

WCDL TRAINING COURSE: LEARNINGS AND GLOBAL ASSESSMENT

Based on a conceptual model of whole child development (WCD)¹ the training course was grounded on two main premises: the need to address the harmonious development of a person in all their dimensions, and the importance of working in particularly difficult contexts, where educational activities can have greater transformational power in achieving equity and fairness, and improving the family, emotional, safety, intellectual and wellbeing aspects of students' lives.

The *Whole Child Development Leadership* training course aims to put into practice a set of theoretical skills which will help to improve the decision making process, through a learning process based on a case study method. It focuses on four areas or domains of activity that the educational leadership research literature describes as substantive:

- a) a specific vision of the school that is conveyed to members of the educational community;
- b) a new approach for the organisation;
- c) a reinterpretation of the curriculum and
- d) an ongoing process of development, monitoring and support in relations with teachers, families and students.

1. A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION MODEL

Assessment of the WCDL training course can be considered as part of what has been characterised as a *comprehensive evaluation strategy*. This implies prioritising the subjective meaning given by the participants in the programme, and hence the main analyses were based on the perceptions and assessments of the teams themselves, here in their role as students, using the following tools and techniques:

1. An assessment questionnaire to be completed at the end of each module. The questionnaire was in two parts:
 - a. Fourteen questions in Likert scale format of 6 points.
 - b. Three open questions
2. A Likert scale of 6 points (1-6) of the overall assessment of the training course comprising 8 indicators and 28 items, in addition to three final items relating to the effects of COVID-19, and the possible scalability of the online training received.
3. A brief semi-structured interview (10-15 minutes) with nine questions on the overall assessment of the course, two weeks after its completion.
4. Fifteen items for measuring the managers' perception of the learning that they have taken from the training course. These items were included in the first post test of the questionnaire which established the base line.

¹ Esteban M., Egido I., Galán A., Reyero, D. and Tintoré M. (2019). *LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME FOR WHOLE CHILD EDUCATION (WCD) THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND AREAS OF ACTIVITY BASIC DOCUMENT* Madrid, Fundación Europea Sociedad y Educación. <https://www.wcdleadership.com/site/wp-content/uploads/Documento-de-Bases-ES.pdf>



2. THE SAMPLE

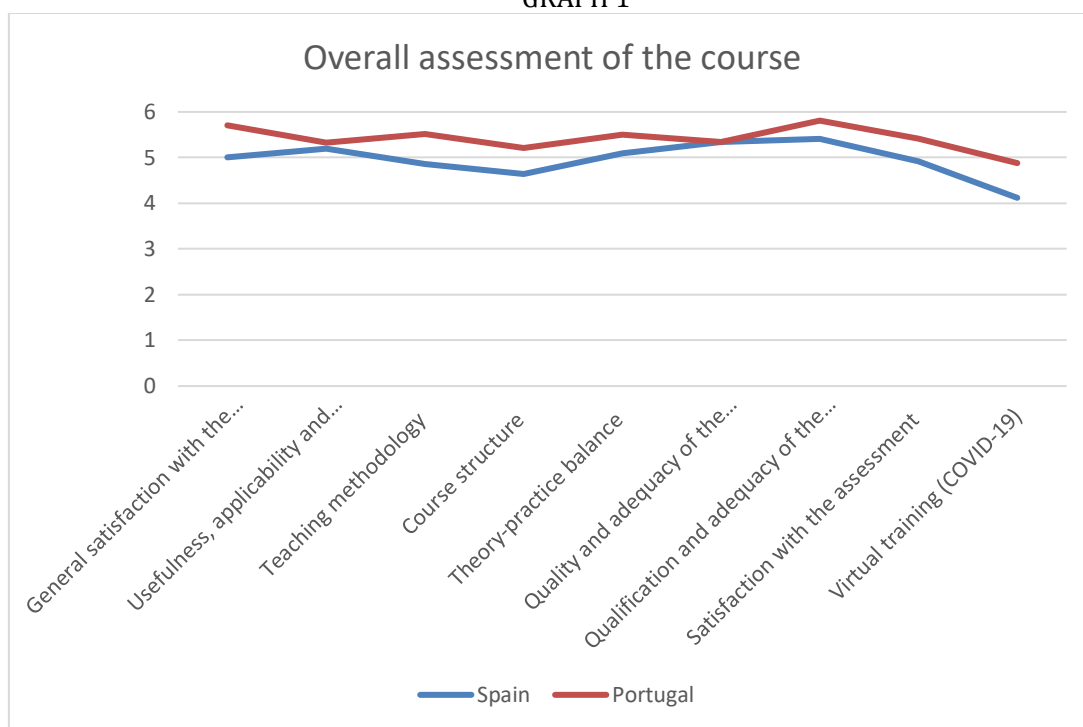
The sample in Spain comprised 21 members of management teams from 8 schools, 4 primary and 4 secondary. In turn, the Portuguese sample comprised 24 managers, grouped in 6 schools.

