CSO HANDBOOK FOR COLLABORATION WITH VET

Project number:
2023-1-DE02-KA220-VET-000156795

Co-funded by the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication (communication) reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Contents

Document Identity

Number of Pages	26
Recipients	Cocivic Consortium
Confidentiality Status	Public

Document Version

Version	Date	Authors
01	01.06.2025	Moritz Borchardt (KulturLife gGmbH)
02	15.06.2025	Manon van Leeuwen (EOLAS)
03	30.06.2025	Moritz Borchardt (KulturLife gGmbH)
04	15.07.2025	Manon van Leeuwen (EOLAS)

Document Reviewers

Version	Reviewers
01	Francisco Rosas
02	Mustafa Ayidin

The Co-Civic Project partnership consists of:

KulturLife gGmbH (Germany, coordinator), Elly-Heuss-Knapp-Schule RBZ der Stadt Neumünster AöR (Germany), ELAZIG TICARET VE SANAYI ODASI (Turkey), EOLAS S.L. (Spain), IES Javier García Téllez (Spain), Özel Elazığ Marmara Mesleki ve Teknik Anadolu Lisesi (Turkey)

1. Introduction to Co-Civic

1.1 What is the Co-Civic Project?

Practical learning is an essential part of school-based vocational training. It not only promotes the necessary specialist knowledge through learning in a real environment but also soft skills such as teamwork and communication. A major challenge here is its integration of companies. The economic crisis following the Covid-19 pandemic and increasing work from home has only exacerbated this problem. However, these practical experiences have great value for the trainees and offer them opportunities for the transition from school to working life.

Co-CIVIC improves collaboration between vocational training institutions and civil society organizations by providing their teachers and staff with the knowledge, skills and tools to help shape a project-based learning approach that equips students with the skills to design and develop social projects. The aim is to enable teachers to select suitable NGOs, approach them and establish cooperations, while trainees can experience that, in addition to professional orientation, their skills also have a social benefit if they are committed accordingly.

With Co-CIVIC the project partnership wants to support social engagement across broader sections of the population and at the same time increase social appreciation of vocational training.

The Co-CIVIC partnership consists of:

Coordinator: KulturLife gGmbH, Germany
Project Partner: ELAZIG TICARET VE SANAYI ODASI, Türkiye
Project Partner: Elly-Heuss-Knapp-Schule RBZ der Stadt Neumünster AöR, Germany
Project Partner: EOLAS S.L., Spain
Project Partner: IES Javier García Téllez, Spain
Project Partner: Özel Elazığ Marmara Mesleki ve Teknik Anadolu Lisesi, Türkiye

1.2 What is the added value for your Civil Society Organisation?

The Added Value of Co-CIVIC for Civil Society Organizations

The Co-CIVIC project, initiated by KulturLife, aims to strengthen civic engagement among vocational education and training (VET) students through project-based learning. This approach not only benefits the students but also offers significant advantages to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) involved in the program.

1. Access to Motivated Young Contributors

By participating in Co-CIVIC, CSOs gain access to VET students who are eager to apply their skills in real-world settings. These students bring fresh perspectives and energy to the organizations, contributing to ongoing projects and initiatives. Their involvement can infuse new ideas and approaches, enhancing the organization's capacity to address social issues effectively.

2. Strengthened Community Engagement

Collaborating with VET students allows CSOs to deepen their roots within the community. Through joint projects, organizations can reach broader audiences and foster stronger relationships with local stakeholders. This engagement not only raises awareness of the CSO's mission but also builds trust and support among community members.

3. Enhanced Organizational Capacity

The partnership with educational institutions through Co-CIVIC provides CSOs with opportunities for organizational growth. Engaging with students requires the development of structured programs and mentorship capabilities, which can lead to improved internal processes and staff development. This capacity-building aspect ensures that CSOs are better equipped to manage volunteers and implement projects effectively.

4. Contribution to Social Impact

By mentoring VET students, CSOs play a direct role in shaping socially responsible professionals. This contribution extends the organization's impact beyond immediate project outcomes, influencing the broader societal landscape. Through this educational collaboration, CSOs help instill values of civic responsibility and community involvement in the next generation.

5. Opportunities for Innovation

The integration of young minds into CSO projects encourages innovation. Students often bring technological savvy and contemporary insights that can lead to the development of new strategies and solutions. This infusion of innovation can revitalize the organization's approach to addressing social challenges.

6. Strengthened Networks and Partnerships

Participation in Co-CIVIC facilitates the establishment of stronger networks between CSOs and educational institutions. These partnerships can lead to long-term collaborations, resource sharing, and joint initiatives that amplify the impact of both entities. Such networks are invaluable for knowledge exchange and collective action in civil society.

7. Recognition and Visibility

Engagement in educational projects enhances the public profile of CSOs. Demonstrating a commitment to youth development and education can attract positive attention from donors, policymakers, and the media. This increased visibility can lead to additional support and opportunities for the organization.

8. Sustainable Community Development

Through the Co-CIVIC initiative, CSOs contribute to the sustainable development of their communities by empowering youth. Educating and involving young people in civic activities ensures the continuity of community engagement efforts. This sustainability is crucial for long-term social progress and the resilience of civil society.

In conclusion, Co-CIVIC offers Civil Society Organizations a multifaceted opportunity to enhance their operations, impact, and community presence. By integrating VET students into their work, CSOs not only support the educational development of young individuals but also strengthen their own capacities and contributions to society.

2. Collaborations Between Civil Society Organisations and Vocational Education and Training Providers

2.1 Why is it important to cooperate with education institutions, in particular with providers of Vocational Education and Training

Civil Society Organisations play a critical role in shaping inclusive societies by addressing gaps in welfare provision, social justice, and civic engagement. When CSOs partner with Vocational Education and Training providers, they bring valuable real-world experience and a socially oriented perspective to vocational education. These partnerships help align education with societal needs and create more inclusive, responsive, and holistic training pathways for young people and adults alike.

Numerous studies highlight how such collaborations can bridge the gap between education and society, ensuring that learners develop not only technical skills but also civic awareness and social responsibility. According to Powell and Solga (2010), VET systems that are closely aligned with societal actors—such as NGOs and CSOs—tend to be more effective at fostering equitable access and social cohesion (Powell & Solga, 2010).

Moreover, CSOs often work with marginalized groups and can therefore provide VET institutions with the insights and networks necessary to support learners who face social or economic disadvantages. A study by Milana (2012) underscores how civil society engagement in education enhances democratic participation and contributes to sustainable development goals (Milana, 2012).

2.2 Understanding the VET System, School Requirements, and Pedagogical Approaches

Before initiating cooperation with a VET institution, it is essential that a CSO understands the educational and administrative context of vocational training. The VET system in many countries is governed by national standards and operates on a dual logic of theory and practice. This typically involves competency-based education, modular curricula, and practical placements in workplaces.

Pedagogically, VET places a strong emphasis on experiential learning, formative assessment, and close alignment with labor market demands. Teachers in this context are often bound by strict curriculum requirements and must meet national qualification frameworks. As noted by Cedefop (2020), successful VET depends on pedagogical strategies that blend occupational training with general education and personal development (Cedefop, 2020).

CSOs need to respect these frameworks while proposing added value. One way to build awareness and foster engagement is by organizing collaborative projects that meet both educational and social objectives. For example, a CSO working on environmental awareness could design workshops or campaigns that VET students implement as part of their practical coursework. Informal teacher-CSO networking events, cross-sector roundtables, and joint project fairs can also help to build trust and familiarity between the two sectors (Heikkinen et al., 2014).

2.3 How to Initiate the Cooperation, Create Shared Goals, and Align with CSO Missions

Successful collaboration begins with a mutual understanding of goals, expectations, and capacities. The CSO should start by identifying areas where its mission overlaps with the objectives of the VET

institution. A common ground could be found, for instance, in the promotion of employability, citizenship education, sustainability, or inclusion of vulnerable groups.

The initiation phase should include exploratory meetings with school leadership, VET coordinators, and ideally teachers, in order to map out possibilities for collaboration. Shared goals should be co-developed and documented, ensuring that both partners benefit and that the activities support the CSO's core mission rather than diverting its resources. As Perini (2014) notes, civil society's participation in educational planning and delivery must be structured and strategic to be impactful (Perini, 2014).

In formalizing cooperation, tools such as Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), project charters, or partnership contracts can help clarify responsibilities and timelines. This level of administrative clarity is crucial, especially when external funding, evaluation, or certification is involved.

2.4 Tips and Strategies for Administrative-Level Cooperation

Findings from the Results Analysis (p. 7–8) provide a clear picture of the current limitations in collaboration between CSOs and vocational education and training providers. Only 21.4% of CSOs "often" collaborate with vocational schools, while 46.4% do so "occasionally" and 32.1% "never" collaborate. This demonstrates that, despite a general interest in cooperation, there is a substantial gap in systematic engagement between these sectors.

Barriers are multifaceted. The most frequently cited issue is a lack of time among CSO staff and volunteers (63.6%), followed by bureaucratic burdens (53.8%) and mismatched expectations (55%)—all from the Key Topics Analysis (p. 4). Over half of CSOs also face difficulties engaging schools that show limited interest (51.9%) and experience inadequate support from their own ecosystems (30.4%).

Addressing these obstacles demands structural solutions. Simplified collaboration processes and standardized partnership frameworks (Key Topics Analysis, p. 6) can ease the administrative load. Training for CSOs on school systems and for teachers on the role of CSOs (p. 6) can further bridge understanding.

The data underscores the importance of formal planning mechanisms, clear responsibilities, and institutional support. A commitment to long-term partnerships—not just one-off projects—is essential for achieving durable, mutually beneficial outcomes.

At the administrative level, there are several strategic considerations that can ease the process of collaboration between a CSO and a VET provider. First, the CSO should familiarize itself with the institutional calendar of the school, including holidays, assessment periods, and accreditation deadlines. This helps avoid scheduling conflicts and ensures smoother integration of joint activities.

Second, both parties should agree on who is responsible for different aspects of the cooperation, such as facilitation, reporting, materials, and monitoring. Transparency about time commitments, funding arrangements, and intellectual ownership of materials or results also helps prevent future misunderstandings.

Third, CSOs may need to adapt some of their language or methodologies to suit the didactic expectations of VET teachers. For instance, activities that are rich in participatory methods or advocacy approaches might need to be reframed to align with learning objectives or regulatory constraints. As highlighted in the work of Hofmann and Strietska-Ilina (2013), VET programs thrive on clarity and outcome-oriented planning, and partners must respect this orientation (Hofmann & Strietska-Ilina, 2013).

Finally, establishing regular communication routines—such as steering group meetings or periodic check-ins—can help track progress and adjust plans as needed.

2.5Long-Term Cooperation and the Role of Partnership Platforms

Long-term collaboration between CSOs and VET institutions can lead to sustainable integration of innovative practices into educational systems. When CSOs contribute to school life over several years, their initiatives can evolve from being "extra-curricular" to becoming embedded in the school's formal offerings or strategic planning.

One of the most effective ways to institutionalize such collaboration is through a shared platform or hub where schools and CSOs can connect, present opportunities, and share best practices. These platforms can be physical (e.g. local education roundtables) or virtual (e.g. online portals, mailing lists, and knowledge-sharing databases) – like the collaboration space by the Co-CIVIC project itself.

An example of such institutional collaboration is discussed by Gessler and Howe (2015), who argue for the creation of "boundary objects"—shared tools or frameworks that help different stakeholders collaborate across professional cultures (Gessler & Howe, 2015). Through these mechanisms, partnerships can become more dynamic, resilient, and impactful over time.

Establishing these platforms may require support from regional education authorities or umbrella organisations, but even grassroots efforts—like a local CSO-school consortium—can have meaningful effects if they are well coordinated.

2.6 Conclusion

The cooperation between CSOs and VET providers offers tremendous potential to enrich vocational education with socially relevant content and to connect learners more closely with the challenges and opportunities in their communities. For these partnerships to succeed, CSOs must understand the VET system, communicate effectively, and create structures for shared ownership and sustainability. With the right strategies and mutual respect, such collaborations can become cornerstones of inclusive and future-oriented education systems.

References

Powell, J. J. W., & Solga, H. (2011). *Why are higher education participation rates in Germany so low? Institutional barriers to higher education expansion. Journal of Education and Work*, 24(1–2), 49–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2010.526587

Milana, M. (2012). *Political globalization and the shift from adult education to lifelong learning.* European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, 3(2), 103–117. https://doi.org/10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela0071

Cedefop – European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. (2020). *The changing nature and role of vocational education and training in Europe. Volume 7: VET from a lifelong learning perspective: Continuing VET concepts, providers and participants in Europe 1995–2015*. Cedefop research paper No 74. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3083_en.pdf

Heikkinen, H. L. T., de Jong, F. P. C. M., & Aspfors, J. (2015). *Peer-group mentoring for teacher development*. European Journal of Teacher Education, 38(3), 358–377.

https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2014.983068

Perini, L. (2014). *Planning Matters in Education: A Handbook for Civil Society Engagement in National Education Sector Planning. Global Campaign for Education*. https://campaignforeducation.org/images/downloads/f1/1484/planning-matters-in-education-en.pdf

Hofmann, C., & Strietska-Ilina, O. (2013). *Skills for Green Jobs: A Global View*. International Labour Organization (ILO). https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_103457.pdf

Gessler, M., & Howe, F. (2015). *From the reality of work to grounded work-based learning in vocational education. In Heikkinen*, H., Wieser, R., & Huttunen, R. (Eds.), Varieties of Work-Based Learning: Initiatives and Practices (pp. 231–250). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-209-9_15

3. Project-Based Learning and Social Innovation: The Role of Civil Society Organizations

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an instructional approach that centers on engaging students in meaningful projects that require critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving. Rooted in constructivist theories of education, PBL posits that learners construct knowledge most effectively through active engagement with real-world challenges (Almulla, 2020).

3.1 Theoretical Foundations

The conceptual underpinnings of PBL are deeply influenced by educational theorists such as John Dewey, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotsky. Dewey advocated for experiential education, emphasizing that learning occurs through experience and reflection. Piaget's stages of cognitive development highlight the importance of active learning in constructing knowledge, while Vygotsky's social development theory underscores the role of social interaction in learning processes. David Kolb further developed these ideas into the Experiential Learning Theory, which outlines a cyclical model comprising four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This model serves as a foundational framework for PBL, illustrating how students can transform experiences into knowledge through reflection and application (Almulla, 2020; Kolb, 1984).

3.2 Application in Humanities and Social Sciences

In the humanities and social sciences, PBL facilitates the exploration of complex societal issues, encouraging students to apply theoretical concepts to practical situations. For instance, a study on experiential education through PBL highlights how connecting students' experiences with academic content provokes serious thinking and enhances knowledge acquisition (Balleisen & Chin, 2022). Moreover, PBL fosters the development of essential skills such as teamwork, communication, and critical analysis. Almulla (2020) notes that PBL transforms classrooms into dynamic environments where learners are inspired to investigate, question, and innovate.

3.3 Benefits and Outcomes

Research indicates that PBL enhances both academic and non-academic outcomes. Students engaged in PBL demonstrate improved problem-solving abilities, higher-order thinking skills, and increased motivation. A case study in middle school chemistry education found that PBL promotes cognitive development, emotional engagement, and social skills (Saavedra, 2019). Furthermore, PBL supports inclusivity by accommodating diverse learning styles and backgrounds. It encourages students to take ownership of their learning, fostering a sense of agency and self-efficacy (Almulla, 2020).

3.4 Conclusion

Project-Based Learning represents a transformative approach to education, aligning with constructivist theories and emphasizing experiential learning. Its application in the humanities and social sciences not only enriches academic understanding but also prepares students to navigate and address real-world challenges effectively.

4. What Is Social Innovation-Based Project-based Learning in Education?

Social innovation-based PBL in the Co-CIVIC program integrates the pedagogical framework of project-based learning with the goals and practices of social innovation. Social innovation, as defined in the social sciences, involves the development and implementation of new ideas that meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations (Murray, Caulier-Grice, & Mulgan, 2010). When adopted in educational settings, this approach positions students as change agents who engage with communities to co-create solutions to social challenges.

This form of PBL is especially relevant in education for sustainable development and global citizenship. Students are tasked with projects that have real implications for marginalized communities or address issues like inequality, sustainability, and public health. The learning process thereby becomes a form of action research, allowing students to critically examine social issues while developing practical solutions in collaboration with community stakeholders (OECD, 2019).

In one example, university students engaged in a social innovation project addressing homelessness in an urban setting were guided to conduct interviews, analyze public policy, and present viable interventions. The learning outcomes extended far beyond knowledge acquisition, encompassing empathy development, systemic thinking, and civic participation. The pedagogical strength of social innovation-based PBL lies in its fusion of cognitive, emotional, and ethical learning dimensions, a triad often emphasized in humanistic education theory (Robinson, 2021).

4.1 Social Innovation-Based Project-Based Learning in Vocational Education and Training

In the field of Vocational Education and Training, the application of social innovation-based PBL presents unique opportunities and challenges. VET systems are typically characterized by a strong emphasis on practical skills and industry alignment. Integrating social innovation into this context enables vocational learners to go beyond technical proficiency and engage with the social and ethical dimensions of their trades and professions (CEDEFOP, 2021).

A growing body of literature supports this integration. The Allview project, for instance, exemplifies how social innovation and PBL can be embedded into VET through the use of digital tools and partnerships with civil society actors. By engaging students in extended reality (XR) simulations related to sustainability in the furniture and wood industry, the project created conditions for experiential learning that also addressed pressing environmental concerns (Allview Project, 2023).

Another example is the use of mobile technology in project-based accounting education in Indonesia, which not only improved student outcomes but also allowed for greater integration of community-based economic issues into the learning process. Such integration is critical in developing vocational competencies that are socially responsible and responsive to local needs (Wijaya et al., 2022).

Additionally, stakeholder cooperation in dual VET systems, such as that found in Germany, reveals how coordinated efforts between schools, employers, and CSOs can foster a form of project-based learning that is both socially innovative and professionally relevant. One study highlighted the importance of these partnerships in creating authentic learning environments where students contribute to socially beneficial outcomes while meeting curriculum objectives (Euler, 2019).

