

Perspective on leadership: using data on diversity to improve your school



Teacher Education
through School-based
Support in India
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This School Leadership OER (Open Educational Resource) is one of a set of 20 units from TESS- India designed to help school leaders develop their understanding and skills so that they can lead improvements in teaching and learning in their school. The units are essentially practical, with activities to be carried out in school with staff, students and others. They are based on research and academic study of effective schools.

There is no prescribed order for studying the units, but 'The school leader as enabler' is the best place to start, as this provides an orientation for the whole set. You might choose to study the units in combinations related to specific themes; these 'families' of units have been aligned with the National College of School Leadership Curriculum Framework (India) key areas: 'Perspective on school leadership' (1); 'Managing and developing self' (2); 'Transforming teaching-learning process' (3); and 'Leading partnerships' (6). Key areas 4 and 5, on leading innovation and leading teams, are addressed in multiple units but not as a specific focus. Some units address more than one key area.

The units can be used by school leaders for self-study or as part of a taught leadership programme. In either scenario, there are benefits in keeping a personal Learning Diary, and in sharing the learning experience with others through discussion of the activities and case studies. The term 'school leader' is used in these units to refer to a headteacher, principal, deputy teacher or any individual taking leadership responsibility in a school.

Video resources

The  icon indicates where there are TESS-India School Leadership video resources in which Indian school leaders talk about how they are enacting change in their school to improve teaching and learning. It is hoped that they will inspire you to experiment with similar practices. The video resources are intended to complement and enhance you working through the text-based units, but are not integral to them should you be unable to access them.

TESS-India video resources may be viewed online or downloaded from the TESS-India website, <http://www.tess-india.edu.in/>. Alternatively, you may have access to these videos on a CD or memory card.

About the TESS-India (Teacher Education through School-based Support) project

TESS-India aims to improve the classroom practices of elementary and secondary teachers in India through the provision of OERs to support school leaders and teachers in developing student-centred, participatory approaches. The 105 TESS-India subject OERs provide teachers with a companion to the school textbook in the subjects of language, science and maths. They offer activities for teachers to try out in their classrooms with their students, together with case studies showing how other teachers have taught the topic and linked resources to support teachers in developing their lesson plans and subject knowledge.

All TESS-India OERs have been collaboratively written by Indian and international authors to address Indian curriculum and contexts, and are available for online and print use (<http://www.tess-india.edu.in/>). The OERs are available in several versions, appropriate for each participating Indian state and users are invited to adapt and localise the OERs further to meet local needs and contexts.

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What this unit is about

The scale of diversity in India is immense. It is revealed through race, colour, gender, language, religion, caste, creed, community, social group, economic status, literacy level, ability levels, levels of health, professions, geographical terrain, climate and political inclination. Traditionally, diversity has sometimes been seen as difference and perceived as a 'problem' – a nuisance rather than a resource. However, understanding diversity as a positive asset is critical to ensuring improvement in the educational outcomes of a school.

The school leader has a huge challenge to manage diversity and ensure that equitable opportunities and meaningful quality education are delivered to every student in their school community. It is only relatively recently, with the introduction of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and the Right to Education Act 2009 (RtE), that plurality has been explicitly embraced. School leaders are now expected to ensure that diversity is looked upon by their staff and students as a learning resource for the school and also within each classroom. Further, they are expected to gather detailed information on their students and parents as an essential first step for the development of social capital, infrastructure, curricular inputs and facilities.

The key to developing a clear and good understanding of the range of diversity in their schools is the use of data. Data on diversity helps school leaders to:

- identify critical areas and issues
- develop an action plan jointly with the school management committee (SMC)
- implement the action plan with other teachers and the local community
- monitor and measure the impact of changes that are made to ensure the equal delivery of quality teaching and learning in the school.

In this unit you will explore the local socio-economic, cultural and linguistic context of your school. You will also consider how to collect and use this data to ensure that you, your teachers, parents, students and staff are aware of, understand and appreciate diversity, and how it affects and impacts on the learning outcomes of all students.

The unit *Promoting inclusion in your school* will help you further to lead in this important area.

Learning Diary

During your work on this unit you will be asked to make notes in your Learning Diary, a book or folder where you collect together your thoughts and plans in one place. Perhaps you have already started one.

You may be working through this unit alone, but you will learn much more if you are able to discuss your learning with another school leader. This could be a colleague with whom you already collaborate, or someone with whom you can build new relationship. It could be done in an organised way or on a more informal basis. The notes you make in your Learning Diary will be useful for these kinds of meetings, while also mapping your longer-term learning and development.

What school leaders can learn in this unit

- The importance of diversity in order to ensure that all students achieve maximum learning gains each year.
- Types of data and nature of data collection that will be useful to you in understanding and dealing with diversity issues in your school.
- To use the collected data to improve learning outcomes for all students and develop an action plan.

- To lead teachers and the local community to gather, analyse and use data on diversity to ensure better outcomes for all students.

1 The importance of addressing diversity issues



Figure 1 Diversity is in every school.

Successive governments recognise the central role of education in creating an inclusive society that celebrates diversity. As a school leader you will need to be able to identify the diversity that exists within your school community and know how to best utilise this diversity as both a resource and an opportunity for learning. You will also need to identify where diversity issues may be a barrier to learning, and develop strategies to improve learning outcomes for all your students.

The extract below from the NCF (2005, p. 9) illustrates the rationale for the necessity of inclusive quality education and its link with equity.

The education system does not function in isolation from the society of which it is a part. Hierarchies of caste, economic status and gender relations, cultural diversity as well as the uneven economic development that characterise Indian society also deeply influence access to education and participation of children in school. This is reflected in the sharp disparities between different social and economic groups, which are seen in school enrolment and completion rates. Thus, girls belonging to SC and ST communities among the rural and urban poor and the disadvantaged sections of religious and other ethnic minorities are educationally most vulnerable. In urban locations and many villages, the school system itself is stratified and provides children with strikingly different educational experiences. Unequal gender relations not only perpetuate domination but also create anxieties and stunt the freedom of both boys and girls to develop their human capacities to their fullest. It is in the interest of all to liberate human beings from the existing inequalities of gender.

Every school leader plays an important role in ensuring that the provision of education is fit for purpose and meets the needs of everyone in the community. The NCF and RtE, which describe a school as a *learning community*, require school leaders to have a good knowledge and understanding of the social context of the school. This is further elaborated upon in the NCSL National Programme Design & Framework 2014, which provides school leaders *space to explore and understand* four special focus areas, namely tribal, small multi-grade schools, schools in conflict areas and difficult geographical conditions.



Video: School Leadership – Inclusion

<http://tinyurl.com/video-sl-inclusion>

Activity 1: Difference in your school

Write down in your Learning Diary five sentences about your encounters with diversity or difference in your school environment in the past week. For example, you might have heard several different languages being spoken, seen male students being treated preferentially over female students, witnessed different students' religious practices, or assisted a student in a wheelchair.

To help, you could refer to the types of diversity that were highlighted in the introduction: race, colour, gender, language, religion, caste, creed, community, social group, economic status, literacy level, ability levels, levels of health, professions, geographical terrain, climate and political inclination.

You need to be alert to actually notice the differences. At this stage you do not necessarily need to think about whether the difference is a problem or not. You just need to notice where there is difference in terms of behaviour, appearance, ability, opportunity or engagement.

Discussion

This will be a very individual response. You will be alert to some differences more than others and it might be interesting to get a colleague to do the same exercise and compare notes, as you are likely to identify different differences. There are many dimensions to diversity and each school community will be influenced by different aspects. The school leader needs to:

- recognise the diversity among their staff and students
- take action to avoid discrimination
- celebrate and use the diversity for positive gains, both socially (for the benefit of the wider community and the country) and educationally (to ensure all students achieve their potential).

Activity 2: Understanding the contexts for achievement and aspiration

Reflect on how the diversity of your students' social context influences the enrolment, learning and achievement of students of your school. What sort of trends and patterns have you been noticing? What are the key diversity issues that you need to address in your context?

The questions below relate to the social context of your students and how this impacts on their learning and aspirations. Make a note of your answers in your Learning Diary. You may want to add or drop some different questions so they relate specifically to your context. You might ask yourself questions like:

- Do any of your students opt for higher education? How many get a place in a college of their choice? Who are these successful students?
- Which able students do not proceed into higher education? Why?
- Which students are focused on moving up to secondary school? Which students are more vague about their education beyond elementary level?
- How many female students in your school think of a longer-term career or profession?

- How far do students aspire to build lives beyond their current social status? Which students are they and why do they hold these aspirations when others don't?
- How far does students' poor attendance link to their low aspirations at school? Does one cause the other or are there poor attenders who are keen learners?
- What impact might the students' language skills have on their learning and longer-term aspirations?

Discussion

Were you surprised by any of your questions? Did you recognise you were probably responding on the basis of gut feelings or general observations? You will probably have realised that you needed more evidence or hard data to confirm your identification of an issue. Before you take action, is it wise to check that you have accurately identified the issues and the extent to which it is prevalent in your school's community. Equally important are understanding and assessing the attitudes and beliefs of teachers, students, local community members, the SMC and parents to the various issues.

To do so requires the collection of data to support your initial reactions and your justification for making changes. Such data-gathering will also give you a baseline from which to monitor or measure any impact on learning.

Activity 3: Mapping diversity within the school

Students enrol at your school with a wide range of experiences and resources. These will obviously impact directly and indirectly on their learning outcomes, and as a starting point you need to map the actual diversity within your school.



