



REGIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES & FACILITATORS
When We Share, We Win

collaborative professionalism at its best

Best practice examples

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Bildungsdirektion
Steiermark



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Regional Learning Communities and Facilitators

About the project

The project “*Regional Learning Communities and Facilitators*” - is an Erasmus+ funded strategic partnership. The project’s goal is to create active, local, regional and European learning communities, promoted by Regional Learning Facilitators. To gain ownership of public issues and concerns, we need new organizational concepts , e.g. analogue and digital networks and support structures that take into account the value of informal networks. By learning communities, we mean forms of exchanges and cooperations organized by individuals, supported by the community and ideally also by education authorities. Members of the community are invited to create, share, exchange and further develop ideas for the education sector – e.g new teaching materials and innovative teaching methods. With the knowledge of existing challenges on different system levels, these Learning Communities can develop and suggest realistic solutions to current issues in everyday education.

The project team

The *Regional Learning Communities and Facilitators’* project (ReLeCoFa) is an Erasmus+ funded strategic partnership collaboration between:

- bit Management, Graz, *Austria*,
- Bildungsdirektion Steiermark - the Education Authority of Styria, Graz, *Austria*,
- Frida Utbildning Didaktikcentrum, Vänersborg, *Sweden* and
- Future Balloons, Figueira da Foz, *Portugal*.

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES - AN OVERVIEW

Within the ReLeCoFa project, best practice examples of networking between teachers and stakeholders at local, regional, national and international levels have been collected from all partner countries, i.e. Austria, Sweden and Portugal. The aim of the sample collection in this paper is to identify success factors necessary for the success of cooperative structures. The goal is to identify forms of cooperation of both informal and formal nature and to draw conclusions as to why the principle of cooperation is of central importance and benefit to the actors involved.

On an **international level**, we have focused on finding information about the most important research on this topic in our respective country. The overview described is not solely with a European perspective as Norway, the United States and more countries are included in the latest research. The first part of the paper focuses on the most important facts stated by this research. We have also looked for international initiatives of different origins such as networks and co-operations within the educational sector initiated by the EU, as well as a combination of the EU and national examples.

On a **national level**, we have focused on finding information about Initiatives from the Ministry of Education, initiatives from the Universities and possible cooperations between researchers and universities as well as bi-national examples springing from a wider perspective.

On a **regional level**, we have focused on finding information about initiatives from the regional government or department of Education, Initiatives from the regional Universities on region specific teacher trainings. We have also focused on networks which originated from organizations specific to a region and based on specific regional criteria or aspects. Here, the cooperations of the Austrian region Styria, represent the majority.

On a **local level**, we have focused on finding information about initiatives from different types of organizations, associations or professional collaborations as well as school consortiums. We have also focused on initiatives within individual schools working on strategic school development or specific goals. Examples have been collected from Sweden, Austria and Portugal.

For each level, the chapter ends with a summary of the **success factors and criteria** as well as a **reflection** about the origins of these. We have tried to connect all success factors to the common

denominations for the best practice examples mentioned in Hargreaves' and O'Connor's study about Collaborative professionalism.

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL - RESEARCH

Collaborative professionalism

Collaborative professionalism: when teaching together means learning for all is a recent study by Andy Hargreaves and Michael T. O'Connor, published in 2018¹. The study gives a good overview of the State of the Art of collaborative professionalism at present. The following pages are excerpt from the above mentioned study. Hargreaves and O'Connor also describe what distinguished the different stages of development and ways of networking in history leading up to today's best practice of professional collaboration. The professional collaboration in the school has gone through five development phases, the first phase being a long period of individualistic teaching culture. Subsequently, four distinct phases of professional collaboration can be distinguished:

1. *The collaboration is expanding/increasing*: teachers are starting to collaborate as an alternative to individualism. Research shows the positive effects of collaboration on student learning and performance.
2. *The collaboration is questioned*: Not all forms of teacher collaboration produce positive effects, e.g. those that are based on words rather than action or "crucified collegiality" that are imposed "from above".
3. *The collaboration is designed*: Different models for teacher collaboration are developed, for example. professional learning communities and joint action research.
4. *The collaboration changes*: Teachers' collaboration deepens into collaborative professionalism, with clearly defined structures and methods. The forms of cooperation permeate all parts of the teachers' work and are based on positive and trusting relationships between those involved.

Definition: Hargreaves and O'Connor define the concept of collaborative professionalism by contrasting it with the concept of professional collaboration. Professional collaboration is about how people collaborate within a profession. It is a descriptive concept that describes how people in a

¹ Hargreaves, A. & O'Connor, M.T. (2018). *Collaborative professionalism: when teaching together means learning for all*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin.

professional group work together. Collaborative professionalism is about how people collaborate more professionally and practice their profession more collaboratively. The concept is normative and aims to strengthen and improve one's professional practice with others.

“Collaborative professionalism means that teachers and other educators jointly transform teaching and learning to help all students create satisfying lives filled with meaning and success. Collaborative professionalism is evidence-based but not data-driven and is organized through rigorous planning, profound and sometimes demanding dialogues, sincere but constructive feedback and continuous collaborative investigation. The school's culture is permeated by the joint work that characterizes collaborative professionalism. The teachers care for each other and have a collegial solidarity in the challenging work they do together. They collaborate professionally and have a responsive and inclusive approach to students, each other and society”

Hargreaves and O'Connor have studied and analyzed five different collaborative models in four continents (Asia, North America, South America and Europe). The collaborative models have been focused on various so-called “message systems” (systems that exist within the school and which are used to convey to students what is important to learn, such as the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, school as organization and the relationship with society) and have involved at least three teachers in or outside a particular school. The study has focused solely on collaboration between educational staff and not collaboration with, for example, companies or colleges/universities. All five models have been applied for at least four years.

[10 principles of collaborative professionalism](#)

Based on the analysis of the five case studies, ten principles of collaborative professionalism have been formulated. These principles show that collaborative professionalism seems to have the following ten characteristics that distinguish it from ordinary professional cooperation.

1. Collective autonomy

This means that teachers are more independent from bureaucratic top management, but more dependent on each other. Instead of focusing on data (for example, test results and statistics of various kinds) as a guide for what teachers do, greater emphasis is placed on teachers' professional judgment based on different types of evidence. The most important thing is that teachers continuously examine their practice and that they use both the quantitative data of the large data sets and their own

professional judgment. Collective autonomy also means that teachers are open to feedback, inspiration and support.

2. Collective capacity

Collective capacity is the conviction that, together with joint efforts, we can make a difference for our students, regardless of the circumstances. It appears that teachers have an incorrect view of the abilities of, for example, minority groups or students from socio-economically vulnerable environments. This approach does not exist in a collective capacity.

3. Collaborative investigation

Teachers routinely explore problems, issues or differences in their practice together to improve or change their methods. It is sometimes called collaborative action research or spirals of inquiry. The process involves first identifying problems in practice and then systematically examining them to make positive changes. The teachers start from a variety of types of evidence, make plans and implement them together with the starting point of what they come up with, and then start from the beginning with a new cycle. Collaborative research works best when it is integrated into daily work, and not a method or process that is applied separately. Collaborative inquiry is an approach that all teachers share and a basic attitude that is embedded in the teaching itself.

4. Collective responsibility

Everyone has a mutual obligation to help one another and take care of common students. Collective responsibility is about our students rather than my students and about our schools in our community, not my school on my little ground. Teachers help each other get better and so do schools in the same area. If all schools get better, the whole community becomes stronger, which means that children are better prepared when they start school and have better ability to learn. There will always be a need for some measure of accountability in most public school systems. But the accountability must be the small residue that remains when the responsibility has been subtracted.

5. Joint initiative

Collaborative professionalism is characterized by fewer, but greater, initiatives. Teachers take on a bigger responsibility, and the system does not prevent them from doing so. People do not feel that they have to wait to be told what to do. They realize that it is better to ask for forgiveness than to ask

for permission. Teachers are inspired and given the opportunity to try new approaches that engage students and bring new life to their own teaching desire. Expectations, processes and funding structures in the school or school system encourage teachers to share what they have started with so that other teachers can also become involved and learn from it. Collaborative professionalism is about groups of strong individuals who want to help each other and learn from each other.

6. Mutual dialogue

Both collaborative professionalism and professional collaboration mean that teachers talk to each other. But the conversations differ. In both cases they are always polite and often personal. Teachers exchange thoughts and talk about experiences and problems. Where there is collaborative professionalism, the conversations involve more than that, they are also work. Troubled conversations occur and teachers take active initiative when motivated. Feedback that is given is sincere and respectful conversations are made and, for example, differences in approach, teaching material or the handling of students with challenging behavior. The talks become a genuine dialogue where both parties value each other's contributions. Often, the conversation is moderated and there are clear rules that you should listen first and ask the other to clarify before making any objections.

7. Cooperative work

Joint work consists of teaching as a team of teachers, planning together, conducting joint action research, providing structured feedback, conducting peer review, assessing student work and so on. The joint work involves documents and products or phenomena (e.g. a lesson, a syllabus or a feedback report) and is often facilitated by special structures, tools and protocols. In collaborative professionalism, conversations are part of the work.

8. Common goals

Collaborative professionalism means pursuing, formulating and promoting a common goal that goes beyond test results or even academic performance in itself. It means a work with educational goals that allow children and young people to develop and flourish as whole people who can live meaningful lives and find work that feels meaningful to themselves and fulfils a purpose in society.

9. Collaboration with students

In school development, students are usually targets and objects of change and the teachers' professional cooperation. Rarely are they also involved as subjects. But in the most in-depth forms of collaborative professionalism, the students are actively involved in creating change together with the teachers. The student's voice is heard.

10. Everyone has an overview and has access to the big picture

Collaborative professionalism is characterized by the fact that everyone has a comprehensive, overall view, unlike the most common case where only the management sees the entire picture while everyone else works in their own little corner. In a collaborative professionalism, everyone works together and creates the picture (together).

Summary

If the ten principles above would be turned into questions, they could sound something like this:

1. Do you want to - and can you make important professional judgments together?
2. Are you truly convinced that all your students can develop and succeed - and are you prepared to make sure they do?
3. Do you regularly ask questions about your own teaching and that of others' - and do you intend to act based on the answers?
4. Do you feel almost the same responsibility for other students in school as for your own - and do you take responsibility for helping them with others?
5. Do you take the initiative to renew and change or help a colleague who needs it without being asked?
6. Do you have intense conversations or even heated discussions with colleagues about ideas, plans, politics or the best way to help students who have difficulties and need a new way to move forward?
7. Do you have colleagues that you work with in a really satisfactory way, inside or outside of school, for example around planning, teaching, reviewing or giving feedback?
8. Are your teaching and your own learning permeated by meaning and a deeper sense of moral purpose - and do you use your influence and authority to help students to find goals and meaning in life?

9. Do you sometimes work with your students as well as for them?
10. Do you have a holistic perspective on your organization, an understanding of how everything is connected and a sense of responsibility for your own place in the big picture/organization?

On the tendency to unintentionally introduce new educational models or methods:

Four situational and cultural aspects that are indispensable in applying these forms of cooperation in schools or school systems elsewhere:

1. What did it look like *before* the model was introduced?

In order for the collaborative models to achieve good results in the short term, they must be part of a longer-term process to change culture and the community.

2. What other forms of collaboration are used in *parallel* with it, both at school and in the culture that characterizes the entire society?


The form that a collaborative system or practice takes in a school reflects the entire culture of society. Models for professional collaboration cannot be lifted from one context to another as they are. If the result is to become collaborative professionalism, the culture must be taken into account.

3. What *support* exists around the model, for example in the form of public support, time for collaboration or larger professional networks?

All schools are part of different systems and must harmonise with these, or - if the systems are not on track - at least with each other.

4. What are the *links* between the model and collaborative ideas or concrete collaboration outside the school, for example in schools in other countries, in international research, on the Internet or elsewhere?

A system can get productive stimulation through external disturbances. When new knowledge regularly seeps in and out of a system, it causes the system to change and also stimulates other systems.

Moving from professional collaboration to collaborative professionalism:		
From		To
Words or action		Words and action
Tight performance goals		Meaningful learning
Occasional meetings		Embedded culture
Administrator-controlled		Teacher led
Too comfortable or strained/ forced		Genuine and respectful
Talk - One way communication		Dialogue
For students		With students

What do we need to do to strengthen the collaborative professionalism of the school?

- stop spending too much time on reference data groups at the expense of a broader collaborative investigation - combine the two
- always adapt collaborative models drawn from other countries and cultures to fit the new context
- take measures to counteract a high staff turnover that undermines the collaborative culture
- continue to develop the collaborative professionalism and move from regular conversations and meetings to in-depth dialogue, feedback and joint research.
- continue to seek constructive feedback from colleagues both within and outside the own community
- allow students to be part of the process and create the change, together with their teachers
- utilize the advantages of digital technology with sound judgment, carefully considering which solutions can *support* collaborative professionalism
- develop more collaboration with other schools and school systems, especially in environments characterized by competition

***Collaborative professionalism:
when teaching together means learning for all.***

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

The all-virtual example - LinkedIn

The facilitator within this network is an Artificial Intelligence - AI - solution recommending suitable courses where like-minded people can meet. The B2B network LinkedIn consists of twenty-seven million learners and nearly thirteen thousand enterprise customers. Some courses are made available for free and are accessible for as many as seven hundred and twenty-two LinkedIn members.

Using the LinkedIn network as a base for reaching stakeholders provides many advantages. Unlike most traditional work-, learning or in-service training related networks, LinkedIn is 100% virtual and provides an extensive and up to date digital representation of the workforce. Furthermore, it is the largest professional network which has correlated data such as previous and current job, occupation, skills, industry etc. within their Economic Graph.

The LinkedIn *Learning* community is one part of the bigger LinkedIn professional community. Unlike the case when taking a “traditional” course or training, another advantage of taking an online course is that the certificate is obtained immediately after finishing the course and the skills can be added to the learner’s LinkedIn profile instantly. Furthermore, the updates to the participant’s LinkedIn profile are spread further within the personal LinkedIn network which in turn enables others within the network to endorse the newly gained competence and skills, i.e., also experts.

The greatest benefits with using the all-virtual LinkedIn as a network for collaborative professionalism, learning and sharing knowledge with other professionals is that it is ongoing and promotes lifelong learning. It provides a mix between asynchronous and synchronous (watch parties) learning forms and the necessary conditions to create a good and efficient environment for sharing and collaborating professionally.

Conclusions to be drawn about LinkedIn's success factors for collaborative professionalism and how to organize sharing according to the above organizational structure. If you have a very large community, the sharing works also when only a few of the participants are active, e.g., course viewers and trainers.

The EPALE example

EPALE - the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe - is funded by the Erasmus+ programme and is part of the European Union's strategy to promote more and better learning opportunities for adults. EPALE is a European, multilingual, open community for adult education professionals, including teachers and trainers, guidance and support staff, researchers and scientists, and policy makers.

EPALE is a common platform for collaboration and information combined with educational initiatives and events. It provides an efficient environment for sharing and cooperation. The platform enables professionals in the educational field to connect with each other and learn from colleagues across Europe - through blog posts, forums, the project partner search tool and real meetings.

How does the process or transfer or the sharing of knowledge and/or skills differ from that in other "traditional" networks? EPALE provides an information and networking platform in the field of adult education thereby also supporting and consolidating professions in the field of adult education. The transfer and sharing of knowledge happen mostly through the community and networking.

The greatest benefit of EPALE is that it provides a platform specifically for the exchange in adult education that supports knowledge transfer and networking.

EPALE's organizational structure provides the necessary conditions to create a good and efficient environment for sharing and cooperating and hence encourages collaborative professionalism.

The eTwinning example

Just like EPALE, eTwinning is an online platform for education. The difference is that eTwinning functions as an enhanced online community for schools in Europe.

It is co-funded by the Erasmus+, the European program for Education, Training, Youth and Sport and offers a secure platform for all school staff - principals, teachers of all subjects, not only languages as one may think, but also librarians and other staff involved in education, teaching and learning activities. The basic criterium is that you have to be working in a school. eTwinning was launched in 2005 as the main initiative of the European Commission's eLearning program, and since 2014 the initiative has been fully integrated into Erasmus +.

European Schoolnet, the international partnership of 34 European Ministries of Education is in charge of eTwinning's Central Support Service to develop learning for schools, teachers and pupils across Europe. eTwinning is further supported at national level by 38 National Support Services.

[eTwinning.net](https://www.etwinning.net), the eTwinning portal is available in 28 languages, offers news from the eTwinning countries, professional development opportunities, information about recognition as well as examples of successful projects.

Originally, cooperation was intended only for schools within the European Union, however, now schools in neighboring countries are also invited to participate in the collaboration. Currently (2021), there are 44 countries represented on the eTwinning platform and the professional community engages hundreds of thousands of teachers, who learn from each other, share practice and ideas but also cooperate with their students. This makes eTwinning the biggest teacher network in the world.

As the name implies, the aim is to use information technology and digital tools and find one or more school partners for collaboration on a chosen theme. There are possibilities to develop projects with or without a toolkit, involve students in different ways, present project results on the eTwinning project's twin space, create forums, chat rooms and digital communication meetings. The projects can be run independently or as a complement to Erasmus+ Mobility or Strategic partnership projects.

As a teacher you can search for cooperation partners according to country, cooperation topics, language, subject/s and age group/s taught and there are also eTwinning forums and groups where teachers interested in a certain topic can search for partners and collaborate.

There are 14 featured *Groups* moderated by experienced eTwinners. These are:

1. Coding at schools
2. English as a Second Language
3. Entrepreneurship in education
4. Bringing eSafety into eTwinning projects
5. French as a Second Language
6. STEM
7. Sustainable Schools Network
8. Game-based classroom
9. Inclusive Education

10. Creative Classroom
11. Virgilio - Your eTwinning Guide
12. Gender - Know How to Stop Stereotypes
13. Integrating Migrant Students at School
14. School Leadership

To help new members, the platform offers both self-teaching material and so-called Learning Events as well as online seminars on different topics. Learning Events normally take between four and six hours. There are also online seminars. These are live online video sessions of one hour where teachers have the chance to learn, talk and discuss a variety of themes. These courses and seminars are led by experts and as they do not require a lot of time, they are mainly to be seen as a boost and inspiration. They provide the participants with an introduction to a topic, new teaching materials or knowledge and also help with cooperation ideas.

Collaborative professionalism is further encouraged through peer learning and eTwinning's featured events, professional development workshops and thematic and annual eTwinning conferences. There are also longer courses, running 3-4 months. These courses are led by a group of experts and the participants are actively involved through tasks and group work, asynchronous and sometimes synchronous activities, online discussions etc. Each year, eTwinning promotes one course with the aim to provide knowledge about online moderation, teaching and learning and courses for eTwinning ambassadors. An eTwinning Moodle has been created for this purpose and participants get a certificate for each fulfilled course.

To provide expertise for the courses and professional development training, there are the so-called Friends of eTwinning. These are bodies, organizations and initiatives that share the values and the objectives of eTwinning. The collaboration between eTwinning and its Friends aims to share their expertise to teachers through online seminars, workshops and disseminating high-quality material.

To support teachers on all levels, also locally, there are so called eTwinning ambassadors. An experienced user of eTwinning can apply with the National Support Services to train and become an eTwinning ambassador. Currently, there are more than 1500 ambassadors, i.e., experienced members, who also share good practices and learn from each other to develop their skills in order to provide support and guidance to all eTwinners.

One of the most important elements of eTwinning is collaboration among teachers, students, schools, but it is also possible to include parents and local authorities in the cooperation. Although these groups of users can never register for an individual profile, they can be invited as guests to a project.

Schools who actively use eTwinning in their everyday learning activities can apply for an eTwinning School label. The Mission statement of the so-called eTwinning schools are the following five commitments.

eTwinning schools are committed to:

- shared leadership, for the responsibility of organization and the decision-making process. The school principal and teacher leaders actively support all staff to become involved in eTwinning activities.
- collaboration, sharing and teamwork where the teachers in the school, work together as a team to plan their eTwinning and other pedagogical activities and share their experiences and practices with their colleagues, both inside and outside their school. They collaborate on providing an eTwinning action plan and use it to drive innovation and change in their school and beyond.
- students as agents of change. Students have a role to play in the development of the eTwinning School. They promote eTwinning to teachers (both already engaged or who are not yet involved) and parents, acting both as drivers and as a sounding board for all innovations taking place in pedagogy and use of technology. eTwinning Schools are models for other schools
- playing a role of ambassadors for other schools in their area/region by actively promoting eTwinning and disseminating their achievements through as many means as possible: open days, information briefings, and mentoring schemes. They are proactive in creating professional development opportunities open to other schools in their area.
- being inclusive and innovative learning organizations. eTwinning Schools are committed to inclusivity at every level and actively seek ways to create an inclusive environment for students of every ability and culture, their parents and the wider community. Teachers in eTwinning Schools commit to developing the whole school as a learning organization. They use eTwinning to support and deliver their curriculum using innovative pedagogical models which include,

among a variety of approaches, collaborative learning, student-centred education, flexible approaches to learning times and learning space.

An eTwinning Report will be published later on in 2021. It aims to show how eTwinning Schools work and promote the above-mentioned shared leadership approach, through the analysis of quantitative data and a qualitative investigation. The quantitative data was gathered via a survey with 1261 eTwinning Schools. The qualitative part is based on six 18-month case studies of eTwinning Schools that got extra support and guidance from the eTwinning Central Support Service via both face-to-face and online activities.

The greatest benefit of eTwinning is its versatility. Schools have a secure platform where staff involved in different aspects of education, teaching and learning can collaborate in many different ways. Projects can be run with or without students and, if desired, other target groups and stakeholders can be invited as guests.

The fact that the platform is accessible and provides several possibilities for professional development, individually and/or in groups, with everything from self-teaching material, shorter learning events and lectures to longer courses has made it the biggest teacher network in Europe.

Plans are made to join together the eTwinning platform with the School Education Gateway, Europe's online platform for school education. This is a platform with a wider target group of users. Here, everyone from the policy makers, experts and all professionals within school education to staff at individual schools mentioned above in the eTwinning example, can keep up to date with European policies and actions within Education.

Conclusion International Level

Best practice examples of networking between teachers and stakeholders at an international level have been collected in order to identify success factors for cooperative structures. The goal is to identify forms of cooperation of an informal and formal nature and to draw conclusions as to why the principle of cooperation is of central importance and benefit to the actors involved.

The three mentioned examples, LinkedIn, EPAL and eTwinning, are all internet-based platforms, however the networks differ regarding target groups and size.

Based on the success factors described in Hargreaves & O'Connor (2018), we can state that for the examples presented, it is primarily the following principles of collaborative professionalism that characterize them; *collective autonomy*², *joint initiative*³, *mutual dialogue*⁴ and the *opportunity to get an overview and access to the field's so called big picture*⁵.

Success factors

The decision to attend a course is individual. The courses are actively sought by the individual or suggested according to relevance for and interests of the person. There is no higher authority deciding. All courses are virtual but only a few participants need to be online simultaneously with the trainers, the rest can participate afterwards and hence the information is shared easily. You receive the certificate of achievement immediately after the course which is something sought after. To get immediate confirmation is considered a sign of efficiency. You learn together with many other colleagues in an international context leading to cooperative work on many levels. This way of organizing a training enables a continuation on national, regional or local levels and in a local context at your school, trying out new things. The way of learning together with others also encourages the sharing process. You continue the dialogue and share your knowledge and ideas with your colleagues locally and are encouraged to share with colleagues at other schools too. An ongoing online course that run longer than just one training event will automatically invite the participants to put the practice into their everyday work life.

² Teachers are more independent of bureaucratic top management, but more dependent on each other. Instead of data, greater emphasis is placed on teachers' professional judgment. Collective autonomy also means that teachers are open to feedback, inspiration and support.

³ Teachers take greater responsibility, and the system does not prevent them to try new approaches. Expectations, processes and funding structures encourage teachers to share what they have started with other teachers.

⁴ Teachers exchange thoughts and tell about experiences and problems. The conversation can be moderated and there are clear rules that you should listen first and ask the other to clarify before making any objections.

⁵ In a collaborative professionalism, everyone works together and creates the picture (together).

NATIONAL LEVEL

The Erasmus+ KA1 Mobility project example

The Education Authority of Styria (in German: Bildungsdirektion Steiermark) is the coordinating organization behind a consortium of 110 schools from all over Austria.

Based on the needs of the schools both individually and on a wider, more general scale, “Languages connecting cultures and fostering economic development”, the network’s EU project provides learning experiences and knowledge exchanges abroad, within the EU. This way, the teachers and other educational staff at the schools within the consortium have something new in common that connects them. They all participate in project activities on an international EU level, but local and regional activities are also organized. These activities trigger new independent co-operations and the establishment of new collaborations and projects are strongly supported and encouraged.

The European Erasmus+ program enables educational authorities of different countries, schools, companies, public institutions, ministries, and extracurricular and school-based educational institutions to collaborate and be part of the same educational network.

What makes the network unique is not only its size - connecting 101 schools all over Austria. This is a network that is absolutely unique also in other ways as such a vast and widespread network has not existed in Austria before. Traditionally, Austrian teachers prefer to work on their own rather than in communities. For example, it is unlikely for teachers in Austria to ask other teachers in their school for support or share knowledge with them. The great advantage of the structure and work of this network is that it empowers individual participants to cooperate and gain the power to change the educational landscape step by step through cooperation. It turns traditional relationships among teachers upside down, it allows them to cross borders and slowly form a community of teachers and those involved in education.

The ways to transfer knowledge are also different from that of a traditional network. The EU commission’s own digital platform, the previously mentioned eTwinning <http://www.etwinning.net/> is the project network’s main exchange platform.

Peer learning is encouraged and enhanced further by presentations and online learning events. Together with the so-called learning festivals organized within the network, these virtual and blended events generate opportunities for exchanges and peer learning is enhanced. During the meetings new interactive tools are used to facilitate cooperation and to help the participants express their opinions and share their knowledge. In this setting, everyone is in the role of a learner and teacher at the same time.

The greatest benefits of the structure and work of this network is that it turns lone wolves into group actors and not only allows but encourages people to initiate further co-operations. Thanks to the tools used, participants learn how to collaborate online.

The natural connection and network within the Erasmus+ project consortium together with the organizational structure provided by the Education Authority of Styria have proved to be essential for the success of this learning environment. The key factors that make this heterogeneous network successful are multiple. Factors include a thorough understanding of the education system, appreciation of the members of the networks, patience, flexibility, spontaneity and creativity as well as a broad horizon to run such networks sustainably and in the long run. The tenacity of a person or group to lead the parts of the process is desirable.

The school in the Cloud example, Portugal

The School in the Cloud platform was originally launched at the 2014 TED conference to help accelerate this research by helping educators — be they teachers, parents or community leaders — to run their own Self Organized Learning Environments - SOLEs - and to contribute to the global experiment by sharing their experiences with others. It is now managed by SOLE Central at Newcastle University, a global hub for SOLE research and practice directed by Sugata Mitra. Sugata Mitra has conducted many experiments since 1999 that have revealed that groups of students can learn almost anything by themselves given internet access and the ability to work as a community.

There is currently (2021) a global community of over 18,000 people using SOLE worldwide. Self-Organized Learning Environments use a new approach to a “learning community”.

A Self-Organized Learning Environment, or SOLE, can exist anywhere provided there are also a computer, an Internet connection and students who are ready to learn. Within a SOLE, students are given the freedom to learn collaboratively using the internet.

An educator poses a Big Question and students form small groups to find an answer. During a SOLE session, students are free to move around, change groups and share information at any time. Towards the end of a session, they have the opportunity to share what they learned with the whole group. SOLE sessions are characterized by discovery, sharing, spontaneity and limited teacher intervention.

The SOLE network solution is successful thanks to its motivational and inspiring nature. Big Questions are the spark that ignites a SOLE session. Asking an interesting and relevant question fires up children's imaginations and curiosity and leads them on a genuine process of discovery. Developing a good Big Question can also be the hardest part of running a SOLE session.

These questions encourage children to offer theories, work collaboratively, use reason, and think critically. A good Big Question will connect more than one subject area: "What is an insect?" for instance, does not touch as many different subjects as "What would happen to Earth if all insects disappeared?".

The role of the e-mediators is an important difference from that of traditional learning environments. The SOLE mediators are referred to as "Grannies". Their role is not just to inspire curiosity, but also to help in developing language fluency and search skills that will allow children to begin answering Big Questions more easily.

The existence of the Granny Cloud, which is run entirely by volunteers, means that no matter where a SOLE is, children can gain access to a supportive and encouraging adult as they begin to learn for themselves.

The School in the Cloud wants to spark creativity, curiosity and wonder in students and inspire them to take control of their own learning. The spaces that make this happen are called Self Organized Learning Environments (SOLEs).

SOLEs can be created by anyone, anywhere, be it educators, parents, or communities. It is simply somewhere students are encouraged to work together to answer Big Questions using the Internet. These places are fueled by self-discovery, sharing and spontaneity. Every SOLE is different, but the aim is always to support children to tap into their innate sense of wonder and embark on an intellectual adventure, driven by big questions. It should be fun!

For a lot of children this is an entirely new way of learning. Hence, it can often take a few sessions for a SOLE to start working really well. With a bit of patience and perseverance you'll quickly find yourself

surprised by just how incredibly the students can learn to work together and find the answers to Big Questions.

The bi-national Steiermark/Štajerska network example

The bi-national Steiermark/Štajerska network is supported by about sixty schools on both sides of the Austrian (Styrian) - Slovenian border. It was initiated by the Styrian Education Authority and the Slovenian Ministry of Education. Both organizations received the mandate to do so from their respective governments.

The uniqueness of this network is that it is legitimized solely by its desire for cooperation.

The Steiermark/Štajerska network is comprised out of:

- Educational authorities that act as facilitators
- Educational staff of schools that are part of this network
- Pupils who act in this network
- extracurricular initiatives, organizations and businesses that act as cooperation partners sparking inspiration for the collaboration

What makes this network more successful than others is what connects the network's participants. They are nourished by the desire to work together and have a strong common interest: The well-being of young people and a flourishing border region. The network is patiently managed by both sides, and the cooperation is not forced.

The network is different from traditional networks in the way that it is more easy going. Due to intrinsic motivation, people involved in the network have the desire to cooperate. You don't need to think of it. It works because there are always people willing to cooperate.

A huge event, with all the network's participants is held once or twice annually. The aim is to gather all stakeholders and to share best practice examples with each other across the border. These gatherings also serve the purpose to nurture this cooperative spirit.

Unlike traditional learning events with a few specific lecturers and a learning audience, these network meetings allow more participants to lecture. Each event follows a very efficient interactive program scheme. Sharing knowledge and learning together is the DNA of the network. There are facilitators

within the school authorities, who serve the network and benevolently accompany, develop and document the development.

Apart from the events organized annually, it is self-evident that all cross-border cooperation is good for the students and teachers.

The Steiermark/Štajerska bi-national region stretches between Austria and Slovenia and shares a long history of conflicts. The activities within the network have long term benefits for both regions from the many impulses that are created within the network.

Conclusions to be drawn about the Steiermark/Štajerska organizational structure for a good and efficient environment for collaborative professionalism. The appreciation for the members of the network is the basis for the success. This goes along with many other soft values and skills that will facilitate and develop the network and the cooperation between partners of different nationalities and cultures although quite close regionally. Examples of such qualities are an open view, patience, flexibility, spontaneity, creativity and looking at a broader perspective.

An understanding of the specifics of the educational systems involved is also needed.

The Teach For Austria (TFA)⁶ fellow programme network example

The learning community with respect to the fellow program is mainly led by Teach For Austria's (TFA's) "training and support team", however, members of the so called "TFA community" can have the lead in certain network activities contributing to the fellow program.

The TFA community is an incredibly lively network consisting of fellows, alumni, staff and former staff. The actors in the network act autonomously and independently. We cannot and do not want to steer and control everything. The TFA community is integrated into a strong network consisting of very valuable partners and stakeholders - cf. chart below:

Kommentiert [KH1]: Maria will look through and rewrite some of this paragraph because the way it was written by Denise does not provide a clear picture of the TFA's function and mission. I sent her the paragraph for editing so I can edit and upload a new final version together with the Swedish final translation too.

⁶ More information about the Teach for Austria's fellow programme can be found here: <https://www.teachforaustria.at/fellow-programm/uber-das-programm>



The versatility of the network ensures that its members can work towards the network's vision for 2050: Every child has the chance of a good life - no matter the income or the level of education their parents have. This versatility further enables bundling efforts to ensure a successful start to school and successful educational pathways, respectively for children and young people from disadvantaged family situations.

One of the main reasons for the success the TFA fellow program has reached can be that it sees the advantages of combining different perspectives and approaches in order to achieve more educational equality. Therefore, its focus lay on communication and interaction on an equal footing, in particular within the school system.

The way the TFA fellow programme network differs from other "traditional" networks has been described below using the words of one of its members.

" Perhaps, the success can be drawn from the fact that the leaders of the network are consciously differentiating

...where they take an active and/or controlling role and where they do not

...in which areas the TFA community members themselves are "learners" or "teachers"

...where it is more sensible to withdraw themselves in order to enable and foster cooperation with respect to the programme's - the TFA 2050 - vision.

The greatest benefit in this form of network is that everyone in the TFA community is clearly committed to the organization's vision mentioned above. Likewise, in the TFA's overall network, the commitment and support for the network's organized activities with respect to educational equality is clearly visible.

The reasons for this success or rather the conditions that need to be fulfilled in order to make the above happen, are the common understanding of the underlying challenge (educational inequality in Austria) within the network and the clarity about TFA's approach and vision.

The awareness about the necessity of one's own contribution is the success factor at community and stakeholder level for this learning community. This awareness is one of the conditions needed to create a good and efficient environment both for sharing and efficient collaboration.

The Teach for Austria's fellow program offers an organizational structure in the form of a network based on relationships between individual people and not entities. The network's relationships are based on trust. Trust in turns depends on the resources that flow through the relationships. Examples of such resources are attention, information, knowledge, money, time, support etc.

The members of the network are committed to collaborating and sharing experiences - even in a seemingly competitive environment - if it contributes to the overall vision.

The national network example INCLUD-ED, Portugal

INCLUD-ED, Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe from education (2006-2011) is a project developed by the CREA (Community of Research on Excellence for All) and funded by the Structural Reform Support Service of the European Commission. The national cooperation derives from this project and is based on scientific theories and the monitoring of experts from the University of Barcelona to reach students in schools.

The network of school groupings involved in the Learning Communities pilot project in Portugal already has eleven organic units.

The Learning Communities Project INCLUD-ED aims at transforming schools and their communities through the implementation of Successful Educational Activities (Ações Educativas de Sucesso - AES), which favors community interaction and participation to overcome social inequalities.

Some of the success for the network can be found in the fact that the project enjoys technical support from the CREA (Community of Research on Excellence for All), which in November 2019 began training a group of 40 trainers, and monitoring and training the teams responsible for implementing the project in each of the educational communities involved.

The Program involves creating interactive groups in the classroom and exploring students' different learning capacities to foster mutual help. The program demonstrates that students from disadvantaged groups, from families with poor education, as well as children of immigrants or whose mother tongue is not Portuguese, can also do well academically, when there is greater family involvement in school.

The results obtained by INCLUD-ED were cited in the European Parliament's guidelines as a way of overcoming school drop-out and inequality in education, with the recommendation that Successful Educational Actions be applied and that schools become Learning Communities.

INCLUD-ED was initially tried two years ago in ten school clusters in the country, leading to improvements in educational outcomes and a reduction in dropout and failure rates. In the 2019/2020 academic year, it was extended to another fifty Priority Intervention Educational Area clusters, where most students come from low-income and poorly educated families, and where schools find dropout rates and the perpetuation of inequalities more difficult to counteract.

The transfer and sharing of knowledge differ from that in traditional networks as the community members participate in decision-making processes by becoming active representatives in decision-making bodies. By doing so, family and community members participate in the evaluation of the school's programs and curriculum. Furthermore, family and community members participate in the students' learning activities during normal school hours as well as outside of school. The members participate in the students' learning processes by helping to assess children's school progress. Family and community members also participate in educational programs that meet their needs.

The greatest benefits have proven to be the organization within the network of:

- Family and community training (Community Educational Participation in their own learning).
- Literary dialogic terms which means that the teacher promotes debate between students on classic works of literature or other arts, with the participation of the community. (Community Educational Participation in their own learning).

Kommentiert [KH2]: Marisa will provide feedback on this part as it is clear that the translation program has mixed some prepositions and expressions of crucial importance to the meaning – I realized this when I was making the comparison with the Swedish translation I made so it will have to be changed.

Kommentiert [KH3R2]:

Kommentiert [KH4R2]:

Kommentiert [KH5R2]:

- Interactive groups and tutored library (Participation of family and community in the classroom and other learning spaces).
- Assembly of families and mixed commissions (Community decision-making): Joint committees and assemblies are decision-making bodies composed of people from all community groups: families, teachers, students, and other community representatives.

The program demonstrates that students from disadvantaged groups, from families with poor education, as well as children of immigrants or whose mother tongue is not Portuguese, can also do well academically, when there is greater family involvement in school.

Conclusions to be drawn about the INCLUD-ED program's organizational structure for a good and efficient environment for collaborative professionalism:

INCLUD-ED has identified successful actions that contribute to overcome school failure through heterogeneous grouping with the reallocation of existing human resources, and by extending the learning time, as well as to include certain types of family and community education.

These successful actions have proved wrong those discourses that tend to blame students or their environment for school failure, especially students with minority or immigrant backgrounds. On the contrary, it has been found that when these actions are implemented in predominantly immigrant and minority schools located in disadvantaged areas their educational results improve.

So, what is crucial is not the student body composition, but which kind of educational action is implemented. Successful types of participation of families and community members become a significant potential resource for the enhancement of educational and social inclusion.

Five types of participation have been identified: *informative*, *consultative*, *evaluative* (i.e. center and students), *decisive* (in decision-making including academic aspects) and *educative*. The last three are found to favor educational success.

Data has shed light on the importance of successful programs for Family Education.

The Dialogic Literary Gatherings are the best example of this successful family education. Data shows that this family education program greatly favors students' motivation.

The term "Community" is taken to mean membership, mutual interest and sharing.

One of the great challenges for the creation of "Learning Communities" is to provide an environment that facilitates interaction, collaboration and, necessarily, the establishment of human relationships. It is these relationships that create the socio-cultural dynamics that promote a more collegial environment for collaboration and sharing. The implementation of these communities must allow for change and innovation.

In Learning Communities, teachers thus have the opportunity to become learners of their own teaching and to assume themselves as reflective professionals capable of expressing informed opinions on their practice. This also helps them develop self-regulatory skills which enable them to interpret the evidence of their teaching outcome. The analysis of the outcome or success factors of their own teaching and also the identification of the necessary changes to maximize student achievement, are professional skills which, as previously addressed, research identifies with effective teachers.

Learning Communities is a project based on a set of successful educational practices aimed at social and educational transformation. This educational model is in line with scientific theories at the international level that highlight two key factors for learning in today's society: interactions and community participation.

The Principal's Education example, Sweden

In the national principal's education in Sweden, supervision should be offered in order to put the participants' own practice in focus and contribute to business development (Skolverket - "The National Agency for Education" 2015). At Gothenburg University, abbreviated GU, professional supervision is a continuous part of the three-year education for principals.

The professional supervisor who leads the principal's group is employed by the university. It may be persons who, themselves, previously worked as principals or who are academically active in the work science and pedagogy fields.

These professional tutors lead the work. Student conversation groups are formed, each made up of six to nine principals. The members of the dialogue group work closely together. They are tutored for professional guidance, have literature studies, dialogues and workshops. The dialogue groups are changed every year, which means that the principals are part of three different dialogue groups during their education. The professional supervisor follows a group for one year.

There is a clear structure in the conversation model that you do not deviate from.

There is an agreed technique to ask questions in different ways. That way, it becomes clear which form of conversation and dialogue to adopt. Everyone needs to learn this. This is based on the fact that the problem owner him-/herself has the answers to his/her problems. The meeting structure is built up in a way that you leave with a feeling that you are not in a locked position. You are provided with a concrete list of things to try in your school.

Each meeting begins with a follow up on the problems dealt with in the previous meeting, and what has been done so far to address the problem and find a solution. The continuous feedback and ongoing work from one meeting to the next creates a sense of motivation. You know you will meet again and that the work you do is followed up. The structure enables the participants in the group to see that, together, they have contributed to helping each member of the group to move forward.

The organization of the work differs from traditional networks in the following ways:

- There is a moderator responsible for the conversation between the participants in the group.
- There is a structure around how to talk and ask questions. All participants enter the group conversations with the approach that the other participants in the group do not have the right answers, but that the owner of the problem you discuss, also has an idea of and can come up with the solution to it.
- The Gothenburg University methods for collegiate work maintain a constructive and forward-looking approach.

In ordinary collegiate conversations, a culture is often created which can be limiting, it becomes easy to fall into the victim mentality or to focus on the negative. The professional guidance model breaks this pattern and creates a different, more constructive-minded, prospective culture with a positive approach.

The process work model used at the principal's program at GU - Gothenburg University - is based on Peer Group Mentoring; a model consisting of nine steps that has been developed by Lauvås, Hofgaard, Lycke and Handal (1997).

Peer Group Mentoring at the national principal education program has its starting point in practical professional theory. Its goal is to achieve business development in an educational context by focusing

on the principals as leaders but also as colleagues and learners. The ability to critically reflect on one's own position and values in the pedagogical context can otherwise be difficult.

The role of the professional supervisor is primarily to be a moderator for the peer group mentoring. This means the supervisor leads the conversation and keeps the direction, contributes with in-depth questions and works towards an open, reflective and challenging climate to the benefit of the participants.

The purpose of peer group mentoring is to broaden the understanding of a specific problem and how to handle it. The model provides the participants with an opportunity to elaborate their own thoughts on a specific problem to gain increased understanding and find new, improved ways of solving the problem. At the principal's education program, focus lies on detecting obstructing factors, i.e. factors that restrict or hinder the participants' professional development.

The following nine steps are included in the model:

Kommentiert [KH6]: The table has been updated

Steps	Explanation	Important matters to consider
Step 1: Introduction	Each principal thinks of a problem that they want help with (about 5 minutes).	Quiet reflection
Step 2: Problem presentation	Description of the problem. Everyone presents a concrete problem based on their school activities.	The moderator takes notes to make the issues visible to everyone.
Step 3: Problem selection	Quick round where everyone says which problem they want to work with. The group chooses one of the problems described. Similar problems are kept separated.	Remind each other of the professional secrecy.
Step 4: Problem explanation	The problem owner provides a more detailed description of the selected problem.	No questions in this step. Participants take their own notes.

Step 5: Clarify the problem and the situation	<p>The participants take turns to ask the owner of the problem questions to increase their understanding.</p> <p>Everyone puts their interpretation of the problem in writing.</p> <p>Everyone reads their interpretations / perceptions out loud to the group.</p>	<p>Listen carefully to other people's questions and the answers that follow.</p> <p>One question at a time.</p> <p>Don't give good advice.</p> <p>The problem owner is given the opportunity to reflect briefly on what has been said.</p>
Step 6: The problem owner's suggestion of possible leadership actions	<p>The problem owner gives an account of possible ways to approach the problem and possible actions..</p>	<p>The moderator takes notes of these actions to make it visible to everyone. The problem owner approves the wording.</p>
Step 7: The group's proposal for leadership actions	<p>Every participant suggests a leadership action to the problem owner.</p>	<p>Please take several rounds.</p> <p>Do not comment on each other's suggestions.</p> <p>The moderator writes down the proposals and the wording is approved by the person who submitted the proposal.</p>
Step 8: Concretizing Leadership Actions	<p>The problem owner chooses the proposed leadership actions that they may want to try.</p> <p>If necessary, the problem owner will get help from the moderator to concretize the specific leadership actions to be tested until the next supervision opportunity.</p> <p>For example, to support the problem owner to go from word to action, the interviewer can use one of the following questions:</p>	<p>What possible leadership actions do you see?</p> <p>What would you like to try until the next time we meet?</p>
Step 9: Conclusion	<p>The tutorial round ends and can be evaluated if desired.</p>	

The purpose of the supervision is to create the opportunity for the principals to reflect upon concrete leadership actions in their professional practice. This is also put forward by the principals as the greatest advantage. It is important that the professional guidance and peer group mentoring focus on the principals' own questions. How the supervisors act as moderators of the conversation by asking questions and leading is also essential. Participants find the different tools provided by the supervisor helpful. Tools such as question templates and a matrix to be able to participate in the peer group mentoring discussions in the best possible way.

The principals stress the model's different steps and the conversation form as important for the development of the group. It contributes to the group's team building and coming closer together. The form also promotes each participant to speak thus preventing that just a few voices are heard at all times.

Several principals have brought the conversation model back to their workplaces. The model has proved successful when handling student matters, as more people become actively involved and motivated.

What conclusions can be drawn on how to organize sharing according to the above - organizational structure, necessary conditions to create a good and efficient environment for sharing and collaboration and collaborative professionalism

It is important to spend time introducing the model among new group members and emphasizing that it may be difficult to see the learning potential in the beginning, both because you do not "know" the model and because you do not know each other in the group. The professional supervisor must create legitimacy both for himself as a moderator and for the form. As the principals change groups and supervisors every year, new constellations are formed. This variation is solely positive as it promotes the principles of peer group mentoring and becomes a source of learning and development together in new constellations.

Conclusion National Level

Best practice examples of networking between teachers and stakeholders at a national level have been collected from all partner countries. The aim of the sample collection is to identify success factors for the success of cooperative structures. The goal is to identify forms of cooperation of an informal and

formal nature and to draw conclusions as to why the principle of cooperation is of central importance and benefit to the actors involved in a national context.

The presented examples show that there are some common characteristics which appear across national borders and in the Steiermark/Štajerska example also in between two countries. With the support of Hargreaves & O'Connor (2018), the following principles emerge as success factors: *common goals*⁷, *cooperative work*⁸, *collaboration with students*⁹ and *building collective capacity*¹⁰ through *collaborative investigation*¹¹.

The organizational structure is important for a good and efficient environment for learning whether for collaborative professionalism and/or, as the Portuguese example shows, for a wider perspective of a learning community.

The appreciation of the members in such a network is also the basis for success. A mutual understanding of the educational system or equivalent is needed. This goes along with an open mind and ability to see things from different perspectives as it may be difficult for the members of the learning community to see the learning potential in the beginning of the process as you are new to the model and the group constellation. You need patience and to earmark, i.e., set aside time, when introducing a new system, model or method for learning to group members not previously involved in similar activities or learning communities. Flexibility, spontaneity, creativity and a broad horizon are other qualities that have shown to be success factors in order to develop such networks. Everyone can be a member of a learning community. Teachers can be learners too. Learning takes place also on a meta-level.

⁷ Collaborative professionalism means pursuing, formulating and promoting a common goal that goes beyond test results or even academic performance in itself.

⁸ The cooperative work consists of teaching as a team of teachers, planning together, conducting joint action research, providing structured feedback, conducting peer review, assessing student work and so on.

⁹ In the most in-depth forms of collaborative professionalism, the students are actively involved in creating change together with the teachers. The student's voice is heard.

¹⁰ Collective capacity is the conviction that, together with joint efforts, we can make a difference for our students, regardless of the circumstances.

¹¹ The process involves first identifying problems in practice and then systematically examining them to make positive changes.

REGIONAL LEVEL

The JEBK Network example¹², Austria

The JEBK Network is an informal network consisting of youth, culture, and educational organizations, all located in Styria; one of the nine federal states of Austria. The network is not enshrined in any formal way, however, this does not undermine its feasibility and well recognized role in Styria. The network was established in 2014 and has since flourished by creating shared events and projects. The advantage of the network is its flexibility, as it is not bound to any legal form.

There are a variety of stakeholders. The network includes the following organizations:

Europe Direct Styria

- LOGO EU.INFO (Youth organization)
- Panthersie für Europa (Project for Styrian youth)
- Europazentrum Europahaus Graz (Educational institution for the realization of a United Europe in Graz)
- Beteiligung.st (Specialised office for child, youth and citizen participation)
- Junge Europäische Föderalisten und Europäische Bewerbung (Youth Organization)
- Sapere Aude (Youth Organization)
- Akademisches Forum für Außenpolitik - Hochschulliga für die Vereinten Nationen (Academic Forum for Foreign Policy - University League for the United Nations)
- LandeschülerInnenvertretung (National Student Council)

Their scope of work varies, overall, it includes education, youth, and art. All organizations involved are pro-Europe and support the development of the European Union.

This type of network has proven to be more successful as it has quite a unique way of structuring its cooperating. Joining the network is voluntary and there is not any set number of events that need to be achieved. Instead, the intrinsic motivation of the organizations' members is the key ingredient to success. According to the motto *"everything is possible, nothing is necessary,"* it is up to the members

¹² Further information about the JEBK Network and its cooperation results and events can be found at: <https://www.bildung-stmk.gv.at/unterricht/europaservice/netzwerke.html>

to move things forward. In practice, the strong relationships among the members of this network have shown to be an important component.

Another success factor is the positive attitude and the approach to sharing information and material; trusting the recipients to use it wisely, without copying ideas. Moreover, the organizations are always on the lookout for synergies to increase the value for all the member organizations involved.

The network's not as formal arrangement and the fact that the cooperation activities are based on the motivation and initiative of the participants are for sure unusual but a key to success. Other, more traditional networks can become stiff over time and innovation does not come as natural in the long run. The fluid form of the JEBK Network allows the organizations to find common denominators and create events and projects in line with each other's interest. A common value base among all the organizations involved is the positive attitude towards the European Union and its programs and policies.

The process for transfer or sharing knowledge and/or skills differ from that in other "traditional" networks as the sharing of information and knowledge is seemingly unorganized and takes place in many different ways both virtually and in person. The network's collaboration arenas include various social media groups and platforms, in-person meetings, emails, and newsletter subscriptions of the JEBK organizations. Rarely does the whole network organize itself into one meeting. The most common form used for networking is that sub-groups gather for meetings.

Nevertheless, the flow of information is consistent. The key ingredient for successful communication is based on the fact that information is shared generously: with a big heart and without envy. New information from other networks arrives with ease, is integrated and generates new learning and new collaborations, events, projects, etc.

In addition to regular communication and exchange, above all, the greatest benefit with this type of network is the strong mutual support among the organizations involved. It is this common interest and support that enable the network to flourish. The community procreates and is constant, even if they are not constantly in touch, the network partners can rely on each other.

One of the reasons and conditions for such a success is that the individuals involved in the network are strong personalities and leaders in their own communities.

Conclusions to be drawn about The JEBK Network organizational structure for a good and efficient environment for collaborative professionalism: As a bottom line, that can be drawn from observing this network, a more flexible and less bureaucratic way of organization is possible and can also lead to great results. Needless to say, a lot of trust and strong relationships among the members ground this network. Constant innovation is possible, as the customizable form of the networks allows room for creativity and new approaches. Especially during the Covid-19 pandemic this network did not fall back, but so far managed to continue its collaborations and was reassured in its creativity, establishing meaningful online-events.

The Urania Graz – Bildung bewegt example, Austria

The Austrian Urania (Styria) sees itself as a center for further education in close contact with Styrian universities and museums as well as with important cultural institutions. As a non-partisan and non-profit association, it is a member of the Association of Austrian Adult Education Centers and the Styrian Education Network. In addition to this, Urania wants to provide a platform on which the latest results of scientific, cultural and artistic activities can be presented to a broad public and should stimulate debate and discussion.

The idea of Urania was born in Berlin as a result of the Enlightenment. Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) was already convinced that scientific knowledge made people more rational and allowed them to act more rationally. As a result, Urania was named after the muse of astronomy and several Urania observatories were founded, for example in Vienna and Zurich. Many of the dozens of Urania throughout the German-speaking world and beyond, which were founded between 1890 and 1925, no longer exist because they were dissolved under the National Socialism reign and not re-founded after the war.

