

Chapter 6

The Planning and Organization of VET: Research on VET Networks in Andalusia



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Abstract VET schools have a social commitment with the education of citizens and with their professional qualification. This commitment requires a close and dynamic relationship of collaboration to establish the objectives as well as it requires the involvement of their agents in planning and management. This chapter provides an opportunity to understand the characteristics of the collaboration and the potential internal and external relationships and prospective partnerships from the perspective of members of the management teams. Our research emphasizes the need for their development both from the internal action of the schools, with the management of their government teams, and from the involvement of the community to the formation of the new generations.

Keywords Community relations · Collaboration · Educational community · Education management · Educational relations

6.1 Educational Collaboration and Community Relations

Collaboration emerges as a philosophical ideal because of the difficulty involved in the construction of a framework lying in its interpretation and definition (Corrie 1995). Currently considered a spontaneous, voluntary, contextualized, intentional and planned process (Sánchez and García 2005), which serves as a tool that is able to change the education and benefit those involved, assuming a sum of capabilities to achieve common goals (Epstein 2014). Antúnez (1998) stated that collaboration goes through five degrees of consolidation: promoting and enhancing mutual

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understanding, undertaking improvement and compliance, sharing resources, participating in joint projects, and establishing networks.

As Gairín (2000) states, inter and intra-institutional collaboration are paramount when considering education as a social project that transcends the educational framework and is committed to society as a collective construction.

This chapter focuses its attention on external collaboration as it pursues the possibility of integral development of individuals through contact with different contexts and realities (González 2014). As shown in Fig. 6.1, the network of interactions between different institutions/agents (formal, informal, and non-formal) is of a different nature, i.e., the relationship arrows are dissimilar. There are differences in the strength (thickness of the arrow), durability (continuous or discontinuous arrow), and direction of collaborative relationships depending on the needs and goals of those involved (Martín and Morales 2013). We will try to characterize the main collaborative relationships.

Partnerships with the community that stand out the most in the literature are those between educational institutions and families (Comellas 2009; González 2014). The benefits of this collaboration highlight the increased academic performance of students (Salimbeni 2011), their personal and professional development (Gareau and Sawatzky 2005), and expectations for further study (Prew 2009). From this point of view, families turn out to be important links that contribute to improving educational institutions and community development (Shatkin and Gershberg 2007).

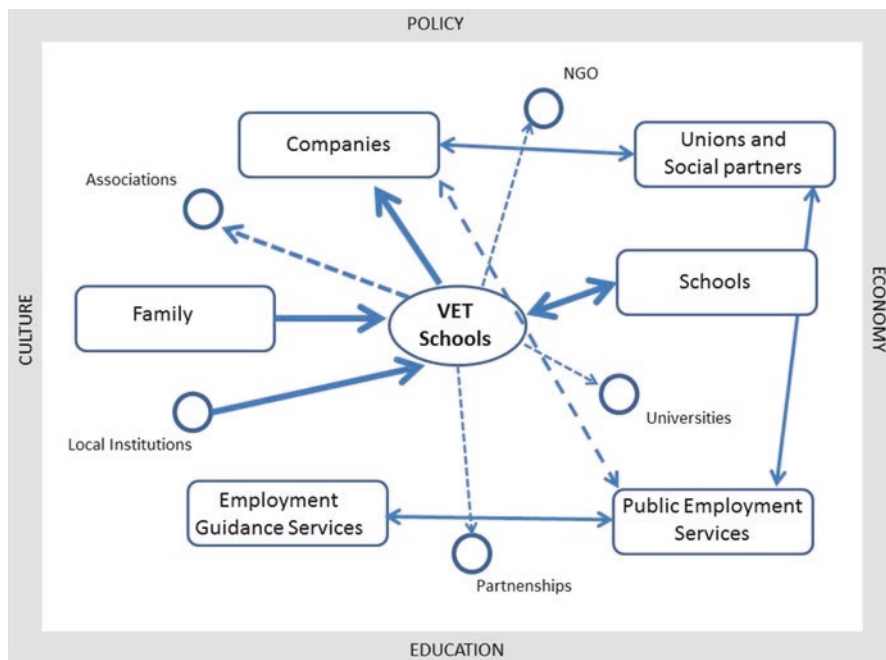


Fig. 6.1 Relational map of entities/agents with which schools have relationships

Another well-commented collaboration is between VET schools and companies, as relationships between the two have been the subject of discussion and reflection (Jackson 2010). These take place in companies where students do internships in companies (FCT) (Grytnes et al. 2017), followed by those private and public companies that have relationships in order to provide resources, training, infrastructure, etc. (Sukarieh and Tannock 2009). Although most researchers support academic-professional integration, they recognize the benefits and implementation of an integrated curriculum, but also consider it problematic (Nkhangweleni 2013). The poor link between these two agents is mainly due to the lack of government policies and subsidies at the education, business, and economic level (Nkhangweleni 2013), the shortage of platforms that facilitate relationships (Smith and Betts 2000), insufficient initiatives encouraged by VET institutions, and the poor response from business agents.

