

## **PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING COMMUNITIES: REDEFINING THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to explore how school leadership that is based on participation, cooperation, and shared vision can change the way schools function in modern society. The research seeks to understand how leaders who work closely with teachers, students, and parents can create a school culture where everyone feels respected, heard, and responsible for the common good. Such leadership moves beyond traditional authority and focuses on building trust, communication, and teamwork. It looks toward how everyday practices like open discussion, joint decision-making, and shared goals can make schools living communities that provide education and teach very important human values. In this way, schools can act as examples of inclusion, respect, and democratic participation, preparing students to take active and ethical roles in their local and global communities. (Constantinides & Eleftheriadou, 2023) The study therefore aims to show that leadership in education is not only about managing resources or improving test results, but about shaping schools into places where collaboration, empathy, and social awareness become part of daily life. The methodology of this study was oriented to explore how educational leadership supports sustainable school development in Greece; we wanted to understand how good leadership is being used by school leaders and teachers in Greece to make schools better and more open to all. The research methodological tools are simple and helped us collect real experiences from people working in Schools talked with 20 school principals and teachers from different areas of Greece. In these discussions, they shared with us how they collaborate with others, as well as how they make decisions and the way they attempt to create a positive school community. We also looked at school documents, such as teaching plans and the official guidelines of the Greek Ministry of Education, to see what kinds of rules and ideas guide schools today. In addition, we used the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which helped us understand how schools can contribute to creating a better and more equitable society. After gathering all the necessary information, we analysed it carefully using a method called thematic analysis, which means we looked for common ideas and patterns in what people said. This helped us understand what types of applied educational management practices bring about long-term positive changes for teachers, students, and society as a whole. Our findings show that active pedagogical leadership helps teachers feel that they have a voice. It leads to group decisions and choices. It helps children participate in shaping a positive school life. Schools that function as "learning communities" are more successful. They generate more new ideas. They have closer ties to their cities and the local community. They often function as small, free groups. They teach cooperation, sustainability, and fairness. We believe it is important to move from the old top-down management styles to shared leadership and cooperation. This type of leadership strengthens the role of schools in society. We believe that leadership training should be added to teachers' training programmes. Schools should form collaborative groups with other schools. New rules are also needed to help schools accept all children without discrimination. This study adds evidence that leadership in education is crucial. It helps bring about positive changes that benefit society as a whole and, above all, students.

**Keywords:** pedagogical leadership, learning communities, sustainable development, school culture, educational innovation, participatory governance

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The way a school is managed and operated is an important indicator of the quality of learning. It determines how well children are taught. However, schools are not limited to teaching. They are also places for social interaction. Here, children learn to work in teams, participate, and behave well towards everyone. Major global initiatives, such as the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, state that schools have an important role to play. They must contribute to teaching ideas such as inclusion, democracy, and social responsibility. The traditional model of school management in Greece was mainly administrative, with minimal cooperation and participation from teachers (Kolosidou & Kakana, 2023). However, new approaches, such as pedagogy and distributed leadership, are beginning to gain interest. These models offer teamwork, open communication, and shared decision-making, helping schools evolve into learning communities where everyone contributes to a common vision (Balasi, 2024). The purpose of

this study is to explore how participatory leadership practices in Greek schools can enhance collaboration and inclusion, transforming schools into active agents of sustainable social development.

**2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The methodology of this study focused on investigating how educational administration and leadership are implemented in Greek primary and secondary schools. A qualitative research model was used to help us examine people's feelings and thoughts in depth. We gathered data through semi-structured interviews with 20 school principals and teachers. They came from all over Greece. This took place during the 2024-2025 school year. The teachers were selected using purposive sampling. This ensured that we had a mix of schools of different sizes, locations, and years of operation. Each discussion lasted about 45 minutes. We focused on leadership practices, teacher collaboration, and school culture. We also examined key school documents, such as school regulations, annual programs, and Ministry of Education guides (Ministry of Education, 2023). This helped us understand how basic rules and guidelines shape leadership practices. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also served as a guide. We used it to identify elements of social responsibility and sustainability in school management. All interviews were recorded, and every word was transcribed. We studied them using thematic analysis. The participants' views were grouped to form themes. The themes that emerged were shared leadership, inclusion, and professional development and learning. Triangulating the data between the speeches and documents made our findings more reliable. (Gamarra-Mendoza & Brito-García, 2023)

