

**Collaborative learning in a boundary zone:
A case-study of an innovative inter-institutional
collaboration**

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This qualitative research is a case-study focused on the three years partnership developed between the largest district in the Ministry of Education and a College of Education. The inter-institutional collaboration was triggered by the school principals' concerns about pupils' low scores in the state-mandated achievement tests, and the district head's decision to investigate and implement means to improve these scores. The district head invited experts from a teacher education college to assist her in her attempt to improve the situation. Ilana, who was the head of an experimental teacher education program in the college (Margolin, 2007), and Edith, who was the head of the school of education in the college, accepted this invitation, and took the role of facilitators seeking to develop a safe space for collaborative learning, mutual engagement and emerging leadership.

The theoretical approach involves analyzing the interconnections based on *boundary practices* and *boundary objects*, and the ways these interconnections shaped the collaborative learning process, promoting educational change and fostering educational leadership. The research question is: How do the participants create common understanding and collaborative learning in order to facilitate leadership, implement educational policies and improve educational achievement?

The study shows that the combination of the use of boundary practices and boundary objects in our discourse explain the process through which participants from different communities reconcile meanings and produce shared understandings. First and foremost the study shows transformation in the superintendents' perception of their roles as well as a change in the culture of the district: from demanding the principals' responsibility for students' learning to sharing commitment with them; from inspecting procedures outside of the classrooms to observing instruction within them; from isolated work to collaborative learning; from using intuitive and diffuse language to using clear, professional, and mutually agreed upon language anchored in the research literature; and from a local, fragmented, and closed work environment to an integrated, connected, and open one.