Figure 2 Mapping diversity.

Using a table like the Table 1 below, complete as much of the information as you can using the data that is currently available to you. In the left-hand column, you will find a list of factors that influence the participation of your students in their learning. You may well need to subdivide the categories further to indicate the range of religions and languages represented by your students.

Think about how each of these factors influences your school community and fill in the columns. You may not have data available for all the categories. Make a note in your Learning Diary where you have gaps in

data and then try to make an estimate wherever possible. Often the actual figures are very different from the estimates, so where you are guessing, make sure that you are cautious not to draw conclusions without further investigation.

Table 1 Mapping diversity within your school.

Factor	Data	Suspected or proven impact on learning outcomes
Male:female ratio		
Low socio-economic band		
High socio-economic band		
Language spoken at home		
Number taught in familiar language		
Learning disability		
Physical disability		
Distance travelled to school		
Religious affiliation		
Health issues		
Other		

Write down in your Learning Diary about what data in this table surprised or worried you, and the questions that arose in your mind.

Discussion

This activity should highlight how aware you are of the context of your school and should have made you curious to find out the rest. You may have noticed that there are disparities that you had not recognised before, or that you had made assumptions. You may also realise that there are many more factors in your school community that you perceive need to be looked at and have data gathered on.

You have probably realised that there is a lot that you do not know for sure, but you may feel apprehensive about how to locate this data. This is natural, especially if you are finding all this very new and are worried about your ability to use the information. As you go along you will find your confidence rising. Keep your focus on your intention: to make a difference to the life chances of every one of your students.

Here is a case study for you to read and reflect on, with special attention paid to how this school leader used the information she had gathered about her school’s context to make a difference to the achievement of the female students in her school. It is about a highly respected leader of a school situated in a community of craftspeople who used her knowledge of the students to improve their learning.

Case Study 1: Mrs Kumar returns

The text in this case study is from a letter that the education officer wrote to his colleague.

Mrs Kumar knows every student in her school and knows who she needs to support and how to ensure they are learning to their full potential. Having looked at the achievements of her students, Mrs Kumar is aware that students from low socio-economic backgrounds have the lowest educational outcomes in her school. Therefore she makes every effort to prioritise their needs in order to raise their ambitions and achievements.

She has convinced her SMC to support the education of her economically backward students instead of spending money on birthday celebrations. She has influenced her staff to provide five sweaters every winter to the students whose families are unable to afford them for their daughters. She has convinced teachers' families to invite her students to their family functions, where they decorate attendees' hands with henna, as they are naturally talented and it provides them with much-needed pocket money.

Her teachers recently convinced the local education officers to place a satellite dish on the roof of their school because their students are not allowed by their families to travel into the city's satellite transmission centre. They did not want the cultural norms to affect the audio-visual instruction that their students now receive in school.

Today, her student alumni are in colleges of the city, some of which are co-educational. She ensures that her teachers are supported to reach every child and know the unique talents they possess. Absenteeism is low, drop-out is virtually nil, the most popular classrooms are a science demonstration room and the working science laboratories, and the use of technology in classes is higher than most government schools.

Mrs Kumar knows the family of each student and extends a helping hand where necessary, but demands their partnership in her endeavour to raise the standards of personal and family health and hygiene. Medical camps are extended to the mothers of the students.

The poems she writes on the school noticeboard are original and impassioned, exhorting her teachers that they are change agents. She earns every bit of the adoration that she receives from her 'school family'.

Activity 4: Mrs Kumar's school context

Mrs Kumar seems to be a very passionate and committed school leader who knows her school context well. Make notes in your Learning Diary in response to the following questions:

- In what ways does Mrs Kumar understand her school context?
- What data do you think enabled her to improve the outcomes of her students?
- What are the direct and indirect effects of her leadership on student learning and achievement?

Discussion

Mrs Kumar has a genuine interest in all her students and has taken care to understand their family and community contexts through conversations and relationships with her students and their parents. She had probably involved her staff in gathering information on the students' backgrounds from the very beginning and continues to involve them in her goal of providing learning opportunities to all her students and building their aspirations. This data meant that she was able to lobby for the satellite dish. They must have discussed as a team how all the staff could work with her to make a difference to the students.

When thinking about student learning, it is helpful to think about direct and indirect impacts. In Case Study 1 you may have identified direct impacts, including the low absenteeism, the use of technology in classrooms and the access to excellent science equipment. The indirect impacts are more likely to be associated with the general wellbeing of the students in order to provide an environment and a community where they can all access learning.

This is not accidental. In order to instigate changes that have the most impact on student learning, it is important to identify the barriers that cause the most difficulty for students in your school and the opportunities that exist but are under-utilised. How you, as a school leader, identify those barriers and opportunities relies on data collection and analysis.

