

## Enabling Leadership: The Training Project “*Managing for @ School of Success*”

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### Abstract

This research presents the study of the impact of the community of practice as a strategy and process in developing the leadership training project - “*Managing for @ School of Success*”. This project originated in, and was coordinated by the Portuguese training centre – EduFor, which involved as international partners, other educational institutions in six different countries: Spain, England, Italy, Poland, the Netherlands and Portugal. The methodology followed was the case study, centred on the group of headteachers from the Portuguese schools involved in that training project. For data analysis, content analysis was used on the digital repository produced and disseminated so far, on different sites and platforms used in the training project. The results show conceptual changes in terms of Strategic Vision, Valuation of Intermediate Leadership, Results Assessment, Motivation and Involvement of Educational Actors. It should be added that the (re)orientation of Leadership practices was greatly favoured by the training environment – community of practice and learning – which allowed not only the problematization of individual learning questions but above all collaborative learning formed by collective appropriation of meanings to develop successful Leaderships of change. It therefore seems relevant to say that for this desired change, it will be interesting to consider similar training programmes to the one studied here to guide School Leaders and Managers in immersive environments with a strong tendency towards long-term training, as conceived and experienced in the “*Managing for @ School of Success*” training programme.

*Keywords:* leadership, leadership training, communities of practice and learning.



## **Introduction**

At times of rapid socio-economic, political, environmental and cultural transformations, school leadership and management are elements stimulating the dynamics of change processes in schools and consequently improved educational responses (Costa & Figueiredo, 2013). Today, the leadership challenge goes beyond a good manager or an excellent classroom teacher. New competences, new meanings and leadership styles have been subject to growing interest in order to determine the indicators that lead to greater effectiveness in schools (Schneckenberg, 2000).

By recognizing knowledge as a strategic factor of success (Tapscott, 2007), schools will have to operationalize this, not only in terms of pupils, but also in terms of teachers and leadership (intermediate and top). In general, change and improvement in practices occurs when people engage with their peers, identify a common domain, reflect on their practices and establish an organic way of working, as in the case of Communities of Practice (CoP), but this is rarely understood and studied as such.

CoP are precisely the knowledge resources, and more dynamic and versatile strategies for knowledge (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002), in which the natural ways of interacting, inherent to people's experience, creates an environment that potentiates change and improvement at both the individual and group level. Concerning training processes for school leadership, as yet there is no consensus about the best way to identify and prepare professionals for this function, finding a gap between the courses provided and the challenges to be overcome in schools' everyday life.

In this context, this research aims to contribute to reflection on training for school leadership, in order to help and inspire strategies that strengthen a training system to qualify even more the role of school leadership, in particular the head of the Group/School.

## **Literature Review**

### **Leadership: from the paradigms to the change factor**

In the organisational context, interest in the topic of leadership has increased significantly, as the need for discussion has led to successive focuses and listed various factors recorded not only in countless theories and models of leadership, but also in multiple approaches and definitions of the very concept (Cunha, Campos, Neves, Cabral-Cardoso, 2003; Caixeiro, 2014), making it practically impossible to form a single definition of leadership.

From a historical perspective, we can say that until the 1980s, three perspectives are generally accepted in conceptualizing leadership: Theory of Traits (Chiavenato, 1993; Yulk, 1994) Theory of Behavioural Styles (Lewin, Lippit & White 1939; Lippit & White 1960) and Contingency Theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Fiedler, 1970; Yulk, 1971). The first is based on studying the leader's personality traits through identification and characterisation of the leader's personal attributes. The second invokes observation and description of the behaviour adopted by the leader in exercising their functions for organisational effectiveness. The third emphasizes the context variables that influence and limit the effects of leadership.

However, from the 80s, triggered by countless criticisms of theories accepted until then new paradigms emerge, a movement commonly known as New Leadership, in which it is recognised that successful leadership: (i) is not just linked to the leader's personality traits (Stogdill, 1948); (ii) and depends on the particular context and adjustment of a differentiated

leadership (Silva, 2010). This change in the paradigm is based on the growing interest in organisational culture as an element determining organisational success and inherent to successful leadership (Schein, 1990; Costa, 1998; Costa 2000)

New theorizations then emerge, which besides including behavioural aspects and personality traits, also invoke new elements such as charisma, transformational capacity and typology of interactions and interests that are formed between all organisational members, giving rise to the Charismatic Leadership of House (1977), Transactional Leadership of Bass (1985) and Transformational Leadership of Burns (1978) and Schein (1990).

