

# Retooling Teachers for Inclusive Classrooms: A case of Mugongo Primary School, Uganda



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## Presentation outline

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## Introduction

- Major educational reforms throughout the world, resulted into a distinctly declared agreement that all children have a right to education regardless of race, gender, nationality and disability.
- Exercising this responsibility involves ensuring that the education system creates equal opportunities for effective learning.
- Definition of Inclusive Education (IE) goes beyond disability and views numerous ways students differ from one another in race, class, gender, ethnicity, family background, sexual orientation, language, ability, size, region and the like. It means educating learners with special educational needs in **regular education settings**.
- The legal framework regarding the provision of special education in Uganda is skeletal and largely undefined. The domestic law places emphasis on establishing structures and capacity building.
- Advancement to IE includes rights proclaimed in the Ugandan constitution and the establishment of UPE and USE. The National Education Policy (NEP,1992) derived from Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC,1989) which was refined into the government white paper on education (GWP, 1992) underpins the vision of the MOE&S "quality education and sports for all"
- The right to education is also enshrined in international instruments that have been ratified in Uganda

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## Background and context

- As more research is done into education and disability and how the two interact, general education teachers in Uganda primary schools are finding themselves needing to teach in an inclusive classroom
- An inclusive classroom is a class in which students with or without disabilities learn together. It is essentially the opposite of a special classroom where students with disabilities learn with only other students with disabilities
- The study was premised on Vygotsky's social constructionist theory on disability, "defects should not be perceived as an abnormality but need to be brought into social context". Special education as a combination of low expectations and diluted curriculum. He advocates the need for a positive differential approach of identifying the children's strengths, not their disability
- In the process of creating and maintaining a successful inclusive classroom, it requires much thought and collaboration between teachers and students who should work together to create and sustain an environment in which everyone feels safe, supported, and encouraged to express her or his views and concerns. (Sanders et al., 2016)

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## Research Problem

- With international and national commitments to ensuring education for all (Education For All convention (1991), the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994), United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF 2000) backed by the Government of Uganda Education White Paper (1992), and the subsequent introduction of Universal Primary Education (1997), it was expected that all children in Uganda would meaningfully gain access to all-inclusive education services.
- NDP, 2010/11-2014/15 10% of school going children in Uganda have special needs, expansion of primary enrolment as a result of UPE has led to large classes and a shortage of teachers, PTR is 70:1 (TISSA Report, 2013), low levels of training in IE during pre and in-service teacher training.
- The research sought to improve in-service teacher competencies to be able to teach in inclusive classroom environments given that we have now in 14 years to go to achieve SDG4 as adopted in the 38<sup>th</sup> UNESCO general conference.

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## Objectives

- To explore practices essential for inclusive classroom environments
- To establish the impact of retooling teachers on ensuring inclusive classroom environments.
- To explore challenges in the realization of inclusive education.

## Methodology

- This was a single case study on the classroom practices of teachers, students and the classroom on ensuring inclusive classroom environments. Robert Stake (2008), notes that as a form of research the case study "is defined by interest in an individual case, not by the methods of inquiry used", and that "the object of study is a specific, unique, bounded system".

Data was collected through:

- Qualitative semi - structured interview with the head teacher
- FGD with teachers
- Classroom observations and post - observation interviews
- Data analysis was by thematic content analysis
- Target population (1 school, 1 head teacher, and 6 teachers)

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## Teacher practices essential for Inclusive education

Practice	Reason
provide options for student engagement, persistence on difficult task	learners are different and are attracted to learn by different things
Frequently checking students' understanding	to discover weaknesses early
Clearly providing objectives at the start of the lesson	To focus students on the learning task and the lesson's target
Giving constructive feedback to students	Students need reinforcement to continue learning
Working as a team with other teachers	To borrow good practices that will ensure effective learning
Teaching using various teaching methods and strategies	To cater for different ways of learning and ensure learning is accessible to all categories of learners through using verbal cues and visual information (videos, pictures, music)
Allowing students to express themselves and communicate without fear	To promote confidence among students
reinforcing students that show positive behavior and encourages mistakes	To keep them contributing but also to encourage others to contribute knowing that it is okay to struggle with something.
Presenting myself professionally before students	
Accommodating students' differences	To respect students' different ways of learning
Link teaching to real world application	For students to gain meaning and interest in what they learn
Little teacher talking	To leave students to generate learning
Welcome all responses equally	To avoid bias

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## Pupil practices essential for Inclusive Education

Practice	Reason
1 Using a variety of means to learn	To enable learning through different ways
2 Attentiveness and focus in class	To maximize attention for effective learning
3 Deciding how to learn best	To motivate pupils to learn
4 Persevering on hard tasks	To encourage pupils to persist and never to give up on learning
5 Working with peers	To help build confidence and especially shy students
6 Demonstrate independence and advocacy	Special needs students need to be able to make their needs and wants to be known for effective learning
7 Ability to link what is taught to what they know outside class and school	To gain meaning and interest in learning "students create mental pictures when reading, and the picture in a students' mind shows his/her experiences"
8 Using a variety of tools and means to demonstrate and communicate knowledge	To motivate students to learn.

