

Inclusive teaching and learning

This handout will cover:

- Features of inclusive teaching and learning
- Differentiation
- Teaching and learning environments
- Motivation
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Features of inclusive teaching and learning

Inclusive learning is about ensuring all your learners have the opportunity to be involved and included in the learning process. It's also about treating all learners equally and fairly, without directly or indirectly excluding anyone. Inclusion is about attitudes as well as behaviour, as learners can be affected by the words or actions of others. You are not teaching your subject to a group of learners who are all the same, but to a group of individuals with different experiences, abilities and needs which should be recognised and respected. Agreeing individual learning plans (ILPs) and/or action plans can help formalise this.

Ways to include your learners during a session can be by asking individual questions, taking time to give help and support, using eye contact, using names and encouraging paired and group activities etc. Inclusion involves ensuring that all support systems in the organisation are available to those learners who need it.

At the end of every session, you could ask yourself if you had a conversation with, or asked a question to every learner in their group. If not, you should plan to do this next time. Every learner should feel welcomed to the group and have some individual attention at some point. You will need to deal with any barriers to inclusion, such as prejudice and/or discrimination, childcare or transport issues. You might not need to do this yourself as there could be specialist people within your organisation who could help. Dealing with any barriers or challenges will help your learner to feel included.

Ways to promote inclusion include:

- ascertaining individual needs, learning preferences and goals
- being approachable and accessible, enabling learners to feel comfortable to disclose concerns
- challenging stereotyping, discrimination and prejudice as it happens
- differentiating activities to address individual differences; for example, different abilities and levels

- encouraging group work where learners can mix and participate with all members of the group over a period of time
- ensuring the environment is accessible to all learners
- identifying where modifications or changes are needed to equipment or activities
- involving all learners e.g. using their names, using eye contact and asking individual questions
- recognising and valuing individual contributions and achievements
- using a wide range of teaching, learning and assessment approaches based upon learner needs
- using resources and materials which positively promote all aspects of community and society, equality and diversity.

Carrying out an icebreaker and agreeing ground rules can help the session flow smoothly. If all learners have been involved in these, they might feel more confident to talk in front of others and take part in activities.

Try to use 70% of the time for learner activities and 30% of the time for teaching activities. It's not all about the *teaching*, but the *learning* that's taking place.

With individuals, you will be able to dedicate your time to their needs and help them achieve their potential. With groups, you will need to be aware of aspects such as attention spans, learning preferences and any individual needs. You also need to be aware of which individuals might not successfully work with others due to personality clashes or other issues.

Differentiation

Differentiation is about using a range of different approaches and resources to engage and include individuals and groups during sessions. You don't have to individualise everything you do, you just need to take individual needs into account, for example learning preferences. You could group your learners for different activities by their learning preference level of ability, level of qualification or learning outcomes, past experiences or current knowledge etc. It is very rare that a teacher has a group of learners who are all at the same level of ability, with the same prior knowledge and experience who have the same needs. You wouldn't help your learners if you delivered a theoretical session to a practical group of learners.

It's useful for teachers to plan activities which *all* their learners are capable of achieving, as well as others that *most* or *some* can achieve according to their level and ability. This ensures differentiation whilst enabling learners to achieve something – ideal for formative assessments which do not count towards a qualification, but give an idea of current progress.

Acknowledging and embracing the diverse nature of your learners' age, experience, culture and background should help you