The application of inclusive principles and practice in schools in South India: Successes and challenges

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Introduction

In this chapter, whilst acknowledging the significant progress that has been made towards developing a more inclusive education system in India, we suggest that the stated intentions of the Indian Government to create more equitable school provision faces many challenges. Not least of these is the mismatch between the intentions to create inclusive schools and a teaching profession that has received inadequate training to address the needs of a diverse school population. Recent policy initiatives, and particularly the implementation of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) (Ministry of Human Resource Development 2009), have placed an onus upon schools to meet the needs of students who have previously been marginalised and excluded. Across India, universities and state providers of professional development are striving to ensure that teachers increase their confidence through gaining the skills, knowledge and understanding that enables them to create more inclusive classrooms (Das Gichuru and Singh 2013). Throughout this chapter we argue that this is a critical factor in establishing sound foundations for a more equitable approach to education. The relationship between theoretical understanding of those factors that lead to marginalisation, and the skills required for creating a more inclusive learning environment are explored and exemplified.

Policy for inclusion within an Indian context

The notion of an entitlement to education for all children within an Indian context has been well established for many years (Miles 1997; Govinda and Bandyopadhyay 2010), and builds

upon a long tradition of valuing formal education within the country (Ghosh 2000). The authors of the Indian constitution (Government of India 1949), in recognising the importance of ensuring access to schooling as a means of developing national stability and an equitable society stated in article 45 that:-

> 'The State shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years'.

> (Government of India 1949)

This intention to provide universal education within the country is often credited to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who oversaw the writing of the Indian constitution, and held strong beliefs with regards to the power of education to transform the lives of those from marginalised and oppressed communities. Ambedkar, who himself came from an oppressed Dalit community, recognised that the educational opportunities afforded to him were denied to many who came from economically disadvantaged groups, or those from scheduled tribes or scheduled castes, and that the Indian education system was in many respects exclusive and elitist (Chatterjee 2007; Kumar 2014). Writing of his influence upon post-independence educational development in India, Sharma (2015 p.251) quotes Ambedkar as stating that:-

> "It is education which is the right weapon to cut the social slavery and it is education which will enlighten the downtrodden masses to come up and gain social status, economic betterment and political freedom"

Despite this assertion and the oft stated intentions of the Indian Government to ensure a more equitable education system, the achievement of universal education within India has remained an elusive ideal (Singal 2010; Unnikrishnan 2010; Juneja 2015). However, it is

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important to acknowledge the significant efforts that have been made to improve educational opportunities for those previously denied formal schooling within the country. In 2015 the Global Monitoring Report (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 2015) praised the Indian Government for the implementation of policies resulting in increased enrolment of children in schools. In particular it was noted that progress had been made in respect of the enrolment of girls, though inconsistency across states remains a challenge in this area. Initiatives such as the provision of midday meals, and improved sanitation have undoubtedly had a positive impact upon increased enrolment (Alfridi 2011; Behrman, Parker and Todd 2013). The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) (ASER Centre, 2014), confirmed improved enrolment rates across India, but also reported that there were significant discrepancies in the acquisition of basic skills by children across states.

Whilst enrolment rates in India have improved greatly in recent years, there are still many issues surrounding attendance. Concerns have been particularly expressed in relation to Government Schools, with levels of attendance reported to be as low as 50% in some North Eastern States, whilst similar schools in Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the south were achieving above 90% attendance rates (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2014). Such discrepancies are not surprising when considering the inequitable distribution of economic and social resources across this populous and diverse nation. However, this situation is being further exacerbated by an escalating market-driven economic model founded upon a belief that growth requires a reduction in government driven initiatives. As Mander (2015) suggests, such an approach militates against public investment in education, health and social welfare and invariably fuels greater inequality. This is a view endorsed by Danforth and Naraian (2015) who suggest that exclusion as a result of poverty is a critical issue in India today in a climate where economic growth is benefiting a burgeoning middle class, whilst those in

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hardship are being further marginalised both socially and economically. At a time when educational opportunities for children from the wealthier sections of Indian society are on a par with those in the world's most affluent nations, the majority of the country's population continue to receive an education that is of a lesser standard.

