

Report- Collaboration in the area of Educational Leadership under GINTL-India

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Introduction

One of the main themes of collaboration under GINTL-India's activities is educational leadership. The central partners, who collectively envisioned and planned how educators from India and Finland could together explore educational leadership, are Creatnet Education (Delhi, India) and the Institute of Educational Leadership (IEL, Jyväskylä, Finland). It was decided that a good way to foster collaboration between the two countries in the area of educational leadership would be to build an Indo-Finnish community of educational leaders who learn about, enact and reflect on educational leadership as a community, in Indo-Finnish pairs/groups. ***Learning and Leadership for the 21st Century*** (L&L21) was a pilot to test the feasibility and understand the requirements of building an Indo-Finnish (or international) professional community of educational leaders.

Background (Pilot Design and its People)

The central design of the pilot involved

1. Getting together 10 educational leaders (who would be participants in the pilot) from India and Finland respectively, and grouping them into 5 coach groups, with **4 participants** (2 **Indo-Finnish pairs**) in each group.
2. Each **group** would have an **Indo-Finnish coach pair** supporting the group's collaborative learning and relationship building through Individual Learning and Development Plans, the format of which was left to the discretion of the groups. Thus, in addition to the 20 participating educational leaders, 10 coaches (5 pairs) were required to be brought on board.
3. Finally, the 20 participants and their 10 coaches would participate in workshops that combined theory and practice, to help them gain insights into important concepts of educational leadership through 4 themes. The themes were:
 - a. **Systems Thinking**
 - b. **Operational Environments**
 - c. **Identity, Expertise and Agency (in the context of Sustainability) and**
 - d. **Pedagogical Leadership**

These themes were collectively identified, through multiple design meetings, by organizers from Creatnet, Simple Education Foundation (SEF) and IEL, based on their strengths and expertise, and awareness of the needs and interests of the educational leadership community in their respective regions. It was decided that the workshops, like the coaching aspect of the program, would be led by Indo-Finnish pairs. Thus, a **domain-expert pair** for each theme needed to be on-boarded- a total of 8 experts.

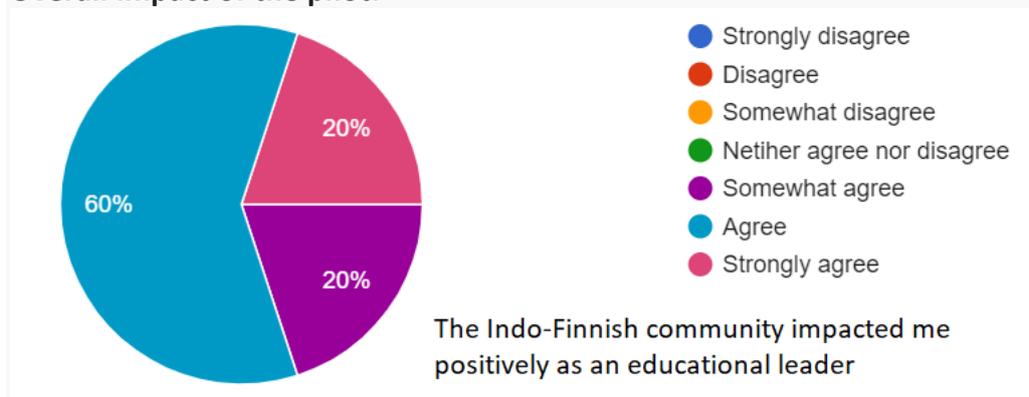
During implementation, SEF had to discontinue playing the role of co-organizer. The 20 participating educational leaders were selected through an openly advertised application process. There were **70 applications** in all- 60 from India and 10 from Finland. 12 applicants from India and 8 from Finland were selected as participants in the pilot. Of the 20 that were selected, 3 from India and 2 from Finland dropped out, leaving a **participant**

group of 15- 9 from India and 6 from Finland. The 15 participants were teamed up in 4 coach groups, each group with an Indo-Finnish coach pair. 9 experts agreed to work in pairs/trios to design and facilitate thematic sessions. All in all, the pilot included 15 participants, 8 coaches, 9 experts and 4 organizers, a total of 36 educators from India and Finland.