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## Classroom practices essential for Inclusive Education

Seat arrangement so that students can communicate, think together and share ideas	To assist in accessibility by all learners
Supports a variety of tasks	To meet students learning needs and also interests
Supports use of learning resources	To ensure that all learning styles are catered for
Rich with connections to students experiences	To promote learning
Conducive for collaboration and group work	Help promote understanding and acceptance of diversity
Allows free movement	Effective class control
Threat free	For pupils to freely contribute to learning
Respects cultural students background	To help pupils get used to diversity
Have adaptable instructional materials	To enable all students to access all educational resources

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## Impact of retooling teachers on ensuring inclusive classes

Knowledge/Skills gained	Evidence
Increased interaction and communication Opportunities by teachers	Ability to agree on teaching tasks, pedagogy, and assessment of learners
Shared responsibility	Class control, evaluation of students, peer teaching, scaffolding learning
Supporting students in solving academic challenges	Supporting various student groups in approaching challenges
An understanding of age appropriate activities	Balanced students grouping
Gained understanding of IE	Extra support to students to accomplish assignments, designing participatory learning activities for students to learn in ways that suit them most, use of a variety of instructional approaches, building friendship among students, teachers model respect and care for all learners
Promoting students social relationships	Ensuring role sharing among all categories of learners in classroom
Can involve all learners	Avoiding negative myths that hinder inclusion
Cater for various learning styles	Designing relevant (Visual, Audio, tactile) aids
Deal with differences in classroom	Ensuring that all learners attain all round development according to attributes, talk about disability in a way that normalizes it before students
Work freely with peers	Teachers sharing roles before, during and after teaching
Appreciate the teaching profession	Motivated by certificate award, change of attitude, gaining of IE competences
Creative and resourceful	Using pens and pencils as alternative to a foot ruler in making number line balanced

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## Voices

- “through team teaching, when you put your heads together even with regard to instructional materials one might have the material required in his/her home, the more the better”
- “Sometimes making fellow pupils help them to participate, but still at their pace helps those with learning problems to achieve learning”.
- “we have been given an opportunity to understand the nature of learners and so we are expected to help all learners to learn regardless of their special needs”
- “unlike in the first lesson where very few teaching methods were used, in the second lesson the teacher used many methods like she made demonstrations as she moved steps which I thought brought out the concept clearly”



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## Voices

- “i can see beyond the negative myths that hinder inclusion, such as: not all kids can learn mathematics.”
- “if you have to ask them questions or engage them in participation you have to make the question simpler for them so that they are part of the larger class”.
- “actually we see such learners sometimes come out to learn especially those we think are special needs learners”.
- “there are different children in classroom and not all have the same needs, there are those isolated cases whom teachers are supposed to pay attention to”.

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## Challenges in the realisation of Inclusive education

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Challenge	Voices/ Reasons
Heavy workload	when you think of mixing both categories of learners sometimes you have to handle with care
Crowded classes	With schools like ours, we are a bit overcrowded and this sometimes causes problems
Large classes	
Lack of team work	
Low level of teacher motivation	In practice, we teach alone and you cannot effectively monitor students activity in such a big class"
Low level of student motivation	students lack concentration and motivation to learn in class because they have a lot on their minds, some fall asleep due to hunger, others are just being bored by the dull teacher
Little knowledge and skills on IE	in the first lesson the teacher did not deal with learners differences in class in a way that he was telling them to use a ruler to make the number line balanced yet many of the pupils did not have sets
Negative attitude (students, teachers, and community) to CSEN	yesterday we had a case here, a child collapsed, I wonder how a parent cannot care about it since even when we inform the parents about the condition of their children they don't care nor give us any information about such cases
Inadequate learning tools and supports	
Inability to differentiate instruction	
Practical barriers	
Fear not of children with special needs but for the children.	You are at times afraid of hurting a child for not meeting perceived needs, or at times it becomes hard to tell a parent that you don't know how to care for their child



## Conclusion

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- It is clear that teacher, student and classroom practices are important in order to effectively retool teachers for inclusive education
- There are a number of challenges in the realization of inclusive education
- Retooling teachers on Inclusive practices using school - based approach has far positive outcomes on ensuring inclusive classroom environments and eventually contributing towards a realization general Inclusive Education

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## Recommendations

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- Developing and institutionalizing school based in – service teacher education programs, activities, and research, with a particular focus on upgrading teacher competencies to be able to teach effectively in inclusive classes.
- Structuring ITE programs to provide appropriate practical experiences in inclusive classroom environments to trainees
- There needs to be a policy and clear guidelines about the implementation of inclusive education.
- The national curriculum and examinations system should conform to individualizing educational delivery
- A bigger study from analysis of a single case towards the comparative in-depth-analysis of two and more cases.

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