Obstacles to progress

Establishing a definitive definition of inclusive education has proven to be a challenge that has vexed many policy makers and researchers internationally ().Whilst in some countries the focus on developing inclusive education has been upon the provision of mainstream school access for children with disabilities or difficulties with learning, in India and many other countries of socio-economic disadvantage there has been a greater recognition of the inter-relationship between issues of poverty, gender, social standing and disability (Giffard-Lindsay 2007). It is also important to recognise that inclusion is not solely an educational issue, and that people with disabilities and those from other marginalised groups have been excluded from the mainstream of society for many years. The authors of this paper have therefore adopted a definition of inclusion based upon that first adopted by Inclusion International, an organisation initiated by people with disabilities to campaign for their right to be included in all aspects of society. This definition states that "inclusion refers to the opportunity for persons with a disability to participate fully in all of the educational, employment, consumer, recreational, community and domestic activities that typify everyday society" (Inclusion International 1996). Much has been written about the obstacles that may inhibit progress towards the development of a more inclusive education system in India (Sharma, Morre, and Sonawane, 2009; Singal 2010). In many instances inquiry into teacher attitudes and expectations has provided a focus for discussion, alongside a consideration of cultural influences and established educational traditions. However, as greater efforts have

been made to implement inclusion policy at both state and school levels, some attention is now being given to conditions in schools, the provision of appropriate resourcing and discussions of pedagogy (Ruffina and Ahmed Bawa 2012). Central to many of the debates in this area has been the necessity to provide a better trained work force of teachers and to improve professional understanding of how teaching practices may be changed to promote classroom justice and effective learning. As Kourkoutas, Vitalaki and Fowler (2015) identify, in many instances teachers recognise the isolation and exclusion of students in their schools but feel inadequate in addressing this situation because they lack the understanding of either causal factors or the skills required to create a learning environment that is more conducive to inclusion. Data reported by Bhatnagar and Das (2013) from a survey of 470 teachers in Delhi established a positive correlation between the training in special education provided to teachers and positive attitudes towards inclusive education. This finding reinforces those from research conducted elsewhere (Salend 2010; Savolainen., Engelbrecht., Nel, and Malinena 2012) though a more detailed analysis of how the training impacts upon classroom practice has received less attention in the literature from India.

In recent years increased attention to inclusive education has been given in a number of teacher training courses and via professional development opportunities across India (Pandey 2006). In this chapter, we propose that greater consideration now needs to be given not only to course content, but also to the support provided to teachers and schools in order to address issues of transfer of learning from courses to classroom, evaluation of impact, and the further dissemination of innovative practice.

Professional development progress and challenges

The provision of teacher training and professional development for teachers in India is long established, and has often included elements focused upon planning for children with special educational needs, or those from other marginalised groups (Hegarty and Alur 2002). In the late twentieth century a number of government supported initiatives aimed to promote more equitable approaches to education. These included the introduction of a programme called the Integrated Education of Disabled Children (IEDC) (Ministry of Welfare 1974), which sought to promote and support the integration of students with mild to moderate disabilities into regular schools. Whilst the intention of this programme was clearly stated, it has been suggested that its success was limited for a number of reasons. Rane (1983), states that a lack of adequately trained teachers, poor awareness of the needs of children with disabilities or special educational needs, and under-resourcing of schools were presenting significant obstacles to progress and impeded the potential effectiveness of the IEDC. This and other initiatives have also been inhibited at times by a lack of awareness among families of their rights to secure access and facilities in support of their child with a disability or special educational need (Kuppusamy, Narayan and Nair 2012).

