



Identifying Teacher Quality

REFLECTION TOOLS FOR TEACHER QUALITY

Title

RUNNING FOR TEACHER

Aims

- Stimulate reflection on teacher qualities in general and on the concerns of different stakeholders in particular.
- Stimulate participants to examine the interests of the different stakeholders by focussing on aspects of teacher quality from different points of view: the 'general public', headmasters, colleagues, pupils, parents, authorities, policy makers...
- Enhance teambuilding
- Promote activity and creativity

Target group

The target group for this tool is teachers or teacher education students.

The group involved should have a minimum of 8 and maximum of 24 participants.

Description

This exercise is based on the electoral campaigns everybody is familiar with (running for president...). Politicians try to convince voters that they have what it takes to do the job right.

What if a teacher had to campaign in order to get a job? What qualities would he/she stress? With what messages would he/she address the different stakeholders? To persuade the public the candidates are challenged to come up with slogans, commercials, speeches and interviews...

In this tool, groups of four work on the development of an election campaign. The campaign is presented by the teacher and its campaign team.

Methodology

The workshop consists of various steps, the first five steps being more or less compulsory in order to reach the goals of this tool. Depending on motivation, target group and time available the group can also tackle follow up activities briefly suggested in the next steps.

Instructions for the participants:

You live in a country where teachers have to campaign in order to get a job. They are asked to promote themselves as teachers and persuade / convince the voters just like in politics. Everyone is allowed to vote in these elections, also the children (of course).

In other words: you would have to SELL yourself to the whole of society and highlight your qualities as a teacher.



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Step A

Individually: think of a slogan for this campaign.

The slogan should be compact, not more than 15 words.

Step B

Join up in subgroups of 4 to 6 and discuss the slogans.

Get agreement on which slogan to use as a group of teachers or come up with a new one having everyone's consensus.

Write down the original slogans (= the 6 individual slogans) and the shared slogan on a sheet of paper (to be handed in later).

Step C

Presentation of the group slogans. Slogans can be written on banners and put on the wall/board.

Suggested questions for discussion / reflection after each group presentation and after all the presentations:

- Are the slogans clear to everyone?
- Are the slogans appealing to the general public? In what way do they meet the expectations of the general public regarding the role of a teacher?
- What teacher qualities are emphasized to convince the public?
- Are there similarities?
- Was it easy to find consensus?
- What qualities did you reach consensus on?
- Which qualities did not get everyone's approval?

Step D

From this point on you – as a subgroup – are the campaign team, the people behind the campaign of a teacher.

Your campaign is doing rather well but there is still *ONE target group* that is not convinced. You have some money left in your campaign budget to make a television commercial which should *convince this specific target group*.

Of course you prepare this commercial in a top secret atmosphere, making sure the rival groups don't get word of or see what you are preparing. (Keep your target group a secret too!)

Each group gets a card with one of the target groups (or stakeholders): pupils, parents, colleagues, headmasters, policy makers...

(It could be interesting – because of comparative possibilities – to give several groups the same target group)

One of you can take the role of the teacher. Others can act in side-roles, be voice-overs, represent objects, animals, ...

The use of props and furniture is restricted to what you find.

You have money for a commercial that is no longer than 45 seconds.



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Each group writes down its objectives with the commercial – these notes can be used during the discussion afterwards.

Step E

Presentation of the commercials + discussion/reflection **or** debate + voting procedure.

The audience is invited to find out what different target groups were assigned. After each performance this is discussed and at the same time the qualities that were highlighted in order to persuade that particular target group are depicted and discussed.

It is strongly recommended to make a grid in order to get a survey of all the target groups and their particular concerns regarding teacher qualities.

Recording the presentation on camera can be useful to stimulate in depth discussion after the live presentations, showing them again on screen and taking time to analyse.

Discussion/reflection – Questions after each presentation:

- Was it clear who the target group was?
- What are the objectives of the commercial? Were they clear to the audience? Here the notes of step 4 can be used to check...
- What qualities were used to convince the target group? (survey on flip chart or blackboard)
- Are these demands recognizable from your own experience? Can you add others?
- For groups with the same target group as a previous group: are there similarities? Differences?

Questions after the presentations:

- When we look at the survey, can we cluster the qualities in some way?
- Are there any parallels between the different target groups? Do they have something in common?
- How do the concerns of the different stakeholders effect teacher education/teacher training in your country? In the curriculum? In the national standards for teachers?

Debate – in campaign-mixed groups:

One by one the representatives from the (four) different campaigns get 2 minutes for arguing for their candidate, followed by 5 minutes of questioning and contra-arguing. Emphasis should be put on demonstrating and criticising the arguments for the qualities aimed for the addressed target group.

Voting

The individual participants vote (one man – one vote) for the campaign/candidate they find being the best, i. e. the campaign that made the most impact.

The campaign can have a number of follow up activities. Below some of these possibilities are suggested.



