

Activity 6: Baseline for an action plan

In Activity 5, Mr Sharma noted that, as well as being the object of prejudice, there were fewer learning opportunities for a female student from the economically weaker section of a minority community with poor access to education and awareness. Either use this example or choose a priority area you have identified for addressing inclusion in your school and think about what steps can be taken to address their needs. You will have started to think about this in Activity 6, but now is the time to make more concrete, specific action plans. You might want to work with another colleague on this to share perceptions and collaborate on appropriate actions. It may help if you consider doing the following.

Identify the girls from the economically weaker section of different minority groups in your school (or the students from your chosen priority). Identify the students, their class, subjects taken, the family and socio-cultural background, and the attendance and grades obtained in each subject. If you have a large number

of students to focus on, then choose a case study group of, say, six to ten students to get a feel for the issues that they face.

- Consider the four dimensions of inclusion (access, acceptance, participation and achievement) to assess in what specific ways the students experience exclusion or disadvantage.
- Find some time from your busy schedule to sit in on some lessons with these students. Do not obviously make them the focus of your attention, but observe how they engage with learning. Ask yourself: Are they participating? What might be the barriers to their active participation? How might they be supported individually to participate more fully in the teaching–learning process?
- You may like to also to understand their background and home situation more holistically . Consider meeting the parents of these students. Have any of them met with you to speak about their child, or the difficulties that the child has faced in school? What is it they would like for their children? What support for their learning or what learning experiences do they receive at home?
- Arrange to talk to the students about their experiences in school and of their learning. You will need to carefully assess whether this is best done in a group situation or individually, and you must ensure that they feel relaxed and free to talk without fear of your reaction or of others finding out the specifics of what they have said. However, it is essential to hear directly from these students, as they are likely to have a very good grasp of the specific difficulties that they face and may be able to tell you what interventions will work.

Discussion

You are building the baseline for an individual education profile of each of the students. Although these students will have certain factors in common, it is very important not to treat them merely as a 'set'. Each one may have other factors that also impact on their learning; differing personalities will also influence their readiness to learn and resilience. You will not therefore be looking for a single solution to address their needs and improve their learning, although there may be common themes that can be addressed as a single intervention.

Having thought in detail about a particular inclusion issue in your school, you are likely to have developed a good understanding of what is preventing the identified students from achieving their potential and have already identified the actions that need to be taken. Interventions or actions to create a more inclusive learning environment will be quite specific to your context but may involve the following:

- Considering how to create a stronger feeling of partnership between the student and teachers. This could involve empowering the students to speak up if they are having difficulty – which will help staff to understand how students are finding the learning – or for teachers to be more active in seeking feedback on how the students feel they are getting on.
- Developing systems to enable students to discuss personal circumstances that are having a negative impact on their learning.
- Adjusting the teaching methods, learning resources or assessment techniques to enable students to learn fully and effectively.
- Making changes to the school environment or systems to ensure that students feel safe, supported and provided with the maximum opportunity to succeed.
- Addressing specific attitudes or behaviours that have a negative impact on the culture of the school as a whole. This might be expressed through actions, how students are referred to or talked about (for example, if a lack of attainment in socio-economically deprived students is always accepted as the norm without any sense of ambition for better), or something as seemingly small as to how rewards or prizes are given (for example, if school prizes are only given for sport, and are always given to male students).