2 Using data to improve learning outcomes for all

Data collection about diversity within a school community has a clear goal: to improve all students' learning and achievement. Some of this data collection and analysis requires school leaders to engage the school community in jointly planning, gathering, analysing and presenting data in order to encourage discussions about what the data says about the school and the varied experience of the students who attend. This collaborative use of data is vitally important to ensure that all members of the community understand the potential barriers to learning that exist for different sections of the community, but also the opportunities to enhance learning that arise from a diverse community. This will be explored later in this unit.

However, there is a strategic and longer-term use of data in the hands of the school leader, particularly data on attendance and attainment. Where individual teachers will need to understand patterns of attendance and attainment across their classes, and to identify individual or group strategies to ensure that all students participate fully in learning, school leaders need to analyse attendance and attainment in broader terms in order to understand the factors that affect student participation and achievement.

Activity 5: Analysing your data

Think about the data you have access to about attendance and attainment across the age range of students in your school. Spend some time listing the different ways you could (or already do) analyse this data to identify factors that may have an impact on students' learning outcomes (for example, attainment in different subject areas by male and female students).

You are likely to have thought of categories such as gender, disability and religion, but there are many other factors that you could interrogate depending on the priorities for your school in addressing underachievement. These could include any of the factors that were discussed in the introduction.

The data will initially give baselines about the range of factors that can affect school attendance and attainment. The data may need further more complex analysis to determine if there are co-dependencies (for example, for female students who are undernourished and from a specific tribal group) between the different data sets that you have. There may also be other data that is needed to inform decisions about any specific work with parents (such as the dates of the harvest seasons, which mean that some students stop attending). In this way, data can be used to identify who is participating in learning and who is not.

Where the student profile is linked directly to attendance or attainment data, the school leader may want to develop specific action plans to build better learning outcomes for certain sets of students. In this way the data can give evidence of the priority areas.

Activity 6: Using your data analysis

Using your attainment data (probably exam results), choose one factor that you suspect might illuminate an issue that needs addressing (such as gender differences in attainment in science). Spend time collating the data and analysing the findings.

Using the data analysis you have done, answer the following prompt questions to complete a row of the action plan in Resource 1. An example entry is shown in Table 2.

- What does the data tell you about the issue that you chose about the student learning in your school?
- What do you suspect may be contributing to the problem in student learning in that area?
- Identify other data that would be useful in order to do a cross-analysis of the issue. For example, identifying the female students who achieve well in science in relation to their socio-economic background or their attainment in maths, or those who have a particular teacher.
- Identify the people you would need to consult in order to draw up an action plan and develop some strategies to improve the student learning in this particular group.
- Identify what you would need to do in order to monitor this issue and ensure learning had improved.
Note: this will need to involve more than just looking at next year's attainment data.

Table 2 An example of an entry in a data action plan.

Data set	Factors analysed	Headline results	Impact on learning	Action(s)	Monitoring
Attendance	Gender during harvest	Male students' attendance reduces by one third for two weeks Female students' attendances reduces by 10 per cent	Loss of five core subject lessons per week Interruption to key exam preparation in science Need to check data for patterns of final attainment against this group	Discuss issue with the senior leadership team and identify ways to discuss the issue with parents of current exam years as an urgent matter – delegate to deputy? Gather data from the science department about the attainment of students who missed these crucial weeks last year Discuss with all subject leaders about the impact on learning in their areas Identify students in exam years most at risk from being withdrawn from school this coming harvest	Attendance during harvest Attainment of group in exams

You will need to analyse your attendance and attainment data in many different ways, and develop an annual plan to build up an understanding of patterns of attendance and attainment over time. Along with

this plan of how to analyse the data will need to be an action plan with clear priority areas. These may change over time as the data you collect becomes more sophisticated, but are likely to be longer-term issues that negatively impact on the learning of some of your students. You may know what these are already, but need to do the careful data analysis to ensure you are addressing them in the most effective manner.

Discussion

This activity will have highlighted the intersection between data analysis and issue identification at a broad whole-school level, and then the subsequent drilling down to identify particular causes or factors that need to be addressed. This drilling down involves much more than just looking at lots of spreadsheets and working alone; it involves the whole school community and requires you to lead your staff (and possibly students and parents) in helping you collect and analyse the data that is needed to make a positive impact on the learning for all your students.

3 Developing a complete picture of diversity in your school

Understanding diversity within your school relies not only on attainment and attendance data, but also on data about the intake and school experiences of your students. To address issues of inequality, you need to engage others in building a positive school culture that embraces diversity. When data gathering is part of this goal, you will need to motivate staff, students and parents to gather the information that you need, giving a goal or purpose that has obvious benefits – people may be suspicious that this data could be used to discriminate rather than to include. The sensitivity in collecting this data not only relates to its use, but also to its storage and safety. You need to have a way of saving it responsibly so that it cannot be misused or shared without permission. You will also need to inform those given their information about how it will be protected.

