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## **Towards a Conceptualization of Dialogic Leadership**

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# **Towards a Conceptualization of Dialogic Leadership**

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## **Abstract**

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In 1968, Freire included in his work the need of dialogue for those acting as leaders. Since then, leadership has been widely addressed by authors around the world and different conceptual frameworks have been developed. Different social and educational movements have granted dialogue a significant role for leading change. Educational research has advanced knowledge on using a dialogic approach for mobilising schools and communities. Building on the research conducted under the INCLUD-ED project, schools and communities together engaged in participation processes that enabled teachers, children, families and community members to lead the transformation of their schools. Based on a first attempt to theorise this phenomenon, this article explores the concept of dialogic leadership and accounts for the contributions from educational and teacher leadership oriented to promote change and improvement. First, a general overview of the relevance of dialogue in the *dialogic turn* of societies and social sciences will be provided. Second, the role of dialogue in different leadership models will be analysed especially considering the relevance granted to dialogue in the teacher leadership model. Third, a conceptualisation of the model of dialogic leadership will be proposed and final remarks highlighting the relevance of conducting empirical work to further elaborate on this conceptualisation will be put forward.

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**Keywords:** teacher leadership, dialogic leadership, educational community



# Hacia una Conceptualización del Liderazgo Dialógico

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## Resumen

En 1968, Freire incluyó en su trabajo la necesidad de diálogo para quienes actúan como líderes. Desde entonces, el liderazgo ha sido tratado ampliamente por autores y autoras de todo el mundo y diferentes marcos conceptuales han sido desarrollados. El rol del diálogo para liderar el cambio ha sido significativo en diferentes movimientos sociales y educativos. La investigación educativa ha avanzado en el conocimiento sobre la utilización del enfoque dialógico para movilizar a las escuelas y comunidades. A partir de la investigación desarrollada en el proyecto INCLUD-ED, las escuelas y comunidades juntas, iniciaron procesos participativos que permitieron a los maestros, niños y niñas, familias y miembros de la comunidad liderar la transformación de sus escuelas. Basándonos en un primer intento de teorizar este fenómeno, este artículo explora el concepto de liderazgo dialógico y parte de las contribuciones en liderazgo educativo y del profesorado, orientado a promover el cambio y la mejora. Primero, se presenta una visión general de la relevancia del diálogo en el *giro dialógico* de las sociedades y las ciencias sociales. Segundo, se analizará el rol del diálogo en diferentes modelos de liderazgo, teniendo especial consideración por el relevante rol que se le otorga al diálogo en el modelo de liderazgo del profesorado. Tercero, se propondrá una conceptualización del modelo de liderazgo dialógico para finalizar con unas conclusiones destacando la relevancia de llevar a cabo trabajo empírico para profundizar en esta conceptualización.

**Palabras clave:** liderazgo del profesorado, liderazgo dialógico, comunidad educativa



*I was in prison and the teacher of my son called me saying that they needed me in school because my son was depressed (...) I started participating and now the teachers count on us, we meet to discuss what we can do in the neighbourhood, we also share conversations among parents (Carlos, Roma father)*

Carlos spent 8 years in prison. As a Roma father in his community he was seen as an unreliable person who was deemed for trouble and could not be trusted for caring for his own children. In 2006 something happened that changed his life. The school attended by his children - which was repeatedly in the news for the week educational performance of its students and the serious conflicts between the school's staff and the students' families-, is located in one of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Spain. The school initiated a process of transformation based on the community participation with the dream of providing all children with the best education. Families, other relatives and other members in the community started to take part of the school's learning activities entering the classrooms and being active agents of the school's transformation into a successful and safe environment for all in which children have demonstrated to improve their academic results (Diez, Gatt, Racionero, 2011). This process meant a life transformation for many parents and community members who were given the opportunity of participating in their children's learning and getting involved in the school and in the community. The process of transformation of this community was analysed by the INCLUD-ED project, the only research in socioeconomic sciences and humanities in the list of the 10 success stories of the Framework Programme selected by the European Commission (2011). Many stories and lives like Carlos' turned into a process of empowerment through which they became leaders in the community, trusted by the families and engaged in different activities such as after-school training and the week-end centre. The process of leadership among many diverse people in the community would not have been possible without the chance to participate in their children's education, hand in hand with the staff, the teachers and other members in the school community. The conversations among teachers and community members about children's education and the future of the school were essential to build a relationship of trust and empowerment that facilitated the emergence of this leadership. Through

