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Developing an intentionally inviting school culture: a case study

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Effective professional development (PD) programmes may deepen teachers' understanding, transform their assumptions and beliefs and thus change their teaching practice. This article is part of a research project and focuses specifically on the views of teachers from two schools on implementing invitational education (IE) intentionally in their schools to achieve improved learner success. An explorative, descriptive qualitative research design was considered the most suitable method to address the research problem. Purposive sampling was used for the study since it focused on two schools that had applied for the inviting school award from the International Alliance of IE in 2010. An awareness PD programme was conducted at each of the schools. Data was collected obtaining participants' views in naïve sketches on how they envisaged implementing IE to make their schools intentionally more inviting. The following categories emerged from the data: assuming an intentionally inviting stance; four levels in the IE model; four dimensions in the IE model, and appreciation for the IE workshop.

Die ontwikkeling van 'n doelbewuste uitnodigende skoolkultuur: 'n gevallestudie

Effektiewe professionele ontwikkeling (PO) programme verdiep onderwysers se begrip, verander hul aannames en oortuigings wat tot 'n verandering in hul onderrigpraktyk mag lei. Hierdie artikel is deel van 'n navorsingsprojek en is in besonder gefokus op die menings van onderwysers van twee skole in die doelbewuste implementering van Uitnodigende Onderwys (UO) ten einde leerdersukses te verbeter. 'n Ondersoekende, kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerp is as die geskikste metode oorweeg om die navorsingsprobleem te benader. Doelbewuste steekproefneming is gebruik vir die studie deur skole wat aansoek vir die uitnodigende skooltoekenning van die International Alliance of Invitational Education in 2010 te identifiseer. 'n Bewuswordingsprogram is by elk van die skole gedoen. Data is ingesamel deur deelnemers aan die program te versoek om by wyse van naïewe sketse te beskryf hoe hulle die doelbewuste implementering van UO in hulle skole beskou. Die volgende kategorieë het uit die data gespruit: waardering vir die UO werkswinkel; die uitnodigende houding; vier vlakke van die UO model, en die vier dimensies van die model.

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There is widespread evidence in the literature that professional development (PD) is the ultimate answer to meeting complex challenges that have benefits for both teachers and schools (Boyle *et al* 2005: 1, Desimone *et al* 2006: 187). PD workshops that aim to enhance teachers' professional knowledge and skills have the potential to raise awareness of and a passion for a particular topic, lead to a shared understanding of concepts relating to the topic, and even act as a catalyst for further development (Heaney 2004: 42, Chappuis *et al* 2009: 57). PD is more successful if schools regard it as a coherent part of school development, and not in isolation (Darling-Hammond & Richardson 2009: 47). In addition, PD should be sustained, job-embedded and collaborative in order to be effective (Darling-Hammond & Richardson 2009: 47).

Teachers are part of a learning environment, and their individual actions and beliefs have the potential to influence the environment in which they work (Hodkinson & Hodkinson 2005: 5, Cohen *et al* 2009: 182). Professional learning takes place on three levels: the individual, the workplace and the organisation (the school) (What is a learning organisation? *s a*, What is professional learning? 2007: 1). Senge (1990: 140) supports this view by stressing that organisations only learn through the individuals who are learning in them.

Therefore, schools need to become places for teachers to learn and develop together if they are to create effective learning environments.[1] It is believed that individuals learn together in a cooperative system where the learning of one individual or group is likely to have an effect on the learning of another. Cohen *et al* (2009: 183) maintain that a positive, sustainable school environment can promote the development and learning of learners. However, many initiatives to promote development and learning in schools have been superficial and ineffective (Kitchen 2009: 46). According to Fullan (2008: 114), these approaches failed to address the core beliefs of teachers and their subsequent behaviour in classrooms.

1 *Cf* Bernauer 2002: 90, Sparks 2003: 29, Cohen *et al* 2009: 182.

Hodkinson & Hodkinson (2005: 110) point out that short PD courses can lead to effective learning when they form part of ongoing practices and development. Smith & Gillespie (2007: 214) point out that short-term workshops, the basis of the traditional professional development model, have benefits for teachers, because they are easy to plan. This model is based on the assumption that learners will benefit if their teachers develop certain competencies and practice-related skills. An array of interactions and activities may enhance teachers' knowledge and skills and, apart from improving their teaching practice, may also enhance their personal, emotional and social development as teachers (Desimone 2009: 182).

When PD opportunities introduce teachers to new approaches based on educational research and developments, "teachers will change their thinking and adopt behaviors that lead to student achievement" (Smith & Gillespie 2007: 215), which may help teachers to improve their professional practices (CPDT 2006). However, such opportunities need to be part of continuous professional development which is job-embedded, involves collaborative participation, leads to reflection, and comprises a variety of professional development activities (Smith & Gillespie 2007: 205, CPDT 2006). For the purpose of this article PD is defined as an ongoing process that involves appropriate and properly planned training, ample support and staff collaboration; is adapted to meet the specific contexts of schools, and is maintained over a period of time (Bernauer 2002: 91, Lee 2005: 139). According to Desimone (2009: 184), the following steps form the core theory of action for PD: teachers experience successful PD; PD enhances or changes teachers' attitudes and beliefs and/or enhances their knowledge and skills; teachers apply their new knowledge, skills, beliefs and attitudes to improve their approach to teaching the content of their subjects, or both, and the instructional changes promote learner performance.

