



A Journey of Learning: Inclusive School Development

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Abstract

A global recognition of students' rights requires school organisations to recognise, value, and provide for diversity. The move towards more inclusive schooling in Queensland, Australia requires schools to address professional development on two levels: reculturing of the school to reflect inclusive beliefs and values; and enhancement of teacher skills and knowledge to better address the learning needs of all students. The recently developed *Index for Inclusion* is one resource that can facilitate the process of professional development and facilitate change in school culture, policy and teaching practice. The Index process described in this paper incorporates the use of a critical friend and peer mentoring within an action research model which together provide benefits for all involved in the professional development process. This paper reports on the initial stages of a collaborative partnership between a university and a primary school in a disadvantaged socio-economic area of Queensland, Australia. The stages of the journey of learning incorporating the *Index for Inclusion* are reported.

Inclusion: Process or Product?

Inclusion has developed from a long history of educational innovation and represents school improvement on many levels for all students. For example, Ballard's (1997) definition of inclusive education embodies a number of factors: education needs to be non-discriminatory in terms of disability, culture and gender; it involves all students in a community with no exceptions; students should have equal rights to access the culturally valued curriculum as full-time members of age appropriate regular classrooms; and there should be an emphasis on diversity rather than assimilation. Above all, it is about a philosophy of acceptance where all people are valued and treated with respect. Indeed, this same author has argued that inclusion is unending, so that there is no such thing as an inclusive school. According to this notion, all schools can continue to develop greater inclusion, whatever their current state. More recent understandings of inclusive schooling have described a process which fosters participation by all pupils and staff as a base for future school development. This is because the introduction of inclusive policies and the ever increasingly diverse learning needs have forced school staff to change their approach to organisation of students, models of support, teaching staff roles, and approaches to teaching and the curriculum. Because inclusion can be understood as a process rather than the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, there are strong links to school and staff development and processes for managing change.

Managing Change in Education

In a period of unprecedented worldwide change, "the western world is undergoing one of the greatest social transformations in history, experiencing in a decade or two changes far more sweeping than the last great change through the industrial revolution" (Queensland Association of State School Principals Business Plan, 2000, p.3). Luke (2000) refers to schools as the shock absorbers and buffers for societal change while Staratt (1996) claims the 'end of certainty' has made the life of those in schools increasingly complex. The rate of technological change and the rapid movement of Australia into the global community will further increase the complexity of schooling. Schools are being challenged to reform their structures and systems to be more effective in this new environment (Rumble, 1999).

Challenges facing education in Queensland are expressed in the document "2010 Queensland State Education". One challenge involves the increasing diversity, which exists in local school communities. Diversity has become the norm with state schools in Australia becoming increasingly responsible for teaching and managing students who are

economically, socially or culturally different. While Education Queensland has "traditionally offered all people the means to improve their standard of living and to achieve social mobility" with the trend for increasing numbers of parents sending their children to private schools, some foresee that in an age of competition and social hierarchy determined by wealth, state education could become a safety net for those who can't pay. Slaughter (1996) warned, "we must not drift passively into this period of profound civilisational change" (p.42), therefore change must be managed if it is to be effective. The 2010 Queensland State Education document signals a systems attempt to explore the implications of world wide change and promote discussion about the nature and purpose of education in the new century. The implications of the global movement to more inclusive education will necessitate

"change in the beliefs and attitudes of teachers; change in classroom practices; and change in the learning outcomes of students"(Guskey, 1986, p.5.)

Previously, teachers and schools have experienced imposed change in the form of systems initiatives and departmental mandates. This "everyone must love it or else" dictum (Hughes & Anderas, 1995,p.30) resulted in superficial reforms at best and more frequently in passive resistance and alienation. Whereas in truth it is the thoughts, words, deeds and hearts of members of the school community that create or stifle change. It has been widely recognised that "effective change occurs when it happens from within" (Hughes & Anderas, 1995,p.29) . In other words change requires skill, motivation, commitment and discretionary judgement and therefore important changes cannot be mandated (Fullan & Miles, 1992). An organisation's culture shapes the energy of the workplace to respond to change and reach goals (Voutas, 1999).

