

In general, this document provides a comprehensive literature overview of findings about the concept of integrated leadership which are in line with the aim of the current project. This theoretical and evidence-based insights are used to clarify the most appropriate interpretation of the concept of integrated leadership on the one hand and to make choices to develop an operational framework for proper leadership practices in schools that enhance the learning of students and teachers on the other hand.

To realize this purpose, we started to interpret different general definitions of leadership and included findings about leadership in the specific context of education such as teacher leadership. Furthermore, the framework of integrated leadership was studied in relation to other leadership concepts in literature. Based on these results, we decided the most appropriate leadership concept that will be used in the further process of the project. More specifically, Leadership for Learning is determined as the theoretical leadership concept which provides a useful operational framework to ameliorate the leadership capacities of a school enhancing the learning of students and teachers.

Finally, the transfer from the theory of Leadership for Learning to the practice in a school context was realized by making choices in a leader's determining activities and practices to transform a school into an eco-system in which each member is a leader and to develop a Leadership for Learning framework. This framework is the foundation of the further developments in the project.

1 Leadership: What's in a name?

In literature there is no general accepted definition of leadership as there are many and very different views of leadership (Daniëls et al., 2019). Many studies examined leadership in different social contexts (e.g. large multinational companies, small enterprises, health organizations, education, ...). This difference in social contexts and the evolution of the vision on the optimal functioning of people within each specific organization may explain the lack of a single widely accepted definition of leadership.

In general, studies on leadership in recent years (Aas & Brandmo, 2016) indicated a shift from a classic role-based top-down approach with only one hierarchical and formal leader to a more bottom-up process in which leadership is team-oriented and school-wide distributed among all members of the organization (Marsh et al., 2013; Daniëls et al., 2019).

In general, the present project considers leadership in accordance with the OECD promoting schools as an eco-system in which each member (head, teacher, team, student, stakeholder...) can be a leader (formal or informal) and each member is involved in the process of transformation.

At the same time, Leithwood et al. (2006) warn that the democratic and egalitarian ethic currently driving much of the professional rhetoric about distributed and teacher leadership seems implicitly premised on the assumption that everyone can be a good leader, that effective leadership is an entirely learnable function, perhaps even that everyone already is a good leader - without any specific preparation.

To give an overview of the evolution in leadership theories, we include a combination of different representative leadership definitions. Firstly, Alvesson & Blom (2019) described leadership more hierarchically as *“Ways of providing direction, advice, support, coordination, encouragement, inspiration and feedback in order to make people work productively together (or autonomously) is often needed. (...) Leadership is about influencing meanings, values and beliefs in a hierarchical (unequal) relation.”* Furthermore, in literature learning activities are frequently described as a process of influencing between individuals. According to this, Leithwood (2012) stated that *“leadership is the exercise of influence on organizational members and diverse stakeholders toward the identification and achievement of the organization’s vision and goals.”* Finally, in several studies leadership is described as a shared characteristic of a social system of dependency between individuals, teams and organizations (Spillane et al., 2004). Van Muijen & Schaveling (2011) outlined that *“leadership is shaped in the process between the person of the leader, the characteristics of the followers and those of the situation.”*

As mentioned above the specific context of an organization influences the vision and theory about leadership. Therefore, the current project will also refer to the recent definition of Daniëls et al., (2019) for leadership in education: *“Leadership in education is a process of influencing teachers and other stakeholders and is not necessarily limited to a single person. The process of influence ideally leads to an effective learning climate which all stakeholders (such as pupils, teachers, parents, society) experience as an added value and keeps all the organizational processes in the school (among others, monitoring the instructional process, managing personnel and allocating resources) running smoothly.”*

In addition, the concept of teacher leadership is introduced as a possible catalyst for dealing with the complexity of leadership in the educational context. In literature several definitions for teacher leadership can be found. However, we will use definitions that include aspects in line with the focus of the project aims.

Firstly, Childs-Bowen, Moller & Scrivner’s (2000) define that *“teachers are leaders when they function in professional learning communities to affect student learning, contribute to school improvement, inspire excellence in practice and empower stakeholders to participate in educational improvement”*.

