

EFEE

THE EUROPEAN
FEDERATION OF
EDUCATION
EMPLOYERS

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION
COMITE SYNDICAL EUROPEEN DE L'EDUCATION



ESSDE Outcome Joint Declaration EFEE/ETUCE on “School Leadership”

The European Social Partners in education EFEE (European Federation of Education Employers) and ETUCE (European Trade Union Committee for Education), have worked jointly during the years 2013-2014 on “**Professional autonomy, accountability and efficient leadership - the role of employers’ organisations and trade unions**”. This work is supported by the European Commission through the Social Dialogue and Industrial Relations budget line (VS/2013/0344).

EFEE and ETUCE are committed to improve the quality of education in Europe and as such wish to make an active contribution to the implementation of the Council Conclusions on **Effective leadership in education** of 25-26 November 2013. We are especially committed to the invitation of the Council of Education ministers to “ Support, in accordance with national circumstances and with due respect for the principle of equity, new ways of enhancing the effective and accountable autonomy of education institutions and educational leaders.”

The European Social Partners in education wish to stress that the issue of high quality and effective school leadership is a priority for their members, the national social partners in education, at national level, but certainly also at local and regional level.

Strong and effective leadership is important in the European schools of the 21st century, as strong and effective leadership is a key driver for educational changes necessary for a modern European education system able to face social and economic challenges like growth, competitiveness and social cohesion.

Moreover, as international studies show, school leaders are expected to play a key role in the maintenance and improvement of educational quality (McKinsey, 2010).

And therefore, the increased recognition of the responsibility of school leaders for school quality and performance (i.e. student attainment and teacher performance) were important starting points for our research and our Peer Learning Activities. School leaders are an important stakeholder group for both the employers’ organisations and trade unions, as they are the link between school management and teachers, between different levels of education and training, families, the local community and the labour market. School leaders also have a crucial responsibility in ensuring the creation of a safe and conducive environment for teaching and learning and student success.

This declaration is **addressed** to social partners in education and their national, regional and local members, the European Institutions, school leaders and interested stakeholders at European or national and local level (Ministries of Education, Municipalities, schools, trade unions, students associations, parents associations, local representatives etc.).

The **aim** of this declaration is fivefold, as the European Social Partners in education we wish to:

- Promote effective educational leadership and involve national members in promoting effective educational leadership at national, regional and local level;
- Share the main findings of the dialogue between employers' organisations and trade unions during the working groups, research, peer learning visits and final conference;
- Contribute jointly to the improvement of industrial relations in the education sector in the EU;
- Work jointly and continuously on the improvement of the quality of education in Europe;
- Inform the European institutions as well as other interested stakeholders on their shared point of view on the topic of school leadership.

Both EFEE and ETUCE agree with the Council of Ministers that educational leadership can be effective when:

- educational leaders are in a position to focus primarily on improving the quality of teaching and learning within their institutions while ensuring equity;
- leadership is based on clearly defined roles;
- it adopts a collaborative and inclusive approach;
- it is able to recognise the strengths and competences of staff members and assign leadership roles to them;
- it is in a position to allocate resources and to explore innovative teaching approaches;
- it remains fully accountable to, and has the support of not only national, but also local and regional authorities and the community at large, particularly when endeavouring to introduce changes.

The focus points of our research on **School Leadership and the role of the European Social Partners in education** as well as of the themes of our Peer Learning Visits to Netherlands, Malta and the United Kingdom, were *professional autonomy, accountability and efficient leadership*. We are aware that international research done by the OECD confirms that autonomy and accountability go together: greater autonomy in decisions relating to curricula, assessments and resource allocation tend to be associated with better student performance, particularly when schools operate within a culture of accountability (OECD 2009).

Accountability in education means that schools should provide information on their performance and functioning to outside parties. Accountable school leaders are responsible for an open school environment that should provide information on the quality of education, or on the "well-functioning" of the education provision. Quality is a rather general term. In actual practice, concerns may relate to a good choice of educational objectives (*relevance*) or to the question whether the educational objectives are actually attained (*effectiveness*). There may also be an emphasis on fair and equal distribution of educational resources (*equity*) or specific concern with an economic use of these resources (*efficiency*).

Recognition that schools and thus school leaders as such, are to be accountable to other

stakeholders than just the external inspection is a basic requirement for democracy. Particularly when this concerns the immediate users of educational provisions, such as students, pupils, and parents. Information from monitoring and evaluation can be seen as a basis for more direct democracy in education. In its turn, more influence from the immediate users is also seen as a stimulant of effectiveness and efficiency (EFEE/ETUCE report on School Leadership, 2014).

EFEE and the ETUCE wish to conclude their work in this field and their peer learning activities by inviting their members to contribute to make educational leadership more attractive, particularly inviting them to:

-Promote school autonomy and the autonomy of school leaders. This could be done from a resources point of view or from a curriculum point of view, or both, depending on the national and regional context. There is not one European model that fits all, but our research reconfirms that autonomous and accountable school leaders can play an important role in the well functioning of the school, in teacher performance and in improvement of student attainments. Greater autonomy should go hand in hand with greater accountability.

-Advocate for the strengthening of pedagogical leadership in schools and the capacity of, and opportunities for teachers to exercise leadership in an environment where there is freedom to innovate and a balance between autonomy and accountability;

-Improve the professionalisation of teachers through distributed leadership and teacher autonomy as these are key features to the professional development of teachers and to the development of accountable and effective teachers;

-Help to ensure professional standards of school boards and governing boards, as they can make an important contribution with respect to the vision, strategy and ethos of the school, as well as ensure accountability with respect to the overall management, including financial accountability;

-Encourage school leaders to engage with their local community and to establish close links with parents, business, other schools and social partners;

-Facilitate the continuous professional development of school leaders in order to support them to be able to adapt and respond effectively to changing local conditions;

-Promote networking between school leaders, for example through peer learning activities at school level and at local and regional level;

-Promote gender balance in educational leadership and increase the number of female school leaders;

-Invite school leaders to inspire their colleague teachers and students to ‘learn to learn’ and to build an atmosphere of mutual trust and support.

Conclusion:→ DIALOGUE

EFEE and ETUCE reaffirm that open learning environments require the leaders of educational institutions to play an active role by providing a strategic vision providing for European schools to provide for a professional working environment for our teachers and professors and an interesting learning community for our pupils and students.

Our joint work on “Professional autonomy, accountability and efficient school leadership” contributed towards the empowerment of school leaders, and towards the awareness of employers’ organisations and trade unions on our own role to play in enhancing the effective and accountable autonomy of education institutions and school leaders.

During our Peer Learning Visits, by exchanging of best practices and experiences, it became clear that the DIALOGUE between and among teachers and school leaders, between trade unions and employers, between schools and their direct community is of outmost importance in guaranteeing good school leadership, in enhancing mutual trust and good-will and in striving for education quality.

The European Social Partners in education therefore commit themselves to actively promote the social dialogue and this declaration at national, regional or local level, respecting national education structures.

We would like to encourage national social partners to continue to work on the **school leadership theme** by making full use of the Strategic Partnership actions of the ERASMUS + Programme offered by the European Commission and by their active involvement in the European Policy Network on School Leadership (<http://www.schoolleadership.eu>)

This declaration has been adopted by the ESSDE Steering Committee on 19 January 2015.

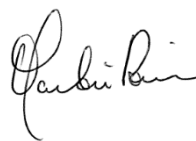
For EFEE



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The original text is in English.