

**LEI
WCDL**

Programa de liderazgo
para una educación
integral en contextos
desfavorecidos

Programa de liderança
para a educação
integral em contextos
desfavorecidos

Leadership Programme
for a Whole Child
Development in
Disadvantaged Contexts



CHANGING EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS THROUGH A WCD LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME¹ POSITION PAPER

PROGRAMA DE LIDERAZGO PARA UNA EDUCACIÓN INTEGRAL (LEI)

MARCO TEÓRICO Y DOMINIOS DE ACTUACIÓN
DOCUMENTO DE BASES

Executive Summary
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1. This research project is supported by Porticus, an international organisation that develops and manages the grant-giving programmes of the charitable entities established by Brenninkmeijer family entrepreneurs.



BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF THE WCDL PROGRAMME

Through education, children and young people, especially those facing extreme adversities are best placed to develop all their potential, with the aim of promoting the common good.

In 2018, Porticus Iberia commissioned two of its partners with experience in the field of education, the *European Foundation for Society and Education* (EFSE) in Spain, and the *Centro de Estudos dos Povos e Culturas de Expressão Portuguesa* (CEPCEP) at the Portuguese Catholic University, to design and pilot a leadership programme for integral education in a group of 13 to 15 Portuguese and Spanish public schools, with students in situations of adversity. This model of leadership aims to assist in establishing educational methods for achieving whole child development (WCD) of students which, through its management function, creates a culture of change driven by principals, head teachers and motivated management teams, and involves all stakeholders in the school community, namely, teachers, parents and pupils.

This executive summary provides an overview of the research teams' proposals in their *Whole Child Development Leadership Programme (WCDL)* through which they aim to address the situation of particularly vulnerable students.

The researchers' initial premise in their work was based on the assumption that school is a place which will have a profound effect on a person's growth and maturity. The authors' hypothesis is based on a concept of whole child education which transcends the mere acquisition of specific skills, mastering routines and using tools or internalising skills, or developing them in the service of their profession or their life. This education goes further: educating every individual is not just about enhancing a person's existence, but is designed to help them fulfil themselves as a human being, that is, learning to be a man, to be a woman; this means encouraging habits, creating and communicating values, in particular, intellectual and moral values, because these are what help us to grow and which mark us out as human beings, enabling us to reflect and to act, developing our conscience and enabling our freedom, that is, individuals whose actions are governed by reason and whose ethical and moral choices give purpose and meaning to everything they do. In practice, a WCD programme systematically addresses education in its entirety, the curriculum, the methods, and the success achieved, all of which are the result of group action that involves, albeit each in their own way, the entire educational community, students, teachers and their families.

Furthermore, the researchers' vision for WCD is more than just the sum of several different, carefully detailed and independent aspects of a person; each individual is seen instead as a unique and special indivisible unit, which in practice, is part of an indissoluble and interconnected whole. As a result, strengthening the importance inherent in every individual per se - and also the importance that we attribute to them is the ongoing task for educators. Education, which is concerned with transmitting culture, will always provide the opportunity to defend and protect human dignity.



The human dimensions that shape a person are formed in history, through action and not just through discourse. A human being requires a lifetime of good habits and repeated actions to become a fully rounded person. However, education generally tends to consider only specific educational activities and this has repercussions that are then erroneously assessed: the reality is that in terms of the most profound aspects of a human being, specific or particular interventions cannot have any real or lasting effect.

The education received by every student throughout their schooldays should be founded on a desire to include all aspects of their personality in the teaching-learning process; and also to inculcate high expectations in them all, irrespective of the conditions or difficulties arising from their social or cultural origin, race, gender or religion. This is the framework for an anthropological reflection based on the radical dignity of every person, as a rational being, free and ethical, capable of self-control.

The six dimensions of a person that have been identified, and which are addressed in this WCD programme, are listed below.

- The physical dimension, which represents the core of an integral ecology.
- Cognitive intellectual dimension.
- Emotional dimension.
- Aesthetic-artistic dimension.
- Social and civic dimension.
- Ethical-moral/spiritual dimension.

The theory of the WCDL programme was devised following an extensive review of diverse literature in the field. This includes the most relevant theoretical and empirical scientific literature on school leadership in disadvantaged contexts, as well as guidelines from several international bodies in this regard. A full review was also carried out on the skills and training programmes by school management used in different countries, and several projects designed to promote effective management of schools in adverse environments, which can be taken as models of reference for this programme.



