

# Innovation in Inclusive Education Teacher Training Sharing our Experiences



## Briefing paper

The Norwegian Association of Disabled  
Enabling Education Network

May 2019

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# 1. Introduction

Over the last four years, Norwegian Association of Disabled (NAD) and its partners in Zambia<sup>1</sup> and Zanzibar<sup>2</sup> have been working with Enabling Education Network (EENET) to develop and test an approach to teacher training on inclusive education for use in low- and middle-income contexts.

The approach has various characteristics that differentiate it from other teacher training programmes supported or delivered by non-governmental organisations. Our approach has yielded many useful lessons and promising results, confirmed through an evaluation in Zanzibar in late 2018, with a Zambia evaluation forthcoming in later 2019.

This briefing paper explains our approach by answering some key questions that other organisations might be curious about. You can find out more about the approach and access the training manuals via EENET's website<sup>3</sup> and NAD's website,<sup>4</sup> or by contacting Elise Bjåstad in NAD<sup>5</sup> and Duncan Little in EENET.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of General Education (MoGE), Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) and University of Zambia (UNZA)

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT), State University of Zanzibar (SUZA) and Zanzibar Association of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (ZAPDD)

<sup>3</sup> [www.eenet.org.uk](http://www.eenet.org.uk) (web section due online July 2019)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nhf.no/arbeidet-vart/internasjonalt> (pages due later 2019)

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## **2. What are the main characteristics of our teacher training approach?**

The key characteristics of our approach are summarised as:

- We build a cadre of skilled and confident principal trainers who have the capacity both to roll out the training to teachers and trainee teachers and to make ongoing improvements to the training (see Section 4.1).
- We help to create contextually relevant training materials that are co-developed and therefore co-owned by key education stakeholders (see Section 4.2).
- We support the use of a teacher training approach that prioritises practice over theory, promotes learning-by-doing, and builds teachers' capacity to be innovative and critically reflective problem-solvers (see Section 4.3).
- We promote an approach to teacher capacity building that recognises the vital importance of collaboration and therefore embeds mechanisms to ensure teachers are not tackling inclusion challenges on their own (see Section 4.4).
- We ensure that in-service teacher training is closely linked to and/or influences sustained change in pre-service training (see Section 4.5).

These characteristics are explained in more detail below.

### **3. Why was a different approach needed?**

Our approach has sought to address several problems with existing training on inclusive education that have been highlighted over many years through project evaluations by diverse organisations and in academic literature.

The cascade approach to delivering inclusive education training to teachers has become the norm. Unfortunately, in its usual format cascade training has not routinely provided teachers with high-quality learning opportunities that ensure genuine and sustained changes in their attitudes and practices within schools.<sup>7</sup> A typical cascade approach is rapid (often consisting of short, one-off courses) and reaches a lot of trainees, but the trainees often learn only superficial theory and have little chance to observe, discuss or try out inclusive practices in a real-world situation. Such trainings succeed in raising teachers' awareness but fall short of changing their practice.

Those who deliver cascade training are called 'master trainers', but these trainers often have little opportunity to understand the subject from a practical perspective and end up struggling to stay one step ahead of their trainees.

The manuals and materials used in these training programmes are usually developed by an external expert. Even if she or he carries out scoping and consultation activities, the training course often remains 'owned' and directed by the consultant and client and not by the trainers who will use it.

NGO- and donor-supported inclusive education training is often only focused on in-service training for existing teachers and lacks the vital connection with pre-service training for the next generation of teachers.

These are just some of the main reasons why NAD and EENET wanted to work together to develop a different approach to training.

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<sup>7</sup> For brevity in this document we use the term 'school' to include all educational settings at all levels (e.g. pre-school/early education settings, tertiary institutions, non-formal education settings, and so on).

## 4. Explaining the key characteristics of our approach

### 4.1. How does our approach ensure that trainers are competent and confident with rolling out inclusive education training and with adapting the training to match evolving needs?

#### **We choose the right trainers**

The success of our approach depends a lot on having a group of committed and competent principal trainers<sup>8</sup> whose capacity to work independently and innovatively grows as the project progresses.