The Urania in Graz was able to re-establish itself from 1947. Important cultural and educational policy innovations of the post-war years in Styria, for example the Youth - later Jeunesse - concerts, the Forum Stadtpark, the Trigon exhibitions, the Graz Declaration on Adult Education or the Hammer-Purgstall Renaissance, can be traced back to initiatives in which the Urania was significantly involved.

Urania has made it its business to spread further education in the sense of critical humanism in close connection with universities and cultural education in Graz and Styria in a general and comprehensive form, with the aim of shaping the human personality in its totality and unity.

Unlike other adult educational institutions, for example traditional adult education centers, Urania is based on an association structure with more than seven thousand members. Many of them have supported the Urania for decades through financial contributions and activities.

Thanks to their close contacts with Styrian universities and research institutions they are constantly confronted with new findings, topics and ways of thinking at an early stage, which they are directly incorporating into their educational offerings. These also include new teaching methods.

To offer the widest possible range of courses, accessible for everyone, next to traditional general education and vocational qualifications Urania also provide meaningful leisure activities, basic qualifications, and cultural and media skills. Moreover, they want to be a forum for dialogue, understanding and diversity of views and have a firm place in the cultural life of the city of Graz and Styria.

What conclusions can be drawn on how to organize sharing according to the above about the organizational structure and necessary conditions to create a good and efficient environment for sharing and cooperation and collaborative professionalism?

Urania's constant exchange is enabled by their close contact with universities and research institutions and by the provision of a forum of dialogue. The managing director of the association is director Dr. Wolfgang Moser. Personalities from politics, science and culture participate in the association's executive committee. This underlying organizational structure with a broad-based executive committee with people from Styrian universities and cultural life, supports the management. Professionalism is guaranteed by the quality management system LQW.

Kommentiert [KH7]: This part was initially just under the headline but fits better here.

[The MUSIS - Steirischer Museumsverband - example, Austria](#)

The Association of Styrian Museums

MUSIS is a community of museums providing a network for museums and collections as well as for interested visitors. The cooperation is determined by personal commitment and professional competence, which is based on international museum standards. Thus, they provide a good network for museums in Styria and provide the essential knowledge.

Mag.a Evelyn Kaindl-Ranzinger is the managing director of MUSIS. As a society, MUSIS also has a whole management board behind the managing director, including persons from different museums.

As a board for the representation of interest, they introduce Styrian museums and collections to international museum standards, promote networking among these institutions as well as with the public and cooperation partners from the media, politics and education. They create and secure jobs in the cultural environment and offer demand-oriented, high-quality and affordable services for the museum- and cultural sector.

As a center of competence for advice, education and networking, they provide the following concrete services: Expert advice and process support in museums, specialist training and further education, projects for job creation and job security, placement of specialists, marketing campaigns, networking, international projects, publications, discussion platforms, lobbying and public relations

Partners also include related educational and cultural institutions (libraries, archives, art associations, regional school boards, etc.)

MUSIS' concrete network of partners/customers:

- management and staff of museums and collections
- volunteers and full-time professionals in the cultural sector
- the public sector (federal/state/municipal authorities) and AMS/St:WUK
- regional, national and international museum representations
- partners from the fields of culture, tourism and education
- individuals and students interested in culture and education
- related educational and cultural institutions (libraries, archives, art associations, regional school boards, etc.)

In their sector, they are the only network to have emerged exclusively from the community and remain completely independent.

They are the only sectoral network that is also very active internationally and at EU level, and enable their Austrian partners who cannot, or do not have the resources, to do so on a project-related basis. Thanks to the extraordinarily broad networking and the strong focus on education, quality development and management based on European benchmarking. The knowledge transfer is not only based on workshop, courses and events, but mainly on networking between the different entities.

What conclusions can be drawn on how to organize sharing according to the above structure and necessary conditions to create a good and efficient environment for sharing and cooperation?

The deliberate independence and factual orientation of the network enables on the one hand rapid action and fact-oriented planning of the offers and projects for the network and its target groups. On the other hand, it reduces the opportunities for public and political bodies to co-shaping the strategies by. The constant economic challenge of the network and all partners sometimes blocks the implementation of effective project concepts. In its given structure, the association lives in a constant boundary between service provider, idea provider, motivator, project developer, platform and lobby and works on the participatory and democratic awareness of its members museums

How efficient and successful the processes are, is always dependent on the individual nodes in the network.

Another thing that distinguishes them from partner networks in other federal states is the comparatively low level of funding from the public sector, while they are still offering a wide range of services and often visionary project planning.

The Holzweltbildung example- Austria

The Holzweltbildung – “Wood world education” in English - is part of the leader region Holzwelt Murau with the main representative DI Franz Rodlauer.

Holzweltbildung is the network of all relevant educational institutions in the district of Murau. Within the Holzwelt Murau they work as an association in the educational sector with young people and adults.

They create equal opportunities for all people in the region in terms of education and offer attractive educational opportunities for all ages, genders, educational levels and interests.

The platform of Holzweltbildung is organizationally unique because in addition to purely educational institutions, cultural organizations, for example museums (Holzmuseum), and cultural institutions as well as social projects, for example non-profit associations such as Domenico, can participate in the network. This diversity and variety with mutual support enable a clear view on the needs of the region as well as openness towards to transregional topics, for example digital educational spaces.

Furthermore, within the network, every age category has its voice, which is especially appreciated by the youth (Landjugend - rural youth in English - state vocational school).

Moreover, the stability of the platform, with its over two decades of joint work and cooperation across all ideological boundaries, is certainly also a characteristic of the uniqueness and a parameter of success.

Different from traditional networks, in this umbrella organization all educational institutions cooperate rather than compete against each other. They are working together on the same topics/problems to provide a good basis for lifelong learning within the whole region.

Within this network the educational institutions meet on a regular basis to exchange information and work on a common goal. Moreover, they have established a common educational platform for the public.

The greatest benefit is that all educational institutions are working together towards a common goal, providing tailor-made educational offers.

What conclusions can be drawn on how to organize sharing according to the above when it comes to organizational structure and necessary conditions to create a good and efficient environment for sharing and cooperation?

A common platform for exchange provides a good basis for cooperation and collaboration. A broad positioning, including institutions in various educational fields and people of all ages in the educational development.

Additional - more informal - comments about this platform made by its members:

- The Holzweltbildung is like a mixed forest with different actors looking at the issues from different directions (Murau ambassadors)
- Varied and unique or hardly to be found a second time in this form (Catholic Educational Institution)!
- Hats off to this network and to the down-to-earth nature of its actors (Chamber of Commerce and WIFI)

- Education and culture or social commitment are important instruments of successful regional development (chairman of Holzweltbildung)

The Lesezentrum Steiermark¹³ example, Austria

Lesezentrum Steiermark - a service and coordination center for the library system in Styria - is managed by the managing director Dr. Michaela Haller and a broad board. They work on behalf of the Styrian provincial government, the diocese, Graz Seckau and the Education Directorate Styria.

It is an institute for library development, library organization and reading education for public libraries (for example in communities, parishes, businesses and hospitals) and the school libraries of Styria. The institute advises library teams throughout Styria regarding professional issues. They also organize trainings and further education, conduct reading education workshops for children and young people, run a multilingual supplementary library and specialist library for reading education, support librarians in the creation or re-organization of libraries, advise authorities and politicians on questions of library systems and reading education. Moreover, they are active throughout Styria in parental education and in the further training of teachers.

In addition to this, the institute also plans different projects involving various specific target groups (families, children, young people, migrants just to mention a few)

It is part of a wider national network together with the two central umbrella organizations for the library system in Austria, the Austrian Library Association (Büchereiverband Österreichs) and the Austrian Library network (Österreichischen Bibliothekswerk). This network includes specialist departments in other federal provinces, with the educational landscape in Austria and in the federal province (Ministry, PH, university, schools), with authorities and with various organizations in the federal province and throughout Austria on the subjects of adult education, museums and libraries.

Summing up, the Lesezentrum contributes to the planning and development of an efficient library network of Styria. They are strongly anchored both nationally and regionally and work on a meta-level in research and development (topics reading and libraries) as well as practically.

They differ from other networks in that they are specialized in the topic of libraries and education in this regard. The greatest benefit is the provision of knowledge/assistance in terms of library development, organization and reading education for all libraries and also authorities and politicians within Styria.

¹³ For further details and names of the partners see <https://www.lesezentrum.at/index.php/ueber-uns/partner>.

Essential network details: The Lesezentrum community is multi-layered, comprehensive, works with sharing on different levels and there is an important connection between theory and practice

What conclusions can be drawn on how to organize sharing with this type of organizational structure?

First of all, a complex networking structure requires good and stable reliable personnel and financial support to build, maintain and operate the network.

Secondly: The connection between theory and practice must be constantly lived and revived, which requires resources and consistency.

The MurauerInnen example - Austria

MurauerInnen started as a project by the leader region HOLZWELT MURAU in course of the call "Women.Live.Regions". The project is operated by four women from the district of Murau (Styria): Gunilla Plank (project leader), Gundi Jungmeier, Uli Vonbank-Schedler and Tina Brunner.

Together with regional artists and cultural workers, associations and interested parties, they are implementing various events, projects and workshops on women-relevant topics between 2019-2020.

The actors are introduced via Facebook, the contents and questions of the respective workshops are developed by the women from the target groups themselves.

This network is unique in the sense that on the one hand it was not created by itself but was planned as a project for a certain time frame.

From the beginning, they had an emphasis on external representation and a heightened "sense of mission". Three of the four women from the core group are/were professionally involved in PR work and it is their heart's desire to make women's specific concerns visible and audible to the outside world. Another success factor is micro-targeting, or the realization that not *all* women can identify with a project, but that a project must have as many different building blocks as possible for as many different approaches as possible.

The project is about giving a voice to the women from the region, clearing up gender-specific prejudices and making this issue a central focus. This means that a specific group discusses topic-specific agendas in order to influence the women as well as the other inhabitants of an entire region.

This also means that specialized discussions are brought outside of the expert group reaching a wider range of people.

Specific to the Murau, the project is characterized above all by the flat hierarchies and the participatory character of other networks.

The MurauerInnen concentrate mainly on women-relevant issues in the region and initiate networking and active participation of women in regional development. Mutual support, knowledge transfer and networking are appropriate.

