

Description of Tool (what is it for and why?)

The purpose of the tool is twofold: Firstly, to be used by teachers and leaders to enhance and support professional discussions about school policy and/or evaluations of the schoolwork in connection with school development. Secondly, to serve as an analytical tool in studies on school improvement. The theoretical background of the tool is based on concepts of individualised learning, democratic and student-centred practices and the school as a learning community.

The tool consists of six main strands: *Internal structure and leadership*; *Policy making, internal evaluation and professional development*; *Physical learning environment*; *Students*; *Teachers*; and *Parents and community relations*. Each strand includes several categories. The development of each category is described using a five-point scale of sequential stages. The first stage outlines 20th century school practices in Iceland. The 5th stage outlines a vision of the future for school practices with reference to ideas regarding individualised and cooperative learning, learning in democracy and/or the school as a learning community.



Tool instructions (how to use it)

The tool is flexible, as users can focus on one or more of the strands, or even a single category within a strand. There are no rules on how it could be used. As such it is user-friendly. If measured by Woolner's (2018) four principles, the main advantages are that the tool takes into account where people are; it helps people to understand better how physical, organisational and social aspects of the school environment are intertwined; and facilitates the exploration of ideas and possibilities.

To use the tool in relation with school space:

Strand 3 about physical environment can be used to enhance and facilitate collaborative discussions about the school space. Five categories are set up in the model: The overall design of the building; Student's workspace; Teaching material and visibility of students work; School libraries; and Technology and equipment. The users at each school could easily adapt the tool, skip some of the categories or add new ones.

The discussion could be guided by three main questions as the group goes through each category:

- At which stage of the physical learning environment strand would we place school practices in our school or department and why?
- Do we like where we are or do we want to develop our practices further towards stage five?
 - If not – why?
 - If so – what needs to be done?
- In which way, if any, did using the tool affect our ideas about the physical learning environment?



Tool instructions (how to analyse it)

A good idea when it comes to analysis after the application of the tool would be to identify areas for further development. These would be categories where the group has marked school practice at a low stage but practice could be developed towards higher stages. This could serve as a basis for a development plan.

Additional resources

The tool was developed 2018 by *Research centre in school development* at the University of Iceland and the city of Reykjavík. It relies on an older version from 2004, that was revised, based on results from a large study on teaching and learning in Icelandic basic schools (Gerður G. Óskarsdóttir, 2014).

Gerður G. Óskarsdóttir (ed) (2014). *Starfshættir í grunnskólum við upphaf 21. aldar [Teaching and learning in the Icelandic compulsory schools in the 21st century]*. Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan. Available:

[https://menntavisindastofnun.hi.is/sites/menntavisindastofnun.hi.is/files/throun skolastarfs/starfshaettir_heild_m_kapu_02102015_lr.pdf](https://menntavisindastofnun.hi.is/sites/menntavisindastofnun.hi.is/files/throun%20skolastarfs/starfshaettir_heild_m_kapu_02102015_lr.pdf)

Woolner, P. (2018) Collaborative Re-design: Working with School Communities to Understand and Improve their Learning Environments. In: Ellis, RA; Goodyear, P. (eds). *Spaces of teaching and learning: Integrating perspectives on research and practice*. Singapore: Springer.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION