

Leadership for diversity: Intercultural communication competence as professional development

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Summary of article

The article provides an overview of a professional development initiative emphasizing the importance of leadership for inclusion and diversity, and concluding with a brief overview of a model for intercultural communication competence training. Since schools can be important sites for transforming our societies to reflect social justice and inclusion, school leaders at all levels can work to cultivate school cultures that reflect a belief in equitable education for all students. However, all educators need the time, space and practice to develop the necessary skills, capacities and habits of mind to enact leadership for social justice in and through their work. As outlined in the overview of the intercultural competence workshop, we see how this type of professional development provides the opportunity for participants to notice, make sense of and challenge their beliefs, values, and competencies when engaging with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Securing equity and quality in education requires that leaders develop and use capacities and skills for social justice leadership; these capacities, skills and mindsets can emerge from critical reflection of self, others, and the various systems that make up the varied educational landscape within which leaders carry out their work. Professional development in the area of Educational leadership preparation programs could be one opportunity for providing school leaders with the space, time and structure for becoming aware of and interrogating the assumptions, beliefs, values and mindsets that shape and focus leadership practices and processes. Intercultural competence can provide the first step towards recognizing and working with values, beliefs and practices for shaping inclusive education in our schools.