Culturally responsive Leadership and Evaluation in Schools – Conceptual Map

The **guiding idea** of the project is:

Under the conditions of cultural diversity

school leaders (as a role or function, not as an individual or position)

by virtue of their specific leadership activities

can contribute to a climate and practice of cultural responsivity in a school

which will enhance learning and wellbeing of all students.

However, they are not acting alone, but there is a number of other contextual and in-school influences.

Meaning of the concepts in more detail:

1. Culture

Cultures = The concept of culture "refers to the whole way of life of the members of a society or group. It includes how they dress what and how they eat, marriage customs and family life, their patterns of work religious ceremonies, leisure pursuits and works of art. It is displayed and expressed through language, thought and action. It is also expressed through physical objects, such as works of art, books, icons, monuments and museums, and through social interaction such as how people relate to one another, make decisions and share experiences. It is the last of these - social interaction - that is perhaps of most significance for educational leadership." (Dimmock & Walker, 2005, p.8)

Cultures = produced and reproduced by **human activity**. Actors are referring to cultural structures (norm and resources) and artefacts in their action, thereby reproducing (and possibly developing/changing) culture.

As a consequence, cultures are **in flux** (more or less so, but they are); and actors have **multiple and fluid cultural relationships/affiliations**. As a consequence, 'cultural responsivity' cannot mean to identify (nail down) a person to a given version of culture.

"'Culture' is a difficult term to define because cultural groups are always internally heterogeneous and contain individuals who adhere to a range of diverse beliefs and practices. Furthermore, the core cultural beliefs and practices that are most typically associated with any given group are also constantly changing and evolving over time. However, distinctions may be drawn between the material, social and subjective aspects of culture, that is, between the material artefacts that are commonly used by the members of a cultural group (e.g., the tools, foods, clothing, etc.), the social institutions of the group (e.g.

the language, the communicative conventions, folklore, religion, etc.), and the beliefs, values, discourses and practices which group members commonly use as a frame of reference for thinking about and relating to the world. Culture is a composite formed from all three aspects, consisting of a network of material, social and subjective resources. The full set of cultural resources is distributed across the entire group, but each individual member of the group only uses a subset of the full set of cultural resources that is potentially available to them (Barrett et al., 2014).

Defining 'culture' in this way means that any kind of social group can have its own distinctive culture: national groups, ethnic groups, faith groups, linguistic groups, occupational groups, generational groups, family groups, etc. The definition also implies that all individuals belong to multiple groups and have multiple cultural affiliations and identities (e.g. national, religious, linguistic, generational, familial, etc.). Although all people belong to multiple cultures, each person participates in a different constellation of cultures, and the way in which they relate to any one culture depends, at least in part, on the perspectives that are based on other cultures to which they also belong. In other words, cultural affiliations intersect, and each individual occupies a unique cultural positioning.

People's cultural affiliations are dynamic and fluid, that is, what they think defines them culturally fluctuates as an individual moves from one situation to another. These fluctuations depend on the extent a social context focuses on a particular identity, and on the individual's needs, motivations, interests and expectations within that situation.

Intercultural situations arise when a person encounters someone else who is perceived to have one or more cultural affiliations that differ from their own. Such encounters can involve people from different countries, people from different regional, linguistic, ethnic or faith backgrounds, or people who differ from each other because of their lifestyle, social class, age or generation, etc. Intercultural encounters occur when cultural differences are perceived and become important because of the situation or the individual's own orientation and attitudes. In such situations, intercultural competence is required in order to interact, communicate and understand the position and perspective of the other across the perceived cultural group boundary." (OECD, 2016, p.7)

2. Teaching, learning, schooling and CSR

Teaching and schooling are expressions of **cultural work**, i.e. they are an expression of existing cultures, and they are contributions to further developing these cultures.

Teaching and schooling very often start implicitly from an **idea of cultural homogeneity**: there are ideal virtues of an educated person, students have to be educated for. Even without immigration, this assumption is not appropriate in most cases (with the possible exception of very homogenous private schools), as e.g. sociological and sociolinguistic studies pointed half a century ago to different value orientations, language and living practices in social classes which are not equally valued by the 'school culture'. With immigration, cultural diversity (which also existed in times of little immigration) is multiplied, while the implicit reaction of schools is often still based on the assumption of a homogenous culture, students must be educated for.