DEFINITION, GOALS AND NATURE OF WHOLE CHILD EDUCATION LEADERSHIP IN DISADVANTAGED CONTEXTS

This leadership programme provides whole child development (WCD) for students from adverse social backgrounds. The WCDL programme's activities encompass all the different dimensions of a person, who grows and develops in a school conceived as a community of civic learning and cultural transfer.

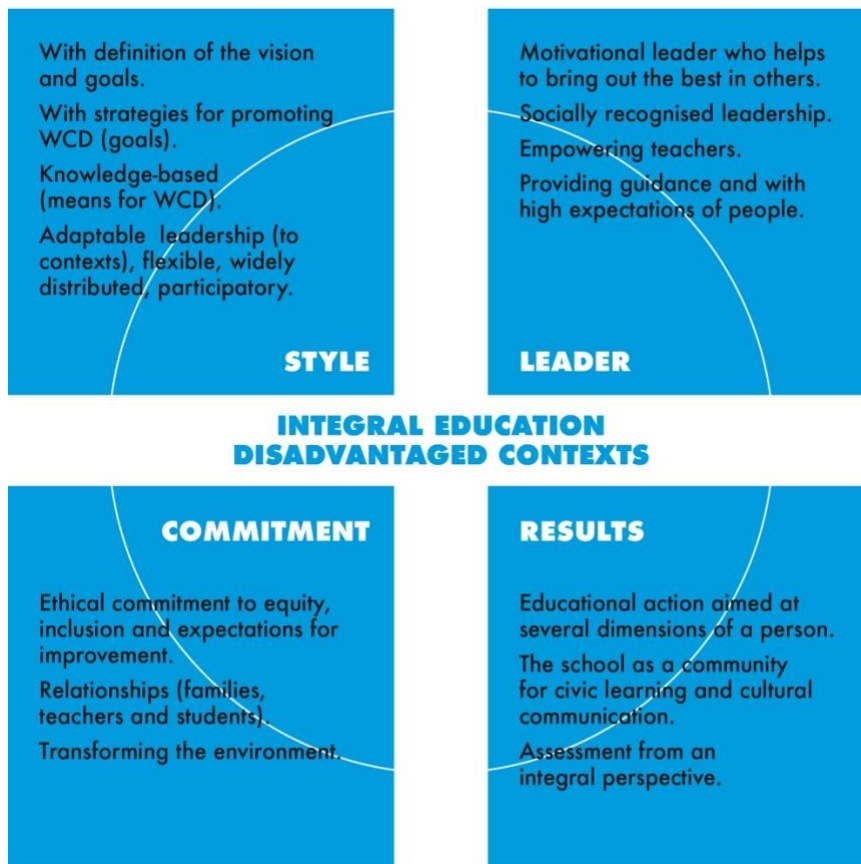
Leadership in WCD differs from other existing models as it has specific elements that differentiate it and which "permeate" to many other aspects of its implementation.

1. Leadership for WCD presupposes a change in paradigm for schools and for teachers. It requires time and effort. Educational leaders need to assume the role of "destabilising" the organisation, requiring its members to continuously question what they are doing and why they are doing it, how they do it and who they are doing it for.
2. Emphasis is placed on the student's integral education, as all the activities of the school consider the student as a whole, taking into consideration the different aspects (physical, cognitive, emotional, creative, social and spiritual) of the person. The purpose of this type of leadership is to prepare students who are able to recognise their inalienable rights as persons, inculcating in them high expectations of their current and future possibilities, and enabling them to transform the particularly difficult environments from which they come.
3. Training "in and about" the six aspects identified is complex, and rarely are these independent of each other. These human dimensions are formed in history, and through action and not just through discourse. Furthermore, they are not formed in isolation but are interconnected, which is very important. Despite attempts to define and differentiate these aspects, they should also continue to be seen as an interrelated whole, as this is how they actually develop and work, fully integrated in the person as an indivisible whole.
4. WCDL is a programme designed specifically for schools working in very adverse areas. The aim is to address the most severely deprived contexts where education requires a greater transformational power to ensure fairness and equity and to improve the conditions of a student's immediate environment (family, emotional welfare, safety, intellect and wellbeing). WCDL takes an optimistic view for students' present and for their future. Furthermore, precisely because of particularly challenging contexts, a leadership of this type is characterised by its aim to open up and relate to the environment, becoming as a result a point of reference for the students' transformation and improvement.
5. The WCDL programme intends to recover the Roman idea of *auctoritas*, as that which encourages membership of the organisation by setting an example and through the leaders' own convictions. The underlying idea is that those closest to the leader will improve, and change from within, bringing out the best in themselves, always with a **widely distributed leadership** in mind, in which the role of the organisation's *natural leaders* is valued and integrated in the new project.



