

# JOELNE Journal



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## Trailblazers:

10 innovative examples of  
leadership and empowerment in  
education

## Practice + Research:

Solving the equation to  
meaningful change in education

# INSPIRING SHOWCASES

Examples from Europe



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## ELNE Partners



EUROPEAN  
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ASSOCIATION



ATEE  
Association for Teacher Education in Europe





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## Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

We are proud to present to you the first edition of the ELNE Journal, which provides a unique insight into some of the most innovative educational practices found in Europe nowadays. This is the product of a collaborative process which involves, in one way or another, all education stakeholders. When putting this Journal together, we kept in mind the main objectives of our network, which are to *inspire* and to *connect*.

We aim to lead by example, showing that the problems that we might be facing in the education and training sector do indeed have solutions, and some of these solutions have already been found. Our goal, therefore, is to give a voice to those in our community who have the answers. It is those people who will hopefully *inspire* others to follow in their footsteps towards enacting positive change in their own contexts, and so it is those people who make the ELNE what it is, a network where those with questions and those with answers can *connect* and learn from each other.

In the following pages, we aim to give you a glimpse into who we are and what we do, but the centrepiece of this Journal is the Booklet of best Showcases. As stated above, a network is, in principle, the people within it. In the case of the ELNE, it is the practitioners who had the grace of sharing their innovative ideas with us, explaining how their unique vision led to the creation and implementation of these practices. It is the ELNE Research Committee, who contributed to already wonderful showcases by providing their valuable input. It is the policymakers, who with the insight and information that these practices provide, have the important task of transforming these ideas into permanent and positive change at the local, national and European levels.

And finally, it is you, the readers, who make the ELNE. As the editors of this Journal, we hope that the ideas within it can inspire you as leaders, as educators, as students, as parents... to positively influence your own educational environments through collaborative leadership. The ELNE Journal is made *by* the education community *for* the education community, so we hope that you enjoy it. This one's for you!

Our best wishes,

Silvia, Valentina and Axelle

## Who are we?

The ELNE is the Educational Leadership Network Europe, a passionate and committed community of education stakeholders working to enhance and strengthen collaborative leadership in education in Europe. It has the ultimate goal of improving the learning outcomes for students and is founded on the conviction that quality education is at the heart of social progress.

This Europe-wide, ever-growing network is currently composed of 60 partner organisations from 34 countries, including European-level networks, universities, and various national, regional, and local institutions in the

education and training sector. These ELNE members represent the voices of tens of thousands of education employers, teachers, school heads, parents, students, researchers, policymakers, and more.

The ELNE provides its community with a platform to 1) showcase and disseminate exemplary educational research, practices, and social programmes; 2) participate in a meaningful dialogue with representatives from other stakeholder groups and break the silos; and 3) get inspired and empowered to shape the future of education.

## Our work

Every year the ELNE launches a set of calls for applications in search of the most inspiring practices and research from different places across Europe. These showcases have collaborative leadership as a focus, as a means, and as an ultimate goal. They aim to empower our audience to transfer the successful examples into their own context, adapting them to seize the opportunities and tackle the challenges specific to their situation.

To share and spread the first-hand knowledge acquired from our community of key stakeholders, the ELNE has two main tools:

**The European Educational Leadership Week (EELW)**, a week-long online forum made up of dynamic and innovative webinars. These are collaboratively organised by the ELNE partners, associated networks, and other national organisations and universities, where educational research, school best practices, and ongoing policy work are shared with a wide audience of stakeholders in a live format, actively engaging in the conversation.

**The ELNE Journals**, the main dissemination material of the ELNE. There will be three publications a year. Although each ELNE Journal will be different, they will all provide information about the latest work of the Network and provide a

platform for the ELNE Community to give visibility to their work. It will therefore keep readers updated about the ELNE and provide them with valuable insights from the members of its community.

In addition, the ELNE will publish annual research conclusions and policy recommendations, informing the policy work of one of its primary stakeholders, international organisations such as the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and national-level decision-makers, supporting practice- and evidence-informed policymaking and research implementation.

As a result, the ELNE offers a unique value proposition to the different groups of stakeholders that it encompasses: visibility of their work; a source of inspiration for practice and research; the possibility of contributing to collaboratively finding solutions for some of the biggest challenges in the education sector; and access to a wide network of education stakeholders. The ELNE offers its members the opportunity to shape the future of education together.

## European Educational Leadership Week 2024

On the week of 12th to 16th February 2024, over 450 education stakeholders tuned into the European Educational Leadership Week (EELW) - Transforming Schools into Learning Communities, the annual flagship event of the ELNE. Education practitioners, researchers, policymakers, parents and students came together to learn, exchange, and participate in the dozens of webinars that were held.