In Queensland, Australia, the responsibility for professional development, once a system responsibility, has been devolved to school organisations. Principals have the role to manage the pace and path of change in schools: to manage the anxiety and stress that can accompany change. Because it is recognised that human minds need stability the change process needs to involve school leaders creating a climate of collaborative effort and ownership of the change process. This will determine the capacity of the school to become more inclusive.

Professional Development Model

Recognising that teachers are the most critical actors in school reform (Hattam, 2000), the model of professional development discussed in this paper attempts to enhance teacher learning through reflective practice and professional dialogue with peers and a critical friend whilst also addressing whole school reculturing. The term 'critical friend' can be described as someone outside the school who has been trusted to provide guidance and honest feedback. The provision of numerous and varied opportunities for individuals to develop a wide range of professional skills will foster the notion of life long learning and create an organisation that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future. Inclusive schooling requires a community of learners where "people are resources for each other" (Rumble, 1999, p.7).

The model of professional development described in this paper acknowledges the needs of individuals as well as the needs of the learning organization. The following features have been considered:

1) Recognition and response to individual requests for increased knowledge and skills to meet diverse learning needs.

Teachers are wary of the "swinging pendulum" syndrome where it seems quick fix innovations are periodically created and forced upon those at the bottom of the chain of command (Hughes & Andreas, 1995). Teachers need to be in control of their own learning and development so professional development strategies have been designed to meet the diverse needs of a group of adult learners. Geyer (1995) maintained that " positive individual responses to organisational change vary according to situation, type and amount of personal involvement"(p.14).

2) Training, access to information and support must all be sustained, as "staff development is most powerful when it is conducted long enough and often enough to assure progressive gains in confidence, knowledge and skills" (Little cited in Phillips & McCullough,1990, p.301).

As change is a process not an event (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin & Hall,1987), members of organisations have to be trained and continuously retrained throughout their career" (Johnson &Johnson, 1994,p.113).

3) The professional development process involves collaborative partnerships and peer mentoring.

Gersten and Brengelman argued that professional development activities must include opportunities for discussion with colleagues. Peer collaboration will contribute to the development of an inclusive school culture which is committed to change and creating better learning opportunities for all students . The sharing of successes and difficulties in the application of new strategies facilitates learning about the underlying concepts. This is because teachers learn to think about what they do at school by listening to and participating in the ways in which people around them talk . Peer collaboration and mentoring reduces isolation creating more open and critical feedback, encourages risk taking and diversity, provides more and continuous opportunities to learn and reduces workload (Voutas, 1999). As teachers discuss, problem solve and develop alternative strategies, they are then able to merge research and practice.

4) Teachers are encouraged to consider collective school beliefs, values and knowledge and the influence of these on school organization, policy, and practice.

"A school's philosophy is the foundation stone for quality teaching and learning in a quality environment" and Voutas warned that without a shared vision a school has little or no direction (1999, p.16). This shared vision contributes to the culture of a school. Opportunities for school staff to reflect and possibly reconstruct beliefs and values related to student rights and education will affect how teachers think about schooling, their students, the curriculum and their own teaching approach (Carrington, 1999). Increased collegiality and cooperation between staff result in organisations where all participants are recognised as having knowledge to share with others. The process of working with staff in the professional model described in this paper, included reculturing strategies which involved changing norms, values, skills and relationships in the organisation to foster a different way of working together . While classroom strategies and proposed learning outcomes are undoubtedly important, it was recognised that teachers and administrators need to examine the cultural and social setting of the school and the beliefs and values of educators who deal with the diverse range of students in the school community.

has reminded us that the process of change in schools is not simple but socially complex. The features described in the professional development model reported in this paper required more than commitment to the imposed innovation of inclusive schooling. This model required teachers and the school community to construct and share their own meanings. Real change is therefore more likely to occur when understandings and

meanings are shared with others so that a genuine culture change can take place. The Index of Inclusion enabled teachers and the school community to become involved in the process of school development and change. Recent Education Queensland documents such as '2010 Queensland State Education' have created a climate of more critical analysis of policy and practice which supports the processes and phases of the Index process.

The Index of Inclusion

The Index of Inclusion is designed to support schools in a process of inclusive school development and was developed in Britain at the Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education (CSIE) in collaboration with the University of Manchester and University of Christ Church College Canterbury . The Index provides a framework for school review and development on three dimensions: school culture, policy, and practice. "It is important to remember that the dimensions overlap: developments in school cultures require the formulation of policies and the implementation of practice" .