Faced with the multiple approaches presented by various authors, for economy we follow in this research the premise of a great number of authors “recognising that leadership involves a process of social influence, on a group of people” (Carapeto & Fonseca, 2006, p. 81), based on the definition proposed by the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) team, which takes the Leadership concept as «something that supposes a “collective addressee”, which differs from power, political behaviour, authority or social influence» (House, Hanges, Dorfman, Javidan, Dickson, & Gupta, 1999, p. 184). Leadership is therefore understood as an individual’s competence to motivate and involve the other subjects of the organisation, aiming to modify behaviours and capacities that increase the effectiveness and success of the organisation they belong to.

In this context, the concept of Leadership, although close to the concept of influence, is some way away from the concepts of power, authority and management. In fact, various authors (Tannenbaum et al., 1970; Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Yukl, 1994; Neves, 2000; quoted in Caixeiro 2014, pp. 137-140) consider the essence of Leadership includes the influence exerted over followers, but should not be confused with power or authority, since the former is limited to

control of people and processes and the latter to the hierarchical position occupied (Rego, 1998). In the line of thought of Rost and Smith (1992), Pina and Cunha (2000) point out the complementarity of Leadership and Management. Indeed, in the world of today's organisations, Management is inseparable from Leadership, as although of a diverging nature, both belong to a binomial that contributes to organisations' balance and sustainability faced with the growing complexity and capacity for change and innovation (Earley, 2002).

We highlight the work of Rowe (2001), which proposes a triangular model whose vertices identify Managerial Leadership, Visionary Leadership and Strategic Leadership, considering, in the author's interpretation of the last-named, that the role of manager co-exists with that of leader. Here, the author invokes characteristics founded on Visionary and Managerial Leadership which give body to Strategic Leadership, among which we highlight: (i) conjugating daily tasks with long-term responsibilities; (ii) discussion and development of strategies with an immediate impact but which ensure organisational stability and development in the long term; (iii) incorporation and distribution of responsibilities, believing in peers and subordinates' full performance.

Senge (2002) presented a new concept – Learning Organisation – to the conceptual understanding of Leadership. This led to the design of a set of competences good Leadership should consider (cf. Table 1), and above all, Leadership started to be understood as a factor of change, development and continuous improvement of the school, where it is recognised that learning communities are environments that favour strong collaborative cultures (Day, 2007; Goleman, 2002).

<b>Table 1.</b> The five disciplines of Senge (2002), adapted from Caixeiro (2014)	
<b>Disciplines</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Personal domain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Requires thorough knowledge of the path to follow, with a spirit of openness and creative attitude.</li> </ul>
<b>Mental models</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Acquisition of own ideas, firm suppositions based on values, principles and the capacity to understand others.</li> </ul>
<b>Construction of a shared vision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Defending important ideas but open to others' perspectives in order to create shared objectives.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning as a team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stimulating dialogue promotes work and learning in groups, pillars of organisational development.</li> </ul>
<b>Systemic thinking (the fifth discipline)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The organisation's vision is rather complex; the interconnection between all elements assumes that when one component changes, all change, also aiming to ensure dynamic balance.</li> </ul>

In this line of thought, Firmino (2010) states that “Leadership is inspired by vision, motivates teams towards innovative projects and draws up the strategy of change, in the medium and long term, which in no way is mistaken for a rigid perspective of strategic planning” (p. 112), just as Carapeto and Fonseca (2006) consider Leadership as “ the courage to innovate, capacity to enthuse others about shared projects” (p.82), or also Fullan (2003) when referring to effective Leadership:

Leading in a culture of change means creating a culture of change. It does not mean adopting innovations, one after the other; it means creating that capacity to search for, critically assess and incorporate new ideas selectively – constantly, both inside the organisation and outside it” (Fullan, 2003, p.51 apud Caxeiro, 2014, p.188)

In truth, change only happens if there is collective knowledge/recognition of the need to give appropriate responses at times of instability in organisations or at times of opportunity to innovate. Therefore, besides investing in training and technology, there must be a basis of collaborative creation of knowledge founded on a culture of collaborative practices which is

