



TICZA

TEACHER INTERNSHIP
COLLABORATION SOUTH AFRICA



Reflecting on Collective Impact and MERL in the TICZA project

**The TICZA Community of Practice (CoP)
Series**

CoP #16 Summary Report:

26 March 2025

The Teacher Internship Collaboration South Africa (TICZA) – Key Features

- *TICZA is a collective impact collaboration project.*
- *It is a partnership initiative made up of government departments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academic institutions and private sector organisations.*
- *TICZA is governed by a representative Steering Committee.*
- *The aim of TICZA is to demonstrate the extent to and conditions under which Extended Student Teacher Internships (ESTIs) can be an effective, efficient and widely used model for teacher work-integrated learning, embedded within Initial teacher education (ITE) policy and practice as part of a broader goal of institutionalisation of the model.*
- *The TICZA Community of Practice (CoP) is a programme element intended to enhance sector-wide collaboration through which implementers share knowledge and practice, discuss key ITE issues and expand the evidence base on student-teacher internship models.*

1 Overview

CoP 16 explored ways in which the collective impact model has played out in the TICZA programme from the perspectives of the implementing partners. The CoP also reflected on the use, collection and sharing of evidence to demonstrate impact – a core feature of the model – and ways in which reflection and learning are integrated into the work of TICZA. The CoP also offered a refresher on the general principles of the collective impact model outside of the TICZA context and considered some of the issues related to sustainability and collective impact once the current funded programme ends.

Presentation 1 (Jennifer Bisgard) explored the five elements of collective impact – shared measurement, continuous communication, a common agenda, the backbone function, and mutually reinforcing activities – in the context of two examples. Example 1 showed that if these elements are not fully addressed, project success is not sustained. A short intervention duration, weak communication, inconsistent measurement and a lack of follow-up engagement led to the dissipation of initial gains. Example 2 showed success factors to be linked to long-term, holistic and multi-stakeholder approaches. Collective Impact model 3.0¹ adds new success drivers, including policy change. Institutionalisation, continuous support, and strategic learning are crucial for sustainability.

Perspectives and lessons learned on collective impact in TICZA were shared:

¹ This refers to recent thinking around features of the Collective Impact model, as illustrated in the slide in point 2 below.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

- Institutional complexity and bureaucracy make partnerships challenging.
- Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) take time due to faculty approvals, ethical clearances and administrative barriers.
- Long-term commitment to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) reform at an institutional level is necessary for system-wide integration.

NGOs

- Collective impact helps an organisation enrich its own planning and enhances alignment with government and funders.
- Collaboration strengthens internal processes and teaches the organisation to model collaboration to their own beneficiaries.
- Sustaining engagement beyond five years requires a detailed, long-term action framework.

Department of Basic Education (DBE)

- TICZA as a backbone organisation helps coordinate stakeholders and assists the DBE in understanding different stakeholder roles in its own planning.
- The DBE is focused on improving teacher quality in schools and working with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) on aligning ITE with government policies.
- Balancing quality assurance with NGO autonomy is necessary.

Funders

- Engagement in TICZA has encouraged funders to explore long-term investments and innovative funding models (e.g. impact investing).
- A clear transition plan is needed once the current funding period ends.

Convening Group

- Shared measurement remains the weakest link – stakeholders struggle to agree on common tools and metrics and are sometimes hesitant to share their data. TICZA could have begun with a tighter definition of its scope and goals to reach common understandings and begun the process of looking for data-based evidence on cost effectiveness earlier.

Presentation 2 (Herman Meyer) on Monitoring, Evaluation, Reflection and Learning (MERL) emphasised the importance of continuous learning and reflection in order to adapt strategies for impact. Pointers on strengthening the learning and sense-making aspects of TICZA were given. Learnings from the evaluation processes will be shared through the TICZA Endline Evaluation report written by Southern Hemisphere.

Key takeaways

- Higher Education Institutions and the DHET need to commit at the highest levels to ITE reform if ESTI work is to continue.
- Both the DBE & DHET need to come together for the initial and continuing professional development of teachers.
- Government and funders should help NGOs become more compliant and sustainable if partnerships are to continue.