Each dimension of the Index is divided into a number of indicators. "The indicators represent statements of aspiration against which existing arrangements can be compared in order to set priorities for development". Following each indicator, a number of questions can be used to encourage thinking about various issues related to inclusive education. The intent is threefold: 1) establish existing knowledge, and understandings about culture, policy and practice in the school, 2) consider priority areas for school and teacher development, 3) manage and document the process of change.

The Journey

This paper reports on the use of the Index for Inclusion in a collaborative project between Queensland University of Technology and a large primary school. The first author worked as a critical friend, peer mentor, and researcher in the school. She worked in the school for one day in most school weeks of the school year. The second author worked as the learning support teacher in the school, peer mentor, and researcher. The role of critical friend included leadership in whole staff in-service sessions, mentoring of individual teachers, provision of information and resources, and involvement in planning and development meetings. It has been reported in prior studies that critical friends from universities have enabled schools to sustain the change process and professional development for teachers (for example, . In contrast, the peer mentoring relationship requires a more equal relationship between colleagues. In a peer mentoring relationship, both participants have knowledge and skills of value. The mentors gain from each other in what can be defined as a mutually helpful situation .

The ongoing conversations and practices associated with the collection and review of data in the Index process can be described as action research. Action research is a cyclical process in which action alternates with critical reflection. This type of research can also be described as a series of spirals as cycles transform into new spirals . This model acknowledges that new issues may emerge and develop during the study and mirrors the complexity of working in school environments.

The school was selected for two reasons. First, staff expressed an interest in teacher and school development for improving learning and participation for all students in the school. Second, the researchers and school were able to collaboratively access funding for the project.

Aim of the project

This study will:

1. document the use of the Index for Inclusion as a process for school and teacher development in a primary school;
2. explore the impact of the use of a critical friend combined with a peer mentoring process in the development of teachers' collective and individual values and practices related to inclusive teaching;
3. advance knowledge of what constitutes effective professional development for teachers.

Data were collected through interviews, surveys, and reflective journals written by the authors of this paper. The method of constant comparison advocated by Glaser and Strauss was used in the analysis of the interviews and the researchers' reflective journals. This strategy combines inductive category coding with a comparison of all data and incidents. As phenomena were coded and classified, comparison also occurred across and between other categories and phenomena. In this way relationships were discovered and initial observations and conceptualisations were refined through further data collection, classification and analysis. Interviews were transcribed and imported into Q.S.R. NUD*IST (Non-numerical, Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching and Theorising) for coding. Reflective journals were also imported into Q.S.R. NUD*IST. Survey data were collated and presented descriptively. The case study data reported in this paper were collected within the context of a larger research project. Only selected data have been reported in this paper.

Setting

The school is one of three state primary schools located in one of the fastest growing areas of Australia. Located in Queensland, the suburb has been rated in the top 10% of the most disadvantaged areas in Queensland. A lack of public transport, community services, and employment opportunities have been identified as the major problems facing the area. Consequently the school in this community addresses a range of complex social and community issues. Selected demographics of the area include:

- 1) A higher than average population of young people aged below 15years;
- 2) 46% of households earning less than \$26 000 per annum compared with 32% for the city area.;
- 3) Particularly high unemployment among people aged 15-24 years. Unemployment in this age group is more than double the city average (29.2% compared to 12.5%);
- 4) Higher than average public housing compared to the city (17.6% compared to 4.5%). The majority of households requiring public housing are couples with children and single parent families. 80% of those living in public housing are recipients of government support benefits.

Students attend the school from Preschool to Year 7. The school incorporates one of the largest Special Education Units (for students with significant disabilities) in the state as well as a Special Education Development Centre (for students with significant disabilities from birth to preschool age) and 2 Preschool Units. The school enrolment is 730 students with a further 100 children attending the Preschool .

Participants

A dual approach was taken to professional development in the school: staff meeting activities for the whole staff, combined with a small group approach (voluntary) where personal professional development needs were met in a more intensive way. The staff meeting sessions consisted of forty-eight teaching staff and three administrators including the principal. The small group of teachers in this stage of the study, included two pre-school teachers, two part-time grade two teachers who were working with one group of students, and one teacher from the Special Education Unit.

