

# INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION

Training Tools for Curriculum Development

## REACHING OUT TO ALL LEARNERS: a Resource Pack for Supporting Inclusive Education



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



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of Education

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*Training Tools for Curriculum Development – Reaching Out to All Learners: a Resource Pack for Supporting Inclusive Education*

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# FOREWORD

Founded in 1925 in Geneva, the International Bureau of Education (IBE) was fully integrated into UNESCO in 1969. Currently, its core mandate is the strengthening of capacities of Member States' education systems for equitable and inclusive delivery of quality and development-relevant education as well as effective lifelong learning opportunities for all. This mandate is fulfilled in partnership with national governments, international organizations, NGOs, academic institutions, and other relevant stakeholders.

As a global Centre of Excellence in Curriculum and related matters, the IBE is valued for its: expertise and cutting edge knowledge in curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment; leading role in global dialogue and advocacy for curriculum and related matters; normative and standard setting role in its areas of competence; innovation and laboratory of ideas in curriculum and related matters; evidence-based expert advice on policy and practice; global networks and communities of practice; professional and institutional development opportunities and rich education resources accumulated over many years.

Over the medium term, the IBE will support Member States and its key partners by focusing on the following operational programmes that align well with its core functions: Innovation and Leadership in Curriculum and Learning; Critical Issues in Curriculum and Learning; Knowledge Creation and Management in Curriculum and Learning; Systemic Strengthening of Quality and Development-Relevance of Education and Learning; Leadership for Global Dialogue on Curriculum and Learning; and Institutional and Organizational Development.

Inclusive education is an over-guiding principle of the 2030 Education Agenda embodied in the SDG4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Inclusive education is at the core of the transformation of education and of education systems. It entails building upon the uniqueness of each learner and providing a personalized learning opportunity. The IBE is therefore well positioned to support Member States and other key partners to effectively implement Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4).

The IBE series of *Training Tools for Curriculum Development: a Resource Pack* is designed to support Member States with regard to education and curriculum reforms and development processes. Specifically, *'Reaching Out to All Learners: a Resource Pack for Supporting Inclusive Education'* intends to share this broader understanding of the theory and practice of inclusive education to support its effective implementation at the school and classroom levels. It provides comprehensive guidance for national policy makers, curriculum specialists and developers, teachers, teacher educators, school leaders and district level administrators.



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The Incheon Declaration which resulted from the World Education Forum held in May 2015 has given new impetus to international efforts for promoting Education for All. It reaffirms the vision of the worldwide movement initiated in Jomtien in 1990 and reiterated in Dakar in 2000 - the most important commitment to education in recent decades, that has helped significant progress in education.

Specifically, the Declaration sets out the international policy agenda for the next fifteen years, emphasizing inclusion and equity in and through education. It argues that it is necessary to address all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes. In this way, the Declaration makes it clear that the international Education for All agenda really has to be about 'all'.

*Reaching Out to All Learners: a Resource Pack for Supporting Inclusive Education* is designed to help countries to address this challenge. Drawing on international research evidence on ways to promote inclusion and foster greater fairness, it is intended to influence and support inclusive thinking and practices at all levels of an education system. Consequently, it is designed to be relevant to teachers, school leaders, district level administrators, teacher educators and national policy makers.

## The *Resource Pack* consists of three inter-connected guides:

### **Guide 1.**

Reviewing National Policies - This provides a framework for reviewing national policies in order to create a policy context in which the other two guides can be used effectively to foster more inclusive schools and classrooms.

### **Guide 2.**

Leading Inclusive School Development - This supports head teachers and other senior staff in reviewing and developing their schools in order to make all their students feel welcomed and supported in their learning.

### **Guide 3.**

Developing Inclusive Classrooms - The aim of this guide is to support teachers in developing more effective ways in engaging all children in their lessons.

The following themes characterize all three guides:

- **Clarity of meaning** – The *Resource Pack* seeks to promote the development of new ways of thinking to address diversity among learners. Within the Resource Pack, much importance is attached to the need for a common understanding of the purposes of such paradigm shifts.
- **Analysis of contexts** – The aim of the *Resource Pack* is to draw attention to and overcome aspects of current policy and practice that may be creating barriers to the presence, participation and achievement of some children and adolescents.
- **Building on existing practices** – Recognizing that there are usually effective practices that can be built upon within any context, the processes recommended in the *Resource Pack* encourage the transfer of expertise within and between schools.
- **Working collaboratively** – Redirecting practice towards inclusion is likely to involve periods of turbulence, as business-as-usual ideas are challenged. The guides therefore emphasize the importance of promoting mutual support among stakeholders to shift practices.
- **Managing change** – The use of the *Resource Pack* has to be managed and led collectively. Thus, all three guides stress the importance of strengthening leadership practice at all levels, including the classroom level.
- **Evaluating progress** – As the *Resource Pack* is utilized, there is a need to continue collecting evidence regarding the implementation and impact of the changes that are taking effect. This can help improving processes of implementation.

This *Resource Pack* is intended to be used flexibly in response to contexts that are at different stages of development and where resources vary. It emphasizes active learning processes for those using the materials, encouraging them to work collaboratively and helping one another to review and develop their thinking and practices. Extensive use is made of examples from different parts of the world to encourage the development of new ways to reach out to all learners.





# GUIDE 1



## Reviewing National Policies

Reaching Out to All Learners:  
a Resource Pack for Supporting Inclusive Education



# INTRODUCTION

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Education systems throughout the world are faced with the challenge of providing an effective education for all children and young people. According to the 2015 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, there are about 58 million children without access to primary school and 100 million who do not complete primary education. Even in wealthier countries, many young people leave school without worthwhile qualifications, some are placed in various forms of special provision away from mainstream educational experiences, and others simply choose to drop out since the lessons seem irrelevant to their lives.

Faced with these challenges, there is an increased interest in the idea of inclusive education. However, the field remains confused as to what inclusion means. In some countries, inclusion is still thought of as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings. However, it is increasingly seen more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity among all learners. It presumes that the aim of inclusive education is to eliminate social exclusion that is a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and ability. As such, it starts from the belief that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society.

This guide provides a framework that is intended to stimulate discussion of these issues among policy-makers within a country. Using a series of indicators based on international research evidence, it also provides a means of reviewing national arrangements in order to determine what needs to be done to move an education system in an inclusive direction.

## **Levers for change**

Research carried out in many countries have suggested factors that have the potential to either facilitate or inhibit the promotion of inclusive practices in schools. These are all variables which national and - to varying degrees - local district administrations, either control directly or over which they can at least exert considerable influence. Some of these factors seem to be potentially more powerful: in other words, they are 'levers for change'. Two factors, particularly when they are closely linked, seem to provide particularly powerful levers. These are: clarity of definition in relation to the idea of inclusive education, and the forms of evidence that are used to measure educational performance.

In what follows, a definition is proposed and suggestions made as to how evidence can be collected in order to review each country's stage of development in relation to this definition.



As explained in Guide 2 of this *Resource Pack*, 'Leading Inclusive School Development,' a school that is committed to becoming inclusive attempts to create a space where:

1. Everyone feels welcome.
2. Students are equally valued.
3. There are high expectations for all students.
4. Staff and students treat one another with respect.
5. There is a partnership between staff and families.
6. The building is accessible to all students.
7. Senior staff support teachers in ensuring that all students participate and learn.
8. The school monitors the presence, participation and achievement of all students.

Classroom practices are crucial to the development of an inclusive school. Guide 3 'Developing Inclusive Classrooms' explains that in a classroom that is becoming inclusive:

1. Teaching is planned with all students in mind.
2. Lessons encourage the participation of all students.
3. Students are actively involved in their own learning.
4. Students are encouraged to support one another's learning.
5. Support is provided when students experience difficulties.
6. Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect and healthy living.
7. Students feel that they have somebody to speak to when they are worried or upset.
8. Assessment contributes to the achievement of all students.

It must be recognized that developing inclusive schools is a never-ending journey. In order to transform current schools into truly inclusive learning institutions, it is crucial to work along with the broadened conceptualization of inclusive education and at the same time to bear in mind that this is an ongoing process.

It is also important to understand that no school in the world is perfectly inclusive - it is always possible to find some students who experience barriers to their presence, participation and achievement. Consequently, schools that are committed to inclusion continue to monitor the progress of all their students in order to support those who are at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement. Their basic premise is that schools are about belonging, nurturing, valuing diversity and educating all children, regardless of their differences in culture, gender, language, ability, class and ethnicity.

## **Using evidence to review national education systems**

The search for levers for change highlights the importance of using evidence for strategic purposes. This is because, within education systems, 'what gets measured gets done'.

The starting point for making decisions about what evidence to collect should be with an agreed definition of inclusion. In line with the suggestions made earlier, then, the evidence collected at the national level needs to relate to the 'presence, participation and achievement' of all students, with a particular emphasis placed on those groups of learners regarded to be 'at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement'.







## Reviewing national development

The Framework consists of 16 performance indicators organized around the four overlapping dimensions. The indicators can be used to review progress within a country or in a local district. As they are used, they should be regarded as ideal types, i.e. unattainable aspirations against which existing arrangements can be compared in order to pinpoint areas for development.

For each indicator, a set of questions is set forth. These suggest the types of evidence that will be needed in order to make informed judgements about the current situation with regard to the particular indicator. Some of the data will be in the forms of statistics. However, qualitative evidence of various kinds will also be essential, not least the views of those involved in education.

The dimensions, indicators and questions are as follows:

### Dimension 1: Concepts

In a national education system that is in the process of becoming inclusive:

- 1.1 Inclusion is seen as an overall principle that guides all educational policies and practices.
  - Is inclusive education regarded as a principle by policy makers?
  - Does the idea of inclusive education inform all national policies?
  - How far is inclusion informing educational practices?
- 1.2 The national curriculum and its associated assessment systems are designed to take account of all learners.
  - Is the national curriculum based on the principle of inclusion?
  - Does the national curriculum have the flexibility to suit all learners?
  - Do assessment systems celebrate different levels of achievement?
- 1.3 All agencies that work with children and their families including the health and social services understand and support the national policy aspirations for promoting inclusive education.
  - Is there widespread commitment to the idea of inclusive education among professionals who work with children and families?
  - Do professionals who work with children and their families understand the implications of the principle of inclusion for their roles?
- 1.4 Systems are in place to monitor the presence, participation and achievement of all children within the education system.
  - Are there effective systems for collecting statistical data regarding the presence, participation and achievement of all children?
  - Is data analyzed in order to determine the impact of efforts to foster greater inclusion?
  - Are actions taken in the light of data analysis to strengthen inclusive practices?

## Dimension 2: Policy

In a national education system that is becoming inclusive:

- 2.1 The promotion of inclusive education is strongly featured in important national education policy documents.
  - Do all major educational policy documents make reference to the principle of inclusion?
  - Are all policy priorities informed by the principle of inclusion?
- 2.2 Senior staff at the national and district levels provide clear leadership on inclusive education.
  - Do national policy makers stress the importance of inclusion as a principle?
  - Do local district administrators provide clear leadership regarding inclusive education?
  - Do school principals and those who manage other centres of learning encourage the development of inclusive cultures in their schools?
- 2.3 Leaders at all levels, including civil society and other social sectors, articulate consistent policy aspirations for the development of inclusive practices in schools.
  - Are national policy makers seen to encourage the development of inclusive practices?
  - Do local district administrators take action to encourage the development of inclusive practices?
  - Do school principals and those who manage other centres of learning (e.g. pre-school provision; special schools) take action to encourage the development of inclusive practices?
- 2.4 Leaders at all levels, including civil society and other social sectors, challenge non-inclusive practices in schools.
  - Are there systems for inspecting schools and other centres of learning that identify and challenge non-inclusive practices?
  - Where non-inclusive practices are found to exist, are they challenged by senior staff at the district level, in schools and centres of learning?

## Dimension 3: Structures and systems

In a national education system that is becoming inclusive:

- 3.1 There is high quality support for vulnerable groups of learners.
  - Are there effective systems for identifying vulnerable groups of learners?
  - Are there flexible arrangements for ensuring that support is available to individuals as and when necessary?
  - Are families seen as partners in supporting their children's education?
- 3.2 All services and institutions involved with children and families work together in coordinating inclusive policies and practices.
  - Is there cooperation between schools and other centres of learning?
  - Do institutions and services within districts work together?
- 3.3 Resources, both human and financial, are distributed in ways that benefit vulnerable groups of children.
  - Are all children seen as being of equal importance educationally?
  - Are available resources used flexibly to support participation and learning?
- 3.4 There is a clear role for specialist provision, such as special schools and units, in promoting inclusive education within the understanding of education as a right.
  - Do special schools and units have working links with mainstream schools?
  - Do students from special schools and units have opportunities to take part in activities within mainstream schools?

## Dimension 4: Practice

In a national education system that is becoming inclusive:

- 4.1 Schools have strategies for encouraging the presence, participation and achievement of all learners from their local communities.
  - Do teachers use a range of teaching techniques to cater for learner differences?
  - Are there effective procedures for taking account of the views of students regarding school practices?
- 4.2 Schools provide support for children who are vulnerable to marginalization, exclusion and underachievement.
  - Are teachers skilled in assessing the progress of individual students?
  - Do teachers (and other school staff) cooperate in supporting individual students?
  - Do teachers (and other school staff) take account of the cultures, interests and, aspirations of all their students in order to enhance their learning?
  - Do staff in schools and other centres of learning work closely with families in ensuring support for students?
- 4.3 Trainee teachers are prepared for dealing with learner diversity.
  - Are trainee teachers helped to develop positive attitudes towards student diversity?
  - Does the teacher education curriculum for all teachers highlight the principle of inclusive education?
  - Are trainee teachers helped to develop teaching strategies that respond positively to student diversity?
- 4.4 Teachers have opportunities to take part in continuing professional development regarding inclusive practices.
  - Do schools and other centres of learning have effective staff development programmes in relation to inclusive practices?
  - Are there opportunities for teachers to attend in-service courses regarding the development of inclusive practices?

## Rating national development

Remembering that inclusion is an on-going process, the National Review Framework can be used to determine the stage of development within an education system. This requires an engagement with statistical and qualitative data, ensuring inclusion of the views of students and their families. As such, evidence can be used to formulate plans for moving policy and practice forward and towards inclusion.

It is recommended that a national strategy group is formed to carry out this review. Membership to the group should include representatives of stakeholders from each level of the education system and from different parts of the country. For example, it might involve: school leaders, parents, community groups, district and national administrators.

Members of the strategy group are asked to score the indicators on the rating scale provided in Appendix 1, using the following descriptors:

- 1. The system is working well.** i.e. There are several significant strengths and no obvious weaknesses.
- 2. The system is performing quite well.** i.e. On balance, strengths outweigh weaknesses.
- 3. The system is not performing well.** i.e. On balance, weaknesses outweigh strengths.
- 4. The system is performing badly.** i.e. There are no obvious strengths and several weaknesses.



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# READINGS FOR THE NATIONAL REVIEW FRAMEWORK

The four Readings that follow summarize the evidence basis on which the National Review Framework was designed keeping the four Dimensions outlined in Figure 1.1 and their indicators in mind.

The content of the Readings is based on summaries of international research. This provides a justification of the indicators that are included in the National Review Framework. It is recommended that those carrying out the review would familiarize themselves with this material.

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## NATIONAL GUIDE READING 1: **CONCEPTS**

### 1.1 Inclusion as a process

Inclusive education can be seen as a process of strengthening the capacity of an education system to reach out to all learners in the community. It is, therefore, an overall principle that should guide all educational policies and practices, starting from the belief that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society.

In order to realize this right, the international Education for All (EFA) movement has worked to make quality basic education available to all learners. Inclusive education takes the EFA agenda forward by finding ways of enabling schools to serve all children in their communities, with a particular focus on those who have traditionally been excluded from educational opportunities – such as learners with special needs and disabilities, children from ethnic and linguistic minorities, and so on.

The EFA Declaration, agreed in Jomtien in 1990, sets out an overall vision: universalizing access to all children, youth and adults, and promoting equity. It is about being proactive in identifying the barriers some groups encounter in attempting to access educational opportunities. It is also about identifying all the resources available at national and community level and bringing them to bear on overcoming those barriers.

This vision was reaffirmed by the World Education Forum meeting in Dakar, held to review the progress made so far (World Education Forum, 2000). The Forum declared that EFA must take account of the needs of the poor and the disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health; and those with special learning needs. It is in addressing these issues that inclusive education has a distinct role to play.

The major impetus for inclusive education was given by the World Conference on Special Needs Education. More than 300 participants representing 92 governments and 25 international organizations met in Salamanca, Spain, in June 1994, to further the objective of Education for All by considering the fundamental policy shifts required to promote the approach of inclusive education, namely enabling schools to serve all children, particularly those with special educational needs (UNESCO, 1994).

Although the immediate focus of the Salamanca Conference was on special needs education, its conclusion was that:

*Special needs education – an issue of equal concern to countries of the North and of the South – cannot advance in isolation. It has to form part of an overall educational strategy and, indeed, of new social and economic policies. It calls for major reform of the ordinary school.*

(UNESCO, 1994, p. iii-iv)

The aim, then, is to develop ‘inclusive’ education systems. This can only happen, however, if local area schools become more inclusive - in other words, if they become more capable of educating all children in their communities. The conference concluded that:

*Regular schools with [an] inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.*

(UNESCO, 1994, Statement, p. ix)

As this key passage indicates, the move towards inclusive schools can be justified on a number of grounds. There is an educational justification: the requirement for inclusive schools to educate all children together means that they have to develop ways of teaching that respond to individual differences and that therefore benefit all children; a social justification: inclusive schools are able to change attitudes to difference by educating all children together, and form the basis for a just and non-discriminatory society; and an economic justification: it is likely to be less costly to establish and maintain schools which educate all children together than to set up a complex system of different types of school specializing in different groups of children.

Article 24 in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which advocates inclusive education and recent legislation to protect indigenous languages provide further international support for inclusive schools. If, of course, these inclusive schools offer an effective education to all of their students, then they are, indeed, a more cost-effective means of achieving Education for All.

All of this has been underlined more recently by the Incheon Declaration, ‘Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all’. Agreed at the World Education Forum in May 2015, it sets out the international policy agenda for the next fifteen years. It states that:

*Inclusion and equity in and through education is the cornerstone of a transformative education agenda, and we therefore commit to addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes.*

In this way the Incheon Declaration makes clear that the international Education for All agenda really has to be about ‘all’.



## 1.2 A curriculum for all

The agenda of inclusive education presents a considerable challenge, not least in terms of the development of a curriculum and systems of assessment that can take account of all learners. The curriculum is the central means through which the principle of inclusion is put into action within an education system. At its heart are the planned teaching and learning opportunities that are available in ordinary classrooms – the ‘formal’ curriculum of schools. However, there are many other potential learning experiences which are more difficult to plan, but which can certainly be influenced by schools and other parts of the education system. These include: interactions among students; interactions between students and teachers in and out of the classroom; and learning experiences that occur within the community – in the family, for instance, or in other social or religious contexts.

The formal curriculum has to serve at least two purposes:

1. It has to embody all the knowledge, skills and values which a country wishes its young people to acquire; and
2. It has to provide quality education for students, both in terms of the level of engagement it generates and the outcomes it produces.

Above all, the curriculum has to achieve these purposes for all students equally. Therefore, it has to be flexible enough to respond to the very diverse characteristics of students. Consequently, the curriculum needs to be:

- Structured and yet capable of being taught in such a way that all students can participate.
- Underpinned by a model of learning which itself is inclusive - therefore, it needs to accommodate a range of learning styles and to emphasize skills and knowledge that are relevant to students.
- Sufficiently flexible for responding to the needs of particular students, communities and religious, linguistic, ethnic or other groups - it cannot be rigidly prescribed at national or central level.
- Structured around varying levels of entry skills, so that progress can be assessed in ways that allow all students to experience success.

All of this means that more inclusive curricula will make greater demands on teachers and, therefore, they will need support in implementing them effectively.

Developing a curriculum that is inclusive of all learners may well involve broadening the definition of learning used by teachers and decision-makers in the education system. Thus, as long as learning is understood as the acquisition of bodies of knowledge presented by the teacher, schools are likely to be locked into rigidly-organized curricula and teaching practices. Commonly, therefore, inclusive curricula are based on a view of learning as something which takes place when students are actively involved in making sense of their experiences. Learners, in other words, cannot simply be told. Rather, they have to find things out and understand things for themselves.

Such a view emphasizes the role of the teacher as facilitator, rather than as instructor. This makes it easier for a diverse group of students to be educated together, since they do not all have to be at the same point in their learning or receive the same instruction from their teacher. Instead, they can work at their own pace and in their own way within a common framework of activities and objectives.



- The involvement of those responsible for training teachers and other professionals is important in opinion-forming. The incorporation of inclusive principles and practices into professional training does not bring about overnight change but builds a corps of inclusively-oriented professionals in the country.

In addition, key channels of communication have to be identified and activated. The principal channel is usually the mass media. A media management strategy may therefore be necessary. Other channels include professional journals, videos and specially-organized conferences and dissemination events. Such events are often used to celebrate successes in inclusive education through the presentation of successful experiences that promote the exchange of ideas about practice, rather than simply to advocate inclusive education in the abstract. As policy is being developed, the processes of dissemination and consultation can be combined in the same events, enhancing the sense of ownership that stakeholders feel.

## 1.4 Monitoring the impact

Certain factors have the potential to either facilitate or inhibit the promotion of inclusive practices in schools. These are all variables which national and, to varying degrees, local district administrations, either control directly, or over which they can at least exert considerable influence. Some of these factors seem to be potentially more potent; in other words, they are 'levers for change'. Two factors, especially when they are closely linked, seem to be superordinate to all others. These are: clarity of definition in relation to the idea of inclusion, and the forms of evidence that are used to measure educational performance.

When establishing a definition for strategic purposes, the following elements can be helpful:

- Inclusion is a process. That is to say, inclusion has to be seen as a never-ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity. It is about learning how to live with difference, and learning how to learn from difference. In this way, differences come to be seen more positively as a stimulus for fostering learning among children and adults.
- Inclusion is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers. Consequently, it involves collecting, collating and evaluating information from a wide variety of sources in order to plan for improvements in policy and practice. It is about using evidence of various kinds to stimulate creativity and problem-solving.
- Inclusion is about the presence, participation and achievement of all students. Here 'presence' is concerned with where children are educated, and how reliably and punctually they attend; 'participation' relates to the quality of their experiences while they are present and, therefore, must incorporate the views of the learners themselves; and 'achievement' is about the outcomes of learning across the curriculum, not merely test or examination results.
- Inclusion involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement. This indicates the moral responsibility to ensure that those groups that are statistically most at risk are carefully monitored, and that, where necessary, steps are taken to ensure their presence, participation and achievement within the education system.

A well-orchestrated community debate about these elements can lead to a wider understanding of the principle of inclusion. Such a debate, though by its nature slow and, possibly, never ending, can have leverage in respect to fostering the conditions within which schools can feel encouraged to move in a more inclusive direction.

The search for levers draws attention to the importance of using evidence to monitor the impact of policies on children. In essence, the argument is that, within education systems, 'what gets measured gets done'. Unfortunately, this means that in countries that value narrowly conceived criteria for determining success, monitoring systems can act as a barrier to the development of a more inclusive education system. All of this suggests that great care needs to be exercised in deciding what evidence is collected and, indeed, how it is used.

The starting point for making decisions about what to monitor should, therefore, be with an agreed definition of inclusion. In other words, there is a need to 'measure what we value', rather than is often the case, 'valuing what we can measure'. In line with the suggestions made earlier, the evidence collected at the systems level needs to relate to the 'presence, participation and achievement' of all students, with an emphasis placed on those groups of learners regarded to be 'at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement'.



### Performance indicators:

The arguments summarized in this Reading about concepts suggest that in an education system that is becoming inclusive:

- 1.1** Inclusion is seen as an overall principle that guides all educational policies and practices.
- 1.2** The curriculum, instructional materials and its associated assessment systems are designed to take account of all learners.
- 1.3** All agencies that work with children, including the health and social services, understand and support the policy aspirations for promoting inclusive education.
- 1.4** Systems are in place to monitor the presence, participation and achievement of all learners.

# NATIONAL GUIDE READING 2: **POLICY**

## 2.1 National policies

Legislation is important in the development of a more inclusive education system. In particular, it can provide:

- The articulation of principles and rights in order to create a framework for inclusion;
- The reform of elements in the existing system which constitute major barriers to inclusion (for instance policies which do not allow children from specific groups – such as children with disabilities, or from different language groups – to attend their neighbourhood school);
- The mandating of fundamental inclusive practices (requiring, for instance, that schools should educate all children in their communities); and
- The establishment of procedures and practices throughout the education system that are likely to facilitate inclusion (for instance, the formulation of a flexible curriculum, or the introduction of community governance).

Even where radical legislative reform is not desirable or practicable, statements of principles at government level can generate a debate around inclusive education and begin the process of consensus-building. Here a key task that may be necessary is that of unifying the legislative framework that governs regular and special education.

In some countries, special and regular education are covered by separate legislation, are administered by separate sections or departments at national and local level, have separate systems of training and funding, and have distinct curricula and assessment procedures. Indeed, some learners' development may be governed by Health or Social Services legislation, rather than by educational legislation. In such cases, a necessary early step in the development process must be to unify the two systems within a common administrative and legislative framework.

The development of inclusive education demands wide-ranging changes involving the whole of the education system, as well as other services for children and young people. It is important, therefore, that the move towards inclusive education is not undertaken in isolation, for two reasons in particular:

1. Inclusive education is difficult to realize where other aspects of the educational and social systems remain unreformed and exclusive in their effects; and
2. In terms of generating a momentum behind the inclusive education movement, it is easier to build consensus where inclusion can be seen as part of a wider attempt to create a more effective education system, or a more inclusive society.





The implication of all of this is that becoming more inclusive is a matter of thinking and talking, reviewing and refining practice, and making attempts to develop a more inclusive culture. Such a conceptualization means that inclusion cannot be divorced from the contexts within which it is developing, nor the social relations that might sustain or limit that development. This suggests that it is in the complex interplay between individuals and between groups of individuals that shared beliefs and values, and when change occurs, it is impossible to separate those beliefs from the relationships in which they are embodied.

It is not surprising, therefore, that some writers have argued that in order to bring about the cultural change that inclusion demands, it is essential to consider the values underlying the intended changes. Thus, cultural change is directed towards a transformative view of inclusion, in which diversity is seen as making a positive contribution to the creation of responsive educational settings. This involves developing the capacity of those within schools to reveal and challenge deeply entrenched deficit views of 'difference', which define certain types of students as 'lacking something'.

It seems, then, that the principle of inclusion is likely to require challenges to the thinking of those within a particular organization and, inevitably, this raises questions regarding forms of leadership. Consequently, there is a need for shared leadership, with the principal seen as a leader of leaders. Hierarchical structures have to be replaced by shared responsibility in a community that becomes characterized by agreed values and hopes, such that many of the control functions associated with school leadership become less important or even counter-productive.

Research suggests that in order to foster inclusive development, school leaders need to attend to three broad types of task: fostering new meanings about diversity; promoting inclusive practices within schools; and building connections between schools and communities. Much of the literature on the role of leadership places emphasis on the importance of social relationships. It has been argued, for example, that leaders may structure staff working relationships in one of three ways: competitively, individualistically or cooperatively. Within a competitive structure, teachers work against each other to achieve a goal that only a few can attain; an individualistic structure exists when teachers work alone to accomplish goals that are unrelated to the goals of their colleagues; whereas, a cooperative structure exists when teachers coordinate their efforts to achieve joint goals. This means that, to maximize the productivity of a school, principals have to: challenge the status quo of traditional competitive and individualistic approaches to teaching; inspire a clear mutual vision of what the school should and could be; empower staff through cooperative team work; lead by example, using cooperative procedures and taking risks; and encourage staff members to persist and keep striving to improve their expertise.

### **2.3 Encouraging inclusive practices**

Recent research has thrown light on what needs to happen in order to develop inclusive practices in schools. It suggests that the development of inclusive practice is not, in the core, about adopting new techniques. Rather, it involves social learning processes within a given workplace that influence people's actions and, indeed, the thinking that informs these actions. The implication is that a methodology for developing inclusive practices must take account of such social processes of learning that go on within particular contexts.



- The extent to which such 'inclusive cultures' lead directly and un-problematically to enhanced student participation is not clear. Some aspects of these cultures, however, can be seen as participatory by definition. For instance, respect for diversity from teachers may itself be understood as a form of participation by children within a school community. Moreover, schools characterized by such cultures are also likely to favour forms of organization (such as specialist provision being made within the ordinary classroom rather than by withdrawal from lessons) and practice (such as constructivist approaches to teaching and learning) which could be regarded as participatory by definition.
- Schools with 'inclusive cultures' are also likely to be characterized by the presence of leaders who are committed to inclusive values and to a leadership style which encourages a range of individuals to participate in leadership functions. Such schools are also likely to have good links with parents and with their communities.
- The local and national policy environment can act to support or to undermine the realization of schools' inclusive values.

Thus, attempts to develop inclusive schools should pay attention to the development of 'inclusive cultures' and, especially, to the building of some degree of consensus around inclusive values within school communities. This suggests that school leaders should be selected and trained in the light of their commitment to inclusive values and their capacity to lead in a participatory manner.

In diverse student environments, particular forms of leadership can be effective in promoting school quality, equity and social justice through more powerful forms of teaching and learning, creating strong communities of students, teachers and parents, and nurturing educational cultures among families. Such approaches are congruent with the view that inclusion is essentially about attempts to embody distinct values in particular contexts. Unlike mechanistic views of school improvement, they acknowledge that decisions about how to improve schools always involve moral and political reasoning, as well as technical considerations. Moreover, they offer specific processes through which inclusive developments might be promoted. Discussions of inclusion and exclusion can help, therefore, to make explicit the values which underlie what, how and why changes should be made in schools. Inclusive cultures, underpinned by certain organizational conditions, may make those discussions more likely to occur and more productive when they do occur. A helpful list of indicators in relation to this analysis is provided by the Index for Inclusion, a widely used review framework for examining school factors that constitute barriers to learning and participation (see: <http://www.csie.org.uk/>).

