40 years (26 teachers) and over 40 years (41 teachers). It is interesting to note that there are no major deviations between what knowledge and skills senior and junior participants declare as acquired and applied, as well as how the



effect among students occur. Moreover, the additional support they need and the barriers to change are perceived in the same manner.

There are only 3 respondents who have declared they teach in a Primary school, 1 – in a United school (Obedineno) and all other participants are teachers at Secondary **schools**, which does not allow for any reliable comparative analysis to be performed.

As to **subject taught**, teachers were divided into English language teachers (who represent the largest group of ELTP participants - 48) and all others (25 teachers teaching various subjects). Non-English language teachers declare that as opposed to their fellow colleagues, ELTP helped them most in learning how to apply new technologies in class. In terms of methods and tools which caused change among students, there is one significant difference observed relating to the effect achieved as a result from the application of Rubrics – English language teachers declare a lot higher impact this tool has on their students.

PTP:

Out of 87 respondents in total there are 32 principals from 2014, 29 from 2015 and 26 from 2016. With time, participants seem to have learned more about the Development Interaction Approach (DIA), planning and supporting students' engagement,, multidisciplinary lessons and PLCs. With regard to the most pragmatic things taken away from the program, there are no major deviations, however, it is interesting to note that working with parents and museums were never among the top-ranked answers. Principals from the last **year of training**, compared to those from 2014, report they need more additional support and most specifically – the establishment of a professional community of principals where experience to be shared. As opposed to the first-year alumni, participants from 2016 predominantly see as barriers to change the lack of autonomy of school principals and certain social attitudes towards introducing innovative methods at school.

With regard to **geographical location** the same approach to group participants as with ELTP was applied (please see above). With regard to acquired knowledge and skills – no major deviations are observed, apart from the fact that the majority of principals from small towns put the emphasis more on their transformation into "inspirers". It is interesting to note that participants from large towns appear in a lot less need of additional support compared to their fellow colleagues. In respect of barriers to change, PTP respondents from small towns indicate the lack of qualified staff, as the main obstacle to introducing change.

PTP participants were also divided into two groups depending on their **age** (up to and over 50 years of age), as there are no principals who took part in the program and are currently below the age of 40. Senior respondents highlight the skills they have acquired to organize learning activities better, whereas the others focus on their role to support the introduction of innovative elements in the school curriculum. There is major deviation observed with regard to the additional support needed – senior principals are in more need of assistance after the end of the program.

As opposed to ELTP, PTP provided an opportunity to a substantial number of principals of Primary **schools** (27), thus allowing for a comparison to be made with their fellow colleagues managing secondary schools (50). For secondary school principals key priorities in terms of new knowledge acquired through PTP are planning learning activities and increasing students' engagement. Their fellow colleagues from primary schools declare that they have learned a lot about how museums and other cultural institutions could assist the development of a more appealing curriculum. For primary school teachers the transformation from managers to inspirers is of great value. In a primary school context, it is mainly the social attitude towards new methods that represents the biggest barrier to change, whereas for secondary school principals this is the lack of qualified staff.



IV.3.3. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUCCESSFUL USE AND APPLICATION OF THE KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES ACQUIRED THROUGH ELTP AND PTP

Apart from the factors examined in the previous section, there are also a number of other aspects which might affect the way programs' results are manifested. Below the report speculates on three hypotheses that ABF would like the evaluation to check:

- ? *"The effect of ELTP at a school level depends on many factors, including the number of teachers participating in the program: with one teacher, the effect dwindles down very quickly; with more teachers participating in the program the possibilities for getting more tangible improvements/changes/innovations grow"*

When analyzing the above hypothesis, a few things should be taken into consideration. First of all, it is among ELTP selection criteria that participants' English language skills are good enough so that they can take part in the component which takes place in the U.S. and for which no translation is envisaged.

Due to this requirement and as registered through the surveys among participants, the majority of the ELTP alumni are English teachers (out of 66 respondents 47 are English teachers). The language requirement predefines to a large extent the number of teachers applying and participating not only in general, but from a given school as well.