In its first edition, the EELW 2024 is proud to have fostered **30 webinars**, which received over 2,200 registrations from more than 600 individuals.

Over the span of a week, the participants attended workshops, panel discussions, presentations and keynote speeches led by some of the most relevant experts in the field. Each webinar provided unique insights on some of the most salient issues in education. With collaborative leadership as a backdrop, speakers delved into topics ranging from the attractiveness of the teaching profession to AI in education. Although the EELW 2024 was a great success all around, this is just the first instalment of what will soon be an unmissable date in the calendar of education stakeholders in Europe.

Through the promotion of these initiatives, the ELNE aims to build a bridge paramount to the connection between policy, research and implementation.

As a uniquely diverse network, the ELNE was able to put together an event where all education stakeholders and their perspectives were included and represented.

All EELW 2024 webinars were recorded and can be found on the [ELNE YouTube Channel](#).

One of the main objectives of the ELNE is to collect educational practices and research. As you will see in the next section of this journal, during the EELW we had the opportunity to converse with some of these inspiring practitioners and researchers in our Practice and Research Corners.

# **Booklet of best Showcases**

*By the ELNE Research Committee*

# Introduction to the Booklet

In 2023, with our first ELNE Call for Applications, we invited various actors in the field of European education to submit proposals for webinars, inspiring showcases of practice, and research summaries. During the ELNE Webinar Week from the 12th to the 16th of February 2024, we wanted to give visibility to the best ones and to provide various stakeholders in the field of education an opportunity to learn from them and to discuss. We will further use this material to, together, make education policy recommendations for transforming schools into learning communities, which is the overarching goal of the first ELNE year.

After the EELW, ELNE Journal 1 continues handling the inspiring showcases of practice. In the future, ELNE Journal 2 will bring the best research summaries collected to you, and, finally, ELNE Journal 3 will compile the work and outcomes of the Network's work over its first year of running while including policy recommendations to transform schools into learning communities. These will be collaboratively created by the ELNE community through their active participation in the EELW and the ELNE Annual Conference (23rd April 2024). The Journals will be, therefore, the main dissemination material of our work. This serves the ultimate goal of ELNE to

establish a 360-degree sustainable learning community that works to make European education policy in a sustainable and evidence-informed way.

This Booklet of best Showcases contains those good practices received at the first ELNE Call that were considered to convey the most relevant and usable presentations to support processes for transforming schools into learning communities. In all, the Booklet contains ten showcases. Seven of them were presented live at the EELW (13th February 2024). Four of the showcases focus on innovative learning environments conducive to leadership practices. Three, on both peer learning activities and shared methods and practices. And three on bottom-up practices led by multiple stakeholders.

With relevance as a selection criterion, we referred to the focus of the Call. For the first ELNE year, the focus is on transforming schools into learning communities with the aforementioned three underlying foci as the various focus areas of the showcases in this Booklet. The relevance criteria presupposed the leadership focus in one way or another.

For usability, the main criterion was that the showcase was transferable to other schools either as adaptation/customisation and/or as

offering ideas for other kinds of practical applications. To be usable, the presentation of the showcase had to be complete, objective, and accurate.

Following the completeness criterion, we expected the presentation to provide enough details on the context, challenge answered, actions introduced, and people benefitting from the initiative. A complete presentation had to provide enough information for colleagues across Europe to be able to fully understand the practice, to adopt it, and to subject it to necessary modifications based on cultural and local contexts. The information also had to be objective and accurate so that the usability of the showcase would be based on firm grounds.

For the commentaries of the best showcases in this Booklet, we relied on the conceptual framework we had created to guide our work. Hence, you will see in the commentaries that we repeatedly come up with the systemic and transformative approach for the development of schools into learning communities. This approach, we believe, should include enacting leadership from the bottom to the top to empower teachers and create learning environments founded on collaborative leadership. In addition, when we succeed in all this, we believe that knowledge production, mediation, and transfer will develop to meet the European Commission's objectives and expectations

This means that the 360-degree learning community is together constructing knowledge, reflecting on the knowledge, and transferring knowledge into practice, research, and policy in novel ways to make a sustainable future in the complex and dynamic world.

# Inspiring Showcases

## Innovative learning environments conducive to leadership practices

Learning environments can be physical, digital, social, and more. They are places where people learn and interact with each other, which makes the possibilities infinite and this range of environments as diverse as it gets. The following Showcases present unique learning environments which have positively impacted the educational community in which they function.

### **Evidence-based learning I.E.S. J. Ibáñez Martín, Spain Ana Isabel Barranco**

At I.E.S. J. Ibáñez Martín, the secondary school's educational vision revolves around implementing an Evidence-Based Learning model to enhance the quality of education. This model not only emphasises academic performance but also encompasses a comprehensive approach to student development, nurturing cultural appreciation across various domains (artistic, literary, scientific and social). Collaborating with NGOs on initiatives such as the "Social Work: Cooperation with the Community" elective subject, the school promotes social responsibility and engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to this, a Digital Literacy Plan ensures that the entire educational community is equipped with the necessary skills to navigate the digital landscape effectively.