In both countries, the response rate to the various assessment questionnaires was very high (around 80%), even considering the pandemic-related disruptions in the 2019-2020 academic year, the period when the training took place.

3. OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE TRAINING COURSE: MAIN FINDINGS

The assessment of the educational efficacy of the training course was in the form of 9 indicators. The information obtained in the quantitative questionnaires has been consistent with the information obtained in the questions with an open response. Both the assessment of the module questionnaires and the telephone interviews with the directors provided them with freedom to reply on what they considered to be the most positive and negative aspects. The main findings are highlighted below.

GRAPH 1



As may be seen in graph 1, overall satisfaction with the course was extremely high, almost at all times above 5 points. In Portugal, it was around half a point higher than in Spain, except when assessing the usefulness and adequacy of the materials, where it is practically the same. The lowest indicator in both countries was that relating to the changeover to virtual teaching. Despite the fact that this entailed a bigger change in Portugal than in Spain (as in Portugal the

2



course was originally designed as almost 100% face to face), satisfaction with online sessions was almost one point higher.

Below, we point out the most significant elements in each of the indicators:

INDICATORS 1 AND 2. GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH THE TRAINING COURSE, USEFULNESS AND APPLICABILITY

The general evaluation of the course is extremely satisfactory in all the indicators. Particularly striking was how positively it was seen in terms of its applicability to disadvantaged schools or those with special problems. The participants also highlighted the usefulness of a detailed perspective on leadership seen through the prism of integral education, and the fact that the course provided a place where problems, queries and concerns could be discussed in order to find specific solutions for their particular schools.

It is a great help. It is reassuring to see that you are on a path that isn't so onerous after all, because the problem is that when you have such a difficult school, when you see so many tough things, you need to take a break to say: "Well, can this be dealt with? Can I do it by myself? Can they help me? How are other people handling it" I think yes It would be more than just a recommendation, it would be: "This is going to help you".

INDICATOR 3. Teaching methodology

The use of "case study" as the methodology par excellence, was also satisfactory although the average points obtained were slightly less than with the other items. On one hand, several opinions were documented that considered it to be a **particularly appropriate method** for this type of course, although in subsequent courses they should be perceived as "real" instead of "constructed". In Portugal, the case study methodology was rated with almost a whole point more compared to Spain. Finally, in both countries, the opportunity to share ideas, reflections and solutions to common problems was viewed very positively.

"We loved the case studies, seeing ... We also think it is a really good dynamic which we have also begun to apply in some meetings with our team of teachers, because giving very practical examples from everyday life, but which are taken out of the context of our reality, give you more scope to voice an opinion, and we found it very positive, while it helps to reflect on the practical aspects.. We liked that a lot."

INDICATOR 4. STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE AND THE BALANCE BETWEEN FACE TO FACE/DISTANCE LEARNING: NOTES FOR POSSIBLE SCALABILITY ONLINE

The structure of the course, division into modules, the assessment system, distribution of time between each face to face session and the communication tools were all well received (averages between 4.7 and 5.1 points out of 6).

Despite the difficulties, and the need to accustom themselves to the format, the students considered that the course was adequately adapted, and they were able to continue their studies. In particular, they viewed the fact that they did not have to travel and the possibility of reconciling study and home life as very positive. Furthermore, it was found that participation in

the online platform was more diverse, as the teacher questioned the different participants at random.

"The session in our first virtual class, as throughout the course, was very well organised and everyone helped to make it enjoyable and interesting at the same time (...). I must say that we liked it more or less, it is proving really useful in the times that we have had to live through and without online training what would we have done?"

INDICATORS 5 and 6. Integration of theory and practice and quality and appropriateness of the materials

The teaching materials, which include the case studies chosen for exemplification of the work of modules and the work for reflecting on and improving practice, were other elements that fulfilled the expectations of the students, with an assessment of the questionnaire awarding more than 5 points out of 6.

