

# Valuing Inclusive Teaching and Learning (VITAL) Toolkit

Learning Environment Observation  
and Teacher Reflection

## INTRODUCTION





The Aga Khan Foundation

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*This is an adaptation and extension, building upon original works by The World Bank and the Aga Khan Foundation. Views and opinions expressed are the sole responsibility of the author of the adaptation and are not endorsed by The World Bank.*



## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	4
Introduction to the Schools2030 Vital Toolkit.....	5
Why use the Schools2030 Vital Toolkit?.....	7
What is the Schools2030 Vital Toolkit?.....	11
Contents of the Schools2030 Vital Toolkit.....	12
Overview of Areas, Dimensions and Behaviours.....	17
References and Useful Reading.....	20



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## Introduction to the Schools2030 Vital Toolkit

[Schools2030](#) is a ten-year participatory learning improvement programme covering 1000 schools across ten countries. It seeks to enhance education equity and quality through focusing on holistic learning and a school-driven locally rooted approach to education system change. In doing so it responds to the global Sustainable Development Goal 4: *to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*. Using the principles of Human-centred Design and focusing on the transition years of ages 5, 10 and 15 years, Schools2030 supports teachers to design and implement low-cost micro-innovations to address learning poverty among the most marginalised children. These innovations will inform and be scaled up to transform education systems to improve holistic learning outcomes. They will thus address the current ‘learning crisis’ exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the growing recognition of the importance of socio-emotional and 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills for life-long learning, well-being, future careers and productive lives. The Schools2030 programme ultimately contributes to the [Aga Khan Foundation](#)’s goal *to equip girls, boys and young adults with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to help them interact effectively with the world and contribute to society*.

Critical to the Schools2030 approach is the deep belief in the teacher and the school lying at the heart of educational change, adopting a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach to educational improvement. Schools2030 aims to increase the agency of teachers and school-level stakeholders to reclaim the discourse of ‘what works’- schools therefore, become the central actors of change rather than the targets of change. Rarely are school leaders, teachers and students invited to listen, reflect, and self-discover the wisdom that lies among them about ‘what works’ to improve quality learning for all- and yet they are the ones who are at the front-line. Research has shown that the quality of the teacher is the most critical factor that affects the level of students’ learning in school, particularly in developing countries (e.g. VSO 2002, Day et al. 2007, Hanushek 2009, Lemov 2015, Stronge 2018, World Bank 2018). Schools2030 believes that when we value, respect and empower teachers as education change agents, we will witness a measurable improvement in students’ holistic learning outcomes.

Schools2030 has developed a set of classroom learning environment assessment tools for preschool, primary and secondary schools across our 10 programme countries. This Schools2030 *Valuing Inclusive Teaching and Learning* (VITAL) Learning Environment Observation and Teacher Reflection Toolkit for primary and secondary schools is to be used alongside learning outcome assessment tools to enable teachers to identify areas where teaching and learning could be improved. Teachers will use the evidence from these assessments in their Human-Centred Design workshops to design innovative solutions and selected teaching practices to improve students’ holistic learning outcomes. In addition, during the iteration process, the Toolkit will be used to monitor and continually improve the progress and impact of the solutions to improve holistic learning outcomes.

While learning assessments will measure students’ holistic learning outcomes, the Schools2030 VITAL Learning Environment Observation and Teacher Reflection Toolkit will provide an assessment of key evidence-based components of the environment in which teaching and learning is taking place. This will help teachers and head teachers reflect on and improve what is happening within their classrooms in terms of providing a supportive emotional climate and inclusive quality teaching and learning practices that enable every student to learn effectively and with joy.



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*Success in education today builds not just cognitive but character fortitude. It is about curiosity – opening minds; it is about compassion – opening hearts; and it is about courage – mobilising our cognitive, social and emotional resources to take action.*

*These qualities, or social and emotional skills as our report calls them, are also weapons against the greatest threats of our time: ignorance – the closed mind; hate – the closed heart; and fear – the enemy of agency.*

OECD (2021:5)

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## Why use the Schools2030 Vital Toolkit?

### TO ASSESS AND IMPROVE HOLISTIC TEACHING AND LEARNING

This Schools2030 VITAL Learning Environment Observation and Teacher Reflection Toolkit is to be used alongside holistic learning outcome assessment tools (on e.g., literacy, numeracy and empathy) to help teachers improve their teaching and learning practices in the classroom. Educators will use the evidence from classroom observations to assess the quality of the learning environment and help design innovative micro-solutions to meet gaps identified in student learning. They will then focus on specific teaching and learning practices to continually advance the progress and impact of the solutions designed to improve learning outcomes.

### TO DESIGN FOCUSED AND JOYOUS LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Schools2030 believes that the quality of the teacher-student relationship is paramount to improving students' learning, particularly for those who are more disadvantaged and whose life trajectories and that of their families can change when they receive a higher quality of education. The teacher as a professional has a set of qualities, attitudes, values and competencies through which s/he teaches the curriculum. However, the *process* through which teaching and learning takes place centres around the relationship between teachers and students. Teachers, as designers, design learning experiences for students. Schools2030 believes that we can build upon teachers' skills through conducting classroom observations, mentoring and teacher reflective dialogue so that they are better able to design '*learning environments which are both serious and focused on one hand, but which are also joyous and inspiring places, operating on the cutting edge of pedagogy and knowledge*<sup>1</sup>.

### TO USE EVIDENCE-BASED QUALITY PRACTICES

The Schools2030 VITAL Toolkit builds upon research that identifies effective teaching practices (e.g., AKES, 2018, AITSL 2014, Greenstein, L. 2012, Kyriacou, C. 1991, Lemov, D. 2015, Stronge, J.H. 2018, Teachstone 2017, Johnston et al 2022, UNESCO 2024, World Bank 2025). It draws from and builds upon the World Bank's *TEACH* tool (WB 2019, 2021) and AKF's *Classroom Guide to Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment* (AKF 2019). It is also based on a large body of research that states that social and emotional skills, holistic learning and having a growth mindset can enhance academic achievement, student well-being and future lives (Bruns et al 2016, Dweck 2017, McKinsey and Co. 2017, OECD 2018, 2021, 2023, 2024, LEGO 2022, Jacobs Foundation et al 2023, Jukes & Norman 2024, Kopka, L et al 2024). The VITAL Toolkit includes examples of playful pedagogies (LEGO 2017, 2019, UNESCO 2024, AKF 2024), and recognises that children learn more deeply through fun, learning in different ways, engaging in interesting activities, experiencing happy emotions with others, encountering something new and enjoying a challenge.

*...having a high-quality teacher throughout elementary school can substantially offset or even eliminate the disadvantage of low socio-economic background.*

Rivkin et al. (2002) cited in Carey (2004:5)

### TO DESIGN AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Schools2030 explores how we can better enable teachers to design an inclusive learning

<sup>1</sup> His Highness the Aga Khan IV 2008: Foundation Laying Ceremony of the Residential Campus, Aga Khan Academy, Mombasa



environment and improve their practice to help students acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to thrive in today's uncertain world. This toolkit adds to the suite of open access tools being developed for this purpose. The VITAL Toolkit highlights the importance of a supportive learning environment, helping the teacher create a warm emotional climate and convey high expectations of every student through positive interactions, and developing effective quality teaching and learning practices, which include skillful facilitation of learning. Moreover, the VITAL Toolkit integrates qualities and competencies related to three areas: having a pluralistic and ethical disposition, social and emotional learning, including developing a growth mindset, and acquiring 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills.

*Variations in teachers can account for about 30% of the difference in pupil progress.*

Day et al. (2007)

## TO DEVELOP A PLURALIST MINDSET

AKF's Schools2030 programme adopts a pluralistic and ethical lens to ensure that the teacher creates a learning environment that is inclusive<sup>2</sup> of all children regardless of background (e.g. gender, disability, colour, ethnic, linguistic and socio-economic background). The VITAL Toolkit encourages teachers to learn to engage positively with differences and diversity both in relation to their relationship with children and the content that they teach. Moreover, it encourages them to do so within an ethical framework that requires every child to have an equal opportunity to learn well. This includes becoming aware of one's own biases, developing a respect for diversity and embracing differences in ideas, ways of thinking and points of views. Teachers are encouraged to help students think critically about the world around them and make informed judgements within an ethical framework (AKF 2019) and make use of transformative pedagogies (AKF 2024, OECD 2017).

The qualities and competencies particularly related to having a pluralistic and ethical disposition (AKF 2019) are given in bold below and include skills required to be the best we can be, to work successfully with others and to improve the communities and world within which we live. These competencies are included within the 27 learning domains given in the box below. In addition to literacy and numeracy Schools2030 country teams choose 3 of these domains to focus on for each cohort of children aged 5, 10 and 15.

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*Effective Teaching is about:*

- *Unashamedly loving your subject and getting your students to know that you love it.*
- *Making your subject exciting, and linking it, wherever possible to issues that your students can relate to in their real world.*
- *Making complex issues understandable.*
- *Showing your students that you care about them, not just as learners, but as people...*

Stephens, P. & Crawley, T. (1994:9-10)

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<sup>2</sup> OECD (2022) uses UNESCO's definition (2009:126) of inclusive education, including but moving beyond attention to special educational needs: *'an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination'*.



