

# PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS A PREMISE FOR TEACHER LEADERSHIP

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## **Abstract**

Strategic documents on education emphasise learning leadership, discuss teachers' activities related to continuous personal improvement in professional activities: by involvement in improvement of school performance, conducting research, participating in specialised group activities, projects, collaboration with colleagues, etc. Innovative trends of teachers' professional development are the basis for the development of efficient leadership: a challenge promoting introduction of changes in teachers' improvement by creating new conditions and possibilities for both teachers and school leaders. It is important for school leaders to ensure coherence between personal and institutional development needs, to create flexible structures while organising support for teachers and promoting fostering of continuous learning culture in the organisation. The research aim is to analyse experiences of heads of departments with regard to teachers' personal professional development possibilities in their professional activities. The results disclose that teachers ambiguously assess the activity of the head of the department: concrete, individual support, attention, encouragement are emphasised but teachers are against observation and evaluation of their activities. This is related to several reasons: teachers' attitudes towards change processes, innovations in teachers' professional development, competencies of heads of education departments and general school culture. It is important to create conditions for manifestation of teacher leadership in schools, creating conditions for every teacher to continuously improve the educational process, develop personal competencies, actively and responsibly participate in group activities, become involved in school improvement processes. Middle-level leaders, heads of departments acting as mediators while implementing individual, group and organisational level tasks promote the development of teachers' competencies.

***Keywords:** improvement, personal professional development, teacher, leadership, possibilities.*

## **Introduction**

European and Lithuanian strategic documents on education emphasise learning leadership, discuss teachers' activities related to continuous personal improvement in professional activities: involvement in the improvement of school activities conducting research, participating in specialised group activities, projects, collaborating with colleagues,

etc. State *Progress Strategy “Lithuania 2030”* sets out the vision of smart Lithuania, stating that the society must become active, solidary, continuously learning and that every person must become open to changes, creative and responsible. The National Strategy on Education for the Period 2013–2022 emphasises that “it is necessary to find incentives and conditions for creation of communities consisting of reflective, creative and professional teachers, to develop participative and shared leadership abilities of heads of education institutions, their deputies, heads of departments who organise education and other people” (The National Strategy on Education for the Period 2013–2022, 2013). Every learning leader aims to promote pupils’ learning by organising a quality (self-)education process and improving activities of the organisation. Innovative trends of teacher’s professional development, i.e. the basis for efficient leadership development, are a challenge promoting introduction of changes in teachers’ improvement by creating new conditions and possibilities for both teachers and school leaders. It is important for school leaders to ensure coherence between personal and institutional development needs, to create flexible structures organising support for teachers and promoting fostering of continuous learning culture in the organisation (The Concept of Teachers’ Professional Development, 2012).

Studies from previous years disclose that the EU school leaders allocate on average 40 per cent of their working time for management and administration (Communiqué of the European Commission “Rethinking Education”, 2012) instead of focusing on promotion of leadership, building favourable learning culture through communication with pupils and teacher counselling. Leadership-based culture promotes purposeful staff development aimed at continuous improvement of teaching and learning quality (Rethinking Education: Investing in Skills for Better Socio-Economic Outcomes, 2012). Undoubtedly, school leaders significantly influence learners’ achievements by helping to create favourable learning conditions at school; therefore, the activities of leaders should be maximally directed towards improvement of employees’ and pupils’ learning, monitoring and assessment of teachers’ work, coordination of curriculum, assurance of continuous formative feedback and building of collaborative culture (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Hattie, 2015; Sergiovanni, 2015; Spillane, 2017; Malloy & Leithwood, 2017). School leaders bear considerable responsibility; therefore, leadership could be shared, involving as many employees as possible in school improvement activities, giving them certain powers to act and make decisions. Collaboration-based leadership can be an alternative for one leader’s leadership and become a way of school improvement.

In order to create conditions suitable for the teacher’s continuous improvement and development of school activities, it is important to change old traditional management structures, organisational management grounded on hierarchical relationships, to create leadership culture orientated to interpersonal relationships based on communication and collaboration, promoting involvement in activities and sharing responsibility. The leadership theme related to formation of school culture and personal development is widely studied in the works of both foreign (Northouse, 2009; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2011; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002, etc.) and Lithuanian authors (Šimanskienė & Župerkienė, 2013; Cibulskas & Žydžiūnaitė, 2012; Valuckienė et al., 2015; Gumuliauskienė & Vaičiūnienė, 2015, etc.). Authors analyse leadership both manifesting in schools and its related factors; however, they mainly focus on the school leader’s leadership (Malinauskienė & Augienė, 2010; Navickaitė, 2012; Cardno & Howse 2005; Manaseh, 2016, etc.). Recently, there was more emphasis on teacher leadership as the phenomenon that is most significantly influencing pupils’ learning outcomes (Harris, 2010; Glickman, 2010; Lambert, 2011; etc.).