Invitational Education (IE), as an example of PD, contends that every individual and everything in and around schools

either strengthens or restricts the process of being "a beneficial presence in the life of oneself and others" (Purkey & Aspy 2003: 148). It is of particular importance that the approach should be intentional; for example, choosing from a wide range of actions to maintain a consistent direction in all situations (Purkey & Aspy 2003: 148). To create a school culture that is intentionally inviting (positive, accessible and encouraging) requires an orchestrated effort (Bernauer 2002: 90). This implies concentrating on the knowledge, skills and attitudes staff need in order to implement and sustain positive and constructive interaction within the school environment. Ideally, the five factors in the IE model, namely people, places, policies, programmes and processes, should intentionally create an environment in which every individual is cordially invited to develop his/her full potential (Novak & Purkey 2001: 15). The ultimate purpose of IE is to build a more satisfying, enriching and exciting school culture (Egley 2003: 58, Paxton 2003: 23).

Although many studies on PD have documented teacher satisfaction, teacher commitment and modifying attitudes to change (Guskey 2002: 49), these studies recognise a need for an empirical study of PD (Desimone 2009: 181). There is still a great deal to be understood about the views of staff regarding PD, in particular those that can result in deep and sustained professional growth in school development (Kitchen 2009: 46). This emergent body of research on PD may offer possible guidelines for PD planning and implementation that could enhance and develop school practice. This article forms part of a study of intentionally inviting school practices. In another study, an appreciative inquiry approach was used to focus on creating intentionally inviting schools (Steyn 2012: in press). This article addresses the following main research question: What are the views of staff to intentionally develop and sustain an invitational education culture in the school?

1. A theoretical framework

If professional development programmes include IE, its implementation could make schools "a more exciting, satisfying, and enriching experience in which people are appreciated and guided in directions that help them grow" (Novak & Purkey 2001: 8). IE has been successfully implemented in approximately 290 schools in 16 countries predominantly in the US, Hong Kong and Canada (IAIE State/Country Coordinators 2004: 32-4). The IE approach is based on the theory of self-concept and on perceptual psychology, and acknowledges the power of people's perception and its influence on self-development (Schmidt 2004: 27).

IE embraces five main assumptions regarding appropriate messages and communicating caring which are intended to promote the development of human potential. These assumptions also serve as a guiding theory for school development. The assumptions are discussed in Novak & Purkey (2003: 12), Schmidt (2004: 27), and Hunter & Smith (2007: 12):

1. Respect

People are able, valuable and responsible, and are to be treated accordingly. According to IE, people have self-directing power and inherent worth and those who value respect will find ways to help learners to succeed.

2. Trust: education is a collaborative, cooperative activity

IE is "built on the fundamental interdependence of human beings" (Novak & Purkey 2001: 13). Both time and effort are required to develop and sustain a cooperative stance in a school milieu According to Kitchen (2009: 48), this approach is sensitive to the roles of both the teacher and the learner, the milieu in which they work and the need to establish "open, non-judgemental and trusting" relationships.

3. Optimism

People possess relatively untapped potential in all areas of human development. "Inviting" staff are committed to the

continuous growth and appreciation of everybody involved in education. This implies that schools create places, policies, programmes and processes to care for everybody and to develop their unlimited human potential.

4. Intentionality

Human potential is best realised by places, policies, processes and programmes that are specifically designed to invite development and are devised by people who are personally and professionally inviting to themselves and to others. Inviting staff members intentionally work to develop school environments that are characterised by both direction and purpose for the benefit of all role players in the schools.

5. Care

The process is considered to be a product in the making. The means and ends of inviting practices are closely linked. In IE, care "is the ongoing desire to link significant personal and professional means with worthwhile collective ends" (Novak & Purkey 2001: 14). With careful and conscientious planning and a strong, positive focus, this aim may be realised in practice.

IE is therefore both a belief and a set of actions intended to enhance a total school environment that intentionally energises people to realise their individual and collective potential.

By grounding PD practice in a theoretical framework, it becomes possible to develop theoretical predictions for enhancing the success of PD endeavours (Barohny 2008: 138). PD as a phenomenon can be grounded in the developmental theory of *Vygotsky* (1978) that is "an attempt to better understand the mechanism underlying teacher development" (Barohny 2008: 138). The following key concepts in Vygotsky's theories of development are relevant to PD practices (Barohny 2008: 138, Ball 2009: 50):

- The social origins of higher mental functions are regarded as the most fundamental concept in Vygotsky's theories. Higher mental functions are formed via social interactions and are ultimately internalised by the individual. Conceptual

growth does not take place in isolation, but comes from sharing various perspectives and the simultaneous changing of internal representations as a response to those perspectives, as well as through collective experience (Chalmers & Keown 2006: 144, Smith & Gillespie 2007: 218).

- Professional learning communities support the social character of individual development while acknowledging the necessity of ongoing school-based collaboration among all role players based on a common goal.[2] Other studies show that learning in organisations is repeatedly presented on two levels, the individual and the collective. These studies maintain that individual learning is a crucial but insufficient requirement for collaborative learning in and development of organisations.[3]
- Since people do not instantly internalise the outcomes of their social interactions, sufficient time (Chalmers & Keown 2006: 145, Silins *et al* 2002: 31) and opportunities are required for teachers to apply the knowledge and skills they have gained from their PD programme.
- In-school PD programmes may be more successful than those presented by external organisations. Smith & Gillespie (2007: 233) support this view: "Teachers need a community of teachers within the school, so they can learn together about their work as they apply that learning".