To start with, we **carefully select the people who will be trainers**, because we know that no training programme can succeed unless the right people are facilitating the training.

In a typical cascade approach it is common for one or a few teachers from a school or cluster of schools to be selected to receive training which they then must pass on to their colleagues. Those who become trainers may have no particular interest in being a trainer, or no previous training skills or experience. The task of carrying out training is often added onto their existing workloads as teachers.

By contrast, our approach aims to select and develop a cadre of inclusive education trainers who already have some **relevant interest, experience and skills**, and who already have some **responsibility for training, advising or managing teachers**. For instance, principal trainers might be head teachers, advisers from local teacher resource centres, district education officers, staff from local teacher training colleges, and so on. It is important that the principal trainers can **embed inclusive education training responsibilities into their job descriptions and workplans**.

#### **We give trainers plenty of support**

Being a trainer is not easy. Other training approaches often under-estimate how difficult it is to be a good trainer. They make the mistake of thinking you

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<sup>8</sup> Note: we call them principal trainers rather than master trainers as the former is more gender-responsive.

can give someone a manual and a short training workshop and this will magically turn them into a trainer. It won't! Reading a document and participating in a workshop as a trainee is quite a simple task. It is then much more challenging to understand and internalise all of the messages and methods used in the workshop and find the confidence to teach other people the same messages using similar or better methods.

Our approach therefore invests much more time and energy into the trainers. They **attend workshops** at which they learn about the subjects they will be training teachers on and experience the learner-centred pedagogy that is essential in the training and in an inclusive classroom. There is one workshop for each training module/subject and the workshops for up to 11 modules<sup>9</sup> are spread out over at least 2 years. This ensures that the **trainers are not bombarded with too much new information all at once** but have time to think, internalise and become comfortable with the training content and pedagogy, which raises the quality of the training they subsequently deliver to teachers.

Trainers also have **opportunities to critically review and adapt the training messages and methods** to better suit their local context and their own training styles. During the workshops, they have many **opportunities to practise facilitating learner-centred activities**, instead of passively watching the 'expert' facilitating everything.

When trainers start delivering the training to teachers, the support continues. They are **encouraged to work together**, perhaps training in pairs or at least meeting up to share their experiences and swap ideas for how to change/improve parts of the training. They are required to document their trainings, for instance in short reports or diaries, or using photography and video, and so on. When the trainers meet to learn about the next module, they first spend a day **sharing experiences and reflecting on the workshops they have held with teachers** using the previous module. They can get advice from their fellow trainers and the external facilitator.

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<sup>9</sup> The approach has developed/is developing 11 modules in Zambia and Zanzibar so far. Trainers have ideas for other topics they would like to add.

## **4.2. How does our approach develop contextually relevant and locally owned training courses?**

The process starts with a set of outline training materials provided by the external training-of-trainers facilitator. These are based on inclusive education training messages and activities that have been tested and improved over many years in different contexts. The materials form the basis of the training for trainers, but it is expected that the trainers will work on adapting the materials. In Zambia and Zanzibar the trainers have also made important decisions about which topics should be added to the collection of modules, and in which order the modules should be delivered.

### **How are changes made to the training modules?**

There are various ways in which the trainers actively contribute to localising and improving the materials. These include:

- During their initial training-of-trainers workshop, trainers are encouraged to actively engage with the training messages and methods. At this point they might highlight information that does not make sense to them, activities that they think will not work in their cultural context, or facts and figures that could be inserted to make an activity more relevant to their context. These are all recorded by the training-of-trainers facilitator and used when producing a revision of the module.
- During the initial training-of-trainers workshop the trainers have opportunities to practise facilitating most of the activities, and in doing so they may suggest changes that would make instructions simpler or make materials more locally relevant, or even suggest adding/removing activities. Again the facilitator records these suggestions.
- When the trainers start to deliver training to teachers, they are expected not simply to follow the manual word-for-word. They are encouraged to adapt activities, insert their own case stories, invent new games and activities, and so on. They are asked to keep a record of the adaptations they make and then share these at the next training-of-trainers workshop so that new ideas can feed into revisions of the modules and inspire their colleagues to be creative.
- Trainers also need to keep a record of teachers' reactions and feedback during/after the trainings, and use this feedback to suggest improvements to the messages and methods used in the training modules.

