Empowering teachers of learners with severe to profound disabilities: Evaluation of short courses

4th Symposium on Teacher Education for Inclusive Teaching

July 2019

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Presentation overview

- What is the TEDI project?
- Background and rationale
- TEDI short courses
- Research methods
- Preliminary evaluation findings related to TEDI short courses
- Conclusion
What is the TEDI project?

**Teacher Empowerment for Disability Inclusion**

**PARTNERSHIP:**
UCT & Christoffel-Blinden Mission (CBM)

**FUNDING:**
Co-funded by European Union and CBM

**AIM:**
Empower teachers to provide quality education for learners with severe to profound sensory or intellectual impairments (SPSII)

**FOCUS:**
Training focused on inclusivity, diversity and addressing learners’ impairment-specific needs
Background and rationale

• Despite policy commitment, slow progress towards achieving quality education for learners with disabilities in South Africa: Very few training programmes preparing teachers to teach learners with disabilities
• Teacher education programmes need to be developed in order for quality education and support for learners with disabilities to be provided.
• These programmes need to be evaluated to determine their effectiveness - will contribute to a better understanding as to whether teachers are being equipped with necessary skills to meet educational needs of learners with disabilities.
Disability studies in education

Courses

Disability studies in education

Education and care of learners with severe to profound intellectual disability

Teaching learners with visual impairment (low vision and blind)

Navigating D/deaf and hard of hearing education: Empowering teachers

• Piloted 16-20 June 2018
• 26 participants
• Learning support teachers and advisors, principals, social workers, classroom teachers, and disability advocates
• Age range: 27-63 years
• Majority female (25/26)
• Three participants had mobility impairments
• Average length of employment 10.6 years
Education and care of learners with SPID

Courses

- Disability studies in education
- Education and care of learners with severe to profound intellectual disability
- Teaching learners with visual impairment (low vision and blind)
- Navigating D/deaf and hard of hearing education: Empowering teachers

- Piloted 23-27 June 2018
- 30 participants
- Carers, facilitators, programme implementers, care centre managers, and unit class educators
- Age range: 24-58 years
- All female
- Average length of employment 6 years
Teaching learners with visual impairment

Courses

- Disability studies in education
- Education and care of learners with severe to profound intellectual disability
- Teaching learners with visual impairment (low vision and blind)
- Navigating D/deaf and hard of hearing education: Empowering teachers

- Piloted 1-5 October 2018
- 26 participants
- Classroom teachers, learning support teachers and advisors, occupational therapist
- Age range: 29-60 years
- Majority female (24/26)
- Average length of employment 11.5 years
- Two participants had a visual impairment
Navigating D/deaf and hard of hearing education

Courses

Disability studies in education

Education and care of learners with severe to profound intellectual disability

Teaching learners with visual impairment (low vision and blind)

Navigating D/deaf and hard of hearing education: Empowering teachers

• Piloted 25-29 March 2019
• 32 participants
• Classroom and learning support teachers and advisors, a principal, Deaf teaching assistants, and education activists
• Age range: 22-65 years
• Majority female (26/32)
• Average length of employment 9.4 years
• Ten Deaf participants
Research methods

• Mixed methods research design
• Pre, post and 2 months post surveys completed by 114 participants across the four courses
• Eleven focus group discussions with 104 participants (course participants and facilitators)
• Qualitative data analysed using thematic analysis
• Quantitative data analysed using descriptive statistics and non-parametric statistical test
• Findings presented here are preliminary and exclude the navigating deaf and hard of hearing course – data still being analysed
Key preliminary findings

- Course ratings
- Learning outcomes
- Personal and professional growth
- Collaboration and support
- Advocacy
- Understanding of disability within an inclusive framework

* Data for navigating deaf and hard of hearing education course still being analysed
## Course ratings

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<td>70.1%</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
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<td>59.8%</td>
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<td>27.4%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
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<td>.9%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
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<td>1.9%</td>
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<td>6.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>.9%</td>
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Learning outcomes

In the **Disability Studies in Education** course, there was a significant difference following participation in the course with respect to certain learning outcomes:

- **Barriers related to communication** (for example, braille or sign language)
- **Teacher support and development**
- **Screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS)**

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<td>3</td>
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<td>-2.673</td>
<td>-1.941</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilcoxon p value</td>
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<td>.008</td>
<td>.052</td>
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(approaching significance)
Learning outcomes

• In the Education and Care of Learners with SPID course there was a significant difference following participation in the course with respect to all learning outcomes (z= - 2.942, p=.003)
• Participants had a better understanding of teaching and caring for learners with SPID following the course.
Personal and professional growth

The courses facilitated personal and professional growth amongst participants:

*I can now confidently apply in my work what I learnt from the course.*

*It changed a lot of my perceptions. It gave me a platform to evaluate myself as well. I found a better understanding of how and why some of the learners act the way they do*
Collaboration and support

Open and honest interactions at the courses allowed for support networks to form:

“I feel like a I am part of a network of people making a difference for inclusion”

“I think we learnt a lot from one another. So, we go to that course with a vision of how can we get assistance maybe from the facilitators or something like that. But the most learning process was the teamwork”
Advocacy

The courses encouraged participants to become advocates for inclusive education and for their learners:

At the conclusion of the course I felt really empowered and applied the theory received. Everything did not always work out as planned but I was a much more confident principal. My passion has simply increased 10-fold, and my belief strengthened in the application of inclusive education”

“I think the carer is the link, because the carer is the person who spends most of the time with the child. Sometimes the parents are working and you’re spending most of the day with this child when he’s awake. So you might be in a position to know more about the needs of the child, and you are in a position to maybe link to the clinic, to the police station, to the care centre manager, to the parents. You can be like an advocate for the child”
Understanding disability within an inclusive framework

The courses helped participants to see that all children have a right to be included in education:

“I’ve learnt more, especially on the path of inclusion... now I know how important it is to include [the children] in everything that I’m doing”

“The course reinforced my understanding of disability as a social justice issue as well as a human rights issue. Principals need to be made aware of this and need to have a mind shift in thinking about disability”
Participants learnt about strategies for inclusion that they can apply in their work:

“Now I learnt … let me give an example … you have to include the child in everything, all the activities. That child is, perhaps, in a buggy and now you are busy at a table with children. That child will feel left out. So, try to work out your activities so that he can also have a paper … or give him something that he can also participate. And as they say, encourage. If a child really cannot, try to motivate him”
Understanding disability within an inclusive framework

Hearing from people with disabilities seemed to facilitate a change in the participants in that they were able to better understand things from others’ perspectives:

*When you hear their story and how they hated to be excluded and the challenges they had to go through, and the bottom line of all of it, is you just want to be accepted and to be treated as normal. I think that, to me, was a total eye-opener*

*When I went back I looked at myself and children differently. If I can use an example: In the course I learned to ask and not to assume I know everything.*
Conclusions

• While short courses alone cannot fill the gap that exists in teacher education, they are a good place to start, and could address the needs of teachers in special, full-service and regular schools.
• Focus of short courses should be not only on upskilling teachers, but also empowering them.
• Empowerment:
  Process whereby teachers take charge of their own growth.
  Confidence in skills and knowledge and continual development.
• Teacher education for children with disabilities should focus on creating platforms where teachers can:
  Openly and honestly communicate with one another
  Form collaborative and supportive networks
  Hear from people with disabilities
• In this way teachers become empowered to drive their own professional development
• They support each other and grow together with an empathetic understanding of what is required of them to support and advocate for learners with severe to profound disabilities
Thank you!

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