

Active Listening in the Diverse Roles of International School Leaders

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ABSTRACT

When asked what skills are essential to becoming a successful international school leader, the answers tend to be broad concepts like integrity, experience, and vision. This review aims to highlight a leader's ability to listen as a leadership skill that deserves a place on the list. Being a skilled listener is coveted by all school community members but is of particular importance in international schools where a variety of cultures, norms, and languages are interwoven. International school leaders are expected to foster relationships throughout a diverse community and honor each set of unique conditions, expectations, and motivations. This review article analyzes current findings in listening and leadership and provides a resource for leaders in these schools to harness the skill of active listening to enhance their communication skills.

KEYWORDS: active listening; diverse leadership roles; international school leadership

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1. Introduction

Listening is a complex skill that provides school leaders contact with all areas of the school community. Historically, the effectiveness of school leaders was measured based on the levels of control and compliance they were able to garnish amongst school constituents. Effective listening, conversely, lends itself to a humanistic approach to leadership and associates a leader with a professional culture based on trust, respect, and understanding.

Effective listening is active. The skill provides the foundation to work with fellow administrators to create collective school policy, assist in conflict management, craft shared ownership of initiatives amongst faculty, honor parents' work, and respect and provide access to the student body. The skill of listening is taken for granted by leaders, yet it plays a pivotal role in how the leader performs and how the community perceives him or her. For these reasons, active listening is worthy of recognition and development with international school leaders and the professional communities they administer. Active listening is not to be confused with critical listening, a commonly employed approach in strongly hierarchical companies. The critical listener tends to be the boss, who is considered the knowledge expert, and spends most of the time listening by either

evaluating the message or formulating a response during the delivery of the message. Active listening breaks this pattern and allows the leader to engage in reflective thought and practice. The active listener can clarify the query, consider the message, and create the time needed to craft a meaningful response.

Leadership in international schools closely resembles that of leadership in most national systems. Leaders in both contexts are accountable for the effectiveness of the teaching and learning, tasked with decision-making processes, and expected to manage the culture and climate of the school. Many international school leaders enjoy a greater sense of autonomy, free from the constraints of district- or state-level regulations, but there are unique challenges that are inherent with the role, as well [1]. Mobility of families and faculty, demands of parents, diversity of staff, and management of host country policies and customs all provide potential threats to the leader's efforts. Awareness and active listening play a fundamental role in what Calnin et al. refer to as the intelligences in relations, heuristics, and reflection required of international school leaders [2].

The purpose of this review is to synthesize the research of active listening in the context of international school leadership, then provide a set of practical and contextual resources. The review will include an examination of current research on active listening, a description of the diverse roles of international school leaders, an analysis of the relationship between listening and leadership, and provide a set of tables of actional items for future consideration and reference.

2. Definition of Terms

2.1 Active Listening

Active listening is the result of a series of complex skills. Emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects provide a complete picture of the skill. As opposed to passive listening, the active listener employs metacognitive strategies that require "planning, monitoring comprehension, paying focused and selective attention to certain language features, and evaluating and checking interpretations" [3].

This review will utilize six different skills to help provide a comprehensive definition of active listening. As described by the Center for Creative Leadership, each of the six skills can provide a focus for practice and further development by all school community members. The individual skills include paying attention, withholding judgment, reflecting, clarifying, summarizing, and sharing [4].

2.2 International School Leadership

This review considers school leadership to be members of the senior administrative staff, such as principals, heads, directors, and other educators in the school who regularly make or have say in school-wide decisions, such as counselors and curriculum and special education coordinators.

Strong leadership in international schools shares many similarities with strong leadership in domestic school systems. Although they share many of the same

philosophical approaches and goals, some differences include the frequent relocation of families and teachers, the management of language and customs, and the uncertainty of being an outsider to an established community. International schools are products of the decentralized schooling system where pressures are placed on site-based leaders who are faced with constant "complexity and unremitting change" [5]. Gurr noted that international schools display "nuanced differences in leadership" that vary across different host countries and contexts [6]. Some differences include an emphasis on developing teacher capacity. Others highlight the development of self and the acknowledgment of legacy. Still, others require a focus on the broad school outcomes and cultural values.

2.3 Diverse Leadership Roles

Although leaders assume a wide variety of roles in schools, this paper uses the framework of the "four hats of leadership" as an organizational framework [7]. The hats include facilitating, presenting, coaching, and consulting. They represent the broad roles school leaders assume in shared leadership models. The school leaders work together to recognize the task and manage their teams with an awareness of which role best suits the situation. This model fits well when considering a school leader's need to adapt to different situations with different school constituents. Establishing and maintaining productive relationships within the school is foundational to a leader's success, in and out of schools. In the international school context, the leader's various relationships fall into four major categories: other school leaders, teachers, parents, and students. Each constituent group has its own unique set of circumstances, motivations, and expectations. Maintaining an awareness of these circumstances when engaging in various interactions provides the school leader the opportunity to be more aware and responsive.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Active Listening in Schools

In 1957, Carl Rogers and Richard Farson first coined the term active listening to increase the listener's sense of empathy and effectiveness when communicating. They noted that active listening "requires that we get inside the speaker, that we grasp, from his point of view, just what it is he is communicating to us" [8]. At the time, this was considered a new way to approach listening and has connected the skill to emotional maturity, less defensive interactions, and a greater understanding of thinking and feeling.

In over sixty years of development, the concept of active listening has evolved into a central tenet of educational leadership. From its introduction, its mandate was to help reduce misunderstandings in human communication. In international schools, this motivation is as valid today as it was from the start. As curricula target the more modern communication forms of multimodal media and visual literacies, the skill of listening must not be taken for granted or overlooked. [9]

The skill of listening is our first and most common form of communication. Our introduction to communication starts with listening and begins before birth. Long before we speak, and much longer before we read and write, we listen [10]. Not only is listening first, but it is also the most frequently used communication skill. Students are expected to listen up to 90% of class time in schools. In adulthood, this percentage decreases, yet "during the process of communication, people spend around 40-50% of the time listening, 25-30% speaking, 11-16% reading and only 9% writing" [11]. The ability to effectively listen is essential in learning in today's schools. Mannion and Mercer describe listening as "the gateway to understanding." In addition, if schools treated listening as a core value, there "would likely be benefits in terms of the ability to acquire knowledge and skills in a range of contexts" [12].

Active listening skills can be learned, practiced, and assessed by others. To actively listen, emotional neutrality is essential. The listener's emotional state can cloud listening; for example, if the listener brings negative feelings to the interaction, the message may be heard differently if the listener is in a positive state of mind. In addition, if the message evokes emotion, the active listener matches and reflects the emotion. Active listening is not devoid of thought. Thinking while listening is crucial as long as the thoughts are dedicated to understanding the message, reading non-verbal communication, and considering the inferences and implications. The active listener is also aware of their physical self. Leaning forward, eye contact, keeping as still as possible, an occasional nod, and matching the speaker's gestures are some ways to show that active listening is taking place.

For the speaker, the interaction with an effective listener can be satisfying, validating, and inspiring. However, the skill of active listening in school leadership remains problematic to measure and replicate. The elusiveness of quantifying listening skills may be due to the challenge of measuring the skill in authentic settings. Santa found "the problem with listening is that it is a mental process and really hard to see" [13]. Several instruments have been developed to capture the skill of listening with the hope of referencing listening as a quantifiable human skill [14]. In most instances, developed instruments generate a numerical scale populated by data that focuses more on retaining information than the overall act of active listening. Conversely, we know that active listening involves more than just the comprehension and retention of verbal information. Bodie found that any attempt to measure active listening is plagued with challenges to establish validity "because of the complexity of the skill" [15].