Hodkinson & Hodkinson (2005: 114) and Ball (2009: 70) believe that by combining perspectives of learning as personal construction and those of learning as workplace participation they can point to more effective ways of improving learning. Such a perspective includes the following (Chappuis *et al* 2009: 57, 58, Darling-Hammond & Richardson 2009: 56):

2 *Cf* Barohny 2008: 140, Heaney 2004: 42, Small & Irvine 2006: 279.
3 *Cf* Chalmers & Keown 2006: 144, Lee & Roth 2007: 104, Senge 1990: 140.

- Creating a cultural shift in the school.

Long-term, ongoing PD is emphasised. Meiers & Ingvarson (2005: 42) believe that teachers need to engage in regular collaborative interactions relating to topics (such as IE in this instance), examine new information, reflect on classroom practice, and make certain adaptations.

- Creating an understanding of the process.

Learning can start with a suitable programme that raises awareness and understanding of a specific topic. In the next step individuals must transfer the information to their own contexts. Purkey & Novak (1996: 135-151) identify the following steps in the process of establishing an IE culture in schools:

1. Awareness: This is the first step in recognising that IE exists.
2. Understanding: This step provides a deeper realisation of an inviting school environment in which everybody can succeed.
3. Application: This step requires some changes and a review of the impact of these changes.
4. Adoption: In this final step everything in the school, that is people, places, policies, programmes and processes, represents IE intentionally in action.

These four steps are also closely linked to the action steps for PD proposed by Desimone (2009: 184-5).

- Ensuring the active support of school management.

Principals are responsible not only for setting the tone and climate in the school, but also for influencing the overall culture of the school. It is the principals' responsibility to communicate the benefits of the PD programme to their staff.

This article relies primarily on the perspectives above in understanding how staff members view the possibility of implementing IE intentionally to maximise their own growth and development in an inviting school culture.

3. Methodology

Two schools were purposefully selected as a site for professional development on the IE approach to teaching and learning. In his interactions with these schools, the principal of a South African school that was previously awarded the international inviting school award recognised the potential of these two schools to also obtain this award. He therefore considered it his "social responsibility" to acknowledge the performance of these schools. He thus approached the researcher, who is a member of the International Alliance for Invitational Education (IAIE) and a member of the Advisory Council of Invitational Education, to nominate these schools for the international IE award. After a visit to these schools to determine whether they comply with the requirements for receiving the inviting school award, the researcher nominated the schools as possible inviting schools at the end of September 2009. Although these schools revealed certain inviting practices in their operations, they lacked an intentional approach to invitational education, which is a key criterion for being a true inviting school.

Intentionality, one of the assumptions of IE, requires certain knowledge and skills regarding the IE model if IE is to be implemented successfully. The researcher therefore presented a workshop on IE to deepen staff's awareness and understanding of IE. In line with Chappuis *et al*'s (2009: 58) guidelines, the researcher chose to use a learning team model in the presentation of the two workshops. This approach began with "an influx of new ideas" (Chappuis *et al* 2009: 59) regarding the IE model, with the aim of assisting participants to apply the IE ideas to their particular schools and classrooms. After the workshops, the participants had the opportunity to identify areas for development and discuss obstacles in meeting goals to create an intentionally inviting school culture in their school. These workshops were conducted in December 2009 for School A and in January 2010 for School B. The researcher also acted as a consultant in assisting the schools to prepare their IE submissions to the IAIE.

Both schools were well-resourced primary schools located in different suburbs in Gauteng. Since both schools were concerned about the quality of the education they offer, they employed additional teachers to lower the teacher/learner ratio. School A had 1 015 learners from Grade R to Grade 7. It had 47 teachers, of whom 24 were funded by the state and 23 by the school. Socio-economically the learners came from an average to above-average community. In 2009 only 4% of the learners were exempted from school fees. School B had 1 525 learners from Grade R to Grade 7. It had 67 academic staff members, of whom only 36 were funded by the State. The socio-economic sector was average to above average, and 1.75% of the learners were exempted from school fees. The school provided food packages to 20 learners per day in the school. Apart from a number of administrative and other support staff, both schools employed educational psychologists to assist learners in need. Both schools also offered a wide variety of extramural sports and cultural activities.

Since the PD workshop on invitational education was the first constructive step in assisting the schools to become intentionally inviting in their approach to teaching and learning and in preparing the schools for the IE application, the goal of the workshop was to increase participants' awareness and understanding of IE. This goal is supported by the view that PD is "the bridge between where [we] are now and where [we] need to be to meet the new challenges of guiding all students in achieving higher standards of learning and development" (What is professional learning 2007: 2), which is one of the IAIE requirements of being an inviting school.