## Performance indicators:

The arguments summarized in this Reading regarding the development of policies suggest that in an education system that is becoming inclusive:

- 2.1** The promotion of inclusive education is strongly featured in important national policy documents and EFA strategies.
- 2.2** Senior staff at the national and district levels provide clear leadership on inclusive education.
- 2.3** Leaders at all levels, including civil society and other social sectors, articulate consistent policy aspirations for the development of inclusive practices in schools.
- 2.4** Leaders at all levels, including civil society and other social sectors, challenge non-inclusive practices in schools.



# NATIONAL GUIDE READING 3: **STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS**

## **3.1 Support for vulnerable learners**

In order to foster inclusive education, governments need to mobilize human and intellectual resources, some of which it may not directly control. This is even more pertinent where the impetus for inclusive education comes from outside government. Therefore, it is essential that partnerships are formed between key stakeholders who can support the transition process. These include: parents/caregivers; teachers and other education professionals; those in other services who will be affected by the move to inclusion (e.g. Health, Social Services); teacher trainers and researchers; national, local and school-level administrators and managers; civic groups in the community; and members of minority groups at risk of exclusion.

The involvement of families is particularly crucial. In some countries, for example, there is already close co-operation between parents and authorities in developing community-based programmes for disabled children. A logical next step is for such parents to become involved in supporting inclusive education developments in schools.

Sometimes, parents of children experiencing difficulties can find themselves in dispute with schools and authorities as they press for better provision. In some cases, such parents - and the parental organizations which represent them - have been invited into the policy-formulation process. They might be involved simply in negotiating provision for their child, in becoming part of schools' governing body, or in joining local or national policy-review groups.

Where parents lack the confidence and skills to participate in such development, it might be necessary to undertake some developmental activities with them. This might mean creating networks of parents who can act as mutual support groups, training parents in skills to work with their own children, or acting as parental advocates in their dealings with schools and authorities.

In thinking about the roles of families and communities, the following points need to be kept in mind:

- Families and communities have rights to involvement and can make a range of contributions. In particular, they have knowledge of their children which professionals do not have.
- Building family and community involvement is a step-by-step process based on trust. Exceptional efforts are needed to promote the involvement of marginalized groups.
- Families and community groups can sometimes take a lead role as activists for inclusive education.
- Families' rights to involvement can be built into legislation or into the system of school governance.
- Communities can also be involved successfully in the governance of schools or of the education system as a whole.
- Schools can act as a resource for the community by offering services or becoming the base for other agencies.

### 3.2 Coordinating services and institutions

In many countries, the systems through which education is administered are barriers to inclusive practices. Often, as noted above, special and mainstream education are administered through different departments or teams, with different decision-making processes, regulations, funding arrangements and so on.

An early step, in situations such as this, might be the incorporation of special and regular education within a single administrative structure. Such a development has recently taken place in Peru, where special education has come within the ambit of primary education for administrative purposes. This seems to have facilitated the development of a series of inclusion projects.

In some countries, the move to more inclusive education has been accompanied by a move towards devolved management structures. This devolution seems to encourage flexibility and risk-taking. It also counteracts the tendency of centralized bureaucracies to set up rigid decision-making procedures. Two levels of devolution tend to be used:

*(i) Decentralization to the local level (e.g. the municipality or district).* Local administrations, managing both the ordinary and special schools in a given area, are able to respond flexibly to local circumstances and to take into account the needs of certain groups or even individual students. They can avoid making decisions on the basis of inflexible systems of assessment and categorization. However, they are large enough to generate some economies of scale, coordinate local services, offer targeted training and act as a mechanism for disseminating innovations rapidly. They are also capable of being more responsive than national or regional governments to the needs of their communities.

*(ii) Decentralization to the school level.* In recent years, a number of countries have opted for what in the USA is called 'site-based management' and in England 'local management of schools'. This means that many decision-making powers and substantial amounts of the education budget are devolved to individual schools. This frees schools up to manage their own resources in order to meet the needs of learners in their communities, to take risks in developing inclusive education programmes and to be proactive in coordinating other services and mobilizing community resources in the interests of their students.

Decentralization to both of these levels carries with it risks as well as opportunities. For example:

- Schools and local authorities can be resisters of change as well as leaders of change.
- Devolving power to schools and local administrations invites them to pursue their own self-interest rather than the implementation of national policy. This is a particular problem if national policy itself is ambiguous or has multiple, conflicting aims.

The diversity which results from devolution inevitably raises questions about equity. It is likely, for example, that levels of inclusion will vary significantly from school to school and district to district. Levels of resourcing may vary similarly, unless national funding mechanisms are sensitive to local needs. This can lead to negative outcome of decentralization: unequal distribution of resources and use of these resources can lead to greater systemic inequalities, which is an obstacle to the development of an inclusive society.



There is evidence from some countries that school-to-school collaboration can strengthen the capacity of individual organizations to respond to learner diversity. Specifically, collaboration between schools can help to reduce the polarization of schools, to the particular benefit of those students who are marginalized at the edges of the system and whose performance and attitudes cause concern. In addition, there is evidence that when schools seek to develop more collaborative ways of working, this can have an impact on how teachers perceive themselves and their work. Specifically, comparisons of practices can lead teachers to view underachieving students in a new light. Rather than simply presenting problems that are assumed to be insurmountable, such students may be perceived as providing feedback on existing classroom arrangements. In this way, they may be seen as sources of understanding as to how these arrangements might be developed in ways that could be of benefit to all members of the class.

Civil society and international organizations can also play a range of roles in the transition to inclusion. They can:

- Help align national developments with current international thinking;
- Provide access to international expertise and experience;
- Work at national level with ministries in formulating inclusive education policies;
- Support inclusive education projects with advice and resources in order to catalyse national developments; and
- Support the implementation of national inclusive education policy with advice and resources.

There are, however, some problems that may arise in working with these organizations. For example:

- International agendas may be imported into a country without sufficient thought as to how they need to be reinterpreted in the light of that country's situation;
- Demonstration projects and other initiatives may be dependent on a level of resourcing which is not sustainable so that they cannot be 'rolled out' throughout the national system;
- Excellent initiatives may take place in isolation and never be fully incorporated into national policy and practice.

The key to avoiding these dangers seems to be for a genuine partnership to be formed between the civil society and international organizations, and the national government, and for there to be a clear plan for the role each will play in the transition process.







This is why it is important to stress that inclusion is about the development of mainstream schools, rather than the reorganization of special schooling. The aim has to be to increase the capacity of all mainstream schools, so that, like the most effective schools that exist, they can meet the needs of all children while offering them similar rights and opportunities. This has implications for a changed role for special schools in the medium term and the disappearance of special schools entirely in the longer term. However, it is vital to note that the disappearance of the buildings that house special schools does not imply the disappearance of the skills, attitudes, values and resources which those buildings currently contain.



## Performance indicators:

The arguments summarized in this Reading regarding structures and systems suggest that in an education system that is becoming inclusive:

- 3.1** There is high quality support for vulnerable groups of learners.
- 3.2** All services and institutions involved with children work together in coordinating inclusive policies and practices.
- 3.3** Resources, both human and financial, are distributed in ways that benefit vulnerable groups of learners.
- 3.4** There is a clear role for specialist provision, such as special schools and units, in promoting inclusive education within an understanding of education as a right.



# NATIONAL GUIDE READING 4: **PRACTICE**

## 4.1 Developing schools for all

Too often the preoccupation with individualized responses that have been the feature of special education deflects attention away from the creation of forms of teaching that can reach out to all learners within a class and the establishment of school conditions that will encourage such developments. This helps to explain why integration efforts that are dependent upon the importing of practices from special education tend to foster the development of new, more subtle forms of segregation, albeit within the mainstream settings. So, for example, recent years have seen the introduction in many countries of supporting teachers and teaching assistants who work alongside class teachers in order to facilitate the presence of those students categorized as having special needs. When such support is withdrawn, teachers may feel that they can no longer cope. And, of course, the requirement for individualized education plans - laid down by legislation in some countries - has encouraged some school leaders to feel that many more children will require such responses, thus creating budget problems within some education systems.

At the same time, the category 'special educational needs' can become a repository for various groups who suffer discrimination in society, such as those from minority backgrounds. In this way, special education can be a way of hiding discrimination against some groups of students behind an apparently benign label, thus, justifying their low attainments and, therefore, their need for separate educational arrangements.

The recognition that inclusive schools will not be achieved by transplanting special education thinking and practice into mainstream contexts opens up new possibilities. Many of these relate to the need to move from the individualized planning frame - referred to above - to a perspective that seeks to personalize learning through an engagement with the whole class.

Research indicates that a feature of lessons that are effective in encouraging student participation is the way available resources, particularly human resources, are used to support learning. In particular, there is strong evidence of the potential of approaches that encourage cooperation between students for creating classroom conditions that can both maximize participation, while at the same time achieving high standards of learning for all members of a class. Furthermore, this evidence suggests that the use of such practices can be an effective means of supporting the involvement of 'exceptional pupils', e.g. those who are new to a class; children from different cultural and language backgrounds; and those with disabilities. However, it is important to stress the need for skill in orchestrating this type of classroom practice. Poorly managed group approaches usually involve considerable waste of time and, indeed, present many opportunities for increased disruption.

Here we can learn much from developments in economically poorer countries of the South, where limitations of resources have led to the recognition of the potential of 'peer power' through the development of so-called child-to-child programmes. Such experiences suggest that children are an under-used resource

that can be mobilized to overcome barriers to participation in lessons and contribute to improved learning opportunities for all members of a class. Interestingly, it should be noted that the essential resources for this to take effect are already there in any classroom. In fact, the larger the class is the more potential resources that are available. The key factor is the teacher's ability to mobilize this largely untapped energy.

## 4.2 Support for learning

In an effective education system, all students are assessed on an on-going basis in terms of their progress through the curriculum. The aim is to make it possible for teachers to provide responses to a wide diversity of students. This means that teachers and other professionals have to have good information on their students' characteristics and attainments.

However, it is not enough simply to be able to identify the level at which each student is performing, or to be able to list the particular difficulties or disabilities which some may experience. Teachers in inclusive systems also need to know how effective their teaching is for different students and what they need to do to enable each one to learn as well as possible. Assessment, therefore, should not focus only on the characteristics and attainments of the students. It also has to focus on the curriculum and how each student can learn within that curriculum.

This in turn means that the most useful forms of assessment take place in the ordinary school as well as in community settings for adult learners. Teachers, therefore, will need to have the skills to carry out most assessments themselves. However, they will also need to find ways of working with special educators, psychologists, social workers and medical professionals so that they can use their specialist assessments for educational purposes. The most important partners of all will be colleagues, parents and students themselves.

Internationally, contextual assessment is under-developed. The culture of attributing all difficulties to learners themselves remains strong and is an issue which many countries might need to address as they promote inclusive education. In this context, support for learning must be a key strategy. Issues to keep in mind are as follows:

- Support includes everything that enables learners to learn. It specifically includes those resources which supplement what the ordinary class teacher can provide.
- The most important form of support is that which is provided from the resources, which are at the disposal of every school – that is children supporting children, teachers supporting teachers, parents as partners in the education of their children and communities as supporters of schools and other centres of learning.
- In many situations, there will also be support from teachers with specialist knowledge, resource centres and professionals from other sectors. Where these forms of support exist, it is important to ensure that they contribute effectively to an inclusive approach. This may mean reorienting them towards providing support in the ordinary school.
- Support has to be delivered holistically. Services and agencies have to work together rather than isolating from each other. This may mean creating local management structures for services which are the same as those for managing schools.

In general, countries find that assessment systems work best where there is a basic system which applies to all children, but which can become more intensive and specialized in individual cases. Such universal systems make it more likely that certain difficulties will be identified. They also make it more likely that assessment will remain focusing on supporting the child's progress and development rather than simply on labelling and categorizing learners.

### 4.3 Preparing teachers for inclusion

In an inclusive education system, all teachers need to have positive attitudes towards learner diversity and an understanding of inclusive practices, developed through both initial training and ongoing processes of professional development. In addition, a few teachers will need to develop a high level of specialist expertise. However, it seems helpful for such teachers not to be placed on separate training tracks from the outset, but to develop skills and experience as mainstream educators and only later to specialize. Moreover, given the diversity of difficulties which they will be confronted, it also seems important for their specialism not to be defined too narrowly and for it to be built on a broad base of expertise at lower levels of training.

Much of the training that teachers need in relation to inclusive practices can take place in their ordinary initial training or through short in-service training events. However, a great deal of professional development also takes place where teachers are able to collaborate with special education teachers or in multi-disciplinary teams. In these cases, it is possible for teachers to acquire some of the skills of these specialists and to understand how these specialists can enhance their own assessments.

A basic training curriculum for teachers, therefore, might include advice about how to:

- Assess the progress of all students through the curriculum, including how to assess students whose attainments are low and whose progress is slow;
- Use assessments as a planning tool for the class as a whole, as well in drawing up individual plans for students;
- Observe students in learning situations, including the use of simple checklists and observation schedules;
- Relate the behaviours of certain students to normal patterns of development (especially important for teachers of young children);
- Involve parents and pupils in the assessment process; and
- Work with other professionals, including knowing when to call on their specialisms and how to use their assessments for educational purposes.

The progression from less to more specialist and extensive assessment is most straightforward where the school has access to a multi-disciplinary team. In many countries, establishing such teams involves bringing together specialists – such as social workers, health workers and educational psychologists - who have traditionally worked separately and this in turn may involve some re organization at ministry level. Where such specialists are scarce, it also involves persuading professionals to work flexibly so that they can take on some of the assessment work normally regarded as the preserve of other professionals. In particular, it may involve developing specialist teachers who can undertake some aspects of, for instance, psychological assessment, and who can relate the whole assessment process to the needs of teachers in ordinary schools.

#### 4.4 Continuing professional development

For all countries, teachers are the most costly - and potentially most powerful – resources that are deployed in the education system. Therefore, the development of the teaching force is crucial, especially in countries where material resources are relatively scarce. As systems become more inclusive, professional development is especially important because of the major new challenges that face both ordinary school teachers - who have to respond to a greater diversity of student needs - and special educators - who find the context and focus of their work changing in major ways.

The key issues for professional development are as follows:

- In inclusive systems, special educators spend more of their time working in ordinary schools and supporting the teachers in those schools. They have to develop a new range of skills in consultancy, the mainstream curriculum, inclusive classroom practices and so on.
- If teachers are to be trained in inclusive approaches, then their training programmes also have to be organized on inclusive lines. The rigid separation between mainstream education and special education programmes has to be replaced by more integrated programmes or more flexible pathways through programmes.
- In order to train teachers in inclusive approaches, teacher trainers themselves have to understand inclusive practice. They have to develop a greater knowledge of mainstream education and, especially, of the sorts of practices that are appropriate in inclusive classrooms.
- Inclusive approaches are based on sets of attitudes and values as well as on pedagogical knowledge and skills. Both initial and in-service training, therefore, have to provide opportunity for reflection and debate on these matters.

Countries find themselves in very different situations in terms of their existing professional development provision. In some countries, there are extensive and well-resourced programmes which simply need to be reoriented towards inclusive ends; in others, training is patchy. Mainstream educators in particular may be trained only to a relatively low level, and the need is to establish effective programmes in the context of limited resources.



In terms of the format of continuing professional development programmes, the following issues need to be taken into account:

- Professional development needs to be seen as part of a whole-system approach to change.
- School-based staff development, aimed at supporting school development, can be exceptionally powerful in the early stages of the move towards more inclusive education.
- Where training resources are scarce, cascade models can enable training to be disseminated throughout the system. This involves lessons from training experiences being passed on to other groups of teachers.
- Where there are logistical problems in giving teachers access to training, distance learning can be important.
- At some point, it will be necessary to review the structures of teacher education. Specifically, it will be necessary to set up a 'hierarchy' of training opportunities, so that all teachers know something about barriers to learning and some teachers have the opportunity to develop specialist expertise.
- It will be necessary to give special educators access to training which helps them reorient their roles towards working in inclusive settings.
- Teacher trainers also may need opportunities for reorienting their role, particularly where mainstream and special education training have traditionally been separate from each other.
- Training efforts need to be sustained over time in a planned, systematic manner.



## Performance indicators:

The arguments summarized in this Reading regarding practice suggest that in an education system that is becoming inclusive:

- 4.1** Schools and other centres of learning have strategies for encouraging the presence, participation and achievement of all learners from their local communities.
- 4.2** Schools and other centres of learning provide support for learners who are vulnerable to marginalization, exclusion and underachievement.
- 4.3** Trainee teachers are prepared for dealing with learner diversity.
- 4.4** Teachers have opportunities to take part in continuing professional development regarding inclusive practices.

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b)  $(\square + \square) \cdot (9x - \square) = \square - \square$

c)  $21x^2 + 10x - 6x^3 = x^3 \cdot (21x^2 + 10x - 6)$



# GUIDE 2



## Leading Inclusive School Development

Reaching Out to All Learners:  
a Resource Pack for Supporting Inclusive Education



# INTRODUCTION

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*Leading Inclusive School Development* is part of a set of resources designed to support the development of inclusive education systems. Its content is based on evidence from experiences and research internationally. (There is a related Guide, *Developing Inclusive Classrooms* that addresses more specifically the implications for teachers and teaching)

The aim of this guide is to support head teachers and their senior colleagues in reviewing and developing their schools in order to make all their students feel welcomed and supported in their learning. It is, therefore, focused on organizational change and the role of leadership in supporting inclusive school development.

## **Inclusive education**

In order to move a school forward, it is important that everybody involved has a common understanding of what inclusive education means. The materials in this guide are based on a definition that involves the following key elements:

- *Inclusion is a process.* That entails that inclusion has to be seen as a never-ending search to find better ways of responding to student diversity. It is about learning how to live with difference and learning how to learn from difference. In this way, differences come to be seen more positively as a stimulus for fostering learning among children and adults.
- *Inclusion is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers.* Here barriers may take different forms; some of which are to do with the way schools are organized, the forms of teaching provided and the ways in which children's progress is evaluated. Consequently, it is necessary to collect, collate and evaluate evidence about these factors in order to plan for improvements in policy and practice. This involves using evidence of various kinds to stimulate creativity and problem-solving.
- *Inclusion is about the presence, participation and achievement of all students.* Here 'presence' refers to where children are educated and how reliably and punctually they attend school; 'participation' relates to the quality of their experiences while they are present and therefore must incorporate the views of the learners themselves; and 'achievement' is about the outcomes of learning across the curriculum, not merely test or examination results.
- *Inclusion involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement.* This indicates the moral responsibility to ensure that those groups that are statistically more at risk are carefully monitored and that -where necessary - steps are taken to ensure their presence, participation and achievement within the education system.

Experiences in various parts of the world indicate that a well-orchestrated debate about these elements within a school can lead to a wider understanding of the principle of inclusion. As far as possible, this debate should involve all stakeholders.

## Using evidence

The approach recommended in this guide involves using evidence to review the situation within the school in order to decide which aspects need to be developed. The starting point for making decisions about what evidence to collect is with the definition of inclusion. In line with the suggestions made earlier, then, the evidence collected needs to relate to the 'presence, participation and achievement' of all students, with an emphasis placed on those groups of learners regarded to be 'at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement'.

Research suggests that such an approach is more likely to be successful in contexts where there is a culture of collaboration that encourages and supports problem solving. It requires those within a particular context to work together, using evidence to address barriers to education experienced by some learners. All of this demands effective leadership at every level of the school, not least at the classroom level. Consequently, a central role for senior staff is to encourage and support all teachers in developing their practices.

## The Inclusion Indicators

In reviewing the school, attention is focused on eight inclusion indicators. These point to school factors that international research suggests are associated with movement towards greater inclusion. The indicators are as follows:

1. Everyone is made to feel welcome.
2. Students are equally valued.
3. There are high expectations for all students.
4. Staff and students treat one another with respect.
5. There is a partnership between staff and families.
6. The school is accessible to all students.
7. Senior staff support teachers in making sure that all students participate and learn.
8. The school monitors the presence, participation and achievement of all students.

These indicators can be used as a framework for reviewing a school. They should be regarded as ideals, i.e. *unattainable aspirations against which existing arrangements can be compared in order to pinpoint areas for development.*

## Reviewing the school

For each indicator, a set of questions is posed. These indicate the types of evidence that will be needed in order to make informed judgements as to the current situation with regard to the specific indicator. Some of the evidence will be in the forms of statistics. However, qualitative evidence of various kinds will also be essential, particularly the views of members of the school community (i.e. students, parents and staff).

The review questions for each indicator are as follows:

### 1. Everyone is made to feel welcome

- Are students, parents and visitors made to feel welcome on arrival at the school?
- Is accessible information about the school made available?

### 2. Students are equally valued

- Is the work of all students displayed around the schools and classrooms?
- Are all students encouraged to take part in all school activities?

### 3. There are high expectations for all students

- Do all students feel that they expected to achieve?
- Are the achievements of all students celebrated?

### 4. Staff and students treat one another with respect

- Are there warm and friendly relationships between staff and students?
- Is respect shown for different cultural traditions and religious beliefs?

### 5. There is a partnership between staff and families

- Is there effective communication between homes and school?
- Do parents feel they are involved in supporting their children's learning?

### 6. The school is accessible to all students

- Are efforts made to overcome potential barriers to participation and learning?
- Can disabled students and adults gain access to all parts of the building?
- Are students who speak a different language helped to participate?

### 7. Senior staff support teachers in making sure that all students participate and learn

- Are there regular staff development activities focused on the improvement of teaching?
- Do senior staff observe lessons and offer suggestions for improvement?
- Do teachers have opportunities to observe one another's practices?

### 8. The school monitors the presence, participation and achievement of all students

- Are there systems for checking on student attendance in school and lessons?
- Are students offered opportunities to comment on how it feels to be a member of the school?
- Is the progress and achievements of every student tracked?

The rest of the guide consists of sets of workshop materials related to each of the eight inclusion indicators. While these materials can be read by individuals, they have been produced with the idea of encouraging school leaders to work with their colleagues in reviewing existing arrangements and agreeing actions that need to be taken in order to move their school forward.



## Using the guide

The recommended approach for using the guide involves a participatory orientation, known as ‘action learning’. This requires the creation of action learning ‘sets’, i.e. groups of colleagues that work on solving real problems through repeated cycles of action and reflection. The materials are used by the members of the learning set as part of a series of school-based workshops. These are intended to encourage participants to think about their school and determine changes they need to introduce in order to foster greater inclusion.

The starting point for the work of an action learning set is the existing experience and knowledge of its members. Those taking part must, therefore, be helped to take responsibility for their own learning. Colleagues in the group are seen as sources of challenge and support, bringing their experiences and perspectives to the discussions that take place. Within such contexts, introductory readings and accounts of practice are used to encourage the sharing of ideas. More specifically, the materials are designed to:

- *Stimulate reflection*, by enabling colleagues to compare what they do with accounts of practice from elsewhere;
- *Challenge and reframe existing thinking*, by reading evidence about practices that have proved to be successful in other contexts; and
- *Conceptualize learning*, through engagement with texts that provide theoretical explanations of what is involved in fostering inclusive ways of working in a school.

### Carrying out a review

Before making use of the workshop materials, it is recommended that the head teacher and other senior colleagues form into an action learning set. If possible, it is helpful to involve somebody from outside the school who can offer a different viewpoint (e.g. an inspector; a senior leader from another school; a university lecturer). The task of the group is to carry out an initial review of the school's stage of development in relation to the eight indicators. In this way, evidence can be used to formulate plans for using the guide to move policy and practice forward.

The first step in this process involves using best available statistical and qualitative evidence to score each indicator on the rating scale provided in the Appendix 2. This scale invites those involved to rate their school individually, using the following criteria:

1. *The school is working well.* i.e., There are several significant strengths and no obvious weaknesses.
2. *The school is performing quite well.* i.e., On balance, strengths outweigh weaknesses.
3. *The school is not performing well.* i.e., On balance, weaknesses outweigh strengths.
4. *The school is performing badly.* i.e., There are no obvious strengths and several weaknesses.

This rating process will lead to a profile showing relative strengths, while at the same time pointing to areas that need more development. In this way, decisions can be made regarding which sections of the guide are likely to be most helpful in moving the school forward.

## Moving forward

While the workshop materials are intended to be used flexibly to suit different circumstances, experience points to certain steps that are likely to be helpful. These are as follows:

- Step 1.** Following the initial school review process, the action learning set chooses one or more of the eight sets of workshop materials that seems to be relevant to their school.
- Step 2.** Individual members of the set read the workshop materials, making notes of issues and ideas that these bring to mind about their own school and its practices.
- Step 3.** At a meeting of the set, the workshop materials are analysed, using the experiences of individuals to inform the discussion. If possible, an external facilitator acts as chair, and care is taken to ensure that all individuals contribute. In the case of a larger set (i.e. more than eight members), smaller group discussion can be used prior to whole group debate.
- Step 4.** The set reviews the discussion, focusing specifically on practices within their school that need to be addressed. Where possible, action learning partnerships are created to support development activities.

Further cycles of action learning are then planned, using some of the other sets of workshop materials to stimulate discussions.

## Points to consider

Experience in various parts of the world suggests that when groups of colleagues within a school develop collaborative ways of working of the sort described here, this can have an impact on how they perceive themselves and their work. Specifically, comparisons of practice can lead them to rethink their aspirations, not least in relation to the way they view students who seem to present challenges. Rather than simply presenting problems that are assumed to be insurmountable, such students may come to be perceived as providing feedback on existing arrangements. In this way they may be seen as sources of understanding as to how these arrangements might be developed in ways that could be of benefit to the whole school community.

However, by their nature such approaches are difficult to introduce and sustain, not least because they tend to raise questions regarding existing assumptions and well-established ways of working. This being the case, there is a need to foster both support and challenge within such action learning sets. Research points to the following factors that seem to be important in this respect:

- **Commitment** - Progress requires a commitment from group members to the group, as well as to the action learning approach. There is also a need to recognize that the processes involved require a commitment over time in order that they can be effective. In other words, it has to be understood that this is not a 'quick fix'.

- *Willingness* - Alongside this sense of commitment, there is a need for those involved to be prepared to have an open mind about the materials and to be prepared to follow the model of adult learning involved.
- *Relationships* - It follows that much of this is about relationships. In particular, the forms of self-questioning that are involved require a degree of openness and trust among group members.
- *Agreed purposes* - Motivation seems to arise from a sense that the processes involved will have a payoff for individuals. This is why it is essential that areas of focus are negotiated and agreed within the set.
- *Power* - Such negotiations will sometimes lead to tensions, as different group members argue their corners in respect to their own priorities and interests. This is why it is usually better to have sets within which there are members who have a senior status.

Together, these five factors underline the challenge facing those who take on the task of facilitating action learning sets.

## The workshop materials

Each set of workshop materials relates to one of the eight indicators. There are three elements for each set, as follows:



### 1. Readings

These introductory texts summarize key ideas from international research regarding the particular indicator in a way that is intended to get readers thinking about the work of their own schools.



### 2. Accounts of practice

These would each take the form of a story of a school in relation to the indicator. The idea is that by reading and discussing the account those within a school will be challenged to think about their own ways of working and how they can be improved. It should be noted that the accounts describe schools in different parts of the world and, therefore, may refer to circumstances, policies and ways of working that are very different to those of your own school.



### 3. Issues for discussion

A common theme that runs through the workshop materials is that of leadership. The implication is that schools will not move forward without those in senior positions taking on the task of change management. With this in mind, a series of questions are posed to encourage those in leadership positions to think about the actions they need to take in order to support improvement efforts.

It should be noted that there is considerable overlap between the content of the eight sets of workshop materials, not least in the way they all stress the importance of collaboration, inquiry, change management and leadership.

# WORKSHOP 1

## Everyone is made to feel welcome



### Review questions:

- Are students, parents and visitors made to feel welcome on arrival at the school?
- Is accessible information about the school made available?



## Reading 1

There is not one single model of what an inclusive school looks like. What is common to highly inclusive schools, however, is that they are welcoming and supportive places for all of their students, not least for those with impairments and others who may experience difficulties. This does not prevent these schools from also being committed to driving up the achievements of all of their students. Indeed, they tend to have a range of strategies for improving achievement that are typical of those employed by all effective schools, and the emphasis on supporting vulnerable students does not appear to inhibit these strategies. The key factor is the emphasis placed on the progress of all of the students.

International research suggests that inclusive schools place particular emphasis on processes of collaboration among staff, students and families. In particular:

- They are characterized by an 'inclusive culture'. That is to say, there is some degree of consensus among adults around values of respect for difference and a commitment to offering all students access to learning opportunities. This consensus may not be total and may not necessarily remove all tensions or contradictions in practice. On the other hand, there is likely to be a high level of staff collaboration and joint problem-solving and similar values and commitments may extend to the student body, and to parent and other community stakeholders in the school.
- Some aspects of these cultures can be seen as participatory by definition. For instance, respect for diversity from teachers may itself be understood as a form of participation by children within a school community. Moreover, schools characterized by such cultures are also likely to adopt forms of organization (such as specialist provision being made within the ordinary classroom, rather than by withdrawal into special classes) and practices (such as active approaches to teaching and learning), which could be regarded as participatory by definition.
- Schools with 'inclusive cultures' are also likely to be characterized by the presence of leaders who are committed to inclusive values and to a leadership style that encourages a range of individuals to participate in leadership functions. Such schools are also likely to have good links with parents and with their communities.