dialogue, they shared values and hopes that turned into action, in the same way as in what Marshall Ganz (2009) conceptualised as the story of self, the story of us and the story of now, where a shared narrative motivates agents for action. In this case, when we approached this reality -the schools analysed by the INCLUD-ED project- with the aim of exploring the ways in which the community participation promoted inclusion, we observed these emerging leaderships and shared empowerment. The processes that enabled community members to become leaders of the transformation has been the object of our analysis, which we intend to conceptualise in this article. Our aim will be to explore the concept of dialogic leadership that is driving to change and improvement and that is based on practices of leadership among the whole community. We first analyse the theoretical background that frames the dialogic turn in the social sciences and the relevance of dialogue among some of the leadership models, particularly focusing on the teacher leadership approach that significantly inspires the conceptualisation of dialogic leadership. We conclude underling the importance of carrying out empirical field work that can contribute to widely develop this conceptualisation.

### **The Relevance of Dialogue in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: the *dialogic turn* of societies and Social Sciences**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, dialogue is acquiring an increasingly important role both in the public and the private spheres. Meanwhile power relations remain and social and educational inequalities, particularly affecting certain social groups, persist (Aubert & Soler, 2008). Among these inequalities, we find the ones resulting from the structural changes of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, consequences of the transition from the industrial society to the information society, which has been widely analysed since the mid-80s (Gorz, 1985; 1983). The transformations that have accompanied this process have generated new models of interaction in which subjects make dialogue an important part of their lives, relationships and ways of thinking. Similarly, people and communities request that such dialogue enters the institutions and structures of the political, educational, economic and cultural systems, according to what has been defined as the *dialogic turn* of societies (Flecha, Gómez, & Puigvert, 2003).

Research has shown that citizens are reclaiming more spaces of dialogue and the need to incorporate in the public debate the voices of the social groups

who have been traditionally silenced. The dialogic dimension of our societies exists at the personal, institutional and political level as dialogue is having more influence in politics, the school, at work, in culture or the family. The fact that people have now more possibilities to decide their own life world increases the influence of dialogue in decision-making processes and contributes to review one's own thoughts through interaction, according to the "reflexive modernization" of our societies (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994). The process of "de-traditionalization" in which the role of the old structures and their functions is being questioned, leads to a public debate about the need to transform them (Heelas, Lash, & Morris, 1996).

The configuration of the personal and professional lives is accompanied by what some authors have defined as the "de-monopolization" of expert knowledge (Beck et al., 1994; Habermas, 1984, 1987). As a consequence thereof, people have the opportunity to confirm the treatments, medicine or therapies recommended for a particular disease; and students' families get increased access to the actions that have scientifically proven to improve their children's academic outcomes. Both the doctor and the teacher start moving away from the role of expert and entering into a dialogue in which the arguments presented by the speaker are more relevant than the position the person holds in a given hierarchy (Habermas, 1984, 1987). The role that the information and communication technologies are acquiring to facilitate this change is extraordinary. The growing Open Access initiatives working for citizens to have free access to scientific knowledge through technology reveal a trend with no return (European Commission, 2013). Although there are still barriers to this knowledge, recent statistics on the Internet use are demonstrating reduced rates of digital literacy (Internet World Stats, 2014), a fundamental skill to access this knowledge. Worldwide educational initiatives that include the information and communication technologies are contributing to this democratization. The use of technologies has also been incorporated by the leadership studies, with multiple e-leadership initiatives arising since the 90s (Avolio, Sosik, Kahai, & Baker, 2014).

Dialogue has changed social life and currently the array of choice increases while people are assuming more risks. These social, political, educational and economic risks are becoming less controllable by the institutions of the industrial society, characterized by the limits of the nation state (Beck, 1999). Similarly, the social sciences have also been greatly influenced by the *dialogic turn* of society, both in its theoretical dimension as well as in the empirical

work. Different authors have analysed this trend as a way to overcome the traditional dichotomy between agency and structures in the social sciences (Beck-Gernsheim, Butler, & Puigvert, 2003). The study of this *dialogic turn* incorporates both structures that favour or hinder the dialogue, as well as the agency, understanding that the social reality is based on this duality. Some of the most relevant authors worldwide, such as Habermas (1987, 1984), Touraine (1997) and Beck (1992) account for this dual perspective in their analysis. They concluded that knowledge is built in a more democratic way by giving more prominence to social actors and communities.