"I found the material extremely valuable. I have a file where I have stored everything to read over again.... I think that the materials as well as coming from where they do, from university academics are extremely valuable, and obviously for us as head teachers it helps us a lot to see where those studies are going."

INDICATOR 7. Qualification and adequacy of the teaching staff. The administrative and teaching team

The teaching team were considered to be one of the most valued aspects of the course. The team organising the course and also the evaluators, as the interviews clearly indicate, merited particular recognition.

"I was impressed with the range of teaching available and the members of the Foundation. We felt really supported, because there were a lot of people working there and behind the scenes as well."

INDICATOR 8. Satisfaction with the assessment of the learning

The assessment system for the course, carried out through different tasks proposed by the teachers in each module, through some written tasks or questions, and also through the final course project, was well received, with average scores of 5 out of 6. Once again, the most troubling aspect for the managers was the time that they had to spend on performing the assessment tasks, (4.8 points out of 6).

INDICATOR 9. THE COVID-19 EFFECT

The three questions relating to this indicator comparatively assess the face to face experience compared to the virtual one. Most managers consider that the virtual experience was slightly worse than the face to face one. Only 18% viewed both options as similar.

An analysis of the responses shows that the pandemic produced a change in the duties of management teams in schools, as they had to work longer hours, and as a result they were unable to dedicate so much time to the training course.

"When we talk about the COVID-19 effect we're talking about all the changes that it has led to and all the jobs we have had to do that we weren't expecting... Our agendas have been a complete disaster, because we had to prioritise things that previously... a situation that no one could have foreseen.."

4. ASSESSMENT OF THE LEARNING TAKEN FROM THE TRAINING COURSE

In the light of the responses provided by the managers on how they perceived the effects of the training course, in both Spain and Portugal, the learning was considered very satisfactory in all WCD domains, without exception. The four most striking aspects were the idea of encouraging skill-based learning, improved comprehension of the meaning and implications of teaching oriented to the students' holistic development, a reflection on their own attributes and qualities as a school leader, and strategic actions to be taken to improve relations with the students' families.

Below the main learning deriving from the training course is considered, organised around the four domains of activity of WCD leadership (which in turn make up the four training modules).

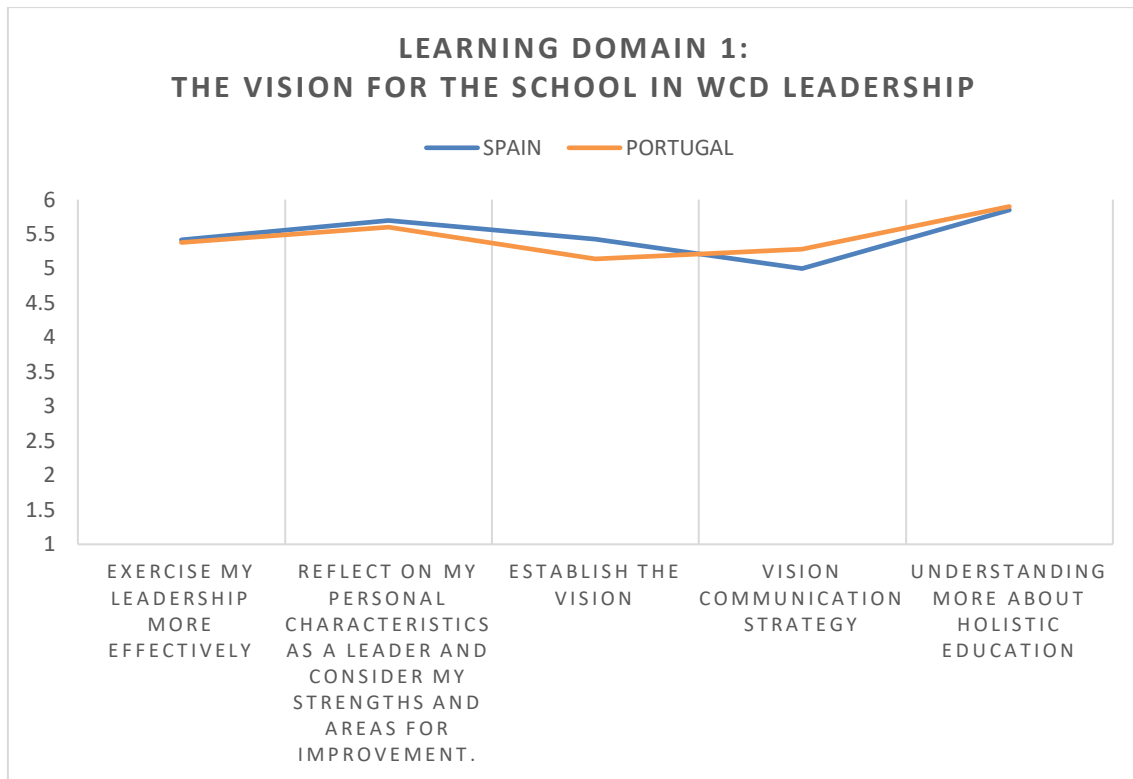
DOMAIN OF ACTIVITY 1. THE SCHOOL VISION IN WCD LEADERSHIP

5

In both the second interviews and the open response questions in the training module assessments, specific information was obtained on particular learnings. These include, first and foremost, the consideration that the training course had helped them to realise the importance of leadership and that this must concentrate **on the need** to adopt a style of management that will reinforce that importance. As to the personal attributes required by a good leader, in Spain the emphasis was on specific values such as assertiveness, capacity for reflection and optimism, whereas in Portugal, empathy was considered to be important. In both countries, the participants highlighted the fact that the training course had improved their capacity to act as school leaders. In particular, the WCD vision for leadership underlined how it was especially appropriate for managing disadvantaged contexts.

"It has helped me to clarify the concept of a holistic education as a whole entity in which all those in the educational community are involved. Something that I already felt, but by putting it to me as actual concepts, and with different examples, I was able to appreciate it and value it so much more. It has made me like my profession, which I chose through vocation, so much more".





6

DOMAIN OF ACTIVITY 2. WCDL AND ORGANISATIONAL APPROACH

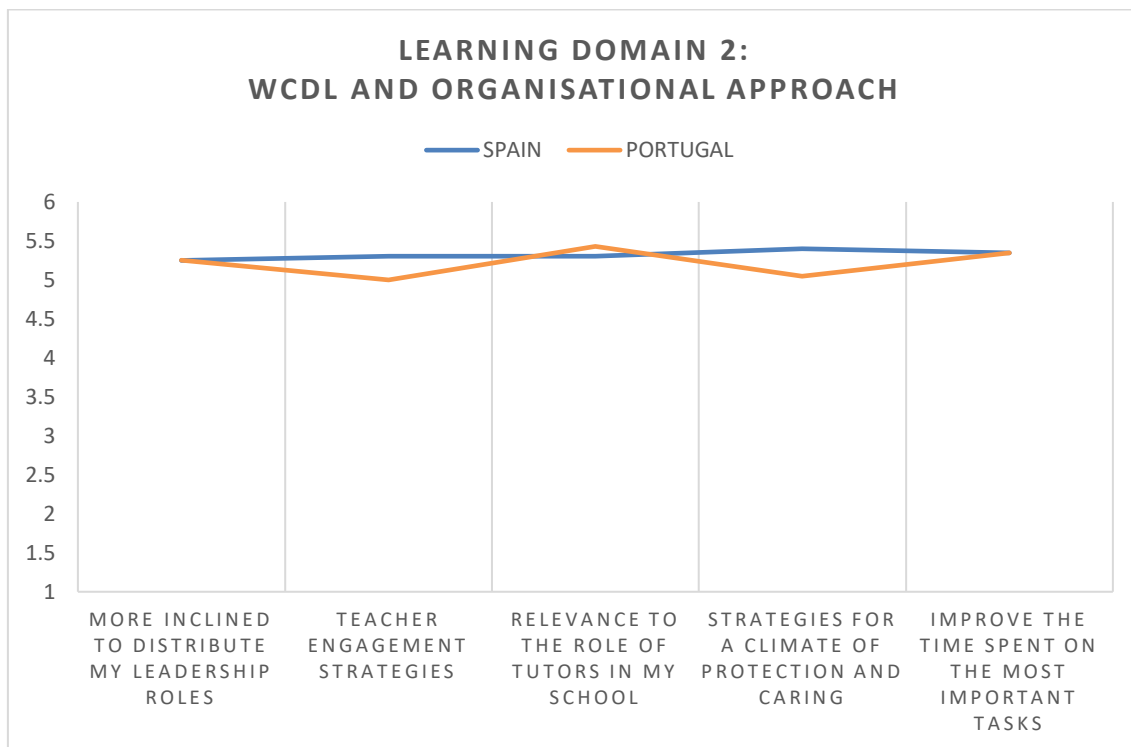
Distribution of leadership is an aspect that was largely dealt with in training module 2. Thus, several quotes were recorded that referred to improvements following the training course in terms of the importance of distributing leadership and, in general, locating and training intermediate leaders in order to delegate managerial duties.