These findings suggest that attempts to develop inclusive schools should pay attention to the building of some degree of consensus around inclusive values within school communities. In addition, there are general principles of school organization and classroom practice which should be followed: notably, the removal of structural barriers between different groups of students and staff; the dismantling of separate programmes, services and specialisms; and the development of pedagogical approaches (such as cooperative learning) which enable students to learn together rather than separately. It is also important that schools should build close relations with parents and communities based on developing a shared commitment to inclusive values.



## Issues for discussion

- How far are teachers in your school committed to making every child welcome?
- Which of your students feel left out? In your view, are there some students who are not fully involved in what the school offers?
- Are teachers in your school committed to finding ways of including all students?



## Account of practice 1

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**As you read the following description of a school that is committed to making all students welcome, you should consider if it points to issues that might need attention in your own school.**

### **‘Making everybody welcome’**

As students at this secondary school arrive in the morning, they are likely to meet the head teacher and other senior members of staff outside the front of the school. Then, as they walk through the rather narrow entrance into the reception area, another senior teacher greets them, frequently using the names of individuals as she speaks. Her greetings are often in the form of joking remarks, such as, ‘Come on, smile, it’s only school!’

The staff handbook describes the school as ‘a multi-cultural community of individuals, students, teachers, support staff, parents/caregivers and the local community. All are of equal value’. It also states: ‘The primary purpose of the school is teaching and learning. It is the entitlement of all members to experience success within a community which values their efforts and celebrates their diversity’.

**Shared values.** It is often said that successful schools have shared values. At this school, there is a core mantra surrounding inclusion and the celebration of diversity. Indeed, these themes seem to pervade everything – leadership styles and arrangements, ways of working, aspirations, priorities for school development and the lived behaviours of everyone who works in the school. Inclusion means valuing everyone, making everyone welcome, and ensuring that the environment (physical and emotional) is hospitable to everyone, that diversity is celebrated, and that achievement is diverse. In other words, inclusion is the key to both the values and the vision. As the head teacher says, ‘We are always trying to find ways of getting through the barriers – that’s what inclusion is all about’.

The school is open from 7.30 am, when some students attend the breakfast club. The library opens at 8am (and 40 – 50 students use it each day). There is free tea and snacks for teachers in the staff room before school. There is also a briefing each morning for all staff.

Teachers meet with students in the canteen at lunchtime, and are in evidence around the school, proactive, engaging with them. Activities pervade the day beyond the classroom, involving students constructively. There is a huge programme of after-school activities, run both by staff and unpaid community volunteers. The library and resources are available after school, and members of the community can use the facilities in the evening.

**Systems and routines.** All classes are said to be ‘mixed ability’. One senior colleague explains that grouping students on the basis of achievement would almost certainly lead to situations in which ‘difficult boys’ would be concentrated together alongside extremely vulnerable students, including those from refugee families, many of whom are still coming to terms with the national language.

It is reported that there are considerable racial tensions within the local community. Indeed, the head teacher argues that, racism is the biggest issue facing the school. Disputes that occur outside can easily continue in the school. Consequently, she feels that conflict resolution has to be an essential aspect of the work of staff.

Establishing consistency throughout the school is, the head explains, a vital issue and represents an enormous challenge. Consequently, the management challenge includes a need to create a sense of common purpose among all the staff and to ensure that there are daily routines that will help students to feel secure within the school environment. Opportunities such as the morning briefing for the teachers are used to repeat what must be, for some colleagues, familiar messages about what is regarded as being important to the school's mission.

The head teacher argues that the aim behind all of this 'is to help teachers to teach and students to learn.' In this respect, support for new colleagues has to be a priority. She comments, 'The students are not kind to new teachers.' So, for example, she told the story of a new teacher, recently appointed from overseas, who is still struggling to understand why it is that some students do not want to learn math. She explained, 'The urgent thing is to help him to cope. Then he will definitely be a good teacher.'

At the same time it is important to stress that the overall working atmosphere, around the school and in the classrooms, seems remarkably relaxed and, in the main, calm. A young art teacher, in her second year of teaching, commented, 'Most of the students seem to forget about what is going on outside. They are here to learn.'

**Living policies.** Much of the work of senior staff in the school is focused on ensuring awareness and the implementation of policies. In referring to this, one of the deputy head teachers commented: 'Setting the framework is the key leadership task and making policies work. We want to create living policies.'

With this in mind, considerable efforts are made to draw attention to key areas of school policy. Here, the displays around the school are particularly significant. It seems that nothing that is important is beyond being displayed. Display boards cover topics as diverse as community education, achievement awards, summer schools, celebration photographs, out-of-school activities, drugs awareness – and everywhere there are overt statements about equal opportunities, anti-bullying and the celebration of diversity. Photography is used extensively to celebrate multiple achievement. Posters with huge lettering stating "All Different, All Equal" are much in evidence – each with two contrasting student faces illustrating the point.

The sense of 'living policies' is perhaps most apparent in the way those within the school are encouraged to act in ways that value others. All staff are expected to be at lessons on time, to talk to students on the corridor on route, and to usher them to the right places. Everybody in the school is encouraged to acknowledge one another when they meet in the corridor. The head teacher says that she keeps saying to staff and students 'Don't walk past anybody without at least nodding'. Corridors are one-way, with arrows on the floor and, as a result, the possibility of confrontational clashes between students is reduced. Students do not wait outside classrooms, they enter, but staff is expected to be there to receive them.



## Issues for discussion

- Do you have a well-defined set of principles that guide the work of your school?
- Are there strategies used in this school that might be useful to you?
- Is your school culture inclusive in the sense that all students are seen as being of equal importance?
- What do you need to change and why?



# WORKSHOP 2

## Students are equally valued



### Review questions:

- Is the work of all students displayed around the schools and classrooms?
- Are all students encouraged to take part in all school activities?



## Reading 2

Of paramount importance in any school are the relationships that exist between children and teachers. Through these day-to-day interactions, the working ethos of the school is created. This is sometimes called the 'hidden curriculum': that is, the messages the students get from the way they are dealt with by the adults.

**Student views of teachers.** Walking round any school and listening to children talking will frequently reveal how teachers in a school are viewed by the children. For example:

*'Mr. Mariamis is horrible. He always shouts.'*

*'I can never understand what Miss Wong wants me to do.'*

*'Miss Fatima is very kind - if you can't do the work she'll always help you.'*

*'I like Jonesy. He always takes you seriously.'*

*'You can do anything you like in Mr. Ronaldo's class. He doesn't care.'*

Generally, children are very good at analysing the professional competence of their teachers. They are not slow to assess both strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, once attitudes have been formed, they are not so easy to change. Therefore, it is important to ensure that, as a teacher, you get off to a good start with the children.

**Teachers views of students.** Research suggests that personal relationships within school are very important. For example, it has been found that teachers who have a good relationship with their students are in a better position to maintain discipline. It also decreases the possibility of schooling being a belittling process, where personal qualities are neglected and all judgements are related to externally imposed criteria. Sometimes, this proves to be a particular problem for relatively low achieving students, whose strengths and efforts may not have been given the consideration they deserve.

Teachers need to deal with students as individuals, with the personal rights and status that implies. This entails a degree of negotiation between teacher and child. As one primary age child was heard to say:

*'I know that I'm no good at school work. That doesn't mean I'm no good as a person. Being told that I'm a slow learner all the time doesn't help and makes me feel that teachers think I've got nothing to offer.'*

Four areas seem to be of exceptional importance in forging good relationships between teacher and child. These are:

- *Classroom organization.* It is important that teachers do everything they can to ensure that the classroom is a good place to be. This means examining lesson content and presentation, organization of groups and physical layout.
- *Goal setting.* The importance of purpose and meaning in learning activities has already been emphasized. It is also important for the children to understand the short- and long-term objectives of the classroom. There is a lot of evidence to suggest that students can take some responsibility not only for formulating their own programmes of work but also for monitoring their progress. Many teachers are surprised at how children can talk about their priorities in the classroom. Perhaps we should consider consulting the consumers more frequently.
- *Teacher behaviour.* Not surprisingly, the manner in which teachers behave has a direct influence on the behaviour of students. Because of their position of status, a teacher's influence can be considerable. How many parents have heard their children say, 'But my teacher told me to'? Not only do teachers provide a model of behaviour that their students might copy, but they are also in a good position to shape and change the behaviour of the children in their classes.
- *Reward and punishment.* These influence the way in which relationships develop and flourish. Unfortunately, teachers frequently provide students with insufficient positive feedback about what they are doing. Although sometimes teachers need to be critical, it is important that they criticize constructively, while also recognizing when it is possible to provide encouragement. As the child quoted earlier said, 'Mr. Mariamis is horrible. He always shouts.' If you stop and analyse your own responses in the classroom, you may be surprised how infrequently you provide positive feedback and encouragement to your students.
- *Appropriate rules.* All schools have a set of rules. In addition, each teacher will have a number of rules that apply to their classrooms and define what is, and what is not, acceptable behaviour. Rules can be established in two ways. They may be formal and explicit; for example, 'No one must eat in class.' Alternatively, they can be implicit and established by case law; for example, it is unlikely that a teacher would state the rule, 'Do not poke the child next to you with a ruler.' It is a good idea to start off with a new class by making some basic rules explicit. As the relationship with the class develops, it is then possible to negotiate and discuss the introduction of new rules, or the modification of the original rules. Certainly, rules that are frequently broken should be re-examined, as it may be because they are not very practical. For example, twenty children waiting in a line to have their work marked may find it very difficult to wait in an orderly fashion. It would therefore be better to limit the number of children, or better still move round the class looking at the work of individuals and groups.

**Disabled students.** A particular aspect of the way teachers perceive their students is raised by the presence of children who have significant impairments. This relates to the changes in thinking that are discussed elsewhere in this guide with respect to the notion of special needs in education.

It is still common practice for the education service to categorize and label children according to their disability. Such an approach, although often used for administrative reasons, tends to imply that the problem rests solely with the child. For example, it may be considered that children are having difficulty acquiring literacy skills because they are seen as having 'dyslexia'. The danger of such an approach is that it may limit our expectations of such learners are able to achieve. Furthermore, it does not provide any ideas as to what can be done to teach the child literacy skills.

Labelling can also give rise to erroneous conclusions, as one young man with a physical impairment recalled when recounting his own experience in school:

*'When it was decided I could go to an ordinary school, I had to have an interview with the head teacher. I can recall him telling my parents that before he could admit me, I'd have to have an IQ test. I can remember feeling insulted. No other child had to have such an assessment prior to admission. It was obvious that the head felt that my physical disability meant that I was probably dull'.*

The student 'passed' his IQ test, did very well at the school, and went on to gain further qualifications at a College of Higher Education.

For children with impairments, placement in an ordinary school, alongside others from their community, can lessen their feeling of being different. Occasionally, however, such a placement has been known to heighten a child's awareness of the differences between other children and themselves. The key factor here is the attitudes of the other children and the staff.



## Issues for discussion

- Are all students valued equally in your school?
- How do you assess the quality of relationships between adults and students in your school?
- Do staff and students seem confident in mixing with disabled individuals?



## Account of practice 2

The following description of a school that has tried to develop ways of making all its students feel valued, points to some important issues regarding leadership. As you read it, you should consider what this means for the way you and your senior colleagues carry out your roles.

### ‘Crossing boundaries’

The word ‘boundaries’ frequently comes up during a visit to this primary school. First of all, the visitor notes the metal fence with pointed spikes that stakes out the physical boundaries of the school, while at the same time discouraging would be intruders. Then, there is much talk of the cultural boundaries children cross each day as they move between contexts that are influenced by different traditions and languages. There is also a sense of boundaries created by the well-articulated rules and procedures that dictate the ways in which staff and children go about their business. And, finally, it is clear that traditional boundaries have been blurred between the different staff groups, such that it is difficult for the visitor to identify the exact status of individuals.

This account analyses these issues in order to make sense of the forms of leadership practice that are used to foster positive working relationships within the school. The account is interesting in that not so long ago the behaviour of students in the school was a major problem. Nowadays, things are much improved. Furthermore, the improvements in behaviour that have occurred have also been paralleled by striking improvements in student achievement.

**The school context.** When the new head teacher joined the school, some years ago, she felt it was too ‘free and easy’. She recalls, for example, that students would arrive at whatever time suited them, that many of the boys tended to ignore the school rules, and that there was lots of ‘running around the building’. Furthermore staff was rather split in their views; some remaining loyal to the previous regime, while others were looking to see change. On reflection the school was, the head teacher recalls, ‘in turmoil’ and, inevitably, ‘standards were very poor’.

One of the first things that the new head chose to do was to improve the physical environment. New windows were fitted and the interior of the building was decorated. Now the whole school is clean and very attractive, with lots of engaging visual displays, many of which are used to illustrate teaching points. Flexible use is made of work areas adjacent to the classrooms, which are rather cramped, particularly for the older classes.

The head also introduced a range of procedures that were intended to develop consistency in the way the staff worked with the children. These are displayed on the walls around the school. So, for example, there is ‘The Golden Way’ (e.g. ‘we will play together and be friends’; ‘We will care for each other and help one another’). Linked to this are ‘The Golden Rules’ (e.g. ‘We do not fight’; ‘We always walk inside school’; ‘We do not swear’). There are also signs offering advice and suggestions, such as: ‘Only positive attitudes allowed beyond this point’; and ‘welcome to class: you may start thinking now’.

In previous years, playtimes were a considerable source of tension and discord. The head explained, 'It was an absolute nightmare and it was running into the afternoon'. Apparently, much of the difficulty arose from the involvement of part-time supervisory staff from the local community who found it difficult to deal with conflict in the playground. The head recalls: 'They simply watched the children fight, or, even worse, sometimes they supported their own children'.

In analysing this situation, the head concluded that in many ways, the break times represented a potentially very important time for the development of the children's social skills. She decided, therefore, to ask classroom support staff to share the responsibility for supervising this part of the school day. In particular, she altered their job descriptions and routines in order to take account of their new roles. She remembers, 'It made such a difference'. Talking about what now happens, a long-serving teaching assistant commented: 'The children know that we all operate from the same script'. In observing this in action and in talking to the support staff as they supervised the playground, it would seem that not only is there improvement in the behaviour of the children but that the children enjoy talking with the support staff. The teaching assistants themselves are also very happy to have this as part of their role.

Efforts have also been made to provide more activities for children to do in the playground and some students are asked to take on the role of 'playground buddies'. Notices in the reception hall explain that their role is to provide help and to make lunchtimes more enjoyable. These notices state: 'If you have a problem, you can ask a playground buddy before asking a teacher'; and, 'If you have no one to play with, ask a buddy. They may be able to help.'

**Responding to diversity.** The school takes certain steps to support children and families as they move between different cultures. On first arrival in the nursery, many of the children have limited language and this has to be a priority, leading to what is often rapid progress. Staff is also sensitive to the fact that many of the children attend additional lessons at the Mosque in the late afternoon.

Considerable efforts have been made to ensure parental support for the school's efforts to foster a cooperative working atmosphere. Earlier on, the lack of parental involvement was seen as part of the problem. The head teacher recalls:

*'Parents used to say to their children, if somebody hits you, hit back.'*

She explains that she tried to convince parents that it was necessary to 'break the cycle of violence'. There was also a period when some parents, specially certain fathers, would come into school to be abusive to the head and other members of staff. Sometimes she used what she referred to as 'veiled threats', for example: 'I've told them that I would exclude'. In fact, she is opposed to exclusion, although at times she has been forced to use this approach, not least in order to attract support from outside the school. Gradually, however, the views of parents have become much more positive, as is reflected by their involvement in assemblies and support for other school events. Here the family literacy programme has proved to be remarkably successful.

At the same time, tensions between home and school do still exist. For example, one teacher comments that a lot of the children are related and sometimes they bring family disputes with them into school. Differences in expectations also surface on some occasions. The head explains:

*'For example, mothers will dress the boys and leave the girls to dress themselves.'*

One teacher, talking about her class of eleven year olds, notes:

*'Every single boy here smokes. They steal cigarettes from home.'*

Nevertheless, the visitor is struck by the quiet atmosphere, and sense of calm and order around the school. Senior staff explains how they have worked with their colleagues to foster this atmosphere. One explained,

*'We tell them, you have to model the behaviour you want from the children'.*

Children speak positively about life in the school. They explain that there is very little bullying and, indeed, when it does occur, they feel comfortable in telling a member of staff, knowing that it will be dealt with quickly and effectively.

When asked about the improvements that have occurred in learning outcomes, the head resists the temptation to talk about test scores, preferring visitors to judge the school's success by the quality of the children's work and their attitudes to learning. Nevertheless, the improvements in test scores are worth noting.

**Leadership and relationships.** So then, what is it that has led to these striking improvements in behaviour and learning? Specifically, what forms of leadership practice have been used? It seems that there have been two over-lapping phases of development, each emphasizing rather different approaches. In the first of these phases, much of the leadership seemed to have been centred around the head teacher herself. She comments:

*'You lead by example. You show everybody that you work twice as much as anybody else.'*

More recently, there has been evidence of a different approach, one that is characterized by a much greater emphasis on forms of shared leadership. The head comments:

*'I've been a bit too much for control.'*

Indeed, one member of the senior management team commented:

*'If something needs doing we all do it.'*

The head seems to be particularly sensitive to the challenges faced by her colleagues. She notes that 'there is too much pressure on everybody.' Having said that, she appears to have been successful in developing a sense of common purpose and a commitment to mutual support. Here there is little evidence of any distinction between the roles of teaching and non-teaching staff. One teaching assistant commented: 'We're all involved in everything.'

Efforts are made to identify and make use of the special skills of each member of staff. For example, the head comments:

*'One of the teaching assistants is brilliant at display, so she has taken a lead on this around the school.'*

The head has taken time to find out what her staff's special strengths and abilities are, and this is reflected, especially, in the added responsibilities given to the teaching assistants.

**Promoting inclusion.** The move towards more participatory forms of leadership has taken place alongside the emergence of what appears to be a well worked out strategy for promoting inclusion. At the heart of this strategy is an emphasis on monitoring the effectiveness of current arrangements for teaching and learning. Initially, this monitoring was largely the responsibility of the head teacher. Gradually, however, this has become a shared responsibility, with members of staff, including teaching assistants, using various forms of information gathering, such as peer observation and questionnaire surveys of student opinion, in order to monitor the situation in the school. Through these processes, areas of concern are determined and these are defined as priorities within the school development plan.

The processes of internal monitoring are mirrored by a preoccupation to locate external possibilities for opportunities to further staff development. However, the head is careful to ensure that the staff engages only in projects that relate to stated priorities.



### Issues for discussion

- Is your school a safe place for all of the children?
- Are difficulties of behaviour in your school addressed quickly and effectively?
- Are there strategies referred to in this account that you might try?





# WORKSHOP 3

## There are high expectations for all students



### Review questions:

- Do all students feel that they expected to achieve?
- Are the achievements of all students celebrated?



### Reading 3

Successful schools are inclusive in the sense that all the students are expected to make progress in their learning. This does not happen by chance. Rather, it occurs as a result of the way the school is managed in order to create an atmosphere where everybody - students and staff - feels valued and supported. So, how can this be achieved? What forms of organization foster high expectations within a school community?

Schools have been described as 'loosely-coupled systems'. This loose-coupling occurs because schools consist of units, processes, actions and individuals that tend to operate in isolation from one another. Loose-coupling is also encouraged by the goal ambiguity that characterizes education. On the other hand, what we see in more inclusive schools are social processes that are intended to coordinate the actions of staff and children behind agreed principles. These have to work in ways that do not reduce the discretion of individual teachers to practice according to their own preferences. Teaching is a complex and often unpredictable business that requires a degree of improvisation. Indeed, it might be argued that a significant hallmark of an inclusive school is the degree to which the teachers in it are prepared to adjust their practices in the light of the feedback they receive from members of their classes.

Consequently, teachers must have sufficient autonomy to make instant decisions that take account of the individuality of their students and the uniqueness of every encounter that occurs. What is needed, therefore, seems to be a well-coordinated, cooperative style of working that gives individual teachers the confidence to improvise in a search for the most appropriate responses to the students in their classes; in other words, a more tightly coupled system without losing loose coupling benefits.

How, then, can such arrangements be achieved? It does seem that relationships are the key to establishing greater coordination. Some American researchers have suggested that school relationships may be structured in one of three ways: individualistically, competitively or cooperatively.

In schools with an individualistic form of organization, teachers tend to work alone to achieve goals unrelated to the goals of their colleagues. Consequently, there is little sense of common purpose, no sharing of expertise, and limited support for individuals. Furthermore, such schools often move towards a more competitive form of organization.



In a competitive system, teachers (and students) strive to do better than their colleagues, recognizing that their fates are negatively linked, since the success of any individual is likely to be enhanced by the failure of others. For this win-lose struggle to succeed, it is almost inevitable that individuals will celebrate difficulties experienced by their colleagues, since these are likely to increase their own chances of success.

Clearly, therefore, the organizational approach that is most likely to create a positive working atmosphere within a school is one that emphasizes cooperation. Therefore, the aim must be to encourage a more lightly coupled system within which the efforts of individuals are coordinated in order to maximize their impact. In such a school individuals are more likely to strive for mutual benefit, recognizing that they all share a common purpose and, indeed, a common fate. Furthermore, individual teachers know that their performance can be influenced positively by the performance of others. This being the case, individuals feel proud when a colleague succeeds and is recognized for their competence.

A school that is based upon a cooperative structure is likely to make good use of the expertise of all members of its community, provide sources of stimulation and enrichment that will foster their learning and development, and encourage positive attitudes to the introduction of new ways of working.

## Issues for discussion



- Is your school organized in ways that encourage collaboration and experimentation among the staff members?
- Are there high expectations for all the children?



## Account of practice 3

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**As you read the following description of a school that seems to have developed a highly collaborative working atmosphere that fosters high expectations, you should consider if it points to issues about relationships that might need attention in your own school. You should also think about how such relationships could be encouraged.**

### **‘Sharing responsibility’**

The head teacher of this primary school has been in her post for over ten years. She recalls that when she joined the school, there was what she describes as too much authoritarianism. This was, she felt, based on preconceptions about the children and their backgrounds. Discipline in the school at that time was seen as being good, but her perception was that it was largely geared to ‘holding down difficult children’, many of whom were from poorer homes. Her own view was that what was needed was a change of approach that would seek to foster autonomy, independence and self-discipline among all the children.

Recalling her early times in the school, the head remembers that it was necessary for her to have a clear idea of where she was heading. Commenting on this, she noted:

*‘It seems to me that you only really develop a philosophy when you become a head teacher. You have time to think about what you believe in, to reflect on what matters. As a teacher, you practice what you believe. You know what works!’*

Her view that teachers’ philosophies are often largely undefined is significant and seems to inform the ways in which she has led and worked with her colleagues. Certainly, she is now able to articulate her own beliefs clearly and in some detail. For example, she explained:

*‘I’m a great believer in equal opportunities. It has to be tangible; it has to touch everything.’*

With this in mind, she recalled:

*‘I wanted experiential learning, a clear commitment to creativity. I’m a late drama convert. By living what you believe, you develop knowledge and understanding.’*

These fundamental principles led her to concentrate on the development of what she calls ‘a creative arts-based curriculum’.

Her early approach to the management of the school was to provide staff with a very clear lead in this respect and to model the kinds of approach that she wanted. Subsequently, she arrived at a point where, in her words, ‘their belief systems matched mine’. Here it is perhaps significant that this head teacher has been involved in the appointment of all the present staff. Now teachers are given space to take on leadership roles within clear frameworks and expectations. Subject coordinators, in particular, are expected to take on considerable responsibility for leading development initiatives. Her attitude to professional autonomy was perhaps best summed up when she was asked about how she monitors the work of the teachers:

*‘No, I don’t read the teachers’ plans. I trust the children to plan their own solutions; so, I have to trust the teachers.’*

**Signposts for practice.** It is interesting, then, to hear about how this head teacher has managed to assemble her staff team to the point where their 'belief systems' match hers. Her account is much informed by her view that practitioners often do not articulate the philosophies that inform their work. This being the case, she has emphasized forms of leadership that are intended to stimulate reflection on practice in ways that encourage her colleagues to work together in order to create understandings and shared commitments. She commented:

*'The way I have brought teachers into this discussion (about beliefs) is by approaching it through that part of their lives.'*

The head is clear that she wants her staff to have creative minds, rather than to be experts in creative disciplines. Such experts can, she argues, intimidate other members of staff. Her aim is to encourage the development of expertise among everybody. Creative minds can, she believes, develop new expertise. So it was that a drama 'expert' was asked to be responsible for technology. The head explained that she was particularly pleased with the resulting innovations in that subject.

In recent years, staff turnover has been high, with a lot of teachers going on to promotion in other schools. Indeed, five former members of staff have gone on to be head teachers elsewhere. Commenting on this with obvious pride, she noted: 'I see my role as a trainer as an obligation and privilege'.

Further revealing her attitude to professional autonomy, the Head stated:

*'I hate policies. What I want are signposts for practice and connected thinking.... It's more important that teachers and children find out what happens, than read about it.'*

With this in mind, she works with her staff to develop clear articulations of the ideas that are intended to inform their actions as they work with the children. Talking about staff meetings – which, incidentally, often start with a song - she explained how visual imagery and key phrases are developed that signal agreements and commitments among the staff. For example, a drawing of a candle provides a visual metaphor of what is meant by creativity. The word 'risk' appears on the flame and the light it shines throws light on 6 Es: enjoy, enrol, empower, empathy, enthuse and experimentation. The discussion about this image ended with the observation that when the candle burnt out it was probably time to light a new one.

Such formulations represent strong visual records of social learning processes within which staff members have helped one another to articulate the beliefs behind their practice. They also provide a reminder of joint commitments that are intended to bring a sense of common purpose and shared responsibility to everybody's practices.

**Relationships.** Visitors become aware of the atmosphere of the school as soon as they enter. It becomes apparent, for example, that children are 'nurtured' to feel real stakeholders in the success and growth of the school. They relate to each other cooperatively, and are open, polite and confident when greeting visitors. It is noticeable, too, that children routinely pick up litter and hang up others' coats that have fallen off their pegs. Some of the children are trained to show visitors around the school and are given the title 'welcomers'. Their obvious loyalty to and love of the school is manifest throughout the tour, and the confident, polite and very mature way in which they relate to visitors tells a story of a school that has real impact.

The commitments that emerge from the social learning processes that underpin the school ethos are perhaps most illustrated by the way that children relate to one another and to adults in the school, not least in respect to their relationship with the head teacher herself. Her office is an important symbol of what this involves. At the top of a set of stairs, adjacent to the front entrance, it is very different to the usual run of head teacher's offices. A largish L-shaped room, it includes a meeting table with some ten or so chairs, working space for the two administrators, storage shelves for resources, and, around the corner of the L, what looks like the living room of a home, with settees and easy chairs. When necessary, this area can be screened off from the rest of the office. The head herself has a desk in one corner of the room.

Known as 'the office', this area acts as the hub of the school. Throughout the day members of staff and children move in and out freely in order to carry out a range of activities. The school secretary, who is also responsible for matters of child protection, is a key part of what happens. She helps to guard the head's time, so that she can dedicate much of her time to working directly with groups of children. Commenting about competing demands on the head's time, the secretary noted, 'Often I can deal with it.'

The head explained how she saw the purpose of the office:

*'In modern management, you need openness and access to information.'*

The office is, she explained, 'a room that is flexible to the needs that present themselves'. Certainly, observing how it is used suggests that the much-quoted strategy of 'management by walking about', while still important, is supplemented by the school coming to her!

**Students supporting students.** Particularly significant is the extent to which children have access to the office and, indeed to the head teacher. All of this is revealing as to her own priorities as a school leader. So, for example, at one point during the day two boys, Karl and Louis, arrive to show the head a picture of a Greek vase that they had made together. Apparently, the previous evening Louis had attacked Karl after school. That morning Karl's mother had contacted the head about what had happened. Consequently, she had required the two boys to work together on the Greek project. She explained:

*'I don't tell them to ignore each other. I ask them to work together. ...Children want to be in the popular group. Separating them would just reinforce Karl as an isolated child.'*

This approach of working directly with children in order to foster positive social relationships is more formally apparent in the school's use of what is called PALS. Focused on 'Positive Environment, Action, Learning and Support', the idea is to create peer group counselling contexts. In some ways, the approach is similar to the 'circle of friends' strategy used to foster the participation in schools of individual children with disabilities. A key difference, however, is that there is much less emphasis on providing support for particular students. Instead, diverse groups of students are created on the assumption that all members will gain some benefit.

The head takes on much of the responsibility for forming and supporting the activities of the various PALS groups, taking great care to ensure an appropriate mix of children. During breaks and lunchtimes, the groups meet in the office, usually for about ten minutes. Each meeting is chaired by one of the children and takes place as and when its members feel it to be necessary. Names are not mentioned during the discussions. The head explained that there is no formal timetable for the meetings. Groups arrive and leave the office in a way that seems to present no difficulties. When asked how the children know that it's 'their turn', the head replied, 'I'm not really sure.' The children had certainly solved this procedural problem themselves and the solution was self-perpetuating.



During PAL group meetings, the head sits in the background, only intervening when she finds it necessary. Currently over two hundred children belong to such a group and clearly this represents a major commitment of her time. On the other hand, she argues:

*'It's better to use your time productively with children rather than solving problems later.'*

The head believes that the approach has been very influential in the school, not least with respect to her own relationships with children and her awareness of their interests and concerns. She noted:

*'I have become a better listener since starting PALS. I'm given daily lessons in humility.'*

The children also talk very positively about the contributions of the PALS groups. One girl explained:

*'It helps to make behaviour better in the school. We try to solve friendship problems sometimes.'*

Talking about the members of his group, a boy explained:

*'I feel confident with these people around me. I know they're not going to tell anybody else.'*

**Children as leaders.** One of the most impressive features of the school is the way students are expected to take on responsibility, not least through its student council. Well established over many years, it involves the oldest students in taking responsibility for providing leadership in the school. Again this reflects the head's vision:

*'I want children to build their own self-belief systems.'*

Council members are not chosen by staff, or elected by the children. Rather, students leaving the school are asked to choose and train their successors for the key council positions. Three students act as leaders, while others take on roles such as peace buddies, minute takers, problem-solvers and reflectionists. In addition, each class in the school nominates a representative.