Later initiatives, such as the Project for Integrated Education for the Disabled (PIED) (Ministry of Human Resource Development 1987), and the District Primary Education Programme (DPED) (Ministry of Human Resource Development 1994), attempted to build upon the IEDC programme by adopting what was described as a "Composite Area Approach." This scheme designated all regular schools within a specified location, referred to as a block, as schools that would be supported in developing provision for children with disabilities and special educational needs (Gitanjali 2004; Sharma and Deppeler 2005). These programmes served to raise awareness amongst education policy makers and teachers, with further support coming from the emphasis upon rights and access stated within the Persons

with Disabilities Act (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment 1995), which had some influence upon the professional development of teachers. However, a survey of teachers conducted by Saravanabhavan and Saravanabhavan (2010), indicated that despite these significant legislative changes, the awareness of teachers in respect of children with disabilities and special educational needs remained at a relatively low level.

Initiatives such as the central government's establishment of District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETS) established in 1986 provide an indication of some recognition of the challenges faced by teachers in addressing the increasingly complex demands of providing education for a diverse population. These regional centres of guidance have secured a base for the professional development of teachers as well as a forum for research and development. Within the constitution of the DIETS is an intention that the support which they provide should maintain a focus upon those groups that have been traditionally marginalised or disadvantaged within the education system. In making this commitment the government identified that priority should be given to girls and women, those from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, minorities, the handicapped (*sic*), and other educationally disadvantaged groups including working children, slum-dwellers and inhabitants of hilly, desert and other inaccessible areas. Whilst the intention of the DIETS was carefully defined, reports of their ability to deliver on these expectations suggest that they have been faced by many challenges. Mehrotra (2006) found that the training provided was often theoretical and general, and did not address the practicalities of day to day classroom management issues. This confirmed the findings of Dyer (2004) who expressed concerns that the professional development provided through DIETS was often delivered by persons who had sound theoretical knowledge, but that this was rarely underpinned by practical experience or a realistic perception of the

difficulties confronted by teachers who were being expected to provide an effective education to a diverse classroom population.

More recently, the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) (Ministry of Human Resource Development 2009) has placed a renewed emphasis upon the encouragement of more inclusive schools. Within the requirements of this Act (section 12) is the introduction of a quota system whereby every recognised school, including private unaided schools (those managed by private agencies), should admit each year in class 1 at least 25% of their pupils from economically weaker sections of society and disadvantaged groups, including those with disabilities, and must provide them free and compulsory elementary education. Though undoubtedly well intentioned, this significant legislation whilst supporting a number of positive initiatives and raising the awareness of State education officials (Soni , and Rahman, 2013), is not without its critics. Rai (2014) is particularly critical of the fact that the Act applies only to children between the ages of 6 – 14 years. At a time when early intervention and improvements in nursery provision have been emphasised as priorities in India, the RTE appears to ignore the importance of this phase of learning. The same author similarly indicates that this important legislation has been introduced without adequate consideration being given to the preparation of teachers who are required to oversee such significant change. This may in part account for the fact that only 10 per cent of schools in India are currently compliant with all the expectations of the Act (Rai 2014). Cheruvalath, (2015) has similar misgivings about the potential for beneficial change from the RTE, suggesting that in a country where poverty remains pervasive, the Act makes unrealistic provision for the poorest members of Indian society. She acknowledges that for a few children from lower middle-income classes there will certainly be benefits, but that the RTE fails to recognise the reasons why children from

the poorest strands of society do not attend school, including the necessity to be wage earners in order to help support their families. Whilst the RTE has renewed a focus upon the responsibilities of private unaided schools to cater for a more diverse population, Cheruvalath suggests that this will have little impact upon Government Schools that are already providing education for the poorest members of Indian society. In these schools she states, there is a shortage of teachers, a problem of low salaries, overcrowded classrooms, a lack of adequate infrastructure and few basic resources. Furthermore, teachers in these schools are often the least well prepared, and are often lacking in the motivation required to create more inclusive learning opportunities.