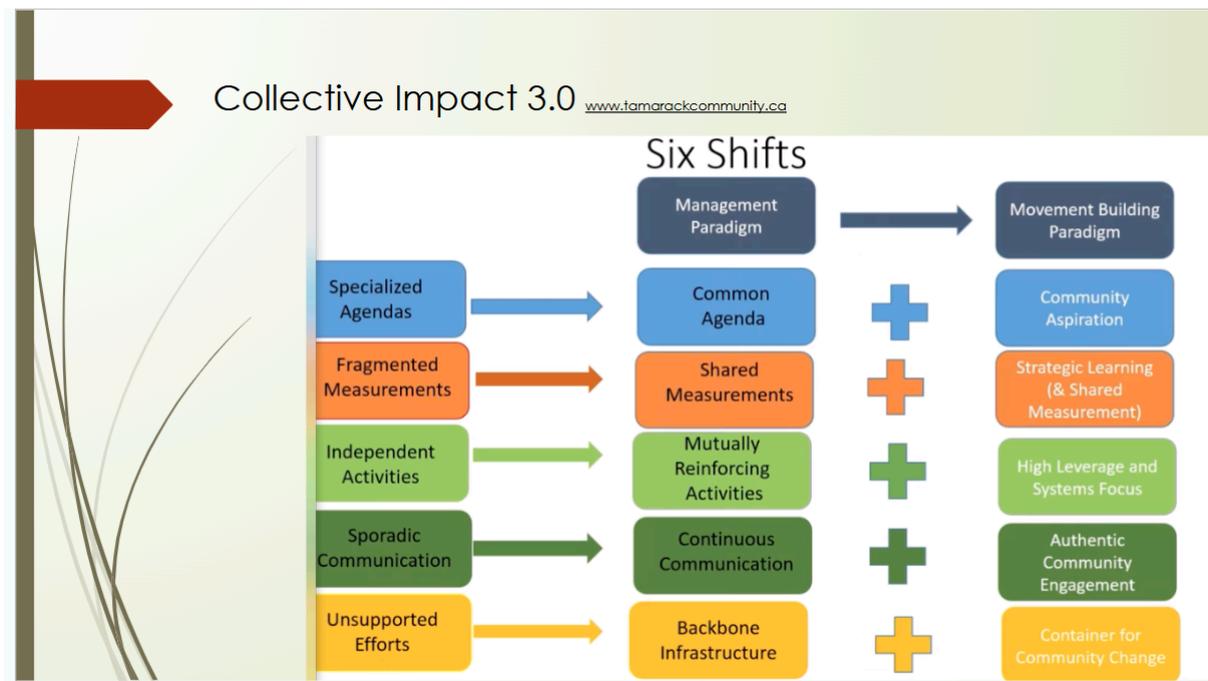
- ESTIs need to align with government policies and procedures for easier adoption; at the same time, the government needs to be open to systemic changes if these are required for the institutionalisation of ESTI approaches.
- Planning needs to happen for post-funding sustainability; however, it is clear that an operational convening platform (with funding) is required if collective impact approaches are to continue.
- Learning, reflection and feedback at all levels needs to continue in a MERL cycle if ESTIs are to show their value, and the use of common metrics needs to be strengthened.

2 Presentation: Jennifer Bisgard, Senior MERL Advisor

Collective Impact in Review

A collective impact approach recognises that complex or ‘wicked’ problems require collaborative action to address different facets of the issue. Jennifer Bisgard presented the five key elements of collective impact: shared measurement, continuous communication, a common agenda, the backbone function, and mutually reinforcing activities. She discussed the Emergent Literacy Project (ELIT) as an example of an intervention with collective impact features in the range of its stakeholders, engaging Grade R learners, Grade R teachers and subject advisors in the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and Wordworks as the NGO project manager. The project showed initial success, with learners performing better than the control group but the effects were gone by the end of Grade 1. Several factors contributed to this, most notably, the short intervention period of six months for numeracy then a change of focus to literacy. The five elements of collective impact were insufficiently addressed: communication was sporadic, measurement was inconsistent, there was no carry through to Grade 1 teachers, and Grade R teachers reverted to their previous practices once there was no active engagement through meetings and other programme activities – that is, mutually reinforcing activities were lacking. Critically, the ‘backbone function’ carried out by the NGO was weakened by the fact that there was responsibility with insufficient authority. Contrasting this example, Ms Bisgard presented the Logan Model in Australia, which has shown long-term success in breaking the cycle of poverty for indigenous people through a holistic approach from the ante-natal stage through to schooling. Key enablers have been the 20-year lifespan of the programme and the strong and continuous support from a diverse range of stakeholders. This illustrates the need for institutionalisation, continuous support and strategic learning to ensure sustainability and impact.