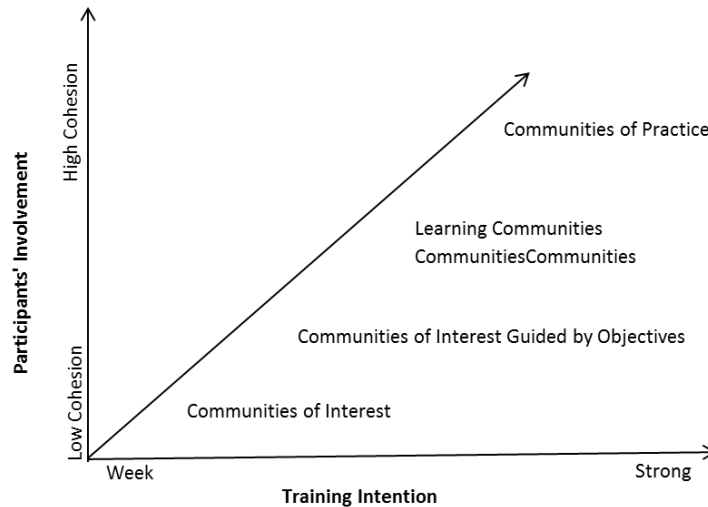
inevitably instigated in and by Leadership. In this context, communities of practice, by the characteristics that will be presented as follows, can be understood as a major strategy for training and enablement, and in particular a catalyst for the construction of successful Leadership.

### **Communities of Practice and Learning: strategy for training and enablement**

Having evolved alongside social and political movements, the concept of *community* is used with different meanings and for different purposes, and it is difficult to form a *theoretical corpus* about it (Illera, 2007 *apud* Lopes, 2012).

So it is from the 1990s, from studies about the learning theory of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, together with the development of web 2.0 tools that discussion intensifies about the different types of communities, as indeed is confirmed in the review by Misanchuk and Anderson (2001): a) learning communities (Hill & Raven, 2000; Dias, 2001); b) communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al, 2002; Gunawerdena et al, 2009) and c) virtual communities and/or online communities (Johnson, 2001; Preece, 2000).

To reach some agreement, Henry and Pudelko (2003) suggest the construction of preliminary boundaries, which serve as theoretical references, able to promote an understanding that allows: (i) recognising the diversity of communities and, at the same time, (ii) understanding their relationships and social activities, the processes of learning, sharing and building knowledge. In the authors' view, the various types of communities, Figure 1, are expressed in the successive relationship between the strength of the social bond (vertical axis) and the degree of intentionality (horizontal axis)



**Figure 1.** Different Communities according to their Context of Emergence.  
(Adapted from Henry & Pudelko, 2003)

At the lowest level of cohesion and training intentionality are Communities of Interest. These join people around a topic of common interest and community members' participation is centred on construction of knowledge for personal use for better understanding of a given matter. At the next level, we find Communities of Interest Guided by Objectives, which refer to specific needs to solve a particular problem or to define or carry out a project. Their duration is fixed according to the duration of the tasks proposed. The construction of knowledge results from discussing and sharing the different perspectives of each member aiming for common understanding in carrying out a project to solve a problem. Communities oriented to academic contexts of learning and training emerge at the next level – Learning Communities – formed of pupils, teachers, trainees from one or various institutions that can be geographically distant. The community's activity develops while carrying out educational programmes which promote the discussion, sharing and negotiation of meanings to construct individual and collective knowledge (learning). In the analysis of Watkins (2005), “community of learning means a collective which

is learning collectively, also about its own learning processes” (Cruz, 2010, p. 42). At the highest level of social cohesion and intentionality of training appear Communities of Practice (CoP), which develop between people who, in the real context, belong to the same profession and share the same working conditions. Sharing a common repertoire and building collective knowledge leads to the development and enhancement of professional practice, representing professional identity.

Wenger (1998) was the first author to draw attention to the importance of communities of practice in “*Communities of practice: learning, meaning, and identity*”. In his initial analysis, he identifies three dimensions “*what it is about*”, “*how it functions*” and “*what capability it has produced*” which define the meaning of community of practice. Subsequently, Wenger, McDermontt and Snyder (2002, p.4) define communities of practice as “*groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly*” and indicate three structural elements – domain, community and practice – that form the theoretical framework of the social theory of learning which the authors sought to develop.

The **domain** element is the basis for the existence of the CoP, since it is the subject of interest and identity of that community. The domain relates to the interactions between members of the community that form their commitment to share and collaborate, and “causes the belief there is a set of concerns and needs that interest those who belong and those who wish to enter” (Macário et al., 2010, p. 2). The **community** element is understood by the authors as a “factory of social learning”, in which a group of people learn from each other, with a communal attitude – each person accepts they are the builder of their own knowledge, the result of interaction with the others; a question of learning for and from the others (cf. Wenger et al., 2002). The community is formed by its members’ growing relationship of mutual belonging and

commitment in discussing and participating in joint activities. So value is given to “the existence of interactions and relationships based on mutual respect and trust, encouraging the sharing of ideas, admitting ignorance, asking difficult questions and listening carefully” (Cruz, 2010, p. 48). The **practice** element is no more than the specific knowledge developed, shared and held by the community. We can therefore say that the members of a CoP develop in a shared way a set of artefacts (experiences, stories and tools) that allow the formation of strategies to improve or face problems. Wenger and collaborators recognize in CoP not just a potential to generate knowledge but also a structure able to “host” knowledge and unleash real transformations, that which Wenger called “*ideal knowledge structure*” (2006, p.1). About this ideal knowledge structure, Lopes says that:

The people involved in a given community of practice benefit not only from the knowledge created and constructed in a particular situation, but also receive and administer in a dynamic and evolutionary way the knowledge that can come from one or various elements or the community itself as a system for discussing and producing knowledge. (Lopes, 2012, p. 49)

In this context, the challenge for CoP is to develop and enhance the professional practice resulting from the share and construction of knowledge among their members. Throughout the process, a professional identity is constructed in the course of learning that allows not only the development of professional practices but also the collaborative construction of knowledge (Fernandes et al., 2016).

## **Research Questions**

Considering the multi-dimensional, singular and dynamic nature of each educational institution, in this study we tried to understand how the community of practice developed in the course of the training project contributed to improving Leadership. Therefore, bearing in mind

the situation of the six school groups in the central region of the country and their involvement in the Erasmus project “*Managing for @ School of Success*”, we present the research questions:

- What aspects of Leadership were (re)learned during the training project?
- How does the CoP contribute to enabling Leadership?

## **Objectives**

To respond better to the above questions we establish as the objectives of this research:

- (i) To describe the Erasmus + training programme “*Managing for @ School of Success*”
- (ii) To form an appropriate reference to study the aspects (re)learnt, in the field of Leadership, by the headteachers involved in the training programme;
- (iii) To characterise the work domain, describe practices and narrate the community of practice as a favourable environment to construct knowledge and enable Leadership.

## **Methodology**

As methodology of a qualitative nature, we chose a case study (Yin, 2005; Stake, 2005), since the aim is to describe and interpret a contemporary situation, in its real context, with the unit of analysis being the group of headteachers in training. In order to obtain sufficient information throughout the study and ensure criteria of validity and reliability of the interpretations and conclusions, we used triangulation of techniques and instruments, which will be described below.

## **Instruments and Procedures**

To understand and analyse the context – Enabling Leadership: the “*Managing for @ School of Success*” project, we chose as research techniques documentary analysis and content analysis, and various documents were used as instruments, such as: the training plan, minutes from meetings, summaries of the activities carried out in the short staff training event, video recordings and presentations, assessment questionnaires, memoranda and access to the different platforms for communicating and spreading the work done in the course of the project. Given the qualitative nature of this study, the methodology used for data analysis was content analysis (Bardin, 2004), considering the recommendations of Coutinho (2011) for whom it is “a technique that consists of systematic evaluation of a corpus of text (or audiovisual material), in order to reveal and quantify the occurrence of words/phrases/themes considered as keys to allow subsequent comparison” (p. 193). Therefore, for content analysis we used the WebQDA program software to analyse qualitative data in a collaborative environment, in which 24 nodes were structured in tree form and two free nodes to proceed to the moment of coding from more than 60 different sources, a methodology described in Lopes, Vieira and Moreira (2013).