Innovative ideas of teachers' professional development are introduced, the teachers' career model is created and new forms and ways of teachers' improvement are disseminated in Lithuania. The Concept of Teachers' Professional Development (2012), The Model of Teachers' Professional Development (2012) emphasise modern ideas of development of teachers' competencies and improvement of quality of school activities. Traditional forms of self-education are considered to be incompletely appropriate because they are insufficiently grounded on a particular context, teachers' individual experience and reflection. The model puts considerable focus on individual self-improvement and forms based on social interaction: collegial sharing of experiences while creating a learning school. By learning from their own and colleagues' activities and by being involved in other self-development activities, too, teachers enhance their competencies and in this way develop teacher leadership processes (The Model of Teachers' Professional Development, 2012). Introduction of new forms of professional development in schools, such as learning conversations, mentoring, coaching, conducting counselling, being counselled, facilitation, reflection, etc., creates preconditions and possibilities for every employee's efficient professional development, when new meanings are sought and new knowledge is built through communication and collaboration based on practical activity. The article formulates *the research problem*: What are the possibilities of teachers' personal professional development as manifestation of leadership in their professional activities?

**The research subject** is experiences gained by heads of departments regarding the possibilities for manifestation of teachers' personal professional development in their professional activities.

**The research aim** is to analyse experiences of heads of departments regarding teachers' personal professional development possibilities in their professional activities.

### **Research Methodology**

**Participants of the research:** 8 middle-level leaders (heads) working in school, who have considerable pedagogical (on average 25 years) and managerial (on average 10 years) experience; most of them hold the second managerial category. The number of mentored teachers differs: from 15 to 30 mentees per one head of the department.

Non-structured interviews with experts as a basis for preparation of a structured in-depth interview questionnaire for middle-level leaders in the school (heads of departments) are *the data collection method*. In-depth semi-structured interviews with heads of departments of different schools who took part in the project "The School Structure Improvement Programme 2006–2009", who are responsible for education in the school, were conducted. Heads of departments, as the most important sources of research information, were asked to share experiences about the possibilities for teachers to continuously purposefully improve in their daily activities in the school while organising the education process, participating in school activities, to self-develop their leadership abilities.

Content analysis is *the data processing method*. Having processed the data obtained during the interviews using the content analysis method, the trends of teachers' personal professional development were distinguished, experiences of schools promoting teachers to evaluate themselves and plan their improvement were summarised, potential activities of heads of departments motivating teachers to improve were highlighted, and problems related to professional development of teachers and heads of departments were emphasised.

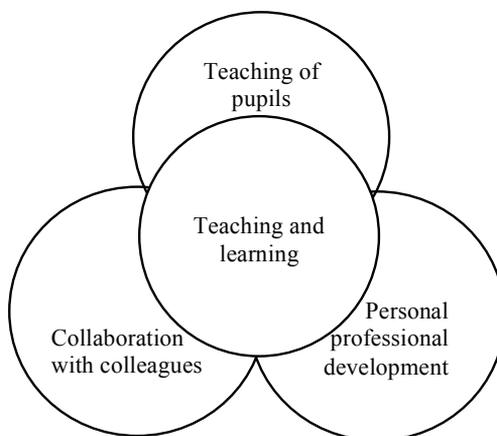
### Research results

#### The results of the analysis of professional experiences lived by heads of departments for promotion of the teacher's leadership through personal and professional development.

Heads of departments, middle-level leaders merging all levels of school employees promote teacher leadership through direct communication, observation and assessment of their activities, results, paying attention to innovative teacher development, manifesting at the individual, group and institutional levels, creating appropriate working conditions and helping to create favourable learning environment. *The teacher leader* is a teacher who constantly learns, is open to innovations, not afraid to change, try out innovations and introduce them to others, who initiates changes, takes interest in relevant issues and relates them to his/ her daily activities. Heads of departments emphasise that it is important for the teacher to combine his/ her internal qualities, value approaches and continuous improvement of competences.

