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Postgraduate Certificate in Leadership in Special and Inclusive Education

## Professional Development and Coaching for Teachers,

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**Action Research** – a cyclical process where teachers identify a problem, implement an intervention, collect data, and reflect on outcomes. Related terms: Data-driven practice, reflective inquiry. Example: A teacher modifies a reading strategy for students with dyslexia, monitors progress, and adjusts instruction. Challenge: Ensuring sufficient time for rigorous data collection within busy school schedules.

**Adaptive Teaching** – instructional methods that adjust content, process, or product to meet diverse learner needs. Related terms: Differentiation, universal design for learning (UDL). Practical application: Using audio books for visual learners while providing tactile materials for kinesthetic learners. Challenge: Balancing curriculum breadth with individualized adjustments.

**Adult Learning Theory** – principles describing how adults acquire knowledge, emphasizing self-direction, relevance, and problem-centered learning. Related terms: Andragogy, experiential learning. In coaching, mentors frame sessions around teachers' immediate classroom challenges. Challenge: Resisting the tendency to revert to lecture-style PD for seasoned educators.

**Assessment for Learning (AfL)** – formative practices that gather evidence to inform instruction and support student progress. Related terms: Formative assessment, feedback loops. Example: Using exit tickets to gauge understanding of a math concept and adjusting the next lesson accordingly. Challenge: Teachers may misinterpret AfL as low-stakes testing rather than a diagnostic tool.

**Behavioural Intervention Plan (BIP)** – a structured plan that outlines strategies to prevent and address challenging behaviours. Related terms: Functional behaviour assessment (FBA), positive behaviour support. Practical use: A BIP includes visual schedules and reinforcement for a student with autism. Challenge: Ensuring consistency across all staff members and environments.

**Blended Learning** – a hybrid model combining face-to-face instruction with online digital resources. Related terms: Flipped classroom, hybrid delivery. Example: Teachers use a video tutorial on inclusive classroom management for home study, then practice techniques in school. Challenge: Digital equity and maintaining engagement across modalities.

**Coaching Cycle** – a structured sequence of pre-conference, observation, post-conference, and goal-setting phases. Related terms: Instructional coaching, mentorship loop. In practice, a coach observes a lesson, provides targeted feedback, and collaborates on an action plan. Challenge: Aligning the cycle with school

timetables without overburdening teachers.

**Collaborative Inquiry** – a group of educators jointly investigating a practice question, sharing data, and co-constructing solutions. Related terms: Professional learning community (PLC), lesson study. Example: A team analyses student work samples to refine scaffolding techniques. Challenge: Sustaining collective focus amid competing responsibilities.

**Competency-Based PD** – professional development aligned to defined competencies, allowing teachers to progress at their own pace. Related terms: Mastery learning, skill benchmarks. Practical application: Teachers complete modules on inclusive assessment until they demonstrate proficiency. Challenge: Developing reliable competency rubrics that capture nuanced teaching practice.

**Constructivist Pedagogy** – an approach where learners actively construct knowledge through experience and reflection. Related terms: Inquiry learning, problem-based learning. In special education, teachers facilitate hands-on activities that link new concepts to students' lived experiences. Challenge: Providing sufficient scaffolding for learners with limited prior knowledge.

**Contextualised Coaching** – coaching that is tailored to the specific school culture, resources, and student demographics. Related terms: Situated learning, culturally responsive coaching. Example: A coach integrates local community narratives when supporting literacy instruction for English language learners. Challenge: Avoiding one-size-fits-all frameworks.

**Curriculum Mapping** – a visual representation of curriculum scope, sequence, and alignment with standards. Related terms: Vertical alignment, curriculum audit. Teachers use maps to identify gaps in content that affect students with special needs. Challenge: Maintaining up-to-date maps as standards evolve.

**Data Literacy** – the ability to interpret, analyse, and apply quantitative and qualitative data to inform practice. Related terms: Evidence-based decision-making, data dashboards. Example: A teacher reads progress monitoring graphs to adjust interventions for a student with ADHD. Challenge: Overcoming anxiety or misconceptions about statistical concepts.

**Design Thinking** – a problem-solving framework that emphasizes empathy, ideation, prototyping, and testing. Related terms: Creative pedagogy, innovation cycle. In coaching, teachers generate multiple strategies for inclusive classroom layout, prototype one, and evaluate impact. Challenge: Allocating time for iterative cycles within the academic calendar.

**Differentiated Instruction** – the purposeful planning of varied pathways to learning based on student readiness, interest, and profile. Related terms: Tiered tasks, flexible grouping. Example: Offering choice boards that let students demonstrate mastery through writing, drawing, or oral presentation. Challenge: Ensuring depth of learning rather than superficial variety.

Distributed Leadership – a model where leadership responsibilities are shared across staff, fostering collective ownership of improvement. Related terms: Shared governance, teacher leadership. A senior teacher leads a cohort on inclusive assessment while a junior staff member coordinates technology integration. Challenge: Clarifying roles to avoid ambiguity or overload.

Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) – instructional strategies supported by rigorous research and proven effectiveness. Related terms: Best practice, research synthesis. Coaches guide teachers to adopt multi-sensory phonics for dyslexic learners. Challenge: Translating research findings into practical classroom routines.

Formative Feedback – timely, specific information that helps learners improve performance before final evaluation. Related terms: Feed-forward, corrective comments. A teacher uses a rubric to highlight strengths and next steps during a writing workshop. Challenge: Avoiding generic praise that does not guide further development.

Growth Mindset – the belief that abilities can be developed through effort, strategy, and support. Related terms: Mindset theory, resilience. Coaches model growth-oriented language when discussing challenges with teachers. Challenge: Confronting fixed-mindset attitudes that may hinder risk-taking.

Inclusive Pedagogy – teaching approaches that anticipate and respond to the full spectrum of learner diversity. Related terms: Universal design for learning, equity teaching. Example: Embedding captioned video, tactile manipulatives, and collaborative discussion in a single lesson. Challenge: Balancing universal design with targeted accommodations.

Individualised Education Plan (IEP) – a legally binding document that outlines personalized goals, accommodations, and services for a student with a disability. Related terms: 504 Plan, personalised learning plan. Coaches support teachers in aligning daily instruction with IEP objectives. Challenge: Ensuring fidelity of implementation across settings.

Instructional Coaching – a supportive partnership where a coach helps teachers refine practice through observation, dialogue, and resource sharing. Related terms: Mentor coaching, peer coaching. A coach may co-plan a lesson on sensory integration and debrief afterward. Challenge: Maintaining a non-evaluative stance to foster trust.

Learning Analytics – the systematic analysis of learner data to predict outcomes and personalise instruction. Related terms: Predictive modeling, data dashboards. Teachers use analytics to identify early signs of disengagement among students with autism. Challenge: Protecting student privacy while leveraging insights.

Learning Styles – a contested concept suggesting individuals prefer certain modalities (visual, auditory, kinesthetic). Related terms: Multimodal instruction, preference theory. While research questions its validity,

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coaches may still use varied modalities to engage diverse learners. Challenge: Avoiding oversimplification that neglects deeper cognitive processes.

Learning Targets – clear statements of what students should know or be able to do by the end of a lesson or unit. Related terms: Success criteria, learning intentions. Teachers display targets on the board and refer back during formative checks. Challenge: Ensuring targets are appropriately challenging for all learners, including those with special needs.

Lesson Study – a collaborative research cycle where teachers jointly plan, teach, observe, and revise a lesson. Related terms: Professional learning community, collaborative inquiry. A team focuses on an inclusive math problem-solving lesson, gathers student work, and refines the approach. Challenge: Coordinating schedules for observation and debrief.

Metacognition – awareness and regulation of one’s own thinking processes. Related terms: Self-regulation, reflective practice. Teachers embed think-aloud strategies to help students monitor comprehension. Challenge: Scaffolding metacognitive skills for learners with executive function deficits.

Micro-Coaching – short, focused coaching sessions (often 15-30 minutes) targeting a specific instructional element. Related terms: Micro-feedback, bite-size coaching. Example: A coach observes a teacher’s use of visual timers and provides immediate feedback. Challenge: Ensuring depth despite limited time.

Multimodal Resources – instructional materials that engage multiple senses (audio, visual, tactile). Related terms: Multimodal learning, sensory integration. A teacher uses a podcast, infographic, and manipulatives to teach a science concept. Challenge: Aligning modalities with learning objectives without cognitive overload.

Needs Assessment – systematic gathering of information to determine gaps in knowledge, skills, or resources. Related terms: Gap analysis, stakeholder survey. Coaches conduct surveys to identify teachers’ confidence levels in applying assistive technology. Challenge: Translating assessment data into actionable PD plans.

Neurodiversity – the concept that neurological differences (e.G., Autism, ADHD, dyslexia) are natural variations of human cognition. Related terms: Inclusive identity, strength-based approach. Coaching conversations frame neurodiverse traits as assets rather than deficits. Challenge: Shifting entrenched deficit-oriented narratives.

Observational Protocol – a structured tool for systematically recording teacher practices during classroom visits. Related terms: Rubric, fidelity checklist. Example: The “Inclusive Teaching Observation Tool” captures evidence of differentiated instruction. Challenge: Ensuring inter-rater reliability among multiple coaches.

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) – an approach that defines desired learning outcomes first and then designs curriculum and assessment to achieve them. Related terms: Competency-based learning,

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results-oriented planning. Teachers align IEP goals with broader outcome statements. Challenge: Balancing outcome specificity with flexibility for individual learners.

Peer Coaching – a reciprocal partnership where teachers support each other’s growth through shared observation and feedback. Related terms: Collegial mentoring, collaborative reflection. Two teachers swap classrooms to model inclusive strategies. Challenge: Managing power dynamics and ensuring constructive critique.

Personalised Learning – tailoring instruction, pace, and pathways to individual learner profiles. Related terms: Individualized instruction, adaptive learning. A teacher provides a self-paced digital module for a student who needs extra time. Challenge: Providing adequate support while maintaining curriculum coherence.

Planning Cycle – the iterative process of setting goals, designing instruction, implementing, and evaluating effectiveness. Related terms: Instructional design, action cycle. Coaches help teachers embed the planning cycle within unit development. Challenge: Resisting the temptation to skip evaluation phases due to time pressure.

Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) – a proactive framework that establishes supportive environments, teaches expected behaviours, and uses data to guide interventions. Related terms: Tiered support, functional behaviour assessment. Example: Schoolwide expectations are taught through modeling and reinforced with token economies. Challenge: Sustaining consistency across staff turnover.

Practitioner Research – inquiry conducted by teachers to improve their own practice and contribute to the field. Related terms: Action research, practitioner inquiry. A teacher investigates the impact of graphic organizers on comprehension for students with language impairments. Challenge: Balancing research rigor with classroom demands.

Professional Learning Community (PLC) – a collaborative group that meets regularly to examine student data, share strategies, and plan improvements. Related terms: Collaborative inquiry, school improvement team. PLCs may focus on inclusive assessment practices. Challenge: Maintaining momentum and clear focus over time.

Reflective Practice – the habit of critically examining one’s own teaching decisions to foster continuous improvement. Related terms: Self-assessment, reflective journaling. Coaches prompt teachers to write “What worked? What didn’t? How will I adjust?” After each lesson. Challenge: Cultivating honest self-scrutiny without defensive reactions.

Remote Coaching – coaching delivered through digital platforms (video conferencing, shared documents) rather than in-person visits. Related terms: Virtual mentorship, online observation. Example: A coach reviews a recorded lesson and provides annotated feedback via a collaborative whiteboard. Challenge: Limited

immediacy of non-verbal cues.

Response to Intervention (RtI) – a multi-tiered framework that provides escalating levels of support based on student response data. Related terms: Multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), tiered intervention. Teachers deliver universal strategies (Tier 1), small-group interventions (Tier 2), and individualized plans (Tier 3). Challenge: Ensuring fidelity across tiers and preventing “tunnel vision” on only high-need students.

Scaffolded Instruction – temporary supports that enable learners to achieve tasks beyond their current capability. Related terms: Zone of proximal development, graduated assistance. A teacher uses sentence starters, visual cues, and peer modelling to support a student with expressive language difficulties. Challenge: Withdrawing scaffolds at the appropriate moment to promote independence.

Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) – learners’ ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own academic processes. Related terms: Metacognition, autonomy support. Coaches help teachers embed goal-setting sheets and reflection prompts for students with executive function challenges. Challenge: Providing sufficient structure without stifling autonomy.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) – a broad term encompassing a range of learning difficulties, disabilities, and health impairments that require additional support. Related terms: Additional needs, inclusive provision. Teachers differentiate curriculum to meet SEN profiles. Challenge: Navigating complex statutory frameworks while maintaining pedagogical focus.

