

# Grasping the role of the school leader in stimulating team learning

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# Team learning

The process by which team members collaboratively develop, share, and apply knowledge to improve performance and solve complex problems.

(Van den Bossche, Gabelica & Koeslag-Kreunen, 2022)



# School leaders' vision on team learning

*"I firmly believe that schools are such complex organizations that collaboration is essential."*

*"To meet today's demands on schools and do so effectively, it's essential to join forces and work collaboratively."*

School leader AE\_05, 2025

# The school leader's role in stimulating team learning



- Facilitating learning (time and resources)
- Coaching teachers
- Developing leadership skills
- Joint decision making
- Sharing responsibility
- Building trust
- Focusing on learning and teaching
- Ensuring alignment with the shared vision, goals and values

(Kools et al., 2020)

# Research design

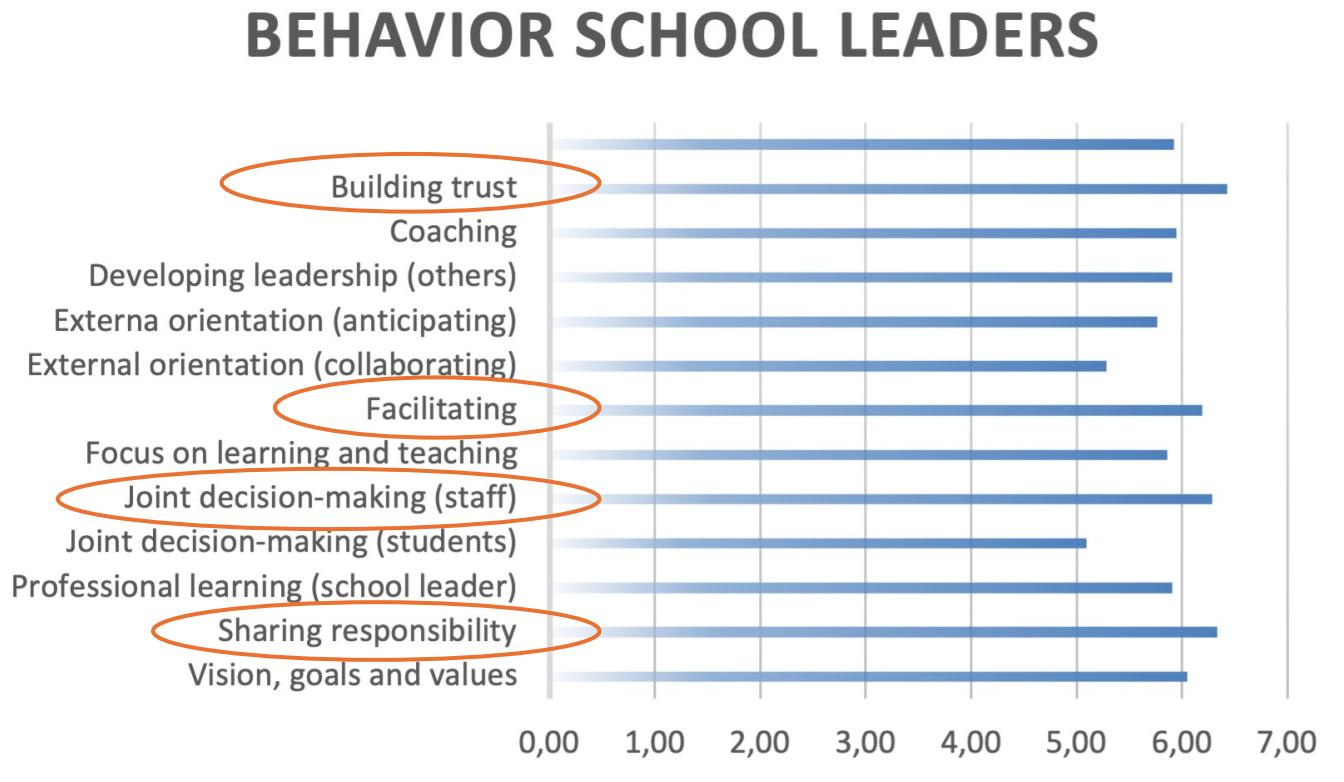


Survey (n=21)



Interviews (n=5)

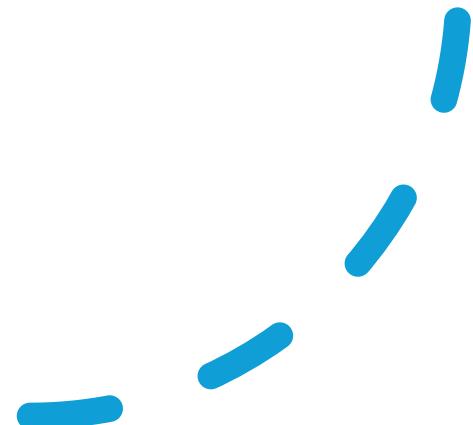
# Survey



# Sharing responsibility

*"I don't need to know or do everything myself. With a little trust, I can confidently place responsibilities in someone else's hands."*

School leader AD\_04, 2025



# Other behavior from school leaders to stimulate team learning

- Ensuring quality
  - Process
  - Content
- Letting go, giving autonomy
- Framing, setting boundaries
- Showing exemplary (learning) behavior

# Ensuring quality\*

The school leader is informed about what is happening and stays involved in the process.

*"I'd like to join the meeting to follow the process. I'll try to keep my hands off and say nothing, because I want them to act from their role—but I do want to know what's happening."*

School leader AB\_02, 2025

# Framing, setting boundaries\*

The school leader provides structure and sets boundaries for the process or the content whenever necessary.

*"We don't act on personal preference. We act with intention—choosing what we know works, understanding why it works, and why it fits our vision."*

School leader AD\_04, 2025

# Conclusions

- School leaders are aware of the importance of team learning.
- School leaders indicate that they invest a lot of time and energy in promoting team learning.
- School leaders report demonstrating all behavioral aspects, especially *building trust, facilitating, joint decision-making and sharing responsibility*.
- School leaders also indicate that they are *ensuring quality, letting go and giving autonomy, framing and setting boundaries and showing exemplary behavior*.

# Next steps

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- Interviews with school leaders about their skills and attitudes
- Studies on
  - How do teams learn?
  - Which factors (inside and outside the team, like school culture) play a role in team learning?
  - How do teams experience the school leader's role?
- Evaluation of a PDP for school leaders to stimulate team learning.

# Discussion

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- Do you recognize these outcomes in your context?
- How can school leaders determine when to ‘sit on their hands’ and when to set boundaries?
- What do you consider the most important behaviors to stimulate team learning? What should definitely be included in a PDP for school leaders?

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