From a social science perspective, integrating social innovation into VET PBL also challenges traditional divisions between academic and vocational learning, affirming the value of vocational routes as spaces for intellectual and civic development. It aligns with calls from the sociology of education to reimagine VET as a transformative force for both learners and society (Hoeckel, Field, & Grubb, 2009).

The Key Topics Analysis of the Co-CIVIC survey (p. 4) reveals what motivates CSOs to collaborate with schools. Chief among them is the desire to shape student attitudes and behaviors (25%) and to mobilize students and communities (22.1%). A further 20% aim to raise awareness about their social missions.

By contrast, only 6.4% of CSOs are driven by media visibility, demonstrating that their motivations are rooted more in impact than publicity (p. 4). These insights reflect a desire to integrate social goals with educational environments, rather than treat schools as outreach platforms alone.

This aligns with the Results Analysis (p. 12), which found that 23.8% of CSOs aim to integrate their mission into school curricula or extracurricular programs. Another 19.8% prioritize raising awareness, while 18.8% seek to change student behaviours around specific social issues. These findings reinforce that CSOs are not peripheral players but co-creators of socially relevant learning environments.

The emphasis on civic development and participatory models supports the theoretical goals of PBL and underscores the potential of CSO–VET partnerships to generate long-lasting educational and social impact.

4.2 The Importance and Role of Civil Society Organizations in Social Innovation-Based PBL

Civil Society Organizations are indispensable partners in the successful implementation of social innovation-based PBL, particularly within VET. These organizations offer deep knowledge of local contexts, access to affected communities, and the ability to co-design projects that align with real social needs. Their involvement transforms PBL from a school-centred exercise into a participatory, community-engaged learning process (OECD, 2021).

In practice, CSOs serve as both mentors and co-creators, providing learners with guidance, case studies, and platforms for implementation. In turn, students contribute new perspectives and energy, creating a mutual benefit. This model aligns with theories of participatory development, which emphasize co-learning, empowerment, and shared ownership of solutions (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995).

For long-term impact, institutionalizing partnerships between CSOs and VET providers is critical. This can be achieved through the development of CSO-school platforms or networks that enable sustained collaboration, knowledge sharing, and replication of successful practices. Such platforms reflect a shift from ad-hoc project partnerships to systemic educational reform with civil society at its core (European Commission, 2020).

By engaging in social innovation-based PBL with CSOs, VET learners not only acquire technical and professional skills but also develop as informed citizens capable of contributing to just and sustainable futures. This approach reaffirms the role of education—vocational or otherwise—not just as preparation for employment but as a means of shaping society itself (OECD, 2019).

4.3 Conclusion

Project-based learning, particularly when integrated with social innovation and supported by CSOs, offers powerful opportunities for transformative education across all levels—including VET. Rooted in the traditions of experiential learning and participatory development, this pedagogical approach fosters technical competencies, social responsibility, and civic engagement. The synergy between VET institutions and CSOs stands as a model for how education can directly serve community development and democratic renewal.

References

Allview Project. (2023). *Allview: Social innovation and extended reality in vocational education*. https://allviewproject.eu/

Almulla, M. A. (2020). The effectiveness of the project-based learning (PBL) approach as a way to engage students in learning. *SAGE Open, 10*(3), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020938702

Balleisen, E. J., & Chin, R. (2022). The case for bringing experiential learning into the humanities. *Daedalus, 151*(3), 138–152. https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01934

CEDEFOP. (2021). *Vocational education and training for sustainable development*. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4173

Cornwall, A., & Jewkes, R. (1995). What is participatory research? *Social Science & Medicine, 41*(12), 1667–1676. https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(95)00127-S

European Commission. (2020). *Civil society organizations as partners in education reform*. https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/document-library/civil-society-education_en

Euler, D. (2019). *Dual vocational education and training in Germany: A model for other countries?* Bertelsmann Stiftung. https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/publications/publication/did/dual-vocational-education-and-training-in-germany-a-model-for-other-countries

Hoeckel, K., Field, S., & Grubb, W. N. (2009). *Learning for jobs: OECD reviews of vocational education and training*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264036044-en

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235701029_Experiential_Learning_Experience_As_The_Source_Of_Learning_And_Development

Murray, R., Caulier-Grice, J., & Mulgan, G. (2010). The open book of social innovation. The Young Foundation and NESTA. https://youngfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/The-Open-Book-of-Social-Innovationg.pdf

OECD. (2019). Social innovation and new business models: Local and regional approaches. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264303383-en

OECD. (2021). Engaging civil society organizations in education. OECD Education Working Papers, No. 244. https://doi.org/10.1787/51b4f7b6-en

Robinson, J. (2021). Social innovation pedagogy: Connecting learning with social change. Journal of Social Entrepreneurship, 12(1), 68–86. https://doi.org/10.1080/19420676.2020.1821876

Saavedra, A. R. (2019). Effects of project-based learning on students' academic achievement, creativity, and communication skills. Education Sciences, 9(3), 223. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci9030223

Wijaya, S., Dwisatrio, B., & Nugroho, E. (2022). Enhancing vocational education through mobile technology: Accounting students in Indonesia. International Journal of Vocational Education and Training Research, 8(2), 45–59. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijvetr.20220802.12

5. Learning Together – Roles, Commitments, and Expectations in the CSO–VET–Learner Triangle

In the evolving landscape of vocational education and training, collaboration between Civil Society Organizations, VET providers, and learners is pivotal. This tripartite relationship fosters an environment where practical skills, social responsibility, and personal development converge. To harness the full potential of this collaboration, it is essential to manage expectations effectively and empower students through tailored coaching and support.

5.1 Managing Expectations Internally and Externally

For CSOs, internal alignment is the cornerstone of successful partnerships with VET providers and learners. This begins with a clear articulation of objectives that resonate with the organization's mission and capacity. Staff members must be adequately trained to engage with educational initiatives, ensuring they possess the pedagogical skills necessary to support learners effectively. Allocating appropriate resources, including time and materials, is also crucial to sustain these educational endeavours without compromising the CSO's core functions.

