

# Measuring Inclusive Education Leadership: Development of a Total Leadership Index for Special Education Governance, Family Trust and Multidisciplinary Coordination

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## ABSTRACT:

Inclusive and special education systems require leadership that can protect learner dignity, coordinate multidisciplinary expertise, communicate respectfully with families and sustain evidence-informed support under pressure. Existing educational leadership frameworks often emphasize school outcomes, distributed influence, instructional improvement or administrative compliance; however, they less directly operationalize the inner leadership processes through which pressure is converted into timing decisions, reflective inquiry and disability-sensitive communication. This conceptual article develops the Total Leadership Index for Inclusive Education (TLI-IE), a 100-point 360-degree diagnostic framework for assessing inclusive education leadership across four measurable pillars: Decision Stillness, Temporal Precision, Structured Reflection and Governed Speech. The paper positions TLI-IE within international debates on inclusive education, family-school partnership, implementation fidelity, psychological safety and special education governance. It clarifies construct definitions, evidence sources, maturity bands, ethical safeguards and propositions for future research. It also outlines a validation pathway using expert review, Delphi refinement, cognitive interviewing, pilot testing, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, inter-rater reliability, measurement invariance, and criterion-related validity. The paper does not claim empirical validation; rather, it offers a testable conceptual model for future research. Its originality lies in integrating inclusive leadership conduct, multi-source evidence, and developmental scoring into a single auditable architecture intended to strengthen psychological safety, family trust, implementation fidelity, and inclusive school climate for learners with disabilities and additional support needs.

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**Keywords:** special education leadership; inclusive education; school leadership; Total Leadership Index; 360-degree feedback; family-school trust; multidisciplinary collaboration; psychological safety; implementation fidelity; disability inclusion

## 1. Introduction

Special and inclusive education depends not only on legal provisions, resources, and pedagogical strategies, but also on the quality of leadership that translates these commitments into everyday practice. Leaders in inclusive education settings make decisions that affect access, dignity, participation, assessment, individualized support, family trust, and the emotional climate of schools. These decisions are rarely neutral. Delayed support may prolong exclusion; premature action may misidentify need; defensive communication may weaken family-school trust; and blame-oriented reviews may discourage teachers, families or students from reporting difficulties early.

The challenge is therefore not merely whether school leaders value inclusion. The challenge is whether inclusive leadership can be made observable, developmental, and auditable without reducing it to compliance paperwork or punitive ranking. Many systems can confirm whether documents exist, timelines are recorded or training has occurred. Fewer systems capture how leaders process pressure, interpret evidence, listen to teachers and families, protect learner dignity, and communicate uncertainty responsibly.

This paper proposes the Total Leadership Index for Inclusive Education (TLI-IE), an adaptation

of the Total Leadership Index for special and inclusive education. The model evaluates four leadership capacities: the capacity to remain stable under pressure, to act at the correct time, to reflect on root causes without deficit-blaming learners, and to communicate in ways that are clear, respectful, confidential, and trust-building. The central research question is: How can inclusive education leadership be operationalized as a measurable 360-degree diagnostic framework suitable for special education governance, professional development, and future empirical validation?

The article makes five contributions. First, it defines inclusive education leadership as an auditable developmental capability. Second, it adapts four leadership constructs to special education contexts. Third, it differentiates TLI-IE from existing educational leadership models by focusing on the pre-decisional and pre-communication layer of leadership conduct. Fourth, it proposes a 360-degree evidence architecture that links leadership behavior to psychological safety, implementation fidelity, family trust, and inclusive climate. Fifth, it outlines a validation pathway without claiming premature empirical results.

**Figure 1. Why special education leadership needs a diagnostic lens**



Figure 1. Why special education leadership needs a diagnostic lens

Note. The figure summarizes the problem-space that requires calm decision-making, timely support, reflective diagnosis, and trust-preserving communication.

## **2. Literature Review and Theoretical Positioning**

### **2.1 Inclusive and special education leadership**

International literature increasingly frames inclusion as a whole-system commitment rather than a narrow placement decision. Inclusive education requires coordination of policy, pedagogy, support services, family engagement, accessibility, school culture, and monitoring. In special education, leadership is distributed across principals, special education coordinators, general educators, specialist teachers, therapists, counselors, paraprofessionals, and family-facing teams. The success of inclusion depends on whether these actors can convert ethical and legal commitments into safe, responsive, and evidence-informed practice.

Recent international work on inclusion emphasizes equity, participation, belonging, universal design for learning, family-professional partnership, and the removal of barriers to learning. This literature is vital, but the leadership measurement problem remains underdeveloped: schools may endorse inclusion while still producing delays, defensive communication, fragmented coordination, or deficit-oriented interpretation of learner behavior. A leadership diagnostic model must therefore examine not only inclusive values, but also the conduct through which leaders make support decisions, manage risk, and communicate with stakeholders.

### **2.2 Leadership assessment and the measurement gap**

Educational leadership assessment often relies on role descriptions, school improvement indicators, performance appraisal, teacher surveys, stakeholder feedback, or student outcome metrics. These tools are valuable, but they do not always reveal the leadership processes that occur before decisions and communication. A leader may complete formal documentation while creating anxiety among teachers. Another may communicate decisively while ignoring family knowledge. A third may support inclusion rhetorically while allowing micro-exclusion to continue in classroom routines.

The TLI-IE addresses this measurement gap by focusing on leadership conduct that is observable but frequently under-measured: pressure containment, timing discipline, reflective inquiry, evidence humility, dignity-preserving language, communication clarity, and trust consequence. It does not replace existing inclusive education measures. It adds a diagnostic layer that connects leadership behavior to implementation climate.

### **2.3 Positioning against existing educational leadership models**

Instructional leadership, transformational leadership, distributed leadership, and adaptive leadership all offer valuable lenses for school improvement. Instructional leadership emphasizes teaching and learning; transformational leadership emphasizes vision and motivation; distributed leadership emphasizes shared influence; and adaptive leadership emphasizes learning under complexity. TLI-IE is narrower and more diagnostic. It asks whether the leader remains calm under pressure from inclusive education, sequences support at the right time, investigates barriers without attributing deficits, and communicates in a manner that protects dignity and trust.

This distinction clarifies originality. TLI-IE is not a general theory of school leadership and is not intended to replace established models. Its contribution is to operationalize a specific inclusive education leadership capability: the conversion of pressure into evidence-informed timing, reflective problem-solving, accessible communication, and developmental action. In this sense, it serves as a special education governance instrument rather than a broad leadership-style inventory.

### **2.4 Psychological safety, family-school trust, and multidisciplinary collaboration**

Special education requires truthful reporting from teachers, transparent participation by families, and collaboration among multiple professionals. Such collaboration is fragile when staff fear blame, families encounter defensive communication or learners are discussed using

deficit-oriented labels. Psychological safety is therefore not only a workplace preference; in inclusive education, it is a practical condition for early risk reporting, accurate identification of needs, and adjustment of interventions.

Family-school trust is equally central. Parents and caregivers often hold crucial knowledge about communication, sensory needs, medical history, behavior patterns, strengths, and history support. When communication is unclear, dismissive, or overly technical, families may withdraw, resist, or become adversarial. Governed Speech in the TLI-IE assesses whether leadership communication is truthful, accessible, respectful, confidential, and oriented toward shared problem-solving.

### **2.5 Implementation fidelity and adaptive inclusive practice**

Inclusive education reforms commonly fail not because principles are absent, but because implementation is inconsistent. Training may occur without follow-up; accommodations may be listed without classroom integration; behavior support plans may exist without shared ownership; and assistive technology may be procured without training, timing, or maintenance. These failures are implementation failures as much as resource failures.

Temporal Precision and Structured Reflection address this problem. Temporal Precision asks whether support arrives at the right moment and in the correct sequence. Structured Reflection asks whether leaders diagnose barriers accurately rather than attributing difficulty to the learner, family or teacher alone. Together, these pillars

allow inclusive leadership to be examined as a continuous improvement process rather than a one-time compliance task.

### **3. Conceptual Methodology**

This article uses a conceptual scale-development methodology. It does not report field data, participant responses or statistical findings. Instead, it develops a theoretically grounded diagnostic framework that can be subjected to future empirical validation. The method involved four steps: construct translation, domain specification, indicator development, and validation planning.

Constructed a translation adapted to the General Total Leadership Index to the demands of special and inclusive education. Domain specification identified the settings in which inclusive leadership is exercised: individualized support planning, disability-related decision-making, family communication, teacher support, crisis response, accommodation coordination, transition planning, and multidisciplinary review. Indicator development translated each pillar into observable behaviors and evidence sources. Validation planning identified procedures through which future researchers can test reliability, factor structure, measurement invariance and criterion validity.

Because the article is conceptual, its findings should be interpreted as propositions and design logic rather than as validated results. This distinction is important for research integrity. The framework is intended to invite empirical testing, not to substitute for it.

#### 4. Construct Definitions

**Table 1**

*Construct definitions and special education translation of the TLI-IE*

| Icon / pillar                                                                                                  | Conceptual meaning                                                                                                                                                                           | Illustrative special education indicators                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <b>Decision Stillness</b>    | The capacity of an inclusive education leader to remain calm, proportionate and evidence-oriented when learner need, family concern, staff pressure or behavioural crisis requires response. | Calm incident response; no blame-first language; space for teacher and family voice; protection of learner dignity.    |
|  <b>Temporal Precision</b>    | The capacity to act at the right time and in the correct sequence, especially where assessment, intervention, IEP review, accommodation or transition support has timing consequences.       | Timely support; appropriate sequencing; readiness checks; avoidance of rushed placement or delayed assistance.         |
|  <b>Structured Reflection</b> | The capacity to examine evidence, context, bias, environment, pedagogy and system barriers before attributing difficulty to the learner or family.                                           | Root-cause analysis; multidisciplinary inquiry; data and narrative integration; reduction of deficit assumptions.      |
|  <b>Governed Speech</b>       | The capacity to communicate truthfully, respectfully, clearly, confidentially and accessibly with teachers, families, learners and stakeholders.                                             | Accessible language; respectful disability discourse; confidentiality; clear next steps; trust-building communication. |

Table 1. Construct definitions and special education translation of the TLI-IE

#### 5. Conceptual Results: The TLI-IE Framework

The conceptual result of this article is the TLI-IE framework. It is a 100-point developmental index that treats inclusive education leadership as a measurable capability. Each pillar carries 25 points. Scores should be interpreted developmentally and qualitatively; they are not intended to permanently label leaders or to rank schools without context.

The index can be used at multiple levels. At the school level, it can support leadership reflection and professional development. At the district or system level, it can identify patterns in inclusive education governance. At the research level, it can generate testable hypotheses about the relationship between leadership conduct and inclusive outcomes.

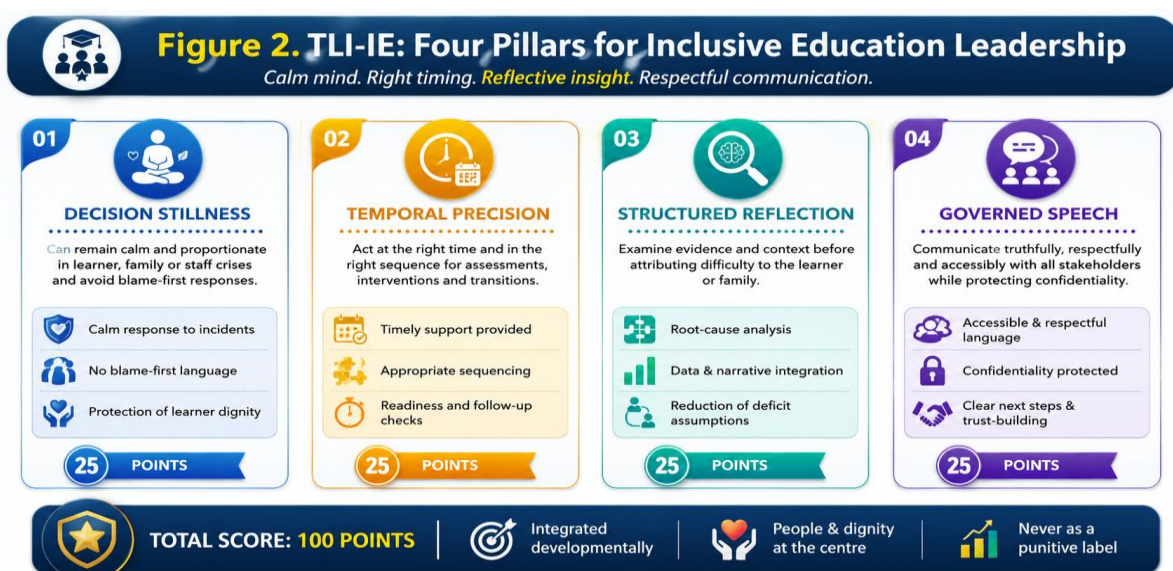


Figure 2. TLI-IE: four pillars for inclusive education leadership

Note. Each pillar is assigned 25 points to support transparent scoring while preserving developmental interpretation.

### 5.1 Pillar 1: Decision Stillness

Decision Stillness concerns the leader's ability to stabilize the educational environment before responding. In special education, pressure may arise from a behavioral incident, a parent complaint, a classroom exclusion, an assessment delay, teacher burnout, a safeguarding concern, or public criticism. A still leader creates a safe space for evidence, dignity, and proportionate response. Indicators include crisis containment, emotional regulation, listening before judgment, protection of learner dignity, prevention of staff scapegoating and avoidance of punitive escalation where supportive inquiry is required.

### 5.2 Pillar 2: Temporal Precision

Temporal Precision examines whether action is timed correctly. In special education, both delay and haste can harm learners. Delayed support may allow difficulties to intensify; premature action may lead to inappropriate labeling, inadequate assessment, or rushed placement. Indicators include timely referral, appropriate support-plan review, alignment between assessment and intervention, transition readiness checks, sequencing of assistive technology support, and avoidance of symbolic deadlines that compromise quality.

### 5.3 Pillar 3: Structured Reflection

Structured Reflection evaluates whether leaders examine causes before conclusions. Deficit-based assumptions can arise when difficulties are attributed to disability, family culture, teacher attitudes, or compliance failures without examining the environment, pedagogy, communication accessibility, sensory demands, curriculum design, peer relationships, or resource adequacy. Indicators include multidisciplinary problem-solving, data-informed inquiry, family knowledge integration, bias checks, environmental analysis and willingness to revise decisions when evidence changes.

### 5.4 Pillar 4: Governed Speech

Governed Speech addresses the institutional consequences of words. In special education, communication can either strengthen dignity and partnership or generate fear and mistrust. Leaders communicate through meetings, emails, IEP discussions, behavior reviews, staff briefings, parent conferences, and written plans. Indicators include respectful disability language, clear explanation of options, avoidance of blame or stigma, distinction between confirmed facts and interpretations, accessible communication, confidentiality discipline and follow-through on commitments.

| Table 2: TLI-IE scoring architecture and evidence sources                                                        |        |                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pillar                                                                                                           | Weight | Core indicators                                                                                     | Evidence examples                                                                                                                                 |
|  <b>Decision Stillness</b>    | 25     | Crisis containment; dignity protection; calm fact-finding; psychological safety.                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incident records; meeting observation;</li> <li>staff/family survey; interview evidence.</li> </ul>        |
|  <b>Temporal Precision</b>    | 25     | Timely referral; support sequencing; transition readiness; avoidance of rushed or delayed action.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IEP timelines; support logs;</li> <li>review minutes; intervention records.</li> </ul>                     |
|  <b>Structured Reflection</b> | 25     | Root-cause analysis; bias checks; data/family voice integration; environmental review.              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case review notes;</li> <li>multidisciplinary meeting minutes;</li> <li>reflective audit forms.</li> </ul> |
|  <b>Governed Speech</b>       | 25     | Respectful language; clarity; confidentiality; accessible communication; commitment follow-through. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication samples; parent feedback;</li> <li>staff perception; plan quality review.</li> </ul>         |
|  <b>Total TLI-IE</b>          | 100    | Composite inclusive leadership maturity score.                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weighted multi-source evidence and developmental interpretation.</li> </ul>                                |

Table 2. TLI-IE scoring architecture and evidence sources

## 6. Integrated Conceptual Model

To enhance presentation clarity, Figure 3 integrates the article's main logic into a single model. The framework begins with an inclusive education problem-space, moves through four auditable leadership pillars, gathers 360-degree

evidence, applies developmental scoring, and links the results to inclusive education outcomes. The model also separates conceptual development from empirical validation, thereby avoiding premature claims while clarifying the research agenda.

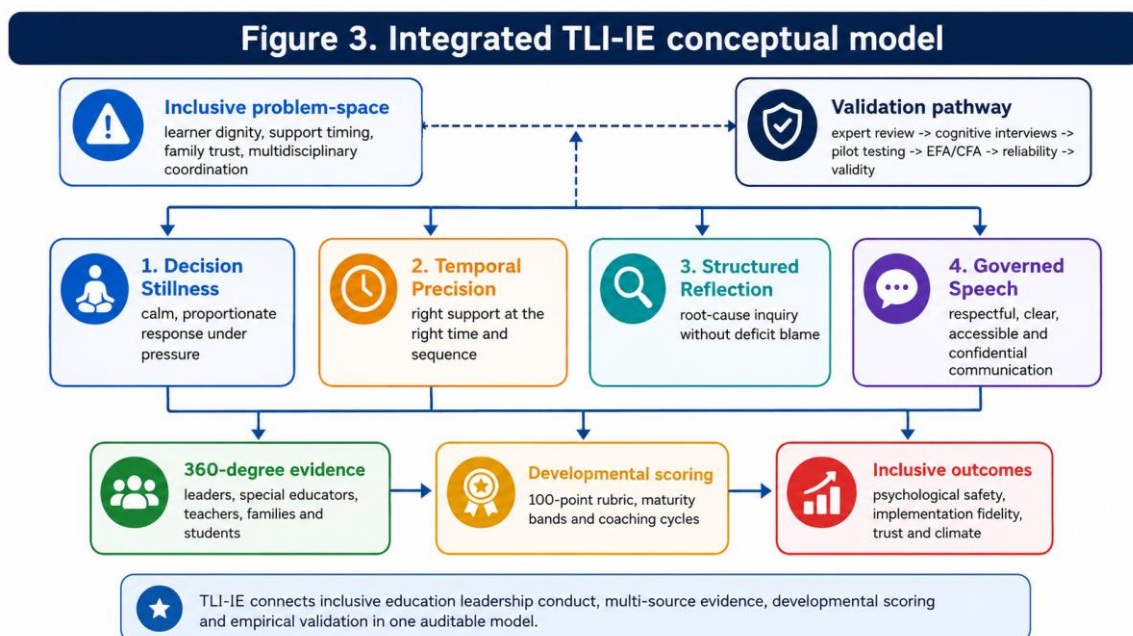


Figure 3. Integrated TLI-IE conceptual model

## 7. 360-Degree Evidence Architecture

The TLI-IE should not rely on a single evaluator. Inclusive leadership is experienced differently by administrators, teachers, specialists, support staff, families, and learners. A leader may appear efficient to senior management while families experience opacity. Another may be popular with staff while failing to protect student voice. Multi-source evidence reduces these distortions.

The proposed 360-degree architecture should be adapted ethically. Student input should be age-appropriate, voluntary, accessible and protected. Family input should be obtained in a way that neither pressures caregivers nor exposes confidential information. Staff input should be anonymized to reduce fear of reprisal.

**Figure 4. TLI-IE 360-degree evidence map**

Figure 4. TLI-IE 360-degree evidence map

| Table 3   Suggested 360-degree respondent groups and ethical safeguards |                                                                                          |                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Respondent group                                                        | Contribution to evidence                                                                 | Ethical safeguard                                                                    |
| <b>School leaders / coordinators</b>                                    | Assesses system reliability, policy alignment, resource coordination and accountability. | Avoid conflict of interest; separate developmental feedback from punitive appraisal. |
| <b>Special educators / support professionals</b>                        | Assesses feasibility of plans, multidisciplinary coordination and support integrity.     | Ensure anonymity; avoid identifying individual cases unnecessarily.                  |
| <b>General teachers / peers</b>                                         | Assesses inclusive classroom support, communication clarity and collaborative climate.   | Use aggregated reporting; avoid blame-oriented comparisons.                          |
| <b>Families / caregivers</b>                                            | Assesses trust, accessibility of communication, respect and follow-through.              | Use plain language; provide translation or accessibility support where needed.       |
| <b>Students, where appropriate</b>                                      | Assesses dignity, voice, belonging and perceived support.                                | Use age-appropriate assent, accessible tools and strong safeguarding procedures.     |

Table 3. Suggested 360-degree respondent groups and ethical safeguards

### 8. Maturity Bands

The TLI-IE maturity bands should guide development rather than ranking. A low score indicates risk and support need; it should trigger

coaching, training and review rather than stigma. Scores should be read alongside qualitative evidence, contextual constraints and improvement trajectory.

**Table 4: *Developmental maturity bands for TLI-IE***

| Score band                                                                                                                               | Interpretation                                                                                                    | Developmental response                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <b>0–25</b><br><b>Reactive risk</b>                    | Leadership responses may create fear, exclusion, delay, confusion or family mistrust.                             | Immediate coaching; safeguarding review where required; communication repair plan. |
|  <b>26–50</b><br><b>Fragmented compliance</b>           | Formal procedures may exist, but leadership practice is inconsistent across timing, reflection and communication. | Targeted training; process mapping; monthly review of high-risk decisions.         |
|  <b>51–75</b><br><b>Responsible implementation</b>      | Leadership demonstrates stable inclusive practice with identifiable areas for refinement.                         | Peer learning; advanced coaching; monitoring of selected indicators.               |
|  <b>76–100</b><br><b>Conscious inclusive leadership</b> | Leadership builds trust, psychological safety, timely support and reflective learning culture.                    | Sustain, mentor others, and document transferable practices.                       |

Table 4. Developmental maturity bands for TLI-IE

### 9. Propositions for Future Research

The TLI-IE is designed for future empirical testing. The following propositions clarify

expected relationships among constructs, indicators and potential methods. They are not empirical findings.

**Table 4: *Icon-based propositions, variables, indicators and suggested methods***

| Proposition                                                                                   | Expected relationship                                                                                                  | Variables                                                                                          | Suggested method                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <b>P1</b> | Decision Stillness is positively associated with staff psychological safety in inclusive education settings.           | Predictor: Decision Stillness; outcome: psychological safety.                                      | Staff survey; incident review; multilevel modeling.             |
|  <b>P2</b> | Temporal Precision is positively associated with the fidelity of implementation of individualized supports.            | Predictor: Temporal Precision; outcome: fidelity of IEP/support implementation.                    | Timeline audit, plan review, teacher report, document analysis. |
|  <b>P3</b> | Structured Reflection reduces deficit-based attribution and improves the quality of multidisciplinary problem-solving. | Predictor: Structured Reflection; mediator: attribution quality; outcome: problem-solving quality. | Meeting coding; case vignette experiment; qualitative analysis. |
|  <b>P4</b> | Governed Speech is positively associated with family-school trust and perceived procedural fairness.                   | Predictor: Governed Speech; outcomes: trust and fairness.                                          | Family survey; communication sample analysis; interviews.       |
|  <b>P5</b> | A composite TLI-IE score predicts inclusive school climate beyond general leadership ratings.                          | Predictor: composite TLI-IE; outcome: inclusive climate.                                           | Hierarchical regression; structural equation modeling.          |
|  <b>P6</b> | TLI-IE-informed coaching improves leadership behavior over repeated audit cycles.                                      | Intervention: coaching; outcome: change in pillar scores.                                          | Longitudinal pre-post design; repeated-measures analysis.       |

Table 5. Icon-based propositions, variables, indicators and suggested methods

## 10. Validation Pathway

Future validation should proceed sequentially. First, an expert panel should examine content relevance, construct clarity and special education fit. The panel should include special educators, inclusive education researchers, school leaders, educational psychologists, family representatives and disability advocates. Second, a Delphi process may refine the indicators and remove ambiguous items. Third, cognitive interviewing should test whether respondents interpret items consistently across roles and cultural contexts. Pilot testing should then examine item distribution, missing data patterns and respondent burden. Exploratory factor analysis may test whether the four-pillar structure emerges empirically. Confirmatory factor analysis may

evaluate the proposed structure in a separate sample. Reliability testing should include internal consistency, inter-rater reliability and stability over time. Measurement invariance should be examined across respondent groups and school types. Criterion validity should test whether TLI-IE scores relate to inclusive climate, implementation fidelity, psychological safety, family trust and selected learner participation indicators.

Because special education settings contain sensitive information, validation must avoid collecting unnecessary diagnostic details or identifiable learner data. The unit of analysis should be leadership behaviour and school climate, not the disability profile of individual learners.

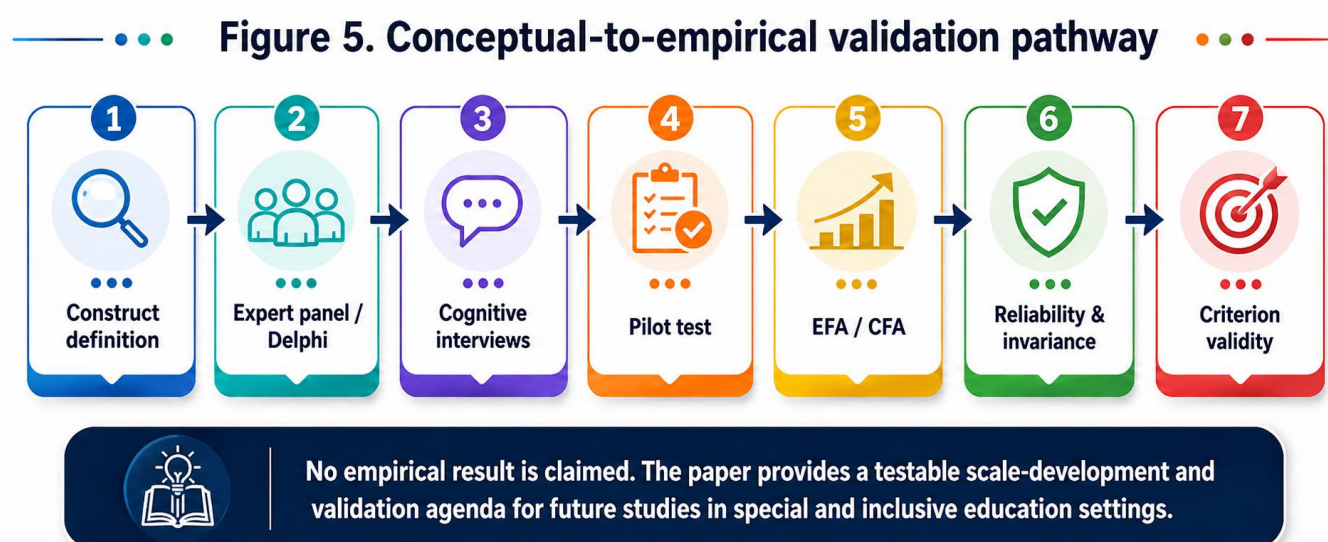


Figure 5. Conceptual-to-empirical validation pathway

## 11. Ethical Considerations

This conceptual article involved no human participants, no intervention and no individual-level data. Therefore, ethical approval was not required for the present manuscript. Future empirical use of the TLI-IE would require institutional ethics approval where surveys, interviews, observations or student/family data are collected.

The ethical design of the TLI-IE must respect confidentiality, informed consent, voluntary participation, non-retaliation and disability dignity. The framework should not be used to identify or punish individual students, teachers,

families or leaders. It should be used as a developmental audit that supports improvement. Any student input must be age-appropriate, accessible, voluntary and safeguarded. Families should receive plain-language explanations of the assessment purpose and data use.

Double-blind review requires that author-identifying details, institutional identity and self-citation details be removed or masked. Author contribution statements, funding statements and unblinded acknowledgements should be supplied in a separate title-page file if required by the journal.

## 12. Discussion

The TLI-IE contributes to special education research by moving leadership assessment from general competence toward inclusive, dignity-sensitive and evidence-based conduct. Its four pillars are intentionally practical. Decision Stillness addresses the emotional climate of high-pressure events. Temporal Precision addresses the timing and sequencing of support. Structured Reflection addresses diagnostic quality and bias reduction. Governed Speech addresses communication ethics, family trust and institutional clarity.

The framework's originality lies in its integration of four elements that are often treated separately: inclusive leadership conduct, multi-source evidence, developmental scoring and empirical

validation. Existing educational leadership models help explain vision, instruction, distributed influence or adaptive change. TLI-IE adds a special education governance lens by asking whether leadership conduct protects dignity, listens across roles, sequences support responsibly and communicates in ways that sustain trust.

The framework also protects against a common risk in leadership measurement: false precision. A score can be useful only when interpreted with evidence and context. For that reason, the TLI-IE combines quantitative scoring with qualitative notes, respondent triangulation and developmental response. It is not intended as a standalone performance ranking system.

**Figure 6. Developmental use cycle for inclusive education systems**



Figure 6. Developmental use cycle for inclusive education systems

## 13. Practical Implications

For school leaders, the framework offers a structured method for reflecting on how leadership conduct affects inclusive practice. For special education coordinators, it provides a language to discuss timing, root cause analysis, and communication quality. For teacher professional development, it identifies leadership behaviors that can strengthen psychological safety and collaboration. For families, it foregrounds trust, respect, and accessible

communication as measurable aspects of school leadership. For researchers, it provides a testable framework that can be examined across contexts and cultures.

The framework may support training modules. A Decision Stillness module could focus on crisis containment and dignity-preserving response. A Temporal Precision module could focus on support timelines and readiness gates. A Structured Reflection module could train leaders in bias-aware problem-solving. A

Governed Speech module could focus on family communication, disability language, confidentiality, and follow-through.

#### 14. Limitations

The article is conceptual and does not validate the proposed scale empirically. The four-pillar structure may require revision after factor analysis. The 25-point weighting per pillar is transparent and practical, but future empirical work may find that different weights are more predictive in specific contexts. The framework may also require adaptation for early childhood, primary, secondary, higher education and vocational settings.

Cultural and legal differences may influence how inclusion, disability, family participation and school authority are understood. Therefore, cross-cultural validation is essential before broad international use. Finally, leadership scoring can create anxiety if used punitively. Implementation must therefore emphasize developmental feedback, confidentiality, and improvement.

#### 15. Conclusion

Inclusive education requires more than policy commitment. It requires leadership that can remain calm under pressure, act at the right time, diagnose barriers reflectively, and communicate with dignity. This article proposes the TLI-IE as

a conceptual 100-point, 360-degree diagnostic framework for measuring these capacities in special and inclusive education settings.

The framework's core conclusion is that inclusive education leadership can be made more visible, developmental, and researchable when leadership conduct is translated into observable indicators and validated through ethical, multi-source evidence. The TLI-IE should now be tested empirically to establish its construct validity, reliability, and practical usefulness.

#### Declarations

Ethics approval: Not applicable for the present conceptual article because no human participants, human data, intervention or field study were involved.

Consent to participate: Not applicable.

Data availability: No datasets were generated or analyzed for this conceptual article.

Conflict of interest: The author(s) declare no conflict of interest in the anonymized manuscript.

Author contributions: Omitted from the anonymized manuscript for double-blind review and to be supplied in the separate title-page or author statement file required by the journal.

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### Appendix A. Short-form draft item pool for future validation

The following draft items are illustrative. They require expert review, cognitive testing and psychometric validation before use.

| ♦ <b>Table A1: Illustrative TLI-IE audit items</b> ♦                                                           |                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <b>Pillar</b>                |  <b>Illustrative item</b>                |
|  <b>Decision Stillness</b>    | The leader remains calm and fact-oriented when a disability-related concern escalates.                                    |
|  <b>Decision Stillness</b>    | The leader creates a safe space for staff to report implementation difficulties.                                          |
|  <b>Temporal Precision</b>    | The leader ensures that support decisions are made neither prematurely nor after avoidable delay.                         |
|  <b>Temporal Precision</b>    | The leader checks readiness before a transition, placement change or assistive technology rollout.                        |
|  <b>Structured Reflection</b> | The leader examines environmental, instructional and communication barriers before attributing difficulty to the learner. |
|  <b>Structured Reflection</b> | The leader invites multidisciplinary and family evidence when reviewing complex support needs.                            |
|  <b>Governed Speech</b>      | The leader communicates with families in respectful, accessible and non-defensive language.                               |
|  <b>Governed Speech</b>     | The leader distinguishes confirmed facts from assumptions and explains next steps clearly.                                |

Table A1. Illustrative TLI-IE audit items