

Research Proposal Leiden Leadership Centre – Summary

This document contains a summary of the research proposal submitted by Leiden Leadership Centre | Leiden University (LLC) to support the Dutch Senior Civil Service (*Bureau Algemene Bestuursdienst*; BABD) in their journey towards a new ‘vision’ on public leadership (*Visie op leiderschap*). The summary has been compiled by employees of BABD. Its sole purpose is to inform colleagues internally and members of the LLC research group about the research proposal.

Team

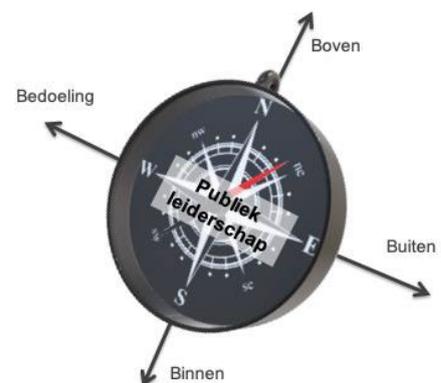
The LLC Core Team (*LLC Kernteam*) consists of Prof. Dr. Sandra Groeneveld, Dr. Ben Kuipers and Dr. Joris van der Voet. The Core Team is supported by the LLC Expert Team, a sounding board (*Klankbordgroep*) and receives project and research assistance from LLC | Leiden University. The Core Team, together with project leader Christina Fortunati and researcher Sonja Hamhuis, form the LLC-ABD Project Team. The Project Team coordinates with Deputy DG Marjolein Voslamber, special advisor for leadership Mark Frequin and others involved within BABD during the course of the project. The Project Team also pays explicit attention to the various lines of communication with the target group of top civil servants.

Underlying principles

LLC applies a number of principles in their research proposal. First, LLC emphasizes **that a ‘vision’ on leadership is inextricably linked to a ‘vision’ on government and public governance**. LLC outlines a number of common threads, including the **interplay between politics and civil service**, central government as a **mission-driven social partner that creates and receives trust**, and central government as a **guardian of various public values**. In addition, LLC distinguishes **four perspectives on leadership** (the ‘4 B’s’): **Boven** (Upward, i.e. the political realm), **Buiten** (Outward, i.e. the societal realm), **Binnen** (Inward; within the central government), and **Bedoeling** (Purpose). The ‘4 B’s’ serve as a rough ordering model to identify and arrange important themes and elements of public leadership, and to provide guidance in ordering the vast leadership repertoire described in Mark Frequin’s Travelogue (*Reisverslag*, 2021). Third, LLC emphasizes the **importance of paying attention to the stratification of the ABD target audience** into domains and hierarchical levels. Finally, LLC emphasizes the importance of **conceptualizing leadership as process and behavior focused on a common outcome**. Following that definition, the focus is no longer on the formal leader alone but also on other actors in this process. This viewpoint is also in line with recent developments that call for delegating leadership and strengthening connections with society.

A compass for (top) civil service leadership

LLC continues the **travel metaphor** from Mark Frequin’s Travelogue (2021). As the journey progresses and the landscape changes into sometimes unfamiliar and possibly even rugged and difficult terrain, the familiar maps no longer suffice. LLC therefore suggests a **compass to keep course** based on the different wind directions. The ‘4 B’s’ represent the cardinal points, **each with a different object of leadership**: *Upward* (political realm), *Outward* (societal realm), *Inward* (organizational realm) and *Purpose*. The perspectives on leadership can be complemented with other elements as the journey progresses (using the ‘assessment framework’ (*‘toetsingskader’*, working title), for example), but the compass itself remains an important point of reference.



Methodology

LLC's research proposal continuously seeks to connect empirical and literature research. The empirical and literature research follow a number of shared methodological principles (e.g., connecting scholarly and practice-based insights; multiple perspectives on leadership; consideration of contextual variation) and together form the basis for the vision and a "review framework" to periodically review the vision.

Literature research

Objectives of the literature review:

1. To identify core themes for public leadership according to relevant international scientific literature as well as Dutch studies;
2. To make a selection of essential elements by confronting the above core themes with those from Frequin's *Travelogue*;
3. To further investigate the functioning of these elements based on scientific literature;
4. To provide input for further empirical research on the operation of these elements;
5. To provide the theoretical basis for an 'assessment framework' (*Leadership Compass*) to periodically evaluate the vision and elements

LLC's literature review takes the form of a **narrative literature review**. This method focuses on identifying and interpreting the most relevant insights, concepts and themes. From this interdisciplinary narrative approach, LLC combines the latest scientific insights on public leadership with the important themes and elements as mentioned in Frequin's *Travelogue* (2021). In doing so, LLC can count on input from an LLC Expert Team and an international sounding board. The four previously mentioned perspectives on public leadership then serve as a rough ordering model for the themes and elements.

Based on the analysis framework, LLC creates a second inventory focused on the selected themes (e.g., diversity, inclusion, and social safety). LLC then elaborates on the analysis framework through a process of open and axial coding and analysis. In this way, LLC integrates Frequin's *Travelogue* (2021) with findings and sources from the academic literature. This gives further depth to already known themes and building blocks; makes new connections and adds new building blocks.

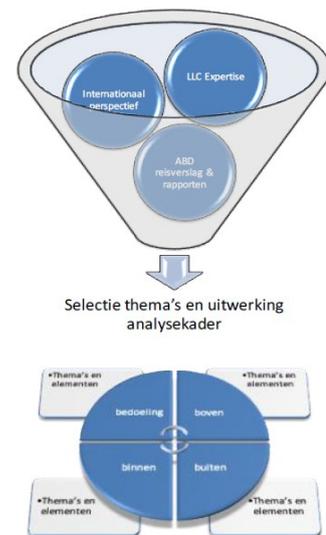
The literature review forms the theoretical basis for the 'assessment framework' and the vision, and also feeds the empirical research. The literature study results in a research report.

Empirical research

Objectives of the empirical research:

1. To identify to what extent certain elements of leadership are present in the behavior of the ABD target group (*realization: questionnaire survey*)
2. To investigate how putting the elements of leadership into practice is experienced, and what tensions and dilemmas are involved (*realization: focus groups*)
3. To test the extent to which the ABD target group agrees that the elements are relevant to the vision on leadership (*realization: conjoint analysis*)
4. To form the methodological basis for the 'assessment framework' (*Leadership Compass*) to evaluate the vision and elements periodically

For its empirical research, LLC employs a complementary palette of research methods: **questionnaire**, **focus groups**, and **conjoint analysis**. Through this **triangulation of research methods**, LLC identifies, examines, and tests various elements of leadership.



Focus groups (*exploring*)

The focus groups consist of sessions in which a relatively small number of respondents (5 to 8) discuss leadership in their daily practice. Focus groups are particularly well suited to generate in-depth, rich data based on the experiences and “lived experience” of managers and employees. To promote reliability, focus groups take place according to an established conversation protocol, in which participants are asked to respond to a series of statements and open-ended questions about the elements of leadership. The discussion protocol of statements and open-ended questions is discussed with stakeholders from the ABD. The implementation of the focus groups is done by organizing a total of eight focus groups: four per work domain with variation on hierarchical level, and four without variation on hierarchical level in which respondents from all work domains participate. Using qualitative analysis software (Atlas.ti) and axial coding, a comprehensive but insightful overview of leadership elements is created. In a final round of analysis, researchers focus on analyzing any differences in axial coding across work domains and hierarchical levels.

Survey research (*identifying*)

A survey research is well suited to reliably conduct a broad survey about leadership among public managers and employees in a short period of time - and with minimal effort on the part of respondents. To design the questionnaire, the LLC Core Team makes an inventory of the elements of leadership to be measured, such as shared leadership, crisis leadership, and social safety. The questionnaire consists of validated measurement scales and will be tailored in two versions: a questionnaire among managers to measure (self)perceptions of formal leaders (ABD target group and a sample from the national government), and a questionnaire among employees to measure the perceptions of employees. The implementation of the questionnaire is done by sending an invitation to the overall ABD target group (over 1500 managers) and a sample equivalent in size among managers statewide (1500 managers). LLC uses multi-stage sampling of employees, by asking managers to distribute a link to the employee questionnaire to (some of) their employees after participating in the questionnaire. The analysis of the questionnaire results in a descriptive analysis from multiple perspectives, identifying to what extent the elements of leadership are present within the target group of the ABD and central government. Distinctions according to work domain and hierarchical level are explicitly included.

Conjoint analysis (*testing/assessing*)

LLC employs conjoint analysis to test the relative importance that managers assign to the various elements of (top) tenure. Conjoint analysis is an innovative research method that makes it possible to establish a hierarchy in the preferences and relevance of certain characteristics for various subjects at the same time. Because these are not all presented to the respondent, but through the presentation of a random sample of pairwise comparisons, social desirability in the answers and cognitive overload of the respondent are avoided. The conjoint analysis is implemented as part of the online questionnaire, thus ensuring minimal additional burden on respondents and commitment of research capacity.

Ultimately, the empirical research together with the findings from the literature review results in a compass of essential leadership elements that is used in the development of an “assessment framework” and a “vision on leadership”. The empirical research also culminates in a research report.

Final products

The research trajectory will run from June 2021 through January 2022 at the latest. The LLC-ABD project team will work with an agreed upon schedule and LLC will deliver several products during the course of the project:

Product	Completiondate
Report literature research	September 15
Report empirical research	September 30
'Assessment framework' (Dutch: <i>Toetsingskader</i> , working title) to periodically review the vision and elements	December 15
Essay and PowerPoint presentation	December 15