It is essential that education and business agents come together to reflect and discuss the possibility of a relationship and its goals (Baker and Henson 2010); as well as promote strategies, research and development of companies and VET schools (Dacre Pool and Sewell 2007). As Olazarán et al. (2013) claim, there must be agreements between these agents to cooperate, given that these favor students acquiring skills for employment, something that becomes vital for a competitive economy and technical change.

On the other hand, we can also highlight relationships with unions and social partners, with the public employment services and employment guidance services. The former have a crucial role in developing VET-employment policies because they can help identify current skill needs in companies and allocation of these training programs; and ensure that qualifications are universally recognized (Haolader et al. 2017) and help/support learning in schools and dual systems (Nielsen 2011). However, the reality reflects how there are few links between VET schools and unions because of the involvement of the latter (ETF 2013).

Public employment services have undergone a reform process since its beginning up until the current economic crisis, so it is necessary to bet on active policies that help foster new employment. Laval and Dardot (2013) consider that agents must be the ones to maintain a close relationship with VET schools from the beginning of student training until just before the end of studies: they can manage both work sessions with teachers of the schools to report on the status of each of the professional areas in the work placements, as we assess students in order to advise them on the profiles in demand by companies, professional skills related to their sector, and the current state of work placement for the training they are doing (Cueto and Suárez 2014).

Regarding the role of Career Guidance Services in VET, Rodriguez (1991) emphasizes that due to their training and consultative role, they can enhance students' personal and professional development by providing resources that allow them to adapt to social and labor changes and promote a positive attitude toward work. These services "try to help the person achieve optimal career development, while at the same time, they must be able to design, internalize and develop their own professional project" (Ceinos 2008, p. 80). This means that the student's

transition from the VET school to the labor market must be facilitated, together with political, educational, and social agents.

Another type of agent that contributes to the development of students exists; these are, for example, associations, NGOs (Martín-Moreno 2010), other schools (Puente and Rodríguez 2004), and universities (Tejada 2005). According to De Gràcia and Elboj (2005), local authorities, associations, and NGOs favor transversal work in schools providing material resources, training, and workshops for the educational community. The relationship between VET and university represents an “attitude of integration and administration, such as training subsystems of production and delivery of service for the world” (Tejada 2005, p. 2). The agents of both institutions should collaborate to research, innovate, and transfer knowledge and experiences, focusing on the students and the partner community.

To observe, study at schools, and know the relationships and how they establish with their environment and the tools that they use for it are relevant topics. This is due to the need to transform the socio-educational dimension of institutions and their environment through the involvement of all people who directly or indirectly influence the learning and development of students, including teachers, family members, friendships, members of associations and organizations, volunteers, companies, etc. Creating collaborative networks, working as a team and becoming aware are key strategies for managing the environment surrounding VET schools.

The use of technologies, as web pages of the school as a means of information about it (Gairín and Martín 2004), platforms such as wikis, where different agents can collaborate (Fuchs 2015), blogger, Skype, social networks such as Facebook, and support platforms such as Timebank (Raihan 2014), can serve as bridges to create stable and strong collaboration and participation relationships that promote improvements and significant changes in schools and society (Muijs et al. 2011). It is worth highlighting some of the contributions that technologies offer us: tutorials and virtual forums and shared work, where students, teachers, families, and the community can interact (Vázquez 2008).

The networks created between the schools and their context are vehicles that lead to the improvement of the educational and partner community (Muijs et al. 2011). Ultimately, the collaboration produces an opening of the schools, breaking the physical walls of these. In addition, the use of ICT, in particular professional, educational, and social networks, helps to take a step further, breaking time-space barriers that bring schools (especially VET) closer to society and the labor market (Raihan 2014). The networks are outlined as amplifiers of the possibilities of school-context interaction, allowing to take advantage of not only the human and intellectual potential of all the members of the educational community, who are immersed in this structure created for collaboration, but also that of the external agents. In this sense, Fig. 6.2 shows how collaborative relationships are formed as mediating tools between two different cultures when VET schools-context collaborative relationships are established. On the one hand, the educational culture promotes a series of values, and promotes a specific type of learning, fruit of the interrelations between students, teachers and family. On the other hand, the social culture is different from