Secondly, the speed with which the effect dwindles down cannot be examined at this point, as no entry nor exit levels among teachers and students were ever measured to allow for quantifying a certain effect over a certain period of time. Moreover, during in-depth interviews with ELTP participants, it became clear that if the principal has not participated in any program funded by ABF or is not supporting the teacher in introducing an innovative method acquired during the training program in the U.S., not much could be done and hence the effect might not even occur despite the number of teachers trained by the ELTP.

On the other side, the participation of more than one teacher per given school in itself speaks for the principal playing a supportive role of such training events and the application of innovative practices in class. Therefore, schools where more than one teacher has participated in ELTP were also subject of special attention during in-depth interviews and a **case study** is dedicated to this phenomenon (see *Annex 2*). For sure, it appears that if more teachers are trained in the U.S., it is easier to introduce innovative practices across various subjects and levels of education.

Having said that, it is also important to highlight that the above mentioned positive effects could be expanded through multiplying the results of the program via dissemination and the establishment of PLCs (where ELTP participants could easily pass on the experience gained in the U.S. and get more teachers to apply new methods in their teaching practice).

Also, each ELTP teacher has access to a different number of students, which additionally affects the scope of the anticipated effect. Moreover, during in-depth interviews, it became clear that the number of students a teacher teaches could change from year to year and in some other cases teachers work with different children every school year. As to collaboration with fellow colleagues, again, this varies widely among participants and the subject they teach. To sum up, from the collected information on the short-term results of the ELTP, which was analyzed throughout the current report, **it appears that the effect of ELTP might depend on the number of teachers participating, but more importantly it depends on the way a given participant disseminates and multiplies the results at different levels, the support he/she receives by the school community (and mostly by the principal) to introduce innovative practices, as well as the number of students and the subject taught.**

- ? *"The constructive and active involvement of the school principal is a key factor for the expected overall positive changes at school level after participation at ELTP"*

During the evaluation, it became clear that there are two prerequisites to ensure constructive and active involvement of the school principal: 1. If the principal has taken part in PTP or any other program funded by ABF, or 2. If the principal is in general an open-minded and supportive individual. In both cases, it is

the professional development and personality of the principal which affect the collaboration with the ELTP teacher, but also with all other teachers in the school.

To illustrate how a principal could positively affect expanding the impact from ELTP, as well as any other changes in result of applying new methods and practices, a **case study** is dedicated to this phenomenon (see *Annex 2*).

Taking into account: the centralized Bulgarian education system where the relationship principal-teacher is predominantly vertical; the results of the online survey among teachers where they elaborate on barriers to change; and the reported during in-depth interviews success stories/challenges, **it can be confirmed that the principal is a key factor not only for the expected overall positive changes to occur, but also for the scope and size of the impact.**

Moreover, it is the principal who initiates the establishment of PLCs (excellent means to involve more teachers in introducing change at school level), SIPs (an instrument to set priorities and introduce innovation), encouraging and supporting teachers to apply new methods, etc. Therefore, it is no surprise that only a year after the launch of ELTP, PTP was also established and currently principals' alumni pool is even larger than the teachers' one.

? *"The program could have more results if continuous professional support is provided to the participants"*

The hypothesis that continuous professional support is crucial for expanding the results of both programs was confirmed from the declarations made by ELTP and PTP participants (please see sections on programs' effect on professional development). Moreover, the above was reconfirmed when our team met two of the American instructors from Bank Street College (Ellis Scope and Kyle Haver) and visited an alumni retreat where principals and teachers (most of whom former PTP and ELTP participants) gathered to exchange best practice experience and upgrade their knowledge and skills as part of ABFs new initiative – ABF Education Academy²⁶.

As highlighted by Ms.Scope and Mr.Haver, over the past few years ELTP and PTP alumni have gone a long way in their own professional development which does not end with their return from the U.S. or the end of the training seminars in Bulgaria, since most of these principals and teachers continue to be part of a larger community of people eager to introduce positive change in Bulgarian schools.