I.E.S. J. Ibáñez Martín is also working towards enhancing every

facet of the school community. From forming a network of 'student mediators' through the revival of a mediation model to expanding course offerings for adult education, it has demonstrated its commitment to inclusivity and continuous improvement. Steps to improving resources, creating conducive spaces and prioritising mental health underscore I.E.S. J. Ibáñez Martín's dedication to holistic student development.

Want to find out more?  
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The programme is a good example of transformative leadership that empowers an educational community (teachers, students, parents) around a project focused on developing cognitive, social and emotional skills. It is also supported by regular assessment to follow and measure

knowledge and skills acquired by students through multiple initiatives, exchanges and responsibilities while providing evidence of their progress. Collaborative practices, such as the dissemination of knowledge and experience, facilitate the promotion of inclusion and sustainability objectives in sharing a common vision and values.

A digital literacy plan is associated with a quality approach in a learning environment rich in material and human resources. Networking and adult mediation ensure that students are well supported, while cultural openness, diversity, safety, and well-being are considered with attention.

This is a very interesting innovation that shows the importance of distributed leadership, in sharing roles and responsibilities horizontally within the educational community, but also of capacity building, which links autonomy and accountability in improving students' skills. It also demonstrates that restructuring school time and space, notably through digital learning environments, helps to improve student and adult well-being.

This innovation could be transferred into other educational contexts as an example of a sustainable professional learning community supported by effective leadership.



### Food for thought

- How can you empower parents and students in innovative literacy practices?
- What could be the impact of restructuring school time and space?
- What is a quality approach at the school level?
- How can you develop diverse skills and learning environments for students?
- What can be made to promote student social engagement and cooperation?
- How can school improvement be based on evidence?
- What can be concretely transformative and distributed leadership?

### **Interxarxes Horta-Guinardó District, Barcelona, Spain Pilar Casals**

**Originating in 2000, Interxarxes emerged as a response to the complex challenges faced by educators in public services for child welfare, particularly concerning multi-assisted families. The programme addresses concerns about the perceived disconnection across social services public health, social care, and education networks. Thus, Interxarxes bridges the gaps and streamlines collaboration between educational institutions and professionals working together to improve the welfare of students from 0-18 years old. Structured around four key axes– Assistance, Training,**

**Research and Community Facilitation- Interxarxes serves the cases through tailored intervention protocols, involving evaluation, a work plan design, assigning a reference point and establishing a follow-up and monitoring process. The plan is focused on the case and the dialogue among the educational, health and social care professionals involved. This collaboration is supported by a quarterly Case-Analysis Seminar, which provides a platform for continuous training and reflection.**

Want to find out more?  
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The development of collaboration and leadership practices in childcare and early childhood programs is a pressing issue for education systems and policies. This program has been running for over 24 years, empowering educational leaders and practitioners as actors in the dialogue held with other public services. It aims to enhance the quality of both care and educational services, increasing the understanding of the reality of childhood and families of their district, providing training and mutual learning for professionals in network collaboration, and formulating proposals for optimising available resources within a broader plan for community facilitation.

The programme connects to collaborative leadership beyond the school premises and the educational field, as it is carried out to enhance cooperation between different stakeholders dealing with the same families. It also gives attention to continuous feedback and evaluation in order to adapt and improve the services provided. This makes a very interesting point, as the methodology of the Case-Analysis Seminar, featuring the participation of an external expert, provides a space for updates, mutual understanding, adjustment of expectations and reflection on network work methodology.

The programme has generated and still generates a methodology that can be widespread and transferred to other territories with similar needs. Interxarxes gives an overview of what could be done more widely in Europe to break down the barriers between services and improve the well-being of students. serving as a reference for transformative leadership practices.

## Practice Corner: Learning Environments

During the EELW 2024, Seija Karvonen from Luovi Vocational College (Finland) and Cedric Ryckaert from VBS Sint-Paulus (Belgium) discussed how the unique environments created in their school communities have prompted leadership practices. Though two very distinct environments, a climate-adaptative school ground, and an ‘upside-down school’ which designs an individual vocational education plan for each student, both highlighted the importance of conversation when building a sustainable long-term project within educational institutions.

Ensuring the participation of all stakeholders in this ‘coffee and cake’ method enabled the practitioners to foster a whole-school approach. The lively discussion you can watch below also evoked other key elements for great learning environments such as building meaningful connections, which in turn promotes an atmosphere of trust, equity and respect.



