Fact sheet 1

Capability: Using relevant knowledge

Using relevant knowledge, requires educational leaders to be knowledgeable and to use that knowledge to analyse and resolve problems that prevent attainment of improvement goals. The background knowledge required is that which is directly relevant to the five domains of leadership practice:

> Leading teaching, learning and wellbeing

> Developing self, others and teams

> Leading improvement, innovation and change

> Leading the management of the school

> Engaging and working with the school community

As an example, competent practice of the domain 'Leading teaching, learning and wellbeing' requires leaders to have up to date evidence-based knowledge of how students learn and of how teachers develop and promote that learning in diverse classroom contexts.

While this capability gives priority to enriching excellent leaders' domain-specific educational knowledge, it also recognises that, in addition to the science of learning and teaching, leaders need knowledge of relevant aspects of leadership and management, and how to use that knowledge in ways that serve educational purposes.

Leaders use their educational knowledge to explain and debate their point of view with those who hold diverse or even contrary views. For example, leaders who cannot give an educational, as opposed to a compliance, rationale for why they want their teachers to use the school's instructional model, will be less confident and less influential in solving relevant student outcome problems than those who can use their knowledge to present their ideas in confident and open-minded ways.

The goal is not that an excellent leader knows everything, but that they know enough to be credible and to know what they do not know, and how to access the resources they need to lead effectively. Deep educational knowledge enables excellent leaders to quickly generate hypotheses about what is occurring, why, and what to do next.

Practice reflection

1. How do you keep up to date with educational research and professional reading?

2. When leading school improvement, or implementing changes in your school, how does this knowledge inform your decisions? How does it inform the way you explain the need for improvement in your community?

3. How do you ensure that staff in your school have access to the relevant and up to date knowledge they need to lead key areas across the school?

4. How do you know that leaders of learning areas in your school have the relevant knowledge of the subject content and pedagogical content knowledge to effectively lead the work? How do you support them to do so?