Externally, managing expectations involves establishing transparent communication channels with VET providers and learners. Defining roles and responsibilities prevents misunderstandings and fosters a collaborative atmosphere. Setting realistic, achievable goals aligned with the capabilities of all parties maintains motivation and facilitates progress tracking. Regular dialogues and feedback sessions are instrumental in addressing concerns promptly and ensuring that the collaboration remains on course.

VET providers, in turn, should recognize the value that CSOs bring to the educational experience. By integrating CSO-led projects into the curriculum, VET institutions can offer students exposure to real-world challenges and social innovation. Teachers play a critical role in this integration, acting as facilitators who bridge theoretical knowledge with practical application. Their openness to collaborative teaching methods and willingness to adapt to new pedagogical approaches are vital for the success of such partnerships.

Learners, as the central focus of this collaboration, are expected to engage actively with both CSOs and VET providers. They should approach projects with curiosity and a willingness to apply their skills to address societal issues. In return, learners can expect to receive guidance, mentorship, and opportunities that enhance their vocational competencies and civic awareness. This reciprocal relationship empowers students to become proactive contributors to their communities and industries.

5.2 Empowering Students through Coaching and Support

Empowerment in the VET context extends beyond the acquisition of technical skills; it encompasses the development of autonomy, critical thinking, and resilience. Coaching and mentorship are instrumental in achieving these outcomes. Effective coaching involves building trust-based relationships where learners feel supported and valued. This foundation encourages open communication and fosters a safe environment for exploration and growth.

Mentors and coaches should work collaboratively with students to set personalized learning objectives that align with their aspirations and needs. This goal-setting process enhances motivation and provides a clear roadmap for development. Regular, constructive feedback is essential, offering learners insights

into their progress and areas for improvement. Such feedback should be specific, actionable, and delivered in a manner that encourages reflection and self-assessment.

Avoiding common pitfalls in coaching is equally important. Over-directing can stifle creativity and hinder the development of problem-solving skills. Instead, coaches should encourage learners to explore solutions independently, intervening only to guide reflection or when necessary. Promoting a growth mindset helps students view challenges as opportunities for learning, building perseverance and adaptability.

Incorporating coaching techniques such as active listening, Socratic questioning, and modelling desired behaviours can further enhance the learning experience. These methods encourage critical thinking and allow students to internalize professional standards and practices. By fostering an environment that supports self-directed learning, coaches and mentors equip learners with the tools needed to navigate the complexities of the modern workforce.

5.3 Conclusion

The collaboration between CSOs, VET providers, and learners is a dynamic process that requires careful management of expectations and a commitment to student empowerment. By establishing clear roles, maintaining open communication, and providing tailored coaching and support, this tripartite relationship can cultivate a generation of skilled professionals who are also socially conscious citizens. Through such partnerships, vocational education can transcend traditional boundaries, fostering innovation and driving positive societal change.

References

CEDEFOP. (n.d.). *One-to-one support through coaching or mentoring. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training*. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/intervention-approaches/one-one-support-through-coaching-or-mentoring

Industry Professor Association. (n.d.). *Effective coaching techniques in Australian vocational education and training*. https://www.industryprofessor.org/effective-coaching-techniques-in-australian-vocational-education-and-training/

TVET Trainer. (n.d.). *Supporting apprentices through mentoring and guidance*. https://tvettrainer.com/supporting-apprentices-through-mentoring-and-guidance/

Notion4Teachers. (n.d.). *Ultimate guide to coaching techniques for educators*. https://www.notion4teachers.com/blog/ultimate-guide-to-coaching-techniques-for-educators

Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training (SFUVET). (n.d.). *Coaching – an innovation from the workplace and its significance for vocational schools*. https://www.sfuvet.swiss/research/projects/coaching-innovation-workplace-and-its-significance-vocational-schools

6. Setting up successful collaborations – what the data tells us

Establishing effective and sustainable collaborations between Civil Society Organizations and Vocational Education and Training providers requires more than enthusiasm—it demands strategic planning grounded in evidence. Insights from the Co-CIVIC Survey Results and Key Topics Analyses highlight both the competencies required for success and the common barriers that impede meaningful cooperation.

Key competencies identified by CSOs for effective collaboration include strong communication skills (85%), teamwork (80%), and interpersonal relationship management (78%), as noted in the Results Analysis (p. 17). Additionally, empathy (74%) and creativity (72%) emerged as vital qualities for engaging in collaborative, socially driven learning environments.

However, these competencies are often tested by structural and relational barriers. According to the Results Analysis (p. 16), expectation mismatches were cited by 55% of respondents as a major challenge. Many CSOs and schools enter into cooperation with different assumptions about roles, goals, and outcomes. Likewise, knowledge gaps exist on both sides, with 45–50% of CSOs and school staff lacking a clear understanding of each other's institutional contexts and mandates (pp. 16–17). Over 50% of CSOs also reported a lack of practical tools and guidelines to initiate and manage cooperation effectively, while 44% cited weak support from educational authorities and funders.

In terms of practice, the survey found that 46.3% of CSOs engage schools through one-off student mobilization activities, while only 26.8% participate in curricular programs, and another 26.8% contribute to extracurricular initiatives (Results Analysis, p. 9). This data reveals a dominant reliance on short-term, event-driven formats rather than sustained, curriculum-integrated partnerships.

By contrast, the successful case studies featured later in this handbook—such as the Pécs Model of school social work in Hungary and Interfolk's cultural heritage projects in Denmark—demonstrate how collaborations can be embedded structurally within the educational landscape. These examples stand out not only for their innovation but for their ability to overcome systemic barriers like limited resources, lack of institutional frameworks, and insufficient long-term planning.

They also reflect motivations outlined in the Key Topics Analysis (pp. 4–5), particularly CSOs' goals to shape student attitudes and promote civic responsibility through authentic, real-world engagement. These cases underscore the potential of CSO–VET partnerships to serve not merely as service extensions, but as co-owned educational ecosystems.

In light of this, future evaluation and planning frameworks should look beyond traditional output metrics. They must assess the quality of collaboration, the alignment of expectations, the availability of enabling resources, and the potential for sustainability. Doing so ensures that collaborations move from ad-hoc to transformative—creating lasting educational and societal value.