### Routes to Employment and Good Life Luovi Vocational College, Finland Seija Karvonen

Luovi Vocational College is a publicly-funded provider of special needs Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Finland. The TELMA programme run by the college focuses on providing students with the necessary skills to aid them in their studies, working life and society.

The learning process occurs through the placement of students in professional settings such as partner companies and local businesses. Students are given real-world tasks, providing them with the opportunity to increase their level of independence at work and subsequently in other aspects of their personal and professional lives. Students are also guided by a personalised study plan, overseen by a professional team. The goal of

**this initiative is to provide students with an individualised learning experience and to help them secure future employment and independence.**

Want to find out more?  
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This showcase is a unique example of a structure where a set of special schools across Finland are transformed into learning communities by empowering and enabling students to design their own learning pathways facilitated by relevant tasks in the workplace, supported by tutors and other professionals. Its novelty is placed in the fact that it bridges theory and practice by bringing together the work of the school and the world of employment, specifically for students who might have fewer opportunities than others. Equal rights for all students stand high on the EEA agenda, whose mission favours an inclusive and fair society as well as democratic participation.

The kind of leadership proposed here tends to follow system leadership and

collaborative leadership approaches where responsibility is shared between all partners involved. It is sensitive to the needs of the students as well as the needs of the employers. Guided by a vision and values, it ensures that solutions are offered to each one of the students as individuals aspiring to develop and become active members of the community.

Meeting the needs of the employers ensures sustainability and fosters students' independence and well-being in the longer term. A key parameter in the process is the development of a personal learning path which follows a 'learning by doing' approach.

Active participation in real and meaningful tasks increases student engagement and motivation, fostering interaction with the environment and personal reflection in learning. The tutors act as facilitators of learning, thus creating the conditions for the emergence of transformative learning communities. The Luovi Vocational College is an excellent example of creating inclusive and innovative learning communities by broadening school collaboration and partnerships, which other EEA regions might wish to adopt.

**Climate adaptive school grounds  
- “Klimaatspeelplaats”  
VBS Sint-Paulus Kortrijk, Belgium  
Cedric Ryckaert**

Want to find out more?  
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Sint-Paulusschool in Belgium is at the forefront of innovative schoolyard design, with their project winning awards such as the New European Bauhaus Award 2023 and the European Ecological Gardening Award 2022. Through a collaborative effort involving students, teachers, parents, local authorities and landscape agencies, the school has successfully reimagined its 370m<sup>2</sup> playground and car park into a nature-rich oasis, prioritising greenery, water management and air quality. This transformation not only addressed the need for climate adaptation and mitigation but fostered a holistic approach to education, integrating outdoor learning and environmental stewardship into the curriculum.

The transformation, which started as an in-school project between teachers and students, led to funding support from the local city of Kortrijk and the province of West Flanders. Then, Sint-Paulusschool established a non-profit organisation with the help of the parents to fundraise and disseminate for their project. Additionally, BLES (Buiten Leren en Spelen) was created as an organisation which supports schools throughout Flanders and Europe in creating climate-adaptive playgrounds.



This showcase is a rewarded example for the subtopic of innovative learning environments to transform schools into learning communities. Climate adaptive school grounds – Klimaatspeelplaats provides a novel learning environment, not just for the school, but also for the broader local community. We consider the created learning environment valuable in several ways but also appreciate the bottom-up initiative by the teachers and students with which the environment was established. Among the European Education Area (EEA) topics, the Sint-Paulusschool provides an inspiring example of both sustainable development education with its ecosystem and international collaboration with how they are sharing their work with schools in several other European countries.

Topical research on educational leadership emphasises the systemic approach with a contextual and collaborative working method. In this

Showcase, you can find ideas and support to renew the learning environment by applying the systemic approach in your own context. In Sint-Paulusschool, the asphalt-concrete playground was transformed into a green zone that broadens the pedagogy of the school and the learning experiences it provides in several ways, of which they particularly mention STEAM and 21st-century skills.

In addition, the process for the green zone and its availability for the whole local community has both required and allowed the collaboration and agency of multiple stakeholders in the school and local community, and beyond stretching to the Province of West Flanders, to the Flemish government, and landscape agencies. The collaboration has advanced the knowledge exchange and co-creation among the internal and external actors strengthening characteristics of both the collaborative leadership and bottom-up approach. The process in Sint-Paulusschool started with something small, an idea by the teachers and students. This grew into the whole school, local community and beyond process. The transformation is institutionalised not just with the school and local community but with the work of the BLES organisation also throughout Flanders and in several other countries.



### Food for thought

- What kind of bottom-up initiatives are brewing in your school at the moment?
- How can you use the Sint-Paulusschool showcase to realise these in your school?

## Peer Learning Activities and Shared Methods and Practices

Peer learning and collaborative leadership serve as catalysts for the development of teaching methods. These experimental and innovative pedagogical practices have both evolved and adapted to the methods they've developed from, as well as inspiring them.