Furthermore, Crowther, Kaagen, Ferguson, and Hann (2002) describe a more expanded view of teacher leadership and its contributions as action that transforms teaching and learning in a school that ties school and community together on behalf of learning and that advances social sustainability and quality of life for a community.

Teacher leadership facilitates principled action to achieve whole-school success. It applies the distinctive power of teaching to shape meaning for children, youth and adults and it contributes to long-term, enhanced quality of community life.

The concept of teacher leadership aims to deal with the complexity of the educational context besides it also intends to provide a solution for the concerns regarding the professional learning of teachers and the career opportunities (Sykes, 1990). More specific, teacher leadership within a school contributed to feelings of empowerment and professionalism for all teachers (Beauchum & Dentith, 2004; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012).

Increased feelings of empowerment and confidence as well as improved professional development (PD) for teachers would contribute greatly to improving teaching and learning within a school. One of the primary duties of teacher leaders is supporting the professional learning of colleagues. Studies indicate that teacher leaders provide more opportunities for PD (Carpenter & Sherretz, 2012), but also a better quality and more relevant PD (Hickey & Harris, 2005; Vernon-Dotson, 2008; Westfall-Rudd, 2011). Additionally, teacher leaders are seen as resources capable of providing assistance and support with pedagogy and content in a non-PD format (Gordin, 2010; Margolis & Deuel, 2009).

According to Harris (2003) the optimal function of teacher leadership is in the direct establishment of professional learning communities (PLCs) within and between schools. This is understandable as PLCs are ideal sites for the exercise of teacher leadership to bring about teacher collegial relations, collaborative or collective engagement, and learning with the intention of bringing improvements in teaching practices and student learning.

PLCs are recognized as having the potential to positively impact teacher knowledge and skills, and student learning outcomes through on-going improvements in teachers' practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Instead of bringing about 'quick fixes' or superficial change, they create and support sustainable improvements that last over time because they build professional skills and the capacity to keep the school progressing (Hargreaves, 2002).

Harris (2005) asserted that PLCs embrace the notion of teacher leadership insofar as it assumes teachers to be catalysts for change and development towards a commitment to shared collaborative learning in a community.

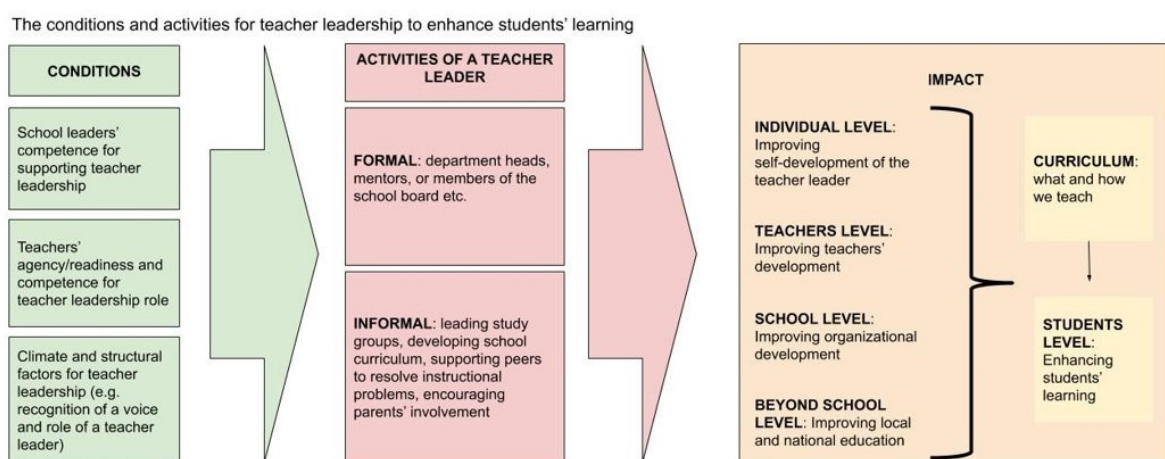


Figure 1. Visual representation of the conditions, activities and impact of teacher leadership to enhance student's learning.

As shown in Figure 1, there are several conditions followed by activities of individual and/or collective teacher leader(s) that has to be taken to have a positive impact of teacher leadership on different stakeholders of a school.