Activity 7: Gathering data collaboratively

Now look at what data about attainment can tell you about diversity in your school, and how you could use it to improve learning opportunities for your students. What else do you need to find out to be sure to take the right action?

Take around 15 minutes to identify further data that should be gathered by:

- you, entirely by yourself
- you and your teachers
- your teachers and your students
- the SMC
- the local community and parents.

List the information, skills and knowledge that your staff and students will need in order for them to undertake the data-gathering. Assess the capacity of your staff and students, and write down in your Learning Diary the names of the staff and students who might be involved in this exercise and for what form of data-gathering. Also write down what you are going to do to develop the capacity of those staff and students not involved in this first round. It is also worth considering how this data-gathering exercise could be built into the curriculum (for example, for data analysis in maths lessons or for writing questionnaires in language lessons).

Having made a decision on who is going to be involved in the data-gathering exercise, it would be best to now share your idea and how you arrived at these decisions. This is also a good time to sit down with the relevant staff to compare information that your school has already collected as part of reporting (as required by government regulations).

Activity 8: Planning together: why, what and who

You have started to identify what data you already have and thought about who might be involved in collecting any further data that you require. You now need to think about how to communicate this to your staff and students. Think about how you will make a persuasive case for introducing the data-gathering exercise that will provide you with baselines from which to plan and monitor with others if you think that doing this with them will help. List four or five **selling points** in your Learning Diary. Remember to include the policy drivers (NCF and RtE) as well as the benefits for the school, and you may find Resource 2 a useful guide to inclusion.

You could take these 'selling points' to the staff during a staff meeting or invite the staff to an assembly that includes the students. You probably do not expect the staff to immediately accept what you are proposing as a data-gathering exercise, so it is good to think ahead about what reservations others may have so that you can either answer their questions or address their doubts and criticisms.

As well as the selling points, you need to have a proposal about the **specific factors** that you want to gather data about. This will probably be different for each school and indeed may change in a school over time as well. You may choose fewer factors or add others that your colleagues suggest.

The third part of the planning that you need to share is how it will be organised and led. If you have identified who will lead this project, you might announce this or ask teachers for volunteers or nominations. At the end of the meeting, do remember to thank everyone for their willingness to work with you on this project. You will first need to motivate the students and staff so that they – guided by you – willingly gather information, think deeply about its implications and apply their knowledge to suggest how the information can be used to improve the students' learning and attainment.

Discussion

By opening the discussion about data collection, your staff and students will not only know the reason for the project, but will have been able to discuss their queries and fears, as well as add their ideas to your list. There could well be a buzz in the school about the project and your team would be identified.

Read Case Study 2, about a school leader and her team talking about how she divided the work between team members and created a format to monitor the plan that they had put together.

Case Study 2: Mrs Kazi delegates work among her team

Mrs Kazi

I want to thank all of you for putting your heads together to make the final list of information we need to gather about our school community. I am looking forward to the process of gathering the data, especially as we are involving the students in this process and the data will be used in class by us. Also, it will finally enable us to track our 1500 students to ensure they all get the most out of being in our school.

Today we have 20 minutes to decide which of us is going to be responsible for one or

two areas so that the data can be gathered simultaneously but without burdening any one person. We should all be able to identify one person who we can use as a reminder – a sort of alarm system to remind us to stay on the job, as well as someone to discuss things with when we are stuck or surprised by what we find out.

Mrs Mehta Yes, thank you, Mrs Kazi, I am happy with the areas that have been allocated to me. I have noticed that you have kept my interests in mind. I would be happy if Mrs Nagaraju agrees to be my reminder.

Mrs Nagaraju Of course, Mrs Mehta. I would be happy to. Regarding the allocation to me, Mrs Kazi, I am fine with gathering data on languages, but I am not sure I can do any investigations in the neighbourhood since my father-in-law has recently been hospitalised and we all have to take turns to look after him. I know we will get the students to do some survey work, but I would like to look personally at some of the places they talk about just to be sure ... and I'm not sure I can.

Mrs Kazi Oh dear! I wasn't aware of that! I thought it should be given to you since you come to school on your scooter and could use that to do the survey. We really need to understand our students' language use at home as there are a number of us who feel this is a major factor in determining educational outcomes in this school but I have no data to prove it! We need to find a solution to this one ...

Mr Behram Well, I could do that on my cycle, Mrs Kazi. Why don't I take on the neighbourhood survey? I find the idea quite fascinating. And I would like to give Mrs Nagaraju in return the job allocated to me to find out the religions of each of the students and the staff. I'd also like Mrs Nagaraju to be my reminder, since that way she could tell me about places she has seen and I don't know about.