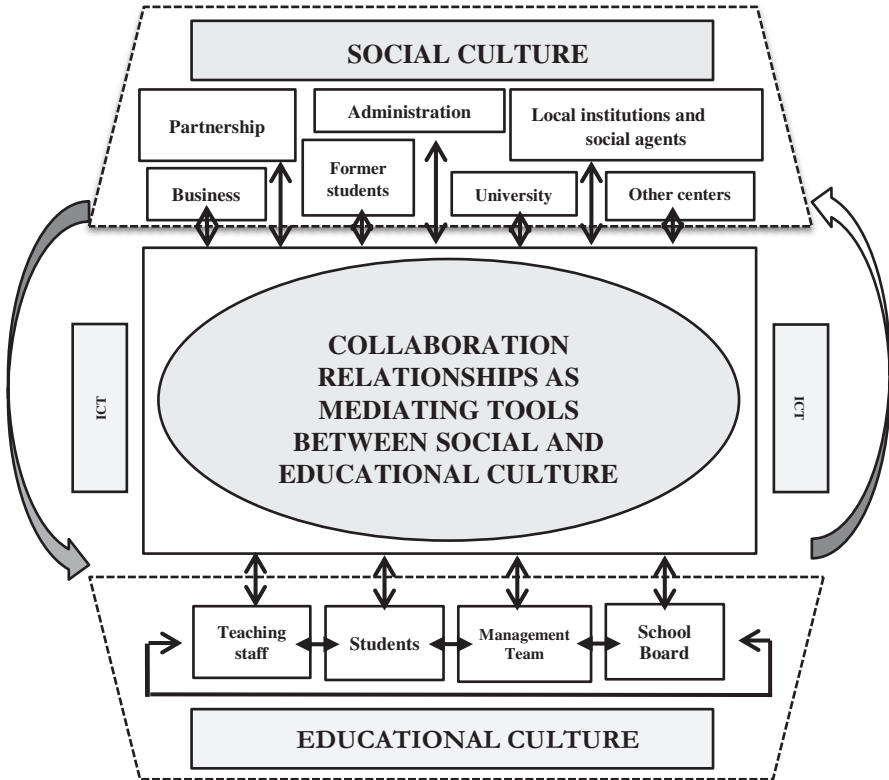


Fig. 6.2 Collaboration relationships as mediating tools between social and educational culture

the previous one, since agents and/or social institutions interact locally, nationally, and/or internationally (associations, companies, foundations, NGOs, etc.).

Both cultures are different, but they are in continuous interrelation; the one influences the other and vice versa. This cycle of influence and/or dependence is mediated by collaborative relationships, which promote values in favor of a better society and involve changes, that is, cultures do not go their own way but rather nourish each other. The educational changes the social, and the social changes the educational one. For this reason, the formalization of collaborative relationships in planning documents and/or projects become tools of change “increase social capital, promoting community relations and a sense of community work at school and between different schools of the district or municipality, families and environment, for a few decades, it has become a clear line where the improvement must be directed” (Bolívar et al. 2013, p. 26).

The society built on information and knowledge poses challenges to the educational environment, teaching trained individuals with a view of an increasingly unstable world of work (Homs 2008). This situation implores the creation of new scenarios (Cabero 2008), in which the individual can receive training and acquire

vocational skills adapted to their job as well as competencies for active citizenship (Tejada 2013); therefore contributing to social and human capital of the communities they belong to (Down et al. 2017). In this light, political, social, and educational institutions should establish ties to collaborate and work together (Martín and Morales 2013). Thus, occurs the importance of educational collaboration with the environment as an element of social transformation and change for organizational development and the performance of individuals linked to them (Katz and Earl 2010; Mfum-Mensah 2011; Schneider and Zufferey 2016). Vocational Education and Training (VET) has managed to adapt to today's society, acting as a driver for innovation and social improvement (Marhuenda 2012), as it reacts to market requirements but also meets the needs and interests of the individual (Royal Decree 1147/2011).

6.2 Planning VET in Andalusia

The Education Law of Andalusia (LEA 2007), in line with the European and national regulations, emphasizes the need for a greater connection between schools with the productive fabric and the labor market. And from this normative framework, a regulation of vocational training is being configured that aims to create a public network of schools and integrate initial or regulated professional training (students aged 16–24) and training for employment or occupational (population active, employed, and/or unemployed), with the involvement of companies and the development of dual vocational training (Order of June 2, 2014). Some relevant aspects of this normative regulation for the development of vocational training in Andalusia are:

- (a) Attending training and updating of teachers.
- (b) Increase pedagogical, organizational (with the participation of the community), and management (to make them more effective) autonomy of the schools.
- (c) All VET courses of initial Vocational Training, in addition to the modules associated with professional competences, will include in their curriculum training related to prevention of occupational risks, information and communication technologies, promotion of the entrepreneurial culture, creation and management of companies and self-employment, and knowledge of the labor market and labor relations. On the other hand, students will receive a training module in companies (promoting the involvement of the business sector in training programs), in order to complete professional skills in real-work situations.
- (d) Promotion of entrepreneurship through the development of business projects linked to innovation and technology transfer, especially in relation to social initiatives and the rural areas.
- (e) Development of the Andalusian Vocational Training Council (AVTC) as the responsible structure for analyzing and disseminating aspects related to the labor market in Andalusia and planning the training offer. It includes the

representation of the Andalusian Institute of Professional Qualifications (AIPQ), the Andalusian Employment Service (AES), the Government Ministries with competencies in training, representatives of the trade union, business and social economy agents, representatives of the local corporations and organizations and vocational schools.

