

Feeling in or out?

Students' perspectives on learning support at secondary school.



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Learning Support in Secondary Schools: Using students' perspectives to transform teacher practice

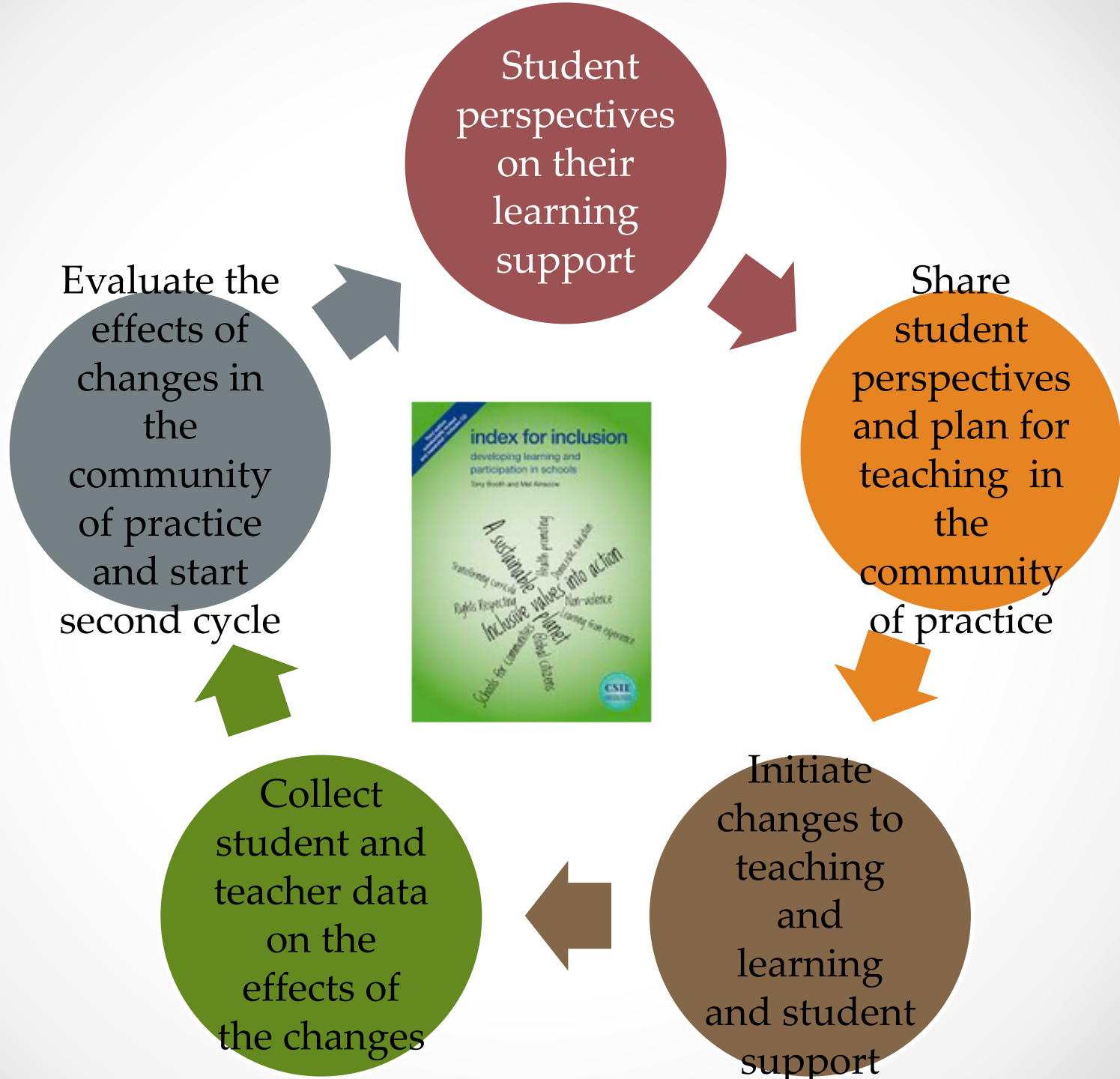
2 secondary schools

Community of Practice

- 4-6 subject teachers in Yrs 7 -11 (11-15 yr old students)
- Learning Support staff
- 3 researchers



Action research cycle



Inclusive Education

Learning support is provided in the **context of inclusive education**



Index for Inclusion: student interview questions

What are the things that help you to learn best in the classroom? (teachers, peers, teacher aides)

- **Peers** – tell me about when you learn with your classmates, when you work together
 - I have some good friends.
 - In lessons children often help each other in pairs and small groups.
 - In lessons children share what they know with other children.
 - Children are interested in listening to each other's ideas.