Mrs Nagaraju Thank you Mr Behram – I would be happy to make the exchange and be your reminder! Mrs Kazi, would you like to be mine?

Mrs Kazi Well, that was quickly sorted – what a relief! Yes, Mrs Nagaraju, I can be your reminder. Is there anyone else here who has any difficulty with their area of enquiry?

Mrs Chadha I'm not too sure how to get real data on socio-economic status. Do you think students and teachers will really know? I'm not sure about my husband's income and how to assess it, since he is a professional who earns on a project basis.

Mr Sharma Don't worry, Mrs Chadha, we are not doing an exact survey. Look at it in terms of the impact it would have on learning outcomes of our students. So if we make three broad bands that indicate a student is well-off and able to afford more than the basics of food, clothing and shelter, we could put them into band A.

Mrs Kazi And I suppose the students who are sent to school by their parents just for the midday meal would be band C. It's them I'm more concerned about and feel we may miss paying enough attention to. We are really good at looking after the students who come to us and ask for books and pencils – could it be that many students do not? Maybe they are too embarrassed or shy. Let's find out as they may be part of the group of students

who are underachieving at the moment.

Mrs Chadha Mr Sharma, if you become my reminder I could come to you for help when I'm stuck!

Mr Sharma Of course, Mrs Chadha! And Mrs Mehta, I'm counting on you to be my reminder.

Mrs Mehta Sure!

Mrs Kazi Well, now that everyone is sorted, can I check if we all remember that each area of responsibility is allocated – each of you has a buddy and each of you also has to involve the students and non-teaching staff, and parents, if possible. In our next meeting, we will discuss how the information gathered can become a part of our class work. Thank you, everyone.

All Thank you, Mrs Kazi.

Activity 9: Reviewing Mrs Kazi's meeting

The discussions between the teachers show a high level of cooperation and also a shared agreement about the purpose and value of the data-gathering activity. Make a note in your Learning Diary of what you felt helped the meeting to move forward until the planning was complete.

Discussion

You heard Mrs Kazi recount how she planned her data collection – her clarity about the task and its purpose helped keep the team on track. She offered support to the teachers who felt unsure and helped them to support each other. You also heard teachers choosing areas for themselves that suited their interests so they felt more comfortable in the task. By the end of the planning meeting there was no confusion in her team about accountability, since everyone knew who was responsible for the work and it had been divided to everyone's satisfaction.

School leaders who help their teams understand why data should be used, and how to interpret and use it, are more likely to succeed in developing an equitable learning environment. Do not just issue orders and stand back – stay involved. Find out what the members of your team are thinking and feeling, and let your team know that you are always available to them and that the earlier they approach you, the more you appreciate it. Follow up on the ones who are not in regular contact with you. In this sense, 'staying involved' is part of your role to lead, motivate and monitor the work that is being undertaken.

The interest you show and the questions you ask will be important signals for your staff and students. This is especially significant when collecting data. Collecting data without any interest in emerging trends may appear to be an administrative task alone. Support your staff, students and parents through this task by demonstrating your interest in it. Always reiterate that its purpose is to improve learning for all.

4 Using data for planning school-based activities

Once data is collected, interpreting it and then deciding a course of action is a leadership activity: information without interpretation has little value. Using evidence or data to change practices may be a new approach, so your team will need a fair amount of support from you to decide what the data is telling you and to identify appropriate interventions or changes to practice to improve the learning of students.

Read Case Study 3 and notice how empowering students to collate diversity information supported them in becoming more effective learners.

Case Study 3: Using the data in the classroom

A large amount of data came through about the school community from field visits, interviews and surveys. The data-gathering had been organised by separate groups in the school who were each led by a teacher. Each group collated its own data and put up charts on the corridors to demonstrate what they had found. Teachers and students of different disciplines then used the data they saw displayed to discuss concepts in their classes.

- Social science classes discussed the reasons for the different family configurations, taking care to value them equally and not suggest that one family configuration was better than another.
- Language classes took the topic of 'family' to develop vocabulary to describe their own family and to debate the advantages and disadvantages of small and large families.
- The list of religious places and range of religions in the school led to the discussion on overlaps in myths and legends.
- Cooking practices in the home science class looked at how different communities had a preference for some spices and how that changed the taste of the lentils, which were brought to class to taste.

The data-collecting exercise and its collated results seemed to have changed the conversations across the school. 'We have started asking "What?", "How?" and "When?";' said the beaming school leader, who could see how much the students enjoyed the reality of working with data about themselves. 'We have got the whole school wondering!'

Such data collection can then lead to further enquiry about missing data or more detailed data, which can in turn inform further actions on the part of the school leader, the teachers or the students.