It is evident that there is an acknowledgement on the part of central government of the need to support the development of more inclusive schools. However, it is equally apparent that progress in this area is being inhibited by a number of factors, not least of which is a failure to address the needs of the workforce to be adequately prepared to deliver the requirements of new policies. There is much to be learned from recent studies of teacher development in inclusion that might be seen as helpful as consideration is given to how teachers can be supported in the achievement of more inclusive learning environments. In particular two significant factors emerge from the literature. Firstly that those undertaking professional development need to have opportunities to relate theory to practice, and to understand how the ideas being developed can have practical application in a range of contexts (Thirumurthy and Jayaraman 2007; Florian 2012; Danforth and Naraian 2015). This requires that courses for teachers are delivered using an interactive approach rather than the more didactic and lecture oriented methods that have been the norm in India (George, and Sankaranarayanan 2007; Das, Gichuru and Singh 2013). Secondly, more effective means of disseminating innovative and effective classroom based practice need to be developed, in order that teachers

have an opportunity to share learning and gain greater insights into successful approaches for developing inclusive classrooms (Jha 2010; Ruffina, and Ahmed Bawa 2012; Le Fanu 2013).

Having an impact or hitting brick walls?

The issues of relating theory to practice and the dissemination of learning were central features of a survey and face to face semi-structured interviews conducted with twenty teachers who had completed a two year part time course of training in the area of inclusive education in Bangalore. These teachers, all female, came from a range of backgrounds and schools. All had a recognised teaching qualification, and several had post graduate degrees and the majority were working in private schools. Each of these teachers had undertaken training related to planning inclusive policies, developing inclusive approaches to assessment, planning and teaching, working with families and communities and understanding the causes of marginalisation. All were qualified and experienced teachers and during their course they had completed a series of written assignments and tasks, including a detailed small-scale research project focused upon an aspect of work in their own institution.

The course was taught by tutors with experience of teaching in a number of schools and other education establishments both in India and the UK, and comprised a series of seminars and practical workshops delivered through five modules taught over 150 hours wherein the teachers were encouraged to develop resources, trial teaching approaches and relate learning to their own professional experiences and situations. Throughout the course the tutors drew upon the experience of these teachers to test theories and debate issues surrounding practices that were considered to encourage participation in learning by pupils who have traditionally been marginalised and excluded. The importance of providing practical examples of teaching from Indian classrooms, work with local families and the application of Indian resources was fundamental to teaching on the course, with tutors ever conscious of the potential risk that

inclusion would simply be seen as a western concept with limited applicability in a local context (Rose, Doveston, Rajanahally, and Jament, 2014).

The course was assessed through a series of four written assignments each of 5,000 words length through which participants were encouraged to take an aspect of learning from the course, discuss this in relation to a body of literature and consider its practical application with students with special educational needs. The participants were encouraged to select topics that were closely related to their own professional circumstances and to evaluate the practicalities of changing practice and the outcomes of their interventions. Throughout the course participants were encouraged to critique their current practice in a manner that emphasised the positive aspects of their teaching, whilst seeking change that would facilitate greater student participation in classrooms and increase the understanding of families and colleagues. The final longer piece of work completed by participants comprised the planning and undertaking of a research project which investigated one aspect of the provision of inclusion within their own working context.

Whilst evaluations from three cohorts of participant teachers who had undertaken the course indicated that they believed that they had increased awareness and understanding of inclusion, and had developed a range of approaches that were applicable within their classrooms, the course tutors recognised that the successful application and sustainability of learning would only be evident after a period of time following the conclusion of the course. It was with this consideration in mind that data were collected from a cohort of students a year after their course completion.

As is the case with many professional development courses, it is reasonable to assume that the majority of participants attend because they already have a level of commitment to the course focus. Investigations into teacher attitudes towards inclusive schooling, including

those conducted in India have dominated research and the literature in this area (Parasuram 2006; Sharma, Morre, and Sonawane 2009). However, several course participants reported that whilst they felt a commitment towards inclusion, they were apprehensive about how this might be practically achieved. The relationship between practical application of skills and the successful implementation of teaching and learning approaches in the classroom was a theme that emerged from many of the interviews with teachers who had attended the course. Several admitted to being unsure of the application of inclusive practices within the classroom at the outset of the course, and some commented on the ways in which their attitudes and expectations had changed as their studies progressed.