### Practice Corner: Peer Learning

At the EELW 2024, Konstantina Tastsis from Palladio School in Greece, Ulla Saastamoinen from the University of Eastern Finland, and Emiliana Alves from Colégio Novo da Maia in Portugal shared their teaching methodologies encompassing the introduction of AI in early childhood education, team teaching, and personal development projects respectively.

The practitioners discussed the challenges and opportunities of implementing such innovative practices, and how they foster the holistic development of students and contribute to the well-being and development of educators. The conversation concurred an element that underlined the transferability of practices was the emphasis put on the participation and education of school leaders and administrators to work towards a fruitful whole-school approach and more collaborative leadership principles in the classroom.

Actively seeing the dynamic interplay between teaching practices and peer learning through school visits and taking part in initiatives, such as Erasmus+ programmes, enables educators who seek to implement similar methods to better see what is being done in these institutions and how.



## Introducing AI Principles in Early Education

Palladio School, Greece

Konstantina Tastsis & Panagiotis Karamalis

At Palladio School in Greece, the implementation of AI principles in Early Childhood Education aims to nurture the next generation with the foundational knowledge of technology and critical thinking skills. By rendering complex concepts accessible through introducing them in a simplified manner, children build an understanding of generative AI and Machine Learning.

The school has fostered a collaborative learning community by joining students, families and teachers together to help implement this innovative curriculum. Based on foundational AI concepts, the curriculum, which includes custom-built apps and games, is adaptable to both different educational contexts as well as advances in technology. It ultimately aims to instil a lifelong interest in AI and innovation throughout the pupil's education.

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How can Artificial Intelligence be introduced through playful methods and shared and active learning paths, to simplify complex concepts and make them accessible to even the youngest children? This is the aim of an educational experience that responds well to the Call's topic: Peer learning activities and shared methods and practices.

A course that plays with the basic ideas of coding and uses customised applications and games to educate with images or voice recognition devices, in complex principles of Machine Learning. Moreover, this project is not only aimed at educators, especially early childhood teachers, but also administrators, school leaders, curriculum coordinators and policymakers because it develops a creative, active and playful educational practice that enhances peer relationships and stimulates curiosity and the pleasure of discovery in all those involved.

In this sense, this practice responds well to the objective of Transforming Schools into Learning Communities. At the heart of the educational project is an idea of collaborative learning that

succeeds in involving educators, parents and students and that promises to go beyond the walls of the classroom. In its enhancement of the learning community, and in putting participatory teaching and education practices at the service of AI, the project appears 'sustainable' in the long term, because it is based on a solid educational project that is flexible and inclusive in its implementation practices. The proposal also shows careful attention to the communication and dissemination of the project, the video presented accounts for the learners' enjoyment of the learning moment and how even school spaces can be renovated to introduce and use new technologies and to integrate learning and play in a new environment.

The collaboration and didactic innovation made possible by the playful iteration between educators and learners effectively makes AI education an integral part of an early learning pathway for children, and an ongoing one for adults.

**B.U+ Project**  
**Colégio Novo da Maia, Portugal**  
**Renata Leite & Emilianas Alves**

**Emerging from the need to equip pupils with both the hard skills taught in school and the soft skills needed to thrive in the 21st century, Colégio Novo da Maia created the B.U.+ programme, with the aim to develop well-rounded students and capable citizens. The programme,**

**developed together by teachers, psychologists and delegates, is designed to explore the emotional management and holistic development of pupils.**

**Through a supportive environment, students set and achieve individual goals which promote their personal growth. The programme utilises continuous questioning, discussions and innovative tools to empower the problem-solving and socio-emotional skills of students. Thus, these skills simultaneously improve intra- and interpersonal relationships. This improvement is reflected in the positive school environment and the student's academic performance and learning motivation.**

Want to find out more?  
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This showcase exemplifies the integration of a multidimensional approach within the learning environment, nurturing both personal and social key competences, while also showcasing their significant impact on academic development, in alignment

with the principles of the EEA New Skills Agenda for Europe. This agenda emphasises that high-quality education, including extra-curricular activities and a broad approach to competence development, improves achievement levels in basic skills (Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, 2018).

Considering the EEA focus topic on improving quality and equity in education and training, the Council identified key competences needed for personal fulfilment, a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, employability, active citizenship and social inclusion. Among them, we can find some of the key competences found in the showcase, such as interpersonal skills, the ability to adopt new competences or self-regulation.

Following the Council's recommendation, this inspiring showcase raises the level of personal and social competence to improve health-conscious, future-oriented life management. Furthermore, it fosters a culture of peace and non-violence, recognised as a skill needed to promote sustainable development (United Nations Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

We consider the presentation of the showcase usable, as it can be transferable to other schools and demonstrates clear practical applicability. Moreover, it is adaptable

to different kinds and levels of educational institutions. By engaging a broad learning community, it encompasses not only educators but also various disciplines, thereby fostering a holistic approach to learning and development.