*“When a person also has these internal qualities and is developing himself/ herself, is looking for ways, then a good teacher is a leader. Two axes: personal qualities and development; if they are combined, then the results are excellent. If personal qualities are present but the person is not improving, this person can remain a mediocre teacher; that leadership may not show up (V4)”*; *“The person who thinks that he/ she does not need to change is not a leader (V6)”*.

Heads of departments distinguished three most distinctive aspects of teacher leadership: work with pupils in the classroom, collaboration with colleagues, teachers' improvement. These aspects share a common idea: teaching and learning. It can be stated that the leader is a constantly learning teacher who is sharing his/ her ideas (see Figure 1). The areas of the teacher leader in the school, presented by heads of departments, directly relate to the ideas of leadership for learning and shared leadership, emphasising that teacher leaders constantly learn from their own and their colleagues' professional activities by collaborating and sharing experiences (Leithwood, Mascal, & Strauss, 2009; Harris, 2010, 2014).



**Figure 1.** The teacher leader's characteristics

The middle-level leaders defined two conceptions of the teacher leader: the teacher as pupils' leader and the teacher as teachers' leader. Teachers cannot escape being leaders because they lead a team, convey knowledge of their area, clearly present

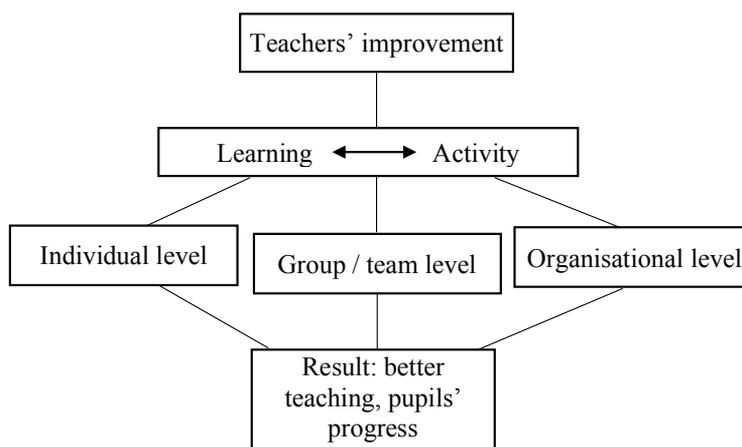
information, motivate for activities, lead to the set goal, know how to achieve it, have acquired experience, their followers trust them. On the other hand, everyone can be a leader: it is important to focus on the area where you succeed best, share experiences, rally others, provide support, encourage like-minded people and continually learn and improve. In professional activities, heads of departments pay considerable attention to the direct contact with employees of their department, mentoring them and seeking such organisation of activities of the department, which would improve pupils' academic performance and enable to implement aims of the school:

*“Here every teacher has his/ her personal development goal set for the academic year, so we discuss with him/ her how he/ she will seek it during the lessons, organising learning, and we also discuss with what colleague he/ she could share his/ her experiences, maybe would participate in some working group of the school (V2)”*; *“We observe lessons, we discuss together with the teacher, this way helping him/ her to develop and improve pupils' achievements (V4)”*; *“In methodological groups, teachers share experiences, I encourage to cooperate organising integrated activities, to attend each other's lessons (V7).”*

Heads take on efficient delegation, apply measures promoting teachers' motivation and responsibility, ways to optimise activities related to accountability procedures, teachers' self-assessment practices, promotion of collaboration activities, involvement in school activity improvement groups, teachers' learning from their own and colleagues' experiences, while promoting enhancement of their competences and manifestation of leadership abilities:

*“I am pleased with manifestation of teacher leadership when, say, the audit team accounts for its investigation results and provides recommendations to all, both colleagues and leaders. Then they feel being important implementers of changes (V1)”*; *“We have agreed that all teachers accumulate the portfolio of their experiences, evaluate themselves each year, distinguish success cases and areas for improvement. When they speak about it in the methodological group reporting for their activities during the academic year, I as the head find it a good opportunity to encourage colleagues to collaborate next year: those who know less about something, for example, using ICT, discuss it with more knowledgeable ones. Or when they set similar goals, I can offer a joint activity for improvement (V3)”*; *“In our school we organise experience exchange days, there was also such “Corridor of Experience”: teachers visit each other's lessons, collect information using the agreed form, and we, heads of departments, analysed it and presented results at the teacher council meeting. Then teachers actively discussed (V7).”*

The diagram (see Figure 2) shows *trends of teachers' professional development*, which are the basis for the head of the department to organise teachers' personal professional development activities.



