

Reflections on Leadership Expertise – An Acronym-based Process

Personal Reflection and the Development of Leadership Expertise

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As noted in the Knowledge-based Model of Leadership Expertise, personal reflection is an important metacognitive skill that allows a leader to consider the progress that he or she is making, identify the challenges that are faced and make plans to adapt one's leadership style or learn new skills or enhance old ones. The acronym REFLECT will provide a reminder of some of the keys steps in this important capacity building process.

REFLECT – A Personal Reflection Process

- R**eflect on a relevant leadership experience
- E**laborate its main features
- F**ocus your reflections on the key aspects
- L**ist the lessons learned
- E**xamine whether the lessons ring true
- C**onnect the lessons with past experiences
- T**ry to identify some key gold nuggets

Some of the key steps in the personal reflection process as they relate to the development of leadership expertise are described below.

Reflect on a relevant leadership experience

The reflection process can be focused on a leadership experience in which you played a major role or one that you simply observed. The key point is that you feel it is relevant and merits taking the time to reflect on it.

Elaborate its main features

Consider carefully what actually occurred in the situation? Where did it take place? Who was involved? How did events unfold? Why was it important? What were some of the key features?

Focus reflections on the key aspects

What were the salient aspects of the experience? How did they link together?
Who were the major players and how did they impact the situation? What went well? What could have been done better? What external or internal factors seemed to be at play?

List the potential lessons learned

Analyze the situation and try to identify several potential lessons learned.
Which lessons seem to be the most important? Why? What other potential lessons might be garnered from your reflections?

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Examine whether the lessons ring true

Take some time to consider each of the potential lessons. Try to state them in a concise and clear manner. Based on your past experience, decide whether they seem to be valid. If not, consider ways to revise them and examine their validity again. Discussing the lessons learned with a trusted mentor can be very valuable.

Connect the lessons with related past experience

Reflect on each of the lessons learned. Link the lesson learned to your own leadership experiences, as well as the ideas, strategies and skills that you have read in the professional literature that might support, add to, or revise the lessons learned.

Try to identify some key "gold nuggets"

"Gold nuggets" are important ideas, skills or values that you would like to share with your professional colleagues, as they will contribute to the building of educational leadership capacity in your school or centre. Take the time to identify these important lessons and consider how you could share them with others.