

Evaluation Framework

for

Culturally Responsive Leadership Practices in Schools



(Culturally Responsive Leadership and Evaluation in Schools)



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Introduction

1. Purpose and rationale

The phenomenal increase in the number of immigrants in many parts of Europe has resulted in multilingual, multicultural schools and classrooms over the past decades. For equitable access to education for all cohorts of students, there is a need to create a learning environment that **acknowledges, positively responds to and celebrates the fundamentals of cultures**. In other words, that the school climate is culturally responsive.

Several systemic and in-school factors and variables influence cultural responsiveness in schools. Regulations, policies and resources for managing migrant and refugee children or young people's education and wellbeing significantly impact mutual understanding of school leaders/teachers and diverse students, students' engagement in learning and inclusion into the host community. The readiness and professional capacity of teachers and school leaders to ensure parity of learning opportunities that result in comparable achievement standards for students from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds are equally essential.

In most instances, however, diversity is acknowledged in policy rhetoric, while in practice, little is done to support the learning of migration background students. There are few professional development programmes for the school leaders and teachers to upskill them to manage and teach multicultural and multilingual classes and counter prevailing biases in the school community. European countries, with high proportions of migrant student populations, are trying to facilitate these students to learn the language of instruction. The focus is to increase such students' proficiency in the dominant language to understand the learning content, become fully engaged, perform better in and outside the schools, develop self-confidence, and become readily integrated. In some countries, special funding is earmarked for this purpose, and extra teaching hours are allocated to schools; nevertheless, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) uncovers the lack of balance between achievement standards of migration background students and their non-migrant peers.

Moreover, the rate of early dropouts from education is also higher for migrant students when compared to non-migrant students, thus, suggesting that proficiency in the language of instruction and high-level regulations are not enough to ensure that migrant students' academic achievement and enhance their connectedness to the school and community.

The in-school outcomes are closely linked to out-of-school variables, and policymakers and other ancillary support services also view schools as a solution to students' problems¹. Along with systemic support (supportive regulations and policies, school leaders and teachers' professional development programmes, special funding to schools with a high proportion of migrant and/or refugee students, provision of additional staff, social workers, psychologists, juvenile justice professionals), there is a

¹ Shores, K., Kim, H. E., & Still, M. (2020). Categorical inequalities between Black and White students are common in US schools—but they don't have to be. Brookings Center Chalkboard. Retrieved 12 July 2020. from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2020/02/21/categorical-inequalities-between-black-and-white-students-are-common-in-us-schools-but-they-dont-have-to-be/>

need for schools to have a learning environment propitious for every student regardless of their ethnic and cultural affiliations.

All levels of school leadership have a role in promoting and sustaining such a climate and practices of cultural responsiveness in schools that facilitate all students' learning and wellbeing. Indeed, leaders can foster such an environment where students learn about themselves and the world around them within the context of their culture(s).

School inspection frameworks are often designed to connect these in-school and systemic variables by emphasising, for example, specific teaching methods or provisions for students with special needs². Likewise, macro and micro variables of cultural responsiveness are generally found in the quality frameworks of the various education jurisdictions under multiple headings and standards.

To raise the awareness of school leaders, inspectors, and other ancillary support agencies about inclusion that embraces all differences and views them as an opportunity for building positive cultural and linguistically diverse climates in schools, an evaluation framework is needed that puts all indicators together.

Consequently, various stakeholders can evaluate what school leaders are doing and what needs to be done to reduce educational inequalities, promote better adjustments among migration (or refugee/minority) background students and improve intercultural relations or social cohesion between majority and migrant students. This Framework represents a synthesis of the research literature on culturally responsive school leadership, national surveys of school leaders, and case studies conducted in four European countries viz., Austria, Ireland, Russia and Spain.

This evaluation framework is constructed to highlight attitudes and behaviours that constitute culturally responsive leadership and practices that create a culturally responsive climate in the school. As we know, school leaders have various roles and a wide range of responsibilities that are encompassed in school evaluation frameworks comprehensively. School leaders employ these quality frameworks to self-evaluate their practices, while inspectors use them during external inspection of schools and forming quality judgements. In the same vein, this quality framework for culturally responsive leadership is envisaged to support school leaders, school inspectors and other sectoral support providers to evaluate the scope of cultural responsiveness in their schools.

Furthermore, the Framework of quality indicators is designed for a shared understanding of cultural responsiveness in schools and will ensure consistency in evaluations carried out by schools themselves or the inspectors. This Framework can be used exclusively for thematic inspections³ or in conjunction with the overall quality framework.

2. Context

This evaluation framework is developed as a part of Erasmus+ Project Culturally Responsive Leadership and Evaluation in Schools in light of school leadership practices, legislation and regulation in support of ever-increasing cultural diversity in schools and high-level educational endeavours

² Munoz-Chereau, B., & Ehren, M. (2021). *Inspection Across the UK: how the four nations intend to contribute to school improvement*. Edge Foundation.

³ School inspection focused on a specific topic

(Curriculum development, Standardised assessments, Initial teacher education etc.) in four partner countries Austria, Ireland, Russia and Spain. The consortium reviewed the policy documents and researched academic literature, surveyed the school leaders and conducted case studies in their respective countries to gather comprehensive and in-depth information about the supports and challenges for the school leadership in a multicultural environment. Additionally, the data thus collected provided insights into what school leaders and teachers are doing in their schools, what are the expectations of students, parents and the local communities and what the different stakeholders believe can be done to promote multifarious inclusion in schools and improve the educational achievement of every student in school.

In light of this information, an evaluation framework that focuses on Culturally Responsive Leadership has been developed that can be included in existing school evaluation frameworks or used separately to assess the extent to which cultural responsiveness is embedded in schools. In both instances, this Framework is expected to drive change by introducing cultural responsiveness as an essential aspect in national education and quality assurance systems across the partner countries and further afield. School leaders, regardless of the tier of school leadership they belong to, can also use the Framework as a tool for self-reflection as well as a self-evaluation instrument to review their understanding and scope of implementation of culturally responsive leadership. The Framework aims to:

- Layout a set of **methodological and theoretical foundations** for leading intercultural coexistence and improving inclusion/academic achievements of refugee and/or migrant students at the school
- State a **set of indicators** for evaluating the actual state of a school concerning Culturally Responsive Leadership practices
- Establish a set of **diagnostic indicators** for school leaders to prevent inclusion problems and poor academic performance of young immigrants
- Define a **set of competencies** for school leaders to deal with these issues and, if appropriate, to better identify potential problems and compatibility profiles
- Establish a set of **patterns for designing specific action plans** and **activities** to lead teaching and learning with and for refugees and/or migration background students
- Identify a set of **assessing indicators** for **measuring the effectiveness of leadership activities** and strategies that are carried out.

3. Structure and application

This Framework can be used independently or to complement the existing school evaluation frameworks for evaluating the extent of cultural responsiveness in schools. Despite being multifaceted, the Framework is organised in a simplistic manner to align with any school evaluation framework. The entire Framework is constructed around – Leadership and Management that is generally a significant dimension of any school evaluation framework. The Framework offers one specific aspect of school leadership and management that is culturally responsive school leadership. Furthermore, school leadership in this Framework is considered a **role** or a **function** and is **not limited to an individual or position**.

The **structure of the Framework (Figure 1)** is derived from the Department of Education Skills (Ireland) School Self-Evaluation Guidelines, available at the [following link](#).

It divides culturally responsive school leadership into **four domains** that exemplify the distinctive, although interrelated, aspects of the dimension.

Each domain is expanded through **standards** that signify **behaviours**, **attributes** and **characteristics of effective practices** in a culturally responsive school. These standards will guide school leaders and external evaluators to specify the areas that need improvement for better learning outcomes for culturally diverse students. Therefore, schools can prioritise the areas that need to be maintained or improved.

Statements of effective practice are provided for every standard to specify benchmarks for school leaders and others involved in schools' internal or external evaluation to form evidence-based evaluative judgements about the quality of particular aspects of a school provision. Also, the statements of practice enable school leaders to devise their school improvement plan in light of the findings of their self-reflection. Some effective practice statements may seem relevant to several standards. However, care has been taken to place them under the standard where they are the most relevant in the school context.

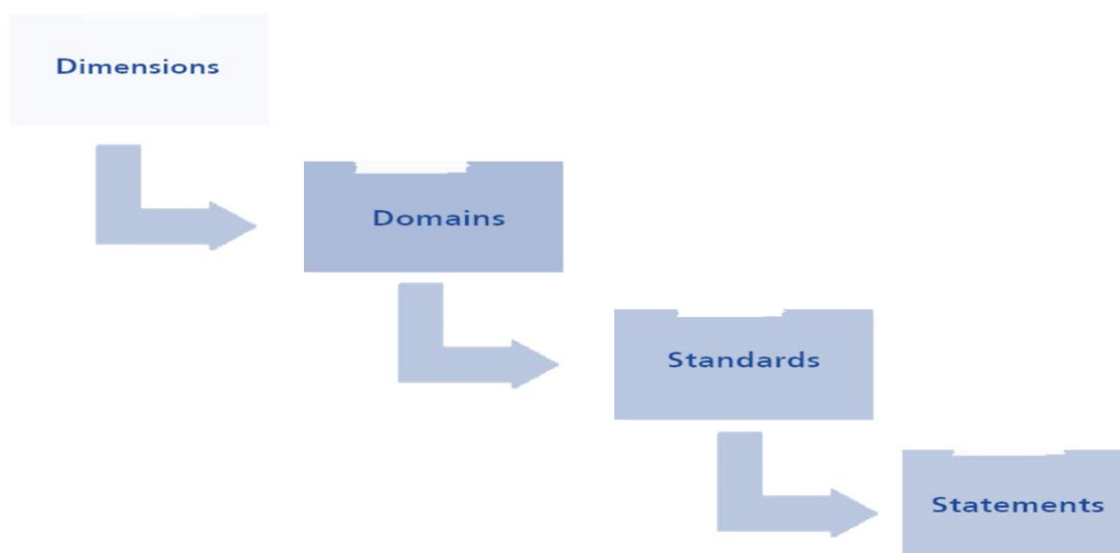


Figure 1: Structure of the Framework

QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

DOMAIN 1: Culturally Responsive Leadership Competencies

Standard: Critical Self-Reflection

Effective Practice

- Leaders routinely reflect on their own life experiences and association with various identity groups (i.e., those assigned by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic, religion, and gender), and they ask themselves how these factors influence their beliefs and actions.
- Leaders know that they, like everyone, can unintentionally internalise biases that shape their instruction and interactions with students, families and colleagues.
- Leaders make a conscious effort to avoid stereotypes (over-generalised beliefs about certain groups) and *microaggressions* (subtle comments or unintentionally discriminatory actions).
- Leaders use student/parent/community voices to understand how various identity markers (i.e., those assigned by race, ethnicity, ability, socioeconomic status, religion, and gender) influence the educational opportunities students receive.
- Leaders are mindful of institutional racism and other systemic biases and understand how these predispositions can disadvantage some groups of students and privilege others.
- Leaders think things through to figure out the best approach for undoing institutional racism.
- Leaders are mindful of multiple cultural association of migrant students. Leaders carefully review student conflicts/clashes/disputes for the root causes and employ problem-solving and violence prevention strategies to prevent future occurrences.
- Leaders are mindful of the school events that are likely to exclude any group of students.
- Leaders are self-aware and demonstrate understanding, sensitivity, and appreciation for the history, values, experiences, and lifestyles of others.
- Leaders critically review their school policies and practices for inclusiveness and equity of opportunity and success for all cohorts of students.

Standard: Strategic thinking and planning

Effective Practice

- Leaders work with a team to develop a strategic plan encompassing equity of opportunities and positive student learning outcomes by taking full account of social heterogeneity (e.g. class, gender, cultures, religions, ethnicities, abilities) among students.
- Leaders ensure that the vision and mission of the school are inclusive.
- Leaders formulate school vision, mission and goals in light of parents, students and community's perspectives and aspirations.
- Leaders allocate resources (staffing and time) to support culturally responsive pedagogy and learning of migration/minority/refugee background students.

- Leaders plan and implement such professional learning and development initiatives that raise staff's awareness of cultural responsiveness and enable them to view their work through an equity lens.
- Leaders invest in building their own cultural proficiency and responsiveness.
- Leaders consider the culture, hierarchy, and other dynamics of the education system in decision-making.

Standard: Communication

Effective Practice

- Leaders follow an open door policy and connect directly with students.
- Leaders frequently communicate with staff to discuss any concern related to the cultural and lingual diversity of the students, their learning needs and educational achievement.
- Leaders regularly post information on the school websites to keep parents/guardians and the community fully informed about school policies, practices and activities.
- Leaders hold meetings with community representatives to learn about their perspectives and aspirations.
- Leaders engage their School Board of Management, Parents' Association, Sectoral Support Agencies and Executive Leadership and lead conversations about equity and inclusion.
- Leaders are active listeners and can identify and diffuse conflicts quickly and effectively.
- Leaders provide opportunities (i.e. fora) to students to share their culture(s), norms, traditions and religions with other students and staff to overcome misunderstandings.
- Leaders honour and accommodate multilingual students and families by making available translation services (interpreters) during meetings.
- Leaders ensure that school information and other resources are provided in various languages.
- Leaders provide a list of students' names transcribed phonetically to ensure no name is mispronounced.

Standard: Data-informed decision making

Effective Practice

- Leaders use data (qualitative and quantitative) to inform their decisions.
- Leaders use student data to develop a demographic profile of the school population based on their social heterogeneity (e.g. class, gender, cultures, religions, ethnicities, abilities)

- Leaders use school data to discover and track disparities in academic achievement among various cohorts of students.
- Leaders use data to identify disciplinary trends (rate of school dropouts, unauthorised absence, late coming/poor timekeeping, bullying and harassment, etc.)
- Leaders use school data to see cultural gaps in achievement, discipline, enrichment, and remedial services.
- Leaders surveys teachers, students and parents to assess their experiences, thoughts, attitudes, values and beliefs.
- Leaders use data to assess progress continually, celebrate successes, and change course if needed.

DOMAIN 2: Leadership for culturally responsive teaching

Standard: Diversity among staff and teachers

Effective Practice

- Leaders engage a range of staff (psychologists, Youth coaches, Counsellors, Social workers etc.) to support the psychosocial wellbeing of students from all cultures.
- Leaders hire teachers representing diverse cultural groups.
- Teacher and staff selection criteria include cultural responsiveness, socio-political awareness, social justice and positive views of diversity.
- Diversity among staff closely corresponds to student diversity.
- Some teachers at school speak the mother tongue of the students and can communicate with parents.

Standard: Professional Development

Effective Practice

- Leaders organise and manage culturally responsive professional development opportunities for teachers.
- Professional development offered also includes: teaching the language of instruction as a second language, pedagogy for additional needs, inclusive pedagogical competences, knowledge of multiple affiliations (races, ethnicities/nationalities and religions).
- Leaders organise team meetings (of teachers) to review student learning for collective inquiry into the effectiveness of teaching practice.
- Leaders organise or model culturally responsive lessons for teachers.

- Orientations and structured mentoring programmes are in place for newly inducted teachers to raise their awareness of their own biases and cultural responsiveness.

Standard: Culturally responsive pedagogy

Effective Practice

- Leaders encourage teachers to adopt and use culturally responsive practices. Connections are made to students' culture(s) and prior knowledge while stretching them beyond the familiar.
- Teachers bring real-world issues in the class so that students identify and propose solutions to these issues, including bias and discrimination.
- Teachers incorporate relatable aspects of students' daily lives into their classroom instruction.
- Teachers evaluate the textbooks and instructional resources and adapt them so that they do not perpetuate stereotypes or misrepresent certain identity groups.
- Teachers complement the official curriculum with authentic materials that reflect experiences, characters, settings, and themes their students can relate to.
- Teaching is organised to meet the learning needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students by using a variety of grouping strategies, hands-on activities, visual, oral language development, reading/writing workshops.
- Teaching encourages students to take a problem-centred approach to learning and focuses on teaching students how to read both the word and the world⁴ (language and socio-political awareness).
- Teachers use culturally responsive classroom management strategies (Clarify expectations, be sensitive to how diverse cultures deal with conflict, emphasise a positive environment, not punishment etc.).
- Teachers use culturally responsive assessment tools for students (formative assessment strategies, e.g. peer/self-assessment, performance-based assessments, creative assessment⁵ and challenge-based learning).

⁴ Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. 30th Anniversary Edition. Continuum.

⁵ Nortvedt, G. A., Wiese, E., Brown, M., Burns, D., McNamara, G., O'Hara, J., Altrichter, H., Fellner, M., Herzo-Punzenberger, B., Nayir, F., & Taneri, P. O. (2020). Aiding culturally responsive assessment in schools in a globalising world. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 1-23.
<http://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-020-09316-w>

- Teachers help students challenge existing power structures and use culture to make meaning of the curriculum and their own experiences⁶.
- Teachers and school leaders use assessment as a diagnostic and developmental tool that tells them how to adjust their curriculum and pedagogy.
- Leaders hold teachers accountable to use culturally responsive pedagogies, management and assessment strategies.
- Leaders organise remedial teaching programmes in light of data analysis and regularly evaluate the impact of the interventions on students' learning and achievement.

Standard: Curriculum and culturally responsiveness

Effective Practice

- The taught curriculum is coherent, inclusive, culturally responsive and fully aligned with the official curriculum.
- The taught curriculum not only reflects the students' lived experiences but also provides insights into the history, traditions, experiences of other cultures and groups.
- Leaders ensure that community and cultural resources are integrated into relevant aspects of the school curriculum.
- Teachers draw on students' cultures to shape the taught curriculum collectively.
- A global perspective is integrated into curricula at all grade levels in various subjects (for example, history, geography, literature, languages and religion).
- Participation in co-curricular activities such as Sports considers students' cultural preferences (e.g. in swimming classes, not all students will wear swimming costumes).

⁶ Ladson-Billings, G. (2021). I'm here for the hard re-set: Post pandemic pedagogy to preserve our culture. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 54(1), 68-78.

DOMAIN 3: Culturally responsive/inclusive school environment/Climate of cultural responsiveness

Standard: Positive and affirming environment

Effective Practice

- Leaders promote diversity (ethnicity, religious preferences, social status, race etc.), awareness and respect for student differences.
- Leaders and staff use students' preferred pronoun, name(s) and pronounces them correctly.
- Leaders create a positive school climate where students' multiple identities are valued and nurtured, and which affirms students' home cultures.
- Leaders set high expectations for all students and create pathways in collaboration with teachers for diverse learners to overcome obstacles and close the achievement gap.
- Leaders facilitate a positive and supportive school climate where every student feels valued, included, and empowered.
- Leaders emphasise affirming relations among students, students and teachers and other staff that enhance students sense of belonging and engages them more in their learning.
- Leaders promote tolerance and foster an appreciation of diversity in the school culture.
- Leaders publish newsletters or write and lead blogs that promote the diverse school culture.

Standard: Student leadership

Effective Practice

- Student voice is considered in decision making by regularly meeting different groups of students to obtain feedback.
- Students have opportunities to integrate socially outside of the classroom.
- There is a programme in place to facilitate the adaptation of new students into the school and classroom, for example, Buddy or Peer Support System.
- There are a variety of student leadership opportunities for all students.
- Leaders (or Guidance Counsellors) train student leaders in diversity who in turn train their peers on diversity and tolerance.
- Students' forums are organised where students from various ethnicities and cultures present their cultures to dispel misconceptions and dismantle prejudices.

Standard: Expressions of diversity

Effective Practice

- Posters displaying common civilities, e.g. Welcome, Hello, Thank you, How can I help you, Pardon etc., in multiple languages (as represented in school).
- Information about various cultures, countries and their geography and historical features is displayed around the school.
- Symbols related to different faiths and communities and their significance to those groups are exhibited in school.
- High-quality pictures and artefacts of diverse students, their families, and community are prominently displayed and/or incorporated into learning materials.
- There are posters in schools displaying heroes from diverse cultures (they can be historical people, media figures, sports personalities etc.).
- A variety of food is available in the school cafeteria menu to meet the dietary needs of every group.
- School uniform policy is flexible and allows wearing of culture or religion-specific garments along with the uniform.

Standard: Appreciation of diversity

Effective Practice

- School celebrates festivities from all cultures represented in the school, e.g. Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Nauroze, Diwali, Baisakhi, Chinese New Year, Purim, Simchat Torah, Christian festivals etc.
- Special arrangements are made to accommodate the cultural/religious needs of cohorts of students on special occasions, e.g. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Ramadan etc.
- Arrangements are made (allocation of a room or space) to facilitate students and teachers to offer their prayers during the school day.
- A cultural day/a month is organised that includes activities, for example, cultural art exhibition, music and folk dance, Hobby/craft fair, National Flags day (display of national flags or flags from the state they/their parents were born and provide information about the place represented and cultural significance of particular colours or symbols used in the design of the flags), Ethnic cuisine day, Black History Month etc.

- Special publications, e.g. Cook Books with traditional cooking recipes from every culture represented in the school, Scrapbook with one chapter about every culture in school, documentary films about different nationalities represented in the school etc.
- Special assemblies are organised to commemorate the national days of the nationalities represented in the school.
- Orientation evenings/days are held to familiarise students and families with the host culture, traditions, beliefs and values.

DOMAIN 4: Collaboration with parents (family) and local community

Standard: Parental/ Guardian (and/or family) engagement

Effective Practice

- Leaders cherish positive perspectives on parents and families.
- Parent involvement programmes exist for all cultural groups.
- There is an equitable representation of parents from all cultural groups in the Parents' Association, Parents' Council and School Management Committee.
- Parents are offered courses to learn the language of instruction.
- Multilingual Open Days are organised to familiarise parents with curriculum, assessment practices, and school facilities, including guidance and counselling.
- Leaders ensure strong partnerships and collaboration between school and parents (or family) to bridge home and school cultures and increase the sense of trust between students, families and the school.
- Leaders systematically gather information from migrant parents about their needs, wishes, aspirations and satisfaction, analyse the information and, where appropriate, act upon it.
- Leaders have established a transparent process for complaints, and parental concerns (for both migrants and non-migrants) and complaints are responded to in a timely and fair manner.
- Systems are in place to share information with the migrant parents, in the language that they understand, about their children's progress, and they have opportunities to discuss this with teachers.
- Special arrangements are made to engage migrant parents in school life so that they feel in a partnership with the school for supporting their child's learning.
- News about school life and student achievements are shared regularly with parents and the local community in multiple languages.

Standard: Links with local community

Effective Practice

- Leaders explore and utilise innovative ways to reach the surrounding community, especially families, to utilise their strengths, and involve them in creating and sustaining a positive climate and culture.
- Leaders nurture positive relationships with the community surrounding the school.
- Leaders encourage community members to support the school's efforts of multicultural education.
- Leaders build a strong, educationally focused relationship with other educational and community institutions to increase student learning and opportunities for success
- Leaders liaise with sectoral support agencies to ensure inclusion of migration/minority/refugee background students in school and their immediate neighbourhood.
- Leaders organise standard Student Exchange Programmes with schools in other countries.

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