Summary of Quantitative Feedback

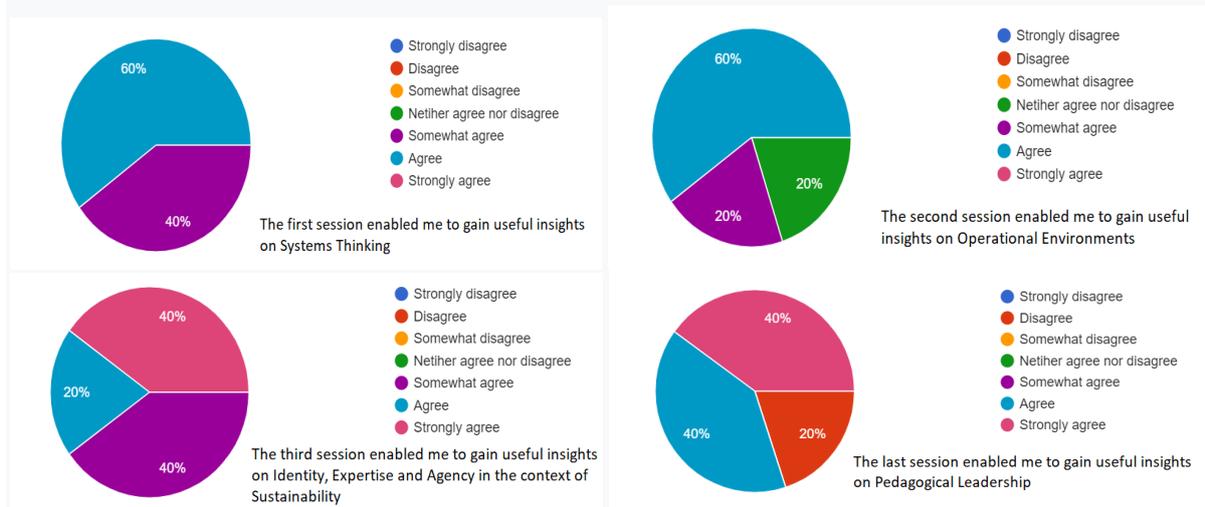
Highlights from the feedback survey are as follows:

Overall impact of the pilot:



100% responses in the somewhat agree – strongly agree range regarding the Indo-Finnish community having an overall positive impact on the participants.

Expert-led sessions in the workshops:



Systems Thinking and Sustainability

100% responses in the somewhat agree – strongly agree range regarding the sessions on Systems Thinking and Sustainability enabling the participants to gain useful insights

Pedagogical Leadership

80% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that the session on Pedagogical Leadership was useful.