Ideally other stakeholders with interests and expertise in inclusion-related issues also contribute to the development of the training modules. This might



include representatives from disabled people's organisations and organisations representing other marginalised groups. This is an aspect of the approach that was not sufficiently explored in Zambia and Zanzibar but which will be given greater attention in any future programmes we implement.

### **What changes are made?**

Trainers are encouraged to be actively involved in improving or revising the following aspects of the training modules:

- clarity and relevance of messages;
- nature of activities and games;
- timing of activities;
- localising facts and figures;
- creating locally relevant case studies;
- taking photos that can be used in the modules or in training activities.

### **4.3. How does our approach enable teachers to develop practical inclusion skills?**

Inclusive teachers are problem-solvers. They know that no training course or manual can ever give them all the answers to all the inclusion problems they will encounter during their career. They need to be able to find solutions themselves rather than waiting for someone else to tell them what to do. Many other training approaches convey a great deal of inclusive education theory but fail to help teachers work out how to convert theory into practice – how to become a problem-solver.

Our training approach therefore focuses first on helping trainers to understand and experience the vital importance of problem-solving within inclusive education, and then to pass on this ethos to the teachers they train.

Trainers experience the value of being reflective problem-solvers because they are:

- actively involved in critiquing and improving the training modules;
- documenting the training sessions they run with teachers and sharing experiences and ideas with other trainers;
- carrying out action research activities that help them experiment with and reflect on new training ideas in between the training-of-trainers workshops.

Our training approach helps teachers become innovative and confident problem-solvers because:

- All modules contain **participatory, learner-centred activities** that require teachers to reflect on their own lives and experiences and work through problems individually, in pairs and in groups. They are never just told the answers to questions but – like an active learner in school – must work out the answers themselves, with support from the trainer.
- In between every module there is an **action research task**. Teachers are asked to go back to their school and carry out a small investigation into a problem they have identified and/or experiment with a new way of working. They document and share the investigation/experiment with colleagues at the next training workshop.
- The modules take an **accumulative approach to learning**, starting with basic inclusive education foundations and then moving on to more complex and specific topics. This helps teachers to gradually build their confidence with learning about and implementing inclusive practice and solving inclusion problems, without placing overwhelming and confusing expectations on them after just one workshop.
- The training **does not expect teachers to learn everything and solve every problem themselves**. For instance, there are modules that support teachers to work collaboratively to develop school inclusion teams and inclusive education co-ordinators. In addition, all the modules encourage action research through which teachers work with colleagues, parents, learners and the community to investigate and address inclusion challenges.

The training also follows the motto “**the medium is the message**”. That means, we use inclusive, learner-centred pedagogy in the training workshops, to demonstrate the kind of pedagogy that needs to be happening with learners in an inclusive classroom. Too many other training approaches use teacher-centred pedagogy (e.g. presentations) to tell participants about inclusion – a total contradiction.

#### **4.4. How does our approach promote collaboration in inclusive education?**

The whole training approach involves aspects of collaboration.

The development and adaptation of the modules is collaborative because trainers, the external training-of-trainers facilitator and the implementing organisation/partners work together on testing and improving training messages and activities.

The training-of-trainers process is collaborative because trainers are encouraged and supported to work in pairs and teams, not in isolation, so that they can provide mutual support and learn from each other's experiences and ideas.

The training modules, as mentioned above, help teachers to develop collaborative ways of working in their schools, by creating multi-stakeholder school inclusion teams and inclusive education co-ordinators, and by encouraging teachers to carry out action research with colleagues and stakeholders in the school community.

Development of a collaborative culture in school is one of the most important ingredients for inclusive education. The more people can work together, the greater the chance they will identify and solve more inclusion challenges, using contextually relevant, innovative and low/no-cost solutions.

