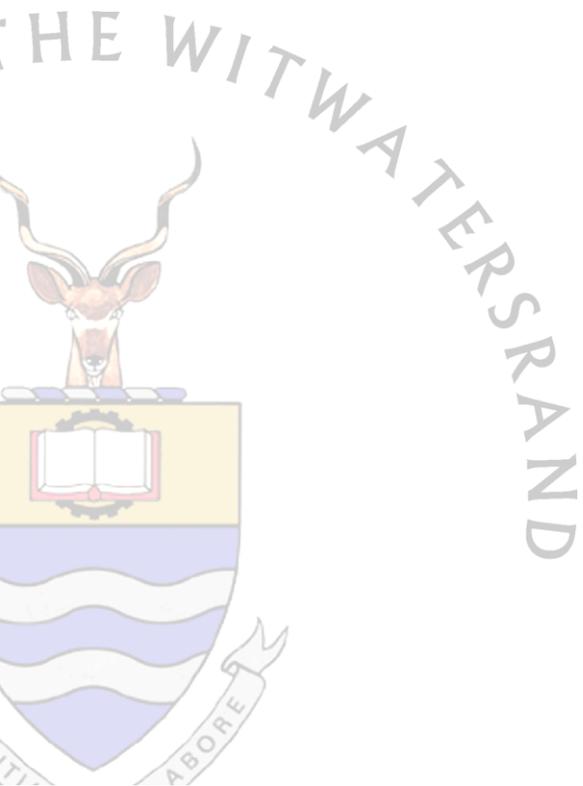


Could Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) be the answer for teacher learning for inclusion in South Africa?

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Overview

- Background
- Context: The Wits PLC Initiative and 'City Primary'
- Professional Learning Communities and Inclusive Education
- Two Studies
 - Development of Teacher Identity
 - Role of the PLC Facilitators
- Reflections



Background

- **Research attesting to teachers' sense of un(der)preparedness for teaching in inclusive classrooms**
- **The failure of the workshop model**

'You can train us until we are blue in our faces, we are still going to struggle'

(Walton, Nel, Muller & Lebeloane, 2014)

Context

- **Wits University Community Engagement**
- **Professional learning communities constituted among staff in a full-service in North-Western Johannesburg**
 - **'City Primary'**
 - **Research**



The area around City Primary

Professional learning communities focus on:

- Professional learning (to enhance student learning);
- Within the context of a cohesive group;
- Focuses on collective knowledge;
- Occurs within an ethic of interpersonal caring that permeates the school.

(Stoll & Louis, 2007)



<p>Four broad needs for teacher development for inclusive education (Loreman, 2010)</p>	<p>Research shows that PLCs</p>
<p>Understandings and positive attitudes towards inclusion and learner diversity</p>	<p>Foster attitude change through improved knowledge and support (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2007; Vescio et al., 2008)</p>
<p>Classroom practices that support inclusion</p>	<p>Develop effective and authentic pedagogical practices that promote learning and achievement (Bolam, et al., 2005; Vescio et al., 2008)</p>
<p>Developing collaborative relationships</p>	<p>Develop collaborative relationships among staff and with external stakeholders (Ainscow & Miles, 2011)</p>
<p>Lifelong learning</p>	<p>Offer continued professional development in the context of enactment (Kiefer Hipp & Bumpers Huffman, 2007; Darling-Hammond, et al. 2005)</p>

At City Primary, we are finding:

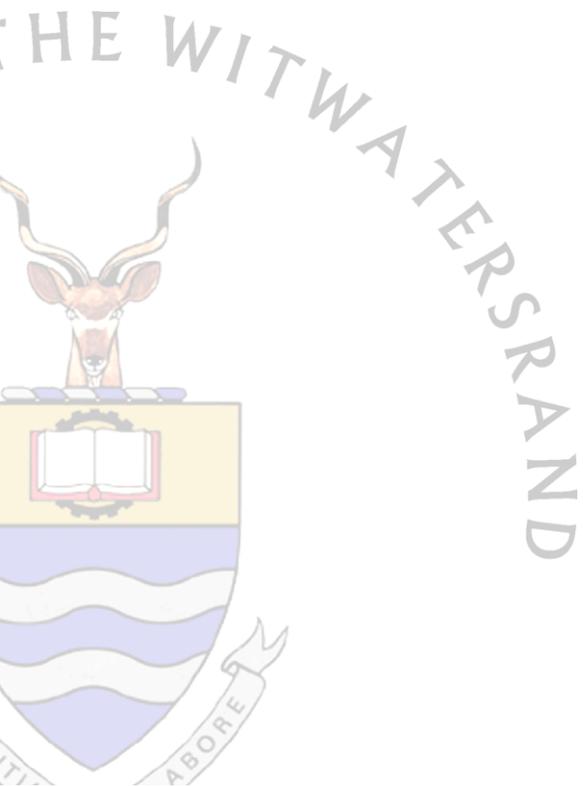
- *High levels of engagement*
- *Teachers valuing each other's knowledge*
- *Shifts in thinking about 'the problem'*

PLC groups in City Primary



Ongoing research into:

- *The development of inclusive pedagogies as a result of PLCs*
- *The development of teachers' identities as inclusive teachers as a result of participating in PLCs*
- *The role of the facilitators and the university*
- *The kind of knowledge teachers have of/for inclusive education*

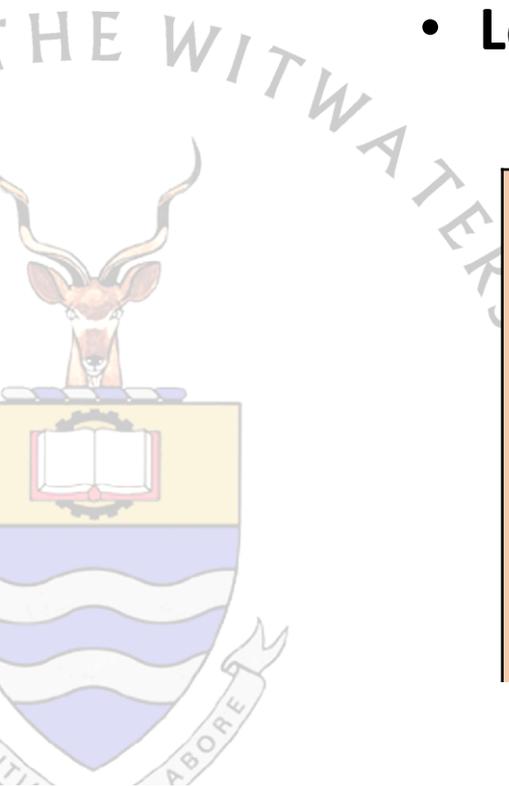


The development of teachers' identities as inclusive teachers as a result of participating in PLCs

Methodology

- Qualitative
- Data: Audio recordings of conversations in PLCs
- Lens
 - **Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action** (Florian, 2014)

Difference accounted for as an essential aspect of human development	Teachers indicate their capability in teaching all children	The profession continually develop creative ways of working with others
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The development of teachers' identities as inclusive teachers as a result of participating in PLCs

- Owning their use of inclusive strategies in first person
 - “In my class I have learned to teach learners with different abilities”
- Challenging each other on appropriate use of inclusive strategies
 - Group composition and learner profiles
- Collaborative problem solving/peer-tutoring
- Celebrating wins in using inclusive strategies
 - The value of ‘whole body’ listening

The Role of the PLC facilitators

- Plan and direct PLC members towards inclusive pedagogy
- Value and respect knowledge of group members
- Reflect and refine inclusive pedagogy with group members



Concerns and caveats: Reflections from the field

- *Difficulty in dislodging the traditional roles and expectations that teachers have of transmission-style courses;*
- *Teachers seem to see themselves as incompetent;*
- *Struggle to position inclusive education as integral to professional teaching practice, rather than a completely separate knowledge and skills set;*
- *Limit to what teachers can do.*

Thank you

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