The transfer of knowledge takes place within the framework of various events and in personal exchanges in networking. An essential part is also joint work on projects. Target groups are women from the region or with a connection to the region. The transfer of questions, results and insights is carried out via social media and newsletters. The concept of community learning is a modern approach that is well accepted.

The biggest advantage of the MurauerInnen is that they are recognised in the region. The reason for this advantage is unconventional behavior, statements and events that counteract the traditional understanding of roles and events...and therefore cause a stir.

What conclusions can be drawn on how to organize sharing, according to the above, concerning the organizational structure, and necessary conditions to create a good and efficient environment for sharing and cooperation:

It is necessary to

- Have a broad-based core team.
- Organize participative events, with a general participatory approach.
- Provide a budget for joint projects and media and PR work.
- Have humor.
- Provide the possibility for knowledge transfer in the course of events and in different projects where further initiatives arise.

Being kind does not always help.

(personal comment from one of the networkers)

Conclusion Regional Level

Best practice examples of networking between teachers and stakeholders at a regional level were collected with the aim of having all countries represented. The examples selected for this paper are all from Austrian regions. The aim of the sample collection is to identify success factors for cooperative structures. The goal is to identify forms of cooperation of both informal and formal nature and to draw conclusions as to why the principle of cooperation is of central importance and benefit to the actors involved in a regional context.

The examples described in the chapter for the regional level are mainly from the region of Styria in Austria. There are four success factors linked to the principles for collaborative professionalism that emerge as a common pattern in these regional projects. The success is based on the following four principles: *collective autonomy*¹⁴, *joint initiative*¹⁵, *mutual dialogue*¹⁶ and *cooperative work*¹⁷.

There is a desire to learn and to share knowledge. It seems this desire and the eagerness to contribute and come up with individual initiatives such as to organize events for learning and sharing, permeate the region. Professional exchanges - both formal and informal - of knowledge and skills, are carried out on all levels. It is enabled by an ongoing close contact and the provision of forums for dialogues with the community members and the extended network on different regional levels, from the individual member, via the organizing institution, to universities and research institutions.

¹⁴ Teachers are more free from bureaucratic top management, but more dependent on each other. Instead of data, greater emphasis is placed on teachers' professional judgment. Collective autonomy also means that teachers are open to feedback, inspiration and support.

¹⁵ Teachers take greater responsibility and the system does not prevent them to try new approaches. Expectations, processes and funding structures encourage teachers to share what they have started with other teachers.

¹⁶ Teachers exchange thoughts and tell about experiences and problems. The conversation can be moderated and there are clear rules that you should listen first and ask the other to clarify before making any objections.

¹⁷ The cooperative work consists of teaching as a team of teachers, planning together, conducting joint action research, providing structured feedback, conducting peer review, assessing student work and so on.

LOCAL LEVEL

The Fridaskolorna Professional learning example, Sweden

The Frida Utbildning – Frida Education - consortium's management group makes the initial decision and is in charge of the overall development plan. They draw up a two-year plan that describes the skills and areas of focus for the desired development of the school group as a whole, as well as its various school and business units. Didaktikcentrum - the in-service trainer within the consortium - is then commissioned to execute the different parts of the plan.

The network is organized in a very structured way on the different levels within the organization:

- The Management group is responsible for the business plan
- The In-service trainer is responsible for the execution of this plan and for the teacher training
- The principals are responsible for leading and adapting the development of skills at each school towards the school's local goals
- The Intermediary head teachers are responsible for leading colleagues' learning. At each school, the principals have appointed teachers who act as intermediate teacher trainers and contribute to the In-Service Training and the individual development at the school. These are people who, for the most part, work as teachers but also contribute to the school's skills development as moderators and facilitators for their colleagues.

The role of the in-service trainer is unique - as it is a part of the consortium and linked to both the management group and each school. Researchers and in-service trainers work together to develop education ways and methods. There is access to both theory and practice. Scientifically based and evidence-based experience. Well-founded theory influences the practice in the improvement / development work and the other way around. The combination creates the opportunity to test theory in practice, draw conclusions and "create" theory from the firsthand experiences and practice.

It is also unique with a strategic and long-term development of a collaborative practice built on high expectations from both sides. The management expects each employee to participate in different development and learning processes. Teachers and school leaders expect to get up to date, relevant, high quality in-service training.

In schools and organizations without an incorporated collaborative culture, "power" tensions may arise. These tensions result in situations where one fosters the other, where meetings do not take place unless someone is in charge or where some people do not take part in or sit silent in dialogues.

The above does not occur within the Frida consortium.

The task of the middle managers/ head teachers is to be facilitators in the collegiate discussions at each school. Regardless of the content for the in-service training, the middle managers contribute in their role as moderators and conversation leader. All middle managers meet on 8-10 occasions per academic year to jointly learn about and exchange experiences on form and content for the development of skills. The in-service trainer is in charge of preparing for and conducting these meetings.

As an employee within the Frida consortium, there are certain expectations and guidelines regarding collaboration and training that you cannot opt out of. The idea of the consortium is that it should be seen as a Hologram - where values and ideas permeate every part. For this to happen, there must be structures and common platforms and arenas. Intermediaries or middle leaders -located between management and colleagues - become an important part of this transfer. The middle managers' meetings function as an arena where this transfer occurs, but also as an arena for exchange of experience and collegiate peer learning. There are clear interfaces with the possibility to enhance and support each other in the different roles. It is an emergent system where the distribution of roles in the schools is clear. The system enables as much action capability as possible in each role.

The development work is based on weekly conferences held at the same time in all schools. They are essential and the condition for successful development. In addition to these there are support measures with a strategic agenda with preparation and evaluation with headteachers' and school leaders'/principals' meetings. All teachers are present not only for their lessons but the entire day and are expected to take part in all conferences within the teachers' teams as well as the weekly general conferences.

The principal's role within the organization looks a little different compared to that in other schools as they do not have the same responsibilities regarding e.g., economy.

The independent school system is also something that differs from that of the municipal schools as there is no political agenda.

- School development through training of the head-teachers.

There are eight half day meetings during one academic year for the head-teachers. The in-service trainer “educates” them to be facilitators and conversation leaders.

They get more training in the form, meaning the “how” and a little less in content. They learn how to successfully lead the meetings in a way that contributes to the active participation of everyone as well as a variety of work methods. For instance, the head-teachers learn about how to start a meeting so that everyone gets involved quickly, how you create structures to encourage everyone to speak and distribute the speech space among the participants. These trainings are also held to highlight a meta-perspective where the group thinks about the conversation itself.

- School development through the classroom

The weekly conferences are also used to distribute tasks for the pedagogues to try out in their own classroom. The headteachers themselves are also involved in this exploration. They do not just follow up the work of colleagues as they contribute through their own work as part of the team.

- School development through established and proven structures for collaboration

Weekly conference time for the teacher teams. For example, cross curricular theme work is planned together. The team becomes a natural part of your planning. Provided arrangements create a habit of sharing and learning from each other. When several teachers are in the same classroom, an exchange of experience takes place not only in the moment but also before - in the planning - and after - in the post-work and evaluation. This is formative teaching - and assessment. In the Frida organization, the teacher works more together with colleagues and it’s not so much “my class” but “our class”.

There is a set structure with recurring meetings that creates opportunities and encourages all staff, teachers, head-teachers and school leaders to collaborate and share experiences and knowledge. Through the organization of professional learning, the middle managers/headteachers have the opportunity to practice their role as moderators and facilitators to become better at leading their colleagues' learning.

The facilitator's role is clarified during full day trainings and collegiate discussions. The headteacher has the mandate to lead and the role as moderator and facilitator is accepted by the group. An in-house trainer in charge of the meetings both with the school group's principals but also all the headteachers within each school, creates an opportunity to take part in and reflect upon the same input of theory, which as a result helps build a common knowledge base and a common language within the entire organization - the holistic view.

The common vision and the goals set by the management justify the importance of a structure and organization of the in-service training to achieve the set goals. Hence, there are also entire in-service training days joint between the schools in the group with content that is important to all participants.

What conclusions can be drawn on how to organize sharing according to the above about the organizational structure and necessary conditions to create a good and efficient environment for sharing and collaboration?

Success factors for this type of collaborative professionalism organization:

- Clear directives and content for the development work.
- So called *Earmarked* opportunities. This means designated time, space and arenas for the development work. These are opportunities not only for headteacher meetings and weekly conferences but for complete in-service training days for the entire organization.
- Clear roles, tasks and appointed responsibilities

There are incorporated tools for collaboration in order to continue both to challenge each other further and to learn from each other. The facilitators need tools in order to ask challenging questions and to create a group culture where the participants are prepared to participate and contribute to the work.

Easily accessible and well-functioning arenas for communication and exchange of information provided by the organization in charge of the training.

The Trainer/Training Centre example, Portugal

The Trainer/Training Centre network is built based on the frequency of a given training action. The objective is to share the materials produced within this same training action among its various participants. Very often, each trainee makes available, in his/her school and for teachers of the same subject area, the materials produced with the aim of eventual uniformity of practices within the same disciplinary group or the use of the materials in addressing the same contents by different teachers.

The idea behind the network is to create a different type of context. It is considered that gathering a group of teachers from several schools and councils in a formative context makes possible another reality beyond that often confined to the teacher himself or the disciplinary group of an individual school.

Given that a training action is attended by teachers from various disciplinary groups, various levels of teaching and from various schools in the region/council (and sometimes between councils), training in a face-to-face context allows for contact between various realities and the sharing of experiences and know-how. On the other hand, each trainee (teacher) constitutes an element that disseminates the resources and knowledge acquired in training to the schools where they teach. That way it is a mutual interest and a win-win situation. The sharing network allows both trainers and trainees to provide a set of resources and knowledge.

The transfer and the sharing of knowledge and/or skills differ from that in other “traditional” networks since the resources and materials are shared on the Training Centre platform so that all teachers have access to them. When possible, the material is also designed to provide solutions to common challenges or issues when addressing the content in class.

Given the non-digital nature of the specific teaching materials and resources, they are available at the Training Centre where they can be used on request.

The greatest benefit of using this type of network is the diversification of methodologies and tools to support the approach of the contents of the various disciplines.

Greater accuracy and speed in the process of student assessment.

What conclusions can be drawn on how to organize sharing according to the above regarding the organizational structure and necessary conditions to create a good and efficient environment for sharing and cooperation?

The feedback is quite positive, considering that there is a growing sense of community among teachers that goes far beyond the school where they teach. On the other hand, due to the lack of human resources allocated, the Training Centre appears here as a centralizing element, despite the difficulties in compiling, organizing and making available all the materials designed within the several, various training actions.

