



Project Proposal 2013-2015

WHEN WANDA MEETS ISSA

Arteveldehogeschool (Artevelde University College) – **VBJK** (Centre for Innovation in the Early Years) –
ISSA (International Step by Step Association)

Wanda is a method to support professional group reflection and by so doing improve quality of the education and care of children and their families. It is a method that can be adapted to ECEC and socio-educational organisations in different contexts and in different countries.

The first stage of the project 'When Wanda meets ISSA' is financed by ESF (European Social Funds), which implies that the priority for the moment is the European Member States. But we would like to underline that our intention is to find out ways to also involve other ISSA countries in the future.

1. Framework

In 2010 Arteveldehogeschool (University College in Gent) and VBJK (Centre for Innovation in the Early Years), with ESF (European Social Fund) funds, started a project called WANDA to develop a new method of professionalization for low qualified practitioners in the 0-3 sector of the Flemish Community of Belgium.

The methodology used in Wanda has its roots in the French 'Analyse de Pratiques' and in the Anglo-Saxon 'Appreciative Inquiry'.

Analyse de Pratiques started in the '60ies in France thanks to Michael Balint, an English-Hungarian psychoanalyst that analysed with a group of doctors their own way of working. The method found later its way in the social sector and got influenced by the systemic theory (Favre, 2004; Sellenet, 2004). Analyse de Pratiques is a method to support groups and to make them feel valorised.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) has been developed in the 80ies in the US by David Cooperrider and Srivasva. The starting point of AI is that positive questions can bring to effective changes faster and better than problem-centred strategies. It starts from the strengths that are present in people and organizations in order to encourage them to grow (Cooperrider, 2003).

The Wanda project is a new adaptation of these two methods that has been successfully developed in 12 ECEC initiatives and in 7 training centres in the Flemish Community of Belgium.

The framework in which this method takes place is the “reflective practitioner” (Schön, 1983) and the concept of “competent system”. As pointed out by the CoRe Research commissioned by the European Commission DG for Education and Culture, and carried out by the University of Gent and the University of East London in 15 European Member States, ECEC quality is strongly related to a professional competent workforce. But a competent workforce has to take shape in a “competent system”, which includes collaborations between individuals, teams and institutions, as well as competent governance at policy level. A competent system has to link the staff’s initial good education to the possibility of constantly reflecting on their ideas and practices (Urban, Vandenbroeck, Peeters, Lazzari, Van Laere, 2011). Therefore we should recognize in the concept of quality the same complexity that lives in our society. Quality is then linked to negotiation (Moss, 2009) and practitioners become *researchers of daily life*. The complexity of our society and its constant transformations need a workforce that is capable to deal with differences and commonalities by valorising them. Therefore, in order to reach quality in the educational system, we need practitioners that are able to negotiate, to deal with uncertainty, to reflect on the meanings of what they think and do (Schön, 1983), to question themselves and constantly find the balance between *agreement* and *disagreement* in the group, as stated also in the document edited by the DECET/ISSA Working Group on Professionalism (DECET/ISSA, 2011). The complexity of the modern European societies and the changes which they have undergone in the last decade made the very family institution and the educational system change. It is then impossible today to define a single model of “the family”, “the child”, and “the school”. At the same time it becomes urgent to reflect on these concepts, to deconstruct their meanings, in order to rediscover them in a negotiating process.

2. Development of the “When Wanda meets ISSA” project

In January 2013 the Wanda project won the ESF-ambassador award in the Flemish Community of Belgium, which means that this project can be adapted to other European Member States.

After the ISSA/DECET Conference of 2012 in Opatija, ISSA showed interest on the Wanda method and on its possible link to the vision expressed in the ISSA Quality Resource Pack (QRP).

The ECEC workforce today has some important challenges to overcome:

1. International researches point out the importance of a) having well trained and well paid staff; b) giving appreciation to staff (Children in Europe 2012; Oberhuemer 2005; Unicef Innocenti Research Centre 2008). In many European countries the staff in the birth to 6 services is low qualified. On one hand there are low qualified practitioners in the birth to 3 services, on the other hand there are low qualified employees that assist high qualified ones (teachers, pedagogues) in the educational facilities (mostly 3 to 6 years age group). In some countries the “assistants” represent 50% of the staff (Van Laere, Peeters and Vandenbroeck 2012). According to OECD, the explanation of the low qualification of

assistants finds its roots in the fact that working with young children is often considered related only to physical care, a task which any woman can perform (OECD, 2006: 163). The salary of assistants is significantly lower than the one of teachers (OECD, 2006: 164; Van Laere, Peeters and Vandenbroeck 2012). Moreover, assistants have fewer opportunities for professional development and for growing in their competences. The job mobility is therefore low and this ensures that there is a shortage especially of male workers in the childcare sector in many European countries.

2. The increasing diversity in society requires reflective practitioners/teachers (Children in Europe 2012; DECET and ISSA 2011). There is a need for methods that stimulate the reflection of the workforce.