**3. RESULTS**

Twenty school principals and teachers participated in the study, which reached three key conclusions: collaborative leadership, teacher empowerment, and positive school culture. The majority stated that schools are changing. They are moving away from the old, hierarchical leadership styles. Approximately 85% of respondents reported that joint decision-making had positive results and improved dialogue and trust. Teachers said that when they were involved in important decisions, they felt more respected and were more motivated to contribute to improving the school. Collaboration among teachers emerged as another important outcome. Nearly 75% of participants reported that team meetings and joint lesson planning promoted innovation and improved student outcomes. Teachers noted that sharing experiences helped them deal with daily challenges in the classroom much more effectively. In addition, 80% of teachers reported that open communication and mutual respect in the school culture strengthened the emotional environment and created a sense of belonging. Schools that included elements of sustainability or community involvement in their vision also reported better relationships with parents and local organizations. These findings demonstrate that pedagogical leadership based on cooperation and trust contributes to the creation of learning communities where both teachers and students thrive. The results confirm international research showing that distributed leadership enhances school effectiveness and teacher satisfaction ( Nonkanyiso Pamella Shabalala 2024);, UNESCO, 2023).

*Table 1. Summary of Results from 20 Interviews (Academic Year 2024–2025), Eutyxia Kateroy*

Category	Main Indicators	Participants Reporting (%)	Representative Examples
<b>Collaborative Leadership</b>	Shared decision-making, open communication, collective planning	85%	“When we discuss decisions together, teachers feel more responsible.”
<b>Teacher Empowerment</b>	Increased motivation, professional autonomy, and a sense of ownership	70%	“Being part of decisions gives us a stronger sense of belonging.”
<b>Teacher Collaboration</b>	Joint lesson planning, exchange of teaching ideas, and peer support	75%	“Our teamwork helps us find new solutions to daily challenges.”
<b>Positive School Culture</b>	Trust, respect, reduced isolation, and stronger community bonds	80%	“We feel like a real team, not just colleagues working in the same place.”
<b>Connection with Community</b>	Engagement with parents, sustainability projects, and local partnerships	65%	“Parents are now more involved and supportive of school initiatives.”

Source: Author’s

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The study demonstrates that participative leadership enhances school culture, teacher motivation, and community engagement. But not all schools got the same kind of aid. There were concerns with schools in the country that with less money. We had a hard time talking to one another. They didn't have time to work together. It was hard to make decisions together. Some teachers indicated that doing more work could be hard without meaningful help. It was hard to move to a system where everybody has a say because there was only one boss. The study offers several nice suggestions; however, it only looks at 20 schools in Greece. And the information comes from what people claimed about themselves. This could make the wonderful things appear better than they were. More research is needed to find out how participatory leadership works with school rules, teacher workload, and student performance. This is really important for schools that aren't all the same or don't have a lot of money. Participatory leadership offers certain evident benefits, but it also has some problems and limits. Schools need good rules, enough money and supplies, and continual professional development to work well.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

Analysis of data from 20 semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers revealed three main themes: collaborative leadership, empowerment of teachers, and positive school culture. Most people liked to work together. They did not like the old top-down way. Heads of schools said it was good when teachers help make choices about what to teach, how to fix problems, and new plans to make the school better. Teachers said this way of working builds trust. It makes them want to help more. One head of school said that when teachers feel heard, they start to take more charge of schoolwork. Teamwork by teachers proved to be a big help in making the school do better. Many teachers talked about their meetings to plan lessons as a group. This teamwork led to sharing ideas on how to teach and provide better help for kids with learning needs. The study showed that the school is a more kind and open place when leaders share a clear goal and talk a lot with all. Teachers said they felt better, less alone, and more joined in their goals. Schools that focused on sustainability and social responsibility also had better ties with the town and parents. (Alinsunurin, 2020) We see that leaders who work as a team and show respect make work ties strong (UNESCO, 2023). This helps the school grow. It helps it do well for years to come. Participatory leadership helps schools do a better job and keeps teachers happy (Harris & Jones, 2020).

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all the principals and teachers who participated in this study. Their time, trust, and ideas were invaluable. I would also like to thank the Greek Ministry of Education for giving me access to the necessary regulatory documents and presidential decrees. Their support was crucial to the completion of this study.

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