Ms Bisgard then discussed changing paradigms in our understanding of collective impact, as illustrated by the slide below. Collective Impact 3.0 shows additional drivers for success.



In the context of a programme such as TICZA, an enabling policy environment (which may suggest the need for policy change) is also a key factor. We need to locate the project within the whole system, which would include ITE provided by HEIs.

See the presentation [here](#)

Key points from the plenary discussion

- Our own assumptions that changes made during an intervention can automatically become part of standard practice may not be correct. Strategies to ensure sustained behaviour change post-project need to be considered.
- Funders also need to think for the longer term. An effective collective impact project needs to transition to ‘business as usual’ rather than remain as a funded activity. For TICZA, this means that the roles of the DHET, DBE and HEIs are critical for sustainable impact.
- Project implementers know that ‘5 years is a gift and 20 years is a solution’, but it is sometimes difficult to get funders and policy makers to take a long-term view which ensures that new practices are embedded. The importance of trust and a common language for different stakeholders to communicate effectively cannot be overemphasised.
- Institutionalisation of a model that enables emerging teachers studying through distance/online means to gain extended school-based experiences will demand systemic adjustments.

3 Panel Discussion

The Journey – Perspectives on Collective Impact in TICZA

TICZA stakeholders shared reflections and perspectives from their specific contexts in response to questions posed by the moderator.

| Panel Moderator | HEI Implementer | NGO Implementer | Government | Funder | Convening Group |
|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|
| Freda Walters (JET Education Services) | Carisma Nel (North West University) | David Oliphant (Teach the Nation) | Lala Maje (Department of Basic Education) | Zandile Ntuli (Standard Bank Tutuwa Foundation) | Nick Rockey (Trialogue) |

HEI implementer perspective: In your view as a higher education institution, what are the institutional dynamics and major factors that affect your participation in a collective impact project?

Carisma Nel from NWU stressed that HEIs are bound by the DHET’s *Policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ)*, which states that HEIs have final responsibility for signing off on student teacher achievements at all stages toward a qualification. This means that a MOU is required for any partnership on wrap-around support for students. MOU processes are not standard across different HEIs. HEIs are complex, hierarchical bureaucracies, and MOUs entail a lengthy process involving faculty level permissions, the HEI legal office, ethical clearance and consent from staff. Any blockage along the chain leads to delays, which can be compounded by staff turnaround; this can mean that the process has to start again. While individuals such as herself and other colleagues are committed to the TICZA model, Ms Nel emphasised that institutional dynamics must be taken into account. In addition, integrating ESTIs into the fabric of a university’s ITE programme places demands on capacity and resources (including administrative, research, data tracking and reporting requirements) and therefore requires institutional commitment to ITE reform. Institutions overall need to look at what they are doing and how they are doing it in their ITE programmes in order to collaborate effectively – this requires institutional will to transform practices at the highest level. This transformation cannot be achieved by one person representing the collective impact model without support and endorsement at an institutional level.

HEI follow up: This suggests that significant institutional investment is required; what does this mean for the sustainability of the ESTI model as represented by TICZA?

Multi Stakeholder collaboration has been key to moving understanding of the model forward; now we need to continue at systemic levels. Phase 1 has established a relationship of trust which includes the DHET and DBE. Example MOUs may be helpful in the next stages.

NGO Implementer perspective: How has being part of a collective impact project assisted and supported your work, or hindered your work?

David Oliphant from Teach the Nation (TTN) said the collective impact approach had signalled a big shift for those in his organisation working on the ground. Being informed by research and experience

from HEIs and other partners has enriched their planning and helped them align better with both government and funder priorities. TICZA enabled a focus on purpose, specific goals and the importance of proof of concept and helped NGOs clarify what is common across their offerings and what is unique. Collaboration has strengthened over the past few years, and learnings at organisation levels have spilled over into the way their own students are supported: that is, TTN has learned how to model collaboration for their beneficiaries. Elements of Collective Impact 3.0 are coming through in these unanticipated outcomes. Mr Oliphant noted that collective impact is not an easy process, and often a pause is needed to get everyone on board. The key question is how to keep this level of stakeholders engaged over the long term, beyond five years. There are examples in other sectors such as the Built Environment, where long term projects of 10-20 years are guided by a common framework with phased achievement points which specify action points for specific actors.

NGO follow up: Which of the multiple stakeholders was the most important to you on an operational/ programmatic level?