#### **4.5. How does our approach ensure that in-service teacher training is closely linked to and/or influences sustained change in pre-service training?**

There is limited value in supporting the training of existing teachers on inclusive education if the newly qualified colleagues who join them from college have no knowledge or understanding of inclusion.

For NGOs that support inclusive education, running a fairly small-scale in-service training programme with a fixed number of schools is understandably more viable than trying to bring about national/government-level change to the curriculum of pre-service teacher training. Nevertheless, there are ways in which our approach can contribute to changes in pre-service training.

Perhaps the most achievable contribution comes through the **selection of principal trainers** – ensuring that the group includes at least some trainers/tutors from teacher training colleges or universities. This brings a two-way benefit:

- The trainers bring to our programme a foundation of teacher training experience and an understanding of the local and national training and teaching context which can inform adaptations to the modules.
- The trainers hopefully take inclusive education messages and active participatory pedagogy ideas from our programme back to their institutions for discussion with colleagues, to trial with their trainee teachers, and even for integration into their own courses.

In Zambia and Zanzibar we have also aimed for a more sustained and strategic connection with pre-service institutions. As well as encouraging principal trainers to have some influence in their institutions, we have reached out directly to senior personnel in colleges/universities and relevant ministry staff. We have explained the training programme, invited them to engage in the process, kept them informed of progress, and had various discussions about how the training modules could be integrated into, or help inform revisions to, the core pre-service training curricula. There is promising progress in both countries.

Reform of pre-service training curricula is never going to be a quick or easy process and is unlikely to be something we, as NGOs, can bring about directly. But every time we use the training approach, we should look for opportunities to connect with and open discussions with pre-service training institutions and the ministry personnel who oversee training, so that we can at least contribute to the reform process.

## **5. Some other frequently asked questions about our training approach**

### **5.1. Does it take longer than other teacher training approaches?**

Yes, but good quality work usually does take a bit longer.

The problem with too many inclusive education training programmes is that they aim to reach large numbers of teachers in a very short time. The only way to achieve this is by cutting corners – providing rapid, superficial, theory-dominated, trainer-led workshops through which a lot of information can be conveyed to a lot of people, quickly. Unfortunately, that information does not ‘stick’. Teachers do not internalise it, they do not get a chance to work out how to convert theoretical ideas into practical action, and sadly they often end up frustrated and sometimes less supportive of inclusion than before the training.

Our approach takes longer because it prioritises:

- development of high-quality trainers who can continue delivering and improving inclusive education training beyond the life of the direct NGO support;
- creation of training materials that are co-developed and owned by local trainers;
- treatment of teachers as adult learners (who have the same diversity of learning needs and speeds as any other learners) rather than programmable machines;
- respect for teachers’ need to learn new ideas and practices in a gradual, accumulative and sensitive way rather than through an overwhelming bombardment of expectations.

## 5.2. How long does it take?

In Zambia and Zanzibar we have been working for 4 years to develop and test 11 modules. However, it is important to recognise that this was a pilot and involved a lot of learning and experimentation.

The time needed to contextualise up to 11 modules, train trainers and work through an initial phase of rolling out training to teachers will depend on local variables such as:

- How much time each year do trainers have available to attend training-of-trainers workshops?
- How much time can trainers allocate or will their managers allow them to allocate, within their annual workplan, for conducting inclusive education teacher training?
- How many weeks can teachers attend inclusive education training workshops, bearing in mind that they will probably be expected to attend in-service trainings on other topics as well during the year?
- What are the regulations regarding in-service training (e.g. does it have to be during school holidays so as not to disrupt teachers' work, and if so, what is an acceptable amount of holiday that teachers can be asked to give up in order to attend training)?

In Zambia and Zanzibar, each module was developed and rolled out one-at-a-time, whereas in subsequent programmes it might be feasible to train trainers and teachers on two modules at a time.

In an ideal situation, for in-service training we might hope to roll out 11 modules in 2 years. That would require principal trainers to learn about and help to adapt 5 or 6 modules per year. They would need to attend 2 or 3 training-of-trainers workshops each year and schedule their first batch of school-based teacher training sessions after each of the training-of-trainers workshops.