Finally, it offers a relevant example of transforming schools into learning communities, considering a broad approach to competence development.

**Team Teaching**  
**University of Eastern Finland,**  
**Finland**

**Ulla Saastamoinen, Anniina Hirva,**  
**Sanna Vänskä, Matias Hänninen,**  
**Mika Mononen**

**At the University of Eastern Finland Teacher Training School, five teachers teach 85 primary school students in a community atmosphere. The co-teaching method was developed by professionals and teachers to create a collaborative learning community. The four pillars of this environment are experiences, active learning, ownership of learning and community.**

**This co-teaching method allows for peer learning among teachers, thus supporting teachers in the continuous development of their pedagogical practices and strategies. This constant collaboration between colleagues, capitalising on each other's strengths, enhances the possibility for students to explore**

**individualised paths in their learning. To reach this, a variation of both small and large class groups is utilised in this unique teaching method and environment.**

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The whole is more than the sum of its parts. Especially when it comes to team teaching, this statement is not just a loose saying, but the crystallisation point of successful student-centred collaboration in the classroom. This showcase impressively demonstrates what is important if team teaching is to succeed. At the University of Eastern Finland Teacher Training School, five teachers work together in an impressive way and enable the students to achieve their personal goals along individual learning paths.

The showcase impressively demonstrates how high quality in schools and lessons can be achieved when teaching and collaboration are based on a specific, pre-defined pedagogical concept. Experiences,

Active Learning, Ownership and Community are the basic building blocks of teaching, which are carefully interwoven in the planning and implementation of the learning pathways. This requires a team that brings different strengths to the table and thus also addresses the different needs of the students.

The University of Eastern Finland Teacher Training School shows how this can be achieved and how much fun working together can be. This includes a lot of time for planning, weekly meetings for exchange among colleagues, consensus and sometimes disagreement, support from the administration, trust, support in difficult situations and breaks together to simply chat. If you want to find out more about this fascinating school and how its members have managed to develop such a high quality, you should definitely take a closer look at it.

## Bottom-up practices led by multiple stakeholders

A learning community is an environment that connects various stakeholders of a learning journey—students, teachers, parents, local community. The following Showcases involve not only educators but also middle management, school heads, parents and students in the learning process.

### **Transforming Schools into Learning Communities: Building a Partnership between Educational Partners**

**University of Debrecen, Hungary**

**Cintia Csók, Gabriella Pusztai, Zsófia Vincze**

The research and development initiative from the University of Debrecen aims to bridge gaps in teacher education and training while encouraging collaboration among teachers, parents and educational support staff. The project identified effective school practices and examined the challenges and opportunities for parental involvement among educational support staff in diverse social and territorial contexts. Building on this foundation, evidence-based procedures aligned with international standards are being developed to enhance the effectiveness of Hungarian schools, particularly those confronting complex societal challenges.

Furthermore, the research underscored the crucial role played by educational support professionals in supporting pedago-

-gical efforts thereby alleviating teachers' workloads and enhancing educational outcomes. By leveraging facilitators' expertise in areas such as child protection and psychology, the initiative aims to optimise school effectiveness and create learning communities. Through the dissemination of innovative practices and the development of evidence-informed procedures, the project seeks to empower school professionals with the tools and knowledge necessary to address complex social challenges and foster transformative change within partner schools.

Want to find out more?

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The aim of this project is to outline teacher training activities that can also foster integration between teachers, parents and all educational support staff. Based on a systematic survey of the most relevant scientific literature, the project aims to test school practices that highlight the opportunities and obstacles to the involvement of parents by educational support staff in different social and territorial contexts.

The project is clear in its general objectives. It has the merit of attempting to involve and analytically investigate this co-involvement. In addition to teachers, professionals and technicians who support pedagogues, as well as parents, have an important role to play in general educational work.

The project aims to show how the presence of facilitators can improve the workload of teachers and the effectiveness of education as well as improve the quality of the working and learning environment. In its application dimension, the project is mainly dedicated to Hungarian schools - selected from those that for contextual reasons "face very complex social challenges" - but with a broad approach that makes it potentially exportable to different social and territorial contexts as well.

The structuring of the project is convincing, and the proposal emphasises the importance of the dissemination of good practices and innovative intervention programmes, and thus of the sharing and dissemination of research results.

## Practice Corner: Stakeholder Engagement

In response to the ELNE call for Inspiring Showcases on ‘bottom-up practices of learning communities led by multiple stakeholders’, practitioners from Colegio Santiago Apóstol in Spain and Perho Culinary, Tourism & Business College in Finland, delved into how the active involvement of education stakeholders and the local community can lead to collaborative and sustainable practices.