Activity 10: Using your students' data

The discussions between the teachers show a high level of cooperation and also a shared agreement. Reflect on the possibilities offered by the case study for your students. In what ways might you do the same with your school's compilation of information? How might the data you gather be linked to the school curriculum or activities? Discuss this with your team and your students as to how the collated data might be used to influence lessons and bring about desired changes in the school more widely.

Discussion

You may have begun to feel some unease about how best to involve the students. This may be due to:

- your awareness of particular community sensitivities
- you not wishing to single out individuals or groups to make an example of them
- the difficulty of making particular data sets anonymous.

These sensitivities are all valid and need very careful consideration. It is vitally important not to put individuals or groups of students in the spotlight in a way that may cause them upset, anxiety or stress. This doesn't mean ignoring the need to address these issues, but considering the role and nature of conversations with students and the community. For example, it may be appropriate in some situations for the discussions to be teacher-led and based around state or nationwide data or events, rather than focusing on the specific data for the school.

5 Representing and sharing data with the school community

Data can be filed away and just used when requested rather than being shared. Alternatively, it can be used by you to create a favourable learning environment in your school. Some part of your office, classrooms or even your corridors could display the information you are collecting, which can be used throughout the year to inform your work. Raw data can be difficult to display. Displaying data visually in charts, lists, tables, maps, diagrams, pictograms, bar charts, pie charts, models or posters can make it easier to understand and interpret. Some of the data – such as the socio-economic composition of your students, or your teachers' backgrounds – can hold true for the entire year. Other kinds of data could change or be added to over time, such as the health profile of the students. Be careful to ensure that any data you display does not make anyone feel ashamed or humiliated. It is very important that it should be presented so that individuals can be identified or singled out.

Activity 11: Sharing your findings and priorities

Write some ideas down in your Learning Diary about the following:

- **How** will you share your findings and identified priorities on an ongoing basis?
- You will need to identify **who** you need to share it with. To make this decision, think about who needs to have the information in order to challenge the status quo and those who need to ensure that barriers to learning do not hinder students from achieving their potential.
- Consider **why** you need to share data. What would be the purpose? How would it contribute to improving student learning?

Discussion

Sometimes the difficulty in sharing is because the data is uncomfortable. Therefore, you will need to think carefully about how best to proceed and share it with others so that planning can be undertaken jointly to arrive at an action plan agreed upon by all. At the same time it is important to think about **what** data would be appropriate to share and what would not. For example, would it be appropriate to share your priority areas with parents so that they know which particular groups of students are struggling to reach their full potential? Would it be appropriate for students to know they are in a targeted group for interventions?

Data that is uncontroversial in one political context could be very sensitive in another. Some data will be very open to misinterpretation, and so will need careful management. The aim is always to achieve more equal learning outcomes, so the data should be presented in such a way that this goal is apparent. It is only by being explicit about the 'Who?', 'How?', 'Why?' and 'What?' questions that you can harness the data to make the maximum impact on your school community.

6 Summary

As a school leader, you need to establish an evidence-based understanding of the diversity in your school. This is so that you can avoid some students being disadvantaged in their learning outcomes and enrich the curriculum and culture of the school by valuing that diversity.

In this unit you have considered what data you might gather, how to gather it and then how to analyse and share the results. You have looked at how to make this a cooperative and collaborative activity that

provides direct benefits to the school and enlivens the curriculum by promoting engagement by students and their parents, relating their education to the realities of their lives. Such data can also inform lesson planning and specific interventions to tackle those factors that adversely affect some students' learning outcomes.

You would have also noted that data on diversity issues is sensitive and needs to be addressed, used and stored carefully only with the purpose of improving learning outcomes for all.

This unit is part of the set or family of units that relate to the key area of perspective on leadership (aligned to the National College of School Leadership). You may find it useful to look next at other units in this set to build your knowledge and skills:

- *Building a shared vision for your school*
- *Leading the school's self-review*
- *Leading the school development plan*
- *Planning and leading change in your school*
- *Implementing change in your school.*

Resources

Resource 1: Data action plan template

Table R1.1 A blank template for a data action plan (see Activities 6 and 8).

Monitoring										
Action(s)										
Impact on learning										
Headline results										
Factors analysed										
Data set										

Resource 2: Involving all

What does it mean to 'involve all'?

The diversity in culture and in society is reflected in the classroom. Students have different languages, interests and abilities. Students come from different social and economic backgrounds. We cannot ignore these differences; indeed, we should celebrate them, as they can become a vehicle for learning more about each other and the world beyond our own experience. All students have the right to an education and the opportunity to learn regardless of their status, ability and background, and this is recognised in Indian law and the international rights of the child. In his first speech to the nation in 2014, Prime Minister Modi emphasised the importance of valuing all citizens in India regardless of their caste, gender or income. Schools and teachers have a very important role in this respect.