Conditions for teacher leadership:

- *School leaders' (principals') competence for supporting teacher leadership*

School leaders must understand that teachers may have the desire to lead and may have the skills to lead but administrators, in the understanding of leadership beyond the classroom, must provide the opportunities for these teachers to lead (Angelle and DeHart, 2011). Schoolwide leadership capacity is built by principals continually scanning the school environment for prospective teacher leaders (Angelle and DeHart, 2011).

Principals who attempted to encourage norms such as trust or an ethic of care (Beauchum & Dentith, 2004), shared leadership (Gonzales, 2004), penalty-free risk-taking (Brosky, 2011), and continuous learning (Hunzicker, 2012) in their schools were seen as being supportive of teacher leaders. When principals shared a common vision or purpose with their staff, this was seen as being quite advantageous to teacher leadership (Chamberland, 2009; Muijs & Harris, 2006; Podjasek, 2009).

Teachers who are empowered by their principals and school communities to make decisions both autonomously and collaboratively and are involved in decision-making will seek to find common ground for the school organization on both the macro and micro levels (Bauman, 2015). Principals, who motivate teachers to become leaders through building mutualistic relationships and valuing the voice of teachers in decision-making, have enhanced the capacity to maintain and sustain school improvement processes (Andrews, 2008).

- *Teachers' agency/readiness and competence for teacher leadership role*

Teacher readiness can also be referred to as "agency". Agency is seen as a personal characteristic or quality which becomes visible through teacher leadership. Priestley, Biesta and Robinson (2015) refer to "agency" as the capacity for action of teachers. Billett (2008) refers to agency as individuals' active participation in and shaping of realities and is generally recognized as an important condition for learning and successful functioning in a workplace and other spheres of life.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) suggest factors that influence teacher's readiness to assume the role and responsibilities of a teacher leader. These factors include: excellent professional teaching skills, a clear and well-developed personal philosophy of education, being in a career stage that enables one to give to others, having an interest in adult development, and being in a personal life stage that allows one time and energy to assume a position of leadership. While not explicitly stated, many of these readiness factors imply that teacher leadership is best suited for teachers in midcareer and midlife, assuming that such teachers also demonstrate high levels of teaching competence. In order to achieve the movement from teacher to leader, teachers also need support and regular opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to voice their opinions (Poekert et al., 2016).

- *Climate and structural factors (support from colleagues, recognizing the voice and the role of a teacher leader)*

Time needs to be set aside for teachers to meet to plan and discuss issues such as curriculum matters, developing school-wide plans, leading study groups, etc. (Harris, 2010). In terms of logistical items, principals simply changing schedules (Borchers, 2009; Gaffney & Faragher, 2010) or providing time and space for collaboration (Chesson, 2011; Chew & Andrews, 2010) appeared to greatly benefit teacher leaders and their work.

Activities of a teacher leader:

- Formal: department head, mentor, member of the school board, appointed leader of a study group, curriculum specialist, and assigned staff developer (Gordon et al., 2020; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).
- Informal: leading study groups, developing school curriculum, supporting peers to resolve instructional problems etc. More precisely: demonstrating new instructional strategies, observing and providing formative feedback to colleagues, actively participating in professional learning communities. Informal teacher leaders also engage in wider educational discussions regarding teaching and learning. They promote collegiality, collaborate on instructional and school improvement efforts, share curriculum and instructional materials, engage in action research, and informal mentoring (Muijs & Harris, 2006; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).
- Collective – a group of teachers acting together in order to improve teaching and learning (both their colleagues' and students').
- Individual – a single teacher takes more responsibility in school development. Acts on self-initiative or the role of a leader is given by the principal.