The Index Process

Users of the Index are encouraged to adapt and create their own ways of using the materials in the process of school and professional development. This section of the paper will document the process and stages of the professional development journey for the study participants and researchers. Data collection, findings, reflections, and actions will be documented for each stage of the process. This process reflects the action research model cycles and spirals. Consideration has been given to the key aspects of the Index process: identification of professional development needs, development of a plan of action to meet those needs, implementation and review of the process.

Phase One: Starting the Index process

The journey of professional growth and learning described in this paper began with a series of meetings at the school. The first author, second author, deputy principal, and principal established a collaborative relationship aimed to address the professional development needs in the school. Much time was spent in these initial meetings sharing knowledge about the school and its' people. Individuals in the group familiarised themselves with the Index and the associated process stages.

Reflection:

We have found that different people in the school have joined the group for discussion and planning at different points in time. For example, the school guidance officer was involved in planning staff group activities related to staff and student interactions. The coordinating group understood that it wasn't always possible for a larger group of people to meet. Parents and students have not been involved yet in any formal way in planning associated with the Index, however the coordinating group believe that there will be time later for greater collaboration in the school community (first author).

Phase Two: Finding out about the school

This phase of the process was used to collect information about the school to help set priorities for development. This stage is an important part of the process to ensure ownership and commitment to the program of school and staff development.

A full day of meetings took place between the critical friend (first author) and the whole staff on a pupil free day. Staff were organised into three groups of year levels and teaching areas. The first author facilitated each group with the following focus: 1) short presentation of a model for professional development incorporating the Index and including plan for whole staff activities, and small group voluntary activities; 2) identification of barriers in the school that impede student learning and participation; 3) brainstorming of focus areas for staff and personal development in the school. Each session was introduced by the principal who

established links to current Education Queensland priorities and initiatives were established. Each group worked with the critical friend for one and a half hours.

Data were collected from each group in the form of a written record of the barriers for learning and priorities for professional development. Data relating to priorities for professional development issues are presented in Table One.

Description of Group of Teachers	Priorities for Professional Development	Link to Index Dimension Issues
<p>A: Preschool and Yr 1,2,3</p>	<p>Strategies for improving transition times between activities.</p> <p>Need to refocus on time spent in preventative behaviour management</p> <p>strategies rather than too much time spent on reactive behaviour management strategies.*</p> <p>Strategies for development of social skills to increase on-task behaviour, anger management, communication skills.</p> <p>Classroom organization strategies for group work behaviour and independent learning behaviour.</p>	<p>Practice</p> <p>Culture</p> <p>Policy</p> <p>Practice</p> <p>Practice</p>
<p>B: Yrs 4/5 teachers</p> <p>Special Education Unit Teachers</p>	<p>Share different teaching styles.</p> <p>How to cater for a broad range of abilities including students from low incidence ability groups.</p> <p>How to streamline the various support programs that students participate in.</p> <p>Peer tutoring training in classrooms.</p> <p>How to address the learning needs of the higher ability level children.</p> <p>How to develop students who are self-directed. Learners rather than reward driven learners.</p> <p>Time for teachers to share their knowledge and skills and resources.*</p>	<p>Culture</p> <p>Policy</p> <p>Practice</p> <p>Policy</p> <p>Practice</p> <p>Culture</p>
<p>C: Yrs 6/7</p> <p>Specialists: music, PE,</p>	<p>Time for teachers to share their knowledge and skills and resources.*</p>	<p>Culture</p>

ESL, Support teachers, LOTE	Strategies for organising a classroom of diverse learners.	Practice
	How to cater for differences in learning.	
	How to continue the spiral of social skills learning.	Policy
	Need to refocus on time spent in preventative behaviour management	
	strategies rather than too much time spent on reactive behaviour management strategies.*	Culture Policy
	* these points have been prioritised for whole school development.	Practice

Table One-Priorities for professional development

The data from all groups were collated and 1) presented to the school administration team for future action; 2) used to inform the development of whole school and focus group professional development activities. The professional development points with an asterisk (*) have been initially targeted as priority for whole school development and influenced the choice of Index activities used in staff meetings. Although these priorities can be described within the dimension of culture, there was also overlap to the policy and practice dimensions.

