

Leadership for inclusive education: Assessment for learning tool

LOES VAN WESSUM (PhD)

What this is tool about?

School leaders play a pivotal role in providing learning success and wellbeing for all students. This also means working hard together on strengthening equality and equity. There is growing consensus among international researchers about the leadership practices that foster improvement in instruction and student learning.

This tool is based on the research of a leading scholar in Leadership in Education, Ken Leithwood. Based on considerable evidence he shows that successful school leaders enact leadership practices and dispositions or personal resources (Leithwood, 2021). Successful school leaders use five leadership practices which contribute to greater equity within schools. The five domains

of leadership practices include 22 specific practices. There are four categories of dispositions, attributes, or personal leadership resources that help developing equity in schools.

School leaders can use these leadership practices and dispositions to develop inclusive schools or schools as learning organizations. These leadership practices and dispositions are described in this tool. School leaders can use this tool to reflect on their situation. Which leadership practices and dispositions are necessary for developing more inclusive, socially just experiences for diverse groups of students in their schools?



How to use this tool?

The tool should not be used as a checklist, but rather as a reflective tool. It is the reflective dialogue with peers which can support school leaders planning interventions (leadership practices and personal resources) and understanding the consequences of their interventions and their professional development. The tool is meant to promote dialogue and discussion of interventions as a way of reflecting on and strengthening your own practice as an effective leader.

Ensure that you have enough time to have a reflective dialogue. Find a place in which you will not be disturbed. It might be helpful to go for a walk together. Plan moments together to use this reflective tool, so it becomes a regular part of your job to reflect.

Reflective dialogue on working on progress

To reflect on present situations and interventions, school leaders can conduct reflective dialogues, try out new interventions (a combination of leadership practices and personal resources) and reflect on the impact of these interventions and their professional development.

School leaders can use the following procedure:

REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE ABOUT THE PRESENT SITUATION

- A** *Describe your situation, your problem or concern to your colleague. Your colleague can ask you questions to get a clear picture of what you are up against.*
- B** *Look at the leadership practices and the personal resources: which are helpful in your situation? How can you use these practices and personal resources for tackling your concerns?*
- C** *What will you do? Be very precise in your answer and describe why you believe these interventions will help you.*
- D** *Implement your plan and adapt if necessary. Make notes on what alterations you have made, based on your practical wisdom (why did you decide to make changes)?*

REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE ON ACTION

After you have enacted your interventions reflect on them.

- A** *Describe your process to your colleague. Your colleague can ask you questions to get a clear picture of what you have done.*
- B** *Collaboratively try to figure out the mechanisms underlying your interventions and discuss how they contributed to solving the problem.*
- C** *Have a conversation about your learning process: what have you learned about your leadership in this situation? What does this mean for your professional development?*

Assessment for learning tool for enhancing equity in education

	REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE ABOUT THE PRESENT SITUATION	REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE ON ACTION		
LEADERSHIP PRACTICES	Describe your situation. What will I be doing? Be precise. Why do I believe these leadership practices and personal resources will be helpful?	Describe your process (including alterations you have made) and analyse how your leadership practices and personal resources contributed to solving the problem.	What have I learned about leadership in this situation?	What does this mean for my professional development?
<p>Setting directions includes building a shared vision. Identifying specific, shared, short-term goals; creating high-performance expectations; and communicating the vision and goals.</p>				
<p>Building relationships and developing people Stimulating growth in the professional capacities of staff; providing support and demonstrating consideration for individual staff members; modelling the school's values and practices; building trusting relationships with and among staff, students, and parents, and establishing productive working relationships with teacher federation representatives.</p>				
<p>Designing the organization to support desired practices Building collaborative cultures and distributing leadership; structuring the organization to facilitate collaboration; building productive relationships with families and communities; connecting the school to its wider environment; maintaining a safe and healthy school environment and allocating resources in support of the school's vision and goals.</p>				
<p>Improving the instructional program Staffing the instructional program; providing instructional support; monitoring student learning and school improvement progress; buffering staff from distractions to their work; and participating with teachers in their professional learning activities.</p>				
<p>Securing Accountability Building staff members' sense of internal accountability and meeting the demands for external accountability.</p>				

Assessment for learning tool for enhancing equity in education

	REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE ABOUT THE PRESENT SITUATION	REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE ON ACTION		
	Describe your situation. What will I be doing? Be precise. Why do I believe these leadership practices and personal resources will be helpful?	Describe your process (including alterations you have made) and analyse how your leadership practices and personal resources contributed to solving the problem.	What have I learned about leadership in this situation?	What does this mean for my professional development?
LEADERSHIP DISPOSITIONS				
Cognitive resources These include problem-solving expertise; systems thinking; and several types of role-related and organizational improvement knowledge.				
Social resources, largely encompassed in most accounts of “social appraisal skills” or “emotional intelligence.” These include the leaders’ abilities to perceive the emotions of others, manage their own emotions, and act in emotionally appropriate ways.				
Psychological resources These include optimism and resilience, self-efficacy, and proactivity.				
Values and ethics Ethical leadership points to both personal and professional values influencing the leaders’ success, such as fairness, honesty, and integrity.				

