Student Assessment in an Inclusive Classroom

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Who are you …?

- Were you once a child …?
- Were you once a classroom teacher? (maybe you still are?)

Remember what that felt like, as you think about assessment and how it relates to teaching and learning ☺

Aims

- To clarify understandings of inclusive education
- To set out an overview of an inclusive setting which supports inclusive assessment
- To explore perspectives on student assessment in inclusive settings
- And
- To consider how The Philippines can ensure that all children are successfully included in regular classrooms

What is Inclusive Education?

- Take a minute to reflect either on your own or with a colleague what you understand by this term.
- How does it relate to your experience of education in The Philippines?

Confusions

- In some countries, inclusive education is thought of as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings (Mittler, 2000). Internationally, however, it is increasingly seen more broadly as a reform that responds to diversity amongst all learners (UNESCO, 2001)

Where does learning and assessment take place?

Inclusive Assessment means:

- Assessment in mainstream settings where policy and practice are designed to promote the learning of all pupils as far as possible.
- The overall goal of inclusive assessment is that all assessment policies and procedures should support and enhance the successful inclusion and participation of all pupils vulnerable to exclusion, including those with disabilities or from disadvantaged groups.

Salamanca Statement 1994

- Every child has a fundamental right to education and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain acceptable levels of learning.
- Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs.
- Educational systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take account of the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs.

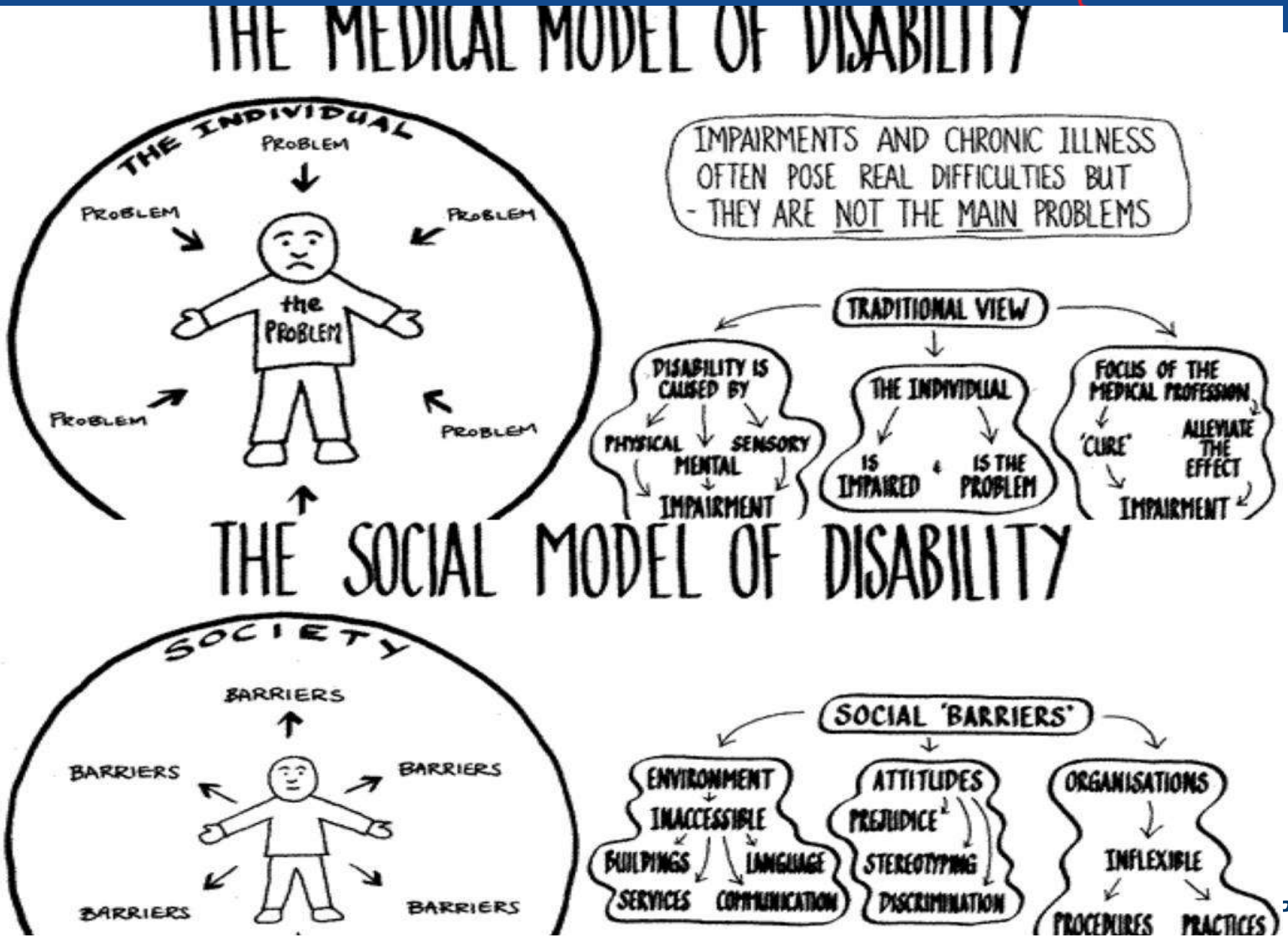
Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities 2006