Realistically, a 2-year timeframe might be too ambitious for some contexts, especially if the amount of time available to trainers and/or teachers is restricted. Therefore, there might need to be: a) a longer timeframe, or b) a compromise on how many modules are rolled out.

When delivering the modules in pre-service institutions to trainee teachers, the modules could be delivered in around 5 weeks.

### **5.3. Does it cost more than other teacher training approaches?**

Not necessarily. The main difference is likely to be in the reach and sustainability.

Our approach focuses on quality and sustainability of learning, rather than quantity and speed. While other training programmes might aim to use their budget to train thousands of teachers in hundreds of schools, our approach will reach far fewer schools.

But, when our direct involvement ends, we should leave behind a cadre of committed and high-quality principal trainers who have embedded inclusive education training into their regular responsibilities.

Our approach supports teachers and trainee teachers to develop life-long inclusion problem-solving skills instead of giving them theoretical information that often just “goes in one ear and out the other”. Problem-solving, critically reflective teachers are more likely to play an active role in whole-school improvement and in supporting/motivating colleagues to be more inclusive.

Therefore, while the immediate training statistics may look less impressive, the potential for longer-term and sustained change in schools is greater.

### **5.4. Do we have to pay the trainers?**

The ideal implementation of the approach is for principal trainers to be selected from people who are already working in jobs that support, train and/or manage teachers. They therefore already have salaries (probably paid by the government) and already have a mandate to spend time working with teachers, or their role can feasibly be adjusted to include such a mandate. We therefore do not pay a wage or consultancy fee to the principal trainers.

In Zambia and Zanzibar we have covered operational costs during the pilot period, such as travel and subsistence costs for trainers and teachers and the cost of venues and workshop materials. In the long term these relatively small costs need to be sustained by relevant government departments, or perhaps by local teacher training institutions.

In Zambia and Zanzibar an external facilitator has been paid on a consultancy basis. The role has involved:

- drafting initial modules and workshop materials;
- facilitating training-of-trainers workshops and making module revisions using trainers' inputs;
- providing ongoing support to principal trainers when they start rolling out training to teachers;
- liaising with teacher training institutions and government ministries regarding opportunities to integrate the in-service training modules with pre-service training.

## **5.5. Do we have to adapt the modules to our own country context?**

The core content and pedagogy of the modules has been developed through almost 20 years of experience in multiple countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. As a core resource they should 'work' in most contexts.

However, the process of adapting and contextualising the modules brings **important benefits that should not be under-estimated:**

- The more relevant the training messages, case studies and activities are, the greater the chance that teachers will accept and internalise them. While we should all be open to the idea of learning from other countries, the reality is that we often feel resistance towards learning lessons that seem to be imposed on us from somewhere else. It is vital that teachers never feel "inclusive education won't work in our context", and thus the training materials need to closely reflect their context to show them that inclusive education is completely possible in their school community.
- Adapting the training materials to the local context is not just about the end product, but also about the process. We want principal trainers to really understand, believe in and be able to enthusiastically use the materials when they are training teachers. Trainers are much more likely to internalise the messages and pedagogy and enthuse about the training if they have played a role in designing it.



## **5.6. How many trainers and teachers are reached?**

As with any project, the reach depends on time and budget. However, as mentioned above, our approach focuses more on quality than quantity so the intention is never to reach huge numbers of trainers, schools and teachers, but rather to ensure that the trainers who are trained and the schools and teachers who are reached actually acquire sustainable commitment to and understanding of inclusive education.

During the pilot in Zambia and Zanzibar there were 35 and 54 principal trainers trained who then trained teachers in 6 and 8 schools respectively. Within the schools, the approach is to train all teachers (a whole-school approach). Thus in total 232 and 170 teachers have been trained in service in Zambia and Zanzibar respectively.

Beyond the pilot it is anticipated that higher numbers of principal trainers could be trained, enabling more schools and teachers to be reached. However, the focus should remain on finding relevant and suitable people to become principal trainers and not on training unsuitable people just to increase the numbers quickly.