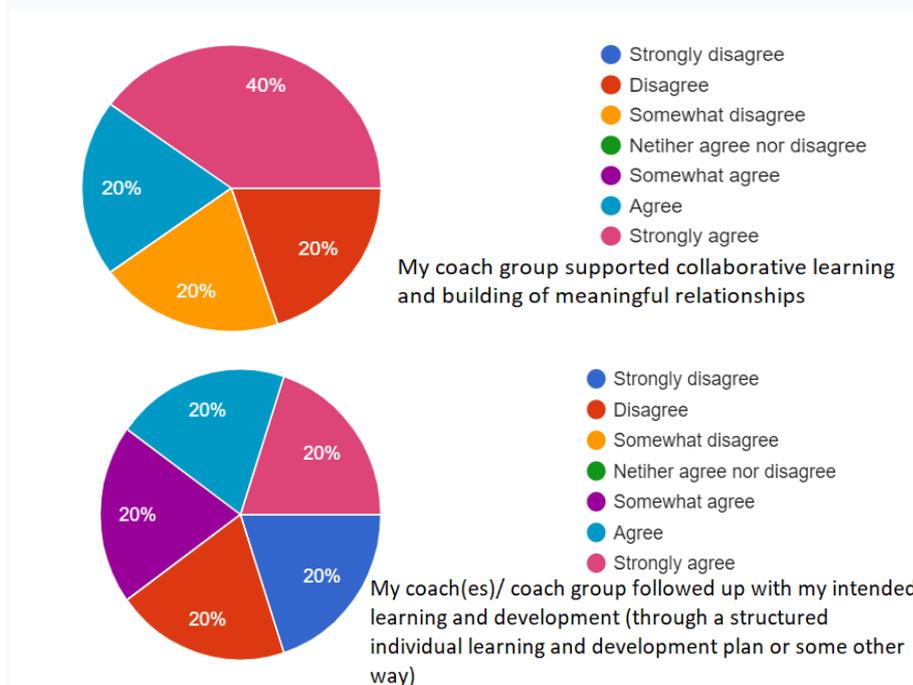
The other 20% of the participants disagreed that the session on Pedagogical Leadership enabled useful insights.

Operational Environments

80% of the participants somewhat agreed or agreed to the session on Operational Environments being insightful.

The other 20% were neutral about the Operational Environments session.

Coach group structure:



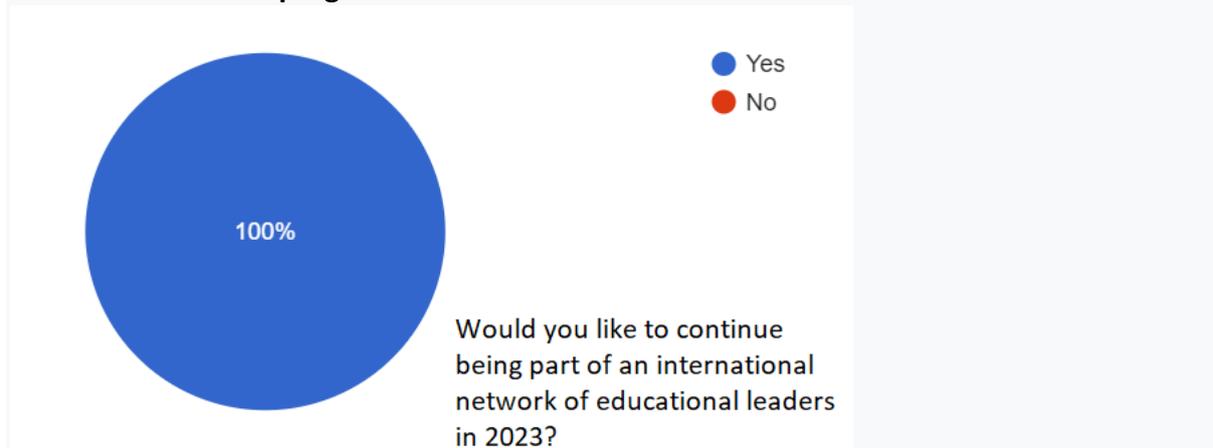
60% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that the coach groups enabled collaborative learning and relationship building; 40% strongly agreed.

40% of the participants somewhat disagreed or disagreed on the coach groups enabling collaborative learning and relationship building.

60% of the responses were in the range of somewhat agree to strongly agree regarding the coaches effectively supporting the learning and development of the participants.

40% of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that the coaches followed up effectively with their learning and development.