Partners have played different roles at different points in time. Government has played a critical role in terms of clarifying policy goals and the role of the South African Council for Educators (SACE). Once these elements are understood, other ESTI implementers become important. The achievement of a common framework of activities and a common understanding of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) amongst partners also plays a crucial role.

DBE perspective: From the government point of view, how does the TICZA collective impact model align with DBE teacher development strategy? Has the diversity of partners affected the involvement of the government, either positively or negatively?

Lala Maje noted that having a backbone organisation to pull collaboration together has been very helpful, especially in relation to seeing where the different stakeholders might fit in terms of the Department's plans, and the roles they might play in the future. From the DBE's point of view, the critical element, as the employer, is the quality of teachers in schools. The DBE therefore has a great interest in influencing and informing what the HEIs produce, taking into account the major role of the DHET which manages and funds HEIs with policies directed by MRTEQ. These ingredients have to come together so that students and newly qualified teachers operating in schools meet quality criteria and the DBE's policies which govern the district- school-teacher-learner relationship. These factors all link to issues such as support for student teachers and mentorship practices. ESTI implementers need to align with policies in schools. One benefit is that ESTI graduates will enter employment with experience, which could lessen the need and cost for new teacher induction. ESTI graduates will be familiar with lesson planning and the practical day-to-day running of classrooms. Ms Maje also stressed that the NGOs who support student teachers need to have appropriate capacity to do what they claim; this may mean that the MOU process between districts, schools and NGOs needs to be streamlined. She recognised that while the government has to help lead and convene partners as well as be assured of quality provision, there also needs to be a balance in terms of partners with practical experience retaining some autonomy.

Funder perspective: As a funder, what would you identify as the most critical enabler of success in this collective impact project? In what ways do you think TICZA's collective impact model has promoted innovation?

Zandile Ntuli stressed that enabling collaboration is a key goal and a strategic principle for the Tutuwa Foundation, linked to the aim of unlocking public funding for innovative interventions. TICZA has created the space in which individual efforts can be grown through collaborative activities, and duplication can be avoided. Diverse voices have promoted out of the box thinking. Funders have also been encouraged to rethink funding models and look at innovations such as impact investing and supporting pilot programmes to help with policy making. TICZA has sparked some creativity for funders to think together with implementers about longer term investments. Ms Ntuli noted that the sustainability of collective impact as a process and the continued work takes place once the funding period for the project has ended. A clear handover process will be needed.

Convening Group perspective: As the backbone support organisation, what has been the biggest challenge in the collective impact model?

Nick Rockey noted that of the five pillars of collective impact – backbone function, common agenda, continuous communication, mutually reinforcing activities, and shared measurement – the biggest challenge is related to shared measurement. The other four pillars have worked reasonably well and have strengthened over the course of the programme. However, it has been a struggle to get agreement on common tools and metrics for shared measurement. While initial suspicion around confidentiality is understandable, these agreements should have been prioritised more strongly at the start. In his view, the divergences between different models have still not been fully understood in terms of the data they yield. While all ESTI programme outcomes appear to be common sense, there is still insufficient evidence on hand. The cost-effectiveness analysis undertaken was based on many assumptions but has not yet properly answered the economic case for ESTIs.

Convening Group follow up: What is the one thing you would change in the way TICZA has implemented the collective impact model?

The starting point could have been a tighter definition of the project with clearer boundaries. This could have mitigated not only unrealistic expectations of capacity but also allowed for a more manageable emergence of systems issues such as measuring success in order to scale and exploring the economic case for ESTIs. A starting point around simpler immediate plans and their lead-in to longer term goals might have promoted common understandings and common agendas earlier and avoided some of the fragmentation that occurred. The development of a Common Competency Framework (CCF) was identified as a need but we still have to see whether it is implemented with common understanding. The Theory of Change, while cumbersome, has led to positive outcomes but has also made it harder to report on the benefits of the programme.



How would you strengthen collective impact in TICZA?



4 Presentation: Herman Meyer, Southern Hemisphere

The Role of Monitoring, Evaluation, Reflection and Learning (MERL) in the Collective Impact Approach

Herman Meyer built on previous discussions, reminding participants that collective impact projects deal with complex and ‘wicked’ problems. Given the nature of collective impact projects with many stakeholders, multiple activities and different programmes, answering typical M&E questions is even more difficult than it is in projects that are less multifaceted than TICZA. We need to suspend our need for simple answers to complex problems.