At Colegio Santiago Apóstol, the involvement of parents in the learning environment has become a key factor in ensuring the success of their students, of whom the majority come from an underprivileged background. Additionally, the involvement of local NGOs and individual members of the community, ensures a wealth of stakeholders have become active participants in the success of the school.

Similarly, in Finland, the focus on building a sustainable learning community with the participation of outside organisations provided students with a well-rounded education and a more open vision for their future. The webinar discussed the importance of encouraging stakeholders who are less active in these learning communities to become more involved and insights on what can be done to incentivise this.



**Green City Farm – learning environment  
of sustainable development  
Perho Culinary, Tourism & Business  
College, Finland  
Heidi Hovi-Sippola & Jarmo Heimala**

The Green City Farm at Perho CTB College is a unique learning environment for sustainable development education, offering a platform to explore and understand responsible land management, biodiversity conservation, ecological food production and more.

In this interdisciplinary approach guided by farmers and educators, students work together to design and implement a range of farming initiatives. This is achieved through collaboration with restaurants and cooperative partners, which include local organisations and businesses. Connecting with stakeholders beyond the college campus creates a dynamic learning ecosystem that prepares individuals for meaningful engagement with the wider community and working life.



This showcase is a wonderful example of ELNE's overarching goal of transforming schools into learning communities with bottom-up practice by multiple stakeholders. The Green City Farm provides a novel learning environment for sustainable farming and food production that involves students, teachers, other educational organisations, and various working life actors. Together, they form a learning community with a bottom-up approach where members are empowered to participate in the joint planning and enactment of the activities through collaborative leadership.

As its authors tell us, this has led to new kinds of knowledge production, mediation, and transfer with further new inspirations and innovations. Among the European Education Area (EEA) topics, the Green City Farm offers an inspiring example at least for sustainable development education, and through their participation in the Erasmus+ AgriCulinary project, for international collaboration. In addition,

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call, they are a beautiful example of experimentation and innovation for the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goal 17 for strengthening the means of implementation and revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development.

Topical research on educational leadership emphasises the systemic approach with a contextual and collaborative working method. In the Showcase, you can find ideas and support to transform a functional organisation into one that is processed and networked, by applying the systemic approach in your own context. The structures, processes and practices of a traditional vocational education school have been renewed so that the institution is not isolated from its external surroundings but an interactive part of its ecosystem. Based on how the created learning environment is presented, the renewed structures, processes, and practices require and allow the empowerment of both teachers and students.

It also becomes evident that in the holistic ecosystem of the showcase, the knowledge exchange and co-creation among all the internal and external members of the community has been advanced. The knowledge construction bears characteristics of both the collaborative leadership and bottom-up approach. This no doubt positively affects every community member's agency, learning and well-being, which is also explicitly visible in the video. The

Green City Farm started the renewal process in 2017. We have now been given the 2024 presentation of the process. At least two things are worth noting here. First, it may have taken them some time to reach where they are now, and they needed the support of their local community in several ways. Second, they have been able to institutionalise their learning community, which is evidence of the sustainability of the renewal.



### Food for thought

- What is your school like now?
- How can you use the Green City Farm showcase to analyse your school?
- What would you keep or strengthen?
- What would you change or develop?
- How would you do all this?

### **Empowering Dreams: The Santiago Apóstol Learning Community's Journey Towards Inclusive Education and Holistic Development**

**Colegio Santiago Apóstol Cabanyal, Spain**

**Jordi Bosch López de Andújar, Roberto Martínez Rodríguez, Alessandro de Gregorio**

Since 2010, Colegio Santiago Apóstol Cabanyal has established a learning community within their school and local neighbourhood. Originally stemming from the implementation of an innovative education programme which aimed to integrate ICT to enhance student motivation, the creation of the

learning community solidified the school's commitment to helping the students, who come from a majority disadvantaged background.

The dialogical approach consists of implementing various initiatives such as Interactive Groups, Dialogical Literary Circles and training for families and volunteers. The increased participation of families in their children's learning is a factor in this learning community which has decreased early drop-out rates and promoted the integration of interculturality.

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The Empowering Dreams project is of high quality in promoting inclusive education and combatting dropouts, objectives set by the European strategy for lifelong learning, while ensuring a sustainable programme capable of being extended to other local and national education systems. The programme emphasises the exchange of knowledge and practices within a wider learning community while encouraging dialogue and interaction to

promote interculturality and basic skills. Digital technologies are at the core of the process, notably through the gamification of teaching. The school's work facilitates capacity building and the involvement of all members of the educational community, especially families.