6. The actual leaders' ethical commitment is a necessary condition in this type of school, alongside an undertaking to ensure equity, inclusion and expectations for improvement of both students and their environment.
7. This leadership is flexible and adapted to the context, providing guidance and giving importance to supporting teachers, students and families.
8. The relationship system, the **school climate** is another essential factor of WCDL. This leadership establishes specific relations with each member of the educational community: with families (respecting environments and qualifying who does what, while at the same permeating areas to a certain extent); with teachers (who are set goals for learning, reassessing their professional competence and their role in conveying culture and knowledge as a tool for promoting WCD); and with students (whose educational development is viewed as a multi-dimensional whole). As a result, this leadership considers the school as a community, as a space for learning civics (a vision that bears a resemblance to the service to the *polis*).

In short, despite defining the common goal of the programme, its resources and some of its specific goals need to be tailored to each particular school and defined by them. **From a shared vision, each school should create its own particular mission and vision.**





DOMAINS OF ACTION FOR LEADERSHIP AND WHOLE CHILD EDUCATION IN DISADVANTAGED CONTEXTS.

The school is a genuine instrument for building a whole human being, as students spend a considerable part of their lives in that institution. The school does not just provide preparation for life, the school is life itself, an experience in relations and education. Leadership strategies can help to encourage a school culture where horizons of hope are not excluded. The school can be a place for experiencing freedom, developing intelligence and for seeking the truth, opening up to horizons of hope, solidarity and ethical action.

The main approach of WCDL is based on the belief that all students have an extraordinary value as complex human beings, with many more dimensions than the merely cognitive one. This consideration of the person from the anthropological perspective, as an inalienable integrated unit, is especially decisive in difficult and disadvantaged social, economic, and cultural environments and contexts.

WCD leadership in disadvantaged areas is a journey of reinvention, which presents itself as an educational project that aims to transform all members of the educational community, determined to anticipate hope for the future.

WCDL specifically places emphasis on four fields of activity, or domains, which are considered essential in the literature on educational leadership. Namely: a specific vision of the school that is conveyed to members of the educational community, a new organisational approach, an interpretation of the curriculum, and an ongoing process of development, monitoring and support in relations with teachers, families and students¹⁹

A vision for the school with WCD leadership

One of the challenges faced by any leadership style is that of creating a model for action based on a vision that imagines paths for the future, that takes decisions and assumes risks and adversities, that creates a school culture, and that bases its curriculum on a philosophy and pedagogy of learning.

In **disadvantaged environments**, the **central role of the school** should be to upturn student's low expectations, not just in terms of academic results, but also in relation to their potential value in contributing to society through their behaviour, their future careers, and their contribution to improving their environment. In this way, the school becomes a cultural and civil learning community. To achieve this, the vision and goals of the school need to be made explicit. They include an **unequivocal commitment to equity, inclusive participation and the integral development and wellbeing of students**, which should be shared by the whole institution.

As a result, **communicating the vision** for the school as a task of the principal and the whole educational community is an essential component of this programme. Creating the time and space to effectively communicate this vision through what we have termed "widely distributed leadership" will be the first action of a programme of this kind. Sharing a passion for these transformational goals could provide the initial impetus for improvement.



This collective vision will be based on excellent educational quality, integrated development of students and equity ("ensuring that every pupil receives what they need to develop all their potential").

WCDL and organisational approach

In order to develop integrated education in disadvantaged contexts, the school faces the fundamental challenge of finding an organisational response based on its own dynamic, specific models of equity and inclusive participation, making good use of time and resources, creating teams of educators who will work together, exchanging experiences and monitoring activities and which, by ethical imperative, seeks to ensure the well-being of all.

The institutional structure, organisation of school time and resources, a culture of participation and team work should be put to the service of the WCDL vision and goals. To achieve this, the institutional structure should facilitate and support participation of the whole community from the aforementioned concept of widely distributed leadership. Notwithstanding, WCDL is not a closed or regulatory programme but rather it aims to promote areas of **freedom**, encouraging and supporting personal or group initiatives. In this way, acceptance of diversity is encouraged, along with a respect for different sensitivities. Through all this, WCDL places the **student firmly at the centre** of school organisation.

