

MOOC pursues dignity for disabled learners



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The course explores the support that teachers require in order to meet the needs of children with visual, hearing or intellectual disabilities.

Based on the premise that inclusive education is only possible if teachers are supported and empowered to make the curriculum accessible to all learners, a University of Cape Town (UCT) Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) offers insight into how education systems can support and promote equity, equal access and dignity for learners with disabilities.

Called Disability Inclusion in Education: Building Systems of Support, the course explores the support that teachers need in order to be able to meet the needs of children with severe to profound hearing, visual or intellectual disabilities.

This dovetails with United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal 4, which commits the global community to achieving inclusive and equitable education for all in a world where millions of children are currently unable to fully participate in schooling, but especially if they live with disabilities.

The MOOC is a product of the extensive research being conducted in the university's Teacher Empowerment for Disability Inclusion (TEDI) project, which aims to empower teachers to provide quality education for disabled learners. TEDI resides within the Department of Health and Rehabilitation's Disability Studies Division, in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

"The MOOC draws on our research within the TEDI project, placing the teacher at the centre of this change process, and looks at what support teachers need, and how they can be supported through education systems," said TEDI principal investigator Associate Professor Judith McKenzie, who also heads the Disability Studies Division.

Other than providing insight into how education systems can support teachers to promote equity, equal access and dignity for learners with disabilities, the MOOC also examines the specific potential needs of these children so that educators can ensure they get the same learning experience and consequent opportunities in life as their non-disabled counterparts.

The course, said McKenzie, runs for five weeks online on the Coursera platform, and is aimed at teachers, principals, policy developers, education officials and others concerned with expanding access to education and the full curriculum for learners with disabilities.

The three-year TEDI project is a partnership between UCT and the Christoffel-Blinden Mission (CBM), co-funded by CBM and the European Union. Other MOOCs have since been produced with the assistance of UCT's Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching.

The self-directed online courses are available to anyone with a computer or mobile device, an internet connection, and access to data to view or download the video lectures. The courses are not for university credit, so assessments are voluntary and participants who complete them can choose to pay for a verified certificate as proof of their achievement. Participants can also apply for financial aid if they cannot afford the certificate fee.

- Find out more about the Disability Inclusion in Education MOOC at: <https://www.coursera.org/learn/disability-inclusion-education>

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The TEDI project has developed a number of other online courses and also offers face-to-face short courses for educators, parents and caregivers supporting children with hearing, visual or intellectual disabilities. For more information, see the TEDI webpage: <http://www.dhrs.uct.ac.za/dhrs/divisions/disability/tedi>

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