I like school.

I got a lot of friends here, there's a lot more fun things to do around school, and it's way funner cos you get to muck around during class – sometimes, not all the time. And it's like really good and the teachers aren't that serious all the time.

Student 1

I like school. Sometimes.

I don't really like it at times. The people here, and some teachers aren't liked, but – I dunno. ... It's OK, but sometimes I don't like it.
It's not my place.

Student B

What I don't like about school.

[Teachers] could explain better, cos half the time they explain in a rush cos they want to get the learning done. ... Then they get lots of questions and they get annoyed and say “Just go and do it!”

Student C

I usually have to wait quite a while – so many other people [need help from the teacher].

Student D

What I don't like about school.

- [I get] bullied at school – a lot. I tried to tell teachers, but they wouldn't really do a lot of stuff. They said to ignore it, but I can't, cos I'm so sensitive, it's hard.

Student B

- The whole school system is mucked up now cos of bullying. ... Years 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 – that's all the years that have bullies in them. It goes from arguments to like, fist fighting at this school. Basically, the yelling, that will just happen when you're walking round school, then a fight will happen on the back of the field.

Student 1

School: All about learning?

Sometimes I don't do anything. *Student 4*

How much of the content would you pick up in Maths, while waiting for teacher's help? About half. *Student D*

[When asked how much she understood of class content, B replied:]
A quarter of it. *And the other three quarters?* Just thinking.
I dunno, it's like, I could do this if it was easier for me –
depends on the time. *Student B*

Learning going well? I'm not sure. Cos I fail most of my tests. Maths, Science – I get not achieved in all of them. It's all like closed book. *If tests were open book, could you do them?* Probably. *Student 1*

School: All about learning?

[Teaching needs to be] more interactive. Half the time I tune out because the teacher talks for half an hour and doesn't clarify things, so then you're sitting there confused ... *I like it when she writes on the board or draws on the board.* ... But lots of the teachers don't, they just speak it.

Some other teachers get grumpy when you ask questions...I get confused because I don't understand, like, we're doing something that seems pointless to me. I ask the teacher "why am I doing this?" "Because you have to." *I want some meaning to learning.* ... I understand I have to do it, but I need to know the point of it, for using in the real world. If the teacher explains why it would be helpful, then I'm fine, but normally teachers say "Just go and do the work."

Student C

School: All about learning?

If [teacher] is having a good day, she'll explain it better than bad days, and you can tell whether a teacher's having a bad day, cos they're either grumpy or just don't help.

Student C

Some people are scared to ask questions, cos they get shouted at by the teacher – the teacher's kind of grumpy sometimes.

Student D

[Groups are] good, cos – normally – someone has listened, or understands the teacher, and then, because they understand and they know how you learn, they can explain it better than the teacher, who has a thousand... Your friends learn [how you learn], cos normally you go through the whole school with them from the first year, whereas the teacher, you have a new teacher every year, pretty much.

Student C



School: All about learning?

Basically, I'm a slow learner, so I get given work and then expected to finish it by next period.

How does the teacher work with you?

Basically, the teacher goes to everyone else and gets someone in for me, to help me with my work. People from Learning Support.

Student 1

What would make school better?

... for the people to be nice to each other ...Not bully people.

Student 4

UNCRC; UNCRPD; Index for Inclusion;

NZ Disability Strategy Lens

- Empower the child
- **Develop learning and other capabilities**
- **Friendship, getting on well together**
- **Confidence, feeling good about myself**
- **Resilience**
- **Determination**
- **Dignity**
- **Respect**
- **Inclusive education**
- **Receive required support**
- **Protection from violence**

Community of practice



Space, voice,
audience,
influence?

Significant barriers to learning:

- unable to understand the teacher, content, written word
- unable to access help in a timely manner
- teachers grumpy, have 'bad days'
- becoming disengaged

Community of practice

Students value:

- A positive, respectful social climate free from bullying (UNCRPD key priority)
- **RELEVANCE** – teaching approaches/materials/content/ teacher time that are responsive to their learning characteristics and interests
- Diverse teaching approaches (not just ‘speaking’)
- Group work



Thank you

References

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