Cultural responsivity = "could be understood as having a positive, respectful, sensitive reaction to different expressions and habits of culture. In order that all students are welcomed and accepted and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning, schools and classrooms must be responsive to culture (Ontario Ministry of Education, Reference?).

Cultural responsivity is keen on learning about the cultural affiliations of co-actors, however, is also aware that it will never fully 'know' these cultural backgrounds. Thus, it is attentive to the co-actors and reflective about its own role in the interaction. As a consequence, culturally responsive teaching is a type of reflective teaching, of action research-based teaching aiming for understanding and developing the quality of teaching.

3. CR school leadership

School leaders = understood as a role or function (not as an individual or position), with a special responsibility for the overall coordination and functioning of teaching, learning and schooling at a 'school site' (consisting of one ore more individual schools).

School leaders become socially relevant by their **leadership activities** (the aspect of 'evaluation' – from the title of the project – is a possible aspect of leadership activities). Broadly speaking, one might distinguish

- Ongoing everyday management
- Development/improvement aiming for changing existing structures and practices
- Evaluation aiming for finding out present states and effects of existing structures and practices

These leadership activities may **refer to distinguishable fields of action,** e.g.

- school mission, curriculum, student interaction and leadership, teachers, teaching and learning, assessments, conflict management, parents and outer community (from Schoolwide Cultural Competence Observation Checklist, SCCOC, by Bustamante, Nelson & Onwuegbuzie, 2009)
- OR: learning experiences and results of students; learning and teaching, extra-curricular activities and school life, professionalism of teachers and professional development, school partners and external relationships [and 'school management'] (i.e. areas of school quality in the Austrian quality management system SQA; Altrichter, Helm & Kanape-Willingshofer, 2012)
- OR: teaching and learning; extracurricular activities and school life; community partnership

Culturally responsive school leaders are persons with school leader functions who are

- effective in their general leadership functions (which refers to the school effectiveness literature)
  - o e.g. context sensitivity (context sensitive, but not context driven; fine tune their responses to the context and culture in which they lead to optimise school success) is considered a key feature of effective schools leaders which obviously relates to cultural responsivity
- attentive and reflective to the achievement and well-being gaps minority students might experience

- and actively developing their school's teaching and learning arrangements, their extracurricular activities and school life, and their community partnerships to become positive, respectful, sensitive to different expressions and habits of culture, and to support all students to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning.

School leaders are the key people for school reform, thus, also for improvement towards cultural responsivity.

Culturally responsive leadership may include:

- developing an equity and inclusive education school policy (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013)
- "high expectations for student achievement, incorporating the history, values, and cultural knowledge of students' home communities in the school curriculum, working to develop a critical consciousness among both students and faculty to challenge inequities in the larger society, and creating organizational structures at the school and district level that empower students and parents from diverse racial and ethnic communities." (Johnson & Fuller, 2003)
- culturally responsive leaders are "inclusive, culturally aware, share leadership, visionary, instructional leadership, and equitable" (Mitchell, 2015).
- "critical, reflective, purposeful, and fearless." (Lopez, 2015)

School Leaders characteristics

The SL activities and impact may be influenced by:

- Personal characteristics (gender, age/work experience)
- Qualification (type of teacher education, amount of professional development, additional qualification and degrees, amount of special professional development focused on CSR)
- Attitudes towards cultural diversity and the challenge of CSR schooling and teaching

4. Contextual factors

National and regional context

The SL activities and impact may be moderated by:

- General attitudes towards cultural diversity in the society (percentage of right-populist parties)
- Characteristics of the school system (inclusive vs selective; centrally guided vs regional vs school autonomy opportunities)
- Support for CSR (additional resource persons, additional time, additional teaching material, professional development)

School context

The SL activities and impact may be moderated by:

- School and class composition (% of minority students, poor students, number of national backgrounds)