The Wanda method aims to increase the professional development of low qualified practitioners (see 1) and to improve the reflective competences of this group in a context of increasing diversity (see 2).

Wanda can play an important role in relation to these two areas, because with this method 1) practitioners become able to “stay in their questions” before reaching the answers; 2) we bring together in the dialogue low and high qualified practitioners/teachers and assistants in order to build a “professional learning community”. The group is supported in dealing with uncertainty and with different points of view. By using different “glasses” (the glass of the child, the parent, the practitioner, the community, the organization etc.), the participants learn to change their point of view, to enrich their empathic competences, to co-construct knowledge. This kind of approach is very relevant and in line with ISSA’s approach towards professionalism, as underlined in the ISSA Quality Resource Pack (QRP) and in the document published by the DECET/ISSA Working Group on Professionalism (DECET/ISSA, 2011). It is a bottom-up method of quality improvement that starts from daily practices in order to reflect on them in a circular way.

3. Project and Activities

As stated before, the roots of Wanda are in the French method of Analyse de Pratiques, and in the Anglo-Saxon method of Appreciative Inquiry. These two methods have been adapted, de-constructed and re-constructed, in order to “fit” in the Flemish Community of Belgium. The same thing will be done with the Central-Eastern European Countries that will participate in this international project. The aim of the *Wanda meets ISSA* project will be indeed to re-elaborate the Wanda Method in order to build a specific method of reflection that the EU ISSA countries will be able to use with practitioners in their contexts, starting from their own daily practices. With this project we will focus on the **birth to 10 years age group**, in the Baltic and Central-Eastern European countries. More specifically we will focus on **4 countries** to pilot this approach on quality improvement.

Roles and Steps:

- The ISSA NGOs staff will be introduced with the Wanda method and its relevance for working on daily practices and with the resources in the Quality Resource Pack - **Leiden, 8-9 December 2013.**
- The organizations that are interested prepare a short “proposal” (see doc.) where they try to underline how they would like to pilot Wanda in their context for improving the quality of practices. The application has to be sent to the following address: nima.sharmahd@vbik.be **before the 7th of January.**
- When approved, reps of organizations will be involved with the Project Team in the organization of the “Train the Trainer” (specific 2 days workshop about the Wanda method and the role of the facilitators of Wanda sessions)– **January – February 2014.**
- The *Train the Trainer* workshop will take place in each of the 4 countries: the “Wanda team” will provide a 2 days specific training about Wanda with the NGO experts/staff – **February – March 2014.**
- The NGO reps will follow the process of Wanda sessions in their own country: each person who’s been trained will test Wanda in his/her context, and document the process and the experiences coming out during the piloting. At least two-three groups of practitioners in each country will begin using Wanda in their context with 1 session every 4 – 6 weeks. Each session lasts 1½ to 2 hours and has to be guided by a trained facilitator (the facilitator can be the NGO expert him/herself or a coordinator/director etc. trained and followed by the NGO expert that participated to the *Train the Trainer*). It will be important to document the sessions (and the questions, doubts etc.) in English in order to share them with the Wanda team during the online supervision moments. The documentation of the process is crucial also for supporting the Wanda Team in building the “working tool” (the adapted Wanda booklet) contextualized to the countries where the method was piloted. During this period the “Wanda Team staff” will be able to go once to each country involved for a face to face local meeting – **March – September 2014 (the supervision moments will go on until the end of the project).**
- The first “point of support” comes from the person responsible for the project in each country. The second “point of support” comes from the Wanda team, with direct supervision moments through Skype or the ISSA Online Community. NGO reps will choose, together with the team, who will come to Gent or Brussels to bring together good practices for the process development in order to prepare the “final working tool” with texts and images of good practices in their own country – **Face to face meeting with all the countries, September or October 2014.**
- Validation of the first version of the “working tool” (booklet) by ESF (European Social Fund) – **January 2015.**
- The method and the “working tool” will be disseminated in the pilot countries and in all countries in ISSA network – **Dissemination, February – August 2015.**

Aspects to take into account in order to participate to the project

Which countries	European Member States and Candidate Member States
What kind of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Typology</i>: ECEC initiatives / primary schools / out of school care - <i>Children age</i>: Birth to 10 (with a focus on birth to 6)
What kind of groups	<p>Wanda can be done with 1) a team that work in the same setting, or 2) with a group of practitioners/teacher/assistants that work in different settings and want to reflect on their practices.</p> <p>*Each group should count from 5 to 15 people. *Staff with lower qualification (secondary, upper secondary level) should be part of this team meeting. Ideally, there is a mix of low- and high-qualified (bachelor master) staff.</p>
How many teams/groups per country	At least 3 teams/groups in each country
How many Wanda sessions for each team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>During the whole project</i>: at least 8 sessions - <i>From March to September 2014</i>: at least 3 sessions <p>*Each session lasts 1½ - 2 hours.</p>
How often	The Wanda sessions should take place every 4 to 6 weeks for each group
Documentation	Each partner in each country should document the sessions for its own benefit, and in order to have materials that can be discussed during the on line supervision moments with the Wanda team. Examples of the documentations can be used to create the final "working tool".
Online supervisions with the Wanda team	Each 6 - 7 weeks through Skype and the ISSA Online Community
Train the trainer	Participants who are interested in the project will follow a 2 days training in their own country in February/March 2014.
Face to face meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 face to face meetings in each country (with participants of that specific country) - 1 face to face meeting with all the participants

December 2013	January 2014	February 2014
8-9 Dec.: Presentation of Wanda in the workshop for ISSA members	Before the 7 th of January: countries have to express their interest for participating in the project. “Selection” of the countries Organizing a <i>Train-the-trainer</i> for 4 learning networks in 4 different ISSA EU countries.	Organizing the <i>Train the trainer</i> for 4 learning networks in 4 different ISSA EU countries. Conducting the Train the trainer for the 4 learning networks in 4 different ISSA EU countries.
March 2014	April 2014	May 2014
Conducting the Training of Trainers for the 4 learning networks in 4 different ISSA-EU countries Individual coaching for the learning networks from distance (supervision, communication) through ISSA platform Each learning network in each country documents their own learning process for their own benefit and for the benefit of the other learning networks, as well as an input for the final working tool.	Individual coaching for the learning networks from distance (supervision, communication) through ISSA platform Each learning network in each country documents their own learning process for their own benefit and for the benefit of the other learning networks, as well as an input for the final working tool.	Individual coaching for the learning networks from distance (supervision, communication) through ISSA platform Each learning network in each country documents their own learning process for their own benefit and for the benefit of the other learning networks, as well as an input for the final working tool.
June 2014	July 2014	August 2014
Individual coaching for the learning networks from distance (supervision, communication) through ISSA platform Each learning network in each country documents their own learning process for their own benefit and for the benefit of the other learning networks, as well as an input for the final working tool. Face to face evaluation meeting for each learning network in each country	Individual coaching for the learning networks from distance (supervision, communication) through ISSA platform Each learning network in each country documents their own learning process for their own benefit and for the benefit of the other learning networks, as well as an input for the final working tool. Face to face evaluation meeting for each learning network in each country	Individual coaching for the learning networks from distance (supervision, communication) through ISSA platform Each learning network in each country documents their own learning process for their own benefit and for the benefit of the other learning networks, as well as an input for the final working tool.
September 2014	October 2014	November 2014
Developing, in close collaboration with ISSA, a method	Developing, in close collaboration with ISSA, a method	Developing, in close collaboration with ISSA, a method

and a working tool based on the experiences of the 4 learning networks and the existing Wanda materials in Dutch. 1 or 2 people from each learning network will come to Ghent or Brussels in order to discuss the overall learning process and results.	and a working tool based on the experiences of the 4 learning networks and the existing Wanda materials in Dutch.	and a working tool based on the experiences of the 4 learning networks and the existing Wanda materials in Dutch.
December 2014	January 2015	February 2015
Developing, in close collaboration with ISSA, a method and a working tool based on the experiences of the 4 learning networks and the existing Wanda materials in Dutch.	Validation of the first version of the product by European Social Fund experts in the Flemish community of Belgium.	Waiting for a decision of validation of the product (a positive decision is needed in order to get the money to disseminate) Start dissemination in the 4 countries and in the ISSA network.
March 2015	April 2015	May 2015
Dissemination in close collaboration with the ISSA partners	Dissemination in close collaboration with the ISSA partners	Dissemination in close collaboration with the ISSA partners
June 2015	July 2015	August 2015
Dissemination in close collaboration with the ISSA partners	Dissemination in close collaboration with the ISSA partners	Dissemination in close collaboration with the ISSA partners

Contacts:

Nima Sharmahd:

VBJK | Vernieuwing in de Basisvoorzieningen voor Jonge Kinderen |
Centre for Innovation in the Early Years | Centre d'Innovation de la
Petite Enfance ad. Raas Van Gaverestraat 67A, 9000 Gent, Belgium/Belgique
Tel. +32 (0) 9232 47 35
Mobile +32 (0)492649031
e-mail: nima.sharmahd@vbjk.be

Annelies Velghe:

Artevelde University College, Bachelor in the Pedagogy of the Young Child
Campus Sint-Amandsberg, J. Gerardstraat 18 - 9040 Sint-Amandsberg
Mobile: +32 (0) 474886442
e-mail: annelies.velghe@arteveldehs.be

Mihaela Ionescu:

International Step by Step Association (ISSA)
Hooglandse Kerkgracht 17R, 2312 HS Leiden, The Netherlands
Tel: (+31) 6 835 44 071
e-mail: mionescu@issa.hu

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