## **5.7. What topics are covered by the modules?**

Seven modules have been fully developed and trialled so far in Zambia and Zanzibar:

- Introduction to inclusive education;
- School inclusion teams;
- Identifying out-of-school children;
- Screening and identification of learning needs;
- Creating individual education plans;
- Exploring the role of a school inclusive education co-ordinator;
- Promoting active learning in the classroom.

A further 4 modules are being developed and tested in 2019:

- Developing learner participation;
- Including learners in transition;

- Creating teaching and learning resources from locally available materials;
- Including learners with intellectual impairments.

In addition, a guidance booklet containing practical ways to support learners with specific impairments accompanies the modules. This booklet<sup>10</sup> is primarily to support trainers with providing timely advice and ideas when needed, rather than being a resource that teachers are expected to digest and remember in full.

## **5.8. What training is received by other actors, beyond principal trainers and teachers?**

Integral to the teacher training process is the role of ‘observers’. These are relevant stakeholders in the education system (e.g. school inspectors, coordinators of teacher resource centres, district education office staff).

The observers receive introductory training on inclusive education and participate in the action research training received by principal trainers. The observers also work with the external facilitator to develop observation checklists and practise their observation techniques. In the context of this teacher training approach, their role is understood as helping to improve teacher training by offering a critically constructive perspective to add to the trainers’/teachers’ own reflections and suggestions for improvements. The observers do not act as inspectors who are grading and assessing teachers.

Observers have the following responsibilities within the training approach:

- Visit schools to observe what is happening in classes and around the school. They do this before and after trainings. The frequency of visits may depend on their available time and funds for travel costs, but ideally they will visit participating schools at least once a year.
- Conduct meetings/interviews with teachers, head teachers, etc, to identify how the training has been received and used and to collect ideas for improvements and additions for the training.
- Document and feed back to the external facilitator to improve/add to the training materials.
- Act as ‘critical friends’ providing constructive feedback to the trainers.

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<sup>10</sup> Based on a resource written by EENET for Leonard Cheshire.

In Zambia, personnel involved in the teacher training approach have presented and demonstrated some of the training at the National Inclusive Education Symposium, enabling participants from MoGE and MoHE as well as other NGO staff and teachers to experience and learn from sessions from the training.

## **5.9. Screening, identification and assessment are often seen as high priority topics in teacher training on inclusive education. How does our approach address this?**

Screening, identification and assessment are covered in the training programme. In Zambia and Zanzibar, Module 4 specifically addresses the topic, although other modules also touch on it.

### **Why wait until module 4?**

One of the problems with other training courses that indicate ‘screening, identification and assessment’ as a priority topic is that they assume priority topics should automatically come first. By contrast, we feel that if a topic is high priority then it is vital we support teachers to understand it properly – which may mean it takes longer and the topic is not ‘done and dusted’ at the start of the course.

Think about child learners. In a certain context it might be a high priority that children learn to read and write in the national language because that is the only way they will compete as adults in the labour market. But we know that we cannot rush straight in and expect them to learn and excel in the national language at the age of four, if they have only ever heard and spoken their mother tongue. There are essential cognitive and communication foundations that need to be laid in the mother tongue, usually for many years, before learning of and in a second language can happen effectively.

Teachers have similar needs. There are some foundational pedagogy and management skills that need to be laid before a teacher can confidently identify and assess learners’ complex and sometimes specialist needs. Existing pre-service and in-service training does not necessarily put these foundations in place. Inclusive education training programmes that jump straight in and expect teachers to start identifying learners’ needs and impairments/ disabilities after just a few days of training often cause additional difficulties. The teachers feel overwhelmed, they may be confused, they may resist this frightening new expectation, and they may even make some worrying mistakes through no fault of their own.

Have you heard the saying “more haste, less speed”? It means the more you rush, the more chance you are going to make a mistake or trip up, which will ultimately slow you down more than if you just went at a steady, gradual pace from the start. Our training approach aims to take teachers at a steady pace through accumulative layers of learning in a way that – hopefully – avoids them rushing to learn everything quickly and tripping up along the way.