Moreover, during the in-depth interviews with PTP and ELTP participants, they were constantly referring to other ABF initiatives which support teachers' and principals' efforts to increase the quality of education. One such initiative is the "Education Technology Specialist" - a unique educational qualification program created by ABF in collaboration with Columbia University in New York, which puts modern technology and its meaningful use in the modern educational process.

All the information collected during the evaluation suggests that **both programs have more results and higher potential for impact than they could have had, precisely because ELTP and PTP are not one-off initiatives, but are only one aspect of the comprehensive support ABF provides in order to increase the quality of education in Bulgaria.**

IV.3.4. OTHER OBSERVATIONS

During the evaluation, it was revealed that not many schools publish information on their websites on the fact that their principal and/or teachers have taken part in an ABF-funded program. While initiatives such as Erasmus+, projects funded by the Ministry of Education and Science and other partnerships are widely announced, there is hardly any information on ELTP, PTP and the skills acquired by participants which directly affect the whole school community.

²⁶ As a continuation of ELTP and PTP, ABF Education Academy provides quality training programs and credit-qualifying programs in Bulgaria for school directors and school teams as well as innovative training sessions for teachers well into their careers.



This issue is not subject to the present study and deserves to be investigated in more detail, however, it should be taken into consideration that the lack of visibility might lead to negative effects on the potential impact the programs might have, if the general public is not aware of the fact that principals and teachers are continuously developing their professional skills through various means and programs.

Therefore, it is recommended that ABF considers the possibility to introduce formal requirements for maintaining the visibility of the programs and the achieved results.

V. CONCLUSIONS

V.1. CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING ELTP

The evaluation shows that the ELTP is a program with great reputation among its participants, who acknowledge its high quality and in particular the way it is organized. Moreover, the majority of teachers highlight its practice-oriented nature, see the program as an inspiring experience with clear objectives and as “the most useful of all such qualification programs that currently exist in Bulgaria”. The fact that the training program is conducted in the U.S. is of tremendous value to all participants who consider the school visits as a unique opportunity for direct observations and sharing experience with fellow American colleagues.

Among many other knowledge and skills, ELTP participants declare that the program was the key to acquiring modern pedagogical practices, improving their assessment competences, as well as learning how to use technology in class. The training program at Columbia University taught teachers how to apply learner-centered concepts such as Understanding by Design, Project-Based Learning, Authentic Assessment, the Six Facets of Understanding and Professional Learning Communities. For some tools, such as Protocols and Rubrics, the majority of teachers have never even heard before. What is really impressive is that all methods learned during the training sessions are applied in participants’ teaching practice, which makes the program highly purposeful. While teachers seem to be using the practices and methods for assessing students’ achievements to which they were exposed at the U.S., an aspect which is still to be worked on is a comprehensive strategy for registering and measuring change among students before and after a certain method is applied.

ELTP trainees declare that most students perceive positively the introduction of new teaching practices and among those with biggest effect are project-based learning, application of technologies in class and students taking over the responsibility for their own performance (authentic assessment, rubrics, etc.). It is worth noting that when describing the initial impact on their students, teachers emphasize a lot more on “how students feel and think”, than on their attainment levels. From the information collected during the evaluation, it can be concluded that ELTP led to engaging all parties in student-centered learning, where enhancing students’ critical thinking skills is at the focus of teachers’ efforts.

ELTP contributed to building a cohort of education leaders who are early adopters and pioneers of innovation and it also transformed their beliefs and values. As a result of the program, participants rethought the way they teach and realized that every teacher could and should be an education leader.

The fact that a large proportion of the ELTP alumni continues the cooperation with ABF, declares desire to take part in follow-up training programs and even expresses willingness to train fellow colleagues, is a proof that the program motivates teachers to continue their professional development and improve further their competences.

The dissemination of the program results among fellow teachers was carried out through various means and channels and has reached nearly 19,000 teachers throughout the country. The results of the survey among non-participants clearly shows that the majority of these teachers have not only been informed of the program as such, but also apply a number of the methods and tools attributable to the ELTP training curriculum.