Reflection:

One of the best aspects of this day was the support provided by the principal. He introduced the session and expressed support for a professional partnership between the university and school. Links were made to current education policy and priorities. Each group of teachers was asked to identify barriers to learning and participation for students and teachers. It was interesting for me to note at this stage that some teachers used this session to complain about issues in the school – a couple of teachers were very negative; however, there were key areas that emerged as priorities for action (first author).

The coordinating group used the collated data to develop a plan for whole school development and focus group professional development. Priorities for whole staff development activities were: 1) collection of views concerning staff perceptions of the school culture; and 2) discussion and sharing of views concerning policies and practices in the school specifically relating to staff-staff interactions, staff-student interactions, and student-student interactions.

Priorities for focus group development were taken from the priorities reported in Table One. Participation in the focus groups was voluntary and teachers were grouped in a similar way as in Table One. It is expected that three and possibly four focus group sessions will proceed for the year. This paper briefly reports on the data collected for the first focus group.

The focus group priorities that emerged from Phase Two are described below:

Focus Group One and Two: To support classroom teachers in the creation of a supportive classroom environment in which learning and participation are maximised. The teachers in

these two groups are teachers in preschool, grade one, two, three, and special education teachers.

Focus Group Three: a) To recognise the factors external to the child and his/her family which impinge upon learning, and b) to provide quality instruction through implementation of a range of teaching methods which respond to diversity. The teachers in this group are from grades five, six and seven.

Phase Three: Producing an inclusive school development plan

Phase Four: Implementing developments

Phase Five: Reviewing the Index process

Figure 1- A cyclic and spiral process incorporating the phases of planning, implementation and review.

The next stage of the journey involved a cyclic and spiral process incorporating the phases of planning, implementation and review for whole staff and the focus group teacher development (see figure one). This process reflects the action research model and is linked to the critical friend and peer mentoring roles and the journey of learning experienced by all. The first focus group session ran over a period of five weeks concurrently with the planning and implementation of whole staff professional activities. The authors in their roles of critical friend, and peer mentors to each other and to the teachers, were continually learning from each other and growing professionally. The process of planning, implementation, and review were constantly swirling in cycles and spirals in the complex environment of school.

Focus Group Professional Development

Focus groups were voluntary and individual teachers controlled the pace and specific path of their learning because they were provided with opportunities to access information and

develop a degree of control and ownership over their learning. The model incorporated group time facilitated by the critical friend, professional dialogue and sharing with peers, visits and collaborative planning with the critical friend and with each other as peer mentors, individual planning and reflection time. Some relief from teaching duties was provided for teachers at different stages in the process. The model included a pre-test, intervention, post-test design. Data were collected in each stage of the process.

Reflection: Being in control of their own learning provided an initial hiccup for members of the first Focus Group. After volunteering to be included in the program, teachers needed to adjust to the notion that they were directing their own learning—that they were not being told what or how or when to learn. Open communication was fostered and members were strongly encouraged to feel comfortable and express opinions and thoughts on issues (second author).

This paper does not provide the scope to explain and document the details of the planning, implementation and review process of the focus group professional development activities or to present the data in any great detail. This information will be presented in a later paper. A small sample of interview data is reported to demonstrate the perceived advantages in using the Index processes that encouraged collaboration and participation in the teacher development process incorporating the role of the critical friend.

I think our discussions have been good. It's been good to hear from different year levels and different areas of the school (year two teacher).

As well as these chats, it's been really wonderful just having the one-on-one talks with you (critical friend). I think I tend to be stuck on the same ideas and strategies because of what worked last year even though it hasn't been working this year (special education teacher).

I have really valued the time to be able to share and chat and be able to talk to you (critical friend)

individually, to be able to access things that I wouldn't normally know about or get to learn about. I think sometimes you can feel quite isolated, like sometimes just the chance to be able to talk to people and be able to say: "Hey, yeah, look you're not the only one with hassles and whatever." (preschool teacher)

Whole Staff Development Activities

Whole staff development activities were designed to be included in staff meetings during the year. These have been described as Index Activities and included questions taken from the indicators in each dimension. Each activity will be explained, data presented and discussed. At the time of writing this paper two Index activities had been conducted with staff.