There is a growing concern in the European context within the social science research about the need to open up a dialogue with the public in order to respond to the specific problems of the citizens. In Europe, the research program in Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities (SSH) with the largest funding in the world is implemented taken this goal into account. During the process of approval of the Horizon 2020 program presently at work and lasting until 2020, the SSH research impact was questioned. This required the mobilisation of the academia claiming to maintain the programme. NET4SOCIETY, ALLEA, the European Consortium of Humanities Institutes and Centres, and the Standing Committees for the Humanities (SCH) and for the Social Sciences (SCSS) of the European Science Foundation (ESF) led these academics' movement which collected more than 25,000 signatures across Europe. However, the challenges for the maintenance and recognition of SSH research continues. The European Commission emphasizes the need to find ways through which civil society gets the opportunity to participate in science and, at the same time, finding channels through which science can be enriched from an on-going dialogue with society, including their voices. Numerous disciplines, from sociology to education or gender studies are incorporating the characteristics of this *dialogic turn* highlighting the dialogic nature of the social processes. In all these areas, the emphasis on intersubjectivity and dialogue is highlighted as key elements that explain the possibilities of living together (Touraine, 1997). Among the contributions that respond to this dialogic turn we can refer to Elster's analysis of the relationship of dialogue with democracy (1998), the dialogic feminism (Beck-Gernsheim, Butler, & Puigvert, 2003) or the conceptualization of the "dialogic self" (Mead, 1934).

Focusing particularly in education, it is relevant to highlight that the role of dialogue as a facilitator of change and transformation has been analysed for

more than four decades. Already in the 70s, Paulo Freire (1970) developed the theory of dialogic action, still playing a prominent role in many of the most important contributions in education at the international level. Through his prolific writing Freire analysed how dialogicity is inherent to the human nature and a fundamental aspect of democracy to empower community involvement, including teachers as cultural workers (Freire, 1998, 1997). In coherence with Freire's work and the *dialogic turn* of societies and the social sciences, relevant developments on education are including dialogue in their analysis. Furthermore, they also consider the ways in which the community can be empowered in order to be involved in schools through it. This approach resonates as a transformative and comprehensive perspective to education according to which learning and development are strongly related to the social interactions provided across school-community boundaries in order to respond to the changes brought about by the information society.

In the same line, this dialogic dimension has influenced several areas of educational research. Educational leadership has evolved towards a greater inclusion of this dimension, taking advantage of the developments that identify synergies between education and dialogue influencing learning and teaching. By doing this, research that considers the different educational agents involved in leadership is encouraged. Some of the contributions in this regard are being discussed in the following section.

### **The Role of Dialogue to Enhance Leadership in Education**

The educational leadership includes a wide range of approaches, concepts, analysis and practices that are facing new challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is important to highlight that recent developments in the field of educational leadership are dealing with the analysis on macro and micro levels, the processes involved in leadership and the varied roles it plays in different cultural contexts (Shina, 2013; Hallinger & Huber, 2012). Among the richness and diversity of topics addressed, we will focus on some of the contributions of teacher leadership for the conceptualisation of our model. This will include the transformative approach, for being particularly relevant as regards the role of dialogue and of communities into schools and their contexts.

Dialogue has a relevant role in the construction and consolidation of leadership, particularly in the models building on the distribution of leadership among different teachers as a way to contribute to efficient leadership



(Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003; Pont et al., 2008; Hallinger, 2009). For instance, Ganz (2010) has indicated the need to mobilize the whole community in order to reach effective solutions through the centrality of dialogue with all community members. Ganz's research and his involvement in the practice has demonstrated the effectiveness and success of dialogue in social movements (i.e. environmental, health, housing) and political campaigns (i.e. Obama campaign).

The pre-eminence of dialogue in educational action and in the different models of leadership, especially in the one developed with a transformative aim, is long known. Freire, who in 1968 included the role of revolutionary leadership and dialogue, inspires some of the leadership contributions. Already in the 60s, Freire stated that "the revolutionary leadership establishes a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed" (1968, p. 50). His work -and the role of dialogue in it- has inspired educational leadership among number of scholars around the world, and it has understood as a key point to social transformation. In line with the importance granted to dialogue in these and other theories, we also observed that dialogue was at the centre of all the activity and progress in Carlos' children school (as we have also identified in other schools following the same educational project) – as well as in the neighbourhood's movements and actions-. The presence of dialogue, debates, conversations in the hall and meetings among teachers, among families, and also between them, does also mean that the analysis of leadership perspectives is not an isolated case but rather that leadership enters this context with a large prevalence of dialogue.