Each Tuesday morning, there is a council assembly that is chaired by the student leaders and attended by all children in the school. Usually only one member of staff is present. Some council members act as 'spotters'. Their job is watch out for children who speak out of turn during the assembly and speak to these individuals afterwards.

The grade six students on the Council speak very positively about the experience, in many instances noting the positive impact this has had on their self-confidence and indeed, on their skills in carrying out their duties. For example, one of the leaders explained:

*'I used to be really shy and now I have much more confidence to speak in front of everybody.'*

Another of the leaders commented:

*'I was really surprised when I was chosen. I'm quite unlucky and usually get overlooked. I was very pleased when I was chosen.'*

Similarly, another council member noted:

*'You never think you are being noticed. I was surprised to be picked.'*



A girl who acts as a minute-taker noted:

*'It's quite a job to hear everybody. I think it makes a difference. Everybody reads my notes.'*

Others spoke more specifically about their personal experiences. For example, a boy referred to the way his own earlier difficulties have helped him:

*'I'm the problem-solver. I think I was chosen because I had a few problems myself in year 5. I turned myself around.'*

Of course, the strategy that has evolved over the years means that these students have grown up in an environment in which their voices are regularly heard - significantly, proposals from the council appear in the school development plan. They have also seen previous year six students taking a lead in ways that have provided very positive role models. Then, when they arrive in their final year, they too have opportunities to share in these responsibilities. Interestingly, some of the year, six students are also providing advice on-line to children in other schools who are involved in the development of councils.



## Issues for discussion

- Are any of the approaches used in this school relevant to your work?
- How do you feel about allowing students to have so much influence within a school?
- To what extent are children 'real stakeholders in the success and growth' of your school?
- How can you maintain the balance between supervising teachers and treating them as partners in the development of inclusive practices?



# WORKSHOP 4

## Staff and students treat one another with respect



### Review questions:

- Are there warm and friendly relationships between staff and students?
- Is respect shown for different cultural traditions and religious beliefs?



## Reading 4

A researcher in New Zealand has suggested that there is no such thing as an inclusive school. Rather, he argues, there is 'a process of inclusion that has no limits'. In this sense, what we see in schools that become more inclusive is an exploration of new forms of practice and organization that are intended to extend the staff's capacity to support the learning of all of the children, whatever their current levels of achievement and perceived difficulties. All of this usually leads to a renegotiation of the working relationships between teachers and students in ways that indicate a high degree of mutual respect.

Consequently, those of who are interested in the ways in which schools can become more inclusive can learn much from hearing about and reflecting on schools that have made steps in these directions. This does not mean that there are blueprints that can point the way forward for all schools - what seems to help development in one school may have no impact or even a negative effect in another.

**Team work.** Writing about his analysis of what happens in one highly inclusive primary school, an English researcher explained how teamwork among staff created opportunities for young children to have more autonomy in the classrooms:

*As a result of my observations and discussions I noted, in particular, the ways in which the school is structured in order to facilitate teamwork. Indeed, enormous amounts of time are given over to this process. In addition to the formal planning processes, the teachers also meet on at least two evenings a week and sometimes more for further planning and in-service activities.*

*The formal planning processes seem to have two main elements. First of all, there is the planning of the overall learning environment. This involves taking the programmes of study outlined in the national curriculum and, while bearing in mind the principles upon which the schools attempts to operate, turning these into appropriate activities, materials and classroom arrangements.*

*The second element is concerned with planning for individual students. This requires the creation of individual curriculum plans for every child, based upon the best available knowledge among the staff team working*

*with the child. Interestingly this approach seems to incorporate the notion of individual planning that is so familiar in special education settings but in a way that relates to the needs of all children. In a sense it is an approach that implies that every child is regarded as being special!*

*This formal planning, carried out in a collaborative way within the teams, provides a basis for yet a third form of planning. I have characterized this as 'planning in action'. It is the decision-making that individual teachers make throughout the school day in the light of their interpretations of their observations. It has to take account of the decisions that individual children make as they engage with the opportunities that are provided. It is, I believe, guided by the knowledge, principles and sensitivities that members of staff develop as they take part in the more formal planning procedures that I have described.*

*All of this takes place in what can best be described as a 'hothouse' atmosphere within which all the teachers are subject to the continual scrutiny of their colleagues. In this context, planning in action becomes a demanding requirement on those who work in the school. Fortunately, the evidence indicates that these pressures are, to a degree, alleviated by the heavy emphasis placed on teamwork and collaboration which, in effect, provides on-going support and encouragement for individual members of staff.*

**Autonomous learning.** In this school, the collaborative approach to planning leads to a context in which the children are afforded considerable autonomy to make decisions about their own learning. This, in turn, seems to signal the respect the teachers have for their students. The researcher explains:

*An important feature of the way in which the areas of the building are organized is the emphasis placed on creating flexible and accessible working environment. Materials and equipment are made available for the children to get themselves; space is allocated for particular types of activities; and much use is made of concrete materials of various kinds to stimulate activity. Frequently use is made of the floor in order to provide more working space, and care is taken to ensure that displays and equipment are at an appropriate eye level for the children. In these ways, considerable overall attention is given to making the classroom areas attractive and stimulating places to be.*

*The emphasis placed on encouraging students to be more autonomous seems to give the teachers more time than in traditional forms of classroom organization. Nonetheless, it is necessary to remember that each teacher has to engage with a large number of children as they move from one area to another. One of the teachers noted that this had now 'become easy' for her and she wonders nowadays what she would do with her time if she had 'an ordinary class size'.*

*In fact, much of the teachers' time is used to move about the classroom, observing, facilitating, questioning, and praising children's efforts. Much emphasis is placed on helping students to relate new learning to old, and to connecting the unusual to the known. Helping the children to find purpose and meaning in their experiences seems to be seen as being of particular importance.*

*At the outset of the morning and afternoon sessions, the children usually meet in base groups, where the teacher asks questions in order to focus the children's attention, and assigns tasks and arrangements. Later, teachers may occasionally call groups of children together to review activities, reflect on what has happened and plan for further tasks. Here there is a noticeable emphasis on 'reaching out' to individuals, helping them to find meaning in their experiences. Thus, once again, we become aware of how plans are modified*

during a session through processes of 'trial and error' as teachers 'think on their feet'. As a result of this type of informal planning, tasks may be reformulated as required and new materials designed as a need becomes apparent. Similarly, at various moments students are encouraged to collaborate in supporting one another's learning. Such groupings of children may have been preplanned or, in other instances, created spontaneously.

The children themselves are given a large degree of independence to shape their programme of activities during much of the school day. This sometimes means that they achieve things that are beyond the expectation of the teacher. Children are required to monitor their own work, reflect upon the meaning of their experiences and keep a record of their achievements.

**Supporting vulnerable students.** Within this overall pattern, those children seen as having special needs are expected to participate equally. The overall emphasis is on providing support within the classroom, making exceptional use of what might be described as 'natural' sources of support, especially the children themselves. The researcher explains:

*Within the school, the whole issue of how support is used remains one of considerable debate. For example, teachers worry about the potential dangers of assigning support assistants to particular children, something that tends to be encouraged by national policies. The concern of some staff is that such arrangements may encourage dependence on the assistant and, at the same time, act as a block to child to child interactions.*

*What has to be stressed, however, is the high levels of task engagement of the students, including those seen as having special needs. For me all of this raises questions about how this is achieved. Specifically, how far is it an outcome of the school's pursuit of inclusion, or is it a manifestation of the more general features of teacher effectiveness reported in the research literature?*



## Issues for discussion

- Are students in your school allowed to make choices regarding their learning?
- Do you see this as an effective way of signaling respect to the students?
- How do you support potentially vulnerable students in your school?







## Account of practice 4

The following account describes how a school used an inquiry-based approach in order to encourage positive views of differences. In considering what happened, you should think about issues that might need attention in your own school.

### ‘Talking about inclusion’

Becoming more inclusive involves learning how to live with differences and, indeed, learning how to learn from differences. This account describes how, over a twelve months period, a primary school carried out a large-scale initiative to strengthen its approach to inclusion. This involved an inquiry-based approach that stimulated considerable debate. Significantly, the students themselves played a key role in what happened.

**Context.** The school caters for about 500 students in the age range 3-11. It has served a multicultural community for many years. Today there are 23 different nationalities, with 19 different languages spoken among the families. Some children are in the school because their parents are post-graduate students at local universities. Consequently, they only stay for short periods. In some cases, these children arrive with limited knowledge of the language used by the teachers during lessons. Fortunately, there are good arrangements for language support.

Ethnic diversity is not only related to children that attend the school but also to members of staff. Commenting on this, the head teacher explained,

*‘Any religious or cultural thing I’m not sure about, there is always somebody I can ask.’*

**Making sense of inclusion.** The motto of the school, ‘All different, all equal’, reflects the commitment among staff to ensure that differences are valued and that everybody’s background is treated with respect. This is not just a motto, however, but a deep held philosophy throughout the school community.

Recently, a newly appointed assistant head teacher took the lead in coordinating efforts to strengthen the commitment to inclusion in the school. She began by holding a staff meeting to brief her new colleagues. Later she repeated this briefing for administrative staff, lunchtime organizers and the team of support assistants. In this way, almost everybody was informed of what was being proposed. What was of most importance though was the fact that during those meetings the assistant head went beyond her presentation, asking people to take an active role. Specifically, she asked them to work in small groups to identify children they considered to be at risk of marginalization or exclusion.

Both the head and the assistant head agreed all of this that ‘was a bit scary’. For example, the discussions that took place brought to the surface potentially uncomfortable issues for discussion, such as, attitudes towards immigration, ‘children who smell’, and feelings about a child who was considered to be odd. The assistant head commented:

*‘The discussion was invaluable. It helped us open the debate. Everybody was discussing openly things that were only said in the corridors before.’*

These initial meetings each lasted for about one hour but the discussions carried on informally afterwards. They proved to be particularly helpful to the newly appointed assistant head in learning more about the school and her colleagues. After the meeting she collated all the comments made and ideas about the children that were identified as being at risk.

**Collecting evidence.** Through the consultations that took place, the school was able to identify children whose progress was a cause for concern. Further information was gathered from parents using a questionnaire, which had to be translated for some families. Another staff meeting was devoted to discussion as to how the views of children could be gathered. This started with a consideration of existing practices in the school for listening to the voice of students, which led to a list of such activities, e.g. circle time, assemblies, friendship squad, clubs, displays. The school also carried out a survey of children's views, using questionnaires. These were translated for those children that needed it. In the early years, classes the surveys were carried out as whole class activities.

The assistant head analysed the responses for each class and then for the whole school. Though this was very time-consuming, she believed that it was really helpful in drawing attention to issues in the school that needed addressing. So much so that she decided to carry out another survey later in the year to see if there were changes in children's views about the school. She also felt that it was exceptionally important to capture the views of new arrivals. In addition, staff completed questionnaires that could be looked at alongside the evidence recorded at the various meetings that took place.

**Getting focused.** At a further meeting, the staff had a chance to look at the data that had been collected. Understandably, everybody wanted to see how their own classes had responded and also to compare the results with those of the rest of the school.

As a result, it was decided to allocate a two-week period for the use of various student voice activities in every class. The assistant head organized a schedule for this and also reminded the teachers who the target children were. As each teacher carried out the activities in their classes, a colleague would observe the process, looking specifically at the way individual children responded. In this way, they were able to integrate student voice activities into their day-to-day teaching and learning, something that subsequently became a part of usual practice across the school.

During this same period, senior staff and support assistants also took part in a programme of observations, focusing specially on the involvement of the children that had been targeted. It was found necessary to adapt the observation schedules they used in order to leave more space for comments. What was most unusual was the way that all of this was concentrated into a two-week period. Those in the school argue that this really led to a period of intensive debate within the school. Commenting, the assistant head said, 'If it is about orchestrating debate within a whole school, it makes sense to create limits'.

The idea of having the observations during students' voice activities was very successful in the sense that everybody remained attentive and concentrated during this particular period of time. Staff felt that the observations helped them a lot and gave them lots of positive feelings and made them see things from different angles.





# WORKSHOP 5

## There is a partnership between staff and families



### Review questions:

- Is there effective communication between homes and school?
- Do parents feel they are involved in supporting their children's learning?



### Reading 5

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In order to foster inclusive ways of working, schools need to mobilize available human and intellectual resources, some of which they may not directly control. It is essential, therefore, that partnerships are formed with key stakeholders who can support the transition process. These include: parents; other education professionals; those in other services who will be affected by the move to inclusion (e.g. health, social services); teacher trainers and researchers; national and local administrators and managers; civic groups in the community; and members of minority groups at risk of exclusion.

The involvement of families is particularly crucial. In some countries, for example, there is already close cooperation between parents and authorities in developing community-based programmes for disabled children. A logical next step is for such parents to become involved in supporting inclusive education developments in schools.

Sometimes, parents of children experiencing difficulties can find themselves in dispute with schools and authorities, as they press for better provision. In some cases, such parents - and the parental organizations that represent them - have been invited into the policy-formulation process. They might be involved simply in negotiating provision for their child, or in becoming part of a school's governing body, or in joining local or national policy-review groups.

Where parents lack the confidence and skills to participate in such development, it might be necessary to undertake some developmental activities with them. This might mean creating networks of parents who can act as mutual support groups, or training parents in skills to work with their own children, or acting as parental advocates in their dealings with schools and authorities.





## Account of practice 5

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**As you read the following description of a school that is committed to the idea of involving everybody, you should consider if it points to issues that might need attention in your own school.**

### **‘Involving everybody’**

This high school was created as a result of the amalgamation of three schools. Three years later, it moved into a splendid new building, where there are boys and girls in the age range 11-16. Its population includes students from a wide range of cultural and ethnic groups, with some 45 languages represented. By and large the young people come from economically poor backgrounds and there is a high level of student mobility.

Students are admitted from a wide area and arrive from almost 40 different primary schools. The school also has many young people from traveler families. Attendance has been a huge problem in recent years and a lot of effort has been made to bring about improvements.

**Getting started.** Developments in relation to inclusion have been led by the deputy head teacher, who also coordinates teaching and learning in the school. This has proved to be a significant factor in ensuring that the focus is on agendas that are central to the school’s work. In describing the process used in the school, the deputy head was keen to stress that it had been very time consuming. Give the undoubted impact; however, she believes that this has been a sound investment of her time.

In setting up the process, the school went through a series of steps, the aim being to make sure that everybody knew what the strategy for fostering inclusion was about. The first step was to explain the overall approach to members of the senior management team. In doing so, she stressed that her strategy had to connect with other developments that were occurring. Following this, she held a similar discussion with heads of the subject department. A staff meeting followed where; once again, the deputy head explained the rationale.

This setting-up phase lasted from September until December. The deputy head recalls that at that stage she herself remained uncertain about where it was all heading but that all the discussions with colleagues helped her to get a much clearer sense of direction. As the process developed, the head and senior management team became very committed to what they were doing and, as a result, the inclusion strategy became a matter of core business. The head teacher commented:

*‘Everything we’ve done with inclusion relates to everything else that we are doing.’*

**Using evidence.** The school gathered together and engaged with statistical data about the presence, participation and achievement of all of the students. There were few real surprises. However, it did confirm that the overall goal remained that of improving achievement through developing approaches to improve learning, while also reducing exclusions. Nevertheless, the process provoked widespread discussion and challenged some of the school’s existing arrangements.

Then, during a period of a few weeks, a massive exercise was carried out to collect the views of many members of the school community. All students were surveyed on the same day during registration periods, and the views of all staff were surveyed, including supply teachers, office workers, kitchen staff, cleaners, lunch supervisors and technicians. The deputy head recalled what happened:

*'It was amazing how it led to a lot of talk around the school. Many people expressed their views forcefully. It was unquestionably a whole school process and it provoked a school wide debate.'*

Everybody had plenty to say about the school and it was clear that the process gave them the opportunity to express themselves. The deputy head held focus groups with students, taking care to include a range of age groups. She was also careful to involve representatives of the different cultures in the school, students in public care, asylum seekers, school refusers, persistent truants, and students who had previously been suspended because of bad behaviour. The implication being that the school could anticipate some challenging feedback.

**Moving forward.** The process led to a more focused approach to school development. A senior teacher explained:

*'The student survey and student voice activities were very powerful in making us, as a staff, think deeply about what we wanted to do and where we wanted to go.'*

More specifically, it led to a decision to revitalize the existing student council in order to make it work more effectively. The evidence is that this has been a great success.

Members of the student council talked with enthusiasm about the steps they have taken to make their school more welcoming for newcomers, particularly those arriving from other parts of the world. For example, they introduced the idea of a suggestion box, where students can express their concerns or propose changes. The council members read these and discuss what actions are needed. So, for example, they took a lead when a few students indicated that they needed somewhere to pray.

Half way through the year, a very successful meeting of all the staff was held, at which extracts of student voice evidence were discussed in small groups. This led to the setting of targets in relation to the following issues:

- Getting students to know about the life styles of families from other countries represented in the school
- Staying safe
- Raising achievement among year 8 students moving into year 9
- Reducing the numbers of students revisiting the isolation room
- Encouraging students to take responsibility

**Parents' views.** The deputy head was keen to widen involvement in this initiative, particularly in respect to the contributions of parents. Her previous experience led her to be aware of some of the challenges this posed, in that their scope of representation tends to be dominated by the most outspoken and articulate groups. This can result in consultation exercises, which, although intended to be inclusive, actually reinforce a sense of exclusion and disaffection among some of the school community. With this in mind, a group of teachers developed an initiative to address these issues in regards to parent voice.

The school had in place the traditional means of parental participation in the forms of a parent/teachers association (PTA) and parent governors. However, it was felt that these organizations were dominated by families of higher socioeconomic status and educational achievement than was truly representational of the wider student community, over half of which comes from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Explaining the reasoning behind the decision to create a parent group, one teacher referred to the work of one of her colleagues:

*'Her idea was to get a range of parents from different backgrounds to speak their mind, to give their views to pass back to the school. There was a strong emphasis on getting parents from poor backgrounds and mixed ethnically, which was not necessarily the case in PTA and parent governors.'*

The parent group started slowly, with the founding member of staff identifying and approaching the parents of students she knew were underachieving and on the margins of exclusion in the school. She built on her already existing relationship with these parents, to encourage them to participate. In this way, at least initially, the parents group had a high representation of families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds than is traditionally found in PTA and parent governor groups. This was seen as being a great success in the school and the group was able to discuss issues of importance to them and pass these back to the school.

It was intended that this group sit alongside the other groups, such as the PTA and parent governors, to provide an opportunity for parents who would traditionally be unlikely to participate directly in their children's school.

A member of staff explained:

*'I don't think the idea was that it would be representative of everybody and a fair balance of views on every issue, because it would have been impossible to do that. It was targeting a niche of parents who were excluded from school life, and try and encourage them to take a fuller part.'*



## Issues for discussion

- How well does your school involve the wider community in supporting its activities?
- Are parents encouraged to take active roles in the school?
- What more might be done to engage families in the work of your school?





# GUIDE 2





# WORKSHOP 6

## The school is accessible to all students



### Review questions:

- Are efforts made to overcome potential barriers to participation and learning?
- Can disabled students and adults gain access to all parts of the building?
- Are students who speak a different language helped to participate?



### Reading 6

Making the school accessible is crucial in order to be inclusive. This means identifying and removing barriers that make it difficult for some students to be present, participating and learning. Some barriers are obvious and easy to remove, such as aspects of the building that get in the way. Other barriers relate to policies and practices that may require much more effort to change. Perhaps the most difficult barriers to address, however, relate to attitudes among staff that set limits on what might be possible, for example, the views of certain teachers that some students are difficult or even impossible to teach.

**Addressing barriers.** The overall approach recommended in this guide involves those within a school working together to address all of these potential barriers. Such processes are stimulated by inquiry that is intended to foster a greater capacity for responding to learner diversity. Collaboration and the use of evidence as a means of stimulating experimentation are seen as key strategies for moving such processes in a more inclusive direction. Indeed, one American researcher argues that inquiry can be the ‘engine’ to enable the distribution of leadership that is needed in order to foster participation, and the ‘glue’ that can bind a school community together around a common purpose.

All of this has major implications for leadership practice at different levels within schools. In particular, it calls for efforts to encourage coordinated and sustained efforts by staff groups around the idea that changing outcomes for all students is unlikely to be achieved unless there are changes in the behaviours of adults. Consequently, the starting point must be with staff members: in effect, enlarging their capacity to imagine what might be achieved and increasing their sense of accountability for bringing this about. This may also involve tackling taken for granted assumptions, most often relating to expectations about certain groups of students, and their capabilities and behaviours.

**An inquiry-based approach.** The overall approach to development that is recommended in this guide is based on the idea that schools know more than they use. This means that the logical starting point is with a detailed analysis of existing practices. As illustrated in other sections of this guide, this requires the collection of evidence and an engagement with this information. This allows good practices to be identified and shared, while, at the same time, drawing attention to ways of working that may be creating barriers to the participation and learning of some students. However, the focus must not only be on practice - it must also address and sometimes challenge the thinking behind existing ways of working.

The eight accounts of practice in this guide illustrate what all of this looks like in practice. More specifically, they suggest ways of using an inquiry-based approach in relation to the following agenda for change:

- Who are the learners who are missing out in our context?
- What evidence do we need in order to understand the barriers faced by these learners?
- How can we analyse this evidence in order to find effective ways of challenging current practice and promoting more positive responses to learner diversity?
- How do we involve learners in a meaningful way in this process?

The recommended approach involves three interconnected processes:

**1. Analysing contexts.** Research has thrown light on the way contextual factors create barriers to the participation and learning of some students. The accounts of practice explain how evidence of various forms can be used to analyse schools and classrooms in order to identify such barriers and determine resources that can be used to address these difficulties.

**2. Making interruptions.** Progress in addressing diversity requires a more dynamic approach to thinking and practice. Many of the accounts illustrate how engaging with evidence can, under certain conditions, create 'interruptions' that challenge the use of language, existing assumptions and established pedagogy, and, in so doing, point towards new ways of conceptualizing school policies and practices – ways which had previously been overlooked.

**3. Creating conversations.** The accounts of practice also illustrate how social learning processes can create opportunities for developing new responses to learner diversity. Creating conversations among staff members is a way of generating and sharing stories, ideas and experience. The accounts also explore some of the complexities involved in developing the forms of cooperation involved.

Each of these themes is, to varying extent, evident in all the accounts of practice in this guide.



## Issues for discussion

- What does the term 'barriers' mean in the context of your school?
- As a school leader, what more can you do to encourage your colleagues to work together in addressing these barriers?
- How can you create a culture of sharing ideas about what work and what doesn't among staff, without being judged by others in a competitive setting?



## Account of practice 6

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**As you read the following description of a school that works hard to make itself accessible to all of its students, you should consider if it points to issues that might need attention in your own school.**

### **‘Somebody knows everybody’**

It has been argued that school improvement is technically simple but socially complex. In other words, it is relatively easy to describe what needs to be done in order to improve behaviour and learning within a school; the much bigger challenge is that of finding ways of encouraging everybody involved to pull in the same direction. The story of what has happened in one urban high school is much about people pulling together in order to create a supportive working atmosphere.

The school serves an economically poor district. Located on a large public housing estate on the outskirts of a city, it has some 900 students in the age range 11 to 16. In addition, on the school site there is provision for over 100 students who follow post-16 courses as part of the programme of a local further education college. This provision was set up about six years ago in recognition of the fact that some young people would have difficulties in travelling to the main college campus.

The issue of poverty has an enormous impact on the work of the school. One recently appointed member of staff commented:

*‘As a teacher I was shocked. These kids are remarkable given some of their backgrounds.’*

Another teacher added:

*‘It’s a miracle that some of them come to school at all!’*

The school faces a peculiar problem of student mobility. For example, of the 160 students who graduated last summer, only 100 of these had started in the school. Meanwhile, over the five years, 227 students had been part of the cohort at one time or another. There is also a more hidden form of mobility, with students moving between the homes of different parents, or other members of their families. Poor health is said to be a pervasive influence on attendance and progress in ways that those in the school believe is not understood in wider circles.

**Developments.** When the current head teacher joined the school, for some years, there were about 600 students and what he describes as a ‘massive financial deficit’. At that time, only 6% of students passed the national examination at the end of their time in school, and attendance was around 68%. Permanent exclusions because of bad behaviour were well into double figures for that year. Apparently, there was an emphasis on punishment as the main means of establishing discipline.

Four years later, examination success had risen to 45%, attendance was 92%, and there were no permanent exclusions. Such remarkable improvements invite questions as to how this has been achieved. In particular, what did the school do to improve behaviour and learning so significantly, and, in particular, what forms of leadership practice did this require?

Recalling the struggle to move the school forward, the head teacher talked about the need to improve the image of the school, both inside the organization and in the wider community. He recalls:

*'Quite simple, we needed a can-do mentality. It's as simple as that. We basically said, these children need the best. We kept asking hard questions. We refused to accept the statement, what can you expect from these children?'*

There was a big turnover of staff during the head's first three years. Here the deficit budget proved to be advantageous in providing a justification for staff changes. One of the deputies argued that the appointment of more committed staff was a vital part of the school's success. He explained that considerable care was taken in making appointments:

*'We looked for teachers who wanted to work with our children. We tried to put people off at interview: if you don't like adversity this is not the place for you. It's very, very hard.'*

Indeed, this being the case, he believes that it is better to 'grow your own.'

According to the head, there is still some 'bizarre behaviour among some of the students'. It is clear that in this respect, tolerance levels among staff have changed. So, for example, when there is a difficulty with a student, there will be a meeting of staff to discuss possible ways forward. Where there is a possibility of exclusion, the head teacher chairs the meeting himself. Sometimes, short, temporary exclusions are used to 'cool things down'. The head argues that these lead him to meet with the student and parents in order to discuss, 'what are we going to do next?'

It is evident that the head does have a lot of direct involvement with students. Indeed, he delegates many administrative duties, including the budget, so that he can commit much of his time to working directly with students and staff. Here his priority seems to be to encourage growth among people in the belief that this will create a much greater capacity for learning. Talking about the way he works with staff, he explains:

*'The thing genuinely grows as we work together. Often I don't know the answer, but you can guarantee that somebody around the table does!'*

Indeed, it is also clear that his management style does vary from time to time. For example, he recalls that following the 'dip' in examination results at the end of one school year, he deliberately adopted a 'more directive style':

*'I remember calling together the science department. I said, we think you are fabulous, but what went wrong? They explained how they had the kids on a carousel so that teachers could teach their specialist subjects. The trouble is that in this school relationships matter, so I told them they had to drop it. It was a knee jerk reaction but I knew it was the right thing to do.'*

**Changing attitudes.** There is a strong tradition of low aspiration within the local community, although recently the school has had some success in moving attitudes on in this respect. The head teacher explained:

*'We had one cohort of students where no parent had experience of higher education.'*

The head argues that what was needed was 'a holistic approach'. He explained how some students ask: 'Why do we need these better examination grades? Where would we go?' Gradually, attitudes are changing, both in the community and among the students themselves, but it remains an on-going struggle.

Staff have been encouraged to see how families have increasingly supported sporting and other events in the school, especially where the students themselves have active roles. However, attendance at curriculum meetings and teacher/parent consultation evenings remains an issue.

Considerable efforts have also been made to strengthen links with the local community generally. One long-established member of staff explained:

*'We've worked hard, for example, to make sure that a lot of local people work in the school. Some of our support staff are parents.'*

An important aspect in the way that the school has developed is that it is perceived as being successful, as reflected in the fact that it is now oversubscribed. Early on it was recognized that the move from primary to secondary school was a high-risk moment for many students. With this in mind, classes from local primary schools have regular opportunities to take part in lessons taught by specialists at the high school.

**Monitoring progress.** The school's strategy for fostering improved learning seems to have two interconnected elements. These are: progress monitoring and support for learning. The monitoring strategy involves a complex weave of many different tactics, all of which are intended to help staff and students to focus on individual progress. Here, the head teacher is very clear that 'we have to know what is going on!'

In various ways, up-to-date information on attendance, effort and performance is used to motivate, to celebrate success, and, of course, to pick out difficulties. Here, the analysis of evidence is the means by which appropriate use can be made of the student support teams that have been introduced. At the same time, it is important to note that there is pressure on all of the students to achieve good results. Commenting on this, a teacher remarked: 'These students thrive on academic rigor.' There is also considerable effort to involve families in this process, as one senior colleague explained:

*'Any member of staff can ring home to give praise or deal with a difficulty. It's not just the responsibility of the pastoral staff.'*

The head teacher places considerable emphasis on the monitoring of the academic progress of all students. Recently a new post was created of a teacher whose job is to monitor the progress of all students in their final year in the school.

Throughout the school, form tutors receive half-termly spreadsheets that summarize the progress of every student. These are discussed with individuals, particularly those that are in any sense a cause for concern, and individual targets are set. One member of staff who has been in the school many years felt that students were clear about their targets and what they had to do to achieve them. Around the classrooms notices explain the meaning of the curriculum levels that are used for target setting and it is clear from conversation with students that these are generally well understood. One year 8 student explained how he has to explain these to his parents, commenting: 'My mum and dad are getting there!'

Each member of the senior management team is responsible for monitoring one subject faculty. In addition, the two deputy head teachers take on a wider monitoring role around the school. The head explained: 'You'll not see the two deputies in their office all day'. One deputy commented: 'We're corridor deputies really!' This means that teachers do have considerable direct support in dealing with disruptive incidents in their classes. The policy is that where a student is misbehaving, he or she will be asked to stand in the corridor for five minutes, a strategy that in some schools could easily lead to even greater disruption. Here, however, the presence of the deputies and, indeed, support staff, around the school seems to minimize this possibility and, of course, they are in a position to add their support to teachers more generally.

It is clear that within the school monitoring strategies are seen as being closely associated with support arrangements - for both students and staff. Considerable emphasis is placed on staff development, particularly in respect to the development of classroom practice. Here the introduction of a new teaching and learning strategy has been seen as very helpful. Specifically, it has been used to stimulate and orchestrate collaborative arrangements for developing more effective lesson plans, and for supporting experimentation in their use. Teachers are encouraged to work in pairs in ways that encourage mutual coaching and, at the same time, the development of a language of practice. The head of the science department commented:

*'It's the first time that I have been involved in an initiative that is genuinely about teaching and learning.'*

**Support for learning.** The visitor to the school is struck by the preoccupation with providing support for learning. Unusual here is the way that those within the school are able to articulate the purposes of support and their sensitivity to the possible dangers. Also impressive is the way in which staff of different status work together in order to provide a support strategy that feels very 'joined up'. As a result, support seems to be readily available, as and when it is needed by anyone in the school. One member of staff noted: 'Along the line, somebody knows everybody!' Students confirm that this is the case. One year 8 boy explained that if you have a problem you see your form teacher or year head, and 'things get done'. Students also commented about the overall friendliness of staff. One commented, 'They don't shout unless they have to.'

Being in an extremely poor district, the school has access to additional financial resources that enable it to employ more staff. As a result, there is a team of seven learning mentors, one of whom is attached to each year group. Support arrangements are coordinated by a member of the senior management team. There is a pastoral suite that provides a base for year heads and various other support personnel, including the team that works on improving attendance. The suite is the focus for the support arrangements in that everybody in the school knows where to go if they need help.

**Being inclusive.** The inclusive philosophy of the school has led it to take on wider responsibilities as a resource centre for students with physical impairments, some of whom use wheelchairs, and other students who are categorized as having severe learning difficulties. This means that even more adult support is available. What is interesting here, however, is that since all of these students spend most of their time in the mainstream classes, the support that is provided is available to others who may need it.

One of the staff involved in providing support for these students explained:

*'It is important to understand that there is no separate special unit. There is inclusion within mainstream. They all register in their forms and follow a normal timetable. There is some withdrawal, but this is kept to a minimum.'*

Throughout the school, among students and staff, there is a noticeable and taken for granted acceptance of the right of those with disabilities to be in the school. Indeed, their presence is seen as having a positive influence. For example, one of the deputy heads commented:

*'They have a tremendous effect on children in the school. They encourage tolerance. Students say, you think you've got problems..... You can cut the atmosphere in the room when one of the kids with disabilities goes up to collect an award in assembly. Everybody is so proud.'*

More general support is orchestrated through the teams of year heads and form tutors. It is very evident, however, that they work very closely with the other support teams, particularly the learning mentors. One of the year heads has only been teaching for three years. In introducing her, the head teacher commented, 'If you're good enough you are old enough.' She explained that she saw the learning mentor who works in her year as her 'eyes and ears'. Each day they meet after school to talk about the progress of particular students. Since the learning mentor is in and out of classrooms, she is able to provide detailed comments on what has occurred during the day.

The work of the team of learning mentors is interesting in other ways. Most of them live in the local community. One mentor acts as the overall coordinator of the team. He explained their roles and how they work together in order to develop their skills. He noted, too, the way in which they were seen by students as not being teachers:

*'Because we don't have the label of teacher, kids will often come and talk to us informally.'*

Commenting on this, a year 8 girl suggested that she saw the mentors as 'being like friends'.

The learning mentors run a lunchtime drop-in centre, mainly used by year 10, offer events in the holidays, and run short courses for some students on 'anger management'. Teaching staff seem to have high regard for the mentors, who they see simply as colleagues.

The overall rationale for providing support to students in the school is explained in terms of the objective of 'unsupported access'. That is to say, support is only provided when it is necessary and is removed as soon as possible. As one teacher commented, 'If you don't need it, it is taken away'. With this in mind, support staff talk of the need to examine the timetable in order to pinpoint 'hotspots' where support may be necessary. One teacher explained:

*'Even though you are in a wheelchair, we would try to get you into as many lessons as possible without any direct support.'*

A similar approach is taken in developing support strategies for those students who experience difficulties in behaviour. Here the learning mentors have a key role in spotting potential 'hotspots' and they are given the authority to act quickly in order to prevent difficulties from occurring. One learning mentor explained that there is no withdrawal room but he will take a student out of lesson if he judges it to be the most appropriate action. The same person noted that his intervention in a classroom can also be positive:

*'When I see things are going well, I may just whisper, well done.'*

Such interventions could, of course, easily be seen as a source of disruption from the point of view of the teachers. Here the rapport that clearly exists between the teaching staff and the mentors is a necessary ingredient.



**The importance of ethos.** In many ways the organizational structures at this school, such as the senior and middle management arrangements, are quite traditional. What is strikingly different, however, is the nature of the working relationships that cut horizontally across these rather hierarchical systems. One of the deputy heads explained this in terms of what she saw as the ethos that permeates each person's work, whatever their status. She commented:

*'Members of staff are much closer to students here than in other schools. It is a much more holistic approach. I would say that something like 98% of staff really do share responsibility for the community of the school. This includes dinner ladies and the caretaker.'*

She recalled that when she first arrived at the school, this struck her as 'earth shatteringly remarkable'; particularly the high expectations staff has for the students. A young teacher talked of the support she had received, noting that 'everything you learn, you learn from those around you'. A head of faculty explained how changes in attitude and expectation had been paralleled by significant developments in classroom practices. He commented:

*'To be honest, a lot of my early teaching was child-minding. Now we are all focused on raising achievement and there is a growing ethos of the school as a learning centre. Our real strength, however, is the teamwork among all the staff.'*

It is significant that discussions in the school often seem to return to the theme of collaboration. Perhaps here the pressures under which the school has to work have been turned to some advantage. One very experienced teacher explained:

*'You don't have easy lessons here. You have to keep the foot down all the time to keep things going.'*

Faced with such intensity, the need for mutual support would seem to be essential. At the same time, it requires leadership. Asked about this, staff tended to point to the central role of the head teacher. One long-standing member of the administrative team explained:

*'Relationships have changed here over the years. It comes from the head downwards. He really does have an open-door policy, so he's listening to people. He does not lose sight of where he wants to go, however. At the same time, he takes on board ideas from everybody.'*

She went on:

*'He's always a couple of steps ahead of the game. Things that he mentions become a reality.'*

## Issues for discussion



- Do all children in your school have somebody to talk to when they are in difficulty?
- Have you got monitoring systems that enable you to mobilize support when it is needed?
- Does this account point to things in your school that might need reviewing?

# WORKSHOP 7

## Senior staff support teachers in making sure that all students participate and learn



### Review questions:

- Are there regular staff development activities focused on the improvement of teaching?
- Does senior staff observe lessons and offer suggestions for improvement?
- Do teachers have opportunities to observe one another's practices?



## Reading 7

For all countries, teachers are the most costly - and potentially most powerful - resources that are deployed within the education system. The professional learning of the teaching force is, therefore, crucial to inclusive development, especially in countries where material resources are relatively scarce. As systems become more inclusive, professional development is particularly important because of the major new challenges that face both ordinary teachers - who have to respond to a greater diversity of student needs - and special educators - who find the context and focus of their work changing in major ways.

The emphasis placed in this guide is on the development of schools that will include all children, whatever their characteristics or personal circumstances. Central to this is the creation of inclusive classrooms. This is the theme of a related guide, *Developing Inclusive Classrooms* that addresses more specifically the implications for teachers and teaching. Senior staff can use this to create a programme of school-based professional development.

In what follows, the focus is on creating the conditions within schools where professional development can occur. This has important implications for leadership practice in the school.

**Moving practice forward.** Research suggests that developments in practice are unlikely to occur without some exposure to what teaching actually looks like when it is being done differently, and the presence of someone who can help teachers understand the difference between what they are doing and what they aspire to do. It also involves the development of a common language with which colleagues can talk to one another and, indeed, to themselves, about detailed aspects of their practice. Without such a language, teachers find it very difficult to experiment with new possibilities.

Much of what teachers do during the intensive encounters that occur in classrooms is carried out at an automatic, intuitive level - there is little time to stop and think. This is why having the opportunity to see colleagues at work, is so crucial to the success of attempts to develop inclusive practices. 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 space is created within which taken-for-granted assumptions about particular groups of learners can be subjected to mutual critique.

**Creating interruptions.** Research has shown how the use of evidence to study teaching can help to foster the development of more inclusive practices. Specifically, it can help to create space for reappraisal and rethinking by interrupting existing discourses, and by focusing attention on overlooked possibilities for moving practice forward. Particularly powerful techniques in this respect involve the use of mutual observation, sometimes through video recordings, and evidence collected from students about teaching and learning arrangements within a school. Under certain conditions such approaches provide interruptions that help to make the familiar unfamiliar in ways that stimulate self-questioning, creativity and action. In so doing this can sometimes lead to a reframing of perceived problems that, in turn, draws the teacher's attention to overlooked possibilities for addressing barriers to participation and learning.

However, such inquiry-based approaches to the development of inclusive practices are far from straight forward. An interruption that is created as a group of teachers engage with evidence may not necessarily lead to a consideration of new ways of working. Deeply held beliefs within schools may prevent the experimentation that is necessary in order to foster the development of more inclusive ways of working. This reminds us that that it is easy for educational difficulties to be pathologized as difficulties inherent within students. This is true not only of students with disabilities and those defined as having special educational needs, but also of those whose socioeconomic status, race, language and gender renders them problematic to particular teachers in particular schools. Consequently, it is necessary to explore ways of developing the capacity of those within schools to reveal and challenge deeply entrenched deficit views of 'difference', which define certain types of students as 'lacking something'. This involves being vigilant in scrutinizing how deficit assumptions may be influencing perceptions of certain students.



**Studying teaching.** All of this raises questions about how best to introduce such ways of working. Here a promising approach is that of 'lesson study', a systematic procedure for the development of teaching that is well established in Japan and some other Asian countries. The goal of lesson study is to improve the effectiveness of the experiences that the teachers provide for all of their students. The core activity is collaboration on a shared area of focus that is generated through discussion. The content of this focus is the planned lesson, which is then used as the basis of gathering data on the quality of experience that students receive. These lessons are called 'research lessons' and are used to examine the teachers' practices and the responsiveness of the students to the planned activities. Members of the group work together to design the lesson plan which is then implemented by each teacher. Observations and post-lesson conferences are arranged to facilitate the improvement of the research lesson between each trial.

Lesson study can be conducted in many ways. It may, for example, involve a small sub-group of volunteer staff, or be carried out through departmental or special interest groupings. It can also happen across schools, and is then part of a wider, managed network of teachers working together. The collection of evidence is a key factor in the lesson study approach. This usually involves observation of student responses and the use of video recording. Emphasis is also placed on listening to the views of students in a way that tends to introduce a critical edge to the discussions that take place. Practical suggestions for using lesson study are provided in the accompanying guide, *Developing Inclusive Classrooms*.



## Issues for discussion

- Does your school have a programme of professional development for teachers?
- How might you introduce the idea of lesson study in your school?
- What are the difficulties in introducing school-based professional development activities? How can these be overcome?





## Account of practice 7

**As you read the following description of a school that is committed to making itself accessible to a diverse range of children, you should consider if it points to issues regarding professional development of teachers and support staff that might need attention in your own school.**

### 'Becoming a reflective community'

*'It would be hard to go back to working with a class on your own.'*

*'When you come into the class you won't be able to tell who the teacher is.'*

These are just two of the comments heard from staff during a visit to this primary school. They give a flavour of the overall impression gained of a school community that has developed a way of working which encourages mutual learning among the teachers, support staff, children and families. This is all the more remarkable in that the student population includes a significant number of children with severe and complex learning difficulties, some of whom display extremely challenging behavior.

So, how was this cooperative working atmosphere fostered? How the school is able to deal with children whose behaviour has the potential to act as a barrier to the learning of all the children in the school?

**Becoming a resourced school.** The school, which is situated in a small village, has only 160 students. It is popular with families in the area and in recent years has received two very positive inspection reports. The most recent of these noted: 'This is a good school. The quality of teaching is good and this helps students to make good progress. Standards in attainment in literacy, mathematics and science are above the national average. The students have very positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour is very good'.

A few years ago, the school became a resource school for children with severe and complex learning difficulties, at which point a group of children and staff transferred from a special school that was then closed. Originally it was intended that there would be places for six 'resourced children', although subsequently the numbers have increased, not least through the requests of parents wishing to see their children in a mainstream school that is responsive to learners with disabilities.

Each additional child brings extra support resources into the school. In addition, building modifications have been made, including a resource room, a lift for wheel chairs, ramps, a sensory room, and additional toileting facilities. Commenting on the issue of resources, the head said, *'It's an appropriate budget but not generous!'*

Even before becoming designated, the school had something of a track record of attempting to cater for children with disabilities. Nevertheless, at the time some of the teachers were very uneasy about having to deal with youngsters with severe learning difficulties. The head teacher commented: *'At the beginning there was a divide. One teacher didn't want to be involved. She finally left the school.'*

Clearly, the first few months were extremely difficult, not least when teachers were faced with challenging and highly disruptive behaviour. The head teacher explained: *'It is difficult when a child in the class suddenly screams out when you have been used to things being quiet.'* Apparently one of the new boys would regularly throw tantrums and then hide under the table. Over time, however, staff and students have learned to deal with such incidents and, indeed, to carry on working when they occur. The head summed this up when she said, *'We've all got comfortable with children whose behaviour is challenging or unusual'*.

Teachers also initially found it difficult having so many support staff coming in and out of their classrooms. For most of them, this was a new experience in that they had been largely used to working alone. Gradually, over a period of years, policies evolved, as did new practices, such that now it is clear that all of the staff recognize that they share responsibility for all of the children, including those with disabilities. So, what is the nature of these policies and practices? How did they develop? What forms of leadership were required?

**Sensitive support.** What strikes the visitor to the school is the way in which the idea of support seems to permeate everything that goes on. In the morning assembly, for example, the children with disabilities sit alongside their classmates. The head recalls one particular boy who regularly used to scream out in the assembly. *'There was no way he wasn't coming in'*, she remarked.

Occasionally during the assembly, a student may make what appears to be an inappropriate noise or comment, none of which seems to disturb the rest of the children. Sometimes a member of staff may step near to a child to quieten him or her with a gentle touch on the arm, or with a whispered remark. Similarly, children are also seen occasionally prompting their neighbour to be quiet or to sit still. As the children walk quietly out of the hall in their class lines, a little girl gently nudges a youngster with Down's syndrome in the right direction.

This emphasis on child-to-child support is always there and has clearly been deeply embedded in the social pattern of the whole school. Apart from assemblies, it is evident in so many other contexts, including the classrooms, the playground, the gym and the dining area. It is low key and taken for granted in such a way that it is not the job of any individual or group. Rather it is a shared responsibility. The head explains with obvious pleasure that so many parents now express pride that the children are all learning to care for others.

Of course, none of this has happened by chance. Throughout the school adults are seen to model ways of supporting children in ways that does not create dependency, and to offer their advice when it is felt to be necessary. So, for example, on one occasion a child was advised, *'There's no need to hold his hand'*. Such advice may also be given to adults. In one classroom, where the children were getting ready for physical education, a new member of the support staff was told by the teacher, *'Let her do it herself, she's good at dressing'*.

However, this sensitive approach to support is perhaps most evident within the classrooms where, once again, it seems to be a seamless blend of responsive and light-handed adult intervention, complemented by lots of child-to-child cooperation.



**Working in teams.** Most lessons involve teams of teachers and support staff. These seem to have developed patterns of working such that changes of activity and role occur in ways that seem to require little or no direction. In one class, for example, there was a mix of over 30 year one and year two children, working with five adults. At one point, two separate plenary sessions were led by teachers, with groups of children sitting on carpets facing flip charts at the two sides of the room. During this phase, the support staff was seated on chairs at the edge of the group closely observing the interactions, only intervening occasionally to prompt or encourage an individual child. Moments later, in a way that seemed almost automatic, there was a coordinated set of movements which left all the children working in small groups around tables. Adults now positioned themselves in different parts of the room, each apparently clear about their roles in relation to certain individuals or groups of children. In contexts like, these it was often difficult to work out which of the adults was the teacher. In effect, roles seemed to change as patterns of activity changed.

It was interesting to hear members of the support staff talk about how they see their roles in these different contexts. All of them emphasized the importance of providing minimum support and being prepared to withdraw their support whenever possible. In this sense, they seemed to have a clear aim of encouraging all of the children to operate as independently as possible. For example, one assistant said, *'We try not to intervene'*. Another said, *'We've talked a lot about not intervening. The main thing is to keep an eye on things from a distance'*.

**Policies.** Teachers report that they emphasize predictable routines in the belief that this benefits the learning of all of the children. In this context, staff argue that the lesson formats introduced as part of the national literacy and numeracy strategies have made a useful contribution, not least in respect to the participation and learning of the children with disabilities, who, it was reported, respond particularly well to the sense of routine that these strategies demand.

The school's behaviour policy is hardly evident during lessons. There are a small number of 'golden rules' that everybody is expected to follow. Then, the members of each class determine their own further rules. Classes also have a 'behaviour book' where notes are made of particular good or bad behaviour. Three negative entries lead to a detention, but this seems to be a very rare event.

The head teacher explained that each week they hold a 'celebration assembly' when children bring in their work to show to the whole school. She clearly takes great pleasure in the way that the majority of the children applaud what might appear to be very small steps of progress taken by the disabled children. She mentions, too, that many of the parents have noted the strides taken by these children over a period of years.

**Staff development processes.** In probing those within the school in order to learn more about what had facilitated the development of these policies and practices, one key theme becomes apparent. This suggests that what has happened involves what can only be described as a social process of professional learning. Stimulated by children whose unusual and challenging behaviour demands experimentation and creativity, groups of staff seem to have developed a greater capacity to work collaboratively in order to solve problems. In this way, working in teams seems to have become a distinctive feature of the school's work. Commenting on this, the head states, *'When it works well it is stunning really'*.

It also seems that this way of working has developed to such an extent that many of the children themselves have also been drawn into the social learning process. If this is true, it raises questions about how this was achieved.



Here one important factor relates to the management and use of time. In a busy primary school, with so many competing demands, time is always an issue for staff. Teachers get little time away from the children during the school day and, of course, the presence of youngsters who need additional support adds to this pressure. Here, this has certainly been the case, not least because during the first few years their unusual behaviour and difficulties of learning presented considerable new challenges to the class teachers. Consequently, it was found necessary to build in weekly time for colleagues to talk about the problems they faced. Here the role of the resource teacher was found to be crucial. Each week she would hold a twenty minute meeting with each class teacher, during which difficulties could be discussed and strategies agreed for the coming week. Recently these meetings have been abandoned, a clear indication of the growth in the capacity of all of the teachers to work with children with disabilities, although the resource teacher still holds weekly planning meetings with each of the teaching assistants.

In addition, it has occasionally been necessary to create longer periods of time that enable groups of staff to analyse challenging situations. Where this was felt to be necessary, supply staff have been brought in so that a class teacher could meet with colleagues, including the resource teacher and the head, in order to develop a more effective strategy. This approach is rarely used, however. The last occasion was about a year ago when, following the death of his father, one of the boys with a severe disability went through a period of considerable distress. This led staff to be concerned about him and, indeed, about the other children in the class, since he became prone to kick out at others around him.

It seems, then, that through cooperative problem solving and mutual support staff within the school has grown more confident that they can find ways of dealing with extremely challenging behaviour and, in so doing, in finding ways of overcoming difficulties in learning. The head put it this way: *'It's not about complicated written down planning. It's the time to talk. Things evolve.'*

The presence and leadership of the resource teacher, who had previously had considerable experience in special schools, was clearly vital during the first years. At that stage, in particular, her confidence provided a sense of assurance to the rest of the staff as they faced children who responded in ways that they had not met before. Now, as the whole staff have become much more confident, her role has changed considerably and leadership has become much more of a shared concern. When asked about what had changed, without needing to think the resource teacher answered, 'attitudes'. Interestingly she included herself in this. She remembers that she had not wanted the special school to close and that, although she had been involved in supporting the integration of individuals, she had not thought it possible that such children could succeed full-time in a mainstream context.

Another important feature of the school's emphasis on teamwork is that all staff has come to take it granted that they will be observed by their colleagues. In this sense each classroom feels like a goldfish bowl, where there is no hiding place. All of this provides many opportunities for personal and professional growth, as staff compares and contrasts one another's practices. Once again, of course, this has not happened by chance. Through successful leadership, trusting relationships have been created such that colleagues feel comfortable about seeing one another at work. As one teacher noted, *'In my last school I would have not been keen to let my colleagues watch me teaching'*.

**Forms of leadership.** When pressed to explain how developments in classroom occurred colleagues seemed to have difficulties in articulating what they do and who provides the actual leadership. Once again, then, we seem to be in a context where practice operates at a largely intuitive level and where forms of tacit knowledge are used which can only be revealed through observation. However, what was very clearly articulated by many staff was the importance of the overall leadership provided by the head teacher. As one teacher put it, *'The tone is set by the boss'*.

One of the head's most important role had been in fostering among the staff a sense of common purpose. Driven by a strong personal commitment to equal opportunities, she seems to have been remarkably successful in leading the whole school community, staff, students and parents, in ways that have led to a commitment to educational inclusion. As a result, there is evidence of considerable agreement as to the meaning of certain key principles, particularly the notion of inclusion. The resource teacher articulated this when she explained what she sees as an important distinction between 'integration' and 'inclusion'. For her: *'Inclusion is the full acceptance of the individual as a child. Integration is simply accommodation'*.

As we have seen, the school also has a well thought out understanding of the purposes of support. Alongside this, there is recognition of the potential of differences to enrich people's lives by stimulating creativity. As a result, the presence of children with extremely challenging behaviour has stimulated a process by which this school has become a reflective community.

**Learning for all.** This account directs our attention on the ways in which processes of social learning can help foster changes in attitude and developments in practice that benefit all children within a school. It suggests that through responding positively to diversity, schools can become more effective in facilitating the learning of all of their students. But, of course, none of this is simple and straight forward. It has to be fostered by effective leadership of a form that permeates all levels within a school community.

Staff in this school argues that there is still a long way to go on their journey towards becoming an inclusive school. They are concerned, for example, that the presence of children with disabilities within their classes should not be seen as an end in itself. They argue that there must be high expectations for the learning of these students, in the same way that they must have high expectations for all the children.

### Issues for discussion



- Do you think your school could include children with such challenging behaviour?
- Do you have a behaviour policy in your school? If so, does it take account of children with challenging behaviour and are you sure that they are receiving the support they need?
- What ideas do you draw from this particular account of practice, especially regarding professional development?

# WORKSHOP 8

## The school monitors the presence, participation and achievement of all students



### Review questions:

- Are there systems for checking on student attendance in school and lessons?
- Are students offered opportunities to comment on how it feels to be a member of the school?
- Is the progress and achievements of every student tracked?



## Reading 8

It is often said that today's schools are 'data rich'. That is to say, through self-review processes and statistical packages, schools now have available various forms of evidence that can be used to scrutinize existing arrangements in order to generate plans for development.

Sometimes, however, there are worries about the nature of some of this evidence and, indeed, concerns about outcomes that are less desirable. In particular, there is concern in some countries that the focus on a relatively narrow range of indicators of student achievement can distort the curriculum and, in so doing, disadvantage those learners whose progress is relatively slow. Increasingly, there is also concern expressed that the emphasis on determining school effectiveness solely in terms of aggregate test or examination scores may create a perverse incentive to exclude students who are seen to hold down overall standards. In other words, the ways in which school effectiveness is measured may well be creating exclusionary pressures in some schools.

In this respect, the guidance given to inspectors in some countries is potentially significant. For instance, in England, policy states that 'effective schools are educationally inclusive schools', and inspectors are expected to evaluate schools in terms of the achievement of all students, focusing specifically on individuals and groups that are known to be vulnerable to marginalization and underachievement. Inspectors are required to consider statistical and process evidence in the light of this inclusive perspective.





## Account of practice 8

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**As you read the following description of a school that is developing a system for monitoring the progress of all of its student, you should consider if it points to issues that might need attention in your own school.**

### **‘Making better use of better data’**

This secondary school has 1,230 students and 77 teachers. For some years, staff in the school has been exploring how data can be used to strengthen their improvement efforts. With this purpose in mind, one senior member of staff is designated as the research officer. Apart from analysing test and examination outcome data in partnership with other members of staff, he carries out occasional surveys of staff, student and parental views in respect to aspects of school policy. The school also has a well-established relationship with a research group at the local university. As a result, over the last three years additional surveys of student views and programmes of classroom observations have been undertaken, looking specifically at student engagement in the context of teaching and learning.

Much of the focus of these activities has been on identifying students who are potentially vulnerable to underachievement in order to explore ways of providing them with more effective forms of support. Prior to and on entry to the school, various forms of data are analysed in order to make predictions about the forms of support that students may need in order to foster their learning. The evidence from teachers’ assessments in the primary schools is seen as being particularly useful. However, much more reliance is placed on scores from tests administered by the school during the early part of the first year.

**Monitoring students’ progress.** Beyond the issue of early identification, senior staff in the school has also been exploring their use of data in order to monitor individual student progress. Recently a new programme was introduced that focuses on personal development, health education, moral and spiritual development, citizenship and careers guidance. Since this is now taught by teams of teachers, it has led to a reduced emphasis on the role of the form tutor, who, traditionally, was responsible for keeping an eye on the progress and well-being of their students.

Members of the senior team became increasingly concerned that this had weakened the link between tutors and the students in their forms, and, as a result, reduced the support available to individual students. This view was further endorsed by a survey that asked all teachers in the school, ‘who has the clearest overall view of students’ academic progress?’ In essence, the survey indicated considerable uncertainty within the school about this issue.

It was decided, therefore, that the school needed to further strengthen its use of data in order to monitor the progress of individual students. Furthermore, it was suggested that form tutors needed to have a key role in engaging with and taking actions as a result of the monitoring data collected. As one senior member of staff suggests, *‘the form tutor is pivotal’*.

Remembering the adage 'what gets measured gets done', there was, then, the important issue of what should be monitored. Here, the following formulation, developed in the school, provided a useful starting point for discussion:

### How do we know what progress students are making?

- Use of end of year results
- Transition information as students move into the school
- Other test results (reading ages, etc.)

### How do we if know students are maintaining progress?

- Tracking students' scores
- Checking against predicted scores
- Reviewing Teachers' comments
- Examining Student self-review

### How do students know what they are working towards?

- Knowledge of their current levels of achievement
- Knowledge of their targets in each subject
- Teachers' comments on their work
- Use of leveled work within departments

In this framework, the range of data that is needed is important, including the recognition of the value of more qualitative forms of evidence. Also significant is the active role for students that is envisaged.

A further relevant development involves the introduction of a strategy for monitoring student behaviour. With this in mind, senior staff decided to introduce a 'student tracker' system. This is designed to track both positive and negative behaviours across the whole school. It requires all staff to complete carbonated slips commenting on the behaviour of individuals during lessons. Currently, these are entered on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet by an administrator, although in future they may be recorded electronically by the teachers.

The database can then be used for tracking students, providing staff with an analysis of behaviour patterns for individuals, forms, or year groups.

**Managing the changes.** Logic suggests that the success of such an ambitious strategy for whole-school student monitoring demands the active involvement of all staff. In other words, it requires professional learning among staff about how to make sense of and use data in relation to their work with students. All of this points to the importance of leadership in respect to the management of change.

Thinking, then, about the leadership implications, research would suggest that the following issues need to be considered in formulating a strategy:

- **Clarity.** Successful change requires those involved to be clear about the meaning and implications of what is being proposed. Research on educational innovation indicates that failure often arises from lack of understanding among key stakeholders. Consequently, those who lead such initiatives have to work hard at communication and vision-building, both formally and informally.
- **Time.** Change requires people who already regard themselves as being very busy to apply their efforts to yet further tasks and responsibilities. The currency that indicates priorities in schools tends to be the allocation of time. It is necessary, therefore, to plan the timetable in such a way that those involved in the change process feel that time is being made available in order to do what is required. Often small amounts of time are sufficient to convince the majority.
- **Professional development.** Since change requires the development of new practices, it also involves learning. This is why successful change is usually supported by high quality staff development activities. Here there is a need to think about two aspects: workshops and the workplace. Workshops are used to provide technical training in respect to necessary skills and knowledge; workplace conditions then have to be created that support the application of the new ways of working, not least by providing coaching and feedback.
- **Commitment.** Given the sense of turbulence that is usually associated with school change, it is essential that senior staff show their total commitment to what is going on. Attendance at workshops and involvement in coaching and feedback are tangible ways of demonstrating commitment.

Finally, it is important to consider the management implications of the possible next steps. In some ways this particular school is in the vanguard in respect to the use of data to address student underachievement and, certainly, what is now being considering is highly ambitious. Timing is, therefore, critical. To launch a major whole-school, push and then fail to pull it off could be damaging to staff morale. On the other hand, successful implementation has the potential to make a major contribution to the progress of all students in the school.



### Issues for discussion

- Does your school have systems for tracking the progress of every child?
- What can be learned from this account that might strengthen practice in your school?





# GUIDE 2





# GUIDE 3



## Developing Inclusive Classrooms

Reaching Out to All Learners:  
a Resource Pack for Supporting Inclusive Education



# INTRODUCTION

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This introduction addresses questions that teachers will want to ask about this Guide, *Developing Inclusive Classrooms*. In so doing, it outlines ways in which the guide can be used to support teachers in developing more inclusive ways of working.

## What is this guide?

*Developing Inclusive Classrooms* has been designed to help teachers find more effective ways of including all children in their lessons. The suggestions that are made are based on experiences from different parts of the world.

## Who should use the guide?

While the Guide can be read by individual teachers, it is mainly intended to be used as a basis of a series of school-based workshops in which groups of teachers – ideally the whole staff of a school – draw on the materials to share ideas and support one another in developing their practices.

## What is inclusive education?

In some countries, inclusion is still thought of as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings. Internationally, however, it is increasingly seen more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity among all learners. It presumes that the aim of inclusive education is to eliminate social exclusion that is a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and ability. As such, it starts from the belief that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a just society.

## How is inclusive education defined?

In this guide, inclusive education is seen as involving four key features:

- *Inclusion is a process.* That entails that inclusion has to be seen as a never-ending search to find better ways of responding to student diversity. It is about learning how to live with difference and learning how to learn from difference. In this way, differences come to be seen more positively as a stimulus for fostering learning among children and adults.
- *Inclusion is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers.* Here barriers may take different forms; some of which are to do with the way schools are organized, the forms of teaching provided and the ways in which children's progress is evaluated. Consequently, it is necessary to collect, collate and evaluate evidence about these factors in order to plan for improvements in policy and practice. This involves using evidence of various kinds to stimulate creativity and problem-solving.



## How can teachers review their practices?

For each indicator, a set of review questions is posed. These indicate the types of evidence that will be needed in order to make informed judgements as to the current situation with regard to the particular indicator. Some of the evidence will be in the forms of statistics. In addition, qualitative evidence of various kinds will be essential, specially the views of colleagues and the students themselves.

The review questions for each indicator are as follows:

### 1. Teaching is planned with all students in mind.

- Do lesson activities take account of student interests and experiences?
- Are varied teaching methods used?
- Do the students understand the purposes of lesson activities?

### 2. Lessons encourage the participation of all students.

- Are all students addressed by their name?
- Are there materials that engage the interest of the students?
- Do students feel they are able to speak during lessons?

### 3. Students are actively involved in their own learning.

- Are students encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning?
- Does the classroom environment encourage independent learning?

### 4. Students are encouraged to support one another's learning.

- Do seating arrangements encourage students to interact?
- Are students sometimes expected to work in pairs or groups?
- Do students help one another to achieve the goals of lessons?

### 5. Support is provided when students experience difficulties.

- Does the teacher watch out for students experiencing difficulties?
- Do students feel able to ask for help?

### 6. Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect.

- Are there established rules for taking turns to speak and listen?
- Do students feel that classroom rules are fair?
- Is bullying discouraged?

### 7. Students feel that they have somebody to speak to when they are worried or upset.

- Are the concerns of students listened to?
- Do teachers make themselves available for students to talk to them privately?

### 8. Assessment contributes to the achievement of all students.

- Do teachers use assessment to encourage learning?
- Are students given constructive feedback on their work?
- Are students helped to revise for tests or examinations?
- Do teachers ensure that diversity is respected, even within one unified formal assessment system?

## How do we get started?

Teachers using the guide should help one another to do a simple review of where they stand in relation to each of the indicators. In so doing, they might ask themselves:

- *What does inclusive education mean for me?* In particular, there is a need to think about the implications of the concept for practice inside the classroom?
- *What are my strengths?* These might be areas of good practice that can be shared with other colleagues in the school.
- *What aspects of my practice do I want to develop?* These could be areas where you can learn from your colleagues.

Through this review, you and your colleagues can decide on which parts of the guide are most relevant. On the other hand, you might prefer to work through all the materials.

## What is in the guide?

The guide takes the form of eight sets of workshop materials related to each of the eight indicators. These materials consist of:

### 1. Readings



Based on experiences and research in different parts of the world, these texts should encourage you think about your own classroom and your own ways of teaching. In this way the aim is to ensure that key concepts and latest international trends are available to teachers to support their understanding of the recommendations made in this guide.

### 2. Issues for discussion



These are intended to get you and your colleagues talking about your practices in a way that will encourage the sharing of ideas. This may lead you to think about aspects of your classroom practice that you wish to change.

### 3. Activities



These are suggested ways of organizing workshops for staff within the school. There is strong international evidence that such workshops can be effective in fostering more inclusive ways of working.

## How can teachers monitor their professional development?

As teachers make use of the guide, it will be helpful to monitor their own professional development. Keeping a learning diary is an important way to keep a record of how your thinking and practices develops. This can serve a variety of purposes. For example, it can provide a record of:

- What actions are taken and why
- Decisions made in relation to classroom practice and the thinking in relation to these
- Anecdotal evidence and observations
- Thoughts about material read or things that happened

Most importantly, the learning diary is an important aid to reflection. By recording thoughts and feelings, when teachers look back at their diary entries, they will be able to think about the changes they have made in order to make their classrooms more inclusive.



# WORKSHOP 1

## Teaching is planned with all students in mind



### Review questions:

- Do lesson activities take account of student interests and experiences?
- Are varied teaching methods used?
- Do the students understand the purposes of lesson activities?



### Reading 1.1

## Developing inclusive practices

Evidence from around the world suggests that the best starting point for developing more inclusive ways of working is with existing practices within a school. This means that teachers have to be involved in the study of practice in their own and their colleagues' classrooms. For example:



**A primary school classroom in China.** There are approximately 75 children, sitting in rows of desks packed into a long, rather bleak looking room. The teacher stands at one end of the room on a narrow stage in front of a blackboard. In the back row of the classroom, there are some students who look older. In fact, these are children who either started school later than the rest or, in some instances, are re-sitting the grade having failed in the previous year.

Lessons are 40 minutes long and, although each is taught by a different teacher, mostly follow a common pattern. Typically this involves a process by which the teacher talks or reads and, frequently, uses questions to stimulate choral or individual responses from the class. Throughout the lesson, the pace is fast and the engagement of students appears to be intense.

Afterwards the teacher explains how she tries to help those who experience difficulties by directing many more questions to them and by encouraging their classmates to go over the lesson content with them during the break times.



## GUIDE 3

What, then, do we make of such an experience in a school that may be very different from those in your country? Does it suggest patterns of practice that might be relevant to teachers in other countries where, despite much smaller classes, it is not uncommon to find groups of children whose participation in lessons is marginal? Why are these students so quiet and obedient throughout a day of lessons that appear so repetitive? It would be so easy to jump to simple conclusions that might appear to offer strategies that could be exported to other parts of the world. On the other hand, there are so many other factors to consider.

It is apparent, for example, that many other influences help to shape the events observed in this classroom. Teachers are held in high esteem in Asian societies, although this is changing as a result of current economic reforms. It also seems that children are often under considerable pressure from their families to achieve success at school. Indeed in some parts of Asia, there are signs in fast food restaurants which say 'NO STUDYING'; presumably to discourage students from crowded home environments who are seeking space to pursue their schoolwork. Such community attitudes are but a part of a range of influences that help to shape the interactions that occur in local schools but which are difficult for the foreign visitor to determine.

The story points to the importance of teachers planning their lessons with all members of the class in mind. Here we bring into focus a central dilemma that confronts any teacher faced with their class. Put simply it is this: *how do I work with the whole group and, at the same time, reach out to each member of the class as an individual?*



### Issues for discussion

- How do you plan for all the children in your class?
- What strategies do you use to involve all students in your lesson activities?



## Reading 1.2

### Reaching all members of the class

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In the years since the right to educational opportunity was extended to all members of the community in many countries, it has become increasingly apparent that traditional forms of schooling are no longer adequate for the task. Faced with increased diversity, including the presence of students whose cultural experience or even language may be different from their own, and others who may find difficulties in learning within conventional arrangements, teachers have had to think about how they should respond.

Broadly speaking, there seem to be three options:

- Continue to maintain the status quo in the belief that those members of the class who do not respond have some 'problem' that prevents their participation.
- Make compromises by reducing expectations in the belief that some students will simply never be able to achieve traditional standards.
- Seek to develop new teaching responses that can stimulate and support the participation of all class members.

The problem with the first option, maintaining the status quo, is that it is likely to lead to conflict with some students and, possibly, their parents. It may also damage the working atmosphere for everybody, thus making life more stressful for the teacher. The second option, making compromises, involves a reduction in standards not least for some students who may already be vulnerable in our increasingly competitive societies. The third option, demanding that it is, has the potential to bring about improvements that can enhance the learning of all students while at the same time reaching out to those who otherwise have been marginalized.

So, what kinds of practices might help teachers to 'stimulate and support the participation of all class members'? How might teachers develop their practice in order to make it more inclusive? These are major questions to be considered in subsequent sections of this guide. At this stage a few introductory remarks will illustrate the directions to take.

It is noticeable, for example, that teachers who appear to be effective in providing experiences that facilitate the participation of all members of the class, while they each have their own style of working, do pay attention to certain key aspects of classroom life. First of all, they seem to recognize that the initial stages of any lesson or activity are particularly important if students are to be helped to understand the purpose and meaning of what is to occur. Specifically they aim to help their students to recall previous experiences and knowledge to which new learning can be connected. As one Italian teacher put it, 'I have to warm the class up - I want hot learners not cold learners'.

It is noticeable too the way that some teachers use available resources in order to stimulate and support participation. Most significantly, they seem to be aware that the two most important resources for learning are themselves and their students. The idea of using the potential of students as a resource to one another seems to be a notably powerful strategy but regrettably in some classrooms, it is one that is largely overlooked. Certainly a striking feature of lessons that encourage participation is the way in which

students are often asked to think aloud, sometimes with the class as a whole as a result of the teacher's sensitive questioning, or with their classmates in well managed small group situations. All of this provides opportunities for students to clarify their own ideas as they 'think aloud', while, at the same time, enabling members of the class to stimulate and support one another's learning.

Such approaches may challenge certain traditional values and expectations about the behaviour of learners. It means that teachers have to think about how far to question cultural values that are long established. It requires a balance between having a class that is in order, while at the same time creating a vibrant environment that supports the learning of all learners, regardless of their different learning styles. This requires an atmosphere that encourages thinking aloud and sharing ideas.



## Issues for discussion

- Which students do you find difficult to engage?
- Where do you find support in exploring new ways of reaching out to these students?
- What do you feel about encouraging students to think aloud and share their ideas?





## Reading 1.3

### Moving knowledge around

There is strong research evidence suggesting that the best way to develop inclusive ways of working is through teachers learning from one another. In this way, the aim is to 'move knowledge around' within the school, so that the best practices are available to all of the children. For example:



***The school serves a poor community in a city in India.***

*Following a lesson in which the children engaged in a role play activity about families, the teachers explain how this had been planned. They explain how for the previous year the head teacher had instigated occasional Saturday morning meetings to discuss their work.*

*Around the walls of the school are beautiful posters developed during these gatherings. It was these discussions, the teachers explained, that had stimulated them to try out different approaches to teaching. However, they explained that it was not just the meetings. They had also developed the idea of what they called 'partnership teaching', whereby they occasionally have opportunities to work together in one another's classrooms. It was this, more than anything, they argued, that had stimulated their experimentation. When asked how they found time, they explained that sometimes the head teacher would take a class to release a teacher to work with a colleague. Other times they might put two classes together but this usually meant that they would have to work outside since the classrooms were too crowded.*

As can be seen, studying practice goes beyond just a consideration of the work of individual teachers. Research points to the importance of the school context in creating a climate within which more effective practices can be developed. The nature of such positive contexts can take many forms and, therefore, attempts at generalizations are very difficult. Nevertheless, the monitoring of developments in particular schools, over time, suggest a series of organizational conditions that seem to facilitate the risk-taking that seems to be associated with movements towards more inclusive practices. More specifically, they indicate that such movement is not about making marginal adjustments to existing arrangements, but rather about asking fundamental questions about the way the organization is currently structured, focusing on aspects such as patterns of leadership, processes of planning and policies for staff development. In this way, inclusive education comes to be seen as a process of school improvement.

There is now considerable evidence that norms of teaching are socially negotiated within the everyday context of schooling. It seems that the culture of the workplace impacts upon how teachers see their work and, indeed, their students. As schools move in such directions, the cultural changes that occur can also

impact upon the ways in which teachers perceive students in their classes whose progress is a matter of concern (e.g. those usually referred to as 'having special educational needs'). What may happen is that as the overall climate in a school improves, such children are gradually seen in a more positive light. Rather than presenting problems that have to be overcome or, possibly, referred elsewhere for separate attention, such students may be perceived as providing feedback on existing classroom arrangements. Indeed they may be seen as sources of understanding as to how these arrangements might be improved in ways that would be of benefit to all students. If this is the case, the children sometimes referred to as having special needs represent hidden voices that can inform and guide improvement activities in the future. In this sense, special needs are special in that they provide insights into possibilities for development that might otherwise pass unnoticed.

It is important to recognize, of course, that the changes necessary to achieve schools that are able to hear and respond to the 'hidden voices' is in many cases a profound one. Traditional school cultures, supported by rigid organizational arrangements, teacher isolation and high levels of specialisms among staff who are geared to predetermined tasks, are often in trouble when faced with unexpected circumstances.

In some parts of the world, there are also added 'competitive' factors among both teachers and children. For example, generation after generation are raised to 'hide their effort' to prevent 'stealing their success'. As a result, children are often asked to put a paper between themselves and their neighbour during formal and informal assessment in ways that encourage children to believe that 'your work is for you only'. With such ideas in mind, it is challenging to advocate teaching approaches that encourage support for other children. On the other hand, there is strong evidence that children's collaboration is a powerful means of fostering the learning of all members of a class.

As for teachers, the story is rather similar, with policies that encourage them to compete with one another, such that collaboration may not seem appealing, despite its effectiveness in supporting all learners across a school. Consequently, teachers have to think about how to challenge such ideas by supporting the development of new ways of working at the school level based on collaborative learning and forms of assessment that do not rely only on a child's individual efforts. In this way, the presence of children who are not suited to the existing 'menu' of the school provides some encouragement to explore a more collaborative culture within which teachers are supported in experimenting with new teaching responses.



### Issues for discussion

- Is there a collaborative culture in your school?
- Do you plan lessons with your colleagues and help one another to address the challenges you face in your classrooms?
- How do you feel about listening to the 'hidden voices'?
- What ways could be explored to challenge inherited values that act as barriers to ways of working that support the development of all learners in the school?





## Workshop activity 1

### Discussing classroom practice

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In order to develop inclusive practices, it is helpful to organize workshops in the school where teachers can help one another by sharing ideas. The aims of such school-based workshops are as follows:

- To develop a detailed language of practice such that colleagues explain what they do in detail;
- To encourage colleagues to share ideas with colleagues; and
- To learn new approaches that teachers can use in their classrooms.

It is important that all participants in a workshop are prepared to listen to colleagues, even when they make suggestions that seem strange or unrealistic. Discussion of unusual ideas can help you to be much more creative in your work.







# Classroom strategies chart

Setting individual tasks		
	Giving students choices	Encouraging joint effort
Getting to know parents	Varied materials	Small group work
	Listening to individuals	Recording progress



# WORKSHOP 2

## Lessons encourage

## the participation of all students



### Review questions:

- Are all students addressed by their name?
- Are there materials that engage the interest of the students?
- Do students feel they are able to speak during lessons?



## Reading 2.1

### Thinking about difference

Attempts to reach out to all learners in a class will be influenced by the ways in which student differences are perceived. At the risk of oversimplifying what is undoubtedly a complicated issue, two possibilities come to mind. On the one hand, differences may be seen in a normative way. This means that students are defined in terms of certain taken-for-granted criteria of normality, against which some come to be seen as being abnormal. Within such an orientation those who do not fit into existing arrangements are seen as needing attention elsewhere or, at least, assimilation into the status quo.

On the other hand, perceptions may be guided by a view that all students are unique, with their own experiences, interests and aptitudes. Associated with this second, transformative orientation is a belief that schools have to be developed in ways that can take advantage of this diversity which is, therefore, seen as a stimulus for learning. For example:



#### ***A primary school in a rural district in West Africa.***

*Here class sizes are typically 50 or so children in each class. The physical resources are noticeably poor by the standards of many countries. Some of the children arrive in the morning carrying stools on their heads. It seems that in this context, this is the equivalent of children in wealthier countries bringing a pen and a ruler from home. Apparently each evening, the stools are taken home so that they can be used for domestic purposes. It may also be that some families are reluctant to leave them in school where they might be stolen, since the classrooms are open, having few walls. One of the teachers explains that his biggest problem is the lack of textbooks. In fact, for most lessons he only has one copy of the book and so frequently he has to write the text on the blackboard.*

A surprising feature of the school is the presence of a number of students who are noticeably disabled. Further inquiries confirm that the head teacher assumes that it is his responsibility to admit all children in the district. 'Where else would they go?' he remarks. Apparently such examples of what might be described as 'casual integration' can be found in a number of developing countries, particularly in rural districts. Indeed they raise the question, is it significant, in some way, that it is a rural environment? A parent in Australia explained how she had found it necessary to move out of the city to find a school that would welcome her disabled daughter.

However, there is the danger of jumping to simplistic conclusions and in so doing, perhaps, ignoring other factors that may well be influential in the context of West Africa? Can foreign visitors be sure of the conclusions they draw as they interpret their observations in the light of their previous experiences and existing frames of reference? Some writers about the development of special education in Africa have argued that there is evidence that the nature of provision is influenced by community perceptions of disabled children. For example, in some countries disability is seen to arise as a result of the influence of factors such as witchcraft, curses or punishment from God, and anger of ancestral spirits. This being the case, it may be that some children will be hidden away from sight by the family in order to avoid feelings of shame.

The ideas in this guide are based on a transformative approach that seeks to develop schools that are responsive to student differences. However, traditions in some countries act as barriers to such a movement. Specifically, the tradition has been to perceive some student's differences as requiring a separate response of some kind. Implicit in this formulation is a view that schools are rational organizations offering an appropriate range of opportunities; that those students who experience difficulties do so because of their limitations or disadvantages; and that they, therefore, are in need of some form of special intervention. Through such assumptions, leading to a search for effective responses to those children perceived as being 'different', vast opportunities for developments in practice are overlooked.

Of course, it is important to identify useful and promising strategies. However, it is erroneous to assume that systematic replication of particular methods in themselves, will generate successful learning, especially when we are considering populations that historically have been marginalized or even excluded from schools. This over-emphasis on a search for 'quick-fix' methods often serves to obscure attention from more significant questions such as, *why do we fail to teach some students successfully?*

In considering this question, it is important to remember that teaching methods are neither devised nor implemented in a vacuum. Design, selection and use of particular teaching approaches and strategies arise from perceptions about learning and learners. In this respect, even the most pedagogically advanced methods are likely to be ineffective in the hands of those who implicitly or explicitly subscribe to a belief system that regards some students, at best, as disadvantaged and in need of fixing, or, worse, as deficient and, therefore, beyond fixing.

In recent years, of course, this so-called deficit way of thinking - in which some children are seen to 'lack something' - has been subject to massive criticism in a number of countries. This has helped to encourage a shift of thinking that moves explanations of educational failure away from a concentration on the characteristics of individual children and their families, towards a consideration of the process of schooling. However, despite good intentions thinking that defines some children as being inadequate is still deeply ingrained and too often leads many to believe that some students have to be dealt with in a separate way. In a sense, it confirms the view that some students are '*them*' rather than part of '*us*'.

This further encourages the marginalization of these students, while at the same time distracting attention away from the possibility that they can help to stimulate the development of practices that might well benefit all students. In other words, those who do not respond to existing arrangements should be regarded as 'hidden voices' who, under certain conditions, can encourage the improvement of schools. Thus, differences can be seen as opportunities for learning rather than as problems to be fixed.

### Issues for discussion

- How do you feel about seeing some children as having deficits?
- Do you see some children as being 'them', rather than 'us'?  
Who are these children?





## Reading 2.2

# Seeing differences as opportunities for learning

In schools that are committed to becoming more inclusive, student differences are seen as providing opportunities to experiment with new ways of involving all members of the class in lesson activities. Through such experimentation teachers develop approaches that can benefit all the children. An example:



***In a classroom in Australia.*** A teacher conducts a foreign language lesson with a class of twelve year olds. Her style takes the form of a 'performance' in which she uses dramatic techniques to create high levels of engagement among all the students. This started, in fact, even as they arrived, in that as they walked into the classroom, they immediately joined in choral chanting of days of the week, the alphabet, numbers and so on. This gradually became more directed once they were all seated, making the whole introduction to the lesson feel fluent and engaging. There are 25 students, eleven of whom were girls. They are scattered around the room, mostly sitting next to boys. Later the teacher explained that she had imposed the seating arrangements at the start of term, arguing that 'it's important to create patterns'.

Having completed the class register, the teacher moves quickly into a session of questions and answers, practicing vocabulary. Little use is made of the home language and the pace set by the teacher is very quick. Sometimes the impression is of a 'market salesman', with rapid fire patter; other times she is like a 'conjurer', taking objects from her rucksack and asking, 'what's this?'. Occasionally she points to illustrations and captions on the wall display in order to prompt a student's response. At one stage she invites the students to sing jingles about the days of the week. Boys and girls readily volunteer to do this individually.

A wide range of vocabulary is used during what is almost 30 minutes of intensive teacher-led emersion in the target language. The Variety of the content seems to be one way in which the students' engagement is maintained. However, variety of task is also evident. At one point, for example, a large soft plastic dice is thrown around the room from student to student. As it lands, the number indicates which word the student is required to read aloud from the blackboard. Much use is made of first names to call on individuals and there are many expressions of celebration by the teacher. Given the pace and the slight sense of uncertainty that she creates- as if at any moment a student might be called on to respond- there is little room for distraction. It seems, however, that the pressure of all of this is compensated for by the atmosphere of support that she was able to create.



## GUIDE 3

During the final moments of this particular lesson, it becomes evident that one boy is unclear about what he should be doing. Indeed, at one point he leans forward and asks another student for help. After the lesson the teacher explained that the boy often has difficulty in following instructions. 'He's my failure', she explained. She then goes on to describe her attempts to encourage him by inviting his responses.

These comments seem to sum up the teacher's approach to her work. Clearly she feels that it is her responsibility to help all members of the class to learn and that if individuals experience difficulties it is her 'failure'. In this way, she sees these students as stimulating her to think about how her repertoire might be adjusted in order to overcome the barriers they face. This is in contrast with the apparent ready willingness of some teachers to presume that difficulties that occur in their classes are a direct result of the limitations or home circumstances of some of their students.

### Issues for discussion



- Is it correct that the boy is the teacher's failure?
- Do you offer a variety of activities in your lessons?
- With the pressure to complete the syllabus, what can you do to ensure that all children in your class keep up with what you are trying to achieve?





## Reading 2.3

### Special educational needs

The introduction of the concept 'special educational needs' in many countries was, to a large extent, an attempt to move away from an emphasis on the categorization of students by disability or inability, to an examination of what each child might need to overcome his or her educational difficulties. This involved a broadening of concern from a small group of learners categorized as 'handicapped' - usually placed in special schools, or in a special classroom with a different curriculum to that offered to the majority of children - to an engagement with all students who experience difficulties in education, inside or outside the mainstream. In practice, many teachers found it difficult to escape from the legacy of the past, where students were divided into the 'normal' and the 'less than normal' in order to provide the latter group with a different form of education often separate from but always additional to that provided for the majority of students.

Too often, the approaches developed as part of what is now sometimes referred to as special needs education have, despite good intentions, continued to create barriers to progress as schools have been encouraged to adopt them. In particular, the preoccupation with individualized responses has deflected attention from the creation of teaching approaches that can reach out to all learners within a class and the establishment of forms of school organization that will encourage such developments.

Meanwhile, students are grouped and labelled in separate classes based on the special educational has continued thus exaggerating the differences between these and other learners. In some instances, this can even create a sense of fear among teachers about their ability to deal with students who have certain characteristics. A classic example of this, that is still common practice in some countries, is the special classroom in the mainstream school, where children only get to see and mingle with their peers in the school community during assembly and break time.



#### Issues for discussion

- Are children with special needs seen as requiring additional support?
- Do some groups of learners experience discrimination in your school?
- Do you have a special class in your school? If so, what do you think of it and its implication on the learners who are enrolled in it?





## Reading 2.4

### Developing inclusive practices

Research in many countries suggests that developments of practice, especially among more experienced teachers, are unlikely to occur without some exposure to what teaching actually looks like when it is being done differently, and exposure to someone who can help teachers understand the difference between what they are doing and what they aspire to do.

At the heart of the processes in schools where changes in practice do occur is the development of a common language with which colleagues can talk to one another and indeed to themselves about detailed aspects of their practice. It seems that without such a language, teachers find it very difficult to experiment with new possibilities. Frequently when teachers hear accounts of what they do in their lessons, they express surprise. It seems that much of what they do during the intensive encounters that occur is carried out at an automatic, intuitive level. Furthermore there is little time to stop and think. This is why having the opportunity to see colleagues at work is so crucial to the success of attempts 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 students can be subjected to mutual critique.

The workshop activity that follows this Reading offers guidelines for the types of activities that can encourage teachers to learn from one another. This is an essential strategy for encouraging inclusive approaches to teaching, particularly the idea of mutual observation. This means that it is vital to create the climate within colleagues will feel able to be in one another's classrooms. It is also necessary for those involved to develop the skills of observing and recording practice, and giving feedback in a constructive way.

In addition to direct observation, audio or video recordings of lessons can be helpful in stimulating discussions of the all-important details of classroom practice. Once again this has to be introduced sensitively, since initially, at least, colleagues may be anxious about having their work recorded. A useful guideline here is that when a lesson is recorded it should be first seen by the teacher in private in order to decide whether it is suitable for their colleagues to view. However, cultural sensitivity around 'recording female teachers' must be taken into account. One way of getting around this is to ensure that only female teachers will see the video once it has been agreed by the recorded teacher.

#### Issues for discussion



- Do you have opportunities to see your colleagues teaching?
- How do you feel about having your lesson video or audio recorded?



## Workshop activity 2

### Reviewing classroom practice

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This activity aims at identifying the feature of lessons that will encourage the participation and learning of all students. In order to develop your ideas, you will be asked to observe one or more of your colleagues as they teach their lessons.

Your observation will need to focus on the details of their practice. For example:

- The materials they use
- The ways in which they introduce the lesson
- Their use of questioning
- Their encouragement of children's talk
- Use of small group activities
- How children are praised for their efforts and achievements
- The ways in which children are helped to record and review their own learning
- The social climate of the classroom
- The support given to students who experience some difficulty

The activity will also help you to develop your skills in observing practice and talking to colleagues about your work.



**Step 1**

Working alone, make a list of features you would expect to see in an inclusive lesson. After a few minutes join a colleague and share your ideas. Each of you must listen carefully so that you can report on what your colleagues has said.

**Step 2**

With your partner, form a working group with two other pairs. Each person takes it in turn to provide a short summary of what their colleague has said. Then, the group works together to develop a small number of 'indicators'. These are descriptive statements of what we expect to see during an effective lesson. Examples of indicators might be:

- Questions are used to help students connect the topic of the lesson to their experiences.
- The teacher praises children's efforts and achievements.
- Children are encouraged to talk to one another about their work.
- A variety of teaching methods are used.

Notice that each indicator refers to one feature only and is written in the present tense. It is a clear statement of what we want to see happening.

**Step 3**

In your working group, plan how a lesson might be observed in order to collect information about each indicator. What kind of information is needed? How can it be recorded? (If possible, you might practice observation using a video recording of a lesson).

**Step 4**

Working in pairs, each person has a chance to observe their partner teach the lesson, using the indicators as a guide. Remember, this observation is not a form of teacher evaluation. Rather, it is a way of helping you both to think about your teaching and how it might be developed.

**Step 5**

After the observation you should meet together, in private, to talk about what happened in the lesson. The observer starts the conversation by giving feedback. This should be positive and constructive.

Helpful phrases for giving positive feedback are:

- *I liked the way you .....*
- *I noticed that you .....*
- *Why did you .....*?
- *Have you thought of .....*?
- *Some teachers find it helpful to .....*
- *thank you for letting me watch your lesson. I enjoyed it!*

At the end of the discussion agree some targets - things that you each want to improve about your classroom practice.

# WORKSHOP 3

## Students are actively involved in their own learning



### Review questions:

- Are students encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning?
- Does the classroom environment encourage independent learning?

### Reading 3.1



## Students taking responsibility for their own learning

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Recent years have seen extensive efforts in many countries to ensure that the right to educational opportunity is extended to all members of the community. As this has happened, it has become increasingly apparent that traditional forms of schooling are no longer adequate for the task. Today's children live in a world of remarkable interest and excitement. Many have opportunities to travel, while even those who do not are accustomed to a rich diet of stimulation through television, films and computers. In this sense, they present challenges not faced by earlier generations of teachers.

The students of today are, therefore, demanding and discriminating; they also, of course, bring to the classroom experiences and ideas that can provide important foundations upon which lessons can be planned. In some parts of the world, this is most evident in terms of differences of race, gender, language, religions and nationalities, something that is now more apparent in many classrooms. Indeed, some schools have more than 100 nationalities among their students.

Faced with this increased diversity, including the presence of students whose cultural experience or even language may be different from their own, and many others who may experience barriers to their learning within conventional arrangements, teachers have had to think about how they should respond. In particular, they need to find ways of drawing on the knowledge and experiences of the students themselves.

So, what kinds of practices will help students to become more active learners? An example:



**The lesson in a Mexican school involved 27 nine year old students.**

*During the initial phase, the children were sitting on a carpet in a circle, each holding their reading book. In her lesson introduction, the teacher discussed the idea of the 'main characters' in a story. She used questions to draw out the children's existing knowledge, e.g. 'What do we call the person who writes a book?' Then they were asked to work in pairs talking about the main characters in their own books. The teacher moved round the circle of children indicating who each child should partner. She then explained that eventually each person would be required to talk about what their partner had said. One boy, Carlos, was to work with her.*

*After a few moments of this activity, it became evident that quite a few members of the class remained uncertain as to what was required. Consequently, the teacher stopped the class and gave further clarification of the task. The children then talked in their pairs for about five minutes.*

*Eventually the class members were asked to finish talking to their partner and then each person took it in turn to report to the class. After listening to each child's summary, the teacher wrote certain words on a flip chart. Occasionally she questioned them to elicit suitable vocabulary, e.g. 'Would you like him?...Why not?' Many of the questions seemed to be aimed at making connections with children's day-to-day experiences, deepening their thinking and, at the same time, extending their vocabulary, e.g. 'Getting excluded - what does that mean?'*

*Despite the fact that this phase of the lesson took some time and involved a lot of listening, the children remained engaged. Indeed, towards the end of the process, the teacher congratulated all the children on their concentration. She then got them to read the words she had listed choral fashion.*

*The class was told that they now had to return to their tables and carry out a writing task about what would happen if their character visited the school. As they moved to their places one child, clearly feeling very involved in what had been discussed, asked if this was really going to happen!*

*The children were seated at five tables, apparently grouped on the basis of their reading attainment. As they began work, the teacher distributed various worksheets. Then she moved to certain tables helping individuals to get started. After a while, she stopped the class and asked them to listen to one boy reading his text aloud so that they could all help him to determine where the full stops should be located.*

After the lesson, the teacher reflected on various things that had happened with one of her colleagues who had been observing the lesson. They talked, for example, about the care the teacher seemed to take with language and her use of questioning to probe the children's own understandings. They also discussed her use of paired discussion. Apparently the children are familiar with this approach since it had been used in previous lessons. Certainly they were both impressed by their concentration and their ability to express themselves. The observer mentioned about the way the teacher had chosen to work with Carlos. Apparently this had been by chance, although she had steered him to the front of the class so as to 'keep a close eye on him'. It seems that Carlos can be disruptive sometimes. They talked about different tactics for keeping an eye on potentially difficult students.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the discussion, however, concerned ways of catering for differences within the class. The observer expressed her worry that sometimes so-called 'differentiation' strategies of the type that are currently fashionable can set limits on our expectation of certain children in such a way as to lower their performance. The teacher explained how an experience early on in her career had made her aware of this danger. She noted, 'All children have things in them to surprise us...all can surprise us'.

The observer recalled different ways in which this lesson had allowed opportunities for 'surprises' while, at the same time, offering individuals varied degrees of support in order that they could participate. She recalled, for example, the way in which some children were encouraged to respond by the use of carefully judged questions. She also noted how the teacher had quietly offered different levels of support once the children began the writing task. So, for example, she immediately moved to give further oral instructions to those she assumed would need them. She also gave additional written prompt sheets to some children but in a way that did not draw attention to their need for further support. In these ways all the children took part in a common lesson, within which they shared a similar agenda, but in a way that attempted to respond to their particular needs.

The two colleagues both felt that their discussions had helped them to reflect in detail on aspects of our own thinking and practice. In this sense, the experience demonstrated the value of having an opportunity to observe practice and quality time to participate in detailed discussion of the shared experience. It was an example how much expertise is available within schools that can form the basis for improvement efforts.

## Issues for discussion



- What struck you about this lesson?
- Do students in your class have chances to take responsibility for their own learning?
- How else could you help a child similar to Carlos, especially if there is not much freedom for the teacher to adapt the one curriculum that is offered for all?





## Reading 3.2

### Starting points for learning

The recommendations made in this guide are based on the idea that, in most schools, the expertise needed in order to teach all the students effectively is usually available among the teaching staff. Thus, the task of moving things forward becomes one of finding ways of making better use of existing knowledge and skills, including the often dormant skill of working together in order to invent new possibilities for overcoming barriers to participation and learning. An example:



#### **A year 7 geography class in an urban secondary school in Egypt.**

*The students were seated in rows, two at a table, each with a text book in front of them. The teacher began the lesson by explaining, 'This is the first of a series of lessons about the Egypt'. He went on to say that before they opened their books, he wanted to know what the class already knew about this subject. Immediately lots of hands went up and within minutes the blackboard was full of lots of information. Despite the fact that none of these young people from the small Emirate had ever been out of the country, their regular viewing of films and television programmes meant that their knowledge of the Egyptian way of life was extensive.*

*Sitting on the front row was Ali, a student who has Down's syndrome who was included lately as part of the Emirati Government's Schools for All pilot project. Next to him was a classroom assistant who is there to support this student's participation. Ali raised his hand and, when called on by the teacher, said, 'They have the Pyramids'*



So, here the teacher was using a familiar tactic to 'warm up' his class: that of using questioning to draw on existing knowledge, prior to introducing new material. It is an approach that many teachers use. Certainly it is not 'special education' but, nevertheless, it proved to be a means of facilitating the participation of members of the class, including one who is seen as needing a permanent adult helper.

This story further illustrates the most important starting point for development and learning; that is, the knowledge and understandings that already exist in any context. Interestingly this seems to apply to the learning of both students and teachers.

Current thinking in cognitive psychology emphasizes the idea that learning is a personal process of meaning-making, with each participant in an event 'constructing' their own version of that shared experience. The implication is that even in what might be seen as a rather traditional lesson, with little apparent concession being made by the teacher to the individual differences of members of the class, each student experiences and defines the meaning of what occurs in their own way. Interpreting the experience in terms of their own mental frames, individuals construct forms of knowledge which may or may not relate to the purposes and understandings of the teacher. Recognizing this personal process of meaning-making leads the teacher to have to include in their lesson plans opportunities for self-reflection in order that students can be encouraged to engage with and make a personal record of their own developing understandings.

### Issues for discussion



- How do you link lesson activities to students' experiences outside of school?
- Do you have ways of drawing on the student's knowledge to enrich your lessons?



## Reading 3.3 Improvising in the classroom

Observations of planning processes used by teachers who seem to be effective in responding to diversity suggest certain patterns that should be born in mind. Usually, experienced teachers have developed a range of lesson formats that become their repertoire and from which they create arrangements that they judge to be appropriate to a particular purpose. Here they seem to take account of a range of inter-connected factors, such as the subject to be taught, the age and experience of the class, the environmental conditions of the classroom, the available resources and their own mood, in order to adapt one of their usual lesson outlines. Such planning tends to be rather idiosyncratic and, indeed, often seems to be conducted at a largely intuitive level. In this sense it is unlike the rather rational procedure introduced to student teachers in that it consists, to a large degree, of an on-going process of designing and redesigning established patterns.

Much of this planning goes on incidentally in the background as teachers go about their day-to-day business. While some of it may occur over the weekend or in the evening, it also continues on the way to school in the morning and on into the building as the teacher gathers things together for the lesson. Indeed, sometimes, final adjustments are still being made as the teacher enters the classroom and judges the mood of the class.

All of this may sound rather informal, even hit and miss, but observations indicate that for many experienced teachers, it involves an intellectually demanding process of self-dialogue about how best to stimulate the learning of the class. Attempts to encourage and support further improvements in practice must, therefore, take account of the nature of this complex approach to planning.

There is a rather obvious limitation to this approach to classroom planning that arises from the largely private way in which it is conducted. This is that the teacher is confined to the range of possibilities that is suggested from earlier experiences. This is why schools are encouraged to develop organizational conditions that lead to discussions of teaching and sharing of experiences about how lessons might be planned.

It is also essential to recognize that planning does not conclude when the lesson commences. Indeed, often the most significant decisions are those that are made as the lesson proceeds. An example:

***The modern languages department of an English secondary school.*** *The teachers explain their total commitment to what they referred to as ‘the target language approach’. Put simply, this involves immersing the students in the language being studied throughout the whole period of a lesson. Thus, they are expected to find ways of establishing meaning in the language, as young children do as they develop their first language in their homes. The approach is very intensive, placing great demands on staff and students.*

*Observations confirmed that the teachers in this particular school were tremendously skillful in this way of working with students at all levels of achievement. However, despite their obvious belief in the target language approach, they occasionally ‘break the rules’ by speaking to the class in English. This occurred when the teacher interpreted the situation as needing a brief change of medium. So, for example, a teacher might sense that some members of a class had been unable to comprehend a detailed instruction as to how a task should be carried out. A brief clarification, in English, quickly solved the problem. On other occasions, the teacher might sense a need to lighten what had been an intensive period of engagement by an amusing aside in English. None of this was planned, and, indeed, the teachers hardly recognized its use as a tactic. It was a form of ‘improvisation’ made at a largely intuitive level as the teachers played their familiar tunes and, in so doing, responded to the reactions of their audience.*

An American researcher uses a different set of images to explain the way teachers adjust their established ways of working in an attempt to reach out to members of a class. He compares the work of teachers to that of artisans. An example will illustrate the point he makes. Faced with a leak in a sink, an experienced plumber sets about the task in the certain knowledge that he has the skill to solve the problem. Since he has fixed many similar leaks before, he is confident that one of his usual responses will do the trick. Occasionally, however, he experiences a surprise - his usual repertoire proves to be inadequate. What does he do? Does he go on a course? Call for help? Read a manual? More likely he will 'tinker' with the problem pipes until he is able to invent a solution. In this way he adds a new way of working to his repertoire, which, of course, he can then take with him to the next leaking sink.

The suggestion is that this is something like the way in which teachers develop their practices. Arguably the key difference is that teaching is far less predictable than plumbing; so much so that during each lesson there are many 'surprises' to be dealt with and, therefore, far more possibilities for 'tinkering'. For example, there is the student who suddenly wants to tell the teacher about something interesting that happened the previous night; another who asks a question about the subject of the lesson that the teacher has never thought of; and, inevitably, those who lose interest or misbehave in some way.

All of these unexpected events require an instant decision. Just like the plumber, the teacher has no opportunity to take advice. In this way new responses are trialed and, where they are found to be of value, added to the teachers' range of usual approaches. Through this form of 'planning in action', teachers learn how to create classroom arrangements that can be more effective in responding to individuals within their classes.

### Issues for discussion



- Can you think of times when you improvise in order to help students to participate in your lessons?
- What do you do when you experience a surprise in your classroom?





## Workshop activity 3

### Overcoming barriers to participation

The aim of this activity is to help you and your colleagues focus on classroom factors that may hinder children's participation in lessons. Often the processes that lead to some students feeling marginalized are subtle ones that occur as part of normal classroom interactions. So, during lessons in one school, 'throw away' remarks by teachers appeared to suggest that a low level of participation was anticipated. For example, a teacher appeared to have targeted one student as somebody who was unlikely to make much of a contribution: 'Leila, homework, I assume you didn't do it - you never do, despite letters home to your mother.' Similarly, another teacher on calling the class register remarked, 'Amazingly, we have Shula here.'

It can be argued that such interactions help to reduce expectations and shape the students' views of themselves as learners. In so doing, they also discourage participation and learning. For these reasons, therefore, another starting point for the development of more inclusive practices within a school has to be with a close scrutiny of how existing arrangements may be acting as barriers to learning.

Barriers can take many forms. Some arise because of circumstances that are outside the control of individual teachers. For example, poor material resources, or very large classes can create barriers. Also, some children arrive at school feeling tired or upset because of experiences in their homes. However, many barriers result from the way schools and classrooms are organized. Examples of possible barriers to participation include:

- A curriculum that does not relate to children's experiences
- Lessons that are poorly prepared
- Use of an unfamiliar language
- Teachers who reject some children because of certain of their characteristics

Some barriers are major and may inhibit the participation of many students; others are minor and may only inhibit one or two students.

#### Step 1

Work with a small group of colleagues (three or four) to generate a list of possible barriers to children's participation in learning. For each item on the list make some notes as to how teachers can take actions to overcome these barriers. Produce a poster that summarizes your ideas.

#### Step 2

Fasten the posters to the wall around the room. Form new groups, each of which has one member from the working groups in step 1. The new groups now move around the room from poster to poster discussing the ideas that are presented.

#### Step 3

Write a short memo to yourself that completes the following sentence:  
"From these discussions I have learnt that ....."

#### Step 4

Discuss your ideas with your colleagues, considering any changes you might like to introduce into your own teaching.

# WORKSHOP 4

## Students are encouraged to support one another's learning



### Review questions:

- Do seating arrangements encourage students to interact?
- Are students sometimes expected to work in pairs or groups?
- Do students help one another to achieve the goals of lessons?

### Reading 4.1



## Using available resources to support learning

A feature of lessons that seem to be effective in encouraging student participation is the way available resources, particularly human resources, are used to support learning. An example:



***The small Asian country of Laos is said to be one of the economically poorest in the world.*** Certainly, this classroom has few material resources.

*The teacher spends the first ten minutes of the lesson talking to the children about a topic to do with nature. His presentation is illustrated by a lovely drawing he has done which is pinned to the blackboard. Suddenly the children move into groups of three to five and begin discussions. The teacher has set a question for them to address arising from his initial presentation. It is apparent from the speed with which all of this happens that the class are used to working in this way. What is also rather noticeable is the change in the atmosphere. The body language and facial expressions suggest that these children who had previously seemed rather passive were now much more engaged in the agenda that the teacher had set.*

A feature of lessons like this that seem to be effective in encouraging student participation is the way available resources are used to support learning. In particular, there is a range of resources that is available in all classrooms and yet is often poorly used, that of the students themselves.

Within any classroom the students represent a rich source of experiences, inspiration, challenge and support, which, if utilized, can inject an enormous supply of additional energy into the tasks and activities that are set. However, all of this is dependent upon the skills of the teacher in harnessing this energy. This is, in part, a matter of attitude, depending upon recognition that students have the capacity to contribute to one another's learning; recognizing also that, in fact, learning is to a large degree a social process. It can be facilitated by helping teachers to develop the skills necessary to organize classrooms that encourage this social process of learning.



### Issues for discussion

- How far are the resources of the children mobilized in your classroom?
- What are the difficulties in using group work and how might they be overcome?





## Reading 4.2

### Cooperative group work

Interest in cooperative group work in a number of Western countries has led to the development of teaching specifications that have enormous potential to create richer learning environments. An example:

**A history teacher described how he had been using highly structured group learning methods in order to improve achievement in his lessons.** *He explained how he had planned one particular lesson around the idea of the ‘jigsaw classroom’. Briefly, this involves the use of student ‘expert groups’, each of which study separate texts related to the overall themes of the lesson. Then, new groups are formed consisting of at least one member of each of the expert groups and they pool their material.*

*When he arrived at the classroom, the teacher was surprised to find that the classroom assistant who was usually there to help communication with a deaf boy in the class was absent. Despite this, he pressed ahead with his carefully planned lesson. His evaluation was that not only had the lesson been successful in facilitating the learning of the class but that also it had been the first occasion on which the deaf student had really seemed to be fully involved. Apparently, the carefully planned social processes of the lesson plan had opened up opportunities for the other students to overcome communication barriers that had previously left this individual rather marginalized during lessons.*

This example illustrates the potential of approaches that encourage cooperation between students for creating classroom conditions that can both maximize participation, while at the same time achieving high standards of learning for all students. Indeed, there is strong evidence to suggest that where teachers are skillful at planning and managing the use of cooperative group learning activities as part of their repertoire, this can have a positive impact upon achievement. Furthermore, there is evidence suggesting that the use of such practices can lead to improved outcomes in terms of academic, social and psychological development. They have also been found to be an effective means of supporting the participation of ‘exceptional students’, e.g. those who are new to a class; children from different cultural backgrounds; and those with disabilities. However, it is important to stress again the need for skill in orchestrating this type of classroom practice. Poorly managed group approaches usually result in considerable waste of time and, indeed, present many opportunities for increased disruption.

Given the strengths of the arguments for cooperative learning it would be reasonable to assume that the use of such approaches would be widespread. However, observations suggest that this is often not the case. In English primary schools, for example, there has been a long tradition of discovery learning and problem-solving within the curriculum. Consequently, it might be expected that teachers would make considerable use of approaches that require students to work collaboratively on common tasks or activities.



In fact, while it is common to see children in primary schools sitting around tables in groups, a closer look confirms that often they are working on individualized tasks. In this sense, they may be getting the worst of both worlds. Individual work requires concentration that may be disturbed as a result of incidental group discussions encouraged by such seating arrangements.

Effective group work can take a variety of forms, but the central feature is that the completion of the task necessitates the active participation of all individuals within a working group and that one member of the group cannot succeed without the success of the others. It is essential, therefore, that group members perceive the importance of working together and interacting in helpful ways. Research in the United States suggests that this can be best accomplished by incorporating the following elements into small group experiences:

- *Positive interdependence* - where all members of a group feel connected to each other in the accomplishment of a common goal, such that all individuals have to succeed for the group to succeed.
- *Individual accountability* - which involves holding every member of a group responsible to demonstrate their contributions and learning.
- *Face-to-face interaction* - where members are close in proximity to each other and have dialogue that promotes continued progress.
- *Social skills* - involving the use of interaction skills that enable groups to function effectively (e.g. taking turns, encouraging, listening, giving help, clarifying, checking understanding, probing).
- *Processing* - where group members assess their collaborative efforts and target improvements.

In summary, then, child-to-child support represents an under-used resource that can be mobilized to overcome barriers to participation in lessons and contribute to improve learning opportunities for all members of a class. Interestingly, it should be noted that the essential resources for this to take effect are already there in any classroom. In fact, the larger the class is, the more potential resources are available. The key factor is the teacher's ability to mobilize this largely untapped energy. The argument is that teachers need help and encouragement in order to develop the necessary skills to make this happen.

## Issues for discussion



- In your experience, what types of lessons are most suited to cooperative group work?
- What materials are needed to make group work effective?
- What are the difficulties and how can they be overcome?



## Reading 4.3

### Encouraging cooperation in the classroom

It is important to recognize that asking students to work collaboratively involves presenting them with new challenges. Consequently this aspect of the curriculum has to be as carefully planned and monitored as any other. Arguably the most important aspect of cooperative working must be an acceptance among members of a group that they can achieve their objectives only if other members achieve theirs. We can refer to this as positive interdependence - the idea that 'one cannot learn without the others'.

Positive interdependence can be achieved in different ways, depending upon the nature of the set tasks, the content of the lesson and the previous experience of the students. For example:

- Students may be required to work in pairs preparing a joint statement about a topic which they will be responsible for giving to a larger group or, possibly, the whole class;
- A group of students may be involved in a task that can only be completed if separate materials that are held by individual members are pooled;
- Individual members of a group may be assigned to particular roles, e.g. chairperson, recorder, summarizer, reporter;
- Each group member may be asked to complete the first draft of a task that has to be completed by the whole group;
- A group may be told that they will be scored or graded as a result of the aggregate performance completed by individual members.

In asking students to work cooperatively, we are, in effect, introducing an additional set of objectives to be achieved. As well as trying to achieve their academic objectives, they are required to bear in mind objectives related to their skills in working in with others. This means, therefore, that the complexity and demands of working collaboratively must be introduced carefully and increased in a gradual fashion. Initial difficulties can be minimized, for example, by simply asking each student to work with one familiar classmate on a relatively straight forward task. The nature of the task demands, and group size and complexity, can then be increased gradually as the students grow in competence and confidence.

#### Issues for discussion



- How might these suggestions be tried in your classroom?
- What do you see as the difficulties?
- Who might support you in trying these approaches out?



## Reading 4.4

### Learning through the written word

Where written materials are to be used as part of group work, these have to be carefully selected and presented. On the other hand, well thought out group processes can be a powerful way of helping students to use reading more effectively, while, at the same time, providing support to those within a class who may find difficulty in engaging with the texts that are being used. This approach is rooted in the view that reading should be seen as a strategy for learning. As such it involves decoding of a text, making sense of what it is saying and relating this to the reader's existing understanding. By these processes, judgements are made and knowledge is extended and modified. In other words, learning takes place.

In introducing such approaches to students, it will be important to overcome the tradition that working together involves stealing the ideas of others. Students will also need to learn how to work cooperatively in order to gain meaning from written materials. This may involve teaching them specific strategies for analysing a piece of text. So, for example, as part of a science or humanities lesson they might be asked to work with other students to:

- Locate and identify particular information in the material. This may involve underlining parts of the text to indicate where particular information can be found.
- Mark the located information in some way as an aid to understanding. Here sections of the text may be grouped into categories of particular significance.
- Organize the information and present it in a different form, perhaps by making a list of items located in the text or by filling in information on some form of table or graph.
- Groups may also be asked to consider questions or issues that are not dealt with in the text or not dealt with adequately. This may well require them to think beyond the actual written material by considering questions such as, 'what might have happened if...?', or 'What would be the result of...?'

Other useful techniques involve some modifications of the texts to be used. For example:

- Activities that involve the group in completing material that has words or sections deleted;
- The presentation of a text cut up into separate sentences or paragraphs that the group have to put into sequence; or
- Prediction of likely outcomes before going on to read the next page or section of the text.

It is important to note that all these approaches rely on the teacher providing effective explanations and, possibly, demonstrations of what the processes involve before groups are asked to start work.

It would be foolish to pretend that this type of approach to finding meaning in written material using group strategies solves all the problems faced by students who have limited reading skills. Nevertheless, at the very least, they can help students to participate in curriculum experiences from which they might otherwise be excluded. As well, the experience of collaborating with more effective readers can be a means of helping them to recognize the potential usefulness and, indeed, enjoyment of reading, while at the same time upporting processes of personal and social development.



#### Issues for discussion

- Have you tried getting students to help one another in reading lesson texts?
- What are the potential difficulties and how can they be overcome?
- Are you aware of which children in your classroom are not able to read or write as well as the rest of their same age peers? And, how might you plan group work to support their learning experiences?



## Workshop activity 4

### Cooperation in the classroom

Where teachers want to experiment with strategies for getting students to cooperate in learning, it helps for adults to cooperate too. Here a potentially powerful approach is that of lesson study, a systematic procedure for the development of teaching that is well established in Japan and some other Asian countries.

The goal of lesson study is to improve the effectiveness of the experiences that teachers provide for all of their students. The core activity is collaboration on a shared area of focus that is generated through discussion. The content of this focus is the planned lesson, which is then used as the basis of gathering data on the quality of experience that students receive. These lessons are called research lessons and are used to examine the teachers' practices and the responsiveness of the students to the planned activities.

Members of the group work together to design the lesson plan which is then implemented by each teacher. Observations and post-lesson conferences are arranged to facilitate the improvement of the research lesson between each trial. It should be noted here that the main focus is on the lesson and the responses of class members, not the teacher. Lesson study usually involves the following steps:

Lesson study usually involves the following steps:

#### Step 1

Staff form trios made up of colleagues with varied experience. They will work together to trial and evaluate the idea of lesson study as a means of strengthening teaching and learning. Each trio will choose and plan a lesson that they will each teach. The aim of this research lesson will be to put together best available expertise as to how to engage the participation of all members of the class.

#### Step 2

As each member of staff teaches the lesson, their two colleagues will observe the process, focusing specifically on the way students respond. If possible, the lesson may also be recorded on video, and a sample of students will be interviewed to determine their reactions and the extent of their learning.

#### Step 3

After each research lesson, the trio will reflect on what has happened, using their notes, the views of students and, possibly, the video recording to analyse processes and outcomes. They will then make adjustments to the lesson plan before it is taught by the next member of the trio.

#### Step 4

Once the lesson has been taught by each member of the trio, a short report will be prepared, summarizing the findings of the process and recommendations for future practice.

At the end of the lesson study period, a school meeting should be held at which each trio will present the findings of their research and the conclusions they have reached. The whole group will go on to consider implications for policy and practice.

In using this proven strategy for professional development, the following issues should be considered:

**1. Planning the research lesson:** *The learning goals* are the backbone of a lesson and provide the 'reason' for teaching and for observing the lesson. Teams usually begin by selecting a subject, concept, theme or topic in the course they want to study. Many are drawn to topics that are particularly difficult for students to learn, or for teachers to teach. Others select a topic that comes later in the term, so they have enough time to plan and design the lesson. Still others focus on topics that are new to the curriculum, or that are especially important in building students' understanding.

Learning goals should be stated in terms of what students will *understand* and what they will *be able to do* as a result of the lesson. Goals specify desired forms of student learning, thinking, engagement, and behaviour. Whatever the teachers decide to do in the class will be considered in light of the goals.

During the planning stage, team members usually begin by sharing how they have taught or would teach the lesson, discussing and debating the merits of different types of class activities, assignments, exercises and so forth. To keep the focus on student learning, though, teachers also pool their knowledge of how students in the past have learned or struggled to learn the topic at hand. Once past experiences and personal approaches are on the table, the team can begin to design a research lesson that will help students achieve the chosen learning goal.

Throughout the process, teachers practice what has been called cognitive empathy. This involves looking at the subject matter from the student's point of view, working to understand how students learn. For example, one group of teachers paid particular attention to the responses of a boy who refused to speak to either adults or students while in school. Through careful observation, they realized that, in fact, he was fully engaged in lesson activities and that sometimes he asked his classmates for help by sending them texts on his mobile phone.

In ways such as this, when planning the research lesson, teachers predict how students will perceive, interpret and construe the subject matter and the lesson activities. As a result, lesson plans are designed in a way that anticipates student responses in terms of learning, thinking and engagement.

Learning goals can be a challenge if the lesson is designed for one group of learners (the average group), with little consideration to those who deviate from the average at any level. However awareness of individual student differences will make a difference if taken into account when planning the lesson in the first place.

**2. Collecting evidence:** In preparation for teaching the lesson, teams should think about how to collect evidence that will help them determine the extent to which the learning goals are achieved. Teams may wish to develop an observation protocol based on their predictions of student responses and decide what types of evidence will be collected from students.

Before the actual class period, it may be helpful to inform students about the research lesson and the observers that will be in the classroom. Prior to the lesson, the observers are introduced to the class, explaining that the overall aim is to find ways to improve their learning.

Traditional classroom observations tend to focus on what the teacher does during the class period. However, observations of research lessons focus mainly on students and what they do in response to teaching. If videos are not culturally appropriate, then another way of recording, such as observation notes (providing permission is sought), would be fine.

**3. Analysing evidence:** The analysis phase addresses three questions:

- In what ways did students accomplish the lesson goals?
- How could the lesson be improved?
- What did we learn from this experience?

After the lesson is taught, while it is still fresh in everybody's minds, the group - and any invited observers - meets to discuss and analyse what happened. Participants then offer their observations, interpretations and comments on the lesson. The purpose is to analyse and evaluate the lesson thoroughly in terms of student learning, thinking and engagement.

To prepare for this post-lesson session, it helps to identify someone to take careful notes and to collect the additional data from lesson observers. Japanese teachers refer to these post-lesson sessions as a 'colloquium', during which the lesson study teacher, group members and, where appropriate, outside observers discuss the research lesson. The person who taught the lesson is given the opportunity to speak first, followed by lesson study group members and other observers. The discussion should focus on the lesson (not the teacher) and on analysing what, how and why students learned, or did not learn, from the experience.

Lesson study involves further research cycles during which the group revises and tests the lesson once again. Analysis of the evidence leads the group to consider ways to improve the lesson plan. Groups may modify the learning goal(s), lesson design, and also change their strategies for collecting evidence. After deciding on revisions the group re-teaches the lesson.



# WORKSHOP 5

## Support is provided when students experience difficulties



### Review questions:

- Does the teacher watch out for students experiencing difficulties?
- Do students feel able to ask for help?



### Reading 5.1 Support in the classroom

The approach to inclusion suggested in this guide involves a process of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, school curricula, cultures and communities. In this way, notions of inclusion and exclusion are linked together because the process of increasing participation of students entails the reduction of pressures to exclude. This link also encourages us to look at the various combinations of pressures acting on different groups of students and acting on the same students from different sources.

As stressed throughout the guide, the starting point for the development of inclusive practices within a school has to be with a close scrutiny of how existing approaches may be acting as barriers to the participation and learning of some members of the class. This means that attention has to be given to helping practitioners to develop a reflective attitude to their work such that they are continually encouraged to explore ways of overcoming such barriers.

With this in mind, the approaches recommended place considerable emphasis on the need to observe the process of schooling and to listen carefully to those involved. For example:



#### ***This is a mixed ability class made up of 9 years old boys.***

*Two children, who are sitting on an isolated table, are in constant contact with what is referred to as an inclusion facilitator. The class is making Eid Treats today, with lots of discussion about values associated with prayers and traditions, including the importance of giving to the disadvantaged children at this holy time (known Islamically as Zakat Al Fitr). With lots of answers and ideas around the subject, the two boys work on different, rather simplified and enlarged print worksheets with pictures and lines, to connect related pictures to each other with the help of the inclusion facilitator. During the class discussion they are not called on to participate and their main focus remains on the worksheet they were handed.*



This experience raises many questions. Certainly the boys in question are present in a regular classroom and, given their apparent learning difficulties; this would possibly not be the case in some countries. They also have the advantage of a large amount of individual attention of the sort for which parents in other countries have to fight. On the other hand, their physical location at a separate table, on the side, away from the other students, suggests that they remain somewhat marginalized, not least because the support teacher tends to stand between them and the rest of the class as she addresses them.

So, are these students included or not? Can we take lessons from this encounter that might inform the development of more inclusive practices in other schools?

### Issues for discussion



- Can you think of examples of where strategies used in your school have created unintended barriers to the participation and learning of some students?
- Are there support teachers/inclusion facilitators in your school? Is their expertise used effectively to encourage inclusion?
- Have you heard of the concept 'covert exclusion'? Do you think this was the case in this example?



## Reading 5.2 The role of support staff

A current area of practice in some European education systems that seems to lead to feelings of exclusion concerns the role of classroom assistants (i.e. unqualified adults who work alongside teachers to support the learning of students categorized as having special educational needs). Here it is important to stress that the idea of having extra adults around who can help facilitate the participation of students is an excellent one. The problem is that many schools have yet to work out how to make such a strategy work effectively. For example:

**An art lesson in an English secondary school.** *While those students seen as having special needs were following broadly the same activities as their classmates, the constant presence of a 'helper' meant that often the challenges posed by these activities were significantly reduced. For example, the assistant might hold the paper for a student with a physical impairment; write the words for a student experiencing learning difficulties, and so on. In these ways it seemed likely that at some point the continual availability of adult support would cease to ensure participation in the lesson, while at the same time effectively trivializing the activity.*

*To take a specific example, a student with Down's syndrome, was observed in a series of lessons. Given the level of support she received, 'she' always completed the set tasks, although it seemed apparent that some of these held little meaning for her. However, she was having full participation on classroom in many other ways.*

*In another art lesson, two students with special needs completed the tasks of the lesson even though they were both absent! In fact, the classroom assistant did the work for them. Meanwhile there was another group of students in the same lesson who had no support and spent most of the lesson talking. Presumably the assistant had been told to concentrate her efforts solely on the targeted students.*

Of course, the constant presence of an assistant may well be socially reassuring for a student and there are plenty of examples of how this can facilitate interactions between students. On the other hand, the assistant's actions can act as a barrier between particular students and their classmates. This is particularly the case where assistants elect to group students with special needs together. This tends to encourage these students to talk to and seek help from the assistant rather than their classmates or the teacher.