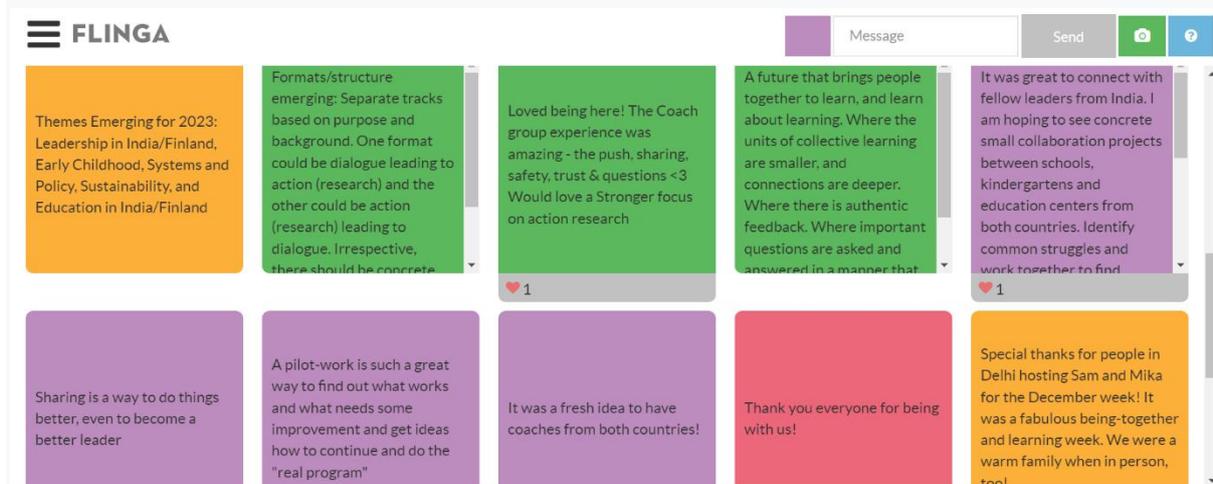
Continuation of the program:



100% of the participants are excited to continue being part of an international community of educators.

Summary of Qualitative Feedback

The pilot program received a lot of positivity, gratitude and constructive feedback. Below is a snapshot of the “gratitude looking back and ideas looking forward” wall.



The summary of the open-ended responses of “what went well” is as follows:

1. Made **friends** across national boundaries.
2. **Expert-led sessions** and discussions in the breakout rooms helped build perspective.
3. **Coach groups** worked very well- coaches were highly engaged and committed towards supporting their group members.
4. **Communication** was supportive towards effective participation. The agenda, details and materials were shared effectively and well in advance.
5. The **design** of the program was conducive to effective learning- 2 hours of large group discussions followed by 2 hours of coach circles for focussed conversations, and the combination of Indian and Finnish participants, coaches and experts.

The summary of “what could be better in the future” is as follows:

1. The coach group **meetings** could be better planned.
2. There were too many **tasks** in a short time. The **duration** of the program should be at least 6 months. There wasn't enough time to engage with the pre and post workshop tasks. With more time and **alignment** between workshops and learning tasks, the connections between the themes and one's professional practice could become much stronger.
3. The **design** of the program could include action research or project-based learning and better structures and processes for learning more deeply about education and educational research in both the countries.

Delhi Visit

The trip to Delhi was quite an eventful one. Following is a summary of the experience visiting each partner:

1. Creatnet



We participated in Creatnet’s work with building capacity in the Principals of Delhi as facilitators. It was wonderful to witness different kinds of voluntary communities that are all interconnected in terms of people, purpose, platforms and/or processes. Experiencing professional development, meditation, reflection and planning in rooms packed with passionate people was truly overwhelming in the most positive way! Creatnet impressed us immensely with their focus on culture and operating principles in all that they do, and the enthusiasm they have been able to generate in the public-school leadership system towards continuous and collective professional development. Besides observing Creatnet’s work in education, we participated in a reflection circle around their for-profit, organization and leadership development-related activities. We also engaged in several conversations regarding reflections on the pilot and the vision and strategy for the future, all the while keeping the sustainability of our collaboration as a grounding thought.

