



Interactive Module on School Leadership

Developed by

SLA, SCERT Assam

in collaboration with NCSL - NEIPA, New Delhi

School Leadership for Transforming the Work Ethos: Building Commitment, Collaboration and Change in school of Assam





LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the module, Head Teachers will be able to:

- 1 Understand the concept of work ethics and work ethos and their influence on school culture.**
- 2 Move from compliance-driven management to commitment-driven leadership.**
- 3 Define a clear, value-driven school vision that balances academic and moral goals.**
- 4 Build collaborative professional cultures that reduce isolation and promote shared responsibility**
- 5 Initiate small, context-sensitive, and sustainable changes that positively influence school ethos**



Work Ethos, Ethics, Collaboration, Commitment, Change, Vision, Goal Alignment, Leadership, Moral Purpose, Direction etc.

6.1 AN INTRODUCTION TO WORK ETHICS AND WORK ETHOS

Work ethics refer to the shared moral principles that guide individual behaviour in the workplace. Values such as honesty, fairness, responsibility, and commitment help individuals distinguish between what is right and wrong and shape professional conduct in everyday actions and decisions.

Work ethos, on the other hand, represents the collective moral climate of an institution. In schools that function within complex environments—marked by diverse learner needs, administrative pressures, accountability demands, and changing social expectations—physical infrastructure and curriculum alone cannot drive sustained improvement. What truly nurtures growth is the institution's work ethos: the shared values, attitudes, and practices that influence how teachers, leaders, and staff collaborate, respond to challenges, and remain committed to the larger educational purpose.

Work ethics provide direction, while work ethos gives meaning. When both work together, schools become positive and supportive spaces for learning and growth.





Let's Pause and Reflect

To understand this idea at the level of practice, let us watch a video by scanning the QR Code:

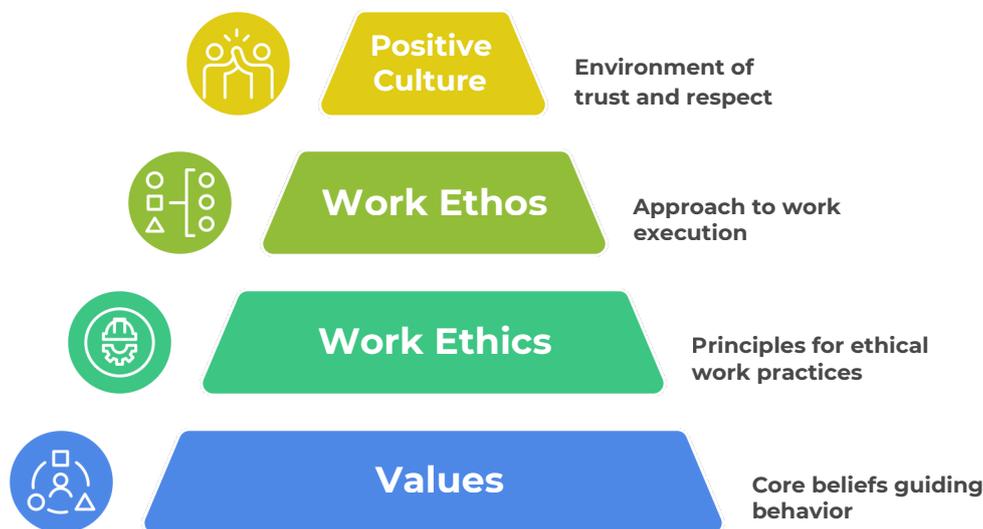


- What aspect of the head teacher's behaviour in the video stood out to you most—and why?
- What is one habit or practice from the video that you could realistically adopt in your own context?

6.1.1 Relationship Between Work Ethos and Positive School Culture

Work ethics and work ethos play a crucial role in shaping a positive school culture. When values such as honesty, responsibility, respect, and commitment are consistently practised by school leaders and teachers, trust and mutual respect grow naturally within the school community. A strong work ethos encourages collaboration, open communication, and a sense of shared purpose, reducing fear and conflict. Over time, these ethical practices create a supportive and inclusive environment where teachers feel valued, students feel safe, and learning flourishes.

Now, look at the Fig below to understand how work ethics and work ethos are related to positive school culture



Conceptual Framework Linking Work Ethics, Work Ethos, and School Culture

"School leadership must move beyond administration to provide moral direction, professional support, and shared vision."

NEP 2020, Para 5.16



Target-Driven Focus

Setting and pursuing clear objectives for progress and motivation.

Diligence

Consistent, earnest effort and persistence in tasks, especially challenging ones.

Efficiency

Achieving maximum output with minimum wasted effort and time.

Ethical Conduct

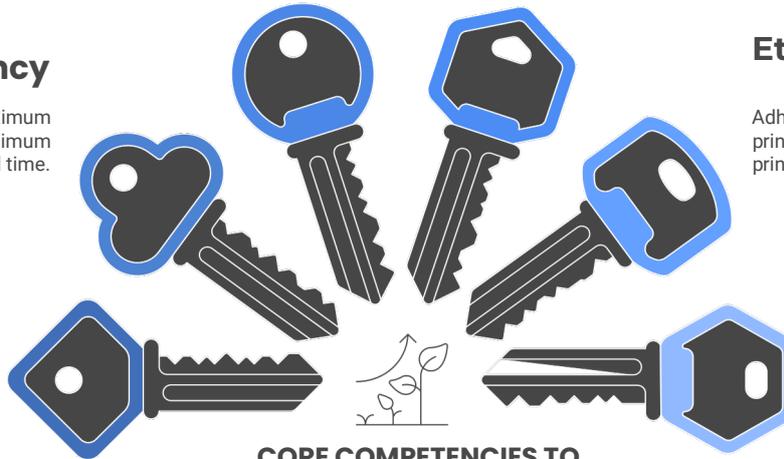
Adhering to moral principles and making principled decisions.

Accountability

Taking ownership of actions and outcomes, showing dependability.

Collaboration

Working cooperatively with others to achieve shared goals and support team members.



CORE COMPETENCIES TO CULTIVATE

Core Competencies for Developing Strong Work Place Ethos

Activity 1

Write your reflections and share it with your pair

- When you look at these core competencies—accountability, ethical conduct, target-driven focus, efficiency, diligence, and collaboration—which one do you believe is most visible in your school’s daily functioning, and which one depends most on your personal leadership to be strengthened—and why?

Vision-led leadership helps schools balance academic goals with values and well-being.

A positive work ethos grows when collaboration replaces isolation, commitment replaces mere compliance, and change is guided by shared values and vision. It has to be intentionally built and sustained through effective leadership practices. For school heads, this means translating ethical intent into lived experiences for teachers and students



6.3 COLLABORATION – FROM WORKING ALONE TO WORKING TOGETHER



Let's Pause and Reflect

**What caption comes to your mind when you look at the above photo?
(Share your thoughts with the group of participants)**



Schools are complex spaces where no single person can carry all responsibilities. When teachers work in isolation, efforts remain fragmented. Collaboration brings shared thinking, mutual support, and collective problem-solving. A collaborative culture helps schools respond better to diverse learner needs and professional challenges.

Working In Collaboration Should Reflect:



ACTIVITY A2

Read situations and put mark

- 1 Teachers jointly plan a lesson in your school Yes No May be
- 2 One teacher does all the work, others sign Yes No May be
- 3 Teachers observe each other's classes Yes No May be
- 4 Teachers in my school seek help from one another naturally Yes No May be
- 5 I encourage open dialogue and shared decision-making Yes No May be
- 6 Teachers feel safe to share ideas and concerns Yes No May be
- 7 Regular staff meetings allow discussion, not just instructions Yes No May be



Now discuss it with the group:

- Why does collaboration fail in your school?
- What small steps can you take to make collaboration easier?

Collaboration is not extra work; it is better work done together. When teachers plan, reflect, and solve problems collectively, effort reduces, clarity increases, and outcomes improve.

6.3 COMMITMENT – FROM COMPLIANCE TO SHARED PURPOSE

Commitment in a school is not created by rules, timetables, or inspections alone. Compliance may ensure that work is done, but commitment ensures that work is done with care, continuity, and conscience. True commitment appears when educators act not because they are instructed to, but because they believe the work matters.

The following real life story from Assam illustrates how commitment transforms routine duty into meaningful impact and how work ethos grows when purpose replaces pressure:



In Assam’s tea gardens, Debajit Ghosh, a teacher at Namsang Tea Estate Model School, demonstrated extraordinary commitment to education. Every day, he traveled nearly 150 km—through forests and difficult terrain—to reach his school because there was no reliable transport, and many children had dropped out of school previously. Despite the long commute and physical challenges, he persisted because he believed that access to education should not be limited by geography or hardship*. His efforts helped bring back around 267 out-of-school children, improve health outcomes like haemoglobin levels, and ensure Class 10 pass outs continued their education, earning him a spot among the 45 teachers honoured with the National Teachers’ Award 2025 by the President of India. (*The Indian Express, 2025*)



Let’s Pause and Reflect

Which action in the story best reflects commitment beyond compliance, and why?

Work ethos deepens when leaders inspire purpose—commitment then becomes a shared value, not an imposed expectation. Commitment grows when teachers feel valued, heard, and trusted, not only constantly monitored.

Activity A3

- Recall a recent instruction you gave to staff.....
- Rewrite it in a way that appeals to **purpose** instead of authority.....

Example: _____



A self-assessment rubric is not an evaluation tool; it is a mirror for leadership practice. It helps Head Teachers to distinguish between **Compliance** (doing work because it is required), and **Commitment** (doing work because it matters). By reflecting on descriptors such as initiative, consistency, integrity, and student-centred decisions, head teachers become more aware of:

- How often they act out of purpose rather than pressure?
- Whether their leadership inspires commitment in others?



6.3.1 Self-Assessment Rubric for Head Teachers



Focus: Reflecting on Work Ethos in School Leadership



Purpose: This self-assessment rubric is meant for reflection and growth. It helps head teachers examine how their leadership practices shape the work ethos of the school.

Dimension	Level 1 – Compliance-Driven	Level 2 – Procedural	Level 3 – Commitment-Driven	Level 4 – Value-Led Leadership
Purpose & Vision	Focuses mainly on rules and instructions	Communicates goals when required	Aligns daily work with school purpose	Inspires shared vision and moral purpose
Personal Integrity	Acts correctly under supervision	Follow norms consistently	Models ethical behaviour even under pressure	Upholds values regardless of constraints
Leadership Behaviour	Relies on authority and control	Balances authority with consultation	Leads through trust and example	Shapes culture through values and conduct
Collaboration & Relationships	Works in isolation; delegates tasks	Encourages cooperation when needed	Builds strong professional relationships	Fosters collective ownership and teamwork.
Commitment to Staff & Students	Responds only to assigned responsibilities	Supports staff and students as situations arise	Anticipates needs and provides support	Consistently prioritises well-being and growth
Response to Challenges & Change	Resists or delays change	Implements change as instructed	Leads change with clarity and support	Turns challenges into shared learning opportunities

True leadership is rooted in service, responsibility, and moral purpose, not authority.

–Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan



Let's Pause and Reflect

- **My strongest area of work ethos:** _____
- **One area I need to improve:** _____
- **One leadership habit I will practice intentionally to encourage a positive work culture in my school:** _____



6.4 CHANGE – LEADING WITH VISION

5 Strategies for Leaders to Improve School Culture

- 01 Empower & Support Your Teachers**
Provide autonomy, resources, and professional support so teachers feel trusted, valued, and confident in their roles.



- 02 Develop a Shared Vision**
Collaboratively define goals and values that align the entire school community toward a common purpose.



- 03 Recognize & Celebrate Achievements**
Acknowledge efforts and successes to build motivation, morale, and a culture of appreciation.

- 04 Build Partnerships within the Community**
Strengthen relationships with parents, local organizations, and stakeholders to support holistic student development.



- 05 Lead by Example**
Model integrity, commitment, and positive behaviour to set the tone for the entire school culture.

Activity 3

- Name few more strategies from your experience that you have implemented in your school for strengthening work ethos through leadership:

Change is unavoidable in schools—new curricula, new assessments, new expectations. Resistance often arises when change feels imposed or unclear. A shared vision helps people understand ‘why’ change is necessary and ‘where’ it is leading.



When vision guides change, uncertainty reduces and effort becomes meaningful





Let's Pause and Reflect

First, let us watch the video (Scan the QR Code):



What did you notice about relationships among teachers, students, and the leader in the above video?

What vision did the school leader in the video demonstrate?

How did that vision shape the direction and priorities of the school?



When leadership mindset shifts from control to trust, work ethos strengthens naturally.

Vision as a Unifying Force

Different people focus on different priorities—academics, well-being, infrastructure, community. Vision aligns all of them into one common direction.

A vision has value only when it is lived daily, not just displayed on walls or reports. Implementation means aligning vision with practice, not treating it as a slogan. Vision must reflect clearly in:



POLICIES

- School policies should reflect the vision, not just rules and compliance.
- Vision-aligned policies promote equity, inclusion, and trust.
- Policies become effective when they guide behaviour, not merely regulate it.
- A clear vision helps ensure consistency and fairness in policy implementation.

- Pedagogical practices should translate vision into classroom realities.
- Vision-driven pedagogy focuses on meaningful learning, not rote coverage.
- Teaching approaches reflect what the school truly values—participation, thinking, and care.
- When pedagogy aligns with vision, teachers teach with purpose and coherence.



PEDAGOGY



EVERYDAY BEHAVIOUR

- Vision is most visible in daily interactions, not written statements.
- Respectful communication, collaboration, and care reflect a shared vision.
- Leaders model vision through how they speak, listen, and respond.
- Everyday behaviour either strengthens or weakens the school's vision.





Let's Pause and Reflect

Read each statement and tick (✓) the option that best reflects your school at present.



- Our school vision is clearly understood by teachers.....
- Teachers understand why certain practices are followed.....
- I consciously model the work ethos I expect from staff.....
- Daily decisions are guided by values, not just rules.....



There are also challenges with putting vision into action, such as inconsistent commitment, changing leadership, or unclear communication. The most important thing is to keep going. Vision work never ends; it changes over time. Leaders need to look at it again every year to make sure it is still useful and includes everyone. Ongoing communication and shared responsibility turn abstract ideas into real actions.



CASE STUDY



The Lamp of Learning

The Case Study given below models an example of navigating leadership challenges in the school environment

When Rupali Borthakur took charge as the headmistress of Madhabdev Government Girls' High School, she faced a familiar challenge – declining student attendance and an alarming lack of enthusiasm among both teachers and students. The classrooms were functional, yet lifeless; lessons were taught, but learning rarely inspired joy. In her first meeting, Rupali asked the teachers a simple question: **“Why do we come to school every morning?”** There was an awkward silence. After a few moments, a young science teacher responded, **“To make sure our students don't fall behind.”** Rupali smiled and said, **“Let's reimagine that – what if we come to school to light the lamp of learning, not to prevent darkness?”** That phrase – **“Lighting the Lamp of Learning”** – became their collective vision. The phrase was painted above the staffroom door, reminding everyone of their purpose. Over the next few months, the school began holding **“Vision Mornings.”** Once a week, a teacher shared a classroom moment that reflected the vision – a student who overcame fear of public speaking, a group that completed a project together, or a parent who returned to volunteer. Teachers also introduced short **“Learning Reflections”** at the end of each week, where students discussed what inspired them the most. Gradually, the atmosphere changed. Attendance improved, classrooms buzzed with energy, and teachers began collaborating across subjects. The annual survey conducted by the District Education Office recorded a **15% improvement** in student retention and a **25% rise** in participation in co-curricular activities within one year. The transformation came not from external intervention, but from a shared moral vision that turned routine teaching into purposeful action. The school had rediscovered itself.





