

## **Preparing for Change**

A selection of Good Practices and Research on School Resilience

## **EELW 2025**

Webinars on Educational Leadership Pratices in Schools, Large-Scale Projects and Research



School

Resilience

ELNE Journal (March, 2025), N°4

ISSN: 3041-377X

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## **ELNE Partners**

























































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A LETTER TO POLICYMAKERS



## Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the second year of ELNE and the fourth edition of our journal- an evolving space where ideas, research, and best practices come together to shape the future of education in Europe. This year, our focus is on a theme that has never been more relevant: School Resilience: Preparing for Change. In a world that is constantly shifting socially, technologically, and environmentally, how do we ensure that our schools are not just responding to change but actively preparing for it?

Through our second call for applications, we have gathered a remarkable selection of good practices and research summaries that reflect the creative and forward-thinking spirit of educators across Europe. These contributions offer insights into how schools can build resilience, encourage adaptability, and create learning environments that are ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow. This booklet is more than a collection of ideas. It is an invitation to reflect, discuss, and implement innovative approaches that can make a tangible difference in education.

ELNE is not just about publishing knowledge; it is about building a dynamic network of people who share a commitment to meaningful transformation. As you explore this edition, we encourage you to take part in the ongoing conversations and activities that ELNE supports. Whether through future calls for applications, discussions during European Education Month, or engagement with the ELNE community throughout the year, your participation makes a difference.

Change is inevitable, but resilience is built. Schools that embrace change with curiosity and creativity will be best prepared for what lies ahead. By exchanging ideas, testing new approaches, and remaining open to transformation, we can ensure that education continues to thrive in uncertain times. This journal is a step in that journey, offering perspectives and strategies that we hope will inspire action and collaboration across our network.

Our best wishes,

the ELNE team



## Who are we?

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.

Set up under the Erasmus+ framework of the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, ELNE is a prominent network in Europe that involves all different types of stakeholders from all levels of the education and training sector, from Early Childhood Education and Care to Higher Education, Adult Learning, and Teacher Training among others. 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 over 60 member organisations from 27 countries, including European-level networks, universities, and various national, regional, and local institutions in the education and training sector. They represent the voices of tens of thousands of education employers, teachers, school heads, parents, students, researchers, policymakers, and more.

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

## **Our work**

ELNE aims to promote and support the enhancement of collaborative educational and school leadership in Europe, which is crucial in light of the new needs that schools have. For this, effective collaboration and a full engagement of the actors at an institutional level is needed. In line with the objectives of the European Education Area (EEA), the Network actively works on the reduction of early school leaving; the enhancement of the well-being of students, teachers, and school leaders; the digitisation of schools; and the continuous professional training of teachers and school leaders; among other things.

Every year 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 these 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 acq-

uired from our community of key stakeholders, ELNE has two main channels. The **European Education Month** (EEM), a month-long online forum of dynamic and innovative webinars and events organised by education professionals from across Europe. This month encompasses the **European Educational Leadership Week**, where webinars are collaboratively organised by the ELNE Lead Partners. During the **EEM 2025**, thid initiative will focus on Collaborative Leadership for the Future of Education.

The **ELNE Journals** are the main dissemination material of ELNE. They are published three times a year to share the best practices and research collected by ELNE, along with valuable insights from the members of its community.

In addition, ELNE publishes annual **research conclusions** and **policy recommendations**, informing the policy work of international organisations such as the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

#### Introduction

(OECD), and national-level decision-makers, in order to support 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.

## Our mission

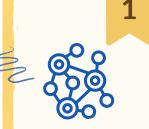
The mission of ELNE is to enhance and strengthen collaborative leadership in education in Europe. Collaborative leadership refers to the process of strategically using the unique skills and knowledge of teachers, school leaders, pupils and parents towards achieving common educational goals. It needs to be effective to ensure the competence development of teachers and school leaders and improve the learning outcomes for students. It has, therefore, a central role in the quality of learning outcomes, as it has the ability to influence the motivation and capacities of students, teachers, school leaders and the school's environment.

But educational leadership is shifting. School leaders, managers and staff in education are taking different or increasingly broader leadership roles. Moreover, teachers, students and parents also need to be considered as leaders, as their self-organised, democratic and independent representative structures are untapped resources that can greatly improve the quality and accessibility of our education systems.

Collaborative educational leadership, we believe, is the key framework to achieving this. For this reason, ELNE's specific objectives are the following:



## Our objectives



*Open and connect the silos* by providing a collaborative platform for EU-level cooperation between stakeholders that do not normally engage or exchange. ELNE aims to become a relevant, reputable, and sustainable community for the running of schools and higher education institutions.

Promote joint work between schools, relevant local organisations, and policymakers.







Identify, share, and promote effective policy practices and stimulate innovation and strategic development in policy implementation and provision through the collection of relevant research and good practices that can inspire and guide other organisations to implement the EEA goals.

Promote practice- and researchinformed policymaking and research implementation.







Support the work of the European Commission's Working Groups contribute to policy developments towards achieving the goals of the European Education Area by becoming a forum of discussion where to explore how research and policy guidelines can be implemented at different levels.

Promote a whole schooling approach.





Support the creation comprehensive systems and institutional-level changes and highlight the importance of involving social partners and other relevant stakeholders in decision-making.



# School Resilience:

preparing for



A selection of good practices



## Introduction to the selection

In 2024, with our second ELNE Call for Applications, we once again invited diverse stakeholders in European education to submit Good Practices and Research Summaries that reflect innovative approaches to collaborative leadership in schools. Through this process, we sought to identify practical, impactful, and transferable initiatives that help schools prepare for change in an increasingly complex educational landscape.

This year's theme, "School Resilience: Preparing for Change," focuses on how collaboration strengthens adaptability, ensuring schools can navigate future challenges effectively. The featured good practices and research summaries in this edition cover a variety of approaches to strengthening school resilience. Some focus on inclusive school governance, fostering shared decision-making and leadership at all levels. Others highlight digital learning strategies for both students and educators. A strong emphasis is also placed on peer learning and community partnerships, demonstrating how cooperation across different sectors can enhance educational outcomes.

The ELNE Research Committee and Steering Group assessed the contributions based on relevance, usability, transferability, and potential scalability, ensuring that each practice and research summary could inspire and inform a wider audience.