3.2 Active Listening in Leadership

Listening is a fundamental component of school communication and a school environment that offers school constituents the opportunity to collaborate in "participative decision-making" and a "free flow of ideas" [16]. Active listening is a precondition to trust, positive relationship building, collaborative school culture, and effective communication. Swart, Pottas, and Maree noted that teachers, parents, and students highly regard effective communication with school leadership as a dynamic skill that improves the school climate [16]. When similar research was conducted in an international school context, researchers found that "listening to the community's

needs (led) to shared respect and goodwill” for school leaders seeking to influence school culture positively [17].

3.3 International School Context

International schools are unique as they often operate in different languages, promote the globalization of ideas, and implement different curricula to that of their host country [18]. The number of international schools in operation has nearly doubled over the last ten years (7,655 in July 2011 to 12,373 in July 2021), and with student numbers expected to reach seven million by 2023, the mandate to consider the international school context as relevant and unique is present [19].

The establishment of the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) in 2001 identified the international school leader as a position worthy of its own analysis. Research conducted by ISSPP has recognized that successful international school principals demonstrate the ability to exhibit unique flexibility and work beyond the contexts in which they work. "They do not comply, subvert, or overtly oppose," Murakami, Gurr, and Notman explained, "rather they actively mediate and moderate within a set of core values and practices which transcend narrowly conceived improvement agendas" [15]. ISSPP has emerged as a leader in international school research and has accumulated a body of research regarding the particular circumstances of international school systems.

The profile of international schools has changed over the last ten years. Initially, they were established to cater to expatriate families living and working overseas for finite amounts of time. Increasingly, international schools are enrolling a more significant portion of national host children, often for affluent families seeking higher education and social status standards. This trend explains the rise in demand and the establishment of more schools, but it also changes the schools' constituent population, leading some researchers to ask the question, Bunnell and colleagues asking, "what is international about an international school?" [21]. Additionally, since access to these schools tends to be only available to the host country's elite, there is a "social and cultural reproduction for the globalizing and cosmopolitan privileged" effect resulting in a diverse and complex school environment for school leaders to manage expectations and change [22].

4. Synthesis

4.1 International School Leadership Has Unique Challenges

There has been an increase in research concluding that international school leaders face a range of unique challenges. Managing a school in a foreign country with staff and faculty from various backgrounds is a daunting responsibility. Not only are leaders expected to take care of the teaching and learning in the school, but they also need to take care of faculty and staff outside of it – people who are, themselves, dealing with challenges associated with working overseas. School leaders are constantly considering the cultural and social standing of the students and adults “specific to the multi-cultural context and transitional nature of international schools” [23]. It is not

surprising to note that of all the ways in which international school leadership differs from educational leadership in other contexts, many have little to do with the actual management of schools. Most are about building trusting relationships and the development of the school culture. International school leaders who are considering things like loneliness, transience, cultural differences, varying governance models, business contexts, and the diverse composition of school populations can be unique to the international school context and outside the realm of formal leadership training [22].

4.2 Active Listening's Benefits to International School Leadership

Although comparative studies of active listening and the international school context are not abundant, what exists supports the premise that international school leaders are met with unique challenges that active listening can help mitigate. Therefore, by comparing a summary list of what previous research has identified as international school challenges with a similar list of the impact of active listening by leaders in schools (Table 1), it is reasonable to propose solutions to the unique challenges these leaders face.

Despite the challenges posed by the measurement of active listening, Bodie designed a widely used scale to measure the behavioral output of listening that includes verbal and nonverbal elements. The Active-Empathic Listening Scale (AELS) is designed to measure the listener's ability to process and understand rational aspects of speech and determine the cognitive aspects of listening, including attending, comprehending, receiving, and interpreting messages [28]. Effective listening statements from the AELS are used in this paper to provide possible indicators that leaders can reflect upon to determine if active listening is prevalent within their professional teams and relationships (see Tables 2 – 5).

5. Discussion

This review aims to serve as a reminder of the benefits of active listening in leadership and a guide for school leaders to reference when working with various school community members. Garmston and Wellman provide a structural framework that includes four key roles, or "hats," that school leaders assume in their position. The four hats are facilitating, presenting, coaching, and consulting [7].

- **Facilitating** – To facilitate is to make easier. A facilitator conducts a meeting where the purpose is dialogue, shared decision making, planning, or problem-solving. The facilitator directs the process used in the meeting, choreographs the energy within the group, and maintains a focus on the meeting's processes.
- **Presenting** – To present is to teach. A presenter's goals are to extend and enrich knowledge, skills, or attitudes and encourage them in people's work. A presenter may adopt many stances – expert, colleague, novice, friend – and use many strategies to presentation – lecture, cooperative learning, study groups, simulations. Touchstones of effective presentation include clarity of instructional outcomes, standards for success, and ways to assess learning [29].

Table 1. International school challenges with active listening impacts.

Summary of challenges faced by leaders in international school context [24]	Summary of impacts of an active listening school climate
High but diverse parental expectations	Effective communication leads to stakeholders placing trust in leaders, obtaining institutional buy-in, and campus commitment; an ability termed ‘sensemaking’ [25]
High rate of staff turnover and student mobility	Greater commitment and identification with the school [16]
Conflicting pressures emerging from the need for compliance with host country education laws and policies and the educational goals and processes guiding international education	Exchange of shared respect and good will in the community [17]
Cultural diversity of staff, students, and board members	Higher level of cultural understanding and empathy [26]
Low impact of school improvement initiatives	Informs teaching practice and professional training, including encouraging teachers to rethink who is an authority of educational practice [27]

- Coaching – To coach is to help a group act toward its goal while simultaneously helping it develop expertise in planning, reflecting, problem-solving, and decision making. The coach takes a nonjudgmental stance and uses open-ended questions, pausing, paraphrasing, and probing for specificity. The skilled coach focuses on group members' perceptions, thinking, and decision-making processes to mediate resources for self-monitoring and reflection.
- Consulting – To consult is to offer expertise to be used by others. A consultant can be an information specialist or an advocate for the content and process. As an information specialist, the consultant delivers technical knowledge to the group. As a content advocate, the consultant encourages group members to use a specific instructional strategy, adopt a particular curriculum, or purchase a particular software. As a process advocate, the consultant influences the group's methodology by recommending a meeting structure that matches the intended objectives. To effectively consult, one must be aware of the group's vulnerabilities and carry out sessions with genuine integrity and trust [30].

5.1 Application of Active Listening in International Schools

Each of the four tables that follow provides points of emphasis for the international school leader. They target listening as an active and conscious choice

when interacting with each constituent group. Each table is dedicated to listening with one of four school constituent groups: other school leaders (Table 2), teachers (Table 3), parents (Table 4), and students (Table 5). Each table has rows organized by leadership hat [7] and provides the following resources for each context:

- a purpose for the group and circumstances to consider when engaging in these conversations
- a highlighted active listening skill, based on this list of active listening skills from the Center for Creative Leadership [4]
- example statements of feedback or reflection as evidence that effective listening is taking place, based on Active-Empathic Listening Scale [28]

The example statements represent what could be reported about the leader's listening or leadership skills by others in this group or upon self-reflection.

"Being a leader who utilizes, values, and practices active listening in the international setting benefits the learning community" [31]. When working with other school leaders, there is a responsibility to act in the interest of the larger school community. School philosophy, vision, and direction are developed in these groups. There are times a leader must publicly support an idea that challenges their own opinions. Within these groups, active listening is crucial to provide the leader the chance to clarify, consider, adjust, and grow.

Productive, professional relationships between teachers and principals benefit all members of the school community. A school leader dedicated to establishing a trusting school climate can start by developing relationships with teachers. Barth described, "relationships among the educators in a school define all relationships within that school's culture. Teachers and administrators demonstrate all too well a capacity to either enrich or diminish one another's lives and thereby enrich or diminish their schools" [32].

Leaders who communicate effectively are an attractive school feature. Odhiambo and Hii conducted a study asking parents how they select international schools. Respondents placed high importance on "the availability of resources and opportunities the school offered... (parents) stressed that it is the principal's responsibility to provide this in terms of deciding where school funds are invested" [31].

Bourke and Loveridge urged schools to move beyond simply speaking about the benefits of providing students with voice and commit to operating the school in new ways. They explain that school systems "must radically change through listening and acting on their (students') views to position student voice as political and educational imperatives" [33]. School leaders are the champions of this change. Through active listening and effective, transformational leadership, international schools are well-positioned to make significant and lasting change. Substantial school change requires leaders with a healthy combination of integrity, experience, vision, and active listening.

5.2 Challenges

As a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the effectiveness of school leadership to communicate, including listening, to the community was more important than ever. Considering how quickly the pandemic affected the management of schools worldwide, the need for decisive and well-communicated responses was placed on

Table 2. Listening with other school leaders.

Facilitating	<p>Purpose: Often, this group is task-oriented and does not have much spare time to consider all sides of an issue. School leaders rely upon each other to be the people with whom they share, connect, and confer.</p> <p>Highlighted active listening skill: Withholding judgment. Many leadership teams use meeting time to establish an unspoken pecking order, but this can lead to critical listening or listening with the intent to respond.</p> <p>Indicators of effective listening: The leader balances participation by encouraging all members to contribute. Through active listening, an effective facilitator will work to ensure all voices contribute and messages are understood.</p>
Presenting	<p>Purpose: Leaders endorse initiatives in their schools. The outcome of a successful presentation can be informing, promoting ideas, and creating a shared vision.</p> <p>Highlighted active listening skill: Clarifying. Leadership teams tend to possess a great deal of collective experience and opinions. In the role of presenter, the active listener can utilize the participants to help endorse or solidify an idea.</p> <p>Indicators of effective listening: The leader works to clarify by repeating or rephrasing what has been said. Paraphrasing is a fundamental active listening skill that shows the speaker respect and encouragement. Paraphrasing can help make messages clear and understood by all group members.</p>
Coaching	<p>Purpose: School leaders can also include non-educators, like board members and community business leaders. As an experienced educator, leaders can use coaching to help create a sense of shared vision and purpose.</p> <p>Highlighted active listening skill: Summarizing. When coaching a group of colleagues, an effective listener will use summaries to ensure a common understanding of the message and the roles of each group member.</p> <p>Indicators of effective listening: The leader provides clear responses to speakers. Educational vernacular can cloud the intent of messages and concepts. By ensuring that all group members understand, the active listener helps the efficiency and effectiveness of the group.</p>
Consulting	<p>Purpose: When school leaders return from a conference or professional development event, they are often responsible for sharing their experiences. As a consultant, the leader can support developing an active listening culture.</p> <p>Highlighted active listening skill: Paying attention. A consultant's effectiveness diminishes if their message is the same to every group, every time. Effective consulting requires understanding the group and is achieved when the leader is aware and pays attention to group members.</p>

Table 2 (continued).

	Indicators of effective listening: The leader can separate issues from people, particularly when members advocate an opposing idea. To consult is not just about delivering a predetermined message. Consulting is guiding a group to reach common understandings.
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Table 3. Listening with teachers.