- (f) The Andalusian System of Professional Qualifications will be developed (around the 26 professional families) according to the specific needs of the labor market in Andalusia. For what will be counted on the collaboration of business and union organizations. VET will be organized in a flexible way, offering a modular catalogue associated to the professional competences included in the Andalusian System of Professional Qualifications. And the competent administrations (employment and education) will establish a device for recognition and accreditation of professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning, for which the collaboration of business and trade union organizations will be available.
- (g) Development of a resource platform for the implementation of an integrated information and professional guidance system.
- (h) Creation of a network of integrated vocational schools (with the aim of turning them into frames of reference), CIFP, which will provide all the offers corresponding to the vocational training subsystems, referred to the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications, leading to the qualifications and vocational certificates referred to in Organic Law 5/2002, of June 19, of Qualifications and Vocational Training (LOCFP 2002). The Administration of the Regional Government of Andalusia, in collaboration with the most representative business and trade union organizations, will establish a common planning model for the network of integrated vocational schools (Decree 382/2010).
- (i) Planning an offer of initial Vocational Training in blended and e-learning modules, using information and communication technologies (ICT) (Decree 359/2011).
- (j) Promoting collaboration with universities, in order to establish acknowledgement procedures between university studies and initial higher VET studies.

In this context, it is interesting to discover the relational fabric between VET schools, as designers of educational responses; and their communities, demanding of training and qualification requirements. This is where the research problem arises: what partnerships do VET schools establish with community? At the same time, pursuing other questions: what other agents do they connect with, what objectives do they pursue, what are the roles of the management teams, and what are those of the educational community? Thus, the main purpose of this chapter is the discovery of the complex web of relationships between formal VET schools of the region of Andalusia, Spain. These relationships are analyzed from the perspective of institutions open to the community, trying to identify the value that comes from practical collaboration in schools and how it affects VET students. Knowing the reality and understanding it, discovering their weaknesses/strengths will lead to the development of proposals for improvement.

Regulations that control VET in Spain and Andalusia include structure and organization, objectives, content and evaluation criteria under the acquisition of basic skills, and professional and key competences for lifelong learning. Among the key skills, three that are closely related to VET can be highlighted: learning to learn, social and civic competences, and the sense of initiative and entrepreneurship (Winterton et al. 2006). Companies are demanding well-trained and qualified individuals for the jobs to be filled (Mulder and Winterton 2014). Along this line, Tejada (2013) raises the need to promote educational strategies to be integrated into the professional profiles of students: the professionalizing, social, ethical, and civic dimension.

Thus, the reaction of economic organizations, (OECD 2006), and the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) propose new contexts for the development of training and education of the population, focusing on the principles of the economy of knowledge, the paradigm of complexity and constant adaptation of workers to change. This approach between training and work has been developed in recent years due to the socio-economic and employment crisis (Marhuenda et al. 2010; Chan 2014; Riphahn and Zibrowius 2015).

6.3 A Study of VET Planning in Andalusia

Currently, the legislation in Spain that regulates the education system states that Vocational Training is divided into Initial or formal VET (Royal Decree 1538/2006) and VET for Employment (Royal Decree 395/2007). This section focuses on the formal VET schools in Andalusia (Spain), i.e., those offering training courses for the mid and upper level. This type of teaching is regulated by the *Ley de Educación Andaluza* (Law on Andalusian Education) (LEA 2007) and the preliminary bill for VET in Andalusia (Consejería de Educación, cultura y deporte, 2014). According to the databases, the network of schools of the Junta de Andalucía (Government of Andalusia) had, at the time of our research, a total of 383 public, semiprivate, and private schools.

Derived from the previous revision and trying to identify what value comes from participating and collaborating in VET schools in Andalusia (Spain), in our research (Martín-Gutiérrez 2015) we set out the following objectives:

1. To get to know, from an educational perspective, partnerships between the community and Andalusian VET schools, from the perspective of members of the management team
2. To understand the nature of these partnerships from the perspective of those involved in them (experiences and practices)
3. To propose guidelines for VET schools' collaboration and cooperation with their communities and organizations in an educational sense

Pursuing the first objective, a probability sample (Hernández-Sampieri et al. 2001) is used, with a confidence level of 95%, an error level of 5%, and a sample size of 225 schools. Stratified random sampling is used, which ensures proportional

representation of the sample in the eight provinces of Andalusia (Rodríguez 1991). A closed questionnaire is used because it requires less effort from those who respond (Hernández-Sampieri et al. 2001) with the following dimensions:

- (a) Descriptive data (location and ownership of the school, age, sex, professional experience of the respondent)
- (b) Collaborative relationships in the schools (with whom they have and would like to have collaborative relationships, promoters/facilitators, obstructions, needs)

In order to find answers to the second objective, a non-probabilistic intentional sample (Goetz and Le Compte 1988) was selected, with two phases to obtain the sample. First VET schools subject to study were selected based on the data of the questionnaire and in the second phase, key informants were used. Therefore, we chose to study in depth a public school located in the township of Dos Hermanas (Sevilla). Their key informants are eight people: two members of the management team (principal and head of studies); VET coordinator; four heads of the various departments of VET (Administration, Electronics, Career and Job Counseling, and Bodywork); and the coordinator in Sevilla of one of the companies with which the school collaborates. Semi-structured interviews (Álvarez et al. 2002) with a predominantly flexible and open character were used to interview key informants (and get their expressions for our analysis). In addition, planning documents of the VET school were analyzed (Tójar 2006). Finally, given the need to shape a common space for contrasting the views of some participants (Llopis 2004), we held a discussion group (Sandín 2003; Bisquerra 2004).