WCDL and curricular approach

One of the fundamental challenges of WCDL is to ensure that the school will be effective in ensuring the **student's whole learning** process. This learning is a much deeper concept that goes beyond the mere acquisition of content, as it is designed to promote growth of the person in all aspects (in particular, the six dimensions established in our proposed concept of whole education: physical, cognitive, emotional, aesthetic-artistic, social and civic, and ethical-moral-spiritual). As a result, this should be the aim in **planning, developing and assessing the curriculum**.

This programme will advocate a skills-based approach to the teaching-learning process, although not in the purely formal sense of the term; that is, it is not a question of promoting skills over content, but rather a pedagogical process that will enable students to understand the world, and better understand themselves so that they acquire the wherewithal to act in that world.

In order to achieve this, a school inspired by WCDL will have an **innovative and enriched curricular project** that is motivational for both students and teachers. Although this programme will be adapted to and abide by any regulations in force, it cannot be predefined by an external agent, but instead should be flexible, adaptable to the specific setting of the school. In the Portuguese context, these challenges are particularly true and relevant, because national educational policies are based on a new approach of autonomy and curricular flexibility.

While **teaching methods** used in each school may vary, approaches like cooperative learning, project-based learning or service-learning are of interest. In particular, this last model that is designed to respond to the needs of the community where the school is located and to optimise



the students' learning experience, may be an effective mechanism for achieving a whole education, as students put into practice the knowledge from the curriculum in a real environment and in service to the community, helping to improve their academic performance as well as their civic commitment.

In this journey towards the creation of a WCD programme for students, a way must be found to enable them to participate in planning educational activities and in creating areas for consideration of the efficacy of developing all aspects and components of the curriculum, making this an active instrument of learning and not a mere "recipe for teaching".

WCDL and personal development: motivation, support and assessment

Basic factors underpinning WCDL are the development of all those who form part of the school community and the creation of relations. In line with the terms of the section on vision above, WCDL aims to create schools as spaces of freedom and respect that encourage and promote collaboration among teachers, families and community. It is thus a question of considering the needs of teaching and non-teaching staff in each school, and establishing ways to involve families and co-operate with the surrounding environment. In addition, WCDL considers it particularly important to **support individuals in their efforts to comply with the programme goals** and to record their progress and achievements, so that there will be **ongoing feedback** on how the programme is working, highlighting any problems and noting how to resolve them. The WCDL programme includes the design of some tools and processes for monitoring and obtaining data, and evidence of specific actions carried out using the WCDL approach. As a result, assessment is part of the route map of this leadership programme, with substantive elements that include definition of goals, strategies, expected changes, drawing up criteria and indicators, monitoring processes, compilation of information, reflection, proposed measures and plans for improving the school.

Opening up to the surrounding community and maintaining a positive image of the school are also fundamental. Any gaps in the requirements or needs of a school may be partially resolved by making the most of available resources in the community. Everything around and in the vicinity of the school can be an opportunity for learning. Efforts should be made to forge links and engage with people, groups or organisations in the area to help students in their process of integral development.

In conclusion, the WCD leadership programme proposes a different model that instead of being bureaucratic, executive, and with a linear vision based on planning and at times on sterile and static reports and control mechanisms, is based on organizing learning with a shared vision, works in teams to create specific dynamics where members interact, allows professional mobility and, above all, where leadership is based on the transformational design of an educational reality which is seen as a process of ongoing assessment and improvement.



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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND AREAS OF ACTIVITY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR SOCIETY AND EDUCATION (EFSE)
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL STUDIES

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WCDL PROGRAMME COORDINATION

Miguel Ángel Sancho (EFSE)

Lola Velarde (EFSE)

TECHNICAL TEAM

Mercedes Esteban Villar. Research Coordinator

Director of the Institute of Educational and Social Studies (EFSE).

Livia de Cendra. Project Assistant

Ana Rey. Technical Office

RESEARCH TEAM

SPAIN (coordinators)

Arturo Galán (IP). UNED.

Inmaculada Egido. UCM.

David Reyero. UCM.

Mireia Tintoré. UIC.

PORTUGAL (collaborators)

Rodrigo Queiroz e Melo. Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

José Maria de Almeida. Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

José Reis Lagarto. Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

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