Despite the efforts and investment made by ABF, Bulgarian teachers are facing a number of challenges which might to a certain extent affect the manifestation of the ELTP results. Among these are the outdated school infrastructure and the lack of technological innovations in the classroom, the ineffective collaboration with other institutions (such as the Ministry of Education and Science and Regional Education Authorities) and the lack of support and motivation among teachers in general. As to the most significant barrier to introducing change, ELTP participants identify the lack of unified vision for what the key priorities in the field of education should be. To address the above mentioned challenges and upgrade further their professional skills, the majority of the teachers rely on ABF for continuous support and even expanding the training curriculum to also include topics of National importance, such as “Innovative Schools”.

There are only five ELTP participants who are no longer working in the field of education, which means that the knowledge is retained in the sector. Moreover, twelve other alumni representatives were promoted to senior positions where they can transfer the results of the program at system level.

V.2. CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING PTP

The PTP is perceived as one high-quality, very useful, inspiring and practice-oriented program, which exceeds initial expectations. While its transnational component is highly praised by those participants who visited the U.S., the seminar in Bulgaria is equally appreciated. As to the added value of the overseas component, it is the direct observation of how practices are applied that stands out among all other reasons indicated by the alumni with regard to the usefulness of traveling abroad.

The biggest effect of the PTP seminars on the participants seems to be changing their beliefs and behaviors. As a result of the training program, principals also learned how to establish PLCs, how to support teachers in organizing multidisciplinary lessons, as well as how to support innovation in their schools.

Despite the fact that PTP participants claim they knew about many of the approaches presented to them during the seminars, they admit that it is the PTP that helped them understand how to properly apply a certain method in practice. In line with its initial objectives, the program indeed led to change in participants’ leadership practices through improving their strategic planning skills, helping them realize their role as “inspirers”, enhancing their collaboration with teachers and encouraging them to start active collaboration with fellow principals. The majority of the PTP participants apply in their practice the key methods and tools they have acquired during the training program, among which are school innovation plans (SIP), professional learning communities (PLC), protocols, project-based learning (PBL), interdisciplinary lessons and UbD. As one of the most pragmatic things taken away from the training sessions, the majority indicated that they now have enhanced skills to plan realistic objectives for the school development.

Out of 87 principals, 79 declare their school has a SIP of whom 73 have implemented in practice their plans. The SIP appears to have important value for the strategic development of the school and is not regarded as an administrative burden. From the information collected during the evaluation, it seems that a SIP has an effect on the whole school community and all PTP participants who have implemented their plans state that such effect has occurred also at students’ level. Detailed explanation as to how principals judge of the above are collected and annexed to the present report. Due to the fact that each SIP is a unique document which is developed in line with a given school’s needs, goals, challenges and context, there are no distinctive trends observed in relation to what SIPs’ purpose and topic are, what changes they caused and how these changes could be evidenced at school community level, apart from the fact that in many cases principals mention enhancement in students’ performance, motivation and attainment. Most of the interviewed PTP participants mention that at some point they will develop new plans, or have already done so. If no plans were developed or implemented, the reasons are mainly as follows: the school uses other means to set strategic goals; personal reasons (such as change of job position); it took some time to decide how to organize the process and now even these principals are about to develop/realize a SIP.



PLCs do exist at schools where principals took part in the PTP and these are vibrant – 78 out of 87 principals state that they have initiated one or more PLC in their school. The total number of teachers involved is 1,380 and the total number of students affected is 30,745. Details on each and every PLC were collected and annexed to the report, but predominantly this tool is used to discuss applied methods and practices at school, as well as the implementation of a given project which requires interdisciplinary connections. In general, teachers (especially those taking part) perceive PLCs as useful. The biggest effect from their establishment is the exchange of experience and the establishment of a collaborative environment. In addition, PLCs turn out to be among the most powerful instruments to disseminate PTP and ELTP results and ensure impact is achieved at system level.

Protocols are used by a large proportion of the PTP alumni – 72 principals, all of whom find this instrument useful for conducting structured discussions and communicating effectively with colleagues on topics of key importance to the school.

Not all PTP participants are in need of additional support, but those declaring willingness to receive assistance (60 out of 86 principals) would mostly appreciate a follow-up training program and the establishment of a professional community to exchange useful materials and experience. In addition, some tools to measure the effect from introducing innovative methods would be most welcome.

Principals are facing mainly challenges of administrative nature and as barriers to change they indicate the lack of unified vision about what the key priorities in education should be, the lack of autonomy of principals and certain social attitudes towards non-conventional practices that are introduced at school.

While the number of trained teachers per school does matter, this appears not to be the most important prerequisite for achieving wider impact. It is extremely positive that sometimes more teachers from a given school have been trained under the same qualification program, however, what seems crucial is how this person applies what has been learned (quality), how he/she disseminates to colleagues and multiplies the results (exploitation), as well as whether the school leadership supports innovation and progress (sustainability).

Good leadership is one of the most important prerequisites for change to happen and innovation to be introduced at school level. Without the support of a principal who is also an inspiring leader, it appears that the impact from any qualification program or funding would be either rather limited, or could not occur at all.

In addition, in order to achieve sustainable and long-term impact it is not enough to launch a one-off initiative targeting a specific issue or need. Without the continuous support and all the other initiatives implemented by ABF, it is highly likely that ELTP and PTP had remained at the level of any common qualification program offered at National level. Placing these two programs in the context of the Foundation's comprehensive strategy to enhancing the quality of education in Bulgaria is what expands their positive effect and ensures maximum results.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The PTP and ELTP no longer exist in the format they were known during the years of their implementation (2012 - 2016) and new programs have now been launched by ABF. Therefore, the recommendations below focus mainly on aspects which are applicable to the beneficiaries (principals and teachers), despite the type of initiative they are engaged in by the Foundation.

- To achieve wider impact at system level, it is necessary that the efforts to build a cohort of skilled and forward-thinking principals and teachers are sustained and continued through expanding the size and scope of the offered qualification programs;



- ELTP and PTP alumni are willing to continue their cooperation with ABF and their competences could be used to multiply the results among new participants, as well as to disseminate further the application of certain methods and tools. For this purpose some training programs on how to effectively present and share best practice experience could be organized for a pool of principals and teachers who can become "ABF's ambassadors of change" for higher quality of education in Bulgaria;
- ABF could consider the opportunity to cooperate with national education authorities in relation to new initiatives such as "Innovative Schools", in order to expand the achieved so far effect and ensure ELTP and PTP results are further exploited;
- It will be highly beneficial to principals and teachers, if ABF trains them or equips them with tools to register, monitor and measure the effect achieved as a result of applying innovative methods and practices at school level. This would also allow for assessing and quantifying the long-term impact of the programs funded by the Foundation;
- To obtain an even more comprehensive overview of the achieved effect at school community level, ABF to consider direct observations of students' behavior and performance as a result of the application of certain methods acquired by PTP and ELTP participants. However, this could be only achieved if specific indicators to be monitored and measured (at least twice over a suitable period of time) are set;
- Even though the Foundation's efforts to improve the professional qualification of teachers and principals and equip them with new skills and practices to apply in the classroom are mainly focused at secondary education level, it might be worth taking into consideration the implication made by a lot of participants during in-depth interviews that "it all starts at primary school level". The foundation could investigate the potential benefit and opportunity to support primary teachers as well;
- The transnational component of the programs (in particular the visit to a country which most teachers and principals would have not had the chance to visit either way) was a valuable aspect which distinguished ABF's initiatives from anything else available on the market for continuous professional development of Bulgarian teachers. Preserving or reintroducing this element, even for less in numbers participants, could be of great value;
- ABF could investigate the possibility and benefit to also train some of the experts at regional education authorities, thus ensuring that the impact of the programs for teachers and principals would be supported when results are applied in practice;
- Challenges and barriers faced by Bulgarian principals and teachers change over time, therefore, it might be useful if the Foundation conducts regular needs assessment among its target beneficiaries, in order to ensure that its programs correspond to National and Global trends.
- ABF to introduce explicit requirements and guidelines for participants on how to ensure the visibility of the programs and acknowledge the benefit as a result from the funding received.