## **How do our modules build accumulative layers of learning for teachers?**

Given that many teachers have a zero or even a negative starting point regarding experience or attitudes towards inclusion, the introductory module helps to get them onto or just over the starting line. There is a limited amount of understanding and change that can emerge from a first short workshop, and we need to have realistic expectations from Module 1. If facilitated well, it inspires teachers’ interest and enthusiasm to get stuck into the increasingly more specific modules that follow.

One of the biggest challenges for teachers when a new expectation of inclusion is presented to them is fear (fear of the unknown, fear of making a mistake, fear of having to learn and remember new things at a mature age, etc). And one of the best ways to overcome fear is to share the frightening experience and have someone else’s hand to hold. That is why Module 2 is about school inclusion teams. Early in the training course we encourage teachers to understand the importance of collaboration, so that they are not dealing with new challenges on their own. Through having a school inclusion team in place, they can share the load and also draw on other people’s expertise. Every school community has a lot of expertise and ideas that often remain hidden, and we want teachers to explore opportunities for revealing expertise and support at the very start of their inclusion journey.

In Module 3 teachers learn about out-of-school children and how to identify them and where they live. This is an important stepping-stone module. It helps teachers to dig more deeply into the idea of barriers to inclusion and all the reasons why children might be excluded from school. There is also a strong focus on action research in this module, encouraging teachers to become actively involved in investigating their school community and trying out solutions to problems.

By Module 4 teachers should have some fairly strong foundations and feel more confident to tackle more challenging identification and assessment of

learning needs. However, this module still does not have any expectation that teachers will become medical and disability experts. It simply expects that they will work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders, some of whom may have medical, disability or rehabilitation expertise. The module helps teachers to look for, understand and know how to respond to learners' functional strengths and weaknesses, and where to go for more specialist advice and help.

From this point onwards the module topics become more specific. However, while disability-related information and activities are woven throughout the training (and a guidance booklet on supporting learners with specific impairments is also part of the trainers' package), modules on specific impairments do not emerge until later in the programme. We firmly believe, based on experience, that training programmes which start by expecting teachers to learn and act on very specific disability content are less effective than those that build foundations of core inclusion skills and confidence and then move on to disability-specific content and expectations.

Inclusive education training programmes that rush to address complex disability content trip the teachers up in their haste, and ultimately make less progress. Such programmes may also give the impression that inclusive education only refers to the inclusion of learners with disabilities. This does not help teachers to understand the foundational and holistic changes needed to ensure inclusion of every learner, from any group or background.

### **5.10. Is it risky to relinquish control and let trainers make changes to the training modules?**

That depends on how you view education and learning. Is education about conveying one perfect answer to your student, and ensuring the student rehearses, remembers and repeats the correct answer at exam time? Or is education about supporting students to think for themselves, to remember some basic concepts and facts that enable them to work out for themselves the answers to lots of un-rehearsed questions in future? Thus, learning by doing. Hopefully you believe it is the latter.

If we believe active learning, problem-solving and experimentation are key characteristics of good quality education/pedagogy, then these characteristics are also needed when we develop and reform education. We want teachers who are able to facilitate active learning in their classes. To get that we need

trainers who are able to train teachers to be active learners and to use active learning throughout their teaching. To get that we need trainers who believe in active learning and have the capacity to think for themselves and motivate teachers to do the same. That is one reason why we believe it is so important for trainers to play an active role in developing and adapting the training modules. Engaging trainers in co-development of training is not risky but an essential part of the process of education reform.

In fact, we argue that it is risky NOT to let trainers have some control over the training. They have contextual knowledge; they know the teachers, the trainee teachers, the communities and the schools. Things will constantly change at local, national and global levels and teacher training needs to keep up with a fast-moving world. It will not always be possible for external 'experts' to keep revising training courses, and formal changes approved at or distributed from central government take time. A good trainer therefore needs to be able to inject ongoing small updates and improvements to their work. They can do this more effectively if they have a deep understanding of and affinity with the training content. That is why our approach does not just train trainers but supports them to co-develop the training.

If you have any questions that have not been answered by this briefing paper, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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