The project has set itself ambitious targets for improving students' cognitive and social skills, thanks to democratic leadership focused on school improvement. The institutionalisation of the project in a network of learning communities contributes to its sustainability and scaling-up. The programme also offers a great opportunity for students to develop their skills in digital technologies and to bridge the digital divide for the most disadvantaged. Learning is really at the core of the relationships and cooperation within the community. This dialogic approach could be transferred at a larger scale as an example of good practice, connecting different people and skills to establish a learning community focused on literacy and inclusion.

**Food for thought**

- How can you develop educative inclusion through innovative practices?
- What can digital technologies do to support learning and sharing knowledge?
- How can you include families in democratic leadership?
- What can leadership do for interculturality and sustainability?

## Practice-informed education: a letter to policymakers

Education is not static, quite the opposite. It is continuously changing and evolving. Evidence of this evolution can be found in the practices that you have just read. If these accomplishments teach us anything, it's that positive change can be achieved and that this change is ultimately what ensures quality in education. However, how do we know what works and what doesn't? How do we, as the education community, know which path leads to positive change?

What we do know is that, despite the different contexts in which they operate, education stakeholders often face similar challenges. The fact that these recurrent challenges continue to exist is a testament to the complexity of the education and training sector. However, it also indicates that, when a solution to a concrete problem is found, it is relevant to the education community as a whole.

This is why the exchange of knowledge and experience between education stakeholders is so important. The practices showcased in this ELNE Journal are examples of how educators overcame obstacles in their own specific contexts. Still, these success stories can be useful in one way or another to anyone and everyone in the community. Even if we all have our unique challenges, drawing inspiration from our peers is often the first step towards coming up with our own solutions.

Because of this, being practice-informed is relevant in all areas and aspects of education and training, and it is an approach that all education stakeholders should strive towards.

For practitioners, it might mean learning from a fellow practitioner in a similar situation and adapting their peer's solution to their own problem. It might mean overcoming a long-standing obstacle by considering a different perspective on a common issue.

For researchers, it may mean getting first-hand information on what works and what does not in order to find their blind spots and fix them, to find out what areas need to be further investigated and to make educational research not only more informative, based, and legitimate, but also genuinely useful for those who then transform research findings into practices and policies.

For policymakers, it means getting a real sense of how they can support the education community by developing and implementing policies that help stakeholders thrive. For educational policies to be truly accepted and implemented, they have to reflect the needs and preferences of those who are being directly affected by them.

The evidence provided by educational practices, such as those collected by the ELNE, is instrumental in the creation of legitimate and relevant policies in this ever-changing field. This is why policymakers need the input of practitioners. But, what do practitioners need from policymakers? We asked some of the authors of the Showcases here included to address policymakers with their requests in the following "letter to policymakers".

Dear education policymakers,

Keep investing - the green & blue deal from the EU needs to start in schools!

- Cedric Ryckaert, Belgium

Provide support and guidance for the sustainable development of learning environments. Green City Farm would be happy to collaborate with local cities, such as our capital city, Helsinki.

- Heidi Hovi-Sippola and Jarmo Heimala, Finland

Create an enabling environment that supports the integration of AI in Early Childhood Education practices by: emphasising pedagogical autonomy; facilitating partnerships between government, educational institutions and technology companies; encouraging collaboration to share resources and expertise in AI integration; enhancing awareness about AI education and providing resources for parents to support their children's media literacy; funding research to identify best practices and providing educators with the necessary skills and resources to effectively integrate AI into their teaching practices.

- Konstantina Tastsis, Greece

Our school hours are financed by the educational administration, but all the activities we do outside school hours have to be financed small project by small project, as the students' families do not have enough resources. If we want to generate a real social transformation we must offer the best opportunities. We are achieving this, but in terms of workload and responsibility, we need, once and for all, an administration, be it European, local, regional or national, that helps us with the financing.

- Jordi Bosch, Spain

Sincerely,

the EELW practitioners

## Upcoming Events

What is up next for the Educational Leadership Network Europe? From our Annual Conference in April to the Kick-Off meeting of our second year, we have lots in store for all members of the ELNE Community.



The ELNE Annual Conference 2024 endeavours to bring together educational organisations, practitioners, researchers and policymakers from across Europe to explore the concept of collaborative leadership and how to put it to good use in education.



In May 2024, the ELNE will be launching its new website, poised to be a hub for discussion. This platform will not only showcase exemplary practices and research from our community but will also feature an exclusive Intranet. Here, individuals are invited to register and join the expansive ELNE community, ensuring they remain up-to-date.



The second ELNE Journal, focusing on research, will be released at the end of May. The Journal will spotlight innovative research which sheds light on pressing issues in the field of education and training, and that has found applicable solutions to tackle them.



Ahead of the second year of the ELNE, the members of the ELNE Consortium will meet in person to build upon the success of the project so far as they envision the next steps for the Network together.

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