- class composition (streaming vs mixed ability grouping)
- teacher qualification (type of teacher education, amount of professional development, additional qualification and degrees, amount of special professional development focused on CSR)
- teacher attitudes towards cultural diversity and the challenge of CSR schooling and teaching
- stakeholder (support vs pressure; stakeholder attitudes towards cultural diversity and the challenge of CSR schooling and teaching)

5. Hindering and facilitating factors

Hindering factors

- Hindering attitudes:
  - school, district and system level personnel who consider the presence of students from diverse cultural backgrounds as "an unwanted burden" (Cooper, Allen, & Bettez, 2009)
  - Bias, fear, lack of cultural awareness impede the ability of some educators to develop culturally responsive education. to consider students from a different cultural background in a "deficit" manner, blaming the students for what they lack.
  - lack of conviction on the part of school and district/system personnel (Wairia, 2017): the impact of culture on the classroom remains largely misunderstood, ignored or minimised.
- teachers lack the cultural proficiency and skill to teach culturally diverse students effectively (Roybal, 2018); teachers lack adequate formal training in culturally responsive teaching and are left to be innovative on their own (Wairia, 2017).
- the school develops a negative climate with conflict, misunderstanding, low teacher morale, high student discipline and low student achievement.
- system level, practices and policies may not align with the best interests of the students and the community (Kugler & West-Burns, 2010)

Facilitating factors

- recognise and include in the school curriculum the expressions of diverse culture in their communities
- establish partnerships, advocacy and trust with their families and wider local community (Durden, 2008; Ford, 2012; Jones, 2002; Khalifa, 2012; and Khalifa, 2013)
- System level discourse, policy, resourcing, and support for culturally responsive school leadership
- Suitable preparation programmes and professional development for culturally responsive school leadership
- System level co-ordination and quality assurance of a continuum of programmes for effective culturally responsive school leadership
- Selection of suitable candidates for school leadership
- School leaders qualities:
  - Have a vision which they communicate effectively for a culturally responsive school
  - Have the knowledge of theory and practice in developing a culturally responsive school
  - Are reflective, aware of their own bias, affirming of diversity and a strong sense of justice

- o Are proactive, have: a positive frame of mind, good problem-solving skills, excellent ability to relate with others, good listening skills and emotional intelligence
- o Understand and practice the theory of leadership that is focused on teacher and student learning, building a school-wide culture of learning
- o Have knowledge and skill in school improvement, particularly for building capacity of teachers in improvement in classroom practice for culturally diverse students
- o Are aware of the cultural expressions, strengths and abilities that students bring to school as well as the strengths of their parents and community
- o Are committed to effective academic outcomes, promote the intellectual engagement and suitable educational pathways for all their students
- o Ensure school level policy and organisational structures support the engagement, strengths and interests, and wellbeing for all students
- o Have the insight to recruit staff who are suited to culturally responsive education
- o Promotes a culture of high expectations supporting the belief that all students can learn, progress and achieve
- o Ensures that assessment practices are suitable for culturally diverse students
- o Share or distribute leadership, empowering others in leadership
- o Work collaboratively with staff, students and parents to enhance learning opportunities and wellbeing for all students
- o Continue to study their school communities and the theory and practice of leadership in their own context
- o Build good relationships with their community to enhance learning opportunities and wellbeing for all students.

6. Expected effects

Culturally responsive leadership is expected to stimulate the development of culturally responsive teaching and learning, culturally responsive extracurricular activities and school life, and culturally responsive community partnership. In turn, these will result in

- good outcomes in the usual aspects of school performance (e.g. student competence, personality development, wellbeing) and
- particularly foster equity, narrow the achievement gap between different social groups and
- contribute to societal integration

National context

Regional context

School context

| **School characteristics** |
| TT qualification, inclusive attitudes, class composition |

| **School leader characteristics** |
| TT qualification, inclusive attitudes, prof experience |

SL activities
> everyday management
> development
> evaluation

Learning and teaching
Assessment, special support

Extracurricular activities and school life

Community partnership

results
> student competence (vs. gap)
> well being
> equity
> integration

Other reform interventions

Support measures
Prof development, special programmes

Stakeholder support /pressure