While the DAC² criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness efficiency, impact and sustainability) are standard practice for M&E, a project such as TICZA needs to focus on expanding into MERL by adding in the ‘reflection’ and ‘learning’ components to improve and adapt programmes and strategies for greater impact. Learning and reflection need to apply both at the level of individual organisations and at the collective level. TICZA has engaged in this type of reflection and commitment to act for improvement with its stakeholders through various mechanisms, and is to be commended for this.

² Evaluation criteria developed by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

One example is the revisions made to Theory of Change: while this has some drawbacks, revision shows a willingness to admit to learnings and mistakes and then adapt. TICZA should also be acknowledged in relation to achievements in real research work with actionable implications, reporting and knowledge sharing. One of TICZA's key successes has been the expansion of the perspectives of all stakeholders on the possibilities for ITE .

Mr Meyer then shared some ideas on how to improve the learning and feedback cycle in TICZA (see slides 5-9), including real time monitoring and bringing in different M&E frameworks such as outcome harvesting. The learnings from the evaluation processes so far are documented in the Southern Hemisphere TICZA Endline Evaluation report, which will be shared with all TICZA partners. The goals of scale and sustainability will require the development of processes and systems at sector level rather than at organisational level.

Mr Meyer ended by talking about the concept of 'sensemaking' (Karl Weick) as especially applicable to collective impact projects. Sensemaking focuses on the synthesis of different sources of information in the jigsaw of data in a collective impact project. It helps us identify what is helpful to the collective and can contribute to the ultimate goal for all. TICZA has enabled stakeholders to understand the range of contexts and complexities that relate to ITE and to students on the ground – this itself contributes to an assessment of the value of the ESTI model.

See the presentation [here](#)

5 Closing comments from participants

- The North West University (NWU) and the DBE inputs highlight the complexity of working in the ITE context. This should be an incentive for those institutions to pick up the ball and take ownership of ITE reform. TICZA needs to continue as a platform for the sustainability of this work.
- TICZA needs to be mindful of other developments in the sector. These include discussions on work integrated learning (WIL) in ITE, the National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA) review of the *Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development* and the review of the *Continental Education Statement for Africa (CESA 16-25)*. Challenges around literacy and numeracy in the Foundation Phase should also be on TICZA's radar.
- TICZA has to create the conditions to make ESTIs preferable and beneficial – that is the only way to influence policy change, and unless this happens, there will not be any institutionalisation of the ESTI model.
- Government likes to see programmes which are aligned to its policies and procedures, so it makes sense to work together on research agendas and other frameworks. The notion of using a tool such as the Common Competency Framework to support student teachers with a common standard is attractive to the government, and HEIs also need to be aligned to this.
- Both the DBE & DHET need to come together for the initial and continuing professional development of teachers. The government has the will to partner with NGOs but these partnerships have to be above board. As a collective, we need to see how to help NGOs be compliant so that they can be used. It was noted that the National Association of Social Change Entities in Education (NASCEE), to which most of the NGO implementers belong, offers support to its NGO members in relation to compliance issues, running webinars and workshops on legal and fiscal matters.

6 Participant List

Facilitators: Patience Voller (NASCEE) and Freda Walters (JET Education Services)

| | Name | Organisation |
|----|----------------------|---|
| 1 | Luvuyo Notshokovu | Numeric |
| 2 | Nick Rockey | Triologue |
| 3 | Carisma Nel | North-West University |
| 4 | Judy Tate | Khanyisa Inanda Seminary Community Projects |
| 5 | Patience Voller | NASCEE |
| 6 | Zaahedah Vally | JET |
| 7 | Jennifer Bisgard | Senior MERL Advisor |
| 8 | Rene` Levinge-Lang | St Peter's Intern Programme |
| 9 | David Oliphant | Teach the Nation |
| 10 | Herman Meyer | Southern Hemisphere |
| 11 | Joy Banda | Researcher |
| 12 | Hema Hariram | NAPTOSA |
| 13 | Melissa King | NASCEE |
| 14 | Freda Walters | JET |
| 15 | Brenda Elshove | Teachers Plus |
| 16 | Luthando Thwala | Global Teachers Institute |
| 17 | Sujata Pillay | Back to Basics, Quality Teaching and Learning For ALL |
| 18 | Zandile Ntuli | Standard Bank Tutuwa Community Foundation |
| 19 | Tshegofatso Mashaphu | JET |