Of the good practices and research summaries submitted, the Research Committee selected nine to be presented during the 2025 European Educational Leadership Week, the flagship event of the European Education Month.

These were presented in three categories: good practices at school level, good practices at large-scale project level and school resilience from a research perspective.

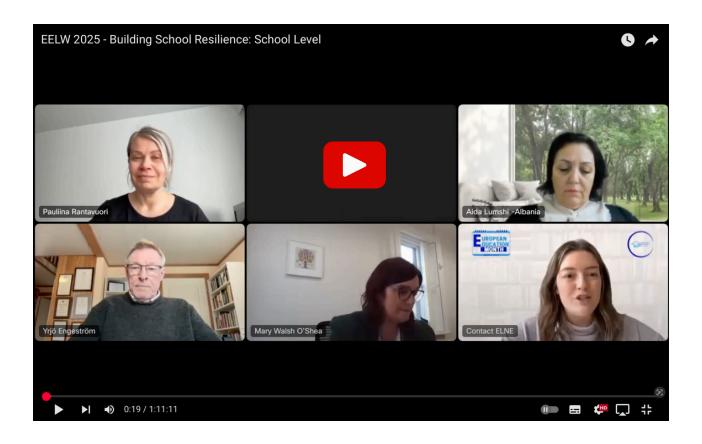
This year's selected practices and research summaries not only highlight the importance of resilience and adaptability but also underscore the significance of collective responsibility in shaping the future of education. By embracing collaboration at all levels- within schools, across communities, and among different educational stakeholders- these initiatives pave the way for a more sustainable and inclusive educational ecosystem. The examples showcased in this edition are a testament to the transformative potential of collaborative leadership, demonstrating how schools can build on shared knowledge and experiences to foster environments that are both resilient and responsive to future challenges.



## **Good Practices at School Level**

During the EELW 2025, educators from three outstanding school initiatives shared how collaborative leadership fosters resilience.

Yrjö Engeström and Pauliina Rantavuori, representing practices from the University of Helsinki and Tampere University in Finland, Mary Walsh O'Shea from Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board in Ireland, and Aida Lumshi from the Center for School Leadership in Albania discussed how stakeholder engagement, student agency, and cross-sector collaboration have contributed to sustainable change. This webinar explored how these models could be transferred and scaled across different educational contexts, ensuring that schools remain adaptable and future-ready.





# Use of immersive technologies to achieve teaching, learning and assessment for healthcare assistants completing certified training

## Mary Walsh O'Shea Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board

The integration of immersive virtual reality (IVR) into vocational healthcare modules at Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board marks a significant advancement in teaching, learning, and assessment. Traditionally, skills demonstrations relied on the use of healthcare manikins. However, from April 2024, adult learners participating in parttime healthcare courses on the Back to Education Initiative programme in Waterford and Wexford have had the opportunity to be fully immersed in a virtual hospital room to carry out their skills These demonstrations include demonstrations. carrying out a care check on a patient and carrying out a bed bath on a patient. This innovation has generated enthusiasm among both staff and learners.

The implementation of IVR technology in this Education and Training Board (ETB) was a collaborative effort involving managers, teaching staff, and various departments of WWETB, including IT, Quality Assurance, Programme Coordinators, and Support Staff. A bespoke IVR learning module was developed in consultation with teachers and coordinators to support skills demonstrations, incorporating practice, revision, and exam modes. This structure provides learners with the necessary scaffolding to master tasks before practising independently.

The primary objectives of this initiative include enabling adult learners to engage with emerging technologies; incorporating Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles; creating an environment that fosters learner presence and agency; and offering a safe space for learners to practice skills and learn from mistakes.



Click to see the IVR in action! (AHEAD YouTube Channel, 2025)

#### **Launch with Industry Experts**

Given the novel approach to this project, the first of its kind for healthcare in Further Education and Training (FET) in Ireland, WWETB hosted a launch event with 100 attendees in February 2024. A key component of the launch was to engage industry experts in a panel discussion about the importance of this initiative and the capacity it has to be replicated across the FET sector. The panel chaired by Dr Lindsay Malone, WWETB FET Director, consisted of Mary Walsh O'Shea, Adult Education Officer, WWETB, Mary Burke, Director of Care, Killure Nursing Home, Stephen Rooney, Cluster Manager, Engineering the South East & Camille Donegan, CEO of Eirmersive.

#### **Contribution to World Skills**

WWETB was the first to exhibit this kind of technology in the Healthcare sector in the RDS at the World Skills in September 2024. World Skills Ireland brings together enterprise, industry, education, training and government which highlights the profile and recognition of skills and apprenticeships. Visited by thousands of secondary school students across the country and enabling them to experience the careers of the future. Hundreds of young people visited our stand and interacted with our virtual patients. In a survey which was carried out with 60 of these students, 59 of them indicated that having virtual reality scenarios like this would provide great guidance in making wise college and career decisions. This kind of response reinforces the foresight that WWETB demonstrated in developing this bespoke immersive technology where the talent of today can identify excellence in educational methods.



#### **Research Informed**

Project Lead Mary Walsh O'Shea for this initiative is currently undertaking a Professional Doctorate in Human Performance and Innovation with the University of Limerick. This doctoral question will examine the efficacy of immersive technologies in achieving learning outcomes specifically focusing on virtual reality in a further education and training setting. The objective of this research is to inform education providers as to whether the investment in immersive virtual reality is a valuable investment and how and if it adds value to the teaching and learning environment.

#### **Public-Private Partnerships**

This project also exemplifies a small-scale variation of a public-private partnership as it is focused on fostering collaboration between a government agency and a private-sector company that can be used to finance, build, and operate projects. In this case, the statutory organisation was the ETB and the private entity was Emagine.

Want to find out more? Contact Mary Walsh at marywalshoshea@wwetb.ie

# The Use of Micro:bit in Teaching to Promote Critical Thinking Among Students in Solving Real-Life Problems

Aida Lumshi & CSL team Center of School Leadership, Albania

At "Jeronim De Rada" School in Elbasan, Albania, the integration of Micro:bit technology into the teaching process addresses the challenges of limited material resources while fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills. By enriching the learning experience through practical, experimental, and collaborative methods, this project bridges gaps in traditional education and prepares students for real-world challenges. The innovative core of this project lies in addressing resource shortages in schools by creating and providing didactic tools and teaching materials with Micro:bit technology. These tools enable practical demonstrations, experiments, and problem-solving activities for a variety of subjects, including Mathematics, Physics, Biology, Arts,

Music, Physical Education, ICT, and electives like Geography and Tourist Guide.

The coding programme began with simple projects led by the school principal, Mrs. Aida, focusing on addressing practical school needs. Gradually, students expanded their scope, finding solutions for broader challenges in family and social life. Students have embraced the programme enthusiastically, enjoying its relaxed, creative environment that encourages collaboration and experimentation. They quickly became adept at coding, proposing imaginative solutions for real-world issues and helping to establish coding as a sustainable school culture.

This initiative goes beyond classroom applications, offering solutions for real-life challenges, such as family needs and school safety. ICT classrooms were enriched with tools created using Micro:bit, enabling hands-on learning and the practical application of coding. The project also fosters recreational activities involving students and teachers, demonstrating the versatility of digital technology in diverse educational contexts. To nurture critical thinking, students were introduced to problem-solving situations linked to multiple subjects. By engaging in activities such as designing didactic tools or solving community issues, they developed essential skills like digital literacy, collaboration, creativity, and imagination. The creation of Coding Clubs has been central to the initiative's success. These volunteer-driven networks of students and teachers facilitate peer learning and training for newcomers, including new teachers. The clubs also help enrich the school's physical laboratories, equipping future generations with enhanced resources for effective learning.

The adoption of Micro:bit and coding has significantly improved the quality of teaching and learning. Students and teachers collaboratively created teaching tools for practical demonstrations across various subjects. In addition, the coding programme introduced interactive and hands-on methods, making lessons more engaging and effective. As a result, participants demonstrated



better critical thinking, problem-solving, and creative skills compared to non-participants, and teachers gained opportunities to refine their skills through peer exchanges, online events, and participation in best-practice sharing forums. This initiative also raised awareness about the productive use of the internet and digital tools, fostering a new perspective on technology's role in education.

The sustainability of this project is ensured by the establishment of a self-sustaining Coding Club model. Students of all ages and skill levels participate, with experienced members mentoring newcomers. This approach has fostered a culture of continuous learning and knowledge-sharing within the school community. Moreover, the programme has expanded to include tools like Arduino, broadening its scope and impact. The school's designation as a "Microbit School" underscores its commitment to maintaining and advancing this innovative culture. With its sustainable and inclusive model, this initiative serves as an exemplary practice for other schools and educational systems, setting a benchmark for integrating technology into teaching and learning.

> Want to find out more? Contact the **CSL Team** at **info@csl.edu.al**

# In Search for Significance: Fostering Movement Across the Six Worlds of Adolescents

Yrjö Engeström, Pauliina Rantavuori, Piia Ruutu, and Maria Tapola Haapala University of Helsinki and Tampere University



Click to see more (EAPRIL YouTube Channel, 2023)

In an era where student school alienation poses a globally growing challenge to education, fostering students' involvement through meaningful learning experiences has become a crucial priority. A study conducted by researchers at the University of Helsinki and Tampere University explores how schools can empower adolescents to take an active role in shaping their education. Grounded in Cultural-Historical Activity Theory and employing the Change Laboratory formative intervention method, the project enabled students to design and implement their own initiatives on topics they found personally significant. By giving students the power to pursue meaningful projects, the initiative not only strengthened engagement but also enhanced their ability to influence.

One of the key challenges addressed in this study was the disconnect many students experience between their personal interests and the rigid structure of school curricula. Drawing on anthropologist Scott Atran's insights, the researchers sought to counteract this disengagement by providing students time, space, and support for the search for significance, concrete opportunities to realise their aspirations, and the autonomy to initiate their own projects. Working within two Finnish schools, the intervention encouraged eighth-grade students to collaboratively develop and execute projects that reflected their interests. These projects, conducted during school hours but independent of curriculum constraints, allowed students to explore topics in a way that felt personally relevant and valuable.

The outcomes of the initiative illustrate the potential of student-driven learning to foster meaningful engagement and innovation. Over the course of the study, students developed and implemented eleven unique projects, ranging from a video podcast on technology and a K-pop music production to a role-playing game. Others focused on broader social issues, such as a documentary on inclusion, the redesign of schoolyard spaces, and the creation of new recreational activities to enhance student well-being. These projects not only nurtured creativity and problem-solving skills but also demonstrated



students' ability to initiate and sustain meaningful change within their school communities and society. This approach offers important lessons for building student involvement resilience in schools. By recognising students' interests as valuable resources for learning, schools can create environments where young people feel empowered and motivated. The initiative underscores the significance of flexibility in education, showing that when students are given space to explore and implement their passions, they take agentic actions and develop a stronger sense of agency and long-term engagement.

More broadly, it presents a model for schools to serve as hubs of expansive learning, where students are not merely recipients of knowledge but active participants in shaping their educational experiences. The adaptability of this model makes it relevant beyond the Finnish context. By shifting towards a more participatory and student-centered approach, schools can cultivate more engaged, committed, and purpose-driven learners, offering a transformative vision for education in the 21st century.

Want to find out more?
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# School Radio as a tool for building resilience and collaboration in the school community Linda Kolega Babajko Association of Croatian Secondary School Principals

Linda's school, located on an island in Croatia, faced the challenge of geographical isolation and the need to strengthen connections within the school and the broader community. At the same time, they recognised the importance of protecting the mental health of our students, which led them to create a preventive school programme. As part of this initiative, they launched a school radio station with the goal of creating a safe and creative environment where students could express themselves, collaborate, and develop important life skills.

This initiative in a geographically isolated school serves as a model for strengthening community connections, promoting student well-being, and developing essential skills. Launched as part of a preventive programme, the radio creates a safe and creative space for students to express themselves, collaborate, and build resilience.

Beyond being a communication tool, the radio fosters digital literacy, public speaking, and creativity while providing a platform for students to discuss news, thematic topics, and personal challenges. Its significance is amplified in an island setting, where it connects students to their peers and the wider community, reinforcing a sense of belonging, especially in times of crisis.

A key aspect of the initiative is mental health support, with the school's counseling service contributing content that helps reduce stigma and provides students with strategies to manage stress. By sharing experiences and advice, students develop emotional resilience and support one another.

The programme exemplifies collaborative leadership, with teachers serving as mentors and students taking active roles in production and content creation. Community involvement, including contributions from local experts and professionals, enriches programming and ensures the initiative's sustainability.

