

Rethinking Teacher Professional Development for Inclusive Practice:

A Collaborative Design Approach

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01. Introduction

- Teacher collaboration is globally recognized as a cornerstone for professional identity and sustainable school change.
- Engaging collectively in reflecting on practice strengthens professional autonomy and transforms educational processes into concrete interventions.
- Aligns with the vision of schools as learning communities, encompassing cognitive, ethical, and relational learning dimensions.

03. Methodology

Design: A two-phase mixed-methods approach

Phase I (Data Generation): A World Café session conducted with 22 teachers to collect baseline data and inform the plan.

Phase II (Validation): Evaluation and validation of the structured PD plan by a focal group of 10 teachers.

The plan bridges theory and practice by integrating two complementary frameworks:

Differentiated Instruction (DI)
Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

04. Results/Findings

The Agency Gap: While inclusion is widely endorsed as essential, its execution is often framed as dependent on external factors—placing inclusion outside the teachers’ immediate sphere of agency.

Transformative Arenas: Structured collaborative spaces do more than just facilitate the exchange of strategies; they serve as spaces where teachers critically interrogate assumptions and reconstruct professional identities.

The continuous professional development plan received a highly positive feasibility and relevance rating:

M=3.9 (SD=0.51)



<https://www.innovationtraining.org/the-world-cafe-method-hosting-and-facilitating-collaborative-discussion/>

02. Objectives

This study addressed two primary aims:

1. To identify teachers' conceptions of inclusive practices, including implementation challenges, advantages, and student engagement strategies.
2. To develop and validate a continuous Professional Development (PD) Plan grounded in effective approaches.

Related literature

Messiou, K. & Ainscow, M. (2020), Inclusive Inquiry: Student–teacher dialogue as a means of promoting inclusion in schools. *Br Educ Res J*, 46, 670-687. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3602>

Tomlinson, C. A. (2017). *How to differentiate instruction in Academically Diverse Classroom* (3a ed.). ASCD Publication.

Walton, E., Carrington, S., Sagers, B., Edwards, C., & Kimani, W. (2022). What matters in learning communities for inclusive education: a cross-case analysis. *Professional Development in Education*, 48(1), 134–148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2019.1689525>

05. Analysis

- **The Paradox of Responsibility:** A clear tension exists between teachers' high valuation of inclusion and their perceived agency. By framing inclusion as contingent on external factors, teachers unintentionally distance themselves from direct accountability.
- **Transformative Dynamics:** The World Café structure proved that professional learning is not merely an individual intake of knowledge, but a highly relational and identity-shaping process.
- **Framework Synergy:** The integration of Differentiated Instruction (DI) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) bridges the gap between inclusive theory and pedagogical action, shifting the focus from "external limitations" to "classroom-level interventions."

06. Conclusion

- A critical gap exists between the endorsement of inclusive values and actual pedagogical action.
- Collaborative settings (like the World Café) empower teachers to critically interrogate assumptions about diversity and self-efficacy.
- Combining Differentiated Instruction and UDL provides the action-oriented tools needed to reclaim professional autonomy.
- The high evaluation of the plan (M = 3.9; SD = 0.51) proves its potential to drive sustainable and equitable school change.