## Schools2030 Learning Domains

REQUIRED: FOUNDATIONAL	APPLIED ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY	BEING OUR BEST	WORKING WITH OTHERS	IMPROVING OUR COMMUNITY/WORLD
Literacy	Science	<b>Self-awareness</b>	<b>Relationship building</b>	<b>Problem-solving</b>
Numeracy/ Mathematics	Health & Nutrition	Self-efficacy	Communication	Civic Engagement
	Arts & Culture	Self-control	<b>Collaboration</b>	Entrepreneurship
	Digital Literacy, Technology & Media	<b>Resilience</b>	<b>Open-mindedness</b>	<b>Respect for Diversity</b>
	Humanities	<b>Taking Responsibility</b>	<b>Empathy</b>	Respect for the Environment
		<b>Ethical Decision-making</b>	<b>Reconciling tensions</b>	
		<b>Creativity</b>	Leadership	
		<b>Critical Thinking</b>		

### TO BECOME MORE DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE

In relation to disability<sup>3</sup> inclusion, the VITAL toolkit acknowledges the evolving concept of ‘disability’ and that it is a social concept based on attitudinal and environmental barriers that people with disabilities face (WB 2021). The Toolkit considers Universal Design for Learning principles to increase learner agency using multiple means of engagement, representation, action and expression (Hayes et al 2018, CAST 2024, World Bank 2023). While asking teachers to be inclusive in their classrooms, it is recognised that it may seem daunting to cater for children with a range of disabilities particularly within large classes and with minimum resources. These could include children with intellectual/cognitive, physical, mental, sensory, learning, and behavioural special educational needs, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, autism spectrum disorder and/or Attention-Deficient Hyperactivity Disorder. Some learners with disabilities will need to use assistive devices to access the same learning as peers. Importantly Schools2030 believes that inclusive education is good education for **all** children, as the strategies can enrich the teaching and learning experience for all students and help them adopt a more inclusive mindset.

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*...most of what teaching children with additional needs involves is simply good teaching.*

(Sobel, D & Alston S. 2021)

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<sup>3</sup> The UNCRPD (2006) definition: ‘...persons with disabilities includes those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’.



## TO NURTURE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS

The Schools2030 VITAL Toolkit integrates social and emotional skills (some of which are included within a pluralistic and ethical disposition), as defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning as well as OECD (2021).

### CASEL: Social & Emotional Learning

- Self-awareness,
- Self-management, responsible decision-making
- Social awareness and relationship skills

### OECD Social and Emotional Skills (2023)

- Open-mindedness: curiosity, tolerance, creativity
- Task performance: responsibility, self-control, persistence, achievement motivation
- Engaging with others: sociability, assertiveness, energy
- Collaboration: empathy, trust
- Emotional regulation: stress resistance, optimism, emotional control

Also incorporated are certain 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills as defined by the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (P21 2007) within the areas of learning and innovation, life and career skills, information, media and technology skills, key subjects and interdisciplinary themes.

## TO ENCOURAGE PEER LEARNING AND COLLABORATION

The intent of the Schools2030 VITAL Toolkit is to reduce teacher isolation within classrooms and encourage greater peer collaboration within and across schools, communities and education systems. When schools focus on improving teaching and learning and use observation of lessons as a tool to do so, learning attainment improves (Bernhard et al 2024, World Bank 2025). Schools2030, therefore, hopes to increase professional learning and the development of collaborative education communities of practice in which teachers and other educators learn from each other to improve students' holistic learning outcomes.

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### GROWTH MINDSET

*A growth mindset is based on the belief that one's intelligence, qualities and skills can be cultivated through effort, good strategies and help from others, as opposed to a fixed mindset which believes that intelligence is static and cannot change.*

*A person with a growth mindset is likely to embrace challenges, persist and learn from setbacks and reach greater levels of achievement.*

Dweck, C. (2017)

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## What is the Schools2030 Vital Toolkit?

### PURPOSE

The purpose of the Schools2030 VITAL Classroom Observation and Teacher Reflection Toolkit is to assess and improve the quality of the classroom teaching and learning. Alongside student learning outcome assessments, it will enable educators/teachers to identify areas where teaching and learning practices could be improved. Teachers will use the evidence from these assessments in their Human-Centred Design workshops to design classroom-based solutions to improve students' holistic learning outcomes, and during the iteration process to monitor and continually improve the progress and impact of the solutions to improve learning outcomes. Following an initial assessment of the classroom learning environment, the toolkit is designed to be used as a professional development tool, to help teachers acquire and improve their teaching practices to ensure all children learn effectively in their classrooms.