Despite the importance of tutoring in the training course, and the fact that it is one of the highest scores with respect to quantitative indicators for improvement, it is surprising that this aspect is scarcely mentioned in the qualitative assessment. In this regard, in Portugal emphasis was placed on how to make the right choice as the main learning.

The question of school climate was addressed in teaching unit 5. This was the model indicator where most results of learning from a qualitative perspective were documented. In the case of Spain, the creation of a new coexistence plan is an officially regulated matter, and so it is understandable that there was considerable interest in this subject. The contribution of this teaching unit to managerial training was three pronged in its approach: a) improvements in how violence in schools is defined and understood; b) improved training in matters of coexistence from a managerial point of view, and c) improvements in terms of bringing that learning to the school coexistence plan.



In the case of Portugal, as well as indicating that they did not have problems with coexistence (thus, this was a significant difference compared to Spain) they also had their own programme in this regard.

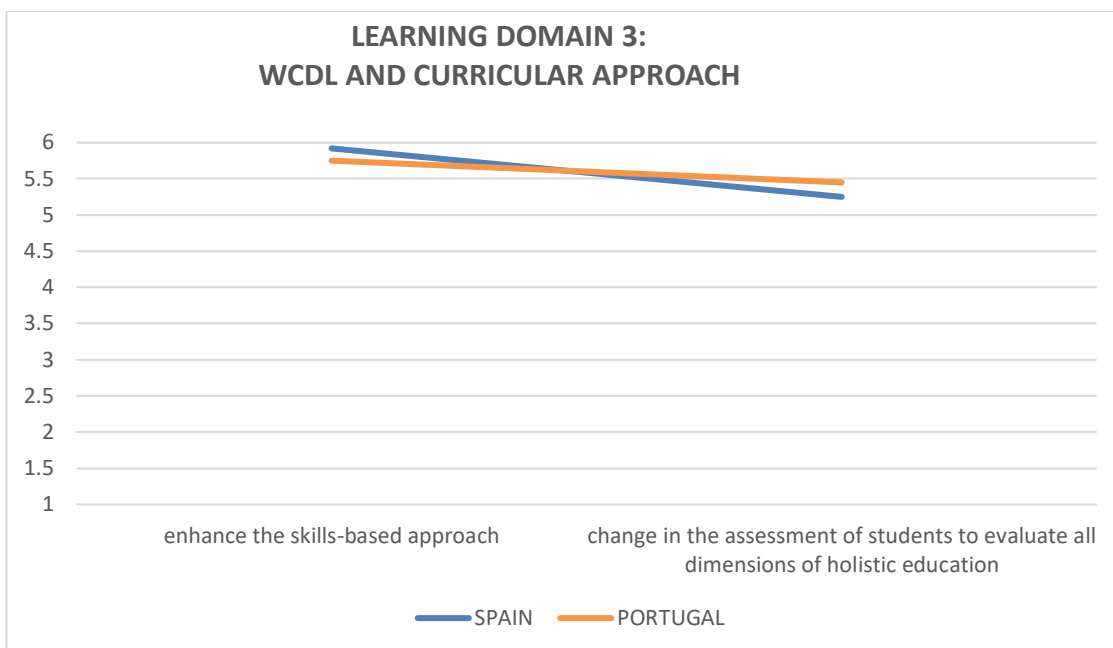


7

DOMAIN OF ACTIVITY 3. WCDL AND CURRICULAR APPROACH

In the training course, special emphasis was placed on a skills based approach, and this was widely reflected in the responses to the open questions in the assessment of module 3. In Spain, the content of the learning referred basically to two things: on one hand, the increased training in skill-based work in general; and on the other, the need to articulate this approach through active learning methods. In Portugal, school managers had already implemented an assessment that focuses on skills other than cognitive ability, although it did not cover all the WCD dimensions, which is why it was mentioned as the main element for improvement.



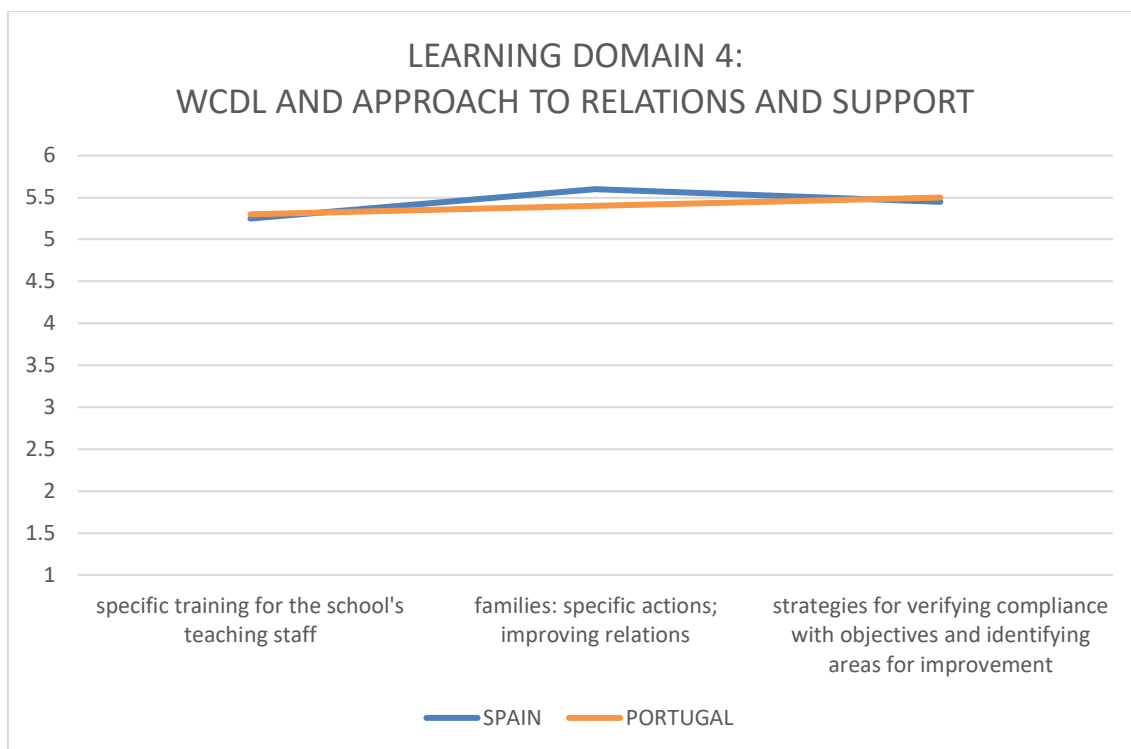


DOMAIN OF ACTIVITY 4. WCDL IN PERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT AND MONITORING

8

With regard to professional support, emphasis was placed on improvement plans and on providing areas for sharing successful experiences. Furthermore, after the course, relations with families were seen as an important aspect for improvement. As to monitoring, hardly any quotes were recorded that would enable us to attest to specific improvements in this area. However, the course participants valued positively some of the templates provided for organising improvement plans, either in the modules (2 and 4), or in the final improvement plan.





5. CONCLUSIONS AND ASPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

9

The experience of this first pilot course on whole child development leadership held in Madrid and Lisbon can be considered a success, based on both the satisfaction of the managers who took part and their perception of the learning acquired, its usefulness and applicability to particularly disadvantaged contexts.

Although the points awarded were satisfactory in both countries, and the trends noted were practically identical, the scores were higher in Lisbon, for which an entirely face to face course had been planned, whereas in Spain the classroom- based course was combined with activities and documented consultation, via the [European Foundation Society and Education training platform](#).

Based on what has been in general a very positive assessment, finally, we highlight some of the specific comments regarding the content of the course:

- There was a need to address more explicitly the list of essential qualities required of a WCD leader as part of the anthropological approach proposed. **The idea of reflexivity in leadership** may be an innovative way of articulating this issue, which was well received in the qualitative analyses.
- **Reinforce the role of tutorial work in the course content.** As mentioned, this item was barely mentioned by students.
- There was a need to propose a **system of assistance and guidance when designing plans for improvement and their subsequent assessment.** In this regard, it might be



useful to hold a session on plans for improvement at the start of the course, so that participants will be able to determine specific actions in respect to each of the fields, and then begin to work on their implementation.

Regarding the training course itself, the management teams have indicated some issues that should be borne in mind for improving further courses in future.

