Reframing Teacher Education: Collective Impact through TICZA

The Collective Impact model is one of many approaches to collaborative interventions in the development sector. At the NASCEE webinar on 15 May 2025, the Teacher Internship Collaboration South Africa (TICZA) shared lessons learned and progress made in using the model.

TICZA is a five-year partnership made up of government departments, non-governmental organisation (NGO) implementers, higher education institutions (HEIs), funders and teacher unions. The focus is on students undertaking their Initial Teacher Education (ITE) studies (mainly through distance learning) while based in schools, through what TICZA calls an 'extended student teacher internship (ESTI)'. TICZA aims to show how and under what conditions ESTIs can serve as an effective model for high quality student teacher training, and in what ways the approach can be institutionalised within the broader ITE system.

The Collective Impact approach (based on the Stanford model) was adopted as a conceptual framework, as it aligned well with the interventions, research, and debates already underway among stakeholders concerned with the quality of teacher education and the need for systems change. Progress in relation to the five pillars of Collective Impact as shown below have been tracked through TICZA's monitoring and evaluation framework.

TICZA struggled early on to establish a unified vision; this initially hampered alignment and progress. A clear common agenda only emerged in year three. Prioritise the common agenda at the start and revisit as needed. Regular communication is critical to maintain the common agenda.

Getting agreement on shared measurement systems was the hardest pillar

For reasons such as variability across ESTI models or privacy concerns, defining and agreeing on shared measurement systems for different types of data was difficult and took significant time. Initial approaches were too top-down, and external facilitation was needed to help recalibrate this process.

Be ready to refine and revise the role of the backbone structure

The backbone role of the TICZA Convening Group was crucial for continued collaboration and collective evidence building, but was initially seen as overly centralized. Earlier inclusion of

regional leadership and a more distributed structure could have improved collective ownership and responsiveness, but there were a number of challenges here. However, the occasional use of external facilitation, the bridging role of the TICZA Communities of Practice, the establishment of working groups and of independent partner interest groups were all helpful. The human resource and time allocations cost of the backbone structure should not be underestimated.

Build common tools through mutually reinforcing activities

For scale and sustainability, it's critical to build shared tools and frameworks (e.g. the Common Competency Framework) and aim for institutionalisation within government policy and ITE systems.

Use research to adapt processes and work towards systemic adoption

The shift from idealism to pragmatism required constant reflection and adaptation. Thin and statistically constrained data initially limited evaluation of the effectiveness of ESTIs, prompting a move to more flexible and feasible research designs and iterative proof-of-concept development.

Keep funders informed and engaged

The complexity and ambition of the collective impact approach led to scope creep, making it harder to deliver timely and tangible results and outcomes. This can lead to funder fatigue. However, key funders were centrally involved in the process and were patient and flexible with these dynamics.

Looking to the future

TICZA has increased awareness of ESTIs and highlighted shared interests between HEIs and NGO ESTI implementers, with active high-level government involvement from the Department of Basic Education, Department of Higher Education and Training and the South African Council for Educators. A five-year endline evaluation with recommendations will be released soon. The next phase will address issues such as a suitable proof of concept methodology, and ways of institutionalising academic or vocational route choices in ITE.

TICZA will continue to be a rich source of data, stories, reflections and learnings on collective impact and collaborative processes in general. NASCEE is committed to sharing these insights to strengthen NGO work – watch this space!

Click here for the webinar presentation. For more about TICZA and to access various reports, visit TICZA Resources on the JET website, and see Trialogue's TICZA Collective Impact Case Study.