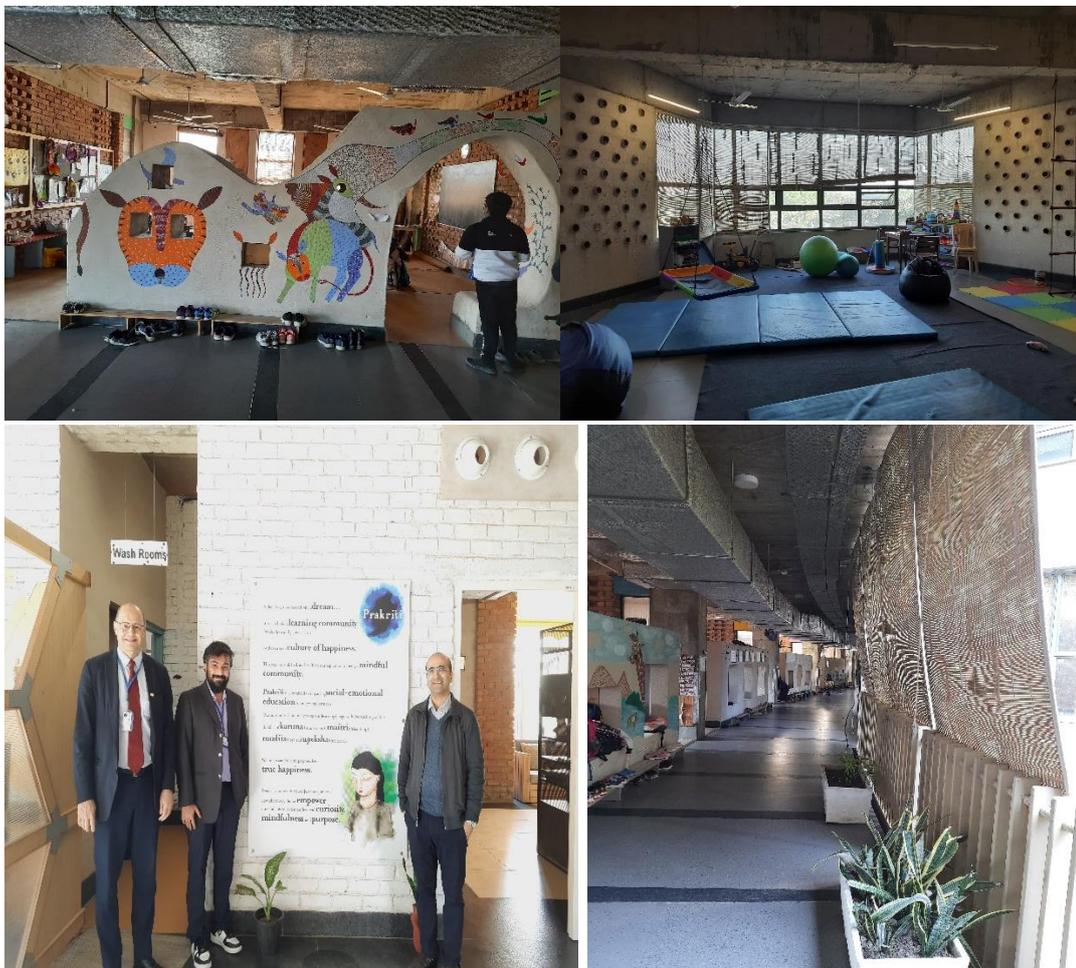
2. Manzil:



Manzil means destination, and is an NGO that provides an after-school learning space for children and adults who wish to pursue pathways of self-development outside the scope of regular academic activities. Several students and alumni of Manzil have over the years set up their own organizations like tour companies and bands, and many have become a full-

time part of Manzil as teachers. Manzil believes in recognizing and nurturing students' innate interests and passions that are more often than not neglected during schooling. We interacted with Manzil's founder- Ravi Gulati and its teachers and students, listening to inspiring stories of overcoming personal challenges, Manzil's philosophy, and personally and socially empowering entrepreneurial initiatives that its students and alumni lead. We witnessed two of Manzil's alumni's initiatives in action. One is called Music Bus, which is a mobile recording studio that drives around the country giving local and rural artists, and students from underprivileged backgrounds the opportunity to record their performances and compositions. The other, called Delhi by Locals, is a tour company that took Mika around a tour of Old Delhi. Manzil is a testament to the belief that it is not students who fail at school, rather, it is the school that fails students, with a focus on what the students do not know rather than on what students can and want to learn and do, often failing to impart and nurture knowledge and skills that speak to students' inner calling.