As mentioned earlier, the ultimate aim of IE is to create an entire school environment that intentionally invites success for everyone in the school. Figure 1 illustrates the various components of the IE approach (Steyn 2005: 261) that were discussed during the PD programme on IE: the four levels, the four dimensions, the four assumptions, the four choices, and the four factors. Throughout the discussion staff had

opportunities for active participation. At the end of the presentation, staff members were requested to form groups according to the grade levels of classes that they teach. The purpose of this exercise was to facilitate constructive discussions that could serve as a starting point to create an intentionally inviting school culture. The workshop section required groups to identify an area in the school/classrooms that they would like to improve and to set a goal to achieve this. In the next two steps they had to identify obstacles to reach this goal and ways to eliminate these obstacles. An action plan was then developed in which they had to indicate who would be responsible for implementing the changes, what resources would be required, and a time frame for meeting the goal. The last step involved an evaluation of the process to determine whether the goal had been met; this was done by identifying suitable criteria for evaluating the outcome of the process. Each group had to identify a spokesperson to provide feedback on their discussion to the rest of the staff in the school.

A qualitative research design, incorporating aspects of descriptive and contextual research, was selected for the purpose of this study.[4] Since this study focused on a single phenomenon, creating intentionally inviting schools, a case study design was selected for the purpose of this study (McMillan & Schumacher 2006: 316, 317, Nieuwenhuis 2010: 75). Such a study provided the views of relevant groups and the interaction between them (in this instance, staff from two schools) (Nieuwenhuis 2010: 75).

4 *Cf* Creswell 2007: 37, McMillan & Schumacher 2006: 316, 317, Nieuwenhuis 2010: 70.

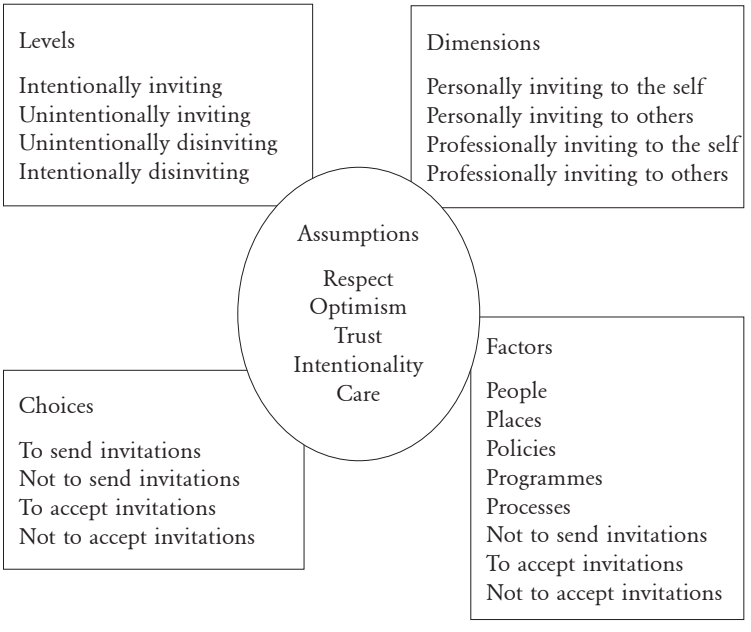


Figure 1: Components of the invitational education approach

Data collection involved naïve sketches (Giorgi 1985: 1) after each workshop in the schools, during which individual participants were requested to present their views on how they envisage intentionally implementing and sustaining IE in their current school culture. Naïve sketching is a method of collecting data developed in a phenomenological orientation and involves returning to the objects themselves (Giorgi 1985: 4-5). This part of the research project, in particular, put the following question to the participants: Considering your current school culture, what do you suggest to create an intentionally inviting school culture? Aligned with the research design and purpose of the study, naïve sketches provided rich descriptions (Giorgi 1985: 1) of ways to create intentionally inviting practices in the schools. In writing their naïve sketches, participants were also requested

to base their views on their group discussion in identifying suitable areas in the school for becoming intentionally inviting. The naïve sketches were particularly helpful in the context of this research since they deepened the participants' views, as reported during the feedback session. Exploring naïve sketches, field notes and literature on PD and IE assisted the researcher in understanding the participants' views on intentionally creating an IE school culture. Field notes taken during the feedback session served as triangulation of naïve sketches collected. In total 38 naïve sketches were collected from School A and 45 from School B. According to Desimone (2009: 189), studies that require description and contain behavioural and not evaluative questions about teachers' PD experiences are valid and reliable.

During the data analysis process a few aspects in the naïve sketches were unclear and member checking with the principals was done by e-mail correspondence to both schools. A further follow-up interview with the principal of School B was necessary to clarify some issues from the e-mail correspondence and descriptions of staff in naïve sketches. The principal of School B also invited a parent to participate in the interview. The interview was recorded and transcribed and field notes were taken during the interview.

Lincoln & Guba's (1985: 289-331) model was used to ensure trustworthiness, a strategy for describing validity and reliability in qualitative research designs. The study operationalised the strategies of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility was ensured by conducting a literature review, triangulation, obtaining naïve sketches and e-mail correspondence with schools, member checking by means of e-mails with principals, and an interview (with field notes) with one of the principals. A thick description of naïve sketches, field notes and the interview, purposeful sampling, and describing research methodology ensured transferability. Dependability was ensured by means of a thick description of each setting, method of data collection and research methodology, involving

all participants in both workshops. Confirmability was established by means of triangulation and reflectivity.