This model is easily adaptable to other schools. A simple setup with basic recording equipment or a format initiate a similar podcast-style can programme. Encouraging diverse student participation and fostering a supportive environment ensures long-term success. By promoting engagement, collaboration, and well-being, the school radio strengthens the fabric of the school community and serves as a replicable model for student-centered, inclusive education.

> Want to find out more? Contact Linda Kolega Babajko at **linda.bilan@skole.hr**



## **Exploring Carbon Cycles: Interdisciplinary Learning in the Outdoor Classroom**

Snježana Marković-Zoraja, Kristina Fratrović Dubovac Primary School, Karlovac, Croatia

The Dubovac Primary School from Karlovac, Croatia, has implemented an interdisciplinary STEM-based teaching model that fosters school integrating real-world scientific resilience exploration with mathematics and IT. By conducting workshops in school and city parks, students engage in hands-on learning, applying problem-based learning (PBL) strategies to analyse real-world environmental challenges. This approach enhances critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and scientific methodology application, while also fostering awareness of societal and environmental responsibilities.

One notable project involved eighth-grade students studying the carbon cycle in terrestrial ecosystems. They analysed carbon flow, identified reservoirs, and carbon transfers through interactive methods such as schematic card games. Practical included measuring tasks tree height circumference to calculate carbon storage, using mathematical formulas and mobile applications for species identification and age estimation. Findings emphasised the role of older trees in CO<sub>2</sub> reduction, reinforcing environmental consciousness. By promoting cooperative learning, students developed solutions for reducing atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and explored applications in everyday life.

The success of this model has led to increased adoption among other teachers in the school and expanded participation in projects related to sustainability. The approach's adaptability makes it applicable across different age groups and learning environments, demonstrating the potential outdoor education to enhance learning, inspire environmental awareness, and strengthen resilience in schools. Bvintegrating interdisciplinary collaboration, technology, and real-world problemsolving, this practice serves as a replicable model for educational institutions worldwide.

We believe this educational practice is inspiring to others because it combines several innovative and and impactful teaching elements encourages educators to think beyond traditional classroom methods. It can be easily replicated in other educational systems because this model can be tailored to different environments, from urban parks to rural fields, depending on available resources. Schools can find a partner with local environmental organisations or governments to enhance the programme's reach and impact and the activities can be adjusted for various age groups and academic levels, making the approach widely applicable. Sharing educational materials, such as the diagrams and formulas used in this practice, can empower educators worldwide to replicate the method.

> Want to find out more? Contact Snjezana Markovic-Zoraja at <u>snjezana.markovic-zoraja@skole.hr</u>

## Monitoring and protection of Marmont Alley Snježana Marković-Zoraja, Kristina Fratrović Dubovac Primary School, Karlovac, Croatia

Marmont's Alley, a historic row of 102 plane trees in Karlovac, has faced significant threats due to extensive construction on the D6 road since 2019. Recognising the need to protect this urban green space, the Dubovac Primary School launched a research project in 2021 to highlight the ecological importance of the alley, assess its role in the carbon cycle, and establish an environmental monitoring system. Students participating in the project, mainly from the GLOBE and IT groups, played an integral role in data collection and analysis. Their engagement in this real-world issue exemplifies the power of collaborative educational leadership in fostering school resilience and sustainability awareness.

The project stands out as a model of collaborative leadership by integrating students, teachers, and administrators into a coordinated research effort.



Students took on active research roles, developing critical thinking, digital literacy, and teamwork skills. Importantly, the initiative was inclusive, ensuring participation from students with learning difficulties, who contributed by measuring tree circumferences and collecting essential data. Over 25 students were assigned roles based on their interests and skills, spanning fieldwork, programming, database management, and working with Arduino systems and sensors. This structured approach allowed students to take ownership of their learning while benefiting from mentorship and teamwork.

Leadership support was crucial to the project's success. The school principal provided financial resources and materials, ensuring that students had the necessary tools to complete their work and present their findings at an international conference. Teachers played a facilitative role, guiding students through all phases of research, from data collection to programming, analysis, and interpretation. By integrating scientific research, engineering applications, and digital technologies, educators helped bridge different disciplines, fostering an interdisciplinary learning environment where students learned from each other and their mentors.

This initiative offers a replicable model for other schools and communities aiming to integrate environmental education with STEM learning. The project's combination of sustainability education, digital skill development, and student-led research demonstrates its global adaptability. Schools in different regions can modify the research focus to align with their local ecological challenges, using similar technologies and methodologies. presenting findings to the local community, students not only raise awareness about environmental issues but also showcase the potential of student-driven initiatives in addressing real-world problems. Marmont's Alley serves as an inspiring example of how collaborative leadership and hands-on learning can strengthen school resilience while making meaningful contributions to urban sustainability.

> Want to find out more? Contact Snjezana Markovic-Zoraja at <u>snjezana.markovic-zoraja@skole.hr</u>



# Good Practices at large-scale project level

The second EELW 2025 webinar focused on innovative large-scale initiatives that have successfully bridged the gap between policy and practice in education through collaborative leadership and knowledge-sharing.

Speakers included Nuria de Pablo (IDEAL Future, Spain), who discussed collaboration among digital education leaders; Şeyma Dağıstan Terzi (ERG Turkey), who focused on transforming universities into collaborative learning communities; and Hanna-Kaisa Pekkarinen and Tea Seppälä (Institute of Educational Leadership, JYU, Finland), who shared insights on building shared leadership in education.





# Using challenge-based scenarios to support professional collaboration amongst digital education leaders in Europe

Dr. Emma O Brien
Mary Immaculate College, Ireland
Ciara Ni Dhrisceoil, Patrick Hickey
Limerick and Clare Education and Training
Board, Ireland

This practice is part of an Erasmus Teacher Academy in Integrated Digital Education Leadership for the Future (IDEAL Future), aimed at addressing the significant gap between education policy and practice in Europe in this regard. Its aim is to strengthen school communities by promoting digital inclusion, supporting teacher agency, and enhancing the capacity to navigate an evolving educational landscape with confidence and sustainability.