3. Prakriti and Mirambika Schools (private)



We were given a tour of Prakriti school by Mridul Batra, one of its four principals and co-founders. Prakriti means nature, and the school's philosophy, infrastructure, curriculum and pedagogy resemble those of Finnish schools, with a focus on holistic, learner and environment-centred, interdisciplinary and phenomenon-based learning,

student and teacher autonomy and well-being, connectedness with nature, and sustainability. Prakriti's classrooms follow an open-door policy, are built on a circular foundation and are connected to their neighbouring classrooms through open passages. The school operates with the Aurobindo philosophy of education and life. We visited another Aurobindo philosophy-centred school called Mirambika, very similar to Prakriti in terms of the learning and teaching philosophy, environment and practices. In both the schools, we had conversations with the school leaders, teachers and students, learning about what makes their school a role model for other schools, and observing pedagogy and learning spaces that could stand as an inspiration to any school in the world.

4. Simple Education Foundation:



The picture is from a learning exhibition that SEF had organized, showcasing scalable practices that can be adopted in government schools towards raising the bar of pedagogy and the kind of learning environments, experiences and motivations that can be provided to students. SEF is an NGO that works with government schools with a whole-school transformation model that involves building capacity in school leaders and teachers through continuous and collaborative professional development, making resourceful and thus, scalable additions and modifications to infrastructure and learning and teaching resources, providing passionate teachers to fill vacancies, and documenting and sharing best-practices and stories of positive change.

Ideas for 2023

1. **A longer program with the existing community of educational leaders and new participants:** The program will be designed to be less dependent on hiring and paying external experts and coaches, and more focussed on leveraging the expertise that the community has to offer. Furthermore, since the coach group format was highly appreciated by the participants and is a strength of IEL, we will continue with the structure. Reflecting on survey responses and analysis, and interactions with the participants, we realize that the coaches and participants will need to be supported more in terms of expectation setting, relationship building and collaborative learning. This will be done by providing clearer instructions and stronger structures for collaboration, and supporting the coaches in working together in advance to purposefully and critically develop, enact and continuously improve the tools and processes necessary to meet the expectations of their groups. Based on feedback, there would be 2 forms of community- one being an organic, low-touch, dialogue-focussed form, and the other being a more structured and rigorous, action research-based form. Participants will choose one form of the program that they would like to engage with. Whichever the form, participants will choose one of four tracks that they will focus on throughout the program. The tracks would be Education Systems and Policies, Sustainability, Early Childhood Education and Care, and School Reform.
2. **Student and Teacher Mobility:** We will apply for grants, like the TFK funding, to provide exchange/ internship opportunities. The Finnish hosts/ partners in this mobility initiative would be teacher education and international master's programs in education in Finnish universities. The counterparts in India would be HEIs associated with the NCERT, HEIs that our community members work with like IISER, and schools like Prakriti, Mirambika.

These activities will require a lot of planning and management and will continue into 2024. In the second half of 2023, we intend on laying the foundation for paid school leadership programs and trainings for participating principals and educational leaders. The hope is that by the time the GINTL funding wraps up in 2024, the dynamics of the community would be such that participants will form enduring relationships with each other and take ownership of creating opportunities of collaborative learning and development for each other. We are already moving in that direction with two participants, one from India and one from Finland, planning to work on a project together independent of the program. The coaches, and particularly the experts, have formed strong bonds with each other. Two of the four teams of experts are in touch beyond the pilot, exchanging thoughts and ideas around the potential of continued collaboration and collegiality.