- Recognizes the rights of persons with disabilities to quality and equitable education
- Mainstream inclusive settings are a basic human right and obliged by the UNCRPD
  - Article 24: states need to ensure all children have access to mainstream education. Children with disabilities cannot be segregated

Including all children in schools: where do the problems lie?

- Where do you think the challenges are?

Take a minute to think about this and perhaps discuss this with a colleague.


THE MEDICAL MODEL OF DISABILITY
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IMPAIRMENTS AND CHRONIC ILLNESS OFTEN POSE REAL DIFFICULTIES BUT - THEY ARE NOT THE MAIN PROBLEMS
TRADITIONAL VIEW
DISABILITY IS CAUSED BY
PHYSICAL
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THE INDIVIDUAL
IS IMPAIRED
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FOCUS OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION
'CURE'
ALLEVIATE THE EFFECT
IMPAIRMENT
THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY
SOCIETY
BARRIERS
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SOCIAL 'BARRIERS'
ENVIRONMENT
INACCESSIBLE
BUILDINGS
SERVICES
LANGUAGE
COMMUNICATION
ATTITUDES
PREJUDICE
STEREOTYPING
DISCRIMINATION
ORGANISATIONS
INFLEXIBLE
PROCEDURES
PRACTICES

Do teachers require special knowledge, special skills?

Special pedagogy is an approach:
'…which assumes that when a child's time at school appears to be going wrong special measures are needed: special assessment, special pedagogy in short – special education….

Children who are slower to learn – for whatever reason – need the same in order to learn as any other child. They need the kind of things which… our humanity tells us they need: interest, confidence, freedom from worry, a warm and patient teacher.

The legacy that one hundred years of special education has given to teachers is the idea that this isn't enough; that you need all sorts of special procedures and qualifications to help you understand them, and all sorts of special techniques before you can make any sort of job of helping them' (Thomas and Loxley,2001, p26)

Learning Without Limits
(Hart et al. 2007, 499)

- The way in which teachers conceptualise student ability can limit students' capacity to achieve
- Current approaches to education are often based on 'determinist beliefs about ability'. They assume that current achievement of students will persist in future tests and examinations. This belief in turn supposes that current patterns of achievement reflect stable, underlying differences in academic potential. (2007, p499)
- Not all children in a grade class will learn at the same rate or achieve goals at the same time

How old were you when you stopped learning?

Holistic Development

- There is no limit to a child's potential learning
- We all keep on learning throughout our lives, at different rates and in response to different stimuli
- Approaches to Teaching and Learning must recognise this and develop systemic responses to diverse student populations.

Universal Quality Design

Provides all students an equal opportunity to learn in inclusive environments through flexible curricular approaches.

UDL has three main approaches

- Multiple Means of Representation (present information and content in different ways).
- Multiple Means of Action and Expression (differentiate the ways that students can express what they know).
- Multiple Means of Engagement (stimulate interest and motivation for learning).

Allows all children to engage in a variety of activities which should capture their learning needs, learning styles and personal preferences.

Learning and Environment

- Engaging classrooms where learners are expected to understand and demonstrate knowledge on what they have learned, but are provided a variety of pathways to do so.
- Teachers expect greater engagement from students, a better understanding of students' capacities, and therefore a greater degree of success and confidence from their students.

Content

- Content remains constant but the delivery and student engagement around content vary by classroom and student learning need.
- To this end, inclusive classrooms provide high-level content (such as those found in national standards or curricula), but create multiple pathways by which students can understand and show mastery of content.
- Spiral curriculums: where learning is revisited at different points during the year and over the course the curriculum itself.

Classroom Processes

- All processes – including how content is represented, how knowledge can be expressed, and how children engage in class – are designed with accessibility in mind.
- Teachers need to understand their students' learning needs, philosophically commit to access of content for all students, and creatively design a multitude of ways for students to engage with content.