> *"I have learnt how to make physical accommodations to make a classroom more inclusive of children with SEN. My values as a teacher and my expectations have been transformed and this has greatly affected my attitude towards inclusion and inculcated deep within me a desire to be inclusive".* (Teacher working as special educator in primary school)

The teachers were initially asked to reflect generally on the course and to provide an overview of what they had learned and how this might have benefited their work. In response to this, several described the importance of being able to place inclusion in India in the context of other countries and situations. One teacher commented that:

> *"The course has given me a greater understanding and exposure to how inclusion and special education works around different parts of the world. It has given me an opportunity to look at various barriers/problems to inclusion and also explore solutions in different situations and with children of different disabilities. It has given me a wider and deeper understanding on the various facets of inclusion around the world."* (Senior teacher in secondary school)

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It was evident from the comments made by other respondents that this ability to see what could be learned from elsewhere, and how approaches might be modified for specific local circumstances, was seen as valuable. In particular, this more global analysis had provided a focus upon inclusion in a broader context, whereas for many of the course participants this had been perceived largely as a special educational needs issue.

> *"The course has given me a different perspective to think in terms of inclusion. It is not just to apply the same to classroom/children but to look at inclusion of all marginalised aspects of learning. To ask questions, not to be judgemental and to understand various aspects of learning in a macro format is definitely the practical learning that I have gained."* (Teacher from Primary School)

The interrelationship between issues of poverty, gender, caste and disability had been emphasised and explored throughout the course and was seen by several of the teachers to have enabled them to reconsider the socio-economic influences that pertained within their own schools.

> *"Cultural disparities definitely are visible in some situations. Socio economic factors negatively contribute to the challenges faced by children and families, as accessibility to facilities of many types which are usually assumed possible is a challenge in my own working situation."* (Teacher working for NGO supporting children with disabilities in an area of socio-economic disadvantage).

However, several commented that they were conscious that their own understanding of these matters was now significantly different from that of some of their colleagues with whom they worked. In some instances they continue to work alongside teachers who have fixed ideas and low expectations of their pupils based upon their gender, caste or home situation. This

had been a source of some frustration, and seems unlikely to change unless the opportunity for professional development provided on the course could be extended through in-school training.

The teachers were asked to provide examples of anything they had learned that they had been able to apply directly in their teaching situation. In response to this most gave generalised responses related to the implementation of more inclusive approaches to assessment and planning, differentiated teaching or the development of individual education plans. Comments were typically of the nature:

> *"Earlier I had no idea about formative and summative assessments, or multi-sensory methods of teaching. So I was able to apply some of the assessment methods and also have used multi-sensory methods in class."* (Teacher from Primary School)

Some were more specific, as for example seen in the response of one teacher who described:

> *"Designing a curriculum and applying 'circle time' technique or rather adapting it to a large group with the opportunity to develop self – awareness, better communication skills such as listening, being respectful and building better relationships ultimately leading to self – advocacy."* (Teacher from Primary School)

When asked about the effectiveness of this intervention she commented:

> *"In the limited time that I have tried this, it does seem to make the children happier. Of course, as yet, with a couple of children, I cannot confidently say so."* (Teacher from Primary School)

Another teacher reported:

"I learned about positive reinforcement as a behaviour management strategy. I have been a part of the team that designed a 'CAUGHT BEING GOOD' programme in our school to elicit and reinforce positive behaviour from our students." (Teacher working as special educator in primary school)

It was evident from the responses that the application of learning from the course was dependent upon specific circumstances. In some instances students were able to inform those priorities or challenges that had already been established in the school. This was generally seen as easier than committing to new initiatives that would require changing the thinking and approaches adopted by significant numbers of colleagues. In the example provided above, teachers in the school had identified a number of difficulties associated with student behaviour and its management. This meant that they were receptive to new ideas and approaches, affording the former student an opportunity to introduce learning from the course at a time when teachers were most likely to be receptive. Several students from the course commented upon this issue of school climate as an important consideration for the introduction of ideas that would be seen as coming from outside of the school. Ownership of learning is clearly an issue that needs to be considered by those who provide professional learning, particularly if they have aspirations that this should have benefits beyond the individual student, and the ability to promote change in schools.