As a result, in some classes, teachers spent little time interacting with students seen as having special needs and more often address their remarks to the assistant. Thus, the presence of an assistant acting as an intermediary in communication and supporter in carrying out the required tasks means that the teacher may, in effect, carry less responsibility for some members of the class than might otherwise be the case. Furthermore, this means that the lesson can continue in the usual way knowing that the implications for these students will be dealt with by the assistant. This being the case, it can be argued that the existence of support may eliminate the possibility that the demands of these individuals could stimulate a consideration of how practice might be changed in an attempt to facilitate their participation.



### Issues for discussion

- Do you have additional adult support in the classrooms of your school?
- If so, how is it used?
- If not, how can we initiate this idea as a school, perhaps through the involvement of community volunteers?





## Reading 5.3

### Using support effectively

Given the difficulties referred to above, the way forward has to be with the development within a school of a policy for working with support assistants that does not fall into these traps. Once again here, an analysis of existing practice can often provide examples that can be used to encourage further developments within a school. An example:



***A lesson in an English inner city primary school where a teacher and an assistant work together.***

*At the start of the lesson the children were all sitting together on a carpet at one side of the classroom. The teacher engaged with the whole class asking them to come up with suggestions about what they would do when they were ninety-nine. Lots of interesting ideas were generated, such as, 'I would eat gallons of ice cream and jelly'.*

*During this time, the support assistant was sitting at the back of the group, occasionally joining in with discussions. Eventually the children moved to their tables where they were to sit in groups working on individual writing tasks. It was made clear that all sentences were to start with, 'I would...'. As they began working, the teacher went over and started working intensively with one group, who, she felt, needed more detailed discussion about what they were going to write. Meanwhile, the assistant moved around the other five groups, encouraging individuals, providing help where necessary and keeping an overall eye on the class.*

*After about ten minutes, the two colleagues exchanged roles, with the teacher moving to work with the class as a whole and the assistant giving further attention to the group that was seen as needing more assistance. All of this was carried out in a relaxed and fluent way, suggesting that the two partners had established prior agreements as to how each of their contributions would be made in such a way as to offer maximum support to all members of the class.*



Planning of how the benefits of two adults in one classroom can be achieved is, therefore, essential and schools need to develop a policy that encourages such planning processes. Specifically, teaching assistants should be:

- Clear about their roles and responsibilities
- Included in and understand the communication system of the school
- Seen positively as part of the school's provision
- Part of a working team
- Encouraged to make use of their personal and professional skills
- Supported in the development of their professional skills



### Issues for discussion

- What is your view about the idea of having two adults in the classroom? Why do you think so?
- Can you think of occasions when classroom assistants (or other adult helpers) have contributed to the learning of all the children in a class?
- If so, what were the factors that led to its success?





## Workshop activity 5

### Support in the classroom

There may not be teaching assistants in your classroom. There may, however, be other possibilities for mobilizing additional adult support. This activity is intended to encourage you and your colleagues to think about possibilities.

#### Step 1

Having looked at the readings for workshop 5, discuss the potential advantages and risks of having additional adults in your classroom.

#### Step 2

Use 'brainstorming' to list ideas as to who might be approached to provide voluntary assistance in the classroom, albeit on an occasional basis. For example: parents and other family members; university students; employees from local businesses; representatives of local community organizations. The aim is to produce a long list of suggestions. One person acts as a scribe and writes down on a large sheet all the ideas that are suggested. Group members take turns to speak.

The rules of brainstorming are:

- All ideas are valued
- Aim for a long list
- No discussion until later

#### Step 3

Consider who might be approached. It will be vital to agree ethical guidelines for the involvement of volunteers and safeguards to ensure the safety of the children

# WORKSHOP 6

## Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect and healthy living



### Review questions:

- Are there established rules for taking turns to speak and listen?
- Do students feel that classroom rules are fair?
- Is bullying discouraged?



### Reading 6.1

## Establishing a positive atmosphere

It is always a pleasure to walk into a classroom and find students busy at work, all knowing what to do and when to do it, the teacher moving easily among the students to give assistance when needed, and a positive and encouraging atmosphere for the students. It is in such a classroom that teaching and learning are both efficient and effective.

Achieving such a level of functioning is attainable only if the teacher takes the time to plan, and implement consistently procedures and rules by which to manage the class. Good classroom management is a necessity for the teacher to be able to teach with ease and for students to enhance their learning.

Before the school year begins, a teacher has to start by deciding how to arrange the classroom: the seating arrangement, the teacher's desk, bookshelves, game areas, places for lunch boxes and coats, etc. The way the walls are going to be used also has to be decided upon: places for students' written and art work, for poems or songs, for illustrative materials for different topics, class rules, etc.

Once all the physical setting is ready, then the teacher has to start planning on how the students will function within the classroom, as well as in the school. For example, when students are permitted to get out of their seats to sharpen a pencil, get a book, go to a learning centre, or go to the bathroom. The more clear these and other procedures are for the students, the less disruption occurs in the classroom and the more smoothly the day will run.

In the checklist provided below, various areas of classroom management are mentioned. It may be helpful to take each one by itself, think of what the students need to know concerning each item and what will happen if a student does not do what is expected. It may seem tedious but it will pay off in the long run.

At the beginning of the school year, the teacher has to plan time when all of these procedures will be explained and taught to the students. The younger the students, the more time it may take for them to learn.

When given due time and the teacher is consistent in their implementation, she will gain a lot in the long run and will have little wasted time during the day on inappropriate and disruptive behaviours.

## Checklist of classroom management procedures

### A. In school:

1. Lining up
2. Use of bathrooms
3. Library
4. Administration
5. Playing
6. Cafeteria

### B. In class:

1. Desks and storage areas for students
2. Teacher's desk and/or closet
3. Bookshelves
4. Game area
5. Learning centres
6. Pencil sharpener
7. Class chores
8. Beginning of day
9. End of day

### C. During lessons/activities:

1. Student participation
2. Talking with other students
3. Raising hand to speak
4. Passing out materials, books, worksheets
5. What to do when in-class work is finished
6. Handing in homework
7. Homework not done

From all of the procedures that the teacher decides upon, a few may become rules for the class. These are chosen according to what important behaviours the teacher feels he/she should concentrate on. The decision of what rules to choose depends a lot on the age of the students. For example in first grade, there may be rules for students about raising their hands before they speak and tidying up their desk at the end of the day.

Older students may have rules about listening to other students' opinions and tidying their files once a week. These rules can sometimes be decided upon by the students with the teacher, if their age permits them to do so. A list of these may be placed on a wall, at a place visible by all. It is preferable to state the rules in a way which describes the behaviour positively, such as 'I listen when another person speaks', rather than 'I don't talk while someone else is speaking'. Sometimes rules can be general, but either in discussion or in writing, they can be clarified, e.g. 'I respect others' means I wait my turn, I ask to borrow something from another student, I listen to another person speaking, etc.

It should be added that to ensure a good social climate within a classroom not only good classroom management is needed but also a relationship between the teacher and the students based on mutual respect, acceptance and understanding of each other's needs.

### Issues for discussion



- What rules do you have in your classroom?
- Are the rules applied consistently?





## Reading 6.2

# Making sure that all students are treated fairly

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Even though teachers try to apply their rules fairly, it is still common to find that some students feel left out or overlooked. These may not be the obvious ones who are known to be vulnerable. Consequently, teachers need to be on the watch out for students who may become 'invisible'.

In some schools, teachers carry out action research projects that are focused on such concerns. So, for example, in one secondary school, a group of teachers set out to investigate students' allegiances and affinity, as there was a sense that some left the school having had a 'slightly disappointing' time. The teachers were surprised to find that about 25% of the students - with equal numbers of boys and girls - seemed to be 'invisible'. A teacher explained:

*'It made us think very hard about how one quarter of our students could effectively be going unnoticed during their time in school, and the implications of this on our exam results.'*

Even more surprising was that - contrary to expectations - these students were at different levels of achievement.

Clearly, these young people were not being noticed in the classroom, either through their learning or their behaviour. Consequently, the team decided to investigate the experiences of the students more closely to see what this could tell them about practices within the school. With this in mind, they observed the students in class to see what their experiences of learning and interactions were. The aim was to observe the lessons 'through the students' eyes'. Over a period of two weeks or so, members of the staff team observed 12 students in at least two different lessons.

While there were minor differences in what was observed, the teachers were struck by how similar the experiences of the students were. In particular, they noticed that their targeted students were rarely named or approached in class. Rather, they were seen to either work through their tasks quietly, often finishing before other students but not then demanding attention, or they were quietly off task, sometimes distracting other students. During whole class question and answer sessions they were generally unassertive in their body language, half of them hardly ever raising their hands or not responding at all.

As a consequence of these further surprises, the teachers decided to carry out group discussions with the students to find out what they had to say about their classroom experiences and the school more generally. Their hunches were that these students did not want to be noticed - that they were happy to not be the focus of attention in lessons. However, once again their assumptions were challenged by what the students said.

During the discussions, the students were asked to identify and write down a recent learning experience where they had felt involved and engaged in learning, and conversely, activities where they have not felt involved or engaged. They were then asked to expand on these, and to also discuss issues around fairness and being listened to within the school. They were told that names of teachers or subjects would be removed, and that anything they said would be treated confidentially.





## Workshop activity 6

### Getting the classroom climate right

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#### **Step 1**

In groups, brainstorm a list of typical classroom management problems and another list of the factors that you think may contribute to these problems. Present your lists to the other groups.

#### **Step 2**

With your group, decide on a grade level you want to work with. Using the checklist provided in reading 1, decide on what the procedures will be for your group's class.

#### **Step 3**

Pick out five to six of these procedures that would be appropriate class rules. Write out the rules in a positive way.

#### **Step 4**

Share your rules with the other groups. After the discussion, see if there are any alterations you may want to make for the rules you have chosen.



# GUIDE 3



## WORKSHOP 7

# Students feel that they have somebody to speak to when they are worried or upset



### Review questions:

- Are the concerns of students listened to?
- Do teachers make themselves available for students to talk to them privately?



## Reading 7.1 Creating a safe environment

In an inclusive school, every child feels valued and respected. Students also feel able to talk to adults if something is worrying them. Establishing procedures that create a sense of trust and safety seems to be an important factor in this respect.

Consistent policies in areas such as attendance, bullying and management responses to classroom incidents, seems to be associated with progress towards an inclusive school climate. However, having stated policies is only part of the answer. What matters most, it seems, is the extent to which such policies are turned into reality by consistent implementation by each teacher. For example:



*In one urban secondary school, there is an established pattern that students are expected to sit where the teacher decides during lessons. These seating requirements are deliberately intended to encourage the integration of students across gender and ethnic divides. What is most striking is that the consistent implementation of this policy in every classroom means that it is now taken for granted by all the students.*

But, of course, schools are places where changes do take place. Indeed, part of the argument of this guide is that a school becomes more inclusive by introducing new approaches in order to reach children who feel left out or overlooked.

Sometimes, organizational change can lead to situations where students feel anxious. At such moments, students can take an active role in helping one another to come to terms with the changes that are occurring. For example:





## Reading 7.2

### Making sure everybody feels safe

As teachers, we must not assume that all the children in our classes feel safe. The story of how a primary school set out to make sure is interesting in this respect.

The teachers in the school gathered evidence from the children through a series of focus group discussions and this led to some 'surprises'. Specifically, attention was drawn to various rather subtle issues related to safety. For example, some children mentioned the noise in the dining room, and others described how they felt unsafe in the toilet areas, or when left isolated on the school field. One child made it known that he always avoided going into the classroom first in case he found himself there alone.

Actions were taken by staff to address these concerns. For example, some children had mentioned that they were afraid coming down the stairs and so they were given more assistance. In addition, arrangements were made to ensure that there were more adults around the toilet areas so that children would feel safer.

In general, discussions in the student focus groups pointed to the fact that lunchtimes were the most common times when students felt unsafe. Particular attention was focused on a small group of children who were experiencing difficulties of various kinds during the lunch break. Teachers scrutinized the views of the children with the team of lunchtime organizers. Together they planned new arrangements to reassure children regarding their safety. Monitoring systems were introduced so that children at risk of marginalization during lunchtimes could be identified and supported. A 'quiet' area was designated for students experiencing social difficulties during the lunchtime, where they could take part in alternative play activities. In addition, 'buddies' from years 5 and 6 were introduced in order to support vulnerable children and to provide models of acceptable social behaviour. The aim was that these students would be supported in joining in activities on the main playground for increasing length of times, until they became fully integrated.

These activities led to an increase in the number of children who felt safe in the school and some of the more vulnerable students benefited from the support arrangements that were introduced. In addition, overall student involvement in the school increased, in such a way that it benefited both staff and children. One teacher seemed to sum this up when she said:

*'Before all of this, I saw inclusion as being about particular special children. Now I see it as being about everybody.'*

At the same time, it is evident that the process encouraged innovation and, as a result, helped to strengthen inclusive policies and practices across the school. Another teacher explained:

*'If things don't work we change them.'*



#### Issues for discussion

- Can you see ways of making greater use of the views of students in your school?
- Do you change 'things that don't work' in your classroom





## Workshop activity 7

### Managing change effectively

Having reviewed aspects of classroom practice, you will have decided upon some areas that need to change. Unfortunately changing arrangements and practices in schools is often difficult, not least because everybody is so busy with their existing work. This means that you and your colleagues will have to be smart in handling change.

This activity will help you to think about what this involves.

#### Step 1

Spend a few minutes writing some notes about a change that you experienced in your work. It might have been a change in organization (e.g. a new timetable); a change in the curriculum (e.g. the introduction of a new scheme of work or new text books); or a change in teaching style (e.g. the introduction of cooperative group work). It might have been a successful or an unsuccessful change. Try to answer the following questions:

- Who proposed the change?
- What was the intention?
- What actually happened?

#### Step 2

Form groups of four or five and tell the stories you have written about. Then prepare a group report listing advice you would make to teachers wishing to change or develop some aspects of their practice.

#### Step 3

Report to the rest of your colleagues and discuss the implications together, thinking in particular at how colleagues can support one another in managing change.

# WORKSHOP 8

## Assessment contributes to the achievement of all students



### Review questions:

- Do teachers use assessment to encourage learning?
- Are students given constructive feedback on their work?
- Are students helped to revise for tests or examinations?
- Do teachers insure that diversity is respected, even within one unified formal assessment system?



## Reading 8.1 Assessment for learning

Assessing the progress of every child is an essential feature of a school that is committed to being inclusive. Assessment should not be seen as a one-off event in which classroom life stops in order that assessment can 'be done'. Neither is assessment the day in the school calendar on which the head teacher administers a reading test to the whole school. Instead, assessment should be the responsibility of all teachers and should be a continuous part of all teaching.

This means that assessment becomes a continuous process, which involves reflecting upon and interpreting events and activities in the classroom as they happen. More than anything else, therefore, assessment requires an attitude of mind that seeks out relevant information and responds to events as they occur.

All of this sounds rather grand and, perhaps, somewhat intimidating. It must be stressed, however, that it does mean that a radically different approach be adopted. Rather, it simply means that, as teachers, we look for ways of improving our capacity to learn from, and respond to, our own classroom experiences. In other words, the major element necessary for assessment in the classroom is an attitude of mind. It involves a recognition that what we already know and what we can find out as a result of our normal interactions with our students are the most significant forms of information that will lead to improvements in our teaching.

This 'assessment for learning' approach relies heavily on teacher observation. This emphasis is based upon the following assumptions:

- Since all teachers observe their students, it need not be a time-consuming affair to systematize this process so that the observations can be used to record relevant information.
- It is a flexible process capable of being adapted to meet varying needs and provide information about different aspects of classroom activity.
- It can be carried out regularly and form a normal part of classroom routine.
- With care, observations can be an accurate method of monitoring.

### Issues for discussion

- How is assessment seen in your school?
- What do you feel about the idea of 'assessment for learning'? Can you see how this relates to your usual practices?





## Reading 8.2

### Listening to learners

In addition to observation, discussion is the most common method used by teachers to understand and evaluate the effects of what goes on in their classrooms. This takes different forms depending to a large extent upon the personal style and preferences of the individual. In most classrooms, it is a natural part of day-to-day encounters.

Discussion is particularly valuable for checking on students' understanding of the purpose and nature of the tasks in which they are engaged. It can also help us to gauge the reactions of individuals to the work they have been asked to do. Various forms of structured discussion activities can be helpful in encouraging children to think aloud and reflect upon their own learning. One useful approach is to get children to talk in pairs, where each child has to listen for two minutes as their partner talks about what they have been doing during the day. Listening, it is explained, has to be undertaken in an active way. This means listening carefully, trying to understand what is said, and only asking a question if what is said is unclear. By this approach of active listening, each student helps the other to give a clearer account of what they think and feel about their classroom tasks and activities.

Inevitably in a busy classroom, with a relatively large class, there will be some need to keep written records. Again, this may be done in a relatively informal, unstructured way, or it might be based upon some form of agreed schedule. Generally teachers' capacity to record lots of detailed written information is limited. Nevertheless, most teachers like to keep informal notes or brief diaries of things that happen and ideas that emerge that they wish to pursue.

The following example is an extract from a report written by a primary school teacher:

*'I am still very concerned about Adil's progress. He really does not seem to care about his work. He spends a lot of time dreaming or interfering with other children. In the last two weeks, he has only completed two work cards and virtually nothing in his number work. He hates reading, although I did see him spending a lot of time in the book corner the other day looking at a book about railways...'*

What do we really know from this report? The teacher makes a number of statements that are a matter of judgement and, in some cases, are liable to misinterpretation. How does she know that he does not care about his work? What does she mean by 'dreaming' or, even worse, 'interfering with other children'? Does he stop them from doing their work or is his interfering of a much more serious nature? She feels that he hates reading and yet her specific observation suggests that Adil does look at some books.

Bearing in mind the points made in other sections of this guide, we also wish to encourage students to keep their own records. This is an important part of a general strategy for encouraging all children to take responsibility for their own learning. It can also provide insights into the way in which individual students perceive their work in school.

There are, of course, difficulties that arise when asking children to keep records of their achievements and experiences. First of all, there is the question of time. If children are to spend time recording what they have been doing, when should this happen? In addition, many children may lack the necessary reading and

writing skills to record for themselves. All we can say is that, in schools where children are introduced to self-recording at an early stage in their school careers, these problems seem to be largely overcome. Time is found because staff feel that the process of self-recording is a worthwhile feature of the learning experience provided for the children.

Similarly, the commitment of teachers to this idea means that they find ways of helping children to overcome difficulties of written communication. These may involve the use of drawings, paired or small group recording, or schedules of various kinds. It is likely that a school's policy for monitoring student progress will include the use of various forms of anecdotal report, whether to summarize work completed, report on social development or describe specific events that have occurred and are felt to be significant.

Where such records are to be retained for future use, it is particularly important that care should be taken in the wording used. It is likely, for example, that descriptions will include both explicit and implicit characteristics. In such cases, the reader should be guided in recognizing what has actually been observed and what has been interpreted by the teacher writing the report.

### Issues for discussion



- Do you encourage students to talk to one another about their learning?
- Do your students take responsibility for recording their own progress?





## Reading 8.3

### Looking more closely

Sometimes it may be necessary to carry out a more intensive period of observation of one child in order to find ways of encouraging their participation and learning. Here, for example, is an account of a teacher's 'shadowing' of Faheema, a six-year-old student with special needs.

**Faheema has cerebral palsy and requires a rollator to aid her walking.** *She is able to communicate, to some degree at least, in both English and Pujabi. I watched her for some 45 minutes as she sat on the floor in a very busy area of the classroom doing a shape-building task. Her walking frame was just behind her. For much of this period, there was little direct adult involvement. However, she did receive some assistance from one of the other students. Indeed, this particular girl had some difficulties in moving away since when she tried to do so Faheema would call her back, even pulling her arm at one point to persuade her to sit down. In my notes, I commented on how I had been struck by the level of engagement sustained by Faheema, even in this context where there were so many potential distractions.*

*Directly after the lesson, her teacher mentioned that Faheema had developed her ability to make choices well. Even so, she noted, just over fifty percent of the child's time is directed by adults. After I explained how I had observed her finish building the shape (a polyhedron), the teacher indicated that the staff would probably not have expected this of her. They would have assumed, she explained, that Faheema's fine-motor control was not developed enough and that the task would not 'excite or stimulate her enough'. In this way, Faheema had, it seems, overcome the limited expectations of the staff. As the teacher noted: 'There is a good lesson to learn; and that is to realize the importance of allowing children a level of choice.' Out of that has come amazing developments in fine-motor skill and shape discrimination.' This also led her to comment that if planning is, in her words, 'too prescriptive' it may cut off this type of possibility.*

#### Issues for discussion



- What did you notice in the way that this teacher recorded his observations?
- What do you see as the advantages of observing one child so closely?



## Reading 8.4

### Using tests

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Beyond observation and discussion, teachers also sometimes use tests in order to determine the progress of their students. However, the use of tests raises some concerns with regards to our efforts to be more inclusive.

Until recently, education has been dominated by the use of tests that compare students with one another (e.g. intelligence tests; many reading tests) but tell you little or nothing about the precise skills or subject matter any student has mastered. These are called *norm-referenced tests*.

The main features of such tests are that they:

- Compare people with each other;
- Are useful in selecting relatively high and low performing members of a group;
- Are not curriculum specific;
- Can only be used occasionally (e.g. once a term or year);
- Can only be obtained commercially.

More recently, attention has tended to focus on another approach involving the use of what are called *criterion-referenced tests*. These tests are concerned with the child's performance related to specific goals within the curriculum. The main features of this approach are that it:

- Compares a person's performance with some required standard;
- Is intended to help in planning instruction for individual students;
- Attempts to test what has been taught and therefore relates directly to the curriculum;
- Can be used for monitoring progress on a regular basis (daily if necessary);
- Can be obtained commercially or designed by teachers.

Clearly, teachers need to understand the difference between these two approaches to testing and of course, when each should be used.



Consider some examples of statements made as a result of children being tested:

- Fatima's reading age on the test is 6.9.
- Paul's score is second from the top.
- Teresa's score is average.
- Paco has an IQ of 80.

These statements are examples of the use of various types of norm-referenced tests. The progress of these students has been assessed in relation to the performance of other children on the same tasks. The teacher can see how each student ranks in relation to others but has no specific feedback on the extent to which each has met, or failed to meet, the objectives of instruction.

Now contrast the preceding statements with the following:

- Dominic can add all combinations of single-digit whole numbers from 1 to 9 without error.
- Christina can spell 90 per cent of the words from the second word list.
- Raul can swim two lengths of the pool using backstroke.

These statements are the result of the use of criterion-referenced approaches to testing. The student's performance is described without reference to the performance of other children. The information is useful in planning the tasks that should be provided for the individual child.

It must be stressed at this point that the issue is not that one approach is good and the other is bad; it is understanding when and how to use each. If your purpose is to select the top or bottom few students, and identify the average, or to survey the relative attainment of students in terms of generally accepted skill and knowledge outcomes, use a norm-referenced test. Consider carefully the types of test items included to ensure that they assess the areas with which you are concerned. It is also important to know the manner in which the standardization of the test was carried out. It may be useful to seek advice at this stage to ensure that you make an appropriate decision.

If, on the other hand, your purpose is to assess what specific content and curriculum objectives have been attained with a view to making decisions about the types of work that should now be set for an individual child, use criterion-referenced approaches. These can take different forms. For example:

- Curriculum-related assessment strategies may be incorporated into schemes devised within a school by groups of teachers.
- Some commercially available criterion-referenced tests are now available. Where these are used it is vital that their content should be matched to the school's curriculum content.
- Some curriculum packages have mastery tests built in to assist in placement and progress monitoring.

## Issues for discussion



- Are you clear about the differences between the two types of test?
- What approaches do you use?
- Is this an area of practice that you and your colleagues need to review?





## Workshop activity 8

### Assessing children's progress effectively

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#### **Step 1**

Read the readings for Workshop 8. In small groups, discuss the content in relation to the following questions:

- What issues arise from these ideas?
- What aspects would you like to discuss in more detail?

#### **Step 2**

Individually make a list of all the approaches you use to assess children's progress. Number the list in terms of the extent to which you find them helpful.

#### **Step 3**

Compare your list and order of preference with others in your working group. What do you think is the explanation of differences between various individuals in the group?


#### **Step 4**

As a group, agree a short statement as to what you have learned from these activities about assessment and recording. Report this statement to the rest of your colleagues and discuss possible changes you wish to make.



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# APPENDIX 1

## RATING OUR NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

Using the four-point rating scale below, score the performance of the national education system against the indicators, where:

**1 means: The system is performing well.**

There are several significant strengths and no obvious weaknesses.

**2 means: The system is performing quite well.**

On balance, strengths outweigh weaknesses.

**3 means: The system is not performing very well.**

On balance, weaknesses outweigh strengths.

**4 means: The system is performing badly.**

There are no obvious strengths and several significant weaknesses.

**NR means: No response.**

You have insufficient information to make a judgement.



### Dimension 1: Concepts

**1.1 Inclusion is seen as an overall principle that guides all educational policies and practices.**

1    2    3    4    NR

**1.2 The national curriculum and its associated assessment systems are designed to take account of all learners.**

1    2    3    4    NR

**1.3 All agencies that work with children and their families, including the health and social services, understand and support the national policy aspirations for promoting inclusive education.**

1    2    3    4    NR

**1.4 Systems are in place to monitor the presence, participation and achievement of all children within the education system.**

1    2    3    4    NR



## Dimension 2: Policy

**2.1 The promotion of inclusive education is strongly featured in important national education policy documents and EFA strategies.**

1    2    3    4    NR

**2.2 Senior staff at the national and district levels provide clear leadership on inclusive education.**

1    2    3    4    NR

**2.3 Leaders at all levels, including civil society and other social sectors, articulate consistent policy aspirations for the development of inclusive practices in schools.**

1    2    3    4    NR

**2.4 Leaders at all levels, including civil society and other social sectors, challenge non-inclusive practices in schools.**

1    2    3    4    NR

## Dimension 3: Structures and systems

**3.1 There is high quality support for vulnerable groups of learners.**

1    2    3    4    NR

**3.2 All services and institutions involved with children and families work together in coordinating inclusive policies and practices.**

1    2    3    4    NR

**3.3 Resources, both human and financial, are distributed in ways that benefit vulnerable groups of children.**

1    2    3    4    NR

**3.4 There is a clear role for specialist provision, such as special schools and units, in promoting inclusive education within the understanding of education as a right.**

1    2    3    4    NR

## Dimension 4: Practice

**4.1 Schools have strategies for encouraging the presence, participation and achievement of all learners from their local communities.**

1    2    3    4    NR

**4.2 Schools provide support for children who are vulnerable to marginalization, exclusion and underachievement.**

1    2    3    4    NR

**4.3 Trainee teachers are prepared for dealing with learner diversity.**

1    2    3    4    NR

**4.4 Teachers have opportunities to take part in continuing professional development regarding inclusive practices.**

1    2    3    4    NR



# APPENDIX 2

## RATING THE SCHOOL

Using the four-point rating scale below, score the performance of the national education system against the indicators, where:

**1 means: The system is performing well.**

There are several significant strengths and no obvious weaknesses.

**2 means: The system is performing quite well.**

On balance, strengths outweigh weaknesses.

**3 means: The system is not performing very well.**

On balance, weaknesses outweigh strengths.

**4 means: The system is performing badly.**

There are no obvious strengths and several significant weaknesses.

**NR means: No response.**

You have insufficient information to make a judgement.

### The Inclusion Indicators

**1 Everyone is made to feel welcome.**

1  2  3  4  NR

**2 Students are equally valued.**

1  2  3  4  NR

**3 There are high expectations for all students.**

1  2  3  4  NR

**4 Staff and students treat one another with respect.**

1  2  3  4  NR

**5 There is a partnership between staff and families.**

1  2  3  4  NR

**7 Senior staff support teachers in making sure that all students participate and learn.**

1  2  3  4  NR

**8 The school monitors the presence, participation and achievement of all students.**

1  2  3  4  NR





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# INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION

## Training Tools for Curriculum Development

### **REACHING OUT TO ALL LEARNERS:** a Resource Pack for Supporting Inclusive Education

The IBE series of *Training Tools for Curriculum Development: a Resource Pack* is designed to support Member States with regard to education and curriculum reforms and development processes. Specifically, 'Reaching Out to All Learners: a Resource Pack for Supporting Inclusive Education' intends to share this broader understanding of the theory and practice of inclusive education to support its effective implementation at the school and classroom levels. It provides comprehensive guidance for national policy makers, curriculum specialists and developers, teachers, teacher educators, school leaders and district level administrators.

The *Resource Pack* consists of three inter-connected guides:

**Guide 1. Reviewing National Policies** - This provides a framework for reviewing national policies in order to create a policy context in which the other two guides can be used effectively to foster more inclusive schools and classrooms.

**Guide 2. Leading Inclusive School Development** - This supports head teachers and other senior staff in reviewing and developing their schools in order to make all their students feel welcomed and supported in their learning.

**Guide 3. Developing Inclusive Classrooms** - The aim of this guide is to support teachers in developing more effective ways in engaging all children in their lessons.

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