**Figure 2.** Trends of teachers' professional development

At the individual level, improvement takes place largely on the very teacher's initiative, but in schools conditions and incentives for each teacher to plan and implement goal-oriented improvement are created. In order to achieve personal professional development, the teacher can concentrate on the development of specific competencies that he/ she needs, enhancement of abilities, choose forms and ways of self-education, combining existing experience with relevant new information:

*"When the teacher honestly reflects on his activities during the academic year, truly names his success areas and what needs improvement and what he wants to improve, then it is very good: I can very purposefully offer sources or some training (V2)"; "The aims of school activities are related to novelties in education in Lithuania, and, according to them, we offer teachers to develop their existing experience (V8)."*

Heads of departments who mentor teachers help to set personal professional development goals, plan activities and measures, promote the continuous process of the teacher's reflection and observation of their activities. The teacher's activity is not limited to giving lessons and organisation of educational activities: by getting involved in groups and teams, teachers are offered possibilities to develop general competences and leadership abilities. Jointly planning and organising school improvement activities, initiating changes, teachers are learning leadership: they lead people and processes, lead to the sought result, assume responsibility. The head who promotes teachers' improvement directs employees to activities appropriate for them and coordinates processes. The latter activity creates conditions for each teacher's personal professional development processes, orientating to teacher leadership, i.e. the pursuit of constant self-education and promotion of self-education of others (both pupils and colleagues) for the sake of success and better results:

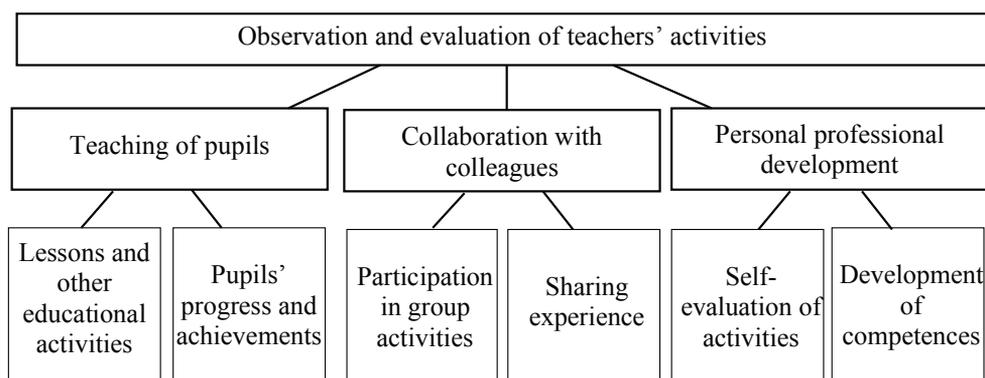
*"It is important for us, leaders, to see what which teacher is able to do and to create possibilities for (self-)development of his or her abilities so that it is better for both children and colleagues and for the school itself (V1)"; "We are thinking in which working groups teachers can be involved, who and how will unfold, will want to share his/ her experience and abilities (V4)."*

Teachers' improvement at the organisational level is carried out by preplanning participation of all employees in joint events that encompass general improvement objectives. It is important that all teachers simultaneously receive the same information that they can use in general school improvement activities, in group processes and individually developing their competencies. Joint learning rallies employees to agree, share responsibility, cohere aims of the institution and individual goals. Teachers' professional development *at individual, group and institutional levels* provides possibilities for manifestation of teacher leadership. Teachers, working together and solving pedagogical problems, participating in school activity improvement groups and collegially communicating, play leaders' role, develop competences and provide support to each other. While jointly working, learning and participating, the culture of the whole school and social capital are being developed; thus, it is very important that all employees are involved in school leadership processes (Meijs, Prinsen, & Laat, 2016; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). The supporting school environment and activities, in particular leaders' activities, create conditions for teachers to take on informal leadership beyond the boundaries of the lesson and classroom.

Schools implement a permanent, cyclical process of developing employees' competencies, which includes interrelated components: *(self-)assessment –planning–activities*. Self-evaluation is implemented by the very teacher, collaborating with the mentor leader and discussing in the methodological group. Evaluating their academic year, teachers reflect on performed activities, results, fill in corresponding forms, reporting for carried out work and presenting their personal experience. In most schools, this process takes place in methodological groups so that colleagues can learn from each other, teachers have possibilities to enjoy their success, learn ideas from colleagues, look for collaboration ideas in the future, initiate changes, discuss problematic cases while planning further activities, propose ideas, share commitments and responsibility. Annual individual talks rarely take place in schools. According to the heads, teachers do not want to talk by one, but having considered the heads' administrative burden and probably the lack of competence of organising the annual conversation and of perception of its value, we think this is a reciprocal problem. Heads who still conduct annual individual conversations emphasised their value for both parties: having reflected on the academic year, the teacher identifies success cases and things to be improved, together with the head coheres the vision of what he/ she should be developing next year:

*“The teacher understands that it matters to me too how he/ she was doing, what difficulties he/ she has encountered (V6)”; “While speaking, we find what needs to be improved, how we can help too, what the very teacher says he/ she will do next year (V8).”*

Assessing teachers' activities, the focus is placed on the following areas: pupils' teaching (lessons and other educational activities, pupils' learning progress and achievements, their recording and informing of stakeholders about achievements); collaboration with colleagues (participation in methodological activities and activities of other groups, sharing experience); the teacher's personal professional development (the teacher's self-evaluation, development of competences). Pupils' teaching and teachers' learning are closely interrelated activities: teachers improve their teaching in order to improve pupils' achievements and evaluation of teachers' activities is based on pupils' achievements. Teachers' evaluated activities identified by heads are illustrated in the diagram (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Observation and evaluation of teachers' activities

Formal evaluation of the teacher's work is organised monitoring activities and results, participation in events, collaboration, but for the teacher, informal assessment and evaluation are also very important. Teachers are motivated by various factors characterising the behaviour of the head of the department: attention, assistance, support, encouragement, sincere and open communication, gratitude, praise, creation of conditions, creation of collaborative culture, rallying the team, the possibility to improve:

*"We often hear the words of gratitude from mentored teachers, they are pleased when I help to find something interesting for the lesson, we discuss how to better organise activities, especially the younger ones or just those who are more open, often pop in to share their thoughts (V1)"; "Come to ask, to offer an idea, both alone and several of them. When they organise joint activities, they always collaborate, I have to rally, coordinate time, other things (V7)".*

The respondents distinguished the following key determinants of the teacher's leadership: authentic communication and collaboration, involvement in the teams improving school activities, maintenance of the initiative, empowerment in order to make certain decisions, giving letters of commendation during events and creation of appropriate conditions. However, teachers ambiguously assess the position of the head of the department, which has appeared due to changes in the school structure: concrete, individual support, attention, promotion are emphasised, but teachers are against monitoring and assessment of their activity. This is determined by several reasons: teachers' attitudes to processes of changes and innovations in teachers' professional development; competences, personal qualities and experience of heads of education departments; general culture being developed and fostered at school, promoting collaboration, continuous improvement and pursuit for quality; management of school activities and decision-making.

Heads of departments encourage their teachers to write reflections after some more important event, new activity (integrated lessons, experience exchanges with other schools). Reflection (i.e. rethinking of what we do before, during and after the activity) is a road to improvement and progress; therefore, it should be the teacher's constant attendant requiring time allocation to regularly rethink one's activities.

*“As to these new forms, we ask teachers to write reflections: after the observed lesson, some other activity [...]. We then read these reflections, carry out content analysis and present at the meeting (V8)”*; *“We also pay a lot of attention to reflection, especially when we self-evaluate activities over the year (V4).”*

In their professional activities, teachers allocate time for oral reflection as an important form of rethinking of activities, seeking personal professional development. According to heads, this should be done more systematically, developing teachers' skills to reflect on what was happening, why it is important, what to do next. Development of the reflective culture in schools is promoted by The National Strategy on Education for the Period 2013–2022, which indicates that it is relevant *“to achieve such level of pedagogical communities when the majority of them consist of reflective, constantly developing and productively working professional teachers”*. Although this is relevant, problems are encountered in this process as well. Heads point out several problems hindering the development of such culture: teachers complain about their workload, lack of time and wish. The study disclosed that heads of departments should receive support improving their reflection skills and getting familiar with practical benefit of reflection so that having deeper understood the meaning of reflection they could more purposefully motivate teachers to constantly reflect on their activities. Analysing how teachers plan their personal professional development activities, it was assumed that evaluation and self-evaluation of teacher's activities must help to highlight areas, abilities to be improved and plan improvement activities. According to the heads, improvement of teachers' competences is planned at the school and group levels (methodological, project, etc.):

*“In school, all teachers' professional development is foreseen in the activity programme: we foresee such improvement trends, general ones (V5)”*.