A valid criticism of professional development is that it often impacts mainly on the individual attending a course and therefore has little effect in terms of changing schools (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Kwang and Birman 2002). It was therefore not particularly surprising to find

that when asked specifically about opportunities to disseminate their learning to colleagues, a mixed picture emerged. Examples were provided of the extension of learning within schools, sometimes at the level of interaction with individual colleagues:

> *"Knowledge gained in the course has provided an opportunity to exchange ideas, observations and thoughts with other teachers at the school. Some of the teachers have provided me with positive feedback after the implementation of few strategies I suggested. To state an example, I requested the class teacher of a particular student to engage him in art activity (water colour painting) whenever he displayed noncompliant behaviour which resulted in anger. The water colouring had calming abilities; it was therapeutic for the child."* (Teacher working as special educator in primary school)

A few teachers had experienced more formal opportunities to share their learning; the most developed of these was described in the following terms:

> *"We have formulated a training programme for mainstream school teachers in the form of workshop modules on "Classroom Techniques for Handling Students with Mixed Learning Abilities". There are four modules namely: Identification of students with Mixed Abilities, Behaviour Management, Learning Strategies, and Assessments."* (Senior teacher in secondary school)

However, more typical were comments such as:

> *"Not in an organised or large set up, but in bits and pieces as and when the opportunity presented. The learning has been shared with colleagues and seniors at*

school and some friends and practitioners known personally." (Teacher from Primary School)

Whilst none had encountered open hostility to the ideas taken back to their schools, it is clear that for several the ability to influence change beyond their own classrooms or amongst a small number of receptive colleagues is limited. This is certainly an issue that needs far greater consideration on the part of those who deliver courses of this nature.

> *"I think, not having a free hand to implement the learning has been a hindrance. Since schools have standardised, fixed systems, getting something changed or tweaked requires a huge round of approvals. Also, there is a natural and inherent resistance to change and people are comfortable just continuing with what is being followed although there may be better ways of doing something. Sometimes there are lots of practical and administrative issues associated. Changing mind sets and asking people to think in a different way also takes a lot of time and perseverance and most often, this mental barrier is the most difficult to cross."* (Teacher working as special educator in secondary school)

Learning from success stories

As with any other accredited course, the application of inclusive principles and practice in schools can in part be evaluated by the assessed practical tasks carried out by students. In particular the dissertations written by students and based upon a small scale empirical research project afford an opportunity to assess how the skills, knowledge and understanding imparted through the course are being applied. An appraisal of the projects undertaken by students indicates that most were able to develop practice based upon ideas garnered through

their course focused studies. Scrutiny of this work provided examples of the application of principles of behaviour management, the introduction of differentiated approaches to teaching, modification of school assessment procedures, planning for periods of educational transition, and initiatives related to parental involvement, amongst several topics that could be directly related to course content. Furthermore, the evidence gained from these research projects suggests that changes made had been seen to have benefits not only for course participants, but also for pupils, teachers and parents, and that the experience of conducting these studies had reinforced the commitment of these individual course members towards adopting more inclusive approaches to teaching and learning.

As an example, one student developed a case study of a girl who was a first generation learner with a physical disability living in a rural community. Applying principles adopted from the course, she involved this girl's mother and grandmother in discussions about her needs and in planning the implementation of a personalised approach to learning. These significant family members had previously identified their own limited understanding of the girl's needs and this was seen to have resulted in low expectations of what she might achieve. Following the interventions of this student the girl who was the subject of the case study reported that her family became more willing to encourage her to participate in household tasks, and that she now felt that her abilities were being better appreciated, and that there was a greater focus on what she could achieve.

In another study undertaken in a primary school, a student conducted a survey of teachers' approaches to behaviour management. This enabled her to identify the strategies being used to manage what were perceived as difficult student behaviours. On the basis of this survey she identified examples of good practice and worked with teachers to develop strategies for behaviour management building on these. By valuing, respecting and including the ideas of

the teachers from her school, this student applied an approach that had been taught on the course in order to improve classroom management within her school in a manner that encouraged the greater inclusion of students who were perceived as being difficult.