To mix formal/informal and collective/individual forms of teacher leadership, it is best to look at the work of Snoek and his colleagues (2019), that outlines the four forms of teacher leadership:

- role-based teacher leadership (formal-individual form) – individual teachers receive or take a formal position or role within the school allowing them to take the lead (e.g. language or math coordinators, annual layer coordinators)
- collective role-based teacher leadership (formal-collective form) – teachers, as a group, are legitimized to exert influence (e.g. working groups, project groups and teacher development teams);
- initiators (informal-individual form) – individual teachers aspire to an informal role of a teacher leader to contribute to their school's development (e.g. create an informal study circle);
- community-based teacher leadership (informal-collective form) – teachers as a group (all or several teachers in the school) take the initiative in school development. In this context, those who have the required expertise in a certain situation are allowed to take control (e.g. teachers planning and working together on an innovative learning strategy to enhance students learning).

Impact:

- Individual level (improving self-development of the teacher leader)
- Teacher level (improving teachers' development) - the teacher leader has impact on his/her colleagues
- School level (improving organizational development)
- Beyond school level (improving local and national education, being involved in policy and decision making)
- Student level (enhancing students' learning)

2. Different concepts of leadership pondered with Leadership for Learning as result

Since the beginning of the 21st century one can see a growing integration of the main theories about leadership in schools. In particular theories of instructional, transformational and distributed leadership are bringing together in concepts such as *shared instructional leadership* (Marks & Printy, 2003), *new instructional leadership* (Halverson et al., 2007; Verbiest, 2010) and *leadership for learning* (Townsend & MacBeath, 2011; MacBeath, 2013; Daniëls, Hondeghem and Dochy, 2019) Verbiest (2010) briefly describes what 'leadership for learning' includes (integrates) from some leadership theories.

Instructional leadership focuses on teaching and learning and on the behaviour of teachers in working with students (Bush & Glover, 2003). Instructional leadership models emerged in the early 1980s from early research on effective schools. The effective school movement stresses a strong, directive leadership focused on curriculum and instruction from the principal (Hallinger, 2003).

There are different descriptions of instructional leadership. For example, Hallinger (2003) propose a model of instructional leadership that consists of 10 specific functions within three broad categories: defining the school mission (with functions as framing the school's goals and communicating the school's goals); managing the instructional program (with functions as supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum and monitoring student progress) and promoting school climate (including protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, providing incentives for learning).

Blase & Blase (1999) found eleven strategies of effective instructional leadership, grouped around two themes: talking with teachers to promote reflection and promoting professional growth. The strategies include giving feedback, modelling, using inquiry and soliciting advice and opinions, emphasizing the study of teaching and learning, encouraging and supporting redesign of programs and applying principles of adult learning in staff development.

In the nineties of the twentieth century the interest in instructional leadership decreases. More and more the concept of **transformational leadership** became important. For one reason, the top-down character of instructional leadership was considered as less suited for the development of school organizations, stressing the professionalism and involvement of the teachers.

As a transformational leader, the school leader inspires teachers to be engaged in their work by developing and articulating a vision; shows concern and respect for the personal needs of teachers; stimulates a culture of collaboration; improves the processes of problem solving in the school and challenge teachers to develop themselves in the context of the development of the school (Leithwood, 1992; Leithwood, Tomlinson & Genge, 1996).

Transformational leadership focuses on developing the organization's capacity to innovate, rather than focusing specifically on direct coordination, control, and supervision of curriculum and instruction. Transformational leadership is to distinguish from transactional leadership (Yukl, 2006). In this last type of leadership there is some exchange between leader and follower, for example exchange of productivity to income.

Hallinger (2003) mentions three important distinctions between the instructional leadership and transformational leadership. Instructional leadership is top-down, emphasizing the principal's coordination and control of instruction. It is characterized as transactional in the sense that it seeks to manage and control organizational members to move towards a predetermined set of goals. And it targeting first-order variables in the change process, influencing conditions that directly impact the quality of curriculum and instruction delivered to students in classroom.

Transformational leadership focuses, on the contrary, on stimulating change through bottom-up participation. It seeks to envision and create the future by synthesizing and extending the aspirations of members of the organizational community. And it seeks to generate second-order effects, increasing the capacity of others in the school to produce first-order effects on learning.

Despite the popularity of transformational leadership there are also critical comments. The concept has different meanings and it is not always easy to differentiate between the different components of the concept. Also, there is some overlap between components of transformational and of transactional leadership (Bush & Glover, 2003; Yukl, 2006; Kelchtermans & Piot, 2010).

Probably the most important critical comment on transformational leadership in education points to the absence of an explicit focus on the process of instruction, the primary process in the school. Even, strong transformational leadership could hinder the teaching duties of the teachers (Barnett et al., 2001; Marks & Printy, 2003). Furthermore, the concept of transformational leadership neglect processes of mutual influence and distributed leadership (Gronn, 2003a, b).

This conceptual neglect of mutual influence and leadership by others than the formal leader, stimulated the development of the concept of **distributed leadership** (Gronn, 2003a, b; Hargreaves, 2003a; Spillane, 2006; Harris et al., 2008). Different terms are used, like distributed leadership, shared leadership and teacher leadership. Distributed leadership is more than leadership by others than the formal leader.

Distributed leadership points to the production and distribution of leadership activities in an interactive web of leaders, followers and situational aspects like instruments, procedures and routines. Also, the concept of distributed leadership is criticized. Just as in the case of instructional and transformational leadership, distributed leadership has different meanings, some of them not just descriptive but prescriptive (Mayrowetz, 2008). Furthermore, the concept seems to exaggerate and to neglect the formal and individual leadership (Kelchtermans & Piot, 2010). And Leithwood et al. (2006) fear that emphasizing distributed leadership strengthens the idea that everybody, without specific preparation, can be a good leader.

The lack of an explicit focus on the instructional process in transformational leadership theories stimulated the revival of instructional leadership. Apart from that, the growing interest in the improvement of the learning and the results of students in the education policy in many countries stimulate this revival also (Hallinger, 2009; Westfall-Greiter et al., 2013).

Recent research points to the effectiveness of instructional leadership (Robinson et al., 2008). But as Marks & Printy (2003) show, transformational leadership is probably a necessary condition for instructional leadership. These latter authors then advocate shared educational leadership. On the one hand, school leader is working transformational: he stimulates the involvement and development of teachers. On the other hand, he works with the teachers to optimize the primary process. He is not the only one who leads the primary process, but rather leads – or guides – the teachers and organizes schools as professional learning communities where one can learn from each other. In this context we can understand the conceptual turn to 'New Instructional Leadership' (Halverson et al., 2007; Verbiest, 2010) and 'Leadership for Learning' (Townsend & MacBeath, 2011; MacBeath, 2013).

In sum, **leadership for learning** is result-oriented, has an explicit focus on learning performance (Hallinger, 2011) and aims to influence school performance. At the same time, it focuses on the organizational conditions for learning about curriculum development, didactics and evaluation: the organization of learning communities.

Leadership for learning puts a clear focus on the process in which the whole school community actively participates in targeted interactions that promote professional relationships and that are aimed at improving learning. Leadership for learning is aimed at learning at all levels within a school system: learning of students, learning of teams within their organization and learning of leadership.

In leadership for learning, shared leadership is directly linked to the organization and management of learning communities. Shared leadership emphasizes the benefits of working together towards a common goal and shared ownership. For the school, this results in better communication about the objectives, better alignment of resources and structures to support students, more active involvement of staff and the ability to maintain a focus on innovation and learning. It is important that schools, within their context, get to know and explore the specific challenges and opportunities to share leadership (see situational leadership point). In this respect, the participation of teachers (teacher leadership) plays a decisive role. Leadership for learning places leadership both with persons in formal management roles (e.g. head, deputy heads, coordinators) and with persons with less formal management roles (e.g. teachers, parents or students).

3. Leadership for Learning in practice: activities of leaders

Our *leadership for learning* activities of leaders are mainly based on leadership for learning characteristics of effective school principals (Murphy et al., 2007; Daniëls et al., 2019), OECD (2016) TALIS report insights about *leadership for learning* and school leaders empowering behavior (Lee & Nie, 2013). The activities have been modified in the concept of how everyone can be a leader in the school at some point of time.

Based on the mentioned literature and presented in *Figure 2* main five pillars of overall activities of leaders are:

- building a trustful school culture and relationships.
- developing and sustaining a vision for learning;
- focusing on the educational program, learning and instruction;
- nurturing professional learning communities;
- recognizing and celebrating success and innovation;



Figure 2. Visual representation of the Leadership for Learning operational framework with five determining pillars that are needed to transform school into an eco-system in which each member can be a leader.

Developing, sustaining and implementing the schools' vision for learning is done in collaboration with colleagues and stakeholders. In order to do that, leaders should create an environment for colleagues to be supportive to each other while creating a shared sense of purpose for all stakeholders focused on learning. Also, they could inspire colleagues with their own proposal of a vision or plans of the future. In co-creation the vision then needs to be translated into clear goals to make it achievable. (Lee & Nie, 2013; OECD, 2016; Daniëls et al., 2019)

If leaders are **focusing on curriculum, learning and instruction** and give feedback on it to colleagues, then teachers feel they are making positive changes and improve their practices. However, it is important to keep in mind how colleagues give feedback, it is crucial for the school to be effective (OECD, 2016). Focusing on curriculum, learning and instruction includes developing and monitoring educational programs with colleagues and supporting each other in implementing the changes, also, monitoring and analyzing students' achievements together (Daniëls et al., 2019).

Leaders should **nurture professional learning communities** to lead the collective effort in order to shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning. To start a professional learning community the leader can nurture relationships to create a culture or climate in the school in which a professional learning community can flourish and where teacher take responsibility for improving their teaching skills. Leaders should initiate collegial discussions of teaching and how it impacts on student learning. It is important to understand, that leaders not only promote, but directly participate with colleagues in formal or informal professional learning. (OECD, 2016). They need to encourage others to take calculated risks, initiate new ideas, dare to make mistakes and learn from them to make innovation happen (Lee & Nie, 2013). Professional learning communities' dimensions such as reflective dialogue, deprivatised practice, shared sense of purpose, collaborative activity and collective focus on student learning are helpful practices in creating a professional learning community in the school (OECD, 2016, p. 91-92). *“/.../ it can be argued that focusing on teacher collaboration and not creating a school culture in which teachers visit each other's classrooms and provide their colleagues with feedback might restrain collaboration from being effective – or at least inhibit the full potential of professional learning communities for teachers' professional learning, and ultimately student learning.”* (OECD, 2016)

Recognizing and celebrating success and innovation includes giving frequent or regular feedback to colleagues to acknowledge their contribution or effort in achieving the school's goals and vision. Feedback should be constructive and motivating. Giving positive feedback or special recognition when performed well improves teachers' self-efficacy and commitment. (Lee & Nie, 2013; Daniëls et al., 2019). At the same time, it isn't always important to bring out people who have achieved great results, but to celebrate successes together and understand everyone's role in it.

Building a trustful school culture and relationships includes effective communication with all stakeholders (colleagues, students, parents and other relevant external and internal stakeholders), maintaining good internal and external relations while shaping the school culture towards trust and collaboration. The leaders should involve stakeholders actively in the decision-making process and sharing responsibilities. The first step is to support co-operation (encourage to work as a team and be “team-players”) among colleagues and stakeholders in order to really start collaborating and working together for the same goals. Trustful school culture can't be built only by leaders, but in unison where everybody takes responsibility for their teaching skills and students' learning outcomes. (Lee & Nie, 2013; OECD, 2016; Daniëls et al., 2019). *“Teachers who are efficacious in instruction and student engagement are, more often, engaged in reflective practice, share a common sense of purpose, collaborate with other staff and report a greater focus on student learning in their school. This could indicate that when teachers feel confident in teaching and engaging students in their classroom, they might experience fewer barriers to sharing their practices with their colleagues and to exploring ways for further improvement. Consequently, teachers who are less self-efficacious in instruction might feel threatened if others confront them with their shortcomings. A reverse mechanism could be at play as well, as observing teachers and providing them with feedback might stimulate a teacher's self-efficacy in teaching. Particularly, enhancing the visibility of classroom practice through observations by peers increases teachers' self-efficacy and teachers' attitudes toward professional development, among others”* (OECD, 2016)

All the leadership for learning activities for leaders are closely related to each other and affect each other in some way or another. Some activities are not that clear in real school life and it is not possible to pinpoint the exact practice with a category of activity, that's why these are more like suggestions what to consider when wanting to change Your school leadership focus to learning.

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