### DESIGN

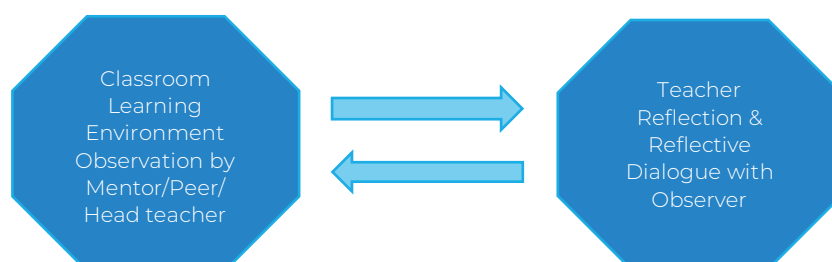
The design of the toolkit builds upon on two key documents: the World Bank *TEACH* tool and the Aga Khan Foundation's *Classroom Guide to Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment* (WB, 2019, AKF 2019). The aim was to simplify use, include student and pluralist perspectives, and align with the priorities of the AKF's Schools2030 holistic learning improvement programme. Users of the Toolkit include programme and assessment teams, teachers, head teachers, education officials and teacher education institutions.

### KEY TOOLS

The Schools2030 VITAL Toolkit provides two tools, as follows:

1. **The VITAL Primary and Secondary Learning Environment Observation Tool consisting of the:**
  - a) [Learning Environment Observation Form](#) and the
  - b) [Learning Environment Observation Rubric](#).
  
2. **The VITAL Primary and Secondary Teacher Reflection Tool consisting of the:**
  - a) [Teacher Self-Reflection Form](#) and the
  - b) [Observer Reflective Dialogue Question Bank](#)

Both the VITAL Primary and Secondary Learning Environment and the Teacher Reflection tools are best used together – once a lesson has been observed, the observer sits with the teacher soon after to help her/him reflect on their teaching, how well the observed lesson went and set improvement targets for dimensions to be observed in the next observation.



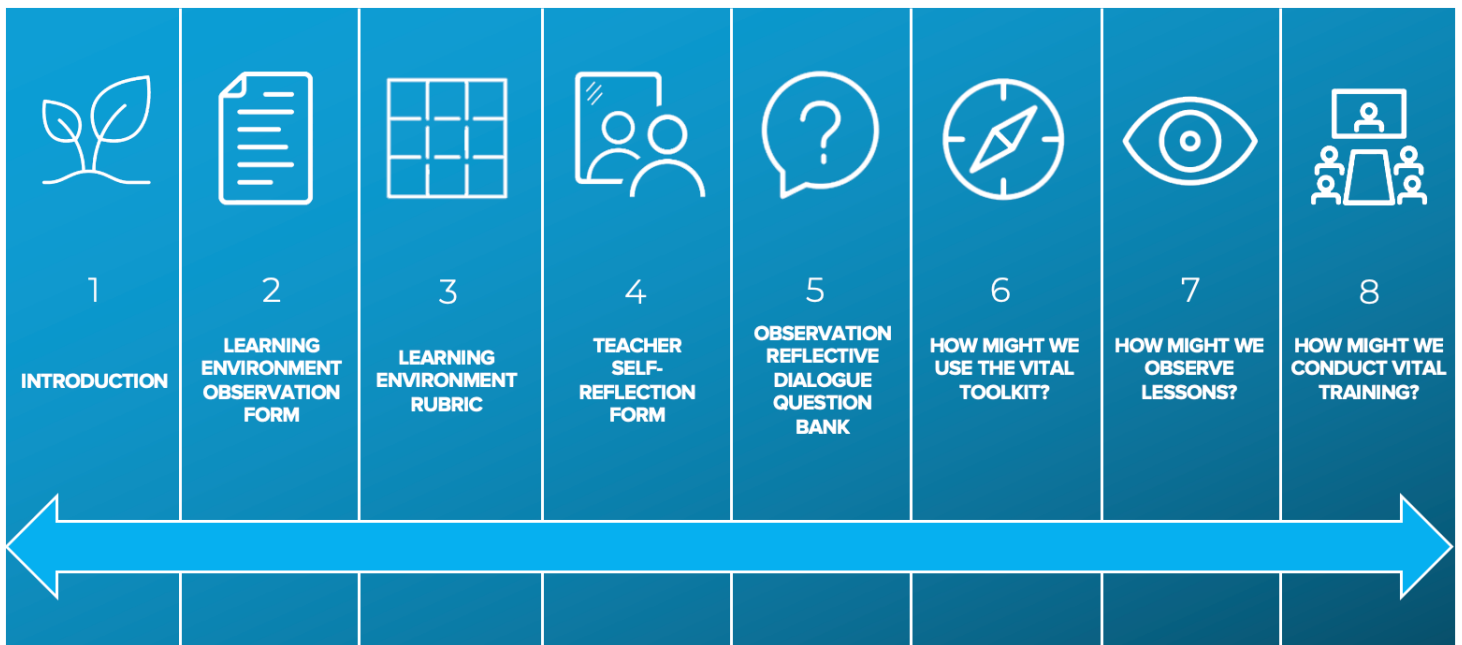


## GUIDANCE TOOLS

In addition to these tools the VITAL Toolkit also provides the following guidance tools:

1. This **Introduction**, outlining what the VITAL Toolkit is.
2. **How Might We Use VITAL?** This provides information and steps for using the VITAL Toolkit, including contextualisation and piloting.
3. **How Might We Observe Lessons?** This provides guidance on how to conduct classroom observations in school.
4. **How Might We Conduct VITAL Training?** This provides a slide deck to help with orientation and training for your team.

