

What does the Data Say about EARCOS Schools' Inclusive Practices?



Introductions

- Dr Margaret Alvarez, Head of the International School of Singapore (ISS)
- Deidre Fischer: CEO and founder of DF Education Pty Ltd, Adelaide (South Australia).

www.deidrefischer.com.au



Presentation Roadmap

- Describe the journey over the last three years
- Describe the research project and share findings
- Think about the implications for our region and your school
- Discuss a way forward

Tuning In



Describe the photograph from the viewpoint of someone on their first trip to Bangkok

Tuning In



Describe the picture from the perspective of someone who lives in Bangkok

Tuning In



Describe the picture from the perspective of a student with processing challenges

Reflection

- How did the viewpoints differ?
- What were the challenges for you in the role you were assigned?
- How do you think this activity relates to the presentation?



Why is this study important?

- The international school landscape is changing rapidly. (ISC TAISI October 2017)
- Demographic shifts in student populations are happening in some schools (author 2017)
- We need to ensure that school policy keeps up with practice (c.f. accreditation standards)
- We have a responsibility to prepare our students with the skills needed for the world they will inherit.



Our Journey so far

- Revisit ELC 2014-2015-2016
 - School leaders can make a difference by not allowing differences to be barriers
- Words into Action, the reconstructed document
- Next steps



Definition - Diversity

- The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment.
- It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

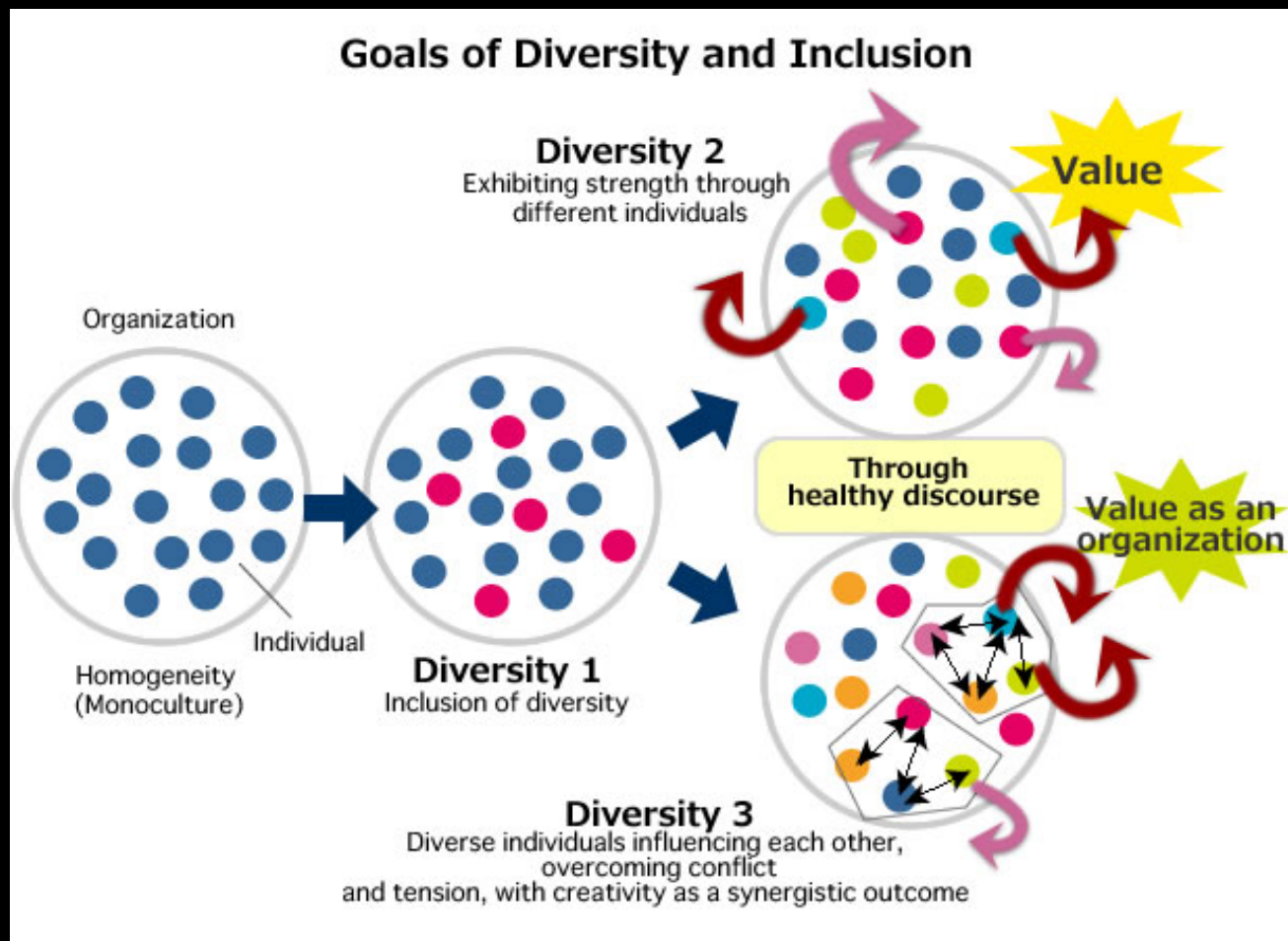


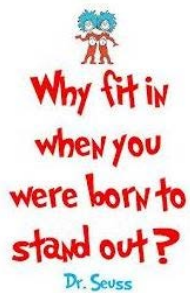
ELC2015 – DIVERSITY AS A KEY ELEMENT FOR INCLUSION

- Shared research from the business world on the benefits/challenges of diversity in the workplace, as well as how they promote a culture of inclusion.
- Business world has discovered that diversity is good for their bottom line (profit margins)
- Using the Charrette Protocol we developed a document that could be used to support the development of inclusive practices in a school.



ELC2016 – Strengthening Diversity and Inclusion for Schools



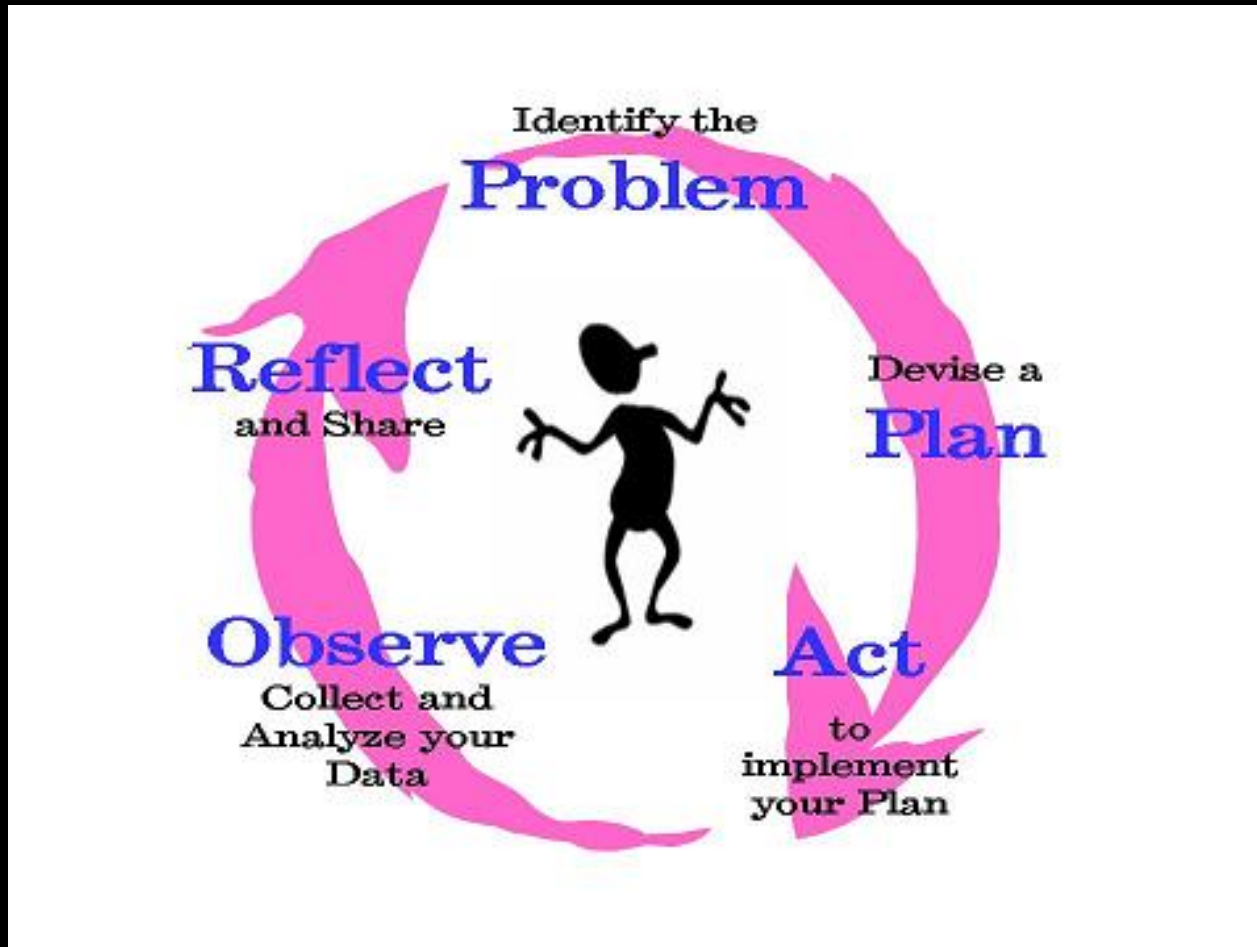


ELC2016 cont

- Why and how we can measure diversity in our schools using KPIs, and
- a practical task where we asked our participants to create 4 indicators for a standard (for Strengthening Diversity in their School), and develop a set of KPIs to measure alignment with the standard.
- Our learning: We needed data from the EARCOS region to support our work. What is the evidence and how can EARCOS support schools?

- As a result of your feedback.....

We engaged in action research



Action Research

- Research in a real situation
- Uses evidence of what is actually happening in an organisation, not external data
- Fosters critical reflection, self regulation, ownership for change
- Generates questions to move practice forward
- Builds scaffolds as understandings are developed
- A powerful tool for change
- Reflects a design cycle approach

The Action Research Process Followed

Focus Stage Identified the key questions

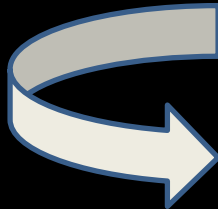
“Is there a shared understanding of diversity in EARCOS schools?”

“What are the practices and policies that support inclusion?”



Research Stage

-developed a survey based on our earlier literature research and the questions and perceptions stemming from previous workshops



Discovery Stage

-synthesis of ideas from research stage
- meaning making from the information gathered



The Action Research Process Followed

Development Stage

- Implications of survey shared with EARCOS members
- Policies and practices shared with EARCOS members

Implementation Stage

- Discussion on how best to promote this agenda
- further resources developed (TODAY)

Review stage

- mid project review
- end of project review
- findings & action (LATER)



Findings

Aims and Hypothesis

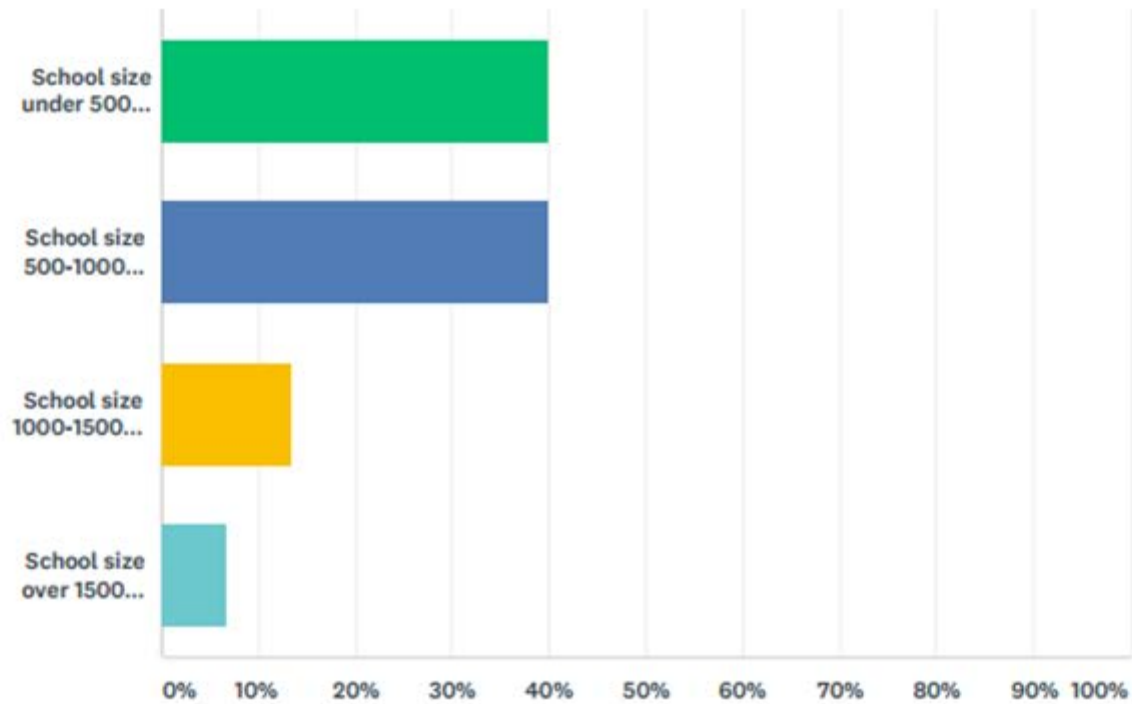
- Explore the hypothesis that in some schools inclusion is viewed as an extension of diversity
- Determine if there is a shared understanding of the term 'Diversity' amongst EARCOS schools
- Obtain and share examples of effective practice in EARCOS schools with regards to inclusive practices and diversity policies

Some Background

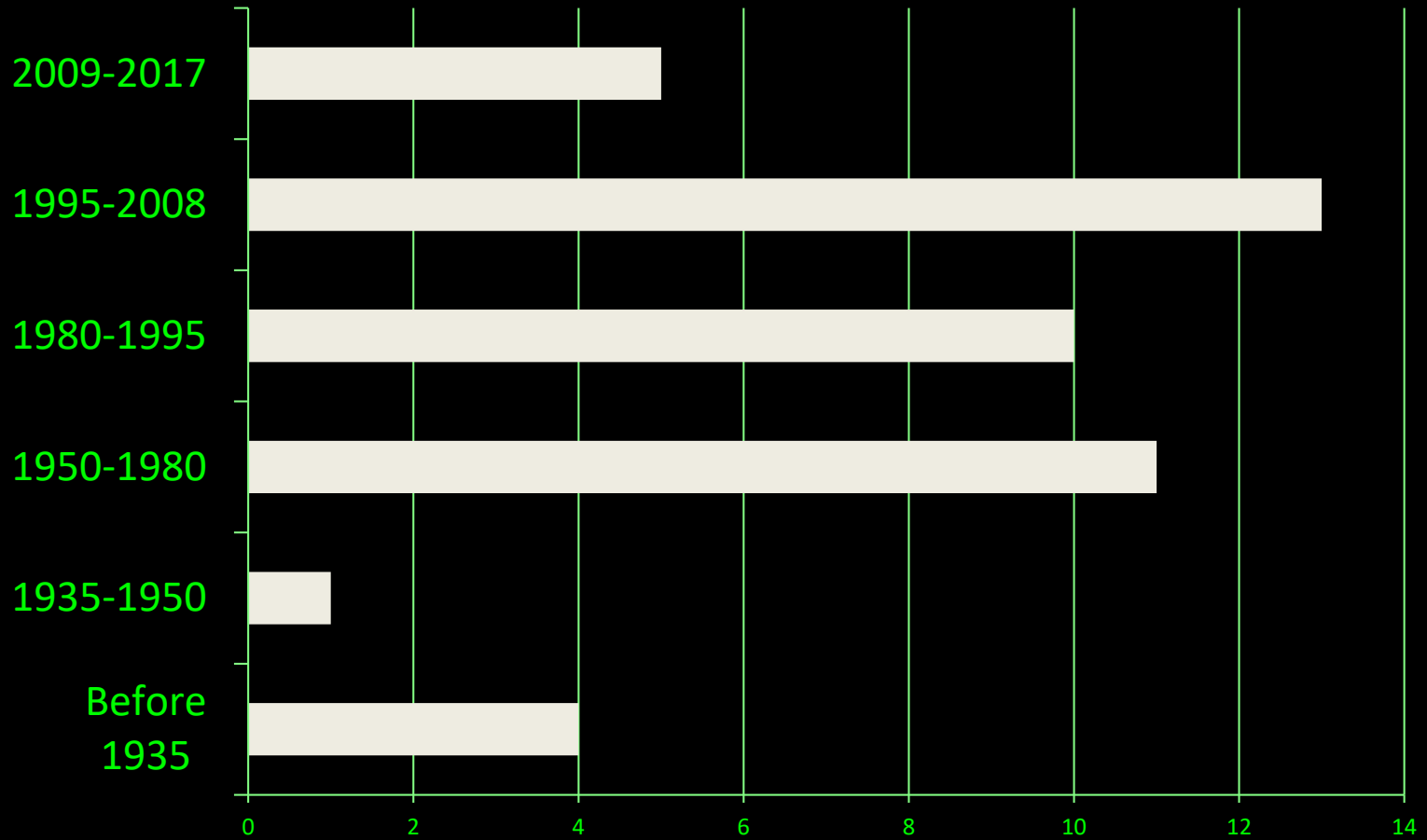
- Survey questions based on research undertaken during the last 3 years.
- 5 basic questions and a section on practice
- Sent to all member schools (3 times)
- 30% of membership responded
- Some surveys not fully completed

Survey Results

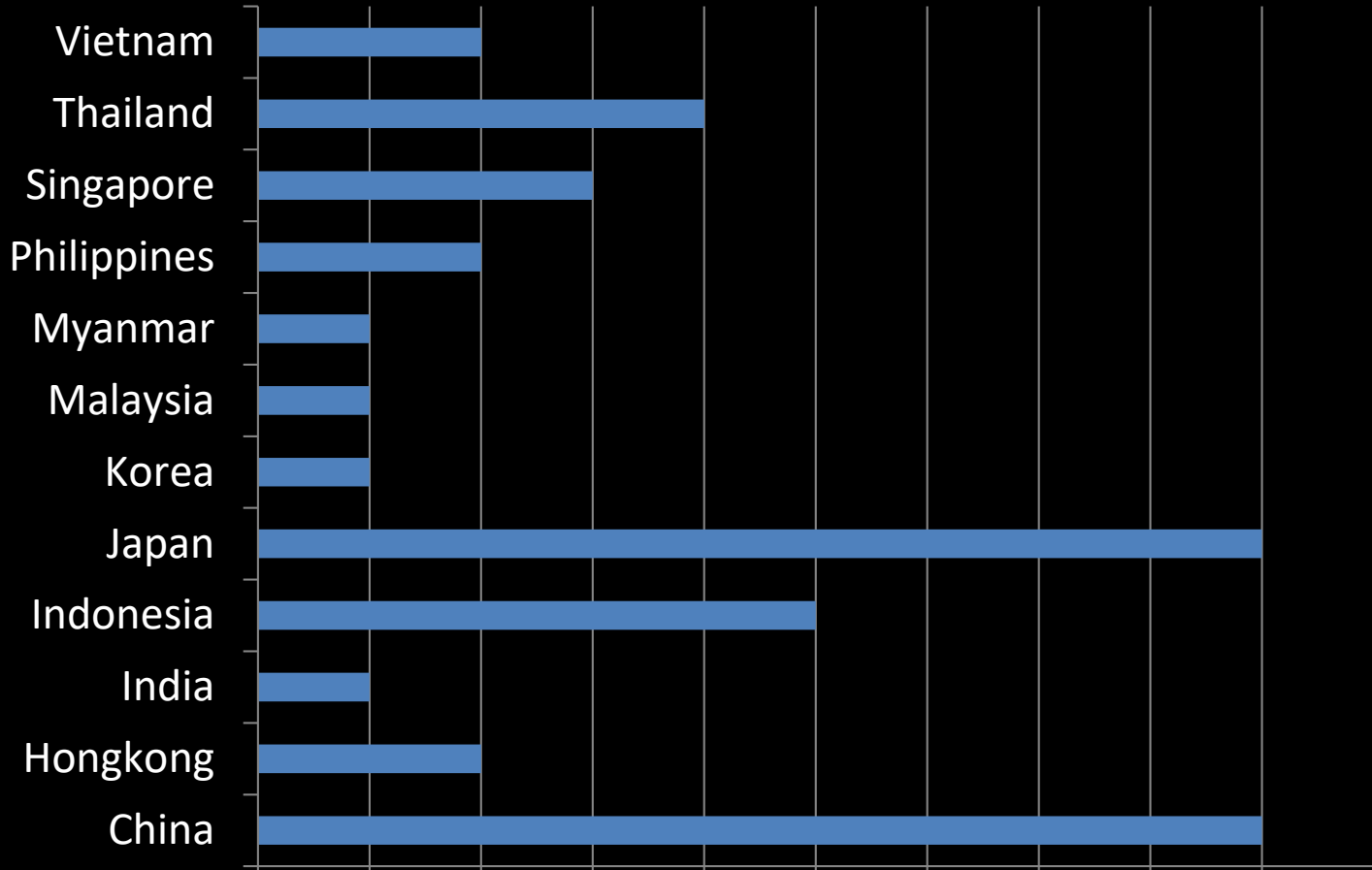
Tell us about your school



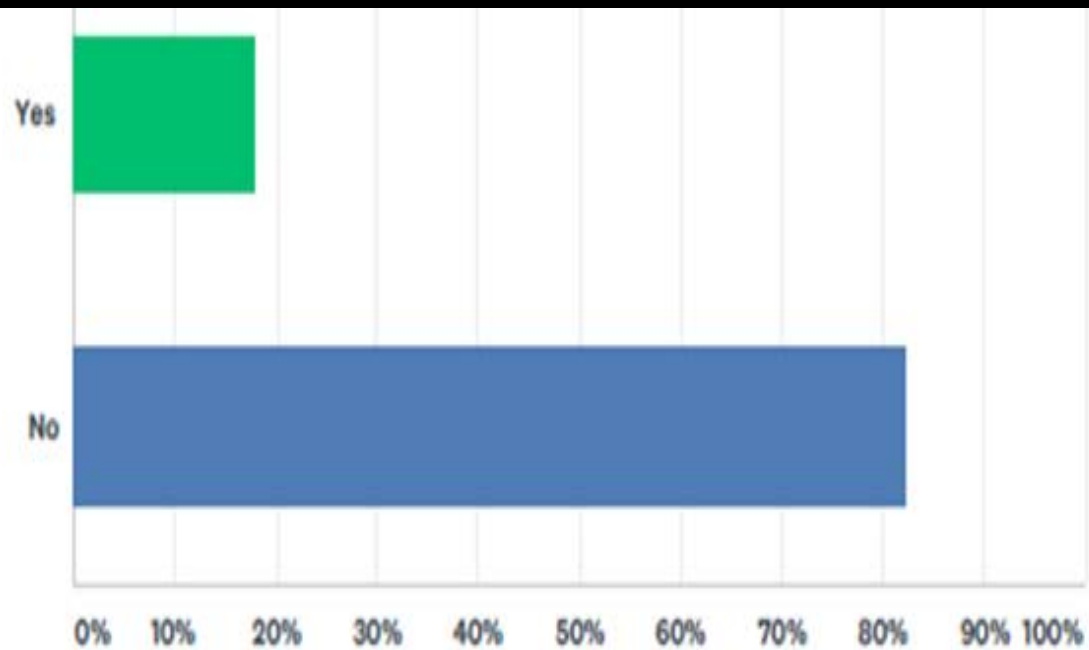
When was your School founded?



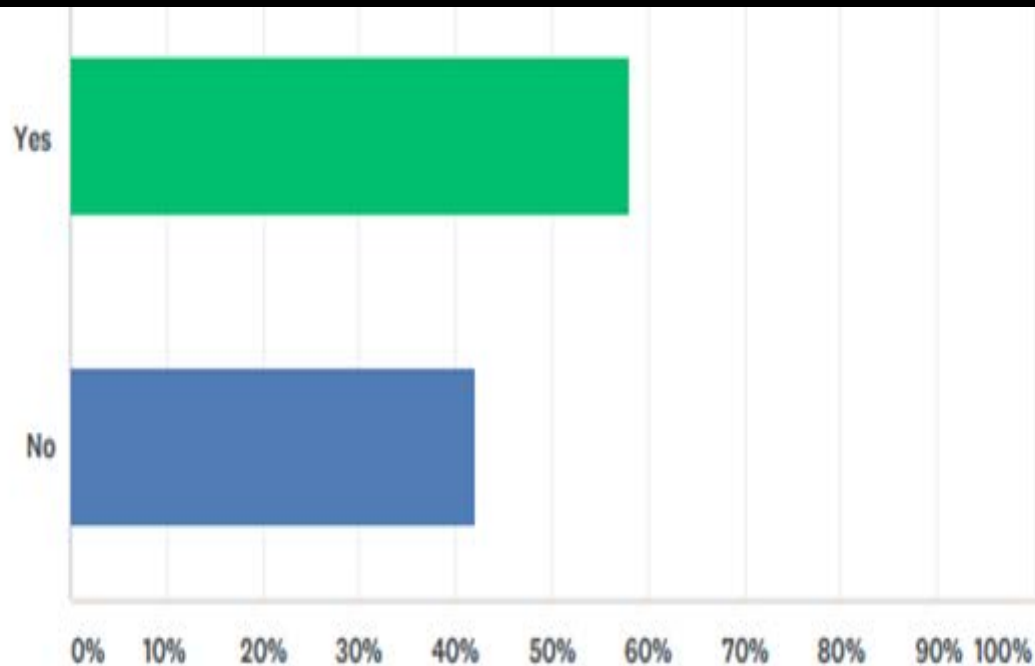
Location of Respondent schools



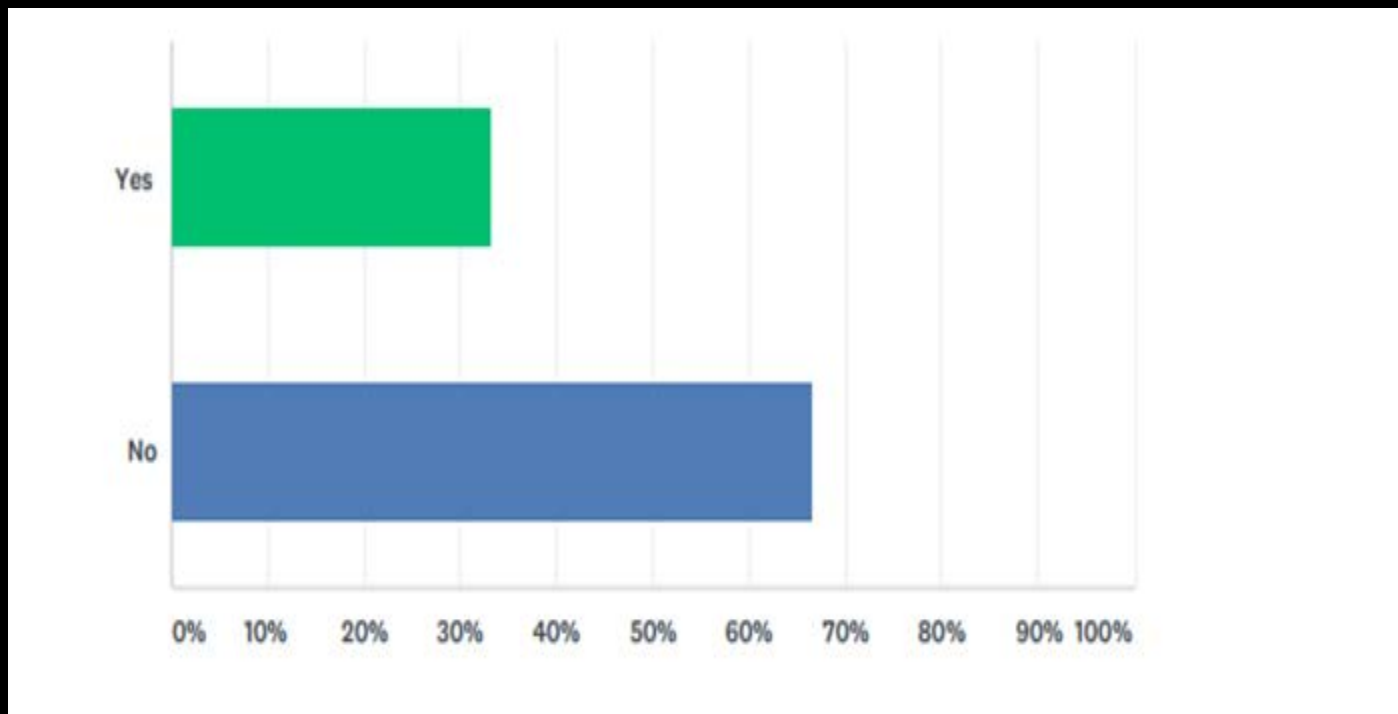
Does your school has a definition of diversity ?



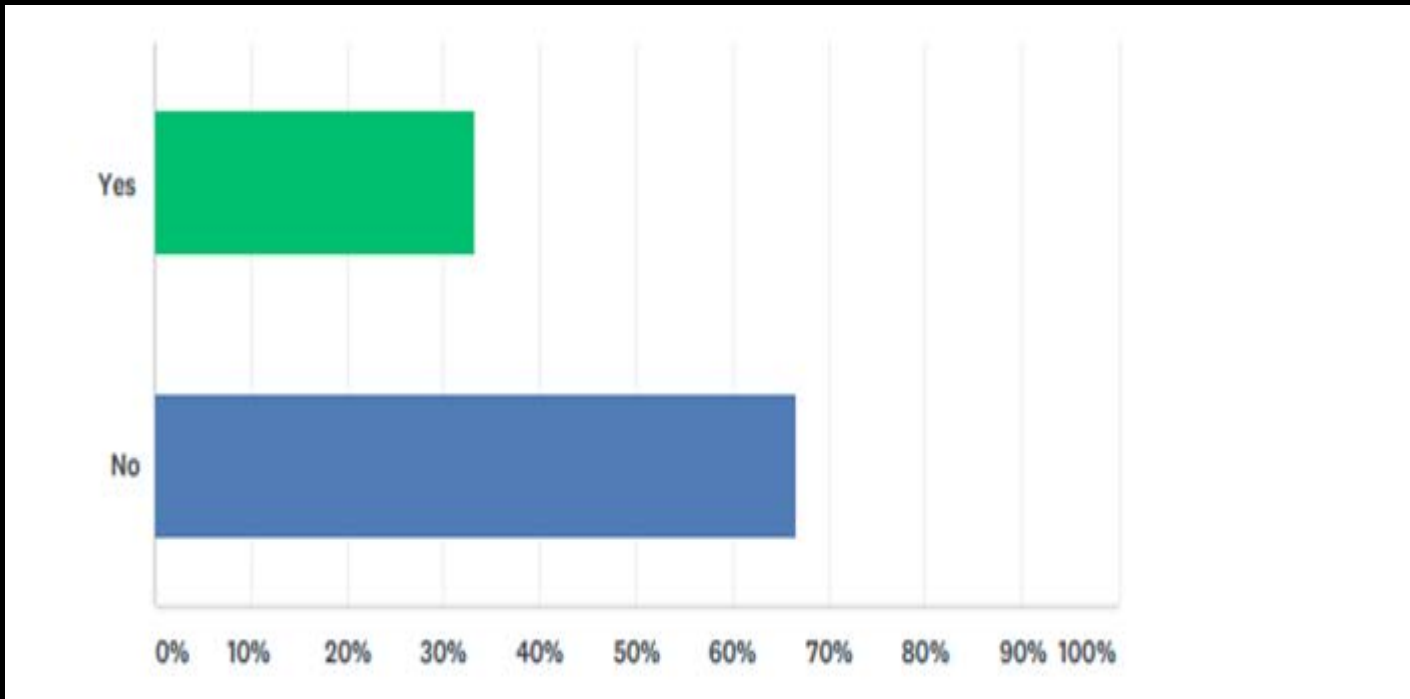
Do you have Board approved school policies that support the promotion of inclusive practices or a culture of inclusion for your school ?



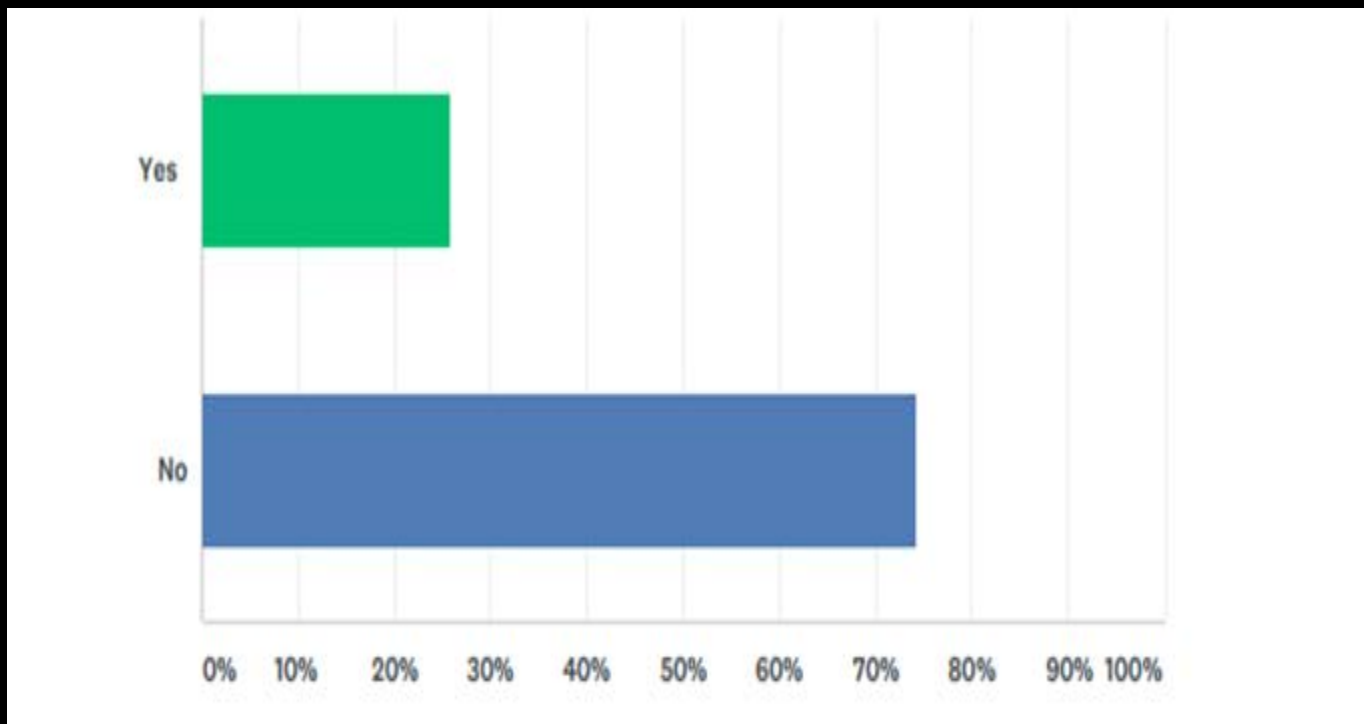
Within your HR Policies and Procedures do you have any policies/procedures that would contribute to a culture of inclusion within your school?



Within your instructional programme policies, do you have any policies that support diverse learning needs?



Does your school have student policies that support diversity and the promotion of inclusive practices amongst students in your school?





Limitations of Research

- Sample size small (3 requests sent!)
- Survey interpretation
- Self reporting
- Bias
- Generalization

Analysis

- The majority of the respondents did not have policy on diversity/inclusion or policies in other supporting areas. Several recognised that this would be important.
- For several schools practice seems to precede policy.
- Some schools did not feel a definition was important as by nature international schools are diverse.
- Some schools reported contextual challenges in defining diversity/inclusion in the way they want
- Several schools reported a shift to increased enrolment of learning support students & need for policy development.

Analysis

- In some cases practice contradicted informal definition (celebration of differences v Special Needs support)
- Diversity/inclusion – multiple understandings across region- celebration of difference, nationalities, Learning Support, diversity a tool to inclusive approaches
- Avoidance of set policy to allow schools freedom of application
- Schools felt diversity/inclusion implied in policy but not explicit

Aims and Hypothesis

- Explore the hypothesis that in some schools inclusion is viewed as an extension of diversity (minority of respondents)
- Determine if there is a shared understanding of the term 'Diversity' amongst EARCOS schools (NO)
- Obtain and share examples of effective practice in EARCOS schools with regards to inclusive practices and diversity policies (DONE)

INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

- In the survey we asked schools to list the various practices under the following headings:
 - Embracing and supporting differences
 - Safe School environment
 - Nurturing the learning environment
 - Valuing Uniqueness
 - Respectful Interactions
 - Understand other viewpoints
 - Positive School environment.

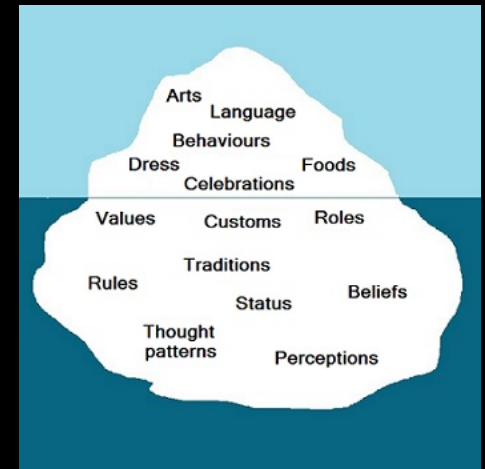
Responses – Inclusive Practices

- 45 in total
- 19 Schools provided examples of practices (some were incomplete)
- Some information provided, eg 'student voice' or 'definition of international mindedness' – not able to determine the practice from the information provided.

Grouping the Practices

1. School Culture (which included any reference to Child Protection/Child Safety/Homeroom/Pastoral care/Advisor as well as School Events and School Structures)
2. SEN/Learning Needs (7 schools focused only on this component of 'inclusion')
3. Teaching and Learning Practices
4. Other

SCHOOL CULTURE



- Practices that fostered a climate of inclusion by providing for a child's emotional, social and physical well-being in schools. Within this category I also included student management practices or practices that ensured student voice and choice was a part of the School's procedures (eg Restorative approaches, peer counsellors, Student buddy system, Autonomous Discipline, School Advocate etc).
- 14 Responses



Examples of practices

- Restorative approaches
- Pastoral Care/Advisory/HomeRoom structures
- Kelso's choice program (conflict resolution process)
- Lunch meetings with administration and Student Council (monthly)
- Lunch meetings with administration and Parent Group (monthly)
- Lunch meetings with administration and Teacher Leadership Team (monthly)
- Active Teacher and Administration communication team
- Consistent communication

SEN/Learning Needs

- 7 Schools
- Schools referred to EAL together with SEN/Learning Needs
- Referred to their inclusion of SEN/Learning Needs/EAL students as part of the school programme for inclusive practices.



Teaching and Learning Practices

- 6 Schools
- included references to the practice of differentiation,
- the inquiry teaching approach,
- using planned reflection and the teaching of ToK.
- Other examples include:
- the use of Essential Agreements within classrooms,
Digital citizenship curriculum,
- students encouraged to pose questions and seek answers,
- responsive classroom training, and
- Best learning practices PL teams

Other

- Admissions – 4 Schools, no theme emerged
- One school stated that they try to live by their norms of how to respond to people on campus with eye contact, a smile and greeting.
- There was one school that responded that they recruit for diversity.

Implications for Schools

- Can we leave diversity/inclusive approaches to chance - osmosis?
- In our changing world and with the multiple interpretations of diversity/inclusion do we need policy to foster transparency (e.g. student/teacher recruitment) ?
- When might policy be advantageous to avoid philosophical drift?
- How do we measure the effectiveness of diversity/inclusion without the concepts anchored within guiding statements/policy?

Areas for Further Research

- How wide-spread is the demographic shift reported by schools?
- What is the impact of this shift on the culture of schools in the EARCOS region?
- What is causing the shift to more inclusive school environments- response to market, philosophical shift...
- What are the implications for a regional organisation such as EARCOS and the services it offers?
- Are there successful strategies for managing contextual challenges?

Discussion

Guiding Questions

- What might be an effective way to share practices within our region?
- Are there partnerships that could be formed?
- Any tips for schools in aligning local conditions with efforts to promote diversity/inclusion?
- What would you like EARCOS to do to help support this work?
- Other thoughts?