The data were read to gain a sense of the whole. In the data analysis, descriptive, open coding was used to label the phenomena, discover the categories, and name the categories according to their properties and dimensions in the study (McMillan & Schumacher 2006: 367, De Vos 2005: 341).

4. Findings

The data analysis revealed certain categories in the IE approach, which are aspects that relate to the assumptions, dimensions and levels of the IE model. *In vivo* codes which refer to the "exact words used by participants" (Creswell 2007: 153) served to deepen an understanding of these categories. The findings are consistent with Vygostky's developmental theory, in that the PD programmes were conducted within the schools where participants felt more at ease with one another. Although the developmental theory does not advocate presentation by external organisations, expert knowledge and skills were required to convey the IE model and its implementation. As a member of the Advisory Board of the International Alliance for Invitational Education, the researcher considered herself an expert who was in a position to assist these schools in implementing IE intentionally and in preparing their IE applications. Responses confirm that the PD programme succeeded in serving as a guide towards teachers' personal and professional development. However, creating a cultural shift towards IE requires long-term and ongoing PD on the IE approach. The assumptions of the IE model form the point of departure for understanding and implementing IE in schools.

The categories identified during the data analysis revealed the following: assuming an intentionally inviting stance: "Be deliberately inviting and very important act inviting"; four levels: "Look and think before you act"; four dimensions: "I'll

try to make my life more positive", and appreciation for the IE workshop: exceeding my "wildest expectations".

4.1 Assuming an intentionally inviting stance: 'Be deliberately inviting and very important act inviting'

The IE approach offers a way to address, evaluate and change the entire school environment (Novak & Purkey 2001: 12). Participants addressed the five assumptions of IE in their naïve sketches and the feedback session as follows.

4.1.1 Respect: people are able, valuable and responsible and are to be treated accordingly

Participants revealed current practices of respect, but also a desire to focus more on this assumption. As far as current practices are concerned, many participants expressed their gratitude for the functioning of the school and the support of their principals. Staff also appreciated how they were treated by their principals; one participant explicitly valued the "right to express one's own unique personality". Other comments referred to how "positively" teachers approached their responsibilities and discipline in the schools. "All people are noticed and appreciated for who they are".

The way in which the principal of School B conveys respect towards staff and learners was expressed during his interview and the field notes:

> I add fuel to the flame; people otherwise get so little recognition [...] I always say: you're part of the best teaching staff there is. I try to hearten staff members [...] When they [teachers] excel or do something special, I say I'm proud of them, the school is proud of them [...] My approach is to protect, empower and motivate them [...] When children come into my office, they see everybody's photos on the wall. I sometimes tease them by saying I may not get everyone into the school hall but they're all in my office.

The participants in the workshops also realised shortcomings in the schools and suggested inculcating more respect between teachers and parents, children and colleagues. Two of the naïve

sketches suggested that it was necessary to treat "everyone in the school more fairly and equally" and to spend "more time in a guardian capacity to focus on children's emotional welfare".

The blue and orange card system that was explained during the workshops was initially introduced by Dr Purkey, a co-founder of IE (Paxton 2003: 23). According to Purkey, a blue card carries the message that someone is able, valuable and responsible, whereas an orange card conveys that the person is unable, worthless and irresponsible. Participants used the blue and orange card system to indicate their commitment to being more positive and not giving orange cards in their approach to learners in particular. One naïve sketch revealed the following:

> I'll hand out more blue cards to bring out what is positive in each learner, and modify my thoughts and behaviour. Errors can be corrected in a different way and I'll focus on what is best and most positive in each learner. They are the parents, teachers and leaders of tomorrow.

As far as the first assumption is concerned, one participant indicated the desire to "make a difference in my world and be THERE for my learners and colleagues [...] I'll try to change my whole attitude to family, learners and colleagues". Implicit in this statement is the recognition that education involves co-operation and collaboration between people involved in the school.

4.1.2 Trust: education is a collaborative, cooperative activity

The way in which the schools functioned at the time of the workshops showed how participants acknowledged the necessity of trust and collaboration between role players. One participant wrote: "The interaction between learner/teacher/parent is essential". Participants acknowledged the "cooperation between staff", "comradeship among teachers" and "many opportunities for participation, that is, en masse, in groups, individually". They also valued the "cooperation by management" and "interest" of management in teachers' work in the schools.

Unfortunately the naïve sketches also revealed shortcomings regarding the collaboration among role players in the schools. Participants acknowledged participative management in their schools, but suggested that it could improve; children could be more involved in classroom decision-making, and the communication between management and staff could be enhanced. They also expressed a desire to have even more cooperation: "more time for interaction" and "team building" between colleagues that "will forge close bonds between us". One participant expressed the desire for an improved collaboration among role players as follows: "I would like to see a more effective system in place".

The developmental theory, in particular, supports the notion that PD relies on the social interaction between staff members and that conceptual growth cannot occur in isolation. This was confirmed by the findings of the study. Moreover, people are part of a system and their potential can be unlocked by the messages they send and receive.

4.1.3 Optimism: people possess relatively untapped potential in all areas of human development

Although a few participants expressed the current "positive spirit" in the schools, many indicated that they needed to change their attitude towards teaching. Participants expressed their commitment to the continuous growth and commitment of everybody in the school. One participant expressed the need to "radiate positivity". The participants indicated that they would "approach learners more positively rather than negatively [...] give greater acknowledgment to slow learners [...] laugh more and make the class laugh more"; "show more positivity in all respects; it rubs off on learners and helps learners to see that all things are possible and they should follow their dreams", and "place more emphasis on the positive and praise learners for it and less emphasis on the negative".

