L2C

Learning
Leadership
for **Change**

LESSONS

## LEARNED &

RECOMMENDATIONS

A POLICY
PERSPECTIVE

PROMOTING THE CONCEPT
OF SHARED LEADERSHIP

The project highlights the **need for a theoretical framework to define and deepen the concept of shared leadership** for operational purposes. There is also a need to characterise the competences associated with it, underlining the need for training including psychological and relational issues such as team-building, collaboration, engagement, efficient communication and professional dialogue. These **competences should thus be integrated into the current school leader competence frameworks** where these exist, and developed for those systems that do not yet have specific frameworks for educational leaders.

> *Policymakers can jointly undertake different actions to strengthen leadership in schools. Communication of, and common reflection on, examples of good practices with distributed approaches is important."*
>
> *Hilde Lesage, Department of Education & Training Flanders (Belgium)*
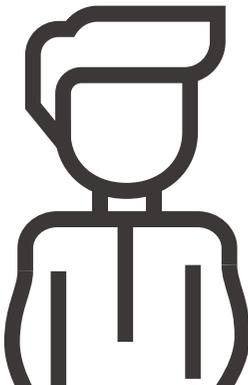
IMPLEMENTING SHARED LEADERSHIP IS A COMPLEX PROCESS

Implementation of **shared leadership in schools requires dialogue, involvement of stakeholders at all levels and co-decision processes and structures**. The preconditions for enabling all these elements to flourish are connected to time availability, incentives, official recognition, support and professional development. The latter should be specifically addressed to meet the specific needs identified and be easily accessible for all educational staff.

> *Like a garden, we [the school community] need to grow, and it needs to be organic; you have to cultivate that trust and the safe environment. My suggestion to have shared leadership is […] to use a framework; you need to make sure that the conditions are there for success, that the person receives the support, the resources and the training they need […] that they can talk about the initiative that they are developing."*
>
> *Fiona Forbes*
> *CEO and founder of ConfigurED*
> *Australia*

Online training is certainly an asset in this regard and school project opportunities are also highly valued.

96% of participants **would recommend this course**

99% of participants **would participate in a similar type of activity**

THE VALUE OF PEER LEARNING

Learning communities are an appropriate tool for shared leadership. These came together regularly during school exchange meetings and were probably one of the most important aspects of the L2C project. Schools receive hands-on information from each other that can be immediately incorporated into their own context. Exchange also helps schools learn there is no 'one single solution or model', but many possibilities. Through peer learning activities they get to learn these different possibilities and understand the value of active participation in a community of practice. **Peer learning should be enabled at all levels from policy to practice**, establishing regulatory frameworks and the necessary conditions that allow this kind of exchanges to take place.

> *It is very important to implement a dialogue when working on shared leadership. There is the importance of school dialogue between the school leadership team, the school board and the teachers. But changing the leadership style in a school will also affect pupils, parents and the wider school community."*
>
> *Jan De Craemer, Department of Education & Training Flanders (Belgium)*

EVIDENCE IS KEY TO SUPPORT INNOVATION

Successful shared leadership necessarily means having indicators in place to monitor and evaluate the transformation of leadership practice. Such monitoring serves to guide adjustment possibly needed along the way, prepares the ground for the dialogue at school (and system) level, and offers opportunities to celebrate intermediate success.

Awareness and use of self-assessment tools have been highlighted as an efficient way to promote and improve the teaching and learning processes. Tools like the SELFIE, eSafety Label, STEM School Label or the FCL Maturity Tool[1] provide a comprehensive overview of schools' positions in the different areas. The data that such tools deliver provides valuable input for schools to adapt their policy and measure policy implementation.

> […] the student voice is very much at the heart of SELFIE, and the feedback we get is that students really appreciate it because they have an opinion on how technology is used in the school; they have an opinion on how the school is helping them with their own digital skills development. I think that's a crucial element, listening to the views from the student community."
>
> Deirdre Hodson
> DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
> European Commission

> If the school board realises that shared leadership can work in times of crisis, as the COVID-19 pandemic showed, […] in normal times it would be very effective. That should be the main guidance promoted by policy-makers."
>
> Fernando Franco
> Directorate-General for Education, Portugal

WIDENING THE SCOPE

The biggest challenge remains now to broaden the scope and increase the outreach by identifying and developing key local, regional and national multipliers. A space for increased collaboration between policy makers, researchers, initial teacher education and practitioners should be organised.