At the individual level, personal professional development is insufficiently effective: it is limited to the areas, abilities to be developed; systematic, well-designed every teacher's improvement is only an aspiration. Teachers do not want or cannot plan their improvement:

*“Our annual activity report contains such column: “What do you plan to improve next year?”. Some teachers neatly wrote off what was in the column: “professional knowledge, didactic knowledge, etc.”. During the department meeting I said: dear colleagues, if you only wrote off, this is a plan about nothing, it means you plan absolutely nothing (V6).”*

The results demonstrate that schools insufficiently promote teachers to set specific goals for improvement, define criteria, outcomes and systematically reflect on their activities by comparing planned and achieved results; too little attention is paid to teachers' and leaders' abilities to plan their professional career. Creation and consolidation of experiences that proved successful, in particular organising systematic reflections and educational conversations, would provide possibilities to make personal professional development more effective. Evaluation of teacher's activity is closely related to (self-)education and daily professional activities: evaluation and (self-)evaluation enables the teacher to find out what needs to be improved in his/ her activities, what competencies have to be developed.

*“They assess themselves in order to know what to improve (V7)”*; *“It's not clear when you're just learning and when you're just working – both of these activities merge [...] the teacher's work can't be imagined without learning (V4)”*.

The analysis of *teachers' professional development activities* disclosed prevalence of traditional professional development forms in schools: the majority of teachers participate in seminars, courses, training, prepare and present papers at conferences. Having returned after training events, they share relevant information, materials and ideas in methodological groups. Innovative forms of professional development are less often used in schools. Teachers' self-educational forms, like reflection, participation in school activities, discussions with colleagues, educational counselling, mentoring, self-evaluation of the teacher's activity, planning of personal professional development, etc., are acknowledged by heads as highly valuable and effective but are applied only episodically, non-systematically; good practices are not consolidated, teachers get familiar with some of them only in theory. School leaders should promote introduction of changes and innovations in order to develop the culture that is based on every teacher's individual progress and general improvement of the organisation.

Heads of departments, who know their mentored teachers' experience and improvement goals, offer training and other activities appropriate for them in order to encourage people to improve:

*"We are looking for a lot of jobs, various obligations, various projects, tasks, and in some cases there may be one team and a leader; in another case, another team; these target groups are formed, in which a leader always shows up (V8)."*

This way, it is proceeded to such (self-)education forms when both the activity and learning are combined, group or school activities have to be planned flexibly and creatively (for example, organisation of the discussion with parents), and commitments and responsibilities have to be shared. By involving employees in various extra-curricular activities, the head creates conditions for them to collaborate, jointly make decisions, try themselves out in another activity, this way helping to develop general competences. Thus, shared leadership enhances the employee's self-esteem and commitment to the organisation:

*"...not only that person to whom this job is assigned according to his functions is a leader, everyone can be a leader in a corresponding area. Only this way we will achieve that quality if we share responsibility from time to time, if we all become involved in a joint activity, because everyone feels important if he becomes involved in that activity (V8)."*

Teachers' involvement in the improvement of school activities, collaboration while seeking to improve pupils' achievements and school processes, task delegation to employees and teams enable all to jointly build the school culture, create conditions for teachers to take on leadership and improve in the professional activity at various levels. Various forms of participation in school activities (teachers' meetings, continuous research, group work, etc.) help to develop personal and school community experiences. Thus, the teacher leader is improving by reflecting on his/ her activities, sharing it with others, influencing others to improve.

Promoting mentored teachers' professional development, heads of departments have to pay considerable attention to development of their own competencies. The results highlighted the trend that schools require leaders to focus on management rather than on leadership; thus, allocating their entire work for planning, organisation, management and monitoring activities, they cannot always express themselves as leaders in their organisation:

*“...I would like to draw up such system of conversations with everyone so that I can encourage the very teacher to look for solutions and improve by discussing, so that this takes place constantly, say, once a month with mentees, but there is no time: I have to check plans, pupils’ results, then I get various daily jobs (V6)”.*