Index Activity One

The critical friend presented a seminar to the staff entitled, "Enhancing Learning and Participation" in the first term of the school year. This presentation 1) reviewed some of the barriers to learning that were identified in Phase Two of the Index process; 2) provided an opportunity for staff to discuss their understandings about inclusion; 3) provided information about the Index process; 4) suggested some ideas that can be used in the classroom to

provide learning programs for a diverse group of students; and 5) collected data from the whole staff on their views about the current school culture.

Two formats were used to collect data from staff about their views on the culture of the school. A short survey was constructed using a selection of questions that were modified from Dimension A: Creating Inclusive Cultures; Indicator 2.2: Establishing Inclusive Values. The questions were selected and modified. The aim was twofold: 1) acquaint all staff with the Index process; and 2) gather data about staff values related to inclusive schooling. All staff were required to individually read each question on the survey and place a tick in the column that said agree, not sure, or disagree. Teachers were informed that the information gathered would help in future planning at the school. Table Two indicates the percentage of teachers who ticked each column for each question. The values related to supportive school community and collaboration with staff received agreement from a high percentage of staff. For example, 84% of staff indicated that the building of a supportive school community is as important in the school as raising academic achievement and 87% of staff indicated that fostering collaboration between staff was also important. This strong support for inclusive values in the school is a strength in the process of inclusive school development. Two other questions received a high percentage of agreement from the staff: 65% of staff believed there was a strong value in the school to minimise inequalities of opportunity, and 78% of staff believed that staff shared a wish to accept students from the local community irrespective of background. These values contribute further to a strong inclusive value base in the school. These data supported staff commitment to inclusive school development in the school.

The second part of the activity was conducted after the discussion about definitions about inclusion and inclusive school culture. Teachers were asked to write a sentence or a phrase to describe the culture of the school. The aim of this activity was to establish shared understandings. Examples of data collected in this phase of Index Activity One are reported in Table Three. Data in this table generally supports the inclusive values reported in Table Two. However, there is also evidence of the challenge and stress involved for these teachers in their roles as teachers with such a diverse group of students.

Indicator a 2.2 Establishing Inclusive Values	Agree	Not sure	Disagree
Is the building of a supportive school community seen to be as important as raising academic achievement at XXX School?	84%	9%	7%
Is the fostering of collaboration between staff seen to be important at XXX School?	87%	9%	4%
Is there an emphasis on valuing difference rather than conforming to what is normal at XXX School?	42%	49%	9%
Is there a shared value to minimise inequalities of opportunity at XXX School?	64%	27%	9%
Do staff share a wish to accept students from the local community, irrespective of background?	78%	11%	11%

Do staff seek to discuss their beliefs about inclusion at XXX School?	36%	44%	20%
Do staff seek to challenge their own and each other's attitudes about the limits to inclusion?	22%	51%	27%

Table Two: Data from index activity one, survey

Examples of Staff Understandings of the School Culture
A school that has a diverse community – social, emotional, economic etc – that strives to cater to the needs of our students (as much as financial setbacks may undermine our efforts).
Tolerant of differences; mindful of children's needs (eg. background – culture, family situation); special needs; serious commitment to intervention; positive environment (eg many awards for positive behaviour).
Children of this school are very challenging and often unappreciative, but if the staff are supportive and understanding of one another we may make a difference to some of them..
Culture is one not similar to my own experience – it appears to incorporate swearing, spitting, physical contact, past unfavourable family experiences of schooling.
A little like a community brought together under adversity; staff are working under difficult circumstances with regards to resources and clientele; this 'under-siege' mentality does create a close collegial community who support one another.
This is the best school – we care about each other.
Caring, diligent approach; shared belief that some children are 'bad news'; recognize the need to have a broad view of education because there are many underdeveloped areas eg. school readiness, home learning, social skills, thinking skills.

Table Three: Selected data, staff understandings of the school culture

Index Activity Two

This activity was planned in term one by the coordinating team which included the school guidance officer. The activity was conducted early in the second term of the school year (there are four terms) and had two components. The first component required staff to work in groups of 4-5 teachers from across the school. In order to facilitate this process, staff were provided with a handout for the session with different coloured sticker dots in the corner. Groups were then arranged according to colour. This process ensured that groups were mixed from across the school to facilitate discussion.