> The fact that the five high schools that have collaborated are so satisfied with the project make us think that we have to promote more and more schools to integrate the values of shared leadership in their organisations."
>
> Javier Magdaleno Fuentetaja
> General Directorate for Innovation and Teacher Training
> Castilla y León (Spain)

Online training and professional learning communities has also proved to be a crucial element in terms of outreach. Further relevance should be given to the macro perspective after the project. It is necessary to involve and empower people in the decision-making and development of distance learning activities. There is also a need for all stakeholders to work in partnership and potentially within a network to exchange experiences and assert themselves as a learning community with and among all.

[1]For more information visit http://l2c.eun.org/tools and https://ec.europa.eu/education/schools-go-digital_en

A SCHOOL-LEVEL
PERSPECTIVE

GOVERNANCE

The project emphasises the **importance of dialogue within schools and between schools**. Meetings and permanent exchange with stakeholders remain fundamental as a way to also develop bottom-up approaches enabling space for discussion between practitioners, experts and policy-makers. **School schedules should be defined beyond teaching**, recognising the need for temporary exemption from teaching duties to facilitate time for the implementation of shared leadership approach.

There was a shared vision which was co-constructed, and this was only possible because formal leaders and informal leaders were engaged with stakeholders in decision making."

Ana Cohen
Portugal

It is very important to see how leadership can be shared. Power is not only in one person or just based on our management team [...]. Everyone feels like sharing different problems and ideas."

Elena Valle Santos
Spain

TEACHERS, INPUT AND PARTICIPATION

For shared leadership to happen, **practitioners need to reflect, share and address issues through active participation in the school community**. Intermediate leaders with practical knowledge of the different areas may encourage the development of peer support structures. The sharing of knowledge of what others do and how they organise themselves is key.

Increasing the time for collaborative work among teachers could be an efficient way to address resistance to change and facilitate the adoption of new practices. The project's results point to the fact that the shared leadership approach has facilitated the adoption of new practices to a greater extent than the technologies; it has also supported the development of trust among teachers and the spirit of helping one another. It brought the learning educational community closer to a different and necessary work process.

People come together, they contribute, they feel they are valued. Valid points that otherwise would have been overlooked are taken into consideration."

Suzanne Camilleri
Malta

We create a balanced power, including all the differences in the group [...]. The keywords are coordination, diplomacy but also integration [in an environment where] all the members are aware of their responsibilities."

Laura Ruggiero
Italy

COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION

Finding better and more innovative ways to communicate and disseminate evidence from policy, practice and research about shared leadership is strategic. Internal communication has a crucial role to ensure that no one is left behind and to involve non-teaching staff in the shared leadership processes. Reflection and sharing within and between schools has to become a common and frequent practice. **Communication should be seen as part of the democratisation process of the school**, opening up its practices and bringing transparency to the whole educational community.

hi!

hola!

With shared leadership, we can feel a sense of belonging [...], We can think of a true cooperation among all the teachers in creating a common strategy for teaching."

Simona Costaggini
Italy

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Learning communities are an especially appropriate tool for shared leadership. The shared leadership approach at the core of the project has proven to be a way to enhance the internal network of trainers that the school has for pedagogical, technical and ongoing projects. The training (of school leaders and teachers) is an essential condition to scale up the adoption of shared leadership practices within the areas of autonomy, collaboration and communication. Shared leadership starts with defining and sharing a common school vision and mission so that each person in the school community knows how to act for a common goal and pushes in the same direction. Setting up a dialogue to improve school interaction with the overall school community and strengthening the relation with all the stakeholders is key in this process.

The learning community should also encourage a culture of evaluation for all aspects of school life. Evidence is key and successful leadership needs systematic indicators in place to monitor and evaluate the transformation of leadership practice. Such monitoring serves to guide adjustment possibly needed along the way, prepare the ground for dialogue at school (and system) level, and offers opportunities to celebrate intermediate success.

SUSTAINABILITY

When implementing shared leadership, there should be a focus on the "lighthouse leaders", whose main function is to involve people in the process and keep the community active and growing. These more informal teams do not remove the need for the so-called formal intermediate management structures. Formal leaders, however, must be in line with and supporting these lighthouse leaders. It is also essential for the Shared Leadership approach to create sharing networks that include local & regional strategic partners so as to reinforce the sustainability of these innovative practices.

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