Over the last decades different conceptual frameworks have improved our understanding of distributed leadership (Spillane et al, 2001; Gronn, 2002; Louis, Mayroweth, Murphy & Smylie, 2013; Robinson, 2008). Although dialogue has been included in some of these contributions, this approach is focused on developing measures, classroom conditions and outcomes for the school improvement (Spillane, 2010; Elmore, 2008; Mulford, 2013; Robison, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). This approach becomes particularly important to improve school outcomes and contexts, including formal and informal dimensions. Aiming at combining both school improvement in socially just contexts (EPNoSL, 2013), the transformative leadership accounts for the role of dialogue to achieve *schools more equitable, inclusive, excellent and socially just* (Shields, 2010, p.580). One of the most important elements in this process is the need to take into account the existence of inclusive spaces

and relationships in which dialogue occurs, expanding the horizon of learning through community partnerships. A clear relation exists between dialogue and the community placing the focus in this case, on the inclusive spaces to open new horizons for leadership.

We have already seen how dialogue is linked to different actions addressed to transformation. In this sense, it is relevant to mention that transformation is a key point in the first developments of what has been defined as transformational leadership, an approach developed in the late 70s (Burns, 1978), while the information society was replacing the industrial one. In his work, Burns studied the leader's influence in developing a common vision into organizations allowing for their transformation, although dialogue had no relevant significance yet in this work. Since then, several authors have tried to assess this conceptualization to measure its impact into the academic outcomes (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood, Louis, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010; Day & Sammons, 2013; Day et al., 2010, 2011). In this approach, the promotion of change and transformation that takes dialogue into account includes the role and involvement of teachers. Furthermore, other similar analyses conclude that the transformation of the school organization is influenced also by the social context (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008). At this point, it would be interesting to study how dialogue is influencing this conceptualization, which requires an inclusive environment to achieve excellence and equity in schools and communities (Shields, 2004, 2010).

Importantly, the scientific literature also highlights the role of teachers in schools as one of the key topics in leadership processes, including the managerial and administrative dimensions, and the very teacher's leadership practice. Frost (2012a) analyses the need of strengthening partnerships with schools' teachers who commit themselves to expand leadership in their schools. The non-positional teacher leadership is one of the basis of this innovative approach that has been pioneering in the United Kingdom and extended worldwide in the framework of the *International Teacher Leadership* project (Frost, 2011; Frost, 2014) with outstanding relevance. This initiative was launched in 2008 at the University of Cambridge and has supported the creation of a network that actually involves 14 countries (Frost, 2012a), having as key transversal aspects: the relevance of developing teacher leadership, knowledge building and culture building. In the network, teacher leadership encourages the development of projects in which there is an

important role of professional development, expert facilitation and support and practical knowledge creation. This international dimension of teacher leadership is strongly supported by the HertsCam Network made up of over 300 teachers and other professionals in the United Kingdom (Frost, 2013).

Following a transformational dimension of this approach, one of the key aspects of these initiatives is the development of strategies for supporting teachers as agents of change, analysing the relevance of the agency to transformative educational aims and the moral purpose of teachers and their professionalism towards successful educational reform (Frost, 2012a). Focusing on teacher leadership, this contribution does also account for the creation of dialogue to lead change (Frost, MacBeath, & Jorunn, 2009; Frost, 2006), in line with the *dialogic turn* of societies and the social sciences. We argue that this dialogue promoted in the teacher leadership initiative is crucial and plays a critical role to inspire other social agents to be engaged in schools. The role of dialogue as a core element in leadership practices is a key contribution upon which we draw in the construction of our conceptualisation of dialogic leadership. In this sense, particularly important is the way by which teacher leadership is empowering profound transformations into school and children's lives, achieving school improvement through meaningful actions that teachers lead. This makes sense not only for the teachers themselves but also, going beyond the school, by creating meaningful networks for the daily work of those who devote themselves to education. These contributions become a milestone in the field also due to the fact that leadership is promoting the empowerment of other agents, the non-positional teachers in this case, shifting from one relevant figure (the principal), to a range of potential relevant figures (the teachers) (Frost, 2014). Therefore the teacher leadership model provides the opportunity to open up leadership to the empowerment of a larger number of agents, a factor that is essential for our conceptualisation. Particularly relevant in this regard is the approach for teacher leadership that analyses, develops and consolidates the vision of teachers as agents of change including the relevance of dialogue and the *dialogic turn* in education.

