**A PERSONAL LEADERSHIP STATEMENT**

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**FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN Y CIENCIAS HUMANAS**
**DEPARTAMENTO DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS**

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## Our leadership profile

Today, we see ourselves as empowered teachers that are able to work and cooperate with colleagues and students using the tools that our context provides. Moreover, we consider that we can see the potential of the people and the environment in which we are and then, we can implement changes that can contribute to the improvement of the context. We are teacher leaders willing to listen to the others in order to find similarities and with those, start a collaborative relationship, being able to work together with any member of our community.

**INTRODUCTION**

The term "Leadership" involves multiple interpretations, varying from authors throughout the time. Stogdill (1950) states that "leadership may be considered as the process of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement", in other words, it is the act of guiding the activities or steps taken by a group to guarantee the accomplishment of a share goal. Meanwhile, Reiter-Palmon & Illies (2004), describes it as "a creative problem solving" since leaders with creative-problem solving skills can stimulate, challenge and inspire others to continually pursue prominent problems and devise creative solutions to feed future success and organizational growth. This term has been used in different contexts, considering the behavior, aptitudes, and process in which it has been developed. Leadership can mean different things to different people, it usually depends on the perspectives, philosophy, personality, values, and profession of those who define it, in its most basic form leadership is defined as "the art of influencing others to their maximum performance to accomplish any task, objective or project" (Cohen, W.A.,1990, p. 9). Additionally, Kirimi (2007) states that Leadership is the interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation, and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals.

Human interaction plays an important role due to the need to accomplish a goal depending on the action of some members. According to Bass (1990), "leadership is an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and expectations of members". Therefore, a leader is an individual who can

encourage, motivate and/or influence others throughout critical thinking, insight, intuition, and the use of both persuasive rhetoric and interpersonal communication including both active listening and positive discourse. Additionally, the leader in this process of leading, enables the follower to innovate as well as to learn from his/her/their own and other's success, mistakes, and failures along the process of completing the organization's objective. In a similar path, Wong (2007) states that a leader by its meaning is one who goes first and leads by example so that others are motivated to follow him, this is a basic requirement, since to be a leader, a person must have a deep-rooted commitment to the goal that he will strive to achieve it even if nobody follows him, as well as to challenge both self and others to provide the best care possible, to set high standards and, at the same time, to encourage, support, and reward those working with him or her.

**ASSUMPTIONS**

Just like in a business, leadership in the classroom requires an open-minded approach from the leader, by being open minded leaders have the ability to think more critically, especially when facing unpredictable circumstances, it helps them see the bigger picture and think more laterally about how best to solve a problem, not only in the short term but in the long term too. Moreover, it helps leaders to develop a sense of empowerment within the team by building confidence throughout actively listening of what the team members have to say. Lastly, it makes a leader leave assumption aside, it enables leader to listen and embrace new ideas regardless of who brought it to the table, as well as to be aware that our beliefs sometimes can be misleading.

Daily we see teachers taking things as they are, but what would happen if we let our beliefs aside and start seeing things differently? What will happen if we stop assuming we know something without having facts to back these beliefs up? As teachers and futures leaders in the classroom we need to get to really know our students without being bias about it, get to know their likes and dislikes, the context where they come from and the one where they are, their background and, most importantly, their potential. This will make our leadership work more achievable since a teacher that knows the potential of the learners will have the ability to design more realistic goals that would be viable for all the people involved in the learning process.

Another important aspect in the process of leadership is collaborative work, defined by the online *Cambridge Bussiness English Dictionary (2012)* as "the act of two or more people or organizations working together for a particular purpose" that establishes clear benefits that can be applied to our leadership purposes. Collaborative work enhances leaders to

seek for a diversity of opinions among the members in order to create a collective sharing environment that will strengthen the ownership of the group members and thus the proficiency. After sharing the members' opinions and shares in the group, the leader can assign different tasks according to the member's visible strengths and weaknesses, covering different angles from the same problem. Good leadership practices can use collaborative work as an effective tool to empower members' relationships and reach more effectively the set purpose

**LEADERSHIP EMPOWERMENT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

Empowerment is an ideology and worldview, defined as opportunity and the self-confidence to act willfully to professionally influence one's path and performance (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). It suggests a range of meanings touching upon the improvement and strengthening of individuals and their functioning in the organizational environments in which they act (Hemric, Eury, & Shellman, 2010). It is also defined as a process that only individuals can initiate to provide the climate, relationship, resources, and means to achieve greater control over their surroundings. Empowered teachers are ones who experience a process of personal and professional development. Their experience of empowerment is related to their work at schools and experience is intensified when teachers assume a leadership position (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Day & Gu, 2007). Research has demonstrated a connection between the individual teacher's leadership position in school and the development of a sense of empowerment (Phillips, Berg, Rodriguez, & Morgan, 2010). Leadership roles expand teacher's authority, strengthen their sense of responsibility, and intensify their willingness to exert special effort at work, not only do such roles enhance the teacher's desire to cooperate with management and with colleagues, but they also raise teacher's levels of satisfaction, motivation, and loyalty toward the school (York – Barr & Duke, 2004). Thus, in this context, empowerment is perceived as an inseparable part of the teacher's career development.

In terms of implications for the future, research on teacher's leadership often examines the teacher's influence beyond the school parameters. Research emphasized that leadership is perceived as part of an initiative to create programs for the professional development career paths

of excellent teachers (Stronge, Ward & Grant, 2011), in an attempt to both leverage their expertise

in support of other teachers and to improve the school. In this context, the efforts of teachers in

leadership positions are viewed as serving to improve and develop the school as part of an overall,

system-wide change, rather than as improving the level of the individual student or class.

**CONCLUSION**

New times implies new challenges, "Teaching today is a more complex set of roles and responsibilities than ever before. The skills and knowledge required to successfully engage students and prepare them for our quickly changing societies define how teachers lead within the classroom and without. Traditionally teachers who have wanted to lead beyond the classroom went into administration, meaning often-times the best and the brightest left the classroom after a few years of teaching. But today many more opportunities are emerging for teacher leadership, both formally and informally." – Walter Makenzie.

Teacher leadership is known to have a direct impact not only to the students but as well as to the school, peers, and the community. "It provides essential instructional guidance by modeling effective practices, sharing best practices, mentoring, and collaborating with their peers. Teacher leaders also take part in strategic planning to achieve better-informed decision making, shared ownership, and are commitment to school and district goals" (Curtis, 2013; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Therefore, every school should do its best to enable effective teacher leadership. They should provide the right tools to help teachers achieve and meet their goals as well as to create a climate that encourages the development of teacher leaders.

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