The Class example, Portugal

The network includes all teachers of a particular class/year who meet weekly to discuss class specific issues. The network is composed of the class director, the class teachers, a representative of the parents and a representative of the students, class representatives. The main responsible is the class director (6th grade).

Meetings are held three times a year, normally before the end of each school term.

In a school with several classes, the community was organized by class. There was no connection to the other classes in the school. As it is a restricted community (only one class) there is not much sharing with others "from outside".

The involvement of all those interested in solving the problems of the class is the main reason why they form this community. In this way the problems encountered involve all interested parties. The greatest benefits are the improvement of the work environment but also the improved school relations, as well as the improvement of the students' grades. The initial focus was on resolving peer conflicts and bullying. These meetings also included the organization of school events, where the whole community was called to intervene.

What conclusions can be drawn on how to organize sharing according to the above - organizational structure, necessary conditions to create a good and efficient environment for sharing and collaboration and collaborative professionalism?

This community is quite restricted (only one class) although it includes the class director, teachers of other subjects, a representative of the parents, and a representative of the students. Communication

between the parents took place by email or telephone and then the representative would pass the information on to the class director.

The success of the network derives from the fact that with the meetings and hence the creation of a sense of community, every class in the school shares the same working methodology.

The Class example, Sweden

Cooperative learning among students at the Fridaskolan schools

The teacher/pedagogue in charge of the work in the classroom organizes the work to create possibilities for and encourage cooperation between the students. The teacher and the students interact with each other. The teacher leads the work, but the students take active part in the collaboration through dialogues in various forms.

The idea of working with collaborative learning is that learning can increase in each individual student if you learn together and in dialogue with others. Social skills are developed simultaneously. The collaboration has its foundation on five different basic principles.

- **Positive interdependence.** The teacher organizes the collaboration where it is necessary to involve every member/pupils/student for the group's work to be successful.
- **Own responsibility.** Each student needs to share their knowledge and thoughts and thus be responsible for contributing to the group's work but also be responsible for their own understanding and learning.
- **Equal participation and simultaneous supportive interaction.** The work in the classroom is organized so that all students become involved at the same time, for example in dialogues in pairs instead of one person at a time getting the floor and the remaining students expected to sit quietly and listen. When questions arise, the students turn to each other first instead of raising their hand and asking the teacher.
- **Collaborative skills.** The ability to collaborate needs to be constantly developed and this is done systematically in collaborative learning. The students talk about which collaboration skills are important for various types of collaboration exercises and practice to improve these as part of the work.

- **Feedback, feed-up and feedforward.** Reflection and evaluation are always important parts of the work in the classroom and hence present at all times. Time is set aside for the students to think about the group's work, give feedback to each other and reflect upon how they want to work in the future.

As part of the collaborative learning, the teacher uses different collaborative structures to support the collaboration between the students in different ways. One such example is the EPA structure. In English, the IPA structure— an abbreviation for Individually, in Pairs, All together.

It begins with the teacher asking the class an open question. The students then have to think about that question *individually* for a while, after which they are encouraged to turn to each other in pairs and tell each other what they think about the question. The last step is to ask a few couples to present their thoughts to the entire class - all.

In a traditional teaching situation, it is often the teacher who owns the content, and the students receive the teacher's knowledge but take on a rather passive learning role. The teacher asks recurring questions, with some students raising their hands and one student answering. If the student answers correctly, the "dialogue" is complete, if the student answers incorrectly, the other students wave their hands even more to get the word out.

In a classroom with collaborative learning, you take the "detour" by allowing the student to think for themselves, then together with others and finally with the whole class. This seemingly small change creates a completely different participation in the classroom. The content is moved from being "owned" by the teacher to being placed between the students. However, this does not mean that the teacher is passive. The teacher needs to design the teaching to ensure this participation and closely follow the students' process.

In schools, group work of various kinds is a common feature. However, traditional group work often makes the students divide the work between themselves rather than collaborate. There are often problems due to the wide difference in how important the group's participants consider the task, their own responsibility and work efforts. In cooperative learning however, students are given different roles, all of which are crucial for the group as a whole to succeed. It creates the interdependence described above, which makes the students important to each other. There is a clear and outspoken expectation of what each participant's role and responsibilities look like.

In "regular teaching", the students' ability to cooperate is valued and seen as a measure of responsibility. The teacher can be disappointed with the students' efforts. Often the students do not think that the group work functions so well among themselves either. In cooperative learning, the teacher spends time training the students' ability to work together. Hence, the ability to collaborate is not expected of the students from the beginning, but something that is to be developed, just like other important abilities within the schoolwork. By training and "playing" with different forms of collaboration, the students will gradually be equipped to manage a collaboration. The teacher is then given the opportunity to assess the students' efforts and skills instead of complaining about the lack of collaboration.

In ordinary teaching, time is seldom spent thinking about the collaboration itself and how it works. If it is done, the evaluation question is generally "good" or "bad". In cooperative learning, the student gets the opportunity to think about the collaboration itself. Such a reflection can take place individually, in groups or all together (usually a little of each). For example, students can think about how the speaking space is distributed in the collaboration. When they see that someone has talked significantly more than someone else, it is easy to create common strategies to develop the collaboration in the next step. Such a reflection does not have to take long but it really contributes to a different level of understanding.

In traditional teaching, students often enter a classroom and sit down with the classmates they know the best. In these constellations each role is predestined and the possibility of exploring new ways of "being" is limited. In a classroom with cooperative learning, the teacher constantly divides the students into new groups, which creates new contact surfaces and new opportunities to develop, also as an individual. At the same time, of course a student can feel a little vulnerable when they start the work in a new "unknown" group. Therefore, it is important that the teacher uses basic ideas from cooperative learning to design the group's collaboration in a thoughtful way.

The biggest and most desirable effect is of course the student's learning. Through a cooperative approach, students learn better and become involved in their own learning right from the start. It also seems that the knowledge is more stable. Students learning in traditional classrooms where teaching is characterised by knowledge transfer from teacher to student, are at greater risk to forget what they have learned. In the cooperative way of working, the students work to put into words what they have learned in several different ways, which contributes to the knowledge becoming longer lasting.

Learning that takes place together with others is an example of the approach to learning emphasised in the Swedish curriculum, based on a socio-cultural perspective. Teachers working with more cooperative methods, automatically use methods that are closer to the state's intentions.

Another advantage is that the students are trained in the basics of democratic citizenship with skills such as cooperating with others, listening to each other, standing for your own opinion but also compromising. The democracy aspect is prominent in the Swedish curriculum.

One of several benefits for the teacher is that many feel that cooperative learning is concrete and easy to learn and adapt to make a difference in the classroom. It takes time to go deeper and understand the collaboration and cooperative work to the full, but from the very beginning, small changes in the lesson design have great positive effects. When Fridaskolan began the teacher training using cooperative learning, many teachers have appreciated its thoughts. With a broader didactic repertoire to choose wisely from, the pedagogues simply feel that they are becoming better teachers.

A final positive effect is that many students experience the teaching as more fun. They experience that the lessons end faster when they themselves are involved in what is happening. In the next step, it also creates a better social climate at the school as a whole. More students have collaborated with each other as they have been "forced" to be in groups that they have not chosen themselves. This way, the school community increases as well as the sense of unity.

What conclusions can be drawn on how to organize sharing according to the above about the organizational structure and necessary conditions to create a good and efficient environment for sharing and cooperation?

One conclusion drawn is that it is relatively easy to go from a more traditionally organized learning to a collaborative learning classroom. It is the teacher who needs to think differently about how the learning can be organized. The teaching does not have to be collaborative learning all the time, but can have elements of collaborative learning, which makes it relatively easy to start trying certain parts and then increase the amount of collaboration as teachers become more confident and the student group's ability to collaborate improves. At the same time, the effects of the collaboration can be greater if the way of organizing learning is used by more teachers in a school. This gives the students greater opportunities to practice collaboration skills and become confident with that way of working.

Over time, both teacher and student group, learn more about collaborative learning, e.g. different structures for cooperation. You gather a didactic repertoire based on which you can vary the work in the classroom and in different ways choose forms for the work in relation to content and purpose of the task.

Practically, you may need to rethink the furniture in the classroom. It is an advantage if the furniture can contribute to the flexibility, since the students sometimes work individually, in pairs or in smaller groups and sometimes as a whole group. The furniture in the classroom needs to enable the students to collaborate in different ways.

Conclusion Local level

Best practice examples of networking between teachers and stakeholders at a local level have been collected from all partner countries. The aim of the sample collection is to identify success factors for the success of cooperative structures. The goal is to identify forms of cooperation of an informal and formal nature and to draw conclusions as to why the principle of cooperation is of central importance and benefit to the actors involved in a local context.

The examples presented from the local level clearly show that when approaching the classroom level, there are two principles that dominate, namely: *collaboration with students*¹⁸ and *collective capacity*¹⁹. Together, they are supported by three other principles in the reported projects, namely: *common goals*²⁰, *collaborative investigation*²¹ and the *opportunity to get access to the so-called big picture*²².

To include more actors can support the active learners in the process. The bigger network and inclusive learning environments where the whole community plays an important role described in the Portuguese class example are easily transferable to other learning communities.

The variation of work methods and how to structure the learning has a direct impact on the results. Varying the methods and work constellations from Individual to in Pairs or All together (the IPA model) make learning more fun, interesting, and less repetitive or even boring for the community members.

¹⁸ In the most in-depth forms of collaborative professionalism, the students are actively involved in creating change together with the teachers. The student's voice is heard.

¹⁹ Collective capacity is the conviction that, together with joint efforts, we can make a difference for our students, regardless of the circumstances.

²⁰ Collaborative professionalism means pursuing, formulating and promoting a common goal that goes beyond test results or even academic performance in itself.

²¹ The process involves first identifying problems in practice and then systematically examining them to make positive changes.

²² In a collaborative professionalism, everyone works together and creates the picture (together).

The cooperative learning work with students presents an opportunity for meta-learning and to reflect - individually, in groups or all together - upon the specifics and success factors of the collaboration itself. Apart from the psychological aspects of learning there is also success factors depending on the organization or set-up of the physical learning environment.

The development of the learning community members' inner motivation and drive to learn, collaborate and share their knowledge and learning experience with others is dependent not only on the setup or the organization of the learning community itself, the support for the participants in all stages of the learning and sharing and how the learning is organized and structured play a role. The organization of the learning space, whether digital for virtual learning communities or the physical setup, choice of furniture, decorations etc. in a classroom or the equivalent on-site environment is equally important.



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The ReLeCoFa project team:

