

Inclusive Teaching and Learning: Introduction (transcript)

KRIS STUTCHBURY: I want you to imagine Joshua and Martha. Joshua has a visual impairment. He attends a local primary school but experiences many difficulties in trying to keep up with his learning. Martha finds herself in a class of over 100 children. She doesn't enjoy school, and she doesn't think that anybody really knows who she is. These courses are to help teachers help people like Joshua and Martha. In learning to cater for their needs, they will benefit all children and create a more inclusive atmosphere.

In many countries, there are very good policies for inclusive education and a recognition that working to include all children is really important. Our partners tell us that these policies often lack interpretation. Teachers know what they're supposed to do but not how to do it. They suggest that training is not hands-on enough and often takes place away from school in one off events. Evidence from around the world suggests that effective professional development needs to take place regularly over time, and it needs to tackle the practical aspects of teaching.

These two courses brought to you by the Commonwealth of Learning and the Open University's TESSA programme are designed to address these issues and to start teachers on a journey for professional development. They are structured around UNICEF's Wave Model for inclusive education in which inclusive teaching is seen as the responsibility for all teachers and not just those with specialist training.

DANIEL SANDE: My message is inclusion is very real. It's achievable. Inclusion is not just any theory. It's not a myth. It is working just the way people move along the road. You find people walking. You find people eating in a hall. A classroom can be that way. They come into-- they walk on the road despite their diversity. They sit down in an eating cafeteria with all their diversity. And they call for different meals. That is my view of inclusion.

Children come to classroom with their diverse needs. And it is our responsibility as teachers to listen to them, to observe them, to understand their needs, and solve them, rather than having a mindset that this is not the classroom for you. You may need to walk elsewhere to get an education. Teach us we have the capacity as long as we get the attitude.

What we have at the moment is a very theoretical kind of teacher training that focuses more on knowledge and very little on skill training. So if you have good teachers, we've got a lot of knowledge but cannot change that knowledge to skills. When I talk of skills, I'm talking of skills that can be used to support individualised learning in classrooms, skills that can be converted to change attitudes, skills that can be converted to adapt curriculum, essentially to adapt curriculum, skills that can be converted to support evaluation individualised, and is evaluation of learners according to their needs as individuals. Then, I think we have a problem.

So what we are doing is a lot of knowledge-based training but very little skill-based training on how to make those adapts or supports. Then that would go a long way in facilitating an inclusive education setting. That is my thinking. I also think we have got very little of quality assurance. You train the teachers, but then you don't go ahead to really give them the support they require at the field and quality assure what they do. So you leave them to their own wild, and they do what they want outside their training. That is what I'm thinking.

KRIS STUTCHBURY: This course, the first in the series, focuses on inclusive teaching. It will explain the key concept of learner-centred education and show teachers how it works in practise. It will present

ideas about how teachers learn and support them in becoming reflective practitioners. Participants will have the opportunity to work together to build their own toolkit of ideas and resources so that they are equipped to continue their journey.