



SYNERGY AND ENVIRONMENT TO
EMPOWER DECENTRALISED SCHOOLS

GREEN·S.E.E.D.S

TOOLKIT GREEN S.E.E.D.S.

MODULE 3 Seeds for Managing

UNIT 3 Inter-school collaboration



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1. Training of the national responsible (5-6.03.2020)
2. Training of the teachers at local level (1.04.2020 – 31.06.2020)

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UNIT 3.3

INTER-SCHOOL COLLABORATION

“Unity is strength. When there is teamwork and collaboration wonderful things can be achieved” Mattie Stepanek

Inter-school collaborations are useful means for achieving various goals the schools might have. Although researchers (Muijs, 2008) have claimed, that inter-school collaborations have been mainly studied in the context of underprivileged urban communities and their schools, there have also been insightful analysis on the inter-school collaboration in rural settings.

Even though studies have shown that inter-school collaborations can have several positive impacts on the difference groups and aspects of school, it is nevertheless important to keep in mind that inter-school collaborations are not miracle cure for all the problems in school. It might be more adequate and useful to think of it as a possibly useful method, which can have a great impact in both shorter and longer perspective, but which also requires time and effort. As we will explain further later, there are different types of inter-school collaborations.

What are the advantages of inter-school collaborations?

If compared to the individual school-based interventions or solutions created externally and bought in, researchers (Muijs, 2008) have brought out that inter-school collaborations allow participants to co-construct the solutions which would best suit the needs of the individual school. Inter-school approach has the advantage over the ones created within one school due to the potential capacity available in inter-school approaches. This active knowledge-making process might help to ensure deeply rooted innovation and potentially stronger motivation of the people involved. Although, there are also some risks as the inter-school collaborations can result in time consuming work which results in the already existing solutions.



What are the possible impacts of inter-school collaborations?

As mentioned before, there are different types of inter-school collaborations,

which depend greatly on the schools that are collaborating. Researchers (Armstrong, 2015) have nevertheless listed some of the possible impacts inter-school collaborations might have.

ASPECT OF IMPACT	NATURE OF IMPACT
STUDENT OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Most positive effect on student outcomes were in the collaborations in which high performing schools partnered the schools with lower performances. Increasing the student outcomes was in most cases the aim of the collaboration. ◆ Similar positive effects have been reported in other inter-school collaborations as well.
TEACHERS AND TEACHING PRACTICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Enhanced teaching practices and gained new perspectives on their own practice. Increased expectations and motivation and greater openness towards their colleagues. ◆ Sharing practices among teachers has been regarded as more beneficial and effective than attending any external training. ◆ Teachers who have taken part of an inter-school collaboration have reported greater willingness to try new things and develop innovative ideas. Teachers reported also increased confidence to solve problems and practiced self-reflection on their own ideas. ◆ The process of curriculum development has been improved in schools within collaborations as schools can co-construct joint courses that they would not be capable of developing individually.
LEADERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Collaborations are a good context for aspiring school leaders to develop. One of the main and direct benefits the collaboration has for the leaders is that they can observe the style of leadership in other institutions. ◆ School leaders have opportunities to engage in new responsibilities related to the partner school in collaboration and have joint training with colleagues from other schools.
FINANCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Schools in collaboration can work together to provide more efficient operation of the schools by different collaborative organisational management functions. ◆ By doing that schools can save money which could be spent on school improvement and enhancing the student educational experience.

WHAT WOULD BE THE POSITIVE CHANGE FROM INTER-SCHOOL COLLABORATION YOUR SCHOOL WOULD NEED THE MOST?

What are the prerequisites for a successful inter-school collaboration?

Although inter-school collaborations have several possible advantages, researchers (Muijs, 2008) have warned from believing that it is possible to just transmit the competences from one school to another. As competences are often tied to the contexts and people, a constant commitment is required for a successful collaboration. Researchers (Valente & Gomes, 2014) have listed some of the most important factors which have proven to be essential for the collaborative processes to succeed:

- ◆ the creation of collaborative mindset within the participating schools;
- ◆ the creation and strengthening of network between the schools in the collaboration;
- ◆ establishing and maintaining the experiential communities;
- ◆ conduct systematic self-assessment and peer assessment to create and retain the accountability to stakeholders;
- ◆ improvement of leadership strategies within the school to encourage professional growth.

WHICH OF THOSE IMPORTANT FACTORS YOU ALREADY HAVE ACHIEVED IN YOUR SCHOOL? WHICH MIGHT CAUSE YOU DIFFICULTIES?

Which are the types of inter-school collaboration?

Inter-school collaborations can take different forms and they can be categorized in many ways, depending on which aspect of the collaboration to

compare. One way that the collaborations have been distinguished is whether or not an instance is created to govern over the partners in collaboration. If there is, it can be called a hard collaboration and if not, a soft collaboration (Muijs, 2008).





Collaborations can also be divided by their aim or function. The following typology has been proposed (Atkinson, Springate, Johnson & Halsey, 2007)

EXPERTISE-BASED COLLABORATIONS	Schools with different levels of expertise come together to share their knowledge. The initial idea might be to help the partners with lower expertise, but this type of collaboration is often beneficial for all parties
CULTURAL-BASED COLLABORATIONS	Schools with different cultural backgrounds come together to share their culture to break down possible cultural barriers
GEOGRAPHICALLY-BASED COLLABORATIONS	Schools serving particular area and/or community come together to better serve the needs of their community and/or area
COMMONALITY-BASED COLLABORATIONS	Schools with similar circumstances or characteristics come together to tackle their common obstacles and challenges
INNOVATION/CREATIVITY-BASED COLLABORATIONS	Schools come together for innovation and planning of new strategies, practices etc.

HAS YOUR SCHOOL ALREADY PARTICIPATED IN ANY OF THESE COLLABORATION TYPES LISTED ABOVE?

WHAT TYPE OF COLLABORATION COULD BE MOST USEFUL FOR YOUR SCHOOL?





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