Teacher networks of leadership use dialogue to create meaning to actions, as actually community members in the schools analyzed by the INCLUD-ED project do as well, and by so doing, the identification of the relevance of the educational community for transformation has arisen. How does the educational community face the lead of teachers? What are the

communication ways in terms of dialogue between them? Which leaders in the communities are also empowering the teachers' work? The dialogic leadership approach we develop shares these concerns with the teacher leadership approach promoted by Frost, as the latter does also depart from the understanding of the critical role of agency for social transformation (Frost, 2012b).

### **Towards a Conceptualization of Dialogic Leadership**

The dialogic leadership is thus the process through which leadership practices of all the members of the educational community are created, developed and consolidated including teachers, students, families, non-teaching staff, volunteers and any other members of the community. In their commitment as dialogic leaders, they seek to work together with families, teachers and students especially by supporting and promoting actions that contribute to transform the school and the community, which include the neighbourhood and the interactions at homes. In this regards, the literature has already informed on the impact that student empowerment has upon academic success (Mulford, 2013). In this sense, it is important to consider that these persons can be working or be involved in a wide range of areas, from economy to health, and can have diverse academic backgrounds, from an illiterate grandmother to a graduated sister or a father in secondary school. The dialogic leadership they carry out brings their expertise into concrete practices with a significant impact upon children's lives. Any **educational community member** may promote this kind of leadership by contributing his or her background to empower the voices and the dialogue among community members.

Our conceptualisation of dialogic leadership is in line with the dialogic turn of societies and the social sciences as, it accounts for some of the main features that we have identified: from the de-monopolisation of expert knowledge to the pre-eminence of dialogue within structures and relations. We put forward a model which is emerging in successful contexts of educational transformation in which the community plays a central role. The model of teacher leadership has followed an inclusive approach that sees leadership possibilities beyond those with administrative or managerial responsibilities, beyond the principal-centred leadership (Frost, 2003). Therefore it enlarges the community of leaders to multiple teachers. In the same way, our model

draws on this inclusive approach that opens up this possibility to other community members. This is the case of a child that is empowered through the capacity she is granted to participating in argumentation and decision making in the context of daily assemblies for instance; this process is taking her to lead change in her own community. Below, we present some of the observations we made in the context of the INCLUD-ED project.

### **Dialogic leaderships identified throughout the INCLUDE-ED project**

The INCLUD-ED project conducted a 5 year longitudinal analysis of case studies in schools of 5 different European countries. As a result of this research, different types of successful family and community agents' participation were conceptualised, mainly educational and decisive participation (INCLUD-ED Consortium, 2009). By going in depth in the analysis of these schools in order to unveil how this type of participation had an influence in the community, we observed that in schools where the successful types of participation were implemented, unforeseen leaderships emerged, some of them against all odds, such as Carlos'. From the moment this father was given the opportunity to enter his children's school while he was still in prison, he started to participate as an active agent of his children's educational success – as well as of the community's transformation. He progressively became a leader in the community actively involved in the creation of alternatives for the most vulnerable in the neighbourhood (Padrós, García, de Mello & Molina, 2011). Other stories of children and families as well as other members in the community follow a similar process of personal empowerment through which they are leading change in their community.

The teacher leadership initiative with the prominence given to dialogue has managed to widen leadership among multiple teachers that are given the chance to become agents of change. Drawing on these advances and on their connection to the centrality of dialogue, and the emergence of diverse leaderships in the communities observed in the INCLUD-ED project, we develop an initial conceptualization of dialogic leadership.

Through our observations, we have identified that the interactions in the context of these schools were based on the validity claims of what is argued and not on the power claims of the speakers (Habermas, 1984, 1987). For instance, in an assembly to discuss which actions were given priority in the community for instance, the voice of a Roma mother had the same value as

that of a person from the school staff or a social worker. Through this principle, dialogic leadership seeks to promote egalitarian dialogue through the maximum involvement of people in schools, regardless their educational background, or the position held in a particular hierarchy, giving value to the voices of all on equal terms. In this context, **teachers** who implement the dialogic leadership are acting independently of their position, creating and consolidating spaces and dynamics in which everybody is important. The principal of the school is also responsible that this dynamics would be fostered in all the school spaces and she becomes another member of the whole community. Moreover, teachers know that educational community members have different cultural knowledge and capabilities learned in very diverse contexts to solve everyday problems. By promoting the inclusion of their voices through dialogic leadership, they are taking advantage of the heterogeneous reality existing among the social contexts of the schools.