Taken as a reference was a segment of what is already applied by the General Inspectorate of Education and Science (IGEC) in external school assessment concerning the dimension of *Leadership and Management*, systematized in the following table:

<b>Table 1.</b> Systems of Categories to assess the impact of leadership training in the “ <i>Managing for @ School of Success</i> ” project		
Categories	Indicators	Descriptors
Strategic Vision	I1:Structuring planning for Organisational and Professional development centred on public service provision;	D1:Describe / present (characteristics, experiences, episodes)
	I2:Actions to mobilize the community	
Valuing Intermediate Leadership	I3:Inventivo à participação das Lideranças Intermédias	D2:Ask / explain (doubts, explanations, justifications, clarifications)
	I4:Sharing responsibility with Intermediate Leadership	
Openness to Innovation, Projects and Partnerships	I5: Developing Projects, Partnerships and Innovative Solutions	D3:Integrate / reformulate (knowledge, priorities, commitments)
	I6:Results Assessment	
Motivating People and Conflict Management	I7:Involvement of different Educational Agents	
	I8:Conflict Management Procedures	

To ensure greater knowledge of the context, we also used information obtained from an interview with the head of EduFor and coordinator of this training project. As an observer participating in the work done in this training project, it was deemed necessary to cross the results obtained from content analysis with information and training design options so as to give the study greater validity.

### **Training Project “*Managing for @ School of Success*”: from the context to strategic planning**

The policy of questioning, debate and analysis focused on training service provision by the EduFor centre has constructed over the years a solid basis of collaborative work in a network and in innovative learning environments, and the problematization of the most topical situations in education and training, particularly regarding education in five local authorities in the district of

Viseu. The “*Managing for @ School of Success*” project emerges as a need to equip the headteachers of the six School Groups associated with EduFor with better Leadership skills, and consequently improve the educational service provided. It was therefore established that in the set of European educational systems, the areas of Autonomy, Curriculum and Schools’ Internal and External Assessment were of interest for Leadership training. In the European framework of educational policies, five clusters are recognized:

*C1. Centralized systems with limited school autonomy, including countries such as Portugal and France;*

*C2. Predominantly centralized systems with certification, such as those in Greece, Italy and Romania;*

*C3. Federal systems with regional importance, in countries such as Germany, Spain and Belgium;*

*C4. Cooperative systems between state and local government, in countries such as Denmark, Finland and Poland;*

*C5. Decentralized systems with considerable school autonomy, in countries such as Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (England – with great curricular autonomy)*

This reading established the criteria for the selection of international partners so that headteachers in training could find out about, study and follow constructively different European schools with different degrees of autonomy in operation with different curricular designs and other forms of assessment. Therefore, and according to the clusters identified above, other five partners joined the project design: Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, Italy and England, whose

request for funding was accepted by the National Agency in the field of Erasmus + Projects in Key-Action 2 (KA2 - *Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices, Strategic Partnerships for school education*).

With the intention to involve other educational and school situations, the project established as general objectives:

- (i) «learn about and share experiences of school management, in different European contexts, with various actors and typologies of responsibility distribution»;
- (ii) «identify experiences of different levels of school management, in effective management promoting a smart school»;
- (iii) «promote innovation in school management, in shared, international reflection on experiences and innovative strategies developed at the local level»;
- (iv) «produce and spread knowledge about local, municipal and national policies able to change stakeholders' perceptions».

To achieve these aims, the training project will last 3 years, beginning in September 2015 and ending in August 2018. At the planning stage four *Transnational Project Meetings* were forecast, for initial, intermediate and final assessment of the work carried out and/or in development, together with six training activities - *Short-Term Joint Staff Training Events* - devoted to specific work in the areas of Autonomy, Curriculum and Assessment, in 5-day exchange meetings in each partner country.

Planning also forecasts 13 outputs, among which we highlight: the “Digital Diary” of each training event; the project’s website <http://schoolsucces.edufor.eu/uk/index.html>; E-book “M@SS” and the International Seminar “*Managing for @ School of Success*” as the Multiplier Event to spread the work done throughout the training.

Therefore, focusing on a policy of headteacher training, shared in the contexts of other countries, this project aims to inspire the heads of six school groups in the central region to develop consistent, systematic actions, in the medium and long term, to bring innovation in implementing good practice in school management and leadership. Autonomy and accountability are key-axes of this training programme articulated and integrated in a community of practice that potentiated learning and the production of references for stronger, informed Leadership.

### **Participants**

Although the conception of the “*Managing for @ school of Success*” training project included the participation of two distinct groups (Group A - headteachers / presidents / consultants / assessors; Group B – clerical / administrative employees) coordinated by the EduFor training centre, this study only considered a sub-group of group A, formed of (Portuguese) headteachers associated with EduFor. This option is also due to only considering for analysis of the impact on Leadership a reference used in Portugal, which naturally responds to what is expected of successful Leadership in the national context.