### Components of the Valuing Inclusive Teaching and Learning (VITAL) Toolkit



## Contents of the Schools2030 Vital Toolkit

The Schools2030 VITAL Primary and Secondary Learning Environment Toolkit focuses on two key areas: a) a **Supportive Learning Environment** and b) **Quality Teaching and Learning Practices**, covering eight dimensions.

Within the first area of a **Supportive Learning Environment**, the observer/mentor observes and assesses the kind of emotional climate present in the classroom and the extent to which the teacher communicates high expectations.

Within the second area of **Quality Teaching and Learning Practices** the observer/mentor observes how well the teacher is facilitating learning, integrating critical thinking and creativity, social and collaborative learning, and learning to learn activities and how well s/he checks for

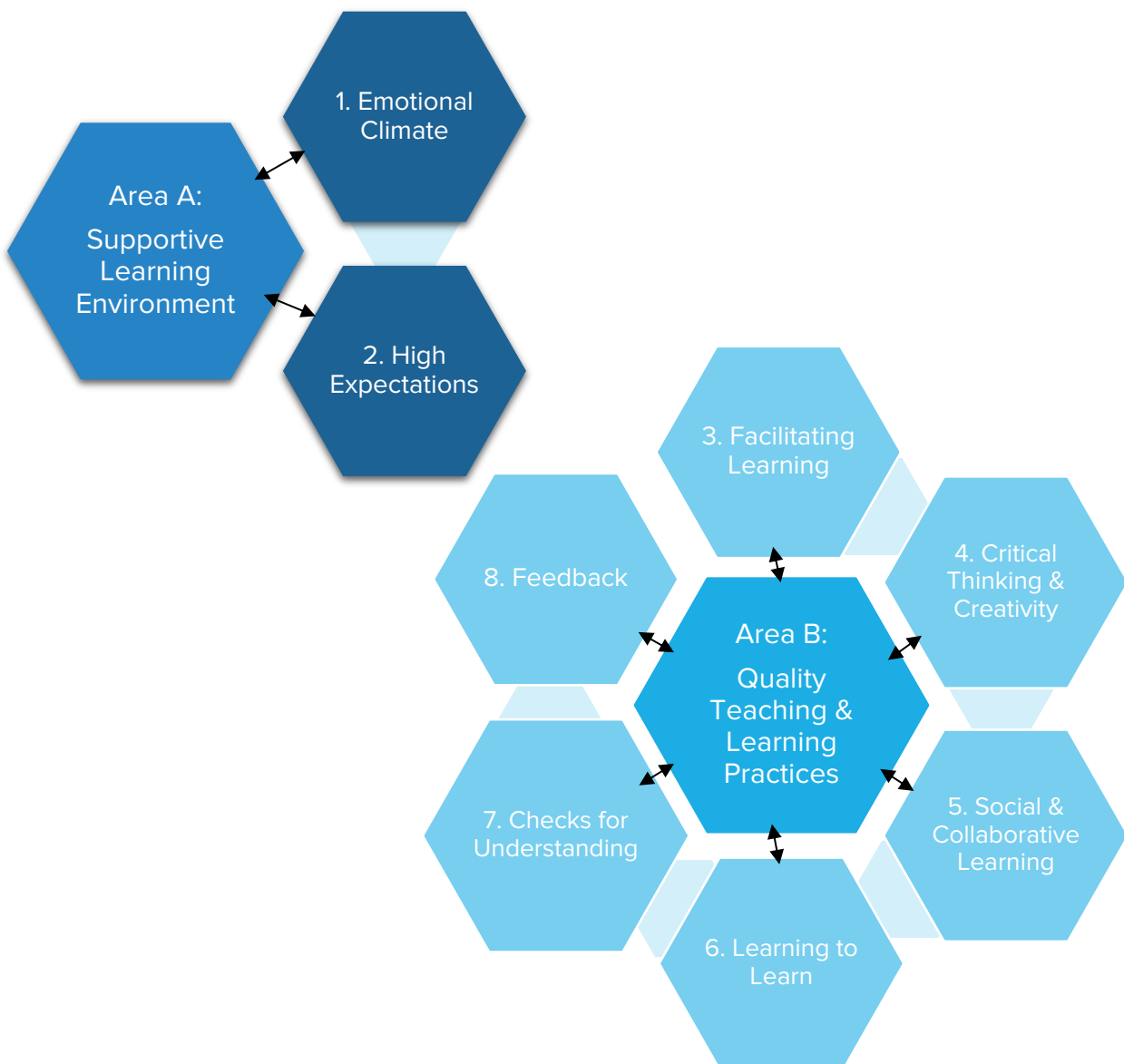


understanding and provides feedback. However, the complexity of classroom interactions means that all these dimensions are inter-connected.