Groups were provided with a number of questions (4-6 questions) taken from selected indicators in the Index. The questions were typed on cards. Each group of teachers was required to discuss the questions and vote on whether the card should be posted in agree, disagree, or not sure. Plastic sleeves (A4 size) were used to collect the voted cards. Members of each group accepted different roles in the process. For example, a chairperson (in case a vote was needed), timekeeper (to ensure the task was completed), a scribe (who recorded comments made by the group for each question). Two groups of teachers (4-5 teachers in each) worked on each set of questions. An example of data collected in this activity is displayed in Table Four and Table Five. The data presented in Table Four indicate that both groups of teachers agreed with questions 1 and 4 and both groups disagreed with question 3. The examples of the discussion for each question are recorded in Table Five. This data illuminates the data further. For example, in question two the second group chose to vote not sure because they didn't 'like' the meaning of the word 'always'. The information gathered in Index Activity Two will be used in a future staff meeting to prioritise direction in school development in culture, policy and practice.

Group Four Questions	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree
Question 1: Are there meetings involving staff, students, parents/carers and others that attempt to deal with problems flexibly before they escalate?	a a		
Question 2: Are responses to the behaviour of students always to do with education and rehabilitation rather than punishment?	a	a	
Question 3: Is there a shared view of what constitutes bullying between staff, parents/carers and students?			a a
Question 4: Can the behaviour of students be related to their need for power?	a a		

Table Four-Index activity two data for group four

Question Number	Comments
Q1	<p>We have processes that aim to deal with the problems involving staff, students, and</p> <p>parents/carers before they escalate (Note: these are not always successful and depends on individual parties' attitudes).</p> <p>Yes, these occur regarding learning needs, physical and emotional needs, and behaviour management. These meetings occur at different levels (eg parent-teacher) or can include outside agencies where appropriate.</p>
Q2	<p>Yes, unanimous response. The focus of behaviour management is to do with education and rehabilitation. Not punishment-consequence of behaviour choices.</p> <p>We have a problem with 'always' in the question. We TRY to make consequences educational in rehabilitation.</p>
Q3	<p>No, there is not a shared view of what constitutes bullying ie. parents/teachers/students</p> <p>varied views.</p> <p>No, but there is a shared view as far as staff is concerned but this does not always extend to parents and children.</p>
Q4	<p>Some behaviour could be related to power. Not all behaviour is related to</p> <p>power – emotional response. Some is attention-seeking etc. Child-to-child</p> <p>could be a power response – only model of power they have</p>

	<p>encountered.</p> <p>Yes, students have problems because of either a feeling of too much or too little power or control.</p>
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Table Five: Group discussion data for group 4

Summary And Future Directions

Data presented in this paper indicates that the Index of Inclusion could provide a useful framework for professional development related to inclusive schooling. Development in this project occurred on two fronts: at a whole school level through an analysis and revisiting of the beliefs and values underpinning policy and practice at the school and at an individual level through the enhancement of teachers knowledge and skills. The Index process clearly encourages communication and collaborative problem solving between members of a school community. One of the authors of the Index, Mel Ainscow, has previously spoken about the need for collaboration and development of a common language with which teachers can talk to one another about teaching practice. He explained the importance of sharing experiences and understandings when teachers are trying to develop practice: 'It is through shared experiences that colleagues can help one another to articulate what they currently do and define what they might like to do. It is also the means whereby taken-for-granted assumptions about particular groups of pupils can be subjected to mutual critique'.

The Index process has been enhanced by the professional development model cultivated in this collaborative university and school partnership. The combination of the roles of critical friend, peer mentors and use of the action research model of cycles and spirals has ensured a depth of learning for all involved in the process. The first author combined the role of critical friend with the role as peer mentor. This meant that she learned as much, if not more than the teachers with whom she was working. In the professional development model reported in this paper, the ongoing support of a critical friend and process of peer mentoring provided ongoing opportunities for modelling of new techniques and sharing of ideas, which facilitated the change process for teachers.

It is surely evident that schools are complex organizations. The school staff in this study demonstrate a commitment to meeting the changing needs of children, the community, and the staff. The school professional development plan incorporating the Index process has implications for school culture and policy related to curriculum, pedagogy and organization and more specifically to the extension of teachers' practices in teaching, learning and assessment.

References