The findings indicate teachers' commitment to changing their current practice in order to create an intentionally inviting

school culture in their schools and classrooms. However, such intentions require sufficient time for teachers to apply the knowledge and skills they have gained from the IE programme, as supported by Chalmers & Keown (2006: 153). The teachers' wish to be optimistic when applying the model in practice implies that they need to work in school environments that are characterised by purpose and direction (Novak & Purkey 2001: 9, 10) and that are intentionally inviting.

4.1.4 Intentionality: human potential is best realised by places, policies, processes and programmes that are specifically designed to invite development and are devised by people who are personally and professionally inviting with themselves and others

The responses clearly indicated that the two schools demonstrated factors that were consistent with the IE approach. Responses included "good planning" and "each educator in the school knows exactly what his or her responsibilities are". As far as good planning in the school is concerned, the principal of School B explained his approach in the interview:

> I have a book entitled "[Name withheld]'s planning book" [he showed me a book covered in red with the title on it ...] I draw up three timetables: one for five days, one for six and one for seven days, and they [teachers] pick one [...] Teachers are given a list of duties – a quarterly programme and an annual programme [...] Our policies are clear [...] Everyone knows precisely what's expected.

Although participants in their naïve sketches appreciated their school cultures, they indicated their desire to improve it in order to become more intentionally inviting. Some participants, for example, expressed their appreciation for their "beautiful" school and the "good facilities", while others believed that there was still room for improvement. Two participants succinctly wrote: "Our school gardens and playgrounds could be more inviting and child friendly" and "The maintenance of our physical buildings, and aesthetic aspects such as gardens, entrance, staff room and hall, could improve".

The naïve sketches indicated some shortcomings and suggestions for teachers to be more inviting in their classrooms. Their comments referred to "organise my class better"; "being more aware of the needs of individual learners and to act on this awareness"; "to improve reward systems in the classroom situation"; "try to be deliberately inviting and very important to act inviting: to take the initiative in greeting people, be friendly and considerate, show sympathy and to respect all people at all times".

One participant in School B complained that some teachers did not have their own classrooms:

> Every teacher should have own classroom/office [...] All should have places of their own where they can relax and feel secure. Recharging in your own personal space is good for relationships and positive attitudes.

During the interview the principal of the school explained the lack of offices and classrooms. Learner numbers had increased in the last few years and, to accommodate these learners, all facilities including the school hall, had to be utilised. He admitted that this is not the ideal classroom atmosphere, but that the "main subjects (English, Afrikaans, Mathematics) are firmly anchored" in classrooms. "Auxiliary subjects that have two periods a week, those are the ones that get pushed around".

Participants, in general, believed that the entire approach to IE should be orchestrated in their schools. One of them succinctly made the following comment in the naïve sketch:

> All staff members should buy into the dream of IE and take broad responsibility for the overall picture of school system [...] be understanding about decisions that transcend one's own responsibilities [...] not be apathetic about new projects such as IE and think 'outside the box'.

Once again the findings are consistent with the developmental theory that learning can start with an awareness programme (Chappuis *et al* 2009: 57). The next step, however, requires that individuals need to transfer the information to their own contexts. The findings are also supported by Senge (1990),

who asserts that shared pictures are necessary to foster genuine commitment. Implicit in the implementation of intentionality is the way in which it should be done. This means that great care should be taken with the process in order to arrive at the destination.

4.1.5 Care: the process is considered to be a product in the making

As is the case with the other assumptions, responses revealed satisfactory practices at the time of the workshops, but also a desire to improve these practices. One response succinctly expressed the current positive practices in the schools: "Caring for children and colleagues is excellent, we have colleague support, encouragement and affection [...] There's always a peaceful atmosphere despite the crowded programme".

A number of participants also conveyed their commitment to improving their caring attitude towards learners. Participants realised their "great influence" on children's lives and how they should "motivate learners", "be more tactful towards learners when they get it wrong" and "place myself in other people's shoes (show more understanding of situations)".

The findings in the above sections are confirmed by Vygotsky's developmental theory. However, consistent with Senge's theory (1990: 6-11), organisations only learn through individuals who are learning. As indicated in the findings, learning in schools can be presented on two levels, the individual and the collective. Individual learning is essential, but insufficient for collaborative learning and the development of schools. Also inherent in the findings is the much-needed support of management to ensure the development of staff and the school becoming inviting, as indicated in the model of Chappuis *et al* (2009: 59).

Based on the above five assumptions, the IE model uses a four-level classification to indicate the person's approach and the school's atmosphere (Novak & Purkey 2001: 20). These

levels serve as a starting point for analysing the positive or negative approach within a school culture.

4.2 Four levels: 'Look and think before you act'

According to the IE model, there are four levels on which people function (Hunter & Smith 2007: 12, Purkey & Siegel 2003: 51-72):

- Intentionally disinviting messages and actions – a negative attitude that is designed to defeat and demean people, both verbally and nonverbally.
- Unintentionally disinviting messages and actions – accidental "discouragement and undermining of others, both verbally and non-verbally" (Hunter & Smith 2007: 12).
- Unintentionally inviting messages and actions – those that accidentally support and encourage others, both verbally and nonverbally. Unfortunately, senders of such messages cannot explain why such behaviours are successful.
- Intentionally inviting messages and actions – these seek to consistently and deliberately exhibit the assumptions of IE.

