



A call for more collaboration ...



Paul Turner - Ministry of Eco Education reflects on the need for more collaboration

It often feels like competition is a natural and necessary part of the world. We watch football matches where one team wins if they score more goals, nature programmes show fighting and hunting between species, and advertising sells us the vision of a highly individualised society.

Far from natural, we must recognise competition as something forced upon us as a symptom of a capitalist system in crisis. **Competition for profits, resources, and markets disunites more than it unites.**

Scientists on the other hand suggest - *“when we see animals like elephant seals fighting with each other, we’re really seeing only a very small sliver of time. Much more of the time they’re accommodating each other and respecting where the boundaries are, that’s cooperation. There is a tremendous amount of cooperation in nature. Humans, plants, and animals are made up of cells that learned to cooperate long ago.”*

See article: [‘Birds Do It. Bats Do It.’](#)

It features research that shows how cooperation prevails across the animal kingdom. And asks - what can humans learn from other species?



Competition is embedded into every aspect of school life. **Young people take examinations where only a certain proportion of people can achieve each grade.**

Yet schools compete on the basis of the best exam results. Universities only have so many places and there’s only so many high paid jobs.

For people working to create change in education and respond to the climate and nature crisis, this creates a dilemma ...

True sustainability can only be achieved through greater collaboration and human connection.

Just as climate justice requires us to dismantle the structures of inequality, we also need to challenge the normalisation of competition.

Is there the potential for greater collaboration in education for sustainability and the possibility of achieving more?

But is there a danger ...

- ❑ that some organisations operate as if they 'own' ... with potentially detrimental language that could make schools feel like they can't take up opportunities from other organisations?
- ❑ Is there a danger that organisations appear to 'land grab', fencing off academy chains and parts of the country for only them. With schools as metaphorical castles, with moats and drawbridges around towns?
- ❑ Is there a danger of a lack of transparency, with a lack of clarity of where funding comes from? Does it matter if an organisation is for profit, community interest or a charity?
- ❑ Is there danger organisations work in isolation, duplicating or replicating ideas rather than building on the work of others?
- ❑ Is there a danger that organisations operating with vastly different numbers of staff and amounts of money are presented as equal in the eyes of schools?
- ❑ Is there a danger it can feel like a race to Hoover up as many schools as possible, to have the most schools take part in an initiative compared to another?

But why is there an atmosphere of competition?

Is it because the funding for education for sustainability is precarious?
Stripped away by decades of austerity.

Is it a result of the workload of teachers?
A result of an already overwhelmed system.

Is it because of a lack of government co-ordination?
Where strategies are published with little consideration.

We set up the Ministry of Eco Education to help bring people and resources together. We work with organisations to weave the wealth of resources and opportunities into a series of lessons and a 5 step journey for whole school sustainability, to make the most of all the opportunities available. We recognised the decades of experience in people and organisations and actively sought out conversations and opportunities to build on the work of others.

As we see it ----

In nature, biodiversity builds resilience.

A community made of different organisms supporting each other is more likely to overcome difficulty and thrive.

We must take every opportunity to share knowledge and expertise, to build networks and create spaces of sharing.

To achieve the change we need, we need to collaborate, cooperate, and support each other.