Whilst the impact upon these specific teachers is evident from the evaluative work undertaken for the course, issues of sustainability and dissemination remain challenging. When undertaking work for a course, teachers are often well motivated and eager to experiment with new ideas. The post study period may often prove more challenging in terms of maintaining change and seeking further ways of developing new practices (Avalos 2011). In part, sustainability is dependent upon the levels of support that may be available within a school. Whilst participating on a course much of the support required to maintain motivation is provided by tutors and fellow students, when this is removed it is not always easy to obtain similar levels of enthusiasm in the workplace. It is therefore necessary to examine the means through which support systems may be established for the longer term mentoring of colleagues who are trying to effect change within their schools.

As a commitment to the course described in this chapter, tutors have made regular visits to students' schools in order to run whole school workshops or work with small groups of teachers. Students participating on the course have commented on the positive impact that this has had upon their own credibility and status in school. In some instances simply visiting a school appears to have boosted student confidence and has been seen as a mark of respect of the tutor towards both the student and members of school staff, and a commitment that goes beyond the professional development classroom.

Several of the teachers who completed the course suggest that change at a whole school level appears to be over ambitious and that they are more likely to adopt a strategy of working with selected, receptive colleagues in the hope that they together may have some impact. The

comment below from a teacher asked about whether she was having an impact on her school is typical of many received during this evaluative process.

> *"Not on a large magnitude, but definitely on a one on one interaction with a few interested teachers and some parents."* (Teacher working as special educator in primary school)

Whilst dissemination, even at a parochial level, presents a number of significant challenges, it remains important to examine opportunities to share learning with a wider audience. With this objective in mind, teachers completing courses should be encouraged to present their work at conferences and other events and where appropriate to publish papers based upon their studies in academic journals and professional magazines.

A number of teachers who have undertaken the course in Bangalore have been successful in having papers based upon their work accepted for publication (Philip 2015; Haridarshan 2015; Vellal 2015). Such a step requires considerable confidence on the part of teachers who have not previously ventured into the domain of academic publication. However, there is surely a responsibility on the part of tutors running such courses to ensure every support to enable their students to bring their work to a wider audience, and in some instances this may require joint publication in order to provide teachers with the initial confidence to move forward (Mahmood and Visser 2015).

Conclusion

The assumptions made about direct transferability of inclusion as a concept from economically advantaged societies to those where access to resources is more limited needs to be questioned. Much has been written about teacher attitudes and expectations in respect of

students with disabilities and special educational needs in India (Parasurum 2006; Sharma, Morre and Sonawane 2009), and there remain many cultural challenges that need to be addressed in this area. However, attitudes are unlikely to change until such time as teachers feel that they have the confidence, skills and knowledge to be able to work practically with children of diverse needs in their classrooms.

Whilst theoretical constructs of inclusion and an understanding of theories of learning must form an essential foundation for developing inclusion (Waitoller and Artiles 2013), courses that aim to effect change must be equally grounded in the development of classroom practices. This demands that a dialogue between the providers of professional development and those intended recipients of training is maintained throughout the process. Teachers and school principals who feel that they have some ownership of course content and have invested in supporting the development of professional development, are more likely to be sympathetic to the ideas brought back to schools by teachers, and as has been indicated by Danforth and Naraian (2015) the promotion of a dialogue between professionals is essential if a climate conducive to change is to be achieved and inclusion recognised as making a positive contribution to educational development. The simplistic presentation of exemplary practices from one context, in the hope that this may result in changes to procedures in a different situation is at best naïve, and in some circumstances may be viewed as imperialistic. It is essential that course participants are encouraged to bring their own experiences into the teacher training arena, and that tutors make greater efforts to draw upon resources and exemplars from environments that are familiar to students.