7. Guidelines for the evaluation of Civil Society – Vocational Education programs

Establishing effective and sustainable collaborations between Civil Society Organizations and Vocational Education and Training providers not only demands strategic planning grounded in evidence, but also proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the collaboration is beneficial and aligned with the mission and core activities of the CSO.

Defining a systematic way of monitoring and evaluating ensures that there is a real impact on the organisations, its activities and that it provides an added value, in short, that it is worthwhile investing (always scarce) time, effort and resources the organisation has.

It has to be noted that there is no "one-size-fits-all" way, each CSO is different, the objectives and goal of the collaboration is different, and the underlying reasons to engage in the collaboration tend to vary widely. Nonetheless, there are some basic guidelines and approaches which are present across a solid monitoring and evaluation framework.

There are several aspects which need to be taken into account when designing the framework are that it needs to:

- Be strategic and structured,
- Acknowledge gaps in existing knowledge and understanding, the process should actively identify if there are any knowledge gaps such as the understanding of the VET system or the school´s understanding of the role of the CSO.
- Look beyond mere output and impact metrics and also assess qualitative aspects such as the quality of the teamwork, communication and the relationships.
- Integrate a long term focus and evaluate the potential for a more lasting impact and long-term collaboration.

The following aspects should be monitored and evaluated:

1. Establishment of clear and shared goals and a mutual understanding of the purpose of the collaboration from the outset.
2. Contribution of the collaboration to the social mission and core activities.
3. Contribution to the CSO's internal capabilities, networks, and sustainability.
4. Efficiency and effectiveness of the collaboration mechanisms and the day-to-day collaboration.

The table below provides an overview of the aspects that are to be addressed by the monitoring and evaluation, giving indications on the items that can be included in the measurement as well as examples on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that can give insight into the achievements.

Establishment of clear and shared goals and a mutual understanding of the purpose of the collaboration from the outset		
Existence of co-developed and documented shared goals.	● Presence of formal tools like a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or project charter clarifying responsibilities and timelines.	This can be measured through a check of the formal documents concerning the collaboration on managerial level.

Evidence that the collaboration aligns with the CSO's core mission rather than diverting its resources.	• Connection between core mission and challenges posed to the students. • Staff time dedicated to the collaboration. • Usefulness of the solutions provided by the students.	This can be measured by a survey with the managerial team and staff involved, who assess the level of contribution of the activity, and the relevance and usefulness of the solutions, in view of the time and resources invested.
Assessment of whether expectation mismatches, a key challenge, have been addressed.	• Levels of satisfaction of all involved, i.e. staff, students and teachers. • Perception that the objectives of the collaboration are achieved for both the CSO and the VET	This can be measured through by frequent feedback dialogues or sessions, and regular satisfaction surveys.
Efficiency and effectiveness of the collaboration mechanisms and the day-to-day collaboration		
Establishment of regular communication routines, such as periodic check-ins or steering group meetings.	• Number of meetings on managerial levels for overall supervision. • Number of meetings between CSO staff/mentors and teachers. • Clear communication channels and processes.	This can be measured by the number of meetings and the perceived quality of these meetings. It can also be measured through the number of online communication processes, channels and tools.
Tracking of time commitments from CSO staff and volunteers to ensure they are manageable.	• Dedicated hours by staff & volunteers. • Perceived increase of workload.	This can be measured by revising the activity logs of staff members and volunteers, and dialogues of supervisors with the staff on the perceived extra workload.
Assessment of the administrative and bureaucratic burden and whether simplified processes are in place	• Number of processes identified in the MoU and/or formal documents on the collaboration. • Perceived level of bureaucracy by staff	This is measured by revising the formal documentation and identify the bureaucratic processes, and survey with staff.
Contribution of the collaboration to the social mission and core activities		
Assess the level of awareness raised about the CSO's mission among students and the wider school community.	• Number of students reached with information about the CSO's mission	This can be measured by the number of students reached based upon their participation in the activity.
Measure the success in shaping student attitudes and behaviours towards social issues.	• Percentage of students who report increased civic awareness after participation	This can be measured through the teacher feedback, CSO staff feedback and/or student survey.

Track the mobilisation of students and community members in the CSO's initiatives.	• Number of students that inquire about becoming a volunteer • Number of volunteer hours contributed by students	This can be measured by requests for information and participation numbers.
Evaluate if the collaboration is integrated into the school's curriculum or extracurricular programs, indicating a deeper partnership	• Documented instances of students applying their skills to benefit the community	This can be measured through direct teacher feedback or surveys with the students.
Assess how the partnership deepens the CSO's roots within the community and fosters stronger relationships	• Increased interest of the community in the CSO activities. • Increased support of the community to the CSO goals and mission.	This can be measured to the number of request for information, in donations or expressions of support. It can also be measured by the presence of the CSO activities in third party social media and publications.
Contribution to the organization's CSO's internal capabilities, networks, and sustainability		
Assess whether the CSO has gained access to motivated young contributors with fresh perspectives.	• Number of students reached through the collaboration. • Number of students actively involved in the challenges.	This can be measured through the number of students to whom the CSO and its activities were presented and the number of students that actually participated in a challenge.
Evaluate the development of the CSO's internal processes, such as structured mentorship capabilities for students.	• Number of CSO staff receiving information and training to support educational initiatives. • Perceived increase in staff capabilities.	This can be measured through the number of staff members involved in the activity and acting as mentors, and through feedback dialogues.
Document the strengthening of networks with educational institutions and other local stakeholders.	• Increase in community member participation in joint events.	This can me measured through the requests for participation, the number of joint events and/or event attendance.
Monitor any increase in recognition, visibility, or positive attention from donors and media as a	• Media coverage of the collaboration. • Social media coverage by the schools and the students	This can be measured through the number of posts, followers or published articles.

result of the collaboration.		
Track whether the collaboration has fostered innovation through the integration of students' contemporary insights or technological skills.	• Adoption of new technologies or contemporary insights brought by students • Development of innovative solutions to social challenges through joint projects	This can be measured by the number of ideas and solutions generated by the students, and interviews with the staff members involved.