The interviews, documents, and discussion group were analyzed through content analysis (Frutos 2008), catering to the following categories:

- Importance of collaboration
- Current status of the schools
- Documents and collaboration agreements
- Desired state of the schools
- Current collaborators
- Desired collaborators
- Involvement of collaborating agents
- Objectives of collaboration
- Involved school agents
- Desired school agents
- Facilitating/hindering elements
- The effects of foreign collaboration
- Educational and professional networks
- Strategies at the internal level
- Strategies at the external level

Among the most significant results of this chapter, we must mention that members of the management teams of VET schools in Andalusia consider collaborating with the community very/quite important (98.2%). For Gairín and Rodríguez (2011), encouraging participation/collaboration of the different sectors of the edu-

educational and social community is an opportunity that is seen today as a fundamental condition for effectiveness and educational success.

Therefore, most have begun to develop collaborative actions and projects listed in the School Plan (PC hereafter) (33.30%), “almost 70–80% of the activities conducted have an agreement or are listed on our project” (coordinator of the electronics department), and routed their wishes to be involved in educational, professional, and social networks, through actions and planning projects (80.40%), “it is increasingly necessary to collaborate and of course not only in the school, but with society in general, life is understood from a different perspective and open to change” (coordinator of the private business of the environment). Muijs et al. (2010) uphold that improvement and change in educational organizations are currently focusing on networking and collaboration among institutions.

Principals are the agents in the school that primarily enhance these relationships (57.3%), “relationships and agreements also often arise from the principal of the school” (coordinator of the private business of the environment). According to Bolívar et al. (2013), managers must take risks and invest in internal and external, accessible, thoughtful, collaborative, and intentional relationships. Heads of the various departments are also prominent (44.4%) since they assume different roles depending on the projects pursued (Epstein 2014) “both staff and the various organs of the VET school are involved in various initiatives...every one of them supports the various activities that are carried out with institutions in this environment” (coordinator of the automobile bodywork department). Ultimately, schools and their members, especially teachers and management teams, are active agents and improve the contribution of social capital of their students and their reference communities (Buys and Miller 2009). As Gairín (2002) indicates, it is necessary to create conditions that lead to transformational, consensual and shared leadership, which involves planning, collaborative, contextualized relationships that are reviewed by both internal and external agents.

Remarkably, VET schools usually collaborate with companies where students carried out internships in work placements (FCT) (60.4%) followed by private external companies (53.3%) and public ones (45.8%). “Workshops for students on complementary and current aspects of their sector take place in the school and the companies themselves” (coordinator of the electronics department); “guided visits to different companies so that students learn the closely-held business views, the aims pursued by various companies and their activities, the various departments, the resulting products” (Principal). In the literature, one of the most prominent relationships is produced with FCT companies, due to the need for institutions where students can carry out internships (Raihan 2014), followed by those companies that provide resources, training, facilities, etc. (Sukarieh and Tannock 2009). However, these relationships are bureaucratic in most cases because the need for an integrated approach to the education system requires new ways of structuring and organization (Grubb and Kraskoukas 1993). Therefore, government policies and subsidies that are aligned at the educational, business, and economic level (Nkhangweleni 2013), joint ventures (Raihan 2014), and appropriate platforms to facilitate relationships (Smith and Betts 2000) are necessary.

Despite having no connection with them, the schools would like to collaborate with Career Guidance Services (48.4%), trade unions and social partners (51.1%), and various public employment services (47.6%) more often, “because of the close links with the labor market, mechanisms should be enabled regarding employment services and career counseling, trade unions and social actors, as there is hardly any contact with them” (coordinator of the administration department). Reality reflects how there are few links between VET schools and trade unions due to the involvement of the latter (Nielsen 2011). In that way, Napier (2014) aims to promote strategies to visualize the importance of the role they can play as a link between VET schools and companies. The same occurs with public employment services (Laval and Dardot 2013) and labor guidance services (Ceinos 2008). Epstein (2014) highlights the need for the willingness and availability of participants, because if the relationship were imposed, the purpose as to why the collaboration was initiated would be meaningless and unsuccessful.

It is noteworthy that families are not common agents of relationships; however, in the literature, this is the most notable collaboration (Comellas 2009; González 2014). “For the type of school in which we find ourselves, more family involvement is necessary, because you are doing a lot to cultivate certain relationships, agreements, and ultimately the development of their youngsters” (Assistant to the Principal).

Other agents that contribute to personal and professional development of students also stand out; these are associations, NGOs, local institutions (Martín-Moreno 2010) “due to the location of the school and socio-economic status of families, other entities that allow students’ development and offer possibilities are also included” (assistant to the Principal), other schools (Puente and Rodríguez 2004), and universities (Tejada 2005) “university research can contribute a lot to the school and the student’s incorporation” (coordinator of the automobile bodywork department).