Teachers who attend courses are at times reluctant to challenge the ideas presented by their "expert" tutors. In some instances this situation has arisen within an educational culture that encourages students to pay unquestioned reverential respect to their tutors (Gelmon and Billig

2007). Early in the course discussed in this chapter, students commented that an emphasis upon group work and the opportunity to debate ideas were approaches that they greatly valued, though for some this approach was initially challenging as it was different from their previous learning encounters. They also appreciated the fact that their own professional experiences were respected and seen as critical in understanding how progress towards achieving greater inclusion in classrooms could be made. Establishing an emphasis upon learning as a partnership between teachers and students was seen by the course tutors as an important principle of course delivery. In particular it was believed that by modelling an inclusive approach to teaching and assessment through the management and delivery of the course, it would be possible to discuss issues of inclusion and equity and to demonstrate the impact that such approaches can have upon the learner. Evidence from course evaluations indicate that whilst many of the participants found this more open and democratic and less didactic style of learning challenging at the outset, they were able to identify positive developments in respect of their increased confidence and ability to understand principles of inclusion.

The impact of professional development upon changes of attitude, understanding and the expectations of teachers towards fostering inclusive practice has been considered by a number or researchers (Avramidis and Kalyva 2007; Chong Suk Ching, Forlin and Au 2007). Less has been reported about the impact that professional development might have upon changing practice in schools (Kaikkonen 2010). This should be seen as a priority area for consideration by both the providers of professional development and those who are researching and evaluating its effectiveness.

The provision of professional development is important, but equal attention should be given to the post course completion period, during which we would hope that new learning is being

applied. This is a much neglected area of professional development in education, and is rarely built into courses as a substantive part of the professional development procedure. Evidence from the authors of this chapter suggests that teachers who complete courses and then find difficulties in implementing their learning are in danger of becoming disillusioned, and are less likely to persist in applying ideas and developing these to a successful outcome. In situations where this new learning may be regarded with suspicion and seen as radical by course participants' peers, there are additional difficulties in achieving desirable change. We would therefore contend that if sustainability is to be achieved, responsibility should be placed upon course tutors to support, evaluate and monitor the application of learning beyond the end of the course and as an integral part of professional development. We would further suggest that this is likely to be achieved in situations where tutors and students form an alliance to work directly in the schools in which the students are employed.

There is clear evidence that many teachers in India are committed to the development of approaches to teaching in their schools that are more inclusive and supportive of a diverse population of learners. The professionalism and commitment of these teachers, and their role as leaders in the promotion of a more equitable education system needs to be fostered and encouraged. Establishing partnerships between experienced tutors and teachers to find effective ways of delivering professional development remains a challenge; but one that is surely worthy of greater consideration.

Summary of key points

The effective delivery of professional development for the promotion of inclusive schooling must take account of local conditions and context. This is best achieved by establishing partnerships between local teachers, school principals and the tutors who will deliver the training. Tutors working on professional development courses need to ensure that they are

familiar with the educational climate and the conditions in local schools, this of necessity should involve them in spending time working alongside teachers in classrooms, and establishing networks with teacher groups and professional organisations. Recognition of the good practice that already exists in schools, and in particular those schools in which students on a course are currently working, is important and provides an opportunity for tutors to build for change on already established foundations.

If the purpose of professional development is the promotion of change and the provision of support to teachers, children, families and schools, it is essential that a clear link is established between the theoretical underpinning of course content, and the practical application of learning. In order that this may be achieved, some consideration needs to be given to the post course period when students may require support in disseminating their work and discussing how their learning may be applied in their schools. Similarly, support should be given to students to enable them to reach a wider audience for their work and to share their ideas with professional colleagues. Here, the expertise of tutors may be critical in providing the support required by students who may previously have had little opportunity to play a leadership role in sharing their learning.

There remains a significant need for research into the application of learning from professional development courses, and the impact that this has both on changes in classroom practices and on the learning of students with special educational needs. This research is most likely to be effective when it is conducted through partnerships between established researchers and classroom teachers.

Points for Discussion

- How might those teachers who complete courses of professional development in inclusion be encouraged to disseminate their learning in order to support colleagues in their schools?

- How might we address the cultural challenges of providing professional development in inclusive education when research and literature in this area is largely conducted in countries with greater socio-economic advantages?

- What systems and procedures might we develop in order to ensure the sustainability of new approaches to support inclusion introduced into schools?

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