	Purpose: Some of the most important work of the international school leader is facilitating groups of faculty and staff. The use of discussion and dialogue in facilitating these groups allows for productive communication.
Facilitating	Highlighted active listening skill: Clarifying. Groups of teachers can follow tangential discussions when left to their own devices. By returning to clarifying statements, the leader keeps the group focused and on task.
	I Indicators of effective listening: The leader keeps the discussions focused on the objectives during meetings. Facilitation is acting as a professional guide who is aware of the group's needs and keeping the group's goals evident.
	Purpose: School leaders represent the leadership team when providing updates and information to teachers. When presenting to teachers, it is crucial to connect messages to the school's purpose and vision.
Presenting	Highlighted active listening skill: Paying attention. Teachers are excellent at sensing authenticity and genuine intent in people. For a leader to effectively communicate with faculty, listening for understanding is essential, especially when offering new information or ideas that may be controversial.
	Indicators of effective listening: The leader uses body language to show interest in what others are saying. A large part of communication is non-verbal. Being aware of body language and non-verbal responses helps create interest and empathy for the listener.
	Purpose: As a leader who is coaching, the objective can be working to get the most out of the teaching team. The group is open to setting goals through active listening and is ready to consider new ideas and adaptations.
Coaching	Highlighted active listening skill: Sharing. Coaches look to identify and solve issues. As a result of active listening, a coach can use the collective expertise in the group to accomplish goals and establish a collaborative professional culture.
	Indicators of effective listening: The leader is an "idea person" suggesting new ways of handling a problem. By adding to the conversation as an equal, the leader sets about earning the respect of the faculty. Offering ideas or expanding on the ideas of others versus telling the group what to do or how to think is a great start.

Table 3 (continued).

Consulting	<p>Purpose: Consulting with educators is the chance to build shared understanding and a sense of community. As a consultant, the school leader can utilize active listening to involve and entrust faculty.</p>
	<p>Highlighted active listening skill: Summarizing. Part of summarizing is listening to how the group plans to move forward. Offering summaries discussion points keeps the group focused and ensures roles are defined for the next steps.</p>
	<p>Indicators of effective listening: The leader knows when to tolerate disagreement and when to postpone it. Active listening allows leaders to consider and presume the positive intent of others, even when opinions are not shared or in conflict with each other.</p>

Table 4. Listening with parents.

Facilitating	<p>Purpose: Parent workshops and the establishment of trust, respect, and understanding between home and school that occur as a result are invaluable to school leaders. Influential leaders work to promote active and positive relationships between school and home.</p>
	<p>Highlighted active listening skill: Summarizing. When facilitating parents, it is easy for the leader to fall into the trap of lecturing to them. Conversely, parents in a workshop may take the opportunity to complain to school leaders. Summaries help keep the interaction focused on the objectives and the responsibilities of the group.</p>
	<p>Indicators of effective listening: The leader helps keep the group focused on the topic. Avoiding the parents who want to take conversations down a tangential path is useful when facilitating parent groups.</p>

Presenting	<p>Purpose: Presenting helps inform the community of the school's approach to teaching and learning.</p>
	<p>Highlighted active listening skill: Sharing. By actively listening to parents during presentation events, school leaders better understand what is already known and understood by parents. Sharing helps support a new concept with a group of parents.</p>
	<p>Indicators of effective listening: The leader compliments significant contributions by group members. Parents can be intimidated by school leaders and can be seeking support without asking directly for it. By helping parents feel valued and competent, they are more likely to engage in active listening.</p>

Coaching	<p>Purpose: Coaching parents can be challenging. The leader needs to ensure parents are looking for support before taking on the role of coach.</p>
	<p>Highlighted active listening skill: Paying attention. Effective coaches encourage groups to move from one point to the next by instilling a sense of confidence and trust. Active listening leads to a socially safe</p>

Table 4 (continued).

	and respectful environment, allowing parents to respond positively to coaching.
	Indicators of effective listening: The leader does not interrupt others when they are speaking. Modeling can be one of the most effective teaching approaches. When a leader has a chance to work with a parent, it is a chance to use modeling.
Consulting	Purpose: Consulting with parents can involve tough conversations about children. A session with a school leader can help set a path forward, but that leader should value determining parent perceptions as part of the process.
	Highlighted active listening skill: Withholding judgment. As educators, school leaders are affected by parent decisions, even the ones that are found questionable. Once leaders are invited to council a parent, listening to understand their perspective is necessary for building a trusting and respectful relationship.
	Indicators of effective listening: The leader asks questions to determine what others mean. Good questions can lead to understanding and solutions. Use questioning as a way to seek clarity and probe for deeper motivations and intent.