Additionally, relationships with students also stand out as pursued goals (job-incorporation 72.4% and skills development 69.3%), “preparing them for the changing society and unstable labor market which they will encounter when they finish school” (VET coordinator), and the need to establish links with the community (company involvement 65.8%, VET orientation to the needs of the economy and society 67.1%, and projection of the school and the community 68.4%). However, other types of objectives relating to teachers (40%), families (43.1%), the integration of VET (44%), and participation in networks (48%) are found in the background. These objectives are covered mainly through coordination, promotion, and management of the management team (94.30%), “everything is much easier when the first thing you have is desire, drive, and enthusiasm from the management team” (coordinator of the administration department). This makes collaboration achieve a greater sense, facilitating the processes of change and improvement in schools (Muijs et al. 2010).

Results highlight the improvement of skills of students in the labor market (48%), and building bridges between students’ training and professional realities (45.3%). In this sense, according to Kearns (2003), if the professionals involved in VET use

a strategic approach for the development of social capital in their communities, mutual benefits for the VET sector are achieved. In turn, the bonds created between different institutions create a social support, academic-vocational guidance, and job opportunities (Buys and Miller 2009).

Given the current structural transformation that affects organizations, the way schools consider necessary promoting and strengthening partnerships within the community (99.60%) is appreciated. They therefore propose strategies internally (resourcing 76.4%, have Internet available 72.4%; promote teacher training 68%; create times and spaces that encourage participation and collaboration 54.7%; enhance the coordinating and managing role of decisions together with the management team 49.3%; and collect collaborative initiatives in the school plan 47.1%), “if we could have a flexible schedule or some incentive, more collaborations could be established and give them the time they need.” The development of social capital can be developed by setting tasks that require students to interact with networks that have not yet been agreed upon and organizing meetings and activities beyond the classroom context and the school, where members of the educational community and students participate (Stringfellow and Winterton 2005) (VET coordinator) and at the external level (establishing collaborative agreement 66.2%; promoting the use of ICT to create network 63.1%; promote a community-wide organizational structure driven by the administration 56.9%; and initiating and promoting a model of dual VET: VET-company 51.6%). “You would like to do many things...but you can’t move forward because they tell you from above that the school should provide a curriculum established by the law, and that can end up interfering if an excessive number of activities exist” (principal). Students have a connection with educational networks, as they have a positive effect on education and training in general and the participation of students, their career aspirations and academic performance (Chan 2014). Furthermore, community networks promote the acquisition of skills for student life and work opportunities.

Moreover, the results confirm that significant differences exist, i.e. the answers given vary depending on the ownership of the school and gender, age, experience in leadership roles and in the VET, and the institutional position of the respondents.

In search of models of schools, the fact that there are differences in terms of partnerships with the community has been observed. We have identified four types of schools, which reflect the previous results (Fig. 6.3): Model A, administrative schools (frequent collaborations are made, mainly determined by the administration, but moving toward the development of actions not included in the PC); Model B, initial schools (actions and collaborative projects not included in the PC are developed and move toward their finalization in the planning documents); Model C, formalized schools (collaborative actions and projects listed in the PC are developed and advanced toward educational, professional, and social network immersion); and Model D, support schools (they are immersed in networks through actions and projects of the PC). This typology could help schools situate themselves in their current state and progress toward improving the quality of their relationships with the community. As Maruyama (2009) states, social collaboration produces better

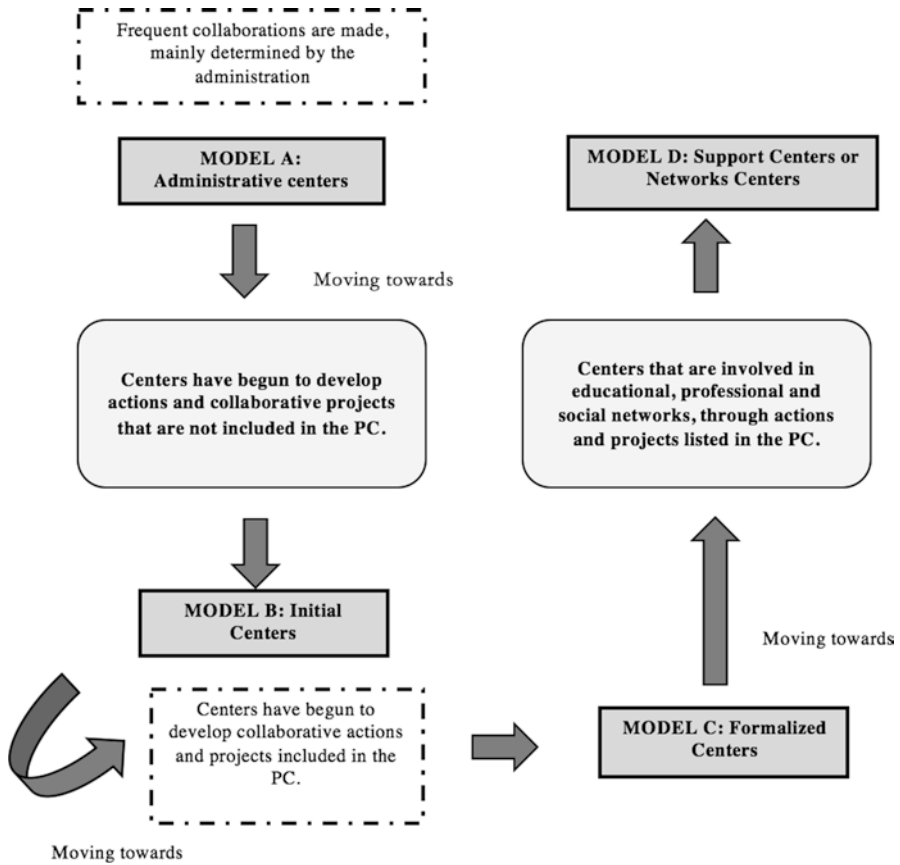


Fig. 6.3 VET models depending on the characteristics of partnerships with the community

results for young people entering the job, it enables insertion sectors to increase value, and students begin to become more involved in their local community.

As Epstein (2014) stated, collaboration begins as an informal process between different actors, where a relaxed and friendly atmosphere exists, and with the passing of time, the relationship between them will strengthen, in a way that agreements, collaborations, projects, etc. are formalized. Along the same line, Antúnez (1998) stated that collaborative processes in schools went through various stages or degrees of consolidation: promote and enhance mutual understanding, recognize improvements and compliance, share resources, participate in common projects and establish networks between institutions.

As Chart 6.1 shows, the model of the most predominant schools in Andalusia and of the province of Seville is the administrative schools model (A), followed by formalized (C), initial (B), and finally support (D).

“Increasing social capital, promoting community relations and a sense of work in the community, the school, and between different schools, families and the

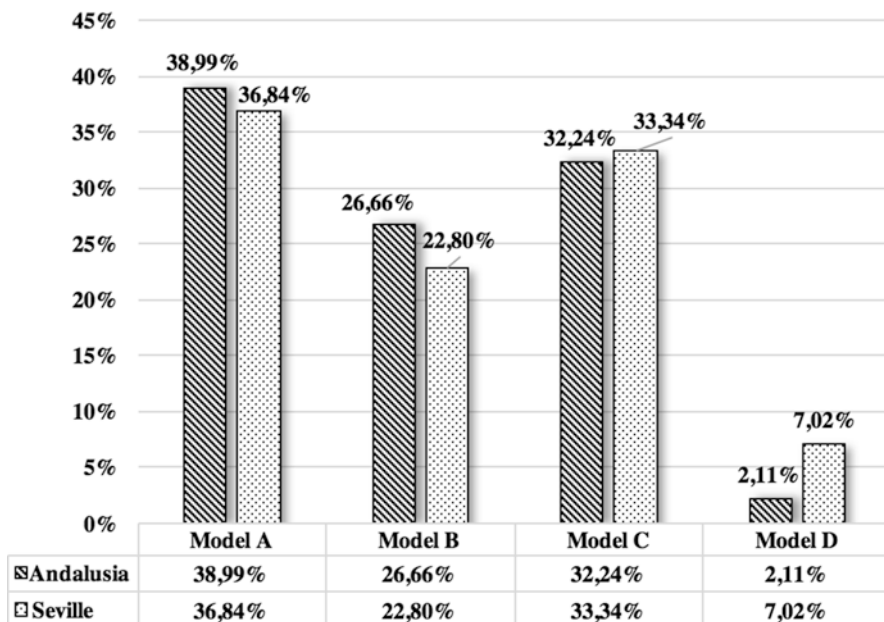


Chart 6.1 Distribution of collaboration models of VET-community schools in Andalusia and Seville

community during the past decades, it has become clear as to where the direction should be improved” (Bolívar et al. 2013, p. 26). In short, VET should not be relegated to a mere reproduction of market requirements, since it involves flexibility and the adaptability necessary to fit into today’s society and to act as an engine of social change and improvement, a reciprocal relationship of continuous exchange (Marhuenda 2012).

6.4 Conclusions

In conclusion, this chapter provides an opportunity to understand the characteristics of the collaboration and the potential internal and external relationships and prospective partnerships from the perspective of members of the management team. And so it emphasizes the need for their development both from the internal action of the schools, with the management of their government teams, and from the commitment of the community to the formation of the new generations.

It designated establishing partnerships with the social, economic, and productive community as a priority. However, there are schools that maintain specific relationships, mainly determined by the Administration or have initiated some actions not included in the PC. Yet, they would like to advance their relationships in

educational, professional, and social networks, formalized in the planning documents and agreements. From this point of view, proposed VET models based on the characteristics of its partnerships with the community: Model A, administrative schools; Model B, initial schools; Model C, formalized schools; and model D, support schools. The most predominant school models in Andalusia and in the province of Seville is model A, followed by C, B, and D.