One of the characteristics of the schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is that its students belong to different cultures, religions and ethnic backgrounds. When **children** from these different backgrounds are leading dialogically, they respect diversity of all, allowing their partners in the classroom to be treated equally, promoting the conditions that enable them to live their differences in egalitarian terms. We observed for instance, in interactive groups (Elboj, Niemela, 2010) children had very diverse strategies to support each other - when one of them would need help in solving a problem, their very different backgrounds and experiences lead them to contribute differently and the very functioning of the interactive group facilitated that all contributions were usefully incorporated, regardless of the diversity they implied. Children in these schools participate in ways that lead them to increase their sense of ownership and involvement with the community and which have an impact on the eventual change in the community. A concern of the school refers to collecting, from the very beginning, the dreams of everyone about what the school is meant to be, and granting equal importance to any of these, whether it comes from small children or from families or teaching staff. In the classroom practice too: the initiatives children take to support each other so that the whole group progresses is another element that characterises a sense of ownership not only of their own practice but also of the sense of belonging within the group. Under dialogic leadership -understood as a source of change and transformation for social and educational projects-, children are developing empowering practices that at the same time contribute to their

increased learning. In these schools, families are not only worried by the values their children are learning in school. Aware of the training requirements of the Information society, families' concerns also refer to the grades they are obtaining and the educational outcomes they achieved at the end of the academic course.

Therefore, the educational community and particularly family members contribute to develop practices to improve children's academic performance, reversing school failure in diverse socioeconomic contexts. **Family members** developing dialogic leadership are participating into decision making processes within school and are also having access to those practices that have demonstrated school improvement. The decision making processes in which family members participate in the observed schools were diverse in nature. For instance, Serrano and Mirceva (2010) have explored how Muslim mothers, in one of the schools analysed, participated in dialogic literary gatherings where they decided together which classic book want to read as well as debate about the its contents . They not only improve their level of Catalan or Spanish language but also they get in touch with some of the most relevant classic universal literature they had not accessed before. And they take active part in all the decisions: from the hours that best suit them to conduct the gatherings to the next classic book they want to read. They told us that by reading this classical books and discussing them in the gathering, they improve their level of Spanish (in this case) and learnt many other things and, most importantly, they felt empowered to help their children with their homework. When they lead dialogically, they are having in mind that the education they want for their children is the education they would like for all children. The impact concerning the improvement of educational outcomes allows the dialogic leadership to be a source of personal and social sense for the families. Furthermore, this meaning is shared by non-teaching members and volunteers also involved in the school, contributing to address actions that transform difficulties into possibilities, improving relations between community members and their context.

## Conclusions

Along with the *dialogic turn* of societies, the role of dialogue is increasingly present in the scientific developments within the leadership models, and more specifically in teacher leadership models. Particularly, dialogue seems to be

one of the keys for educational success in inspiring work on teacher leadership. Scientific literature on educational leadership has addressed in detail the relevance that dialogue and the involvement of the community in schools have for improving the quality of education, with a special focus on teacher leadership. Some of the questions addressed in this sense are in relation to how teachers are empowering students to succeed in their academic results through dialogue, why they are creating meaning to other teachers around the world empowered through dialogue or what the challenges they face towards community involvement are. These are questions being discussed around the world across cultures and countries, among teachers coming from a wide range of school realities.

Different contexts could be identified as more facilitators of the emergence of this kind of inclusive leadership based on dialogue, on the involvement of the families and community members into schools with a transformative ethos. Through the inspiring work of teacher leadership and the practices of schools that are working on a dialogic basis through successful educational actions ([INCLUD-ED Consortium, in press](#)), we can identify the existence of a particular type of leadership involving the whole community, which we have attempted to conceptualise as dialogic leadership.

Now, many questions remain unexplored about how this dialogic leadership is created, promoted and consolidated in the long run, beyond teachers' and professionals' practice in educational centres. Empirical research is needed that allows us to find answers to these. In which ways do the concrete educational actions promote dialogic leadership? To what extent does the influence of dialogue particularly promote a successful dialogic leadership? How is the dialogic leadership consolidated among community members? Developments in this sense are needed, highlighting the relevance of research on these topics, including concrete actions undertaken towards this goal, as those promoted by the International Leadership Initiative (ITL, 2014). These new research avenues will allow advancing into the scientific knowledge on leadership research, in a joint effort to put in common the ways through which processes are influencing this field of knowledge as well as the transformative practices they enable and promote. The results would have relevance not only for the schools but also for the development of solidarity among community members, building a better future for our children.



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