Inclusive Assessment is …

- Continuous and formative (all aspects of formative assessment will be present in an inclusive setting)
- Recognizes the holistic development of the whole child
- Acknowledges that learning is continuous and cannot be summarised in one form of assessment administered at the convenience of the education system.

Promoting learning and guiding teaching

- Children need to have the opportunity to show what they have learned in different ways, according to their different pathways of learning.
- Continuous assessment provides feedback for teachers, who can at any moment adjust their lessons to ensure that all children understand what is going on, and for children, who learn how they can make progress.
- It helps to communicate the child's ongoing development to parents on a regular basis, so they can be involved in the learning process of their children throughout the school year. Within this approach, assessment is serving the educational process by promoting learning and guiding teaching. It is assessment 'for' and 'of' learning.27

Inclusive Assessment

- Observations and keeping observational records, factual non-judgemental notes of children's activities.
- Asking open-ended questions during activities to assess the children's ability to express themselves verbally and to know why children behave in a certain way.
- Screening tests to find out what the children already know and can do, to provide meaningful learning opportunities.

- Portfolios for assessment. A portfolio includes samples of the child's work (written samples – essays, stories and reports; and illustrations – pictures, maps, diagrams and mathematics worksheets, etc.) Also, children's non-curricular activities can be recorded, such as taking responsibility in a classroom committee. The portfolios show what the child has learned and how the child learned it.
- It focuses on achievements rather than on failures. A child can be included in the assessment through portfolios, for example, by deciding what to record in the portfolio. The portfolio can be used to assess the progress of the child over a certain period (instead of comparing the results of children with each other). The portfolio serves as a basis for discussion with the children and their parents about their learning progress.

- Learning stories: this form of narrative assessment includes written documentation and pictures of the child's learning. It does not focus on mistakes or weaknesses. It recognizes that learning takes place through a unique interaction of the child with the world. Parents and children are usually involved in documenting the child's learning.
- Quizzes, checklists, classroom tests, learning journals and conferences, etc.
- Peer assessments / Group assessments

Universal Testing

- Universally designed tests are clear about what the construct is, but allow flexibility for students.
- They also try to minimize problems which may impact children with disabilities by creating designs that are maximally accessible.
- This includes questions that minimize bias based on experiences of certain groups, instructions that are clear and easy to understand, questions that are at or below the reading level of all students, and diagrams that are clear and easy to read.

Universal Design for Assessment

- The most important consideration in assessment is that the **construct** – what is supposed to be tested – is not changed.
- If the construct is clearly defined it is possible to arrange assessments to be accessible for children with disabilities. The philosophy of 'multiple means' is enacted in four types of **accommodations**

Accommodations in presentation

- Under these conditions children can access assessments by being allowed:
  - Oral reading of the assessment (either by recorded voice or adult reader).
  - Large print assessments.
  - Magnification devices (i.e., magnifying glasses).
  - Sign language administration for test questions.
  - Braille tests.
  - Tactile graphics (3-D diagrams so children with disabilities can feel them).
  - Manipulative objects (shape blocks, real coins, abacus).
  - Audio amplification to aid in listening (hearing aids of speakers).
  - Computerized screen readers of text.

Accommodations in response

- Using a computer or utilizing a scribe to help with answering of questions.
- Using assistive technology (point to signs, computers, etc.) to support answering of questions.
- Using a Braille writer.
- Circling answers directly in the text booklet rather than a separate book.
- Using organizational devices (calculators, organizers, spell checkers, dictionaries) as long as they do not interfere with the construct.

Accommodations in setting

- Administration of the test in a separate place to minimize distraction.
- Testing in a small group.
- Adjusting lighting in a room (more or less light for children who need it).
- Providing noise buffers (headphones, ear plugs, ear phones).

Accommodations in timing

- Extended time to complete a test.
- Multiple or frequent breaks.
- Change the order of a test (e.g., provide easier subjects first to decrease anxiety).
- Testing over multiple days rather than one day.

Formative assessments for inclusive settings are used to help teachers answer these questions about ALL students:

- What background knowledge and prior experiences do the learners each bring with them to this area of study?
- What skills have they each developed that are relevant to this area of study?
- What motivations and interests do students have that can be woven into this area of study?
- What is each learners conceptual understanding related to this area of study?
- As classroom learning proceeds through an area of study, what specifically are students learning and what are they not learning that will need to be revisited?

Assessment supports teaching and learning and removes barriers to participation and achievement

Further reading …

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Much of the material in this presentaton is sourced from the resources below:

http://www.inclusive-education.org/basic-page/inclusive-education-booklets-and-webinars