### **Characterisation of the Sample**

The target group is formed of six School Group headteachers from five local authorities in the district of Viseu. Distribution by gender is balanced, 50% being female and 50% male. As for age, 67% of headteachers are between 45 and 55 and the remaining 33% between 55 and 65. Regarding areas of training and recruitment groups, there is complete heterogeneity of areas: GR230 (Mathematics and Natural Sciences), GR330 (English), GR500 (Mathematics), GR520 (Biology and Geology), GR410 (Philosophy) and GR910 (Special Needs Education). As for academic qualifications, all have a degree and two followed specialized training. In addition, two headteachers have a master and one a Ph.D. None of the post-graduate qualifications is in the

area of School Administration, Management and Organisation. Finally, concerning years of service in performing top leadership duties, three headteachers have less than 5 years, one headteacher less than 15 years and one headteacher with over 25 years.

## Presentation and Discussion of the Results

Table 2 presents the complete results for each category and indicator considered in the reference for assessing the impact of leadership training in the “*Managing for @ School of Success*” project. In a first analysis, we can say that the categories of *Strategic Vision and Motivating People and Conflict Management* were coded most in the set of sources taken as the basis of our work. So questions related to structuring planning for organisational and professional development focused on providing the educational service, the relevance of initiatives to mobilize the community, and encouraging the participation of the different educational agents seem to have been the indicators warranting most attention from the training group.

<b>Table 2. Matrix of the Generic Results for Leadership</b>								
	<b>Categories</b>							
	<b>Strategic Vision</b>		<b>Valuing Intermediate Leadership</b>		<b>Openness to Innovation, Projects and Partnerships</b>		<b>Motivating People and Conflict Management</b>	
<b>Indicators</b>	Organisational & Professional Planning	Mobilizing the Community	Encouraging Participation LI	Sharing Responsibilities LI	Developing Projects, Partnerships Innovative Solutions	Assessment of Results	Involvement of Educational Agents	Conflict Management Procedures
<b>Total</b>	167	41	20	28	27	36	65	17

However, a greater number of code units or excerpts may not mean the real impacts of the training on headteachers, particularly in the competences of Leadership. Therefore, a deeper analysis, using the descriptors, allowed a more consistent reading of the data. Table 3 presents the number of codes made in each descriptor for each of the eight indicators.

**Table 3.** Matrix of the Specific Results for Leadership

	<b>Describe/ Present</b> [characteristics; experiences; episodes]	<b>Question / Explain</b> [doubts; explanations; justifications; clarifications]	<b>Include/ Reformulate</b> [knowledge; priorities; commitments]
	<b>D1</b>	<b>D2</b>	<b>D3</b>
I1: Organisational and Professional Planning	47	61	59
I2: Mobilizing the Community	10	11	20
I3: Encouraging Participation Intermediate Leadership	2	8	10
I4: Sharing Responsibilities Intermediate Leadership	9	7	12
I5: Development of Projects, Partnerships, Innovative Solutions	7	8	12
I6: Assessment of Results	9	11	16
I7: Involvement of Educational Agents	10	23	32
I8: Conflict Management Procedures	9	3	5

At this stage of analysing the results, we leave the totals to now make an intrinsic analysis of each category, trying to extract meanings from the numerical “jumps” between the three descriptors – Describe/Present (D1), Question/Explain (D2) and Include/Reformulate (D3).

In the category of *Strategic Vision*, regarding indicator 1 – Planning, a certain regularity is found for the number of excerpts in D1(47), D2(61) and D3(59). The tendency of the greatest number of excerpts, centralized in D2 is explained by the heterogeneity of the training group and

consequently by the natural need to give extra clarification to the doubts raised among the trainees regarding the different typologies of organisational and professional development. So there was a great sharing of experiences, integrating knowledge from different school situations.

Some examples from the coded excerpts follow:

The project “Managing for @ School of Success” have allowed us to observe, analyze and share the educational contexts of different European countries (C2\_May 2017))

But if functional and structural changes seem easier to implement here in Portugal (at least some of them), pedagogical and management practices are not so easy to change (C3\_February 2017)

I further involved the Pedagogical Council and the General Council in decisions about the life and future of the School (C2\_May 2017)

The time to reflection on the last day was very useful to make us think about possible changes to improve our school (C4\_November 2016)

For indicator 2 – Mobilizing the Community, we observe a growing tendency in the descriptors D1(10), D2(11) and D3(20), and the last-named accumulates almost 50% of the excerpts. This result shows an expressive “jump” regarding the reformulation of priorities and forming commitment to joint actions to involve the community, particularly in initiatives to help the quality of education, as shown by the following records:

As far the school’s relationship with the surrounding community, besides top and intermediate management, this is another aspect I want to highlight in this project. (C1\_April 2016)

I became more bold. I made a school success promotion project that involved all local entities, and shared them with the success of the students. (C2\_May 2017)

I have also met with groups of parents, mainly with those whose children are going to move to a new study cycle, to exchange perspectives and information about the school educational offer. (C2\_May 2017)

(...) to provide the school community with tools to correct and improve their functioning. (C4\_November 2016)

As for the category of *Valuing Intermediate Leadership*, the results for indicators I3 – Encouraging Participation and I4 – Sharing Responsibilities, in the three descriptors, present

similar behaviour [I3: D1(2), D2(2) and D3(10); I4: D1(9), D2(7) and D3(12)] and so we present a joint analysis. Standing out is the low number of records in D1 for indicator 3, and the convergence of approximately 50% of the excerpts in D3 for both indicators (I3 and I4). These results indicate that describing experiences or identifying cases related to intentional practices that encourage the participation of Intermediate Leadership was residual, compared to the number of registers concerning the reformulation of priorities and forming commitments (D3) to Valuing Intermediate Leadership: both in encouraging participation and in sharing responsibilities, as revealed in the following excerpts:

I was more persistent in aspects like the analysis of academic results, contributing with my personal reflection to the reflection of the teachers in the curricular groups. (C4\_May 2017)

I have invested more in valuing and training people, coordinating with training entities (...). (C3\_February 2017)

I have delegated more roles and responsibilities to be free for key aspects of management, such as visiting schools, listening to people, and networking with external school partners. (C4\_May 2017)

In the category of *Openness to Innovation, Projects and Partnerships*, in indicator 5 – Development of Projects, Partnerships and Innovative Solutions, a growing tendency is observed in the number of records in the descriptors D1(7), D2(8) and D3(12). This infers that the training was a space to discuss the need for Leadership to take on a more pro-active role in developing Projects and Partnerships and become a catalyst of innovative solutions for the development and provision of better educational service. Similarly, in indicator 6 – Assessment of Results, in terms of Projects, Partnerships and Innovative Solutions, D1(9), D2(11) and D3(16), the results of the descriptors show the central nature of the discussion/integration of learning and growing recognition of assessment as an instrument for the trainees (headteachers) to improve and respond to the needs of pupils, teachers and the community in general.

(...) Dutch partners led me to understand more intensely the need for schools of innovative leaders, leaders who think of students and their life project and to think of concrete organizational responses to the learning and development needs of students (C4\_November 2016)

I could identify some aspects where I have been able to intervene. Despite the few financial resources, it was possible to start a humanization process of the school spaces, by painting some rooms with lovely colors, motivational phrases and comfortable furniture. This is an ongoing process. (C2\_May 2017)

I realized that along with the freedom of initiative in the creation of educational projects and in the hiring of people, there is the responsibility to be accountable for the results of the project (C2\_May 2017)

(...) to provide education decision makers with decision support elements (C5\_ November 2017)

Finally, in the category of *Motivating People and Conflict Management*, indicator 7 – Involvement of Educational Agents, was found to present a considerable number of excerpts in D1(10), D2(23) and D3(32) unlike what was recorded in indicator 8 – Conflict Management Procedures, for D1(9), D2(3) and D4(5). The results of I7 strengthen the previous analysis in the category of *Strategic Vision*, agreeing with the need for Leadership to recognize the quality of the educational service, the natural involvement of all Educational Agents, not only inside the organisation-school, but also external ones, in a systemic and holistic Strategic Vision of Education.

I intend to promote the opening up of the classroom not only as a physical space, but also as a place to share experiences with other actors, placing the emphasis on each pupil's full development (C5\_ November 2017)

On the other hand I try to get students and parents more involved in educational issues. Every three months I meet with the classes representatives in order to listen to the problems that might have occurred, to ask for suggestions and proposals for school intervention (C2\_May 2017)

And we could also see that teachers worked together, inside and outside classrooms. And not only teacher... When municipality (politicians), headmasters and companies (business organizations) got together in meetings, they did it in a very constructive way, they had fruitful discussions, trying always to do more and better things for their students' future and always defending the quality of education (C2\_May 2017)

I learned from our partners' schools how important it is to have teachers together at school instead of working alone at home so as to provide experiences that allow teachers to plan

lessons, discuss student performance, curricula, as well as, provide encouragement and support. (C5\_November 2017)

To analyse the results in I8, attribution of meaning was only possible through triangulation of the information gathered from the interview with the director of EduFor. In fact, the low number of excerpts in indicator 8 is explained by the context of the Portuguese schools involved in the project, i.e., they are schools without serious discipline problems or other conflicts of a professional nature. So we can understand for indicator 8, there is a falling tendency of the descriptors D1(9), D2(3) and D4(5), with concentration on the description of experiences and presentation of characteristics in Conflict Management procedures to foreign trainee colleagues.

