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**DEPARTAMENTO DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS**



**A PERSONAL LEADERSHIP STATEMENT**

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**JUAN PABLO OTERO ROJAS**



**UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAMME**

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**Lifelong Professional Development: Empowering Foreign Language Teachers**

**MONTERÍA - CÓRDOBA**

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**A PERSONAL LEADERSHIP STATEMENT**

**YAIRA YULIETH ARIAS DELGADO**

**JUAN PABLO OTERO ROJAS**

**Statement submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of English**

**Teaching Program**

**MENTOR**

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**UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA**

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### Our Leadership Profile



Yaira Y. Arias Delgado & Juan P. Otero Rojas

As future leaders, we consider ourselves to be empathetic and visionary individuals who can develop collaborative relationships in which we not only willingly influence but also mobilize our followers to live up to their best potential, work together for a shared goal and provoke a change along the way. We see ourselves as effective leaders that act as figurative compasses guiding others towards the development of our community and society. We ultimately aspire to devote ourselves to the philosophy of lifelong learning as a means of showing personal commitment and growth. Thanks to the reflective work done during this diploma course, we have learned how to optimize collaborative work, seek diversity and build spaces that foster inclusiveness, and mostly that leadership is a transformative innate part of our everyday lives.

“Leadership is a mutual partnership in which leaders inspire their followers to achieve common goals and make a long-lasting impact, guiding them toward empowerment.”

—Arias & Otero, *A Personal Leadership Statement*



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**Abstract**

Throughout history, the concept of leadership has shifted and evolved in such a way that not only are there plenty of definitions related to it but, subsequently, different types of leadership. Due to this, when treating this topic in the educational context, the metaphorical lines between leadership and authority have been blurred. This personal leadership statement details our notions, approach, and forward-looking aspirations as teacher-leaders. This paper is a culminating learning task of a Lifelong Professional Development: Empowering Foreign Language Teachers course. Accordingly, this statement seeks to bring innovative and transformational ideas about learning and authentic leadership to the educational community as a support for their journey into the ever-changing educational system. This statement then acts as a premise and foundation to positively impact the construction of leadership and empowerment values in education as teacher-leaders.

**Keywords:** *leadership; authentic leadership; empowerment; teacher-leaders, educational system*





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## Introduction

The question: What does it take to be a leader? Is age-old, and as proposed by Ulrich and Smallwood (2012), it is often followed by “what is leadership?” (p. 11). This statement aims to contextualize the concept of leadership with the previous knowledge of established authors. We will then construct a unique perspective on leadership that answers the aforementioned inquiries. As countless types of leadership exist, this statement will focus primarily on authentic leadership.

It has come to the authors’ attention that being in a position of power does not imply leadership, especially not authentic leadership, which strives to be ethical and transparent. From this, there is a need to breach the gap between authority and authentic leadership. In the new shift, people who still preserve an authority of power are seeing the negative effects, which is leading them to transform their working practices over time.

Daft (2008) points out that “defining leadership has been a complex and elusive problem largely because the nature of leadership itself is complex” (p. 4). Hence, even with the variety of existing definitions, it is still elusive to many people. Namely, also according to Daft (2008), leadership is “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes and outcomes that reflect their shared purposes” (p. 4). The ideas that the authors of this statement will convey will often evidence Daft's influence.

Silva (2016) believes that “leadership is the process of interactive influence that occurs when, in a given context, some people accept someone as their leader to achieve





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common goals" (p. 3). Such a definition provides a clear understanding of roles in the leadership process. Now, in their research, Cardiff et al. (2018) concluded that “relational, person-centred approach to leadership influences leaders, associates and context” (Conclusion section, para. 1). It can then be argued by the authors of this statement that leadership is a reciprocal and non-coercive relationship between two or more parties, which can occur in any given context, as long as the leader has a defined influence and ability to mobilize their willing followers to achieve commonly shared goals, and possibly make a difference in the immediate context or even the world.

Having set the grounds for this statement by stating our perspective, analyzing other authors’ ideas, and building our definition of leadership, this statement will now proceed to expand on the details that have been glossed over so far.





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#### Our Assumptions

To lead educational or foreign language classroom processes, a true teacher leader should be committed to never stopping learning and actively participating in the community not only within the physical classroom but also beyond it. In the words of Daft (2008), leadership is not confined to one space as it should translate “in the classroom, your neighborhood, community, or volunteer organizations” (p. 27). A teacher-leader may begin working in a classroom, but their authentic impact should echo through all channels associated with the educational space to which they belong. They have the opportunity to transform their assumptions into effective instruments to aid their educational journey.

What leaders assume about the educational or foreign language classroom processes serves as a framework for a range of educational decisions and stances both inside and outside of the classroom. Donaghue (2003) maintains that teachers’ practices are steered by teaching beliefs and assumptions about the learners, which are ultimately drawn from experience and personality. Thus, they play an important role in these processes as the assumptions influence how teacher-leaders navigate them and assume stances.

During our discussions held with leaders-to-be, our experience with them showed two things, how their perspectives differed from our own and sometimes even matched at some points. We were given the opportunity to share and receive an overall experience full of variety and growth. It also served to reveal that there is indeed reciprocal learning that





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would work just like it does with leaders and their followers. As such, there was collaborative and mutual enrichment for everyone involved, in which we were able to develop a skills-rich culture that is needed as future leaders. Daft (2008) remarks, “one of the most important aspects of the new paradigm of leadership is the ability to use human skills to build a culture of performance, trust, and collaboration” (p. 23).