Stakeholder Engagement – the active involvement of families, community members, and other partners in educational decision-making. Related terms: Parent partnership, community liaison. Coaches model strategies for teachers to hold inclusive parent-teacher conferences. Challenge: Aligning diverse expectations and communication styles.

Standardised Assessment – tests administered under uniform conditions to compare student performance across populations. Related terms: Norm-referenced testing, benchmark assessment. Teachers interpret results to identify gaps for students with learning difficulties. Challenge: Ensuring accommodations are applied consistently to maintain validity.

Strengths-Based Approach – focusing on learners’ abilities, interests, and assets rather than deficits. Related terms: Asset mapping, positive psychology. A coach assists a teacher in highlighting a student’s visual-spatial strengths during a geometry lesson. Challenge: Avoiding “strengths-only” narratives that ignore necessary supports.

Synchronous Coaching – real-time coaching interactions, such as live classroom walkthroughs or immediate post-lesson debriefs. Related terms: Real-time feedback, live observation. Example: A coach joins a lesson via video link and offers instant suggestions. Challenge: Coordinating schedules for simultaneous presence.

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**Teacher Agency** – the capacity of educators to make informed decisions, influence practice, and shape their professional trajectory. Related terms: Empowerment, professional autonomy. Coaching models that ask “What would you try?” Reinforce agency. Challenge: Balancing guidance with autonomy in hierarchical school cultures.

**Teacher Efficacy** – teachers’ belief in their ability to affect student learning outcomes. Related terms: Self-efficacy, outcome expectancy. Coaches build efficacy by celebrating small wins and providing evidence of impact. Challenge: Counteracting low efficacy that may stem from repeated challenges with special needs learners.

**Technology Integration** – purposeful use of digital tools to enhance learning and accessibility. Related terms: Assistive technology, blended learning. Teachers incorporate speech-to-text software for students with writing difficulties. Challenge: Ensuring technology aligns with pedagogical goals rather than being an add-on.

**Tiered Assessment** – assessments designed at varying levels of difficulty to capture the full range of student abilities. Related terms: Differentiated assessment, layered testing. A math test may include basic computational items (Tier 1) and complex problem-solving items (Tier 3). Challenge: Creating valid items for each tier without over-burdening test design.

**Trauma-Informed Practice** – an approach that recognizes the impact of adverse experiences on learning and behavior, emphasizing safety, trust, and empowerment. Related terms: Supportive environment, resilience building. Coaches guide teachers to use calm down corners and predictable routines for students with trauma histories. Challenge: Distinguishing trauma responses from disability-related behaviours.

**Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** – a framework that offers multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression to meet diverse learner needs. Related terms: Inclusive pedagogy, flexible design. Teachers embed captioned videos, interactive simulations, and choice-based assessments. Challenge: Systematically applying all three UDL principles without superficial compliance.

**Vertical Alignment** – ensuring continuity and progression of learning goals across grade levels. Related terms: Curriculum mapping, longitudinal planning. Coaches help teachers map reading standards from Year 1 through Year 6, noting accommodations for students with dyslexia. Challenge: Coordinating across departments and schools.

**Visionary Leadership** – leadership that articulates a compelling future direction for inclusive education and inspires collective action. Related terms: Strategic leadership, transformational leadership. A principal champions a schoolwide inclusive vision, allocating resources for co-teaching. Challenge: Translating vision into concrete policies and daily practice.

**Whole-School Inclusion** – a systemic commitment to embedding inclusive values, policies, and practices

throughout the entire school environment. Related terms: School culture, inclusive climate. Coaching programmes align with whole-school inclusion plans, supporting staff at every level. Challenge: Shifting entrenched practices that marginalize students with special needs.

Yield-Based Planning – designing instruction based on the expected learning outcomes rather than the content alone. Related terms: Outcome-focused design, backward planning. Teachers decide the desired student product (e.G., A multimedia presentation) before selecting activities. Challenge: Ensuring that yields are realistic for learners with varying abilities.

Zero-Tolerance Policy – a strict approach that eliminates certain behaviours without discretion. Related terms: Punitive discipline, exclusionary practice. In inclusive contexts, coaches advise against zero-tolerance rules that may disproportionately affect students with disabilities. Challenge: Replacing punitive policies with restorative alternatives while maintaining safety.