In the responses many participants revealed a clear understanding of the different levels on which teachers and schools often operate. It opened their eyes to the impact of disinviting messages, and revealed a commitment to conveying more intentionally inviting messages to themselves and others: "to look and think before you act", to "be more patient in some situations", to "keep quiet or say something positive in a negative situation" and to "think thrice before saying or doing anything".

A number of participants expressed their commitment not only to be more positive towards learners, but also to make teaching and learning more fun. As one participant wrote: "I'm going to change a few things so that teaching and education can be fun again. After 30 years on the job, this is very much needed. Our future is blue!"

Considering the above, IE cannot be regarded as a quick fix because it takes time, creativity, effort and continual learning

to implement it successfully (Hunter & Smith 2007: 15). The findings are consistent with Vygotsky's developmental theory. New developments, such as sending more inviting messages, require time to internalise and to transfer the information to teachers' own contexts (Chalmers & Keown 2006: 153, Chappuis *et al* 2009: 59). The goal of IE is to support and encourage teachers to develop in four dimensions when transferring the information to their own situation.

4.3 Four dimensions: 'I'll try to make my life more positive'

Becoming an inviting teacher is "an intentional internal process" that determines how people invite themselves and others personally and professionally (Purkey & Siegel 2003: 74). The four dimensions are (Hunter & Smith 2007: 15, Novak & Purkey 2001: 25-8):

- Being personally inviting with oneself

It is necessary to invite oneself personally before someone else can be invited.

- Being personally inviting with others

It is crucial for teachers to develop cooperative relations with others. This implies caring about others.

- Being professionally inviting with oneself

Inviting oneself professionally is a lifelong process which requires a continuous expansion of knowledge and skills.

- Being professionally inviting with others

In this dimension it is important to consider the places, policies, programmes and processes in the school in order to "cordially and creatively" summon human potential (Novak & Purkey 2001: 28).

Both schools offered workshops and opportunities for training and self-improvement. A few participants indicated their desire to focus on their own professional development for the sake of an inviting school culture, and even to make their own

life "more positive". This implies that they needed to be more inviting to themselves, as a participant wrote: "Sometimes I am too hard on myself – I have to be kinder to myself". They also indicated that they wanted to improve themselves, "learn new skills" and widen their "horizons by looking things up". They intended to "review and research the subjects" to make the lessons "more interesting" and to "investigate new methods of using my time more effectively".

The naïve sketches and e-mail correspondence with schools referred to views on practices of being personally and professionally inviting to others in the school. Both schools conveyed a "strong sense of belonging" where role players formed a "close unity" and where they cared for one another. For example, requests for prayers were recorded and "good and bad news" was shared during staff meetings. The schools also took "pains to build relationships" among colleagues, such as supporting staff members who were going through divorces, helping a colleague "battling with an alcohol problem", and subsidising fees for furthering studies. However, the views of participants also included a longing to be more professionally inviting to others. One participant mentioned: "The status quo is good – but that means we have stagnated, there has been no growth". Their wishes were expressed when they indicated that there should be "even more cooperation, team-building activities" than currently existed among staff members; and that they should "have even better relationships with the children".

The above findings indicate that creating an IE culture in the school requires the input of individual staff members, but also a collective approach to implement and sustain the IE culture. In addition, this requires continual personal construction and workplace learning to improve learning in schools (Chappuis *et al* 2009: 60). Although participants were not required to report on their experience of the workshop, many participants expressed their view of the content of PD programmes in creating an intentionally inviting school culture.

4.4 Appreciation for the IE workshop: exceeding 'my wildest expectations'

A goal of the workshop was to help participants understand the IE model and what implications this may have for future actions in the classroom and school. They referred to the programme being "incredibly informative and enlightening"; "stunning" and exceeding "my wildest expectations". The following naïve sketch serves as an example of participants' appreciation for the programme:

> Thanks for all the things I can affirm. I have a passion for improving children's self-image; not only they or their parents are advantaged by this, but particularly I myself. Children can believe in themselves, believe that other people also believe in them – and miracles happen! You have inspired me to think afresh about things I had forgotten to apply or hadn't thought through properly.

PD programme evaluation is a critical and integral part of professional development (Guskey 2002). Such evaluations can be done at various levels. According to Mosoge (2008: 184) and Guskey (2002: 46), there are different levels at which the views of staff regarding a PD programme can be determined:

- Level 1: satisfaction/reaction

This level reviews the participants' reactions to the content and relevance of the programme, the presentation of the workshop and activities during the workshop, and other factors.

- Level 2: learning

This level refers to changes in participants' knowledge, skills and attitudes regarding their practice.

- Level 3: work behaviour/application
- Level 4: institutional

Levels 3 and 4 are not applicable to this study.

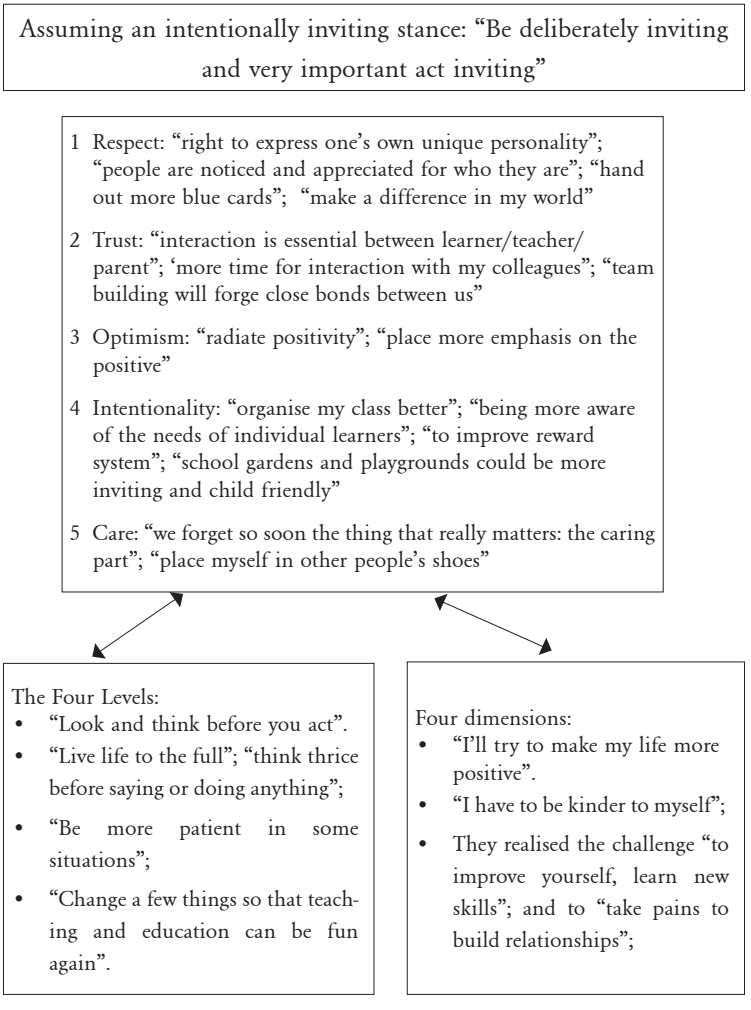
The long-term improvement of participants' approach to education in the light of IE needs to be assessed in a future project. It is clear from the responses that the workshop succeeded in meeting the needs and expectations of participants

(Level 1). According to Day & Sachs (2004: 22) and Lessing & De Witt (2007: 55), PD programmes should, apart from enabling and supporting teachers to gain confidence, competence and commitment for their teaching, also lead to a sense of joy in their teaching.

Their reflections also reveal that the workshop helped participants to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes regarding IE (Level 2). Although this cannot be measured in the short term, the content and activities were planned to develop self-direction and guide teachers to implement IE successfully (Lessing & De Witt 2007: 55).

Figure 2 provides a brief overview of the findings of the study. It shows the necessity to assume an intentionally inviting stance and how this stance has implications for the four levels and four dimensions of the IE model in creating an intentionally inviting school culture.

Figure 2. An overview of the findings within the study



5. Conclusion

Invitational education serves as an example of a PD programme that may change people's attitudes and thus contribute towards

an intentionally inviting school culture. The process of creating such a school climate requires a sound understanding of the assumptions and the components underlying the IE model. To attain such an understanding, awareness programmes on IE were therefore conducted at the two schools. With the necessary knowledge of the IE model and staff members' views on the way their schools were functioning, they were in a position to realise what was necessary to create an intentionally inviting school culture in their particular school.

The findings show some inviting practices at the time of the workshops, but also certain shortcomings in the schools when compared with the IE model. In reflections on their professional approach to teaching, staff members acknowledged their limitations and indicated their intention to be more intentionally inviting in their approach to living and teaching. The starting point for an intentionally inviting school culture is a change in the mindset of staff to create such a culture. An invitational education stance can only become intentional once staff members change their way of thinking, change limiting values and begin to modify their attitude towards living and teaching. This constitutes both an individual attitudinal development and a collaborative attitudinal development for creating the intended school culture (Evans 2008: 36).

Considering the findings of the study and the developmental theory of Vygotsky, the following are required to intentionally implement IE in the schools:

- School leadership needs to provide extensive collaborative opportunities to generate a sincere commitment towards intentionally implementing IE in schools.
- An intentionally inviting school culture requires ongoing developmental endeavours to create a sincere commitment towards the IE model. The ongoing, long-term approach to implementing IE is emphasised in the study.
- Continual opportunities for social interaction among staff members are required. Although individual development is indispensable for inculcating an intentionally inviting stance, conceptual growth within a school comes from

sharing IE approaches and experiences through continuous collective actions among all role players in the school.

Because the schools in this study have only begun the process of becoming intentionally inviting schools, it is necessary to have follow-up studies to monitor how the schools succeed in developing self-direction and in guiding teachers to implement IE intentionally.

In conclusion, when striving to create an intentional inviting school culture the focus should be "on creating a more expansive learning environment at work" (Hodkinson & Hodkinson 2005: 123). Any school that wishes to create an IE school environment needs to reflect on its current practices in the light of the IE model and consider the necessary changes to convert deeply ingrained practices and conventions that do not meet the requirements of an intentionally inviting school culture.

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