### TWO AREAS, EIGHT DIMENSIONS, 37 BEHAVIOURS, 4 LEVELS

The graphic below lays out the two Areas (A and B) and the eight Dimensions of observation and how they relate to each other. Each dimension can be observed on its own or the full set of dimension behaviours observed over a lesson of at least 35 mins but preferably around 45 - 60 minutes or a series of lessons. A general description for each of the eight dimensions is given over the page.

#### The VITAL Areas and Dimensions





## General Description of the Eight Dimensions

<p><b>A.</b> Supportive Learning Environment</p>	<p>1. <b>Emotional Climate:</b> The teacher creates a supportive, warm, positive and inclusive learning environment in which all students feel emotionally safe and are encouraged to take learning risks. Moreover, all students feel they belong and are welcome as the teacher treats all students respectfully regardless of background and abilities; attends to their needs and enables them to feel heard, understood, trusted and validated. Teacher and student interactions are positive, and students demonstrate sensitivity, empathy and respect towards each other.</p> <p>2. <b>High Expectations:</b> The teacher communicates the highest expectations for learning and behaviour for all students. S/he enables them to make ethical and socially responsible choices and provides opportunities for students to take on meaningful roles in classroom activities. S/he promotes positive behaviour by acknowledging student behaviour that meets or exceeds expectations. Moreover, the teacher sets clear behavioural expectations for different parts of the lesson and focuses on the expected behaviour when re-directing misbehaviour.</p>
<p><b>B.</b> Quality Teaching and Learning Practices</p>	<p>3. <b>Facilitating Learning:</b> The teacher facilitates learning to improve student understanding and holistic learning outcomes. The teacher explicitly articulates the expected learning outcome and explains concepts clearly. S/he connects lesson content to classroom activities, and relates it to students' prior learning, other content and/or students' lives. The teacher uses a variety of appropriate strategies and materials, provides students with choices, and differentiates/adjusts learning activities to meet the varied levels of the students while still challenging them. Lessons are well structured and paced. All students are engaged in learning activities.</p> <p>4. <b>Critical Thinking &amp; Creativity:</b> The teacher builds students' critical thinking and creativity skills to help them reflect on and use information in various ways, including actively applying and analysing information. The teacher asks open-ended questions, provides thinking tasks, learning through play and activities that encourage initiative, imagination, curiosity and creativity. Students happily engage in high level questioning and are not afraid to make mistakes.</p> <p>5. <b>Social &amp; Collaborative Learning:</b> The teacher fosters a collaborative and inclusive learning environment that incorporates a respect for diversity. The teacher promotes interpersonal skills and peer interaction through effective use of individual, pair and group work. Collaborative activities encourage all students to participate and work with peers from diverse genders, abilities, backgrounds and with diverse views. The teacher helps students find ways to resolve conflicts and reach agreements to create an environment free from hostility.</p> <p>6. <b>Learning to Learn:</b> The teacher models learning to learn and guides students in thinking through how to approach tasks and how they learn. The teacher responds positively to students' challenges, framing failure and frustrations as part of the learning process. S/he provides opportunities for students to self-assess, assess their peers and set short- and long-term learning goals. Students seek clarification whenever they are struggling and learn to become leaders of their own learning.</p> <p>7. <b>Checks for Understanding:</b> The teacher checks for understanding and builds upon this to ensure that students comprehend the lesson content and to extend learning. The teacher walks around the classroom to assess understanding, monitor progress and assist. The teacher promotes students' efforts towards acquiring new concepts, skills and attitudes instead of focusing only on results, intelligence and natural abilities, helping students acquire a 'growth mind-set'.</p> <p>8. <b>Feedback:</b> The teacher provides genuine, meaningful and timely feedback that is framed positively and constructively to deepen student understanding. The teacher provides specific comments or prompts that help identify student misunderstandings, understand successes and guide thought processes to promote learning. Students have opportunities to give constructive feedback to one another and to the teacher.</p>



## BEHAVIOURS AND LEVELS

Across the areas of creating a *Supportive Learning Environment* and developing *Quality Teaching and Learning Practices*, the eight dimensions each have a set of 3-8 observable teacher and student behaviours, with a total of 37 behaviours as shown on pp.16-17. The behaviours are each given a general statement of the expected good practice behaviour. By way of example, the general statements of behaviours for the dimension of ‘Emotional Climate’ within the area of creating a Supportive Learning Environment are as follows:

AREA	DIMENSION	BEHAVIOURS
A. SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	1. EMOTIONAL CLIMATE	1.1. The teacher treats all students respectfully.
		1.2. Teacher and student interactions are positive.
		1.3. The teacher responds to students’ emotional, physical and material needs.
		1.4. The teacher does not exhibit bias (relating to gender, disability, colour, ethnicity, linguistic or socio-economic background etc.).
		1.5. The teacher challenges stereotypes (relating to gender, disability, colour, ethnicity, linguistic or socio-economic background etc.).
		1.6. Students demonstrate sensitivity, empathy and respect towards each other and are willing to help peers.