In our journey as future leaders, several questions have arisen that are worth discussing, as they are part of our introspection which ascertains where we stand. Daft (2008) points out that “a top characteristic of effective leaders is that they know who they are and what they stand for” (p. 19). Is our attitude one of optimism and self-confidence? How much of what characterizes a leader do we put into action? Are we aware of inclusion and diversity in our community?

Our way of finding answers to these questions begins with an important attribute of leadership itself, self-criticism that ends with the way we understand ourselves. When it comes to the involvement of inclusion Roberson (2019) adds diversity initiatives pursued by leaders committed to it provide insight into the role of leadership in managing diversity.

Having gone through the process of writing this section, we were able to consolidate a space in which we fortified our leadership learning. In order to be successful leaders, we should constantly evaluate ourselves to discover who we are and where we stand. In the same vein, our commitment to continue learning and participating in communities is







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necessary to make a positive impact. Yet, such assumptions should not be part of something that anyone can easily emulate if they so choose, but something that is genuine: authentic leaders.





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**Leadership Empowerment and Implications for the Future**

Leadership empowerment, as gathered from the review by Cheong et al. (2019), is a process that involves allocating power and delegating responsibility and autonomy to followers, fellow team members, or individuals in order to enhance motivation and success. Correspondingly, empowerment in the educational process translates into giving educators the opportunity to take on leadership roles to innovate and create skill sets, along with allowing those same educators to gain more knowledge, self-determination, and build a strong sense of identity. Taking ownership of leadership empowerment allows for the improvement of perceptions of professional assets, ultimately resulting in efficiency and better organization in the respective educational centers and communities.

Daft (2008) comments that “empowering workers enables leaders to create a unique organization with superior performance capabilities” (p. 243). Empowerment helps leaders channel their followers’ motivation to perform well, as the new sense of responsibility instills in them the motivation to improve their competence. This relinquishing and allocation of power, however, as revealed by Daft (2008), is not always well received as it shifts the power balance and disturbs hierarchies. Ahmad and Ghavifekr (2017) discuss that for traditional principals, for instance, this process may be conflicting as their position in the system is hierarchical in nature.





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Additionally, Ahmad and Ghavifekr (2017) point out the disconnect between planning and implementation, as for the most part, they have been carried out separately. One could argue that this is a result of a lack of leadership empowerment because perhaps if there were a power balance between administration, teachers, and students, the curriculum would be aligned and the bodies mentioned would have a deep sense of responsibility for its performance. This notion is supported by Yu et al. (2018), as their research goes over the positive implications of empowerment in organizations.

Our intention as teacher leaders is to act authentically as such; we will accept what has already been mapped out and provide a unique angle that increases collaboration. This is to create a continuous conversation on better ways to meet the needs and the global goal of an institution. Holding no position of authority does not make us diminished in our capabilities as teacher leaders. This is why, as empowered individuals, all we aim for is to make a positive impact on our community's own context. Daft (2008) emphasizes that leaders, "are based largely on the strength of the leader's personal power rather than on a position of authority granted by an organisation" (p. 356).

Through this process of learning and developing the qualities of teacher leaders, our future perspective, as a whole, lies in leading with a perceptiveness toward empathetic and empowering values. One outlook that facilitates the natural growth of ourselves and other individuals based on the motivation triggered by the creation of an environment that so permits. In the words of Daft (2008), "many other leaders have found that creating an





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environment where people feel valued is a key to high motivation” (p. 225). When we have such atmospheres that stimulate others, these same individuals will become enthusiastic about continuing to learn and thus grow in knowledge and skills. Consequently, this will also increase the performance levels that take them closer to the achievement of the intended goals. As teacher leaders, our future perspective path is one in which we use motivation to empower others. It is one that aims to be consistent and lead to long-term success.





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**Conclusion**

After going over the composition process of this section, we were able to visibly set out our forward-looking perceptiveness toward the authentic leadership we want to deliver via empowerment. Along with it, there is also a need to emphasize that each individual or member of a community is just as important as someone in a position of power. What we gathered is that through empowerment there is balance in terms of performance, collaboration, and growth toward defined goals.

Consequently, we believe that individuals' behaviors transcend the realms of productivity and how it plays a vital element in success. With this in mind, it is worth remarking on the importance of motivation and how it drives empowerment into behavioral attributes of initiation and achievement of goals. We should develop the potential and skills of individuals to create a continuous learning environment in which they can grow and perform at a greater standard.

If schools are to innovate, they should start by doing a retrospective self-analysis of their structures and operational systems, here they can assess what they have and find what may be missing and from there they can look into what they need to breach those gaps. Schools can focus on the environment, people, infrastructure, and available resources. One suggestion that can be put forward is that of seeking curriculum leadership and alignment to ensure innovation and quality of foreign language education. Namely, curriculum





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leadership is the active role of an individual who aims to align and improve curriculum elements. They not only provide vital balanced perspectives, but they also contribute inspiration and substantial modification to the necessary context. This suggests that by leading, balancing, and applying new approaches, they inspire others to participate in curriculum development as well, ultimately empowering all members of the educational community to be responsible and active members of this process.





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