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Alternative 1: Election speeches

Your campaign is going really well. Your candidate is becoming more and more famous. He/she is asked to give speeches on various occasions, in different contexts and settings. Prepare a speech of 2 minutes for one of the following contexts and convince your audience that you have what it takes:

Teachers and parents of a secondary school in a *rural area*.

- The school is a traditional school and has a good reputation. Good education, preparing pupils for further education, traditional values are regarded very important.

Teachers and parents of a secondary school in an *urban setting*.

- A deprived area of town, facing poverty, multicultural and language problems, a lot of children with special needs due to all kinds of reasons and problems, unemployment and no future-feeling, lack of motivation...

Alternative 2: Discussion/reflection about the impact of the school context on teacher qualities.

Again a survey can be made, writing down the teacher qualities from the speeches in two columns for the two different contexts.

Questions:

- List the teacher qualities used to convince the audiences from the different contexts.
- How did the context effect the content of the speeches?
- How does context effect teacher quality?
- Can we prepare teachers for a variety of contexts? What qualities does a teacher need to have for this purpose?
- Can we find these qualities in teacher education? Standards?

Alternative 3: Interviews: done individually.

You are one of the following stakeholders: a pupil, a minister of education, a parent, a teacher, a headmaster. Prepare 3 questions for an interview with a teacher-candidate, each questions starting with the words: 'What would you do when/if....' Join up in pairs and alternatively do the interviews without revealing your identity. Can your partner identify you? Did he/she meet your expectations when answering the questions?

Alternative 4: Discussion/reflection

Again, it is useful to list the various questions for the different stakeholders in a grid.

Questions:

- Was it easy to identify with the particular stakeholder?
- What qualities were you addressing with the questions you asked?
- Did you get convincing answers from the teacher-candidate?
- What impact do the concerns underlying the questions have on teacher quality?



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Variations

Of course there are other possibilities than these suggested in the alternatives described above.

One can also think of:

- debates between the different candidates, score their performance from the stakeholder's viewpoints...
- elaborate the campaign: designing flyers, posters and banners that have to appeal to the different stakeholders...
- discussion between the different candidates on teacher qualities: the other participants act as public and give points...
- debates on particular subjects such as gender, diversity and equity, citizenship, inclusion...

The workshop might be experienced as too directive, telling the participants what to do every five minutes. They might feel they are being treated as children, allowing no 'self-steering'. To prevent this you could give very open instructions, allowing the participants to come up with their own ideas about campaigning.

E.g.: How would you promote your teacher-candidate in an election campaign?

- 1) to the public in general
- 2) to the different stakeholders

Present your campaign to the rest of the groups.

Conditions

Participants should feel no restraint on being creative and expressing themselves without any inhibitions. The expressive intensity of acting out the commercials, identifying with and playing the role of candidate, stakeholder, interviewer,... will depend on the group's dynamics and mutual trust. It is important that the participants already know each other, have worked together in previous workshops, feel safe and that there is an atmosphere of openness and respect

Another important condition is the availability of time. E.g. The creative assignments and the in-depth analysis and reflection after each performance up to step 6 will take at least 3 hours with a group of 24 (5 subgroups of 4 to 6).

Furthermore, it is useful to write down important findings/remarks/insights on a flipchart or blackboard during the reflection process. These outcomes can also be mapped regarding to their content (link with the paper on reflection).

Materials

Paper, banners, different locations for groups to prepare the commercial
For the commercials it is interesting to record the performances: digital recording equipment, computer, dataprojector.

Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

This method can stimulate empathy with, and awareness of, the concerns regarding

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teacher qualities that different stakeholders in education have.
It can stimulate reflection on public demands regarding teacher qualities.
Because of the group work it is a strong teambuilding-exercise.
It offers more active methods to trigger reflection on teacher qualities.
The creative aspect offers opportunities to point out qualities in a variety of ways (through performance – visual messages – wordplay – roles – attitudes – body language, ...).
Qualities can be acted out, made tangible, recognizable.

Weaknesses

The danger exists that discussion and reflection remain too superficial. One should make sure that enough time and depth go to the discussion and reflection steps. The creative assignments are a means to trigger quality-awareness, not a goal in themselves.
To deepen the discussion one might discuss the presentations in two steps: first within the groups, afterwards between the groups.
Possibly not all participants feel as much at ease with creative assignments. Not everyone likes to perform... Giving more open instructions – as suggested above – might be a solution here, letting the participants themselves decide on how far they will go during the presentation of the campaign.

Experiences from participants and trainers after pilots

The participants were very positive about this tool. Especially the innovative and creative aspects were highly praised. The trainers were also convinced that this tool is very useful for the purpose of reflection on teacher qualities.
However, one has to make sure that there is ample time for the reflection stages and the evaluation of the activities. The instructor should also clearly instruct the participants, orally and in writing. The trainer can easily use the instructions that are mentioned above with each step, making adjustments to the specific context if necessary.