## SPECIFIC BEHAVIOUR STATEMENTS FOR LEVEL 1-4

Within the *Learning Environment Observation Rubric* each behaviour is given a more specific statement falling under each of four levels, ranging from a teacher whose practice is deemed ineffective, partly effective, effective to very effective:

1. A classroom in which no good practice is observed would be considered as ineffective practice – Level 1.
2. A classroom in which practice is partly or occasionally effective/satisfactory would be allocated a Level 2.
3. The observer would assess teaching and learning practices at Level 3 if good practice is mostly observed.
4. and at Level 4 if the practice is consistently very good or excellent.

The *Learning Environment Observation Rubric* provides the behaviour statement adapted to each of the four levels with examples, in italics, of the kind of activities that **could** be observed under each level. **The examples are only indicative** and cover a range of content areas including literacy, numeracy, values-based education using transformative pedagogies, pluralism/a respect for diversity, disability inclusion and a respect for the environment/climate resilience.



By way of example, under the first behaviour statement 1.1: ‘*The teacher treats all students respectfully*’, the rubric contains the following:

DIMENSION & BEHAVIOUR	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
	<b>Ineffective</b> No good practice observed	<b>Partly effective</b> Partly satisfactory practice	<b>Effective</b> Good practice mostly observed	<b>Very effective</b> Consistent very good/excellent practice
<b>A. SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT</b>				
<b>1. EMOTIONAL CLIMATE</b>	<i>The teacher creates a supportive warm, positive and inclusive learning environment in which all students feel emotionally safe and are encouraged to take learning risks. Moreover, all students feel they belong and are welcome as the teacher treats all students respectfully regardless of background and abilities, attends to their needs and enables them to feel heard, understood, trusted and validated. Teacher and student interactions are positive, and students demonstrate sensitivity, empathy and respect towards each other.</i>			
<b>1.1. The teacher treats all students respectfully.</b>	<p>The teacher <b>does not treat students respectfully.</b></p> <p><b>Examples:</b> <i>The teacher does not use students’ names. The teacher exhibits negative verbal and/or physical interactions e.g. uses a negative verbal tone or body language, shouts, scolds, uses sarcastic or dismissive words and cold, humiliating interactions.</i></p> <p><i>S/he might use physical punishment.</i></p>	<p>The teacher <b>treats all students somewhat respectfully OR treats some students respectfully.</b></p> <p><i>The teacher uses the names of some students, does not shout at or humiliate students.</i></p> <p><i>S/he may show annoyance or frustration.</i></p> <p><i>S/he may be polite with some students but not others.</i></p>	<p>The teacher <b>treats most students respectfully.</b></p> <p><i>The teacher uses students’ names, polite language, “please” and “thank you” or other culturally relevant signs of respect with most students.</i></p>	<p>The teacher <b>treats all students respectfully using a positive, empathetic and encouraging manner.</b></p> <p><i>The teacher uses students’ names and consistently uses polite language, “please” and “thank you” or other culturally relevant signs of respect with all students.</i></p> <p><i>S/he listens to and talks/communicates with all students in a warm, positive, caring, empathetic and encouraging manner.</i></p>

It is important to note that due to the complexity of classroom interactions, the teacher may display behaviours that reflect more than one of these 4 behaviour descriptions. The observer will need to **choose the level statement that *most strongly* reflects the teacher and/or student behaviour.** The list of the eight dimensions within the areas of creating A Supportive Learning Environment and using Quality Teaching and Learning Practices and the 37 general behaviours to be observed are given below on pages 16-17. **It is important to note that each**



**dimension can be observed on its own, without the other dimensions if required.** A lesson can be observed or a series of lessons which allows the observer to see if practices are consistent and/or if progress is being made.

## Overview of Areas, Dimensions and Behaviours

### AREA A: SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

DIMENSION	BEHAVIOURS
<b>1. EMOTIONAL CLIMATE</b>	1.1 The teacher treats all students respectfully.
	1.2 Teacher and student interactions are positive.
	1.3 The teacher responds to students' emotional, physical and material needs.
	1.4 The teacher does not exhibit bias (relating to gender, disability, colour, ethnicity, linguistic or socio-economic background etc.
	1.5 The teacher challenges stereotypes (relating to gender, disability, colour, ethnicity, linguistic or socio-economic background etc.).
	1.6 Students demonstrate sensitivity, empathy and respect towards each other and are willing to help peers.
<b>2. HIGH EXPECTATIONS</b>	2.1. The teacher communicates the highest behavioural expectations for learning activities.
	2.2. The teacher acknowledges positive student behaviour.
	2.3. The teacher redirects misbehaviour by focusing on the expected behaviour.
	2.4. The teacher helps students make ethical and socially acceptable choices.
	2.5. The teacher provides opportunities for students to take on meaningful roles in the classroom.

### AREA B: QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES

DIMENSION	BEHAVIOURS
<b>3. FACILITATING LEARNING</b>	3.1. The teacher explicitly articulates the expected learning outcomes of the lesson and relates learning activities to these outcomes.
	3.2. The teacher explains concepts and content clearly.
	3.3. The teacher relates the lesson to previous learning, other content and/or students' daily lives.
	3.4. The teacher uses a variety of appropriate learning strategies, tasks and materials <i>e.g. auditory, visual, movement, play, role-play, multi-sensory, discussion, presentation, digital technologies etc. and uses objects, low-cost materials and those from the contexts/environment.</i>
	3.5. The teacher provides students with choices.
	3.6. The teacher adjusts teaching and provides activities relevant to the levels of the students.



	3.7. The teacher provides a beginning, middle and end to the lesson with good sequencing and pacing.
	3.8. Students are engaged in learning activities.
<b>4. CRITICAL THINKING &amp; CREATIVITY</b>	4.1. The teacher asks open-ended questions (that require reasoning, explanation, generalisation or have more than one correct answer).
	4.2. Students are happy to ask questions, including open-ended questions.
	4.3. The teacher provides thinking tasks (that require students to actively analyse content as opposed to rote learning or building fluency).
	4.4. The teacher provides activities that encourage student initiative, curiosity, imagination, creativity and/or learning through play <i>e.g., the use of art, craft and design, mime, movement, drama, music, poetry and playful pedagogies such as experiential learning, games, inquiry, problem-solving, project-based learning; use of outdoor activities.</i>
<b>5. SOCIAL &amp; COLLABORATIVE LEARNING</b>	5.1. The teacher uses collaborative pair and group work effectively.
	5.2. The teacher helps students find ways to resolve conflict and reach agreements.
	5.3 The teacher integrates a respect for diversity into lesson content and delivery, <i>e.g. respect for diverse perspectives, opinions, peoples, ethnicities, genders, abilities or 'disabilities', neurodiversity, geographies, cultures, contexts, beliefs, languages etc.</i>
<b>6. LEARNING TO LEARN</b>	6.1. The teacher models learning to learn and/or offers guided instruction to help students think through how they will approach a task.
	6.2. The teacher responds positively to student challenges.
	6.3. Students seek clarification and support.
	6.4. The teacher provides opportunities for self-assessment and/or peer assessment.
	6.5. The teacher provides opportunities for students to set their own goals.
<b>7. CHECKS FOR UNDERSTANDING</b>	7.1. The teacher uses questions, prompts, or other strategies to determine students' level of understanding.
	7.2. The teacher monitors students during independent and group work.
	7.3. The teacher acknowledges and focuses on students' effort and attitudes (rather than focusing only on results, intelligence or perceived 'natural' abilities).
<b>8. FEEDBACK</b>	8.1. The teacher provides specific comments that help identify students' successes.
	8.2. The teacher provides specific comments or prompts to help clarify students' misunderstandings.
	8.3 The teacher provides opportunities for students to give constructive feedback to one another.

Now that you have read the Introduction, please study the VITAL Learning Environment Observation Form and Rubric sections before moving to the remaining sections. A list of References and Useful Reading is also provided here.

Welcome to our Schools2030 VITAL Learning Environment journey to improving students' holistic learning outcomes!



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*Every child needs a champion, an adult who will never ever give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists they become the very best they can be..... This is why teachers will always matter. Teachers matter.*

Keishia Thorpe, Winner of the Global Teacher Prize  
(2021, The Varkey Foundation)

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*The importance of relationships may seem obvious, but for children living in poverty  
“it’s a make-or-break factor”*

*Many schools rely on power and authority rather than positive relationships to get students to behave or perform well. The problem with the coercion approach is simple: the weaker the relationships, the more resources and authority you need to get the same job done..... people will do more, and do it more willingly, for people they respect and enjoy being around.*

Jensen (2009)

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*Students’ perceptions of a supportive learning environment (e.g., teacher support, student cohesiveness and equity) are significantly related to their motivation (i.e., self-efficacy beliefs and achievement goals) and self-regulation in learning.*

(Tas 2016, Velayutham & Aldridge 2013  
cited in Stronge, J. 2018:196)

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