School staff that energize and enhance these relationships are the directors and head of the various departments, with support from the rest of the educational community. However, families do not have a significant role in the collaboration, despite the desire of VET schools. The assessment of partnerships between VET schools and community members that members of the management team carry out varies depending on the ownership of the school, the gender and age of the respondents, the number of years of experience in leadership roles and in VET, and the institutional role.

The most regular collaborative relationships are companies where students performed the FCT, followed by private and public external companies, local institutions, the government, and other schools. But they say they would like to collaborate more frequently with Career Guidance Services, unions, and social agents and public employment services, despite the low level of involvement they present. Thus, intended objectives of these collaborations are student's employment and skills development, and the need to establish links with the community (involving companies, VET organization to the needs of the economy and society, and the projection of the school toward the community). These objectives are covered by the coordination, promotion and management of the management team; autonomy, participation and responsibility; the PC and activities; internal and external spreading of the school practices; access to specific policies that support collaborative initiatives and the use of ICT.

As a result of the mechanisms put in place in these relationships, it stands out improving students' skills in the labor market and creating bridges between students' training and professional realities. Nevertheless, elements that facilitate collaboration are necessary, like training members of the organization, internal relations, the sensitivity of the educational community, school evaluation processes, involvement in ICT-supported networks, the working environment of teachers, institutional and professional recognition, infrastructure and material resources.

Given the current structural transformation that affects organizations, respondents consider that for establishing collaboration relationships, approaches at internal and external level are necessary. At internal level: resourcing; promote lifelong learning; create time and space; strengthen the coordinating and management role of the management team; and collect collaborative initiatives in the PC. And at external level, promote the use of ICT to create networks; promote an organizational structure at the community level driven by the administration; and initiate and promote a model of dual VET-VET company.

Because of the importance of relationship between VET schools and context, guidelines to empower them at the macro level (Government and Administration)

and at the micro level (community centers and institutions) are provided below, as the result of our research.

6.4.1 *Government and Administration*

First, it is necessary to access specific educational, social, labor, etc. policies that support collaborative community initiatives to formalize and generate a global collaborative culture that would support educational innovation and improve the quality of education. For this, a general consensus between the government, schools, employers, social agents/institutions, and unions is essential to avoid the great rift caused by the financial crisis.

In turn, an increase in VET budgets devoted to a national, regional, and corporate level with respect to training, learning, teachers, material resources, and mobility, in addition to the granting of aid and incentives for agents that promote collaborative relationships is required. Creating a system of institutional and professional recognition of the achievements of those involved and those schools and institutions that promote external collaboration is also necessary. Along the lines of recognition, it is also necessary to promote and organize on-site, semi on-site, and virtual environments to record experiences, resources, and best practices of partnerships between the VET schools and their communities.

Moreover, in terms of organizational structure, a review and adaptation of curricula and skills acquired by students is requested, according to labor market needs of the immediate community and the students themselves enrolled in VET. On this basis, it is indispensable to promote entrepreneurship among students. In turn, the requirements and competencies required for access to VET systems must be established; forms and mechanisms of recognition of prior learning; individualization and flexible teaching-learning process; and mobility programs.

Finally, as to those involved in VET, the school coordinator and the community profile must be framed: qualifications, continuing education, functions, duties, rights, etc.

6.4.2 *School Management Teams and Community Institutions*

In order for partnerships with the community to be possible, it is necessary to strengthen the role of coordinator and joint-decision manager in the management team. Fernández et al. (2002, p. 31) identified three main objectives that drive the change: promote a new concept of culture in schools, adopt distributed leadership, and internalize management functions to maximize resources and adapt to the reality of the school and the community.

A dynamic partnership with the community through public diffusion of such intention and the appointment of a management team responsible for the

coordination and monitoring of actions should be institutionalized. There should also be mediators to facilitate the initial negotiations and boost medium-term projects included in VET and collaboration agreements. In turn, promoting the creation of a commission for the empowerment and opening a line of collaborative work representing all sectors involved could also be implemented.

All this could be facilitated through programs that help prepare faculty and community agents for mobility and active participation at the local, regional, national, and international level in firms in the vocational training industry, other schools, and/or agents which influence student training. In addition, we must define and reinforce the profile of the community agents involved in collaborative relationships with schools. They should have teaching qualifications as they are involved in the teaching and learning processes. Thereby, guests of different social groups in the community, faculty and school boards can be incorporated in order to design joint collaborative projects; as well as welcoming professionals from schools within institutions of the community for a certain time.

Finally, as a cross proposal, the idea to use ICTs as tools for enhancing partnerships with the community arises. Faculty and institutions deem relationships based on ICT necessary to strengthen formal learning as they experience a sense of dissonance between students' routines inside and outside the schools. Siemens and Weller (2011) state as the educational potential of networks is "virtually unlimited," therefore, uniting all its potential for collaborative relationships, creating a cycle of endless and divergent interactive possibilities that connect the school with the community, is proposed. In this sense, networks are generating and amplifying knowledge, experience, and resources. Through proper use, they help define and produce personal-professional projects of each of those involved and adapt to social and labor challenges.

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