The problem of the head’s workload, functions and related quality of work shows up. Being overloaded with administrative and technical type tasks, heads have no possibilities to concentrate on teachers’ quality mentoring, put more focus on communication and activities promoting teacher leadership. Seeking efficient work of the head of the department, these problems would need to be solved in the ways most appropriate for the school: by reviewing activities of heads of all levels and sharing certain functions so that middle-level leaders have more possibilities to communicate with teachers and pupils, to organise and coordinate work of the department more purposefully; perhaps paying more attention to employees’ general culture and enhancement of collaboration promoting to help each other, take initiative, make decisions; possibly learning time management and developing planning skills or developing communication and conflict resolution skills and the like. Another problem is showing up as well – its solution could be a prerequisite to review the head’s activities, creating more conditions for him/ her to work directly with teachers. Heads of departments have too few possibilities to develop and improve their competences. Employees’ immediate managers mainly interact with their mentees at the individual and group level; thus, good communication and counselling skills are required:

*“Heads of departments would very much need to practice careful listening, questioning while encouraging the person to solve issues, problems and make decisions himself/ herself rather than to instruct him/ her how he/ she should do [...]. We would need such practical sessions as our director told us: in counsellors’ training sessions he was practically learning these coaching elements and at times he says he is using them. Maybe we don’t notice it a lot because we have not tried. I read somewhat, I got interested, I would really like to learn it myself because I believe that as we are constantly directly communicating with such various people, this knowledge of how to influence, maybe say in a better way, encourage the teacher, these learned things, techniques would help a lot (V2)”*; *“The most necessary skills are to hear while listening, to ask repeatedly about things that he/ she emphasised but maybe didn’t feel and then, having stopped, one can ask what can be done to solve the problem, and how it used to be earlier for you, what success experiences you have (V4)”*.

Middle-level leaders, constantly directly communicating with teachers, promote individual implementation of personal professional goals, motivate teachers to improve the activities of the organisation in order to improve pupils’ learning achievements. Involving teachers in various activities, they motivate them to be leaders, help teachers to develop competencies but insufficiently use innovative forms of professional development.

### **Generalisation**

Enhancing the impact of heads of departments on teachers’ leadership, it is important to reduce the amount of administrative and technical tasks, creating conditions for heads’ systematic communication, direct contact with teachers, reviewing employees’ assessment practice and related employee education as particularly important conditions for school improvement; to agree with all employees about their contribution to the flourishing of their

organisation; to develop heads' competences by creating possibilities to try out teachers' innovative professional development forms, promoting exchanges of experience with heads of other schools; to try out new forms of employee (self-)evaluation and activity improvement; to encourage teachers to reflect; to discuss with heads the possibilities of their improvement, activity evaluation and feedback. It is relevant to encourage heads to improve in innovative forms and constantly develop their existing competences in practice by systematically reflecting on success and aspects to be improved.

Heads of departments constantly improve their competences by participating in training events intended for school leaders and teachers, taking interest in materials provided in online sources, reading various literature, observing, reflecting on and evaluating activities, participating in project activities, sharing experiences with other schools, organising seminars or other training events. Leaders are not only inquisitive themselves, they want to share valuable materials and experiences with their mentees, encourage them to improve by looking for and trying out new forms and methods, not just teaching but also learning themselves. A relationship-oriented leader motivates people more, making it easier to implement the task.

Heads of departments directly communicating with people and leaders creating interrelationships would need psychological knowledge and practical training on conflict management, coping with stressful situations and the like. Heads emphasised that they badly lacked training orientated to practical work-specific activities, experience sharing with heads of departments of other schools. Discussion of specific cases, analysis of situations, assessment with colleagues would be a great tool for improvement, which both helps to learn and builds self-confidence. Leaders are interested in such forms as journal writing, content analysis, action research and would like to introduce them to teachers, but they lack knowledge and experience. In order to develop competences of heads of departments, it would be necessary to orientate towards new forms of teachers' professional development: internships (both short-term and long-term), supervisions and coaching. Workshops, active training in which theory is presented and much attention is paid to improvement of practical skills are also important. Heads find it particularly relevant to improve abilities of conducting counselling and being counselled, moderation, facilitation, teamwork organisation, motivation, work with staff, time management, they need knowledge of the basics of school management and leadership. Employees' (self-)education, improvement are the necessity for every modern organisation. Schools can flexibly respond to challenges in education by changing their structure, creating relationships orientated to collaboration and innovative forms of activity and learning. Middle-level leaders, being closest to their employees, create conditions for unfolding of teachers' creative potential and development of leadership abilities, seeking every pupil's progress.

### Conclusions

1. It is relevant and necessary to create conditions for manifestation of teachers' leadership in the school, when every teacher is constantly improving the educational process and developing personal competences, actively and responsibly participating in group activities and getting involved in the processes of improving school activities. Middle-level leaders, heads of departments, mediating in the implementation of individual, group and organisational level tasks, promote the development of teachers' competences.
2. The attention of heads of departments and their support to every teacher, individual assessment of the situation, focusing on the employee's strengths and exceptional abilities, collaboration motivate teachers to continuously purposefully improve their personal

professional competences. Teachers evaluate the activity of the head of the department ambiguously: concrete, individual support, attention, promotion are emphasised, but teachers are against observation and evaluation of activities. This is related to several reasons: teachers' attitude towards processes of changes and innovations in teachers' professional development, competences of heads of education departments and general school culture.

3. Creating conditions for teachers' personal professional development in schools, the focus is on the (self-)assessment processes. Such issues like purposeful planning that is orientated to concrete results, how the teacher could improve competences important for him/ her, what abilities are necessary for namely his/ her situation, what ways of improvement are the most appropriate for him/ her in order to achieve results receive too little attention. Effective personal professional development must be intensified at the individual level, creating possibilities for teachers to choose forms and ways of improvement according to their needs, experience and work style.
4. The latest trends in employee assessment and education promote school leaders to continuously develop and improve their competences. It is necessary to continuously improve leaders' competences introducing innovative forms of employee education, such as learning conversations, reflection, coaching, counselling, mentoring, facilitation, etc. Teachers' professional development institutions should update their training supply in accordance with the latest national documents and relevant issues.

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## PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS A PREMISE FOR TEACHER LEADERSHIP

### Summary

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Leadership-based culture promotes purposeful staff development aimed at continuous improvement of teaching and learning quality. School leaders significantly influence learners' achievements by helping to create favourable learning conditions at school; therefore, the activities of leaders should be maximally directed towards improvement of employees' and pupils' learning,

monitoring and evaluation of teachers' work, coordination of curriculum, assurance of continuous shaping feedback and formation of the collaborative culture. Heads of departments, middle-level leaders, merging all levels of school employees, promote teacher leadership through direct communication, observation and evaluation of their activities, results, paying attention to innovative teacher development, manifesting at the individual, group and institutional levels, creating appropriate working conditions and helping to create the favourable learning environment. Teachers, working together and solving pedagogical problems, participating in school activity improvement groups and collegially communicating, play leaders' role, develop competences and provide support to each other. While jointly working, learning and participating, the culture of the whole school and social capital are being developed; thus, it is very important that all employees are involved in school leadership processes. The respondents distinguished the following key determinants of the teacher leadership: authentic communication and collaboration, involvement in the teams improving school activities, maintenance of the initiative, empowerment in order to make certain decisions, giving letters of commendation during events and creation of appropriate conditions. However, teachers ambiguously assess the position of the head of the department, which has appeared due to changes in the school structure: concrete, individual support, attention, promotion are emphasised, but teachers are against monitoring and evaluation of their activity. This is determined by several reasons: teachers' attitudes to processes of changes and innovations in teachers' professional development; competences, personal qualities and experience of heads of education departments; general culture developed and fostered at school, promoting collaboration, continuous improvement and pursuit for quality; management of school activities and decision-making. The results demonstrate that schools insufficiently promote teachers to set specific goals for improvement, define criteria, outcomes and systematically reflect on their activities by comparing planned and achieved results; too little attention is paid to teachers' and leaders' abilities to plan their professional career. Creation and consolidation of experiences that proved successful, in particular organising systematic reflections and educational conversations, would provide possibilities to make personal professional development more effective. The analysis of teachers' professional development activities disclosed prevalence of traditional professional development forms in schools: the majority of teachers participate in seminars, courses, training events, prepare and present papers at conferences. Innovative forms of professional development are less often used in schools. Teachers' self-educational forms, like reflection, participation in school activities, discussions with colleagues, educational counselling, mentoring, self-evaluation of the teacher's activity, planning of personal professional development, etc., are acknowledged by heads as highly valuable and effective but are applied only episodically, non-systematically; good practices are not consolidated, teachers get familiar with some of them only in theory. Promoting mentored teachers' professional development, heads of departments have to pay considerable attention to development of their own competences. The results highlighted the trend that schools require leaders to focus on management rather than on leadership; thus, allocating their entire work for planning, organisation, management and monitoring activities, they cannot always express themselves as leaders in their organisation. Middle-level leaders, constantly directly communicating with teachers, promote individual implementation of personal professional goals, motivate teachers to improve the activities of the organisation in order to improve pupils' learning achievements.

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