As was mentioned in the methodology, two free nodes were created: CL1 – Collaborative work and CL2 – Headteacher competences, in order to seek in the coding process evidence in support of collaborative work to build a community of practice as an environment potentially developing leadership competences. Coded in CL1 were 99 excerpts, and in CL2, 52 excerpts. These results clearly express the importance of the training having been carried out in an environment of collaborative work to form an international collaboration network regarding Leadership – Community of Practice. The following excerpts support our reasoning:

To share and discuss with other educational actors and stakeholders new possibilities of networking regarding educational issues (C3\_February 2017)

The moments for discussion of topics among partners have been an important part of the meeting (C4\_November 2016)

As meetings and training events succeed I think partners have opportunity to deep their professional relationship (C2\_May 2017)

A really positive aspect is the relationship between all the participants; over the nationality all of us try to share experiences and ways of work (C2\_May 2017)

I would highlight the work collaboration and the tolerance to speak. I was so comfortable. (C5\_November 2017)

(...) positive feeling of sharing a common experience, interpersonal relationship, stimulus to bring some positive change in every participant's school (C2\_May 2017)

I learned that you can change a learning community if you manage to communicate clearly with them (...)(C4\_November 2016)

We can learn much from each other without getting something right or wrong. (C5\_November 2017)

(...) to develop, transfer and implement communication platforms (C1\_April 2016)

## **Conclusions**

Returning to the theoretical framework established initially, we present the concluding synthesis for the two research questions formed to carry out this study.

### **What aspects of Leadership were (re)learnt in the course of the training project?**

The results obtained allow the conclusion that, generally speaking, the training project contributed to developing Strategic Leadership (Rowe, 2001). Indeed, the possibility of new designs of organisational planning, the need to incentivise participation and share responsibilities with Intermediate Leadership, the need for the constant involvement of educational agents in actions with an impact on the quality of school learning and results assessment coming to be understood as a regulatory element generating quality in educational service, are aspects with a higher value of integration/reformulation at the time of the study. Indeed, from the outset, Strategic Vision was found to be most coded dimension, clearly reconfiguring Leadership as a factor of change (Fullan, 2003), supporting the new conceptual understanding of Leadership, added by Senge (2002) – Learning Organisation. So it is in the set of competences presented by that author that we can also point out the incorporation of training in enabling Leadership. Here, we return to the *theoretical corpus*, the most developed competences: (i) Personal domain – more informed knowledge about the different educational situations in Europe, which are subject

to: different degrees of autonomy, different curricular designs and different forms of assessment; (ii) Mental Models – construction of a cognitive architecture open to others’ perspectives; (iii) Construction of a shared vision – framed by a creative and shared position, and (iv) Learning in a Team – potentiated by the development of the community of practice, which leads us to answering the second research question:

### **How does the CoP contribute to enabling Leadership?**

About the CoP, we conclude that the dynamics promoted by the different training activities helped to emancipate decisively a whole set of single affects and professional states that revitalized school Leadership practices. In truth, the elements of domain, community and practice belong completely to this training group, since the subjects of interest – Autonomy, Curriculum and Assessment – determined the community’s very identity, in which its members undertook shared and collaborative work. It was a case of learning for and from others in a growing relationship of belonging and mutual commitment, finally developing a shared set of artefacts (experiences, narratives and tools) that allowed forming strategies to improve or face problems in their professional practice, in this particular case school Leadership. We therefore consider that the CoP facilitated not only the formation of a collaborative professional bond between the headteachers, but above all the formation of significant learning for the construct of enabling Leadership. As a final reflection, it seems relevant to say that for this desired change, it would be interesting to replicate similar leadership training programmes involving immersive environments with a strong tendency towards long-term training, as indeed was designed and experienced in the “*Managing for @ School of Success*” training programme.

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