We all have prejudices and views about others that we may not have recognised or addressed. As a teacher, you carry the power to influence every student's experience of education in a positive or negative way. Whether knowingly or not, your underlying prejudices and views will affect how equally your students learn. You can take steps to guard against unequal treatment of your students.

Three key principles to ensure you involve all in learning

- **Noticing:** Effective teachers are observant, perceptive and sensitive; they *notice* changes in their students. If you are observant, you will notice when a student does something well, when they need help and how they relate to others. You may also perceive changes in your students, which might reflect changes in their home circumstances or other issues. Involving all requires that you notice your students on a daily basis, paying particular attention to students who may feel marginalised or unable to participate.
- **Focus on self-esteem:** Good citizens are ones who are comfortable with who they are. They have self-esteem, know their own strengths and weaknesses, and have the ability to form positive relationships with other people, regardless of background. They respect themselves and they respect others. As a teacher, you can have a significant impact on a young person's self-esteem; be aware of that power and use it to build the self-esteem of every student.
- **Flexibility:** If something is not working in your classroom for specific students, groups or individuals, be prepared to change your plans or stop an activity. Being flexible will enable you make adjustments so that you involve all students more effectively.

Approaches you can use all the time

- **Modelling good behaviour:** Be an example to your students by treating them all well, regardless of ethnic group, religion or gender. Treat all students with respect and make it clear through your teaching that you value all students equally. Talk to them all respectfully, take account of their opinions when appropriate and encourage them to take responsibility for the classroom by taking on tasks that will benefit everyone.
- **High expectations:** Ability is not fixed; all students can learn and progress if supported appropriately. If a student is finding it difficult to understand the work you are doing in class, then do not assume that they cannot ever understand. Your role as the teacher is to work out how best to help each student learn. If you have high expectations of everyone in your class, your students are more likely to assume that they will learn if they persevere. High expectations should also apply to behaviour. Make sure the expectations are clear and that students treat each other with respect.

- **Build variety into your teaching:** Students learn in different ways. Some students like to write; others prefer to draw mind maps or pictures to represent their ideas. Some students are good listeners; some learn best when they get the opportunity to talk about their ideas. You cannot suit all the students all the time, but you can build variety into your teaching and offer students a choice about some of the learning activities that they undertake.
- **Relate the learning to everyday life:** For some students, what you are asking them to learn appears to be irrelevant to their everyday lives. You can address this by making sure that whenever possible, you relate the learning to a context that is relevant to them and that you draw on examples from their own experience.
- **Use of language:** Think carefully about the language you use. Use positive language and praise, and do not ridicule students. Always comment on their behaviour and not on them. 'You are annoying me today' is very personal and can be better expressed as 'I am finding your behaviour annoying today. Is there any reason you are finding it difficult to concentrate?', which is much more helpful.
- **Challenge stereotypes:** Find and use resources that show girls in non-stereotypical roles or invite female role models to visit the school, such as scientists. Try to be aware of your own gender stereotyping; you may know that girls play sports and that boys are caring, but often we express this differently, mainly because that is the way we are used to talking in society.
- **Create a safe, welcoming learning environment:** All students need to feel safe and welcome at school. You are in a position to make your students feel welcome by encouraging mutually respectful and friendly behaviour from everyone. Think about how the school and classroom might appear and feel like to different students. Think about where they should be asked to sit and make sure that any students with visual or hearing impairments, or physical disabilities, sit where they can access the lesson. Check that those who are shy or easily distracted are where you can easily include them.

Specific teaching approaches

There are several specific approaches that will help you to involve all students. These are described in more detail in other key resources, but a brief introduction is given here:

- **Questioning:** If you invite students to put their hands up, the same people tend to answer. There are other ways to involve more students in thinking about the answers and responding to questions. You can direct questions to specific people. Tell the class you will decide who answers, then ask people at the back and sides of the room, rather than those sitting at the front. Give students 'thinking time' and invite contributions from specific people. Use pair or groupwork to build confidence so that you can involve everyone in whole-class discussions.
- **Assessment:** Develop a range of techniques for formative assessment that will help you to know each student well. You need to be creative to uncover hidden talents and shortfalls. Formative assessment will give you accurate information rather than assumptions that can easily be drawn from generalised views about certain students and their abilities. You will then be in a good position to respond to their individual needs.
- **Groupwork and pair work:** Think carefully about how to divide your class into groups or how to make up pairs, taking account of the goal to include all and encourage students to value each other. Ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn from each other and build their confidence in what they know. Some students will have the confidence to express their ideas and ask questions in a small group, but not in front of the whole class.
- **Differentiation:** Setting different tasks for different groups will help students start from where they are and move forward. Setting open-ended tasks will give all students the opportunity to

succeed. Offering students a choice of task helps them to feel ownership of their work and to take responsibility for their own learning. Taking account of individual learning needs is difficult, especially in a large class, but by using a variety of tasks and activities it can be done.

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