Table 5. Listening with students.

Facilitating	Purpose: Facilitating student groups is one of the most powerful tools a school leader can use to engage and empower students. When leaders utilize active listening and assume the role of facilitator, they provide students with a meaningful voice and sense of agency.
	Highlighted active listening skill: Paying attention. Students rarely get the opportunity to have an adult listen to them with the intention of understanding. By taking the time to listen to students actively, leaders can earn respect and gain invaluable insights and perspectives.
	Indicators of effective listening: The leader demonstrates interest in what others are saying. When leaders seek understanding in students, they often will do the same in return. Respected school leaders are empathetic, caring, and good listeners.
Presenting	Purpose: Sharing and involving students in school initiatives help to build enthusiasm, excitement, school pride, and spirit. Students appreciate the joy of learning and having the opportunity to lead.
	Highlighted active listening skill: Summarizing. Our children spend more time expected to listen in school than at any other point in their lives (Latha, 2018). School leaders can use their time with students to model active listening strategies, and summarizing is a powerful strategy to model.
	Indicators of effective listening: The leader analyzes the available information to solve a problem or complete a task. Active listening

Table 5 (continued).

	leads to thoughtful discourse, and despite having more experience, school leaders can learn a great deal from their students.
	Purpose: School administrators may not consider themselves part of the student's teaching and learning team, but they can play a significant role. Coaching can provide students with a learning model and a reliable resource.
Coaching	Highlighted active listening skill: Reflecting. At times, students need to hear their ideas in a more coherent form. By reflecting on the ideas shared, the level of discussion of the entire group improves, the speaker feels validated, and the input of other groups members is made available.
	Indicators of effective listening: The leader maintains eye contact with people who are speaking. Behaviors that encourage active listening are recognizable by students, not only for modeling the skill but also because children are hyperaware of nonverbal communication.
	Purpose: An unavoidable aspect of the relationship between school leaders and students is behavior management. Viewing these interactions as consulting sessions can help utilize active listening skills and increase the effectiveness of strategies.
Consulting	Highlighted active listening skill: Sharing. When working with students in a consultant role, school leaders need to be clear about message content and who is responsible for future actions. Sharing helps to establish and clarify these responsibilities.
	Indicators of effective listening: The leader is accountable and leads by example. To be considered reliable and authentic, leaders need to follow through with their responsibilities as a result of consultation with students.

school leaders and teachers. Successful school leaders were able to “capture the complexities of the coronavirus pandemic, collect information, and communicate to all stakeholders” [34].

The pandemic led to a general survival approach in international schools with many leaders electing to “let-go of high expectations and make-do with who and what was available” [35]. Building those expectations back to pre-pandemic levels is an opportunity to strengthen the role and impact of creating a school climate that values active listening. COVID-19 will continue to provide challenges to all school communication systems for the foreseeable future.

5.3 Future Considerations

Debate remains whether the perception of a leader's ability to listen actively is as impactful on leadership as the actual skill of active listening. Previous studies in this area were unable to distinguish between the perception of a leader's listening ability and the actual listening skill of that leader and the effect on a group's view of the leader's effectiveness [36]. In summary, it is not clear if a leader who is a skilled listener is a

more effective leader than one who is only perceived to be a good listener. A more precise understanding of the nature of the connection between active listening and the perception of active listening is worthy of further exploration.

Traditionally, Language Arts curricula target four areas of student development: reading, speaking, writing, and listening. Language studies in international schools tend to highlight speaking, reading, or writing skills. There tends not to be a conscious effort on listening alone. "Listening seems like it should be simple, or secondary to other more active language skills" [11]. Nevertheless, instructional approaches and curricula focused on English as an additional language have valued learning how to listen. Examining the effectiveness of these approaches in the development of listening in mainstream classrooms would inform future research in this area.

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