Activity 4

- What small actions taken by the head teacher helped build a positive school culture in the case study 'Vision as a Unifying Force'?

- Make a list of changes that you would like to make in your school to sustain the school vision

Why Small Changes Matter ?

Work ethos is shaped daily—through routines, interactions, and decisions. Small, consistent changes are powerful because they are visible, repeatable, and believable. They signal values in action, not just intentions on paper.

Examples of Small, High-Impact Changes:

- Replacing directives with brief explanations of why.
- Ending meetings with one appreciation or learning.
- Allocating few minutes weekly for collaborative planning.
- Acknowledging effort publicly, correcting privately.



Let's Pause and Reflect

Ask each school head to complete silently:

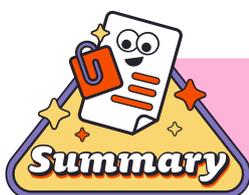


"One leadership practice I will strengthen to build collaboration, commitment, and meaningful change is _____"

-----"

Work ethos grows not through dramatic reforms, but through small, consistent actions aligned with vision.

Over time, these actions accumulate into a strong, positive school culture



Let us watch the video (Scan the QR):





To Do: Translating Vision into Action

Prepare a 30-day Work Ethos Action Plan for your school using the given template.

● While preparing the action plan, please ensure that:

- You focus on one key area (collaboration, commitment, or vision in daily practice).
- The action proposed is small, realistic, and within your direct influence as a Head Teacher.
- The action clearly reflects the school's vision and shared values, not merely compliance with rules.
- The plan is embedded in an existing school routine and does not create additional workload.
- The emphasis is on behavioural change and leadership practice, rather than documentation.

● After implementation, reflect on the outcomes after 30 days and note:

- What changed in everyday behaviour or interactions,
- What worked well,
- What you will continue, adapt, or strengthen further.

6.5 CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1 Work ethics guide individual behaviour, while work ethos reflects the collective moral climate of a school.

- True False

1 Collaboration in schools means doing extra work in addition to regular duties.

- Yes No

3 A lively classroom encourages learners to:

- a Giving instructions and monitoring strictly b Ensuring compliance through rules
- c Inspiring shared purpose and trust d Avoiding teacher involvement in decisions



4 **Commitment grows mainly through inspections, timetables, and external pressure.**

True

False

5 **Vision becomes meaningful in a school when it is:**

a Displayed on notice boards

b Written in annual reports

c Lived through policies, pedagogy, and everyday behaviour

d Shared only during meetings

6 **Small, consistent leadership actions can gradually strengthen work ethos and school culture.**

Yes

No

6.6 REFERENCES

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4. Hargreaves, A., & O'Connor, M. T. (2018). *Collaborative professionalism: When teaching together means learning for all*. Corwin.
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6.7 ADDITIONAL READINGS

- **National Centre for School Leadership (NCSL), NIEPA, *Handbook on School Leadership Development***
- **Fullan, M., *Leading in a Culture of Change***
- **Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D., *Shaping School Culture***



Vision provides direction to change; without vision, change feels imposed and uncertain.





AUTHOR PROFILE

Pompy Talukdar

Pompy Talukdar is a Senior Lecturer at DIET Kamrup Metro and a contributor to the School Leadership Academy, Assam (NIEPA Initiative), with sustained engagement in teacher education and school leadership development. Her academic and field-based work focuses on strengthening reflective practice, collaborative culture, and vision-driven leadership in schools.



Transforming the Work Ethos: Building Commitment, Collaboration, and Change in Schools emerges from this engagement and is designed as a structured, practice-oriented leadership resource. The module examines how shared vision, distributed leadership, meaningful communication, and psychological safety contribute to sustainable institutional transformation. Through contextual case studies, guided reflection, and actionable planning tools, it positions work ethos as a foundational driver of school improvement and professional integrity.

