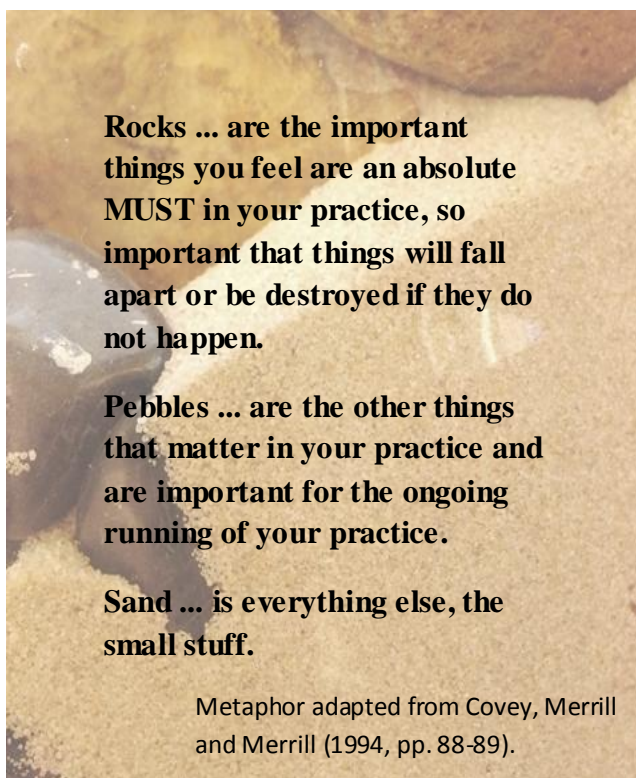# 4. Rocks, pebbles and sand

Aim: This activity allows members of the group to reflect upon how and why they prioritise what they need to know, understand and/or can do in order to be effective in their practice. It can be done as a stand-alone activity or it can be done in conjunction with the "Container of time" and "Rocks, pebbles and sand as visual representations" activities.

The notion of *practice* in this worksheet allows the user to apply it to any situation within their practice such as a mentor, teacher, supervisor, head of department, assistant principal, principal, etc.?

1. To provide a starting point for the activity, consider *rocks*, *pebbles* and *sand* as a prioritising metaphor.

Rocks ... are the important things you feel are an absolute MUST in your practice, so important that things will fall apart or be destroyed if they do not happen.

Pebbles ... are the other things that matter in your practice and are important for the ongoing running of your practice.

Sand ... is everything else, the small stuff.

Metaphor adapted from Covey, Merrill and Merrill (1994, pp. 88-89).

2. Instructions

Consider the appropriate question. What do I need to know, understand and/or do in order to be effective in my practice?

OR

What does the mentor/mentee need to know, understand and/or can do in order to be effective in their practice?

While reflecting on your own or others' needs, **generate** a list in the left column of the "Rocks, pebbles and sand data collection sheet".
Reflect on each item in the list, **allocate** it as a rock, pebble or sand item and **rewrite** the item under the allocated category on the right side of the sheet.

3. **Group Reflection**
Share findings with others in the group.
How did the lists vary? How were they similar? Explore the reasons for placing each item under the selected category?
Can items be moved from one category to another?
Co-construct a list of needs.

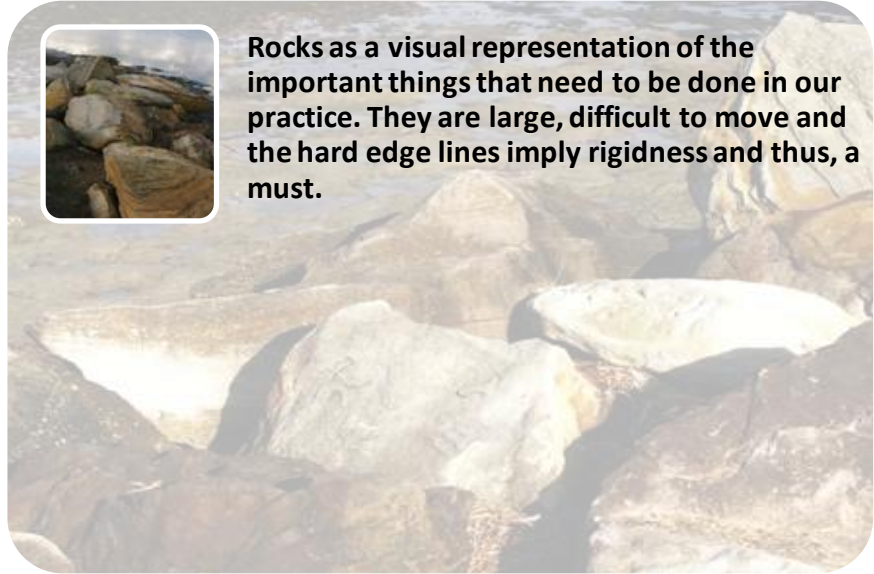**Further Reflection and / or discussion**

Analyse a system or school based tool, created to articulate expectations of duties. Reflect, allocate and rewrite the items into the "Rocks, pebbles and sand data collection sheet".
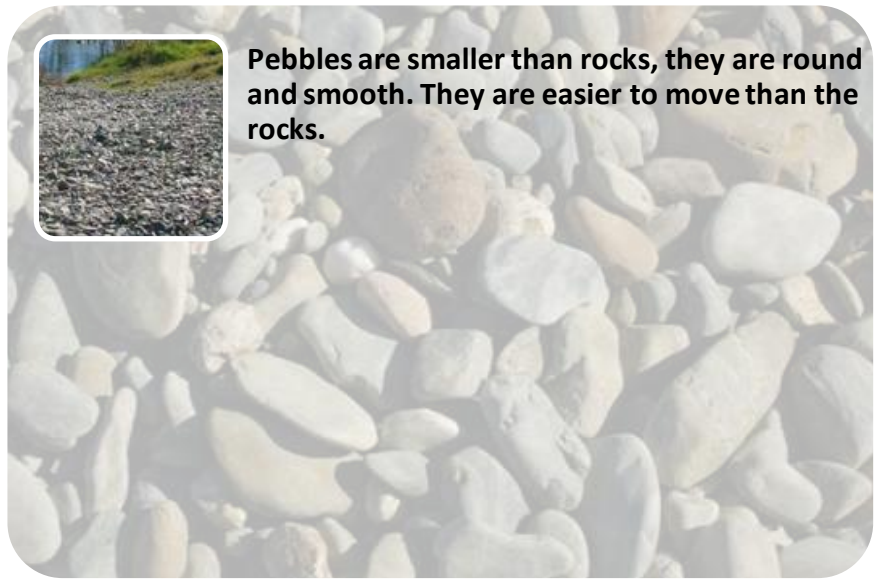
Rocks, pebbles and sand data collection sheet

Generate a list

Rocks as a visual representation of the important things that need to be done in our practice. They are large, difficult to move and the hard edge lines imply rigidness and thus, a must.

Pebbles are smaller than rocks, they are round and smooth. They are easier to move than the rocks.

Sand's small particles are light and very easy to move. However if there is a lot of sand the combined particles will weigh a lot. Sand can also get in the way, covering, the rocks and pebbles.