The IDEAL Future project focuses, among other things, on determining the common challenges facing digital education leaders across Europe. Interviews were conducted with 164 educators and educational leaders from four European countries -France, Ireland, Latvia and Spain-regarding the current and future challenges teachers and educators face in a digital era at individual, school and community levels. A key finding of the project was that, although at the EU level and within many countries there are high-quality policies advocating the use of digital learning technologies within schools, these are inconsistent with implementation measures, particularly with regard to funding of digital learning infrastructure and the investment to support the provision of continuous and sustained professional learning, which is often technocentric, sporadic, and does not consider the teacher's mindset and intention with regard to digital learning technologies.

In all, there were nine categories of challenges ranging from broad contextual challenges such as access, finance, time, pace of change, curricular constraints and access to professional learning to practice-based or individual challenges such as critical use of technology, mindset and well-being. The project then used these categories to develop 25 narrative challenge-based scenarios, a mapping framework for educators' necessary digital leadership competencies. The aim was to provide opportunities for meaningful collaboration between digital leaders across Europe and provide opportunities for them to exchange and learn with each other.

Furthermore, IDEAL Future continues its work. Upcoming project events will explore the evidence regarding why these challenges exist and the contributing factors, showcase good practices of how these challenges have been addressed in different communities, and co-design solution-oriented outputs to be adapted to different contexts. The produced resources are freely available as material to support professional learning and dialogue as well as a recommended pedagogical model to face the challenges.

Want to find out more? Contact Dr. Emma O Brien at emma.obrien@mic.ul.ie

#### **Good Practices in Education Conferences**

Dr. Şeyma Dağıstan Terzi, Project Specialist Education Laboratory, Education Reform Initiative

Yaprak Sarıışık, Coordinator Education Laboratory, Education Reform Initiative

Education Reform Initiative (ERG) has been organising Good Practices in Education Conferences since 2004. The initiative was established with the aim of challenging the existing centralised and top-down in emphasising approach Turkey by the transformative power of participation and collaboration. More specifically, at its inception, Good Practices in Education Conferences aimed to create an alternative space for teachers beyond the limited professional development opportunities available after graduation and to provide them with a space where they can share the projects or practices they had developed in response to an educational challenge



they observed with their colleagues and other education stakeholders. The scale of these projects developed by teachers or education stakeholders can span from localised efforts that take place in a classroom setting to large, multi-regional, or even international initiatives that take place across multiple schools.

The conferences have brought together educators, students, policymakers, and civil society members to showcase inspiring good practices and collaboratively develop innovative and effective solutions to educational challenges. From the first conference in 2004 to the most recent one in 2023, a total of 19 Good Practices in Education Conferences were organised. In addition to the main conference held in Istanbul, 49 local workshops were organised in 43 different cities across Turkey. Over the course of 20 years, more than 13,000 applications were received, and over 2,000 good practices were presented at the Good conferences. **Practices** in Education Conferences reached more than 25,000 people.

Good Practices in Education Conferences define a 'good practice' as a project that is grounded in a logical framework, adheres to ethical principles, prioritises stakeholder participation, documents its impact or the change it creates, embraces innovation, and is built on a reliable and valid scientific foundation. All interested stakeholders are welcome to submit examples of effective, creative, and collaborative practices addressing specific problems experienced in educational settings, which are then reviewed and selected by an independent volunteer peer committee composed of teachers, school leaders, civil society professionals, and academics.

Beyond the annual conferences, in 2024, ERG curated a digital platform featuring over 2,000 good practices presented at the conferences over the past two decades. This open-access resource invites educators and stakeholders to explore, adapt, and disseminate innovative approaches, fostering continuous learning and improvement within the education community.

Overall, the Good **Practices** in Education Conferences have significantly enhanced professional motivation, strengthened collaborative networks, and promoted ecological and inclusive approaches in education. Ecological and inclusive themes were prioritised not only in the conference content but also in its organisation. Efforts were made to ensure an eco-friendly event by managing waste. Additionally, sign language interpretation was provided for all panels and workshops upon request. Accessibility training was provided to all stakeholders involved in the conference, including good practice presenters, panelists, speakers, workshop facilitators, and the ERG team. The success of the initiative is a testament to the collective efforts of ERG staff, the pool of volunteer peer reviewers, and the active participation of educators and stakeholders. It demonstrates how shared leadership can drive meaningful sustainable educational progress.

In addition, organising the Good Practices in Education Conference has enabled ERG to maintain ongoing connections with teachers and schools. This network has proven invaluable in implementing other projects, such as the annual Education Monitoring Reports. By consulting with members of the Good Practices community, ERG incorporates their valuable observations and experiences into research and reporting.

The Good Practices model offers an inspiring alternative to the traditional, top-down approach to existing professional development opportunities for teachers and education stakeholders in Turkey. By prioritising collaboration and empowering education stakeholders, this model has proven to be significantly transformative.

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# Transforming universities into a collaborative learning community to provide continuing learning for educational leaders

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Esa Posio -University of Lapland
Tea Seppälä - Tampere University Continuous
Learning Services
Anette Skog, Jenny Tahkola - Kokkola University
Consortium Chydenius

In recent years, Finnish universities responsible for educating educational leaders have significantly strengthened their collaboration. This cooperation has taken shape through the organization and implementation of continuing education programmes, joint planning of financial and research projects, and collective efforts to influence education policy in the field of educational leadership. A trust-based framework has been established, enabling universities to jointly design and execute diverse educational initiatives aimed at enhancing leadership in education.

The national cooperation forum for university education in educational leadership emerged when the Finnish National Agency for Education, a key various educational funder of programmes, emphasised the necessity of collaboration. particularly to uphold the principle of regional equality. Initially, a small group of university representatives convened for this purpose. Over time, the network has expanded, now welcoming all universities and interested experts to participate in its activities. The network has also applied for ESF+ funding, which will enable it to strengthen and systematise its activities and extend its network to institutions for occupational teacher training as well as other stakeholders in Finland and internationally.

This network operates as an informal and nonhierarchical entity, fostering idea generation, joint planning, information exchange, and the development of educational programmes and other collaborative efforts. Educational programmes attract directors and principals from across Finland, and online delivery ensures accessibility, allowing participation regardless of geographic location or professional obligations. Meetings are held approximately once a month via Microsoft Teams, and coordination has been facilitated by the Institute of Educational Leadership at the University of Jyväskylä upon request.

The initiative underscores the value of collaboration over competition in developing educational leadership. National-level cooperation provides a broader perspective on emerging trends and implicit signals within the field, ensuring that training programmes remain responsive to future challenges. This approach offers a replicable model for universities in other countries, demonstrating how inter-university collaboration can enhance leadership education and contribute to systemic improvements in the field.

Explore this practice at www.jyu.fi/en/edupsy/kla/institute-of-educational-leadership

Want to find out more? Contact Hanna-Kaisa Pekkarinen at hanna-kaisa.hk.pekkarinen@jyu.fi



## Asynchronous Discussion Forums in Online Education in the African Context

### Dr Anastasia Datsogianni, Dr Veronica Hadjipanayi, Dr Ioanna Koliandri, Mr. Tassos Dimitriou, Dr Vasileios Kappis Unicaf

The Unicaf organisation presents this practice of using asynchronous discussion forums as a digital learning strategy to enhance student engagement, inclusivity, and resilience in online education. Asynchronous discussion forums provide an inclusive and flexible platform for student interaction, overcoming barriers such as time constraints, geographical limitations, and technological disparities. This model ensures that students can engage in meaningful academic discussions, reflect critically on course materials, and collaborate with peers and instructors.

Research findings from various studies, such as Pena et al. (2012), indicate that asynchronous discussion forums significantly enhance student engagement and academic performance by fostering deeper learning. Students can process information at their own pace, revisit key discussions, and engage with diverse perspectives—all of which contribute to improved critical thinking and reflective skills (Andresen, 2009; Afify, 2019) while fostering interaction, peer learning, and individual performance (Moosa, 2022; Afify, 2019). They are also effective for student-teacher interactions, with increased participation enhancing productivity (Onyema et al., 2019).

Additionally, asynchronous discussion forums have been linked with the development of pedagogical skills such as critical thinking, collaboration and reflection (Abawajy, 2012). Most importantly, asynchronous forums create a more inclusive learning environment, benefiting students with diverse learning styles, those with disabilities and individuals balancing work, family and academic responsibilities (Ismailov et al., 2022). The flexibility of this model has also proven effective in maintaining continuity in education during disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, war-

affected populations ensuring that students remain connected to their learning communities (Peliova et al., 2023; Fabriz et al., 2021).

Preliminary findings on the effectiveness of this practice are derived from module survey data collected between 2022 and 2024 across nine postgraduate programmes namely, MA in Education, MA in Leadership in Education, MSc in Psychology, MA in Criminology and Social Policy, MA in Mass Communication, MA in International Relations, Master of Laws, Master of Laws (LLM), and Postgraduate Certificate in Education.

The preliminary findings seem to align with existing evidence in the area of online education. Below, students' responses on the effectiveness of discussion forums across nine programmes are outlined, based on data from surveys between January 2022 and February 2024, and averaged across modules and programmes. The majority of students reported that discussion forums provided opportunities to interact with tutors and peers, engage in critical reflection on their learning experiences, and feel supported and connected within an online academic community. Regarding the statements that discussion forums have provided students with the opportunity to 'interact with their tutors and other students' and 'critically reflect on my learning experiences', almost 80% (3100 students) and 73% (2810 students) definitely or mostly agreed, respectively. Lastly, nearly 67% (2600 students) definitely or mostly agreed with the statement, "My interaction with others ensured that I felt supported by and connected to an online community of students." To overcome the challenges of low participation from both students and instructors in the above-mentioned forums programmes, discussion have been continuously enhanced in terms of content. Additionally, instructor engagement is highly encouraged through relevant professional development training.

This model can be successfully replicated in other educational institutions through a strategic and collaborative approach. Specifically in this process, the key stakeholders could take action including



Academics and Faculty members and leaders, instructional designers and IT support teams. Institutions looking to adopt this practice should focus on establishing clear guidelines for discussion participation, providing professional development for instructors and ensuring that the technological infrastructure supports this interaction. Additionally, collaboration with students is crucial to refine the structure of the discussion forums, which could be done based on user feedback and establishing continuous improvement of the current practice.

The collaborative nature of this practice, involving programme leaders, faculty institutions, administrative strengthens teams, institutional resilience by continuously improving content and engagement strategies. Instructor participation is through actively encouraged professional development, ensuring that the quality of discussions remains high.



Want to find out more?
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## Research Expertise from the Academic Diaspora (READ)

## Enrik Keco Albanian American Development Foundation

The Albanian American Development Foundation (AADF) has launched the Albanian Diaspora Fellowship Program (READ Program) to bridge the gap between Albania's higher education institutions (HEIs) and the expertise of its global academic This seven-year initiative aims strengthen research capacity, modernise curricula, foster long-term collaborations between Albanian universities and leading scholars from OECD countries. By offering structured short-term fellowships, READ provides a formalised mechanism for diaspora scholars—both Albanian-born and second-generation—to engage in capacity-building projects that directly contribute to Albania's academic and research landscape.

Historically, Albania has struggled with brain drain and limited institutional resources, weakening its academic system. The READ Program addresses this challenge by establishing a sustainable model for collaboration. Participating universities have adopted more dynamic and inclusive governance structures, integrating diaspora scholars into decision-making and research initiatives. The programme has led to the creation of Project Coordination Units to manage partnerships, Research Clusters to align academic efforts with global standards, and increased policy engagement with government bodies to influence systemic change. These reforms have enhanced institutional adaptability, strengthened academic networks, and cultivated a culture of continuous learning and development.

The impact of READ has been transformative. Collaborative research initiatives have expanded, leading to increased high-quality publications and more globally competitive curricula. Faculty and students benefit from mentorship, training, and access to international funding opportunities.



Albanian universities have gained greater visibility on the global stage, while diaspora scholars have reconnected with their homeland, contributing to national progress.

READ exemplifies how leveraging diaspora expertise can turn local challenges into opportunities for resilience and growth. Its success is driven by collaborative leadership, uniting Albanian universities, international partners, and government stakeholders in a shared mission to revitalize the country's education sector. By providing a scalable and replicable model, READ offers a blueprint for other nations seeking to harness their global networks for sustainable academic and institutional development.

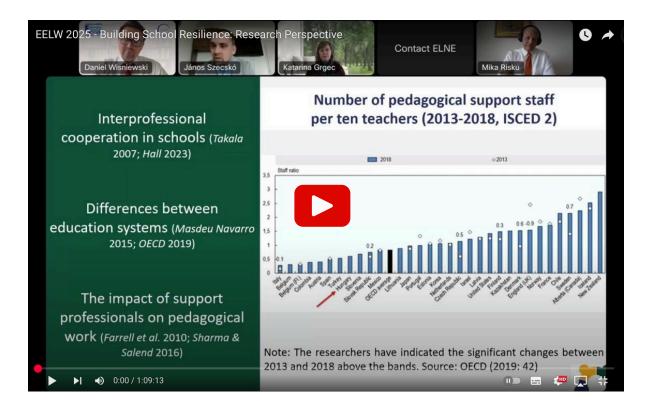
Want to find out more? Contact Enrik Keco at e.keco@aadf.org



## **The Research Perspective**

This webinar explored the role of collaborative leadership and shared decision-making in building resilient schools. With a focus on school support staff and inclusive governance, the session highlighted how these elements contribute to creating sustainable educational environments. Presentations from these exceptional research summaries illustrated the impact of teacher and support staff collaboration on school resilience.

Speakers included Janos Szecskó and Cintia Csók (University of Debrecen, Hungary), who discussed building resilience through the collaborative efforts of teachers and support staff; Zdravka Grðan (European School of Varese, Italy) and Katarina Grgec (Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, Croatia), who explored fostering inclusive governance in secondary schools; and Mika Risku (Institute of Educational Leadership, JYU, Finland), who focused on leadership in the educational context.





## Collaborative Educational Leadership in Secondary Schools: Fostering Inclusive School Governance for Resilience

Dr. Zdravka Grđan
European School of Varese
Katarina Grgec, doctoral student
Ministry of Science, Education and Youth of the
Republic of Croatia

This study examines the role of secondary school directors in fostering resilience through inclusive school governance by providing insights into how their leadership influences school effectiveness and contributes to improved educational outcomes. The aim of this study is to contribute to the development of specialised management strategies that reflect the distinct context and mission of secondary schools.

The research highlights the impact of transformational and instructional leadership styles, emphasising vision-building, continuous improvement, and enhanced teaching outcomes. Surveys of 150 directors reveal how these approaches shape school culture, teacher satisfaction, and student performance.

This study highlights the predominance participative leadership among secondary school directors (80%), emphasising collaboration and shared decision-making, while 20% still employ autocratic leadership based on situational demands. contributes the instructional to transformational leadership debate by reinforcing the necessity of flexibility, aligning with situational leadership theory. The findings support a conceptual advance by advocating for adaptive leadership approaches, where directors adjust their style based on context and stakeholder needs. Training on participative programmes and situational leadership are recommended to enhance directors' ability to navigate diverse challenges effectively. Ultimately, the study underscores that adaptive leadership fosters better school management and stakeholder engagement.

The study focuses on the professional competencies of Croatian school directors, as well as over 150 school directors from Croatia, Finland, Iceland, Scotland, and Bulgaria, and specifically their capacity to foster teamwork, open communication, and shared decision-making. These practices involving multiple stakeholders—directors, teachers, students and stakeholders—are shown to be pivotal for ensuring effective management and building resilient school communities.

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative surveys and qualitative thematic analysis to examine the leadership competencies of secondary school directors in Croatia and other European countries. The methodology ensures a comprehensive understanding of leadership practices, challenges, and professional development needs, providing actionable insights for improving school management. To scale the research within the ELNE community, the study design could be replicated in different European contexts, allowing for comparative analysis and the development of cross-national strategies for enhancing school leadership effectiveness.

The findings underscore the universal importance of stakeholder engagement in the management of secondary schools through collaboration, communication and shared goals; of professional development of school leaders for strategic planning, communication and team motivation, which are critical for creating effective learning environments; and of aligning schools' vision and mission with national policies. These strategies can be transferred and adapted across diverse educational systems to promote collaboration, resilience, and effective governance.

Want to find out more?
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# Building School Resilience through the Collaborative Efforts of Teachers and Educational Support Staff

Cintia Csók, János Szecskó and Gabriella Pusztai

MTA-DE-Parent-Teacher Cooperation Research Group at Institute of Education Studies and Cultural Management, University of Debrecen

This study explores the evolving role of school social work within the Hungarian public education system, particularly following the 2018 introduction of an external model for kindergarten and school social assistance. Prior to this reform, teachers were responsible for social assistance tasks, but the structured implementation of social workers aimed to formalise and improve this support system. The research investigates the expectations of parents and teachers regarding school social workers, identifies key areas of focus, and examines the implications for school effectiveness.

Through the semi-structured interviews of 20 school social workers focusing on their relationship with parents and teachers, the study identified and categorised the expectations of stakeholders towards these services. Then, the services required by parents and teachers were compared with the social assistance reform concept.

One of the central findings of this research is that, while the Social Assistance Regulation primarily empowers school social workers for preventive, group-based, and community-focused activities, and teachers predominantly individual-focused support. This disconnect between objectives and practical expectations policy underscores the need for a more balanced approach that integrates both community-level initiatives and individualised assistance.

As a result, the study emphasises the need for establishing a robust system of school support staff. In a variety of educational settings, having a dedicated team to help with tasks such as organising

extracurricular activities, providing personalised support to students, and managing administrative tasks allows teachers to focus more on teaching. Performance evaluations have demonstrated the significant benefits of this practice in school effectiveness, as performance evaluations have revealed.

The study also highlights the importance of support staff in building a network of relationships with students, families, teachers, and external agencies. In doing so, these professionals not only bridge gaps within the school community but also enhance collective problem-solving and strategic planning, core aspects of collaborative leadership. In addition, their involvement in developing prevention and intervention programmes exemplifies a proactive, unified approach to addressing challenges, which is consistent with the goals of collaborative leadership to foster a supportive, resilient learning environment.

This redistribution of responsibilities fosters a collaborative leadership model in which each professional contributes their expertise to better meet students' diverse needs.

Educational policymakers in all countries have not yet recognised that the work of school support staff impacts student achievement and increases school effectiveness. These professionals can develop prevention and intervention programmes, contribute significantly to building relationships with students, teachers, parents, and families, and maintain links with other institutions. Parent support is an area where school support staff can play a crucial role. Although these professionals use different methods and tools, their ultimate goal is to provide comprehensive support to pupils and promote their academic progress.

Want to find out more? Contact Cintia Csok at csok.cintia@arts.unideb.hu



# Leadership in the context of education with a specific focus on collaborative leadership

Raisa Ahtiainen, Eija Hanhimäki, Jaana Leinonen, Mika Risku, Ann-Sofie Smeds-Nylund University of Helsinki, University of Jyväskylä, University of Lapland, and Åbo Akademi University

A team of academics from four Finnish universities has edited *Leadership in Educational Contexts in Finland: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives*, the first-ever research-based book on educational leadership in Finland. Released in 2024 by Springer and available as an open-access publication, this groundbreaking work offers a comprehensive and indepth examination of contemporary leadership in Finnish education. The book addresses education policy, governance, and the role of collaborative leadership in shaping the country's renowned education system, providing valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners.

This volume critically explores the Finnish education system within international discourses on educational leadership. It examines key themes such as distributed leadership, collaborative governance, and the evolving role of educational leaders. The book highlights the changing nature of leadership professions in education, acknowledging both the challenges and contradictions that emerge in daily organisational practices. By placing Finnish leadership in a global context, the authors offer a nuanced perspective on the dynamics of policy implementation, institutional autonomy, professional agency in education.

In addition to empirical analyses, the book provides a strong conceptual foundation by integrating theories of educational and pedagogical leadership. It clarifies the multidimensionality and ambiguities inherent in leadership studies, helping to bridge theoretical perspectives with practical applications. Through this synthesis, the book contributes to a deeper understanding of leadership practices in Finland while fostering dialogue with international scholarship.



As the first systematic, research-based study on educational leadership in Finland, this book is an essential resource for policymakers, researchers, and educational leaders worldwide. By showcasing the distinctive features and emerging trends in Finnish leadership practices, it offers a replicable model for collaborative, research-informed leadership development. With its open-access format, this publication serves as a valuable tool for advancing global conversations on effective and equitable educational leadership.

Want to find out more? Contact Eija Hanhimäki at eija.h.hanhimaki@jyu.fi

## A Design Thinking Mixed Methods Study on Empathy in a Midwest University Writing Center

Susan Edele, EdD

Director of the Writing Center, College of Arts
and Humanities, Lindenwood University

The study explores the problem of practice in the role of empathy in writing centre services, focusing on tutoring training. The research aimed to determine if empathy training and mindfulness could enhance the empathetic practices of writing centre staff and if such enhancements would make students using writing centre services feel more included, seen, and heard during tutoring sessions.

The problem of practice was examined through three lenses: tutor training, understanding empathy in the context of a writing centre environment, and the perceptions of empathy



from the students using writing centre services. A mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data, was employed.

Findings indicated experienced staff were aware of empathetic practices, with less experienced tutors showing higher empathy scores. The study's alignment with the EdD Leadership framework highlighted the importance of a human-centric approach, suggesting empathy training could lead to organisational change within writing centre pedagogy, technology, ethics, equity, and social justice within writing centres.

The implementation of empathy training modules into tutor programmes emerged as a key strategy for meeting students' needs who use the writing centre services, promoting equity, and enhancing empathy in the writing centre environment. The research underscored the critical role of empathy in educational settings, offering insights for further integration of empathetic practices in tutor training programmes and consistent writing centre professional development.

This research then allows scholar-practitioners to research a problem within their own discipline. Using the design thinking process, the researcher digs deeper than traditional quantitative data and uses the value of the qualitative data collected from immediate stakeholders.

By using the design thinking process, iterative testing and feedback can be used to revise and refine methodologies to address challenges which can also ensure more relevant outcomes. This approach encourages interdisciplinary collaboration, leading to innovative solutions that might not emerge through traditional research methods. Additionally, design thinking helps researchers remain resilient while experiencing evolving academic needs and reinforce the impact and sustainability of their work in higher education.

In institutions with a large population of non-native learners, empathetic practices can enhance European writing centers and composition



classrooms by fostering inclusive, student-centred support that meets diverse linguistic and cultural needs. This approach encourages confidence and engagement, particularly for multilingual and non-traditional students who may face additional challenges; supporting collaboration and open dialogues may strengthen the role of writing centers and composition classrooms as inclusive academic communities.

Want to find out more? Contact Susan Edele at sedele@lindenwood.edu

## Dear education policymakers,

Policy makers need to ensure that relevant resources are made available to education providers so that they can embrace all new technologies, ensuring teaching and learning environments provide rich and deep learning experiences.

- Mary Walsh O'Shea, Ireland

By prioritising collaborative and participatory approaches, policymakers can ensure that professional development in education moves beyond centralised, top-down models, leading to more sustainable progress in the field.

- Dr Şeyma Dağlstan Terzi, Turkey

Traditional teacher-led instruction often overlooks students' potential. Our findings demonstrate that cultural-historical activity theory and the Change Laboratory intervention method can effectively tackle educational crises. Schools can improve learning by fostering activities that empower students and reveal their interests. However, support is needed to implement these strategies, especially to address students' quest for significance. In an era of widespread alienation, such initiatives are crucial for overcoming educational challenges.

- Yrjo Engestrom, Pauliina Rantavuori, Piia Ruutu, and Maria Tapola Haapala, Finland

We advocate for initiatives that support the professional development of educators in digital pedagogies, ensuring they are equipped to facilitate engaging and interactive asynchronous learning experiences..

- Anastasia Datsogianni, Cyprus

Training programmes for teachers and school support professionals should incorporate preparation for teamwork skills, including their purpose, practical application, and methodologies. Effective teamwork fosters professional collaboration, enhances the efficiency of pedagogical work, and contributes to students' development. From a funding perspective, education policymakers should not cut costs in this area, as the investment will yield long-term returns through improved academic performance and higher educational quality.

We ask policy makers to support the development of holistic approaches to digital competency that considers competencies regarding the human and ethical impact of technology, to enable educators and students to be critical, active digital innovators rather than passive, digital consumers and users of technology.

- Emma O'Brien, Ireland

We request the support of collaborative learning models like Coding Clubs and fostering publicprivate partnerships that would further strengthen digital skills and problem-solving abilities in students, preparing them for future challenges.

- Aida Lumshi, Albania

Sincerely, the ELNE practitioners



## **Upcoming events and activities**

Curious about what's next for the Educational Leadership Network Europe? Take a look at the upcoming events and activities scheduled for the next few months to see what's on the horizon.



ELNE's Annual Conference will take place in May 2025. Under the theme 'Dimensions of Collaborative Leadership – Exploring Together' the ELNE Annual Conference 2025 will bring together a diverse assembly of educational organisations, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers from across Europe.









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