8. Examples for successful collaborations between Civil Society and Vocational Education

8.1 The Pécs Model of School Social Work – Hungary

The Pécs Model in Hungary is a well-established example of collaboration between educational institutions and civil society organizations to address social inclusion. Developed in the city of Pécs in the early 2000s, this model was built through a partnership between the University of Pécs' Faculty of Humanities and local NGOs focusing on youth welfare and community development. It primarily operates within VET and secondary schools located in socially disadvantaged areas of Pécs, targeting vulnerable youth at risk of dropping out of school or becoming disengaged from society.

The essence of the model is to integrate school social work into the daily routines of educational institutions. School social workers—trained at the university and often employed through NGOs—work directly in schools, acting as mediators between students, teachers, families, and social service providers. Their work is coordinated with local civil society partners who bring in expertise in community development, mental health, and youth engagement. These NGOs help facilitate workshops, mentoring programs, and crisis interventions. The collaboration is institutionalized via formal cooperation agreements between the university, schools, and NGOs.

The program's strength lies in its long-term, embedded presence in schools and its responsiveness to the lived realities of students. It has led to measurable improvements in student retention, emotional well-being, and parent-school cooperation. Evaluations by Hungarian education researchers suggest that this model enhances the educational experience for students by providing not just academic support, but holistic development.

This model has also attracted interest from other European contexts looking to build bridges between civil society and education. Importantly, the model offers a framework that positions VET and secondary schools as part of broader social support systems, not isolated academic institutions.

Reference: Felvinczi, K. (2007). *The Pécs Model of School Social Work*. Japanese Society for the Study of School Social Work. https://www.jssssw.jp/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2010_01.pdf

8.2 MEP Avista Music Education Program – Bosnia and Herzegovina

The MEP Avista program in Bosnia and Herzegovina exemplifies how arts-based VET education can be enhanced through civil society collaboration. This music education program is implemented in Sarajevo through a partnership between the Citizens Educational Center (CEC), a local NGO, and Avista Music School, a vocational training institution. The initiative focuses on integrating marginalized youth—particularly Roma and post-war displaced populations—into formal and non-formal music education pathways.

The core of the program involves community-based workshops, public performances, and training sessions facilitated by professional musicians and educators. These are held not only at Avista's facilities but also in youth centres and local cultural houses. CEC plays a critical role in outreach, logistics, and psychosocial support, while Avista provides the educational infrastructure and certification. Together, they create flexible learning environments where students can develop both technical musical skills and personal agency.

The collaboration is based on mutual respect and long-term vision. Avista gains access to a more diverse student body and additional pedagogical tools, while CEC benefits from having a stable

educational partner with recognized credentials. Importantly, the program does not merely serve artistic purposes—it also includes modules on entrepreneurship and event planning, thus embedding social and economic empowerment into the curriculum.

The impact is visible not only in the increased enrolment rates of marginalized youth in music education but also in broader social terms. Several students from the program have gone on to participate in national competitions or work in community centres as peer mentors. The initiative is also a model of sustainability, having secured funding from both local government and international donors.

Reference: Citizens Educational Center. (n.d.). *MEP Avista Music Education Program*. https://www.cec.ba/mep-avista

8.3 Developers From Euskadi – Spain

"Developers From Euskadi" is a local initiative launched in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Basque Country, Spain. It is a collaboration between local VET schools, Fundación VASS (a non-profit linked to the tech sector), and regional civil society actors aiming to bridge the digital skills gap among young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The initiative's goal is to train future software developers through immersive project-based learning while tackling social inclusion and youth unemployment.

The program runs as a bootcamp model but is embedded within the curricula of participating VET schools. It targets students who are either enrolled in IT-related VET tracks or have dropped out of formal education but wish to return. The training is structured around real-life digital challenges sourced from NGOs and local government units. For instance, one team of students developed a web-based appointment system for a local food bank.

The unique feature of the initiative is its participatory co-design model. Civil society organizations propose challenges based on their operational needs, while VET schools select student teams and provide coaching support. Fundación VASS provides the digital infrastructure and mentorship through its network of professional developers. Regular feedback loops and public demos ensure that the process is transparent and collaborative.

The impact has been substantial. Not only have over 150 young people completed the program with employment-ready digital skills, but the organizations receiving technical solutions have also benefited directly. The visibility of the program has spurred replication in nearby towns and attracted EU funding under the NextGenerationEU framework.

What makes this initiative particularly innovative is how it democratizes access to high-value digital training while embedding civic purpose and community relevance. It aligns vocational goals with civil responsibility and reflects a European ethos of inclusive digital transformation.

References:

Fundación VASS. (2023). *Una nueva edición de Developers From Euskadi arranca en Vitoria-Gasteiz*. https://www.fundacionvass.org/una-nueva-edicion-de-developers-from-euskadi

VASS University. (n.d.). *A new paradigm of large-scale training*. https://vassuniversity.com/en/trends/a-new-large-scale-training-paradigm/

8.4 Science Shops and Community Research – The Netherlands

Science Shops are local intermediaries in the Netherlands that connect universities, including those with vocational and applied sciences tracks, with civil society organizations. While not limited to VET schools, several university colleges with vocational orientation (such as HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht) actively participate in Science Shop projects that feature VET students working on applied research problems posed by community groups.

In one notable example, a local NGO working with refugees asked a Science Shop at HU Utrecht to research access barriers to vocational education for migrant women. The research was carried out by interdisciplinary teams including VET social work and education students. It included surveys, interviews, and co-design sessions, and culminated in a policy brief submitted to the Utrecht municipal council.

The strength of the model lies in its institutionalized process: NGOs submit research questions, which are reviewed and matched with student teams, supervised by university staff. The collaboration is contractual, but also grounded in the values of open science and participatory development. Students not only gain research and project management skills but also develop civic awareness and community engagement practices.

Science Shops have operated in the Netherlands since the 1970s, but their adaptation to the VET context is more recent. They offer an effective model for turning civil society concerns into educational assets. Furthermore, they validate the intellectual potential of vocational students by positioning them as researchers and co-creators of knowledge.

References:

EU-Citizen.Science. (2025, May 6). *Science Shops – Bridging universities and communities*. https://eu-citizen.science/blog/2025/05/06/science-shops-bridging-universities-and-communities/

Living Knowledge Network. (n.d.). *History of Science Shops*. https://livingknowledge.org/science-shops/about-science-shops__trashed/elementor-1260/

8.5 Interfolk Cultural Heritage Projects – Denmark

Interfolk is a Danish civil society organization that collaborates with VET institutions to promote cultural heritage education. Based in Aarhus, Interfolk has worked with local VET schools on projects funded by the Nordic Council's Nordplus program. One standout project involved students from vocational programs in design, carpentry, and tourism in revitalizing a disused local historical site into a community cultural center.

The project began with community consultations facilitated by Interfolk and involved students conducting fieldwork and historical research. Guided by Interfolk's staff and school teachers, they co-designed renovation plans, exhibition displays, and event programming. The process included interdisciplinary training modules covering project management, sustainability, and community outreach.

Crucially, the project blurred the lines between formal and informal learning. Students were mentored not only by VET instructors but also by community artists, elders, and local historians. The site was inaugurated with a student-organized festival celebrating multicultural heritage, which drew over 1,000 visitors and received coverage in regional media.

The collaboration highlighted the civic potential of vocational education. The students saw their craftsmanship applied to meaningful community development while learning about cultural heritage

preservation. The success of the project led to its expansion into a pan-Nordic learning network focused on community-based cultural education.

References:

Interfolk. (n.d.). *Case studies from the civil society area*. https://interfolk.dk/

Interfolk. (n.d.). *Nordplus COMMON*. https://interfolk.dk/projects-1/projects-former-1/nordplus-common

9. Annex: Core Topics of the Co-CIVIC Survey on Collaborations between Civil Society organisations and providers of Vocational Education and Training

From July 2024-January 2025, the Co-CIVIC project partnership conducted research online and offline in the three involved countries, Germany, Spain and Türkiye. Here we are sharing the Key Topics Analysis of that dataset.

Key Motivations for CSOs to Cooperate with School

- Shaping student attitudes and behaviours (25%): CSOs see schools as platforms for raising awareness about social issues and influencing the next generation's perspectives.
- Mobilizing students and their communities (22.1%): Many CSOs aim to engage students as active participants in their initiatives.
- Raising awareness about their mission (20%): Schools provide an opportunity to introduce young people to social causes.
- Gaining insights into student tendencies (15%): Some CSOs see value in understanding students as future decision-makers.
- Integrating CSO activities into curricula (11.4%): While desired, this is a lower priority compared to engagement and awareness-building.
- Media visibility (6.4%): CSOs are less motivated by publicity and more focused on direct impact.

Key Barriers Preventing CSOs from Cooperating with Schools

- Lack of time among staff and volunteers (63.6%): The biggest challenge, making it hard for CSOs to commit resources to school partnerships.
- Administrative and bureaucratic burdens (53.8%): Excessive regulations discourage CSOs from engaging with schools.
- Mismatch in expectations (55%): Schools and CSOs often have different priorities and working styles, making collaboration difficult.
- Schools and teachers are not interested (51.9%): A significant portion of CSOs struggle to engage schools in their initiatives.
- • Lack of support from funders and the CSO ecosystem (30.4%): Many CSOs feel that their own networks and donors don't prioritize school collaboration

Challenges Faced During Cooperation

- Knowledge Gaps:
    - 50% of CSOs lack knowledge about the VET system and school requirements.
    - 45-50% of school staff do not fully understand the role of CSOs, leading to misalignment in goals.
- Lack of Tools and Support:
    - 50%+ of CSOs feel there are not enough guidelines on how to effectively collaborate with schools.
    - 44% struggle with limited support from education authorities and stakeholders.
- Skills Needed for Effective Cooperation:
    - Communication skills (85%), teamwork (80%), and managing interpersonal relations (78%) were identified as the most essential skills for successful collaboration.
    - Creativity (72%) and presentation skills (70%) were also valued for engaging schools effectively.

Recommendations to Improve CSO-School Cooperation

4.1 Address Bureaucratic and Administrative Barriers

- Simplify collaboration procedures: Governments and educational authorities could reduce bureaucracy and create fast-track approval processes for CSO involvement in schools.
- Standardized collaboration frameworks: Developing clear guidelines and templates for school-CSO partnerships could help streamline cooperation.

4.2 Bridge the Knowledge and Expectation Gap

- Training sessions for CSO staff: Workshops on educational systems, school requirements, and pedagogical approaches can help CSOs better align their initiatives with school priorities.
- Awareness programs for school staff: Schools need better understanding of CSO roles and potential benefits of collaboration. Information campaigns or networking events could help bridge this gap.
- Develop clear, mutually beneficial project plans: Defining shared goals between schools and CSOs can reduce expectation mismatches.

4.3 Improve Support and Resources for CSOs

- Create funding opportunities: Grant programs or dedicated financial support for school-CSO projects could encourage more partnerships.
- Encourage funders and supporters to recognize school collaborations: CSOs can work on advocating within their ecosystem to highlight the long-term benefits of school engagement.

4.4 Foster Long-Term, Sustainable Collaboration Models

- Move beyond one-off activities: Most CSO-school partnerships focus on short-term projects. Encouraging long-term integration into school programs could have more lasting impact.
- Pilot programs and case studies: Successful school-CSO collaborations should be documented and shared to encourage more partnerships.

4.5 The reasons for considering collaboration with schools and their teachers.

- Establish a CSO-School partnership platform: A digital platform where schools and CSOs can connect, share opportunities, and find best practices could facilitate partnerships.
- Encourage teacher-CSO networking events: Creating spaces where educators and CSOs can meet and discuss common goals would improve mutual understanding.

Final Thoughts

- CSOs recognize the value of working with schools but struggle with time, bureaucracy, and alignment of expectations.
- Better communication, training, and institutional support can make partnerships more effective and sustainable.
- Long-term, structured collaborations (rather than one-off projects) will create lasting impact for students, schools, and CSOs alike.
- By implementing simpler procedures, better resources, and stronger networking opportunities, CSOs and schools can work together more effectively to educate and empower the next generation.