



Think Piece

On Selecting Senior School Leaders

Recent research shows that the most effective – and therefore successful - school leaders are proactive in delivery, yet deeply reflective to ensure that they are consistently self-challenging and innovative in their practice. As a result they achieve high visibility as leaders of learning first and foremost while at the same time, they fulfill other responsibilities that are associated with whatever particular role they are contracted to execute in their school. In effect this means they keep up-to-date pedagogically but hone their abilities to coach and support other teachers in their pursuit of appropriate good practice and ‘model’ practice where appropriate.

These realities will clearly impact recruitment/interview teams when schools seek to recruit senior practitioners and indeed, leaders at all levels. These effectiveness capabilities – qualities and skills - need to be translated into prioritized selection criteria with well-articulated measures which in turn, need to be woven into interview panel/team questions, challenges, tasks and activities.

Qualities, Skills, Capabilities for Success

While each and every school will have its own particular ethos – the result of its history, context and current realities, the research to which we refer above clearly shows that overall school success requires the presence and exercise of an inventory of qualities, skills, and general capabilities in all of its key leaders and practitioners. These include:

- Energy, enthusiasm, resilience to push for success
- Solid self-esteem
- Solid self-belief
- High levels of self-awareness leading to the ability to learn
- Capacity to listen and question
- Good communication
- Capacity to think on feet and ‘act appropriately’
- Depth of integrity and consistency
- Grounded and approachable professionalism
- Ability to work well under pressure
- Developed emotional regulation
- Demonstrates perceptiveness
- Agilities in appropriate intervention demonstrating support
- Regular provision of opportunities for others to learn
- Skills at modelling value-adding behaviours and practices
- Awareness of the criticality of paying attention to on-going improvement
- Proven ability to respond to shifting circumstances ensuring effective systems are in place
- Skills at setting up effective and efficient teams
- Skills at setting up school routines and behavior frameworks
- Ability to set realistic yet stretch goals with clear success measures for individuals & teams
- Capacity to recognise and reward achievement in others
- Skills to give authority to others when appropriate
- Awareness of need to seek feedback and change direction if required
- Ability to take risks and align others when essential
- Advanced capacity for taking decisions in a self-aware and self-critical manner



On Selecting Senior School Leaders

Group Recruitment Exercises are Key to Selection Success

Select exercises and questions that mirror typical work dilemmas – disciplining under-performing staff; dealing with a difficult parent; addressing student behavioral issues; managing school improvement plan changes....

take note of:

1. How well candidates interact with others
2. How well they influence
3. How well they work in group settings
4. How effective they are as communicators
5. How they cope with stress
6. How well they listen
7. How they take decisions – based on logic or emotion
8. How good they are at critical thinking
9. How they involve group members
10. How they respond to feedback
11. How they question
12. How they recognize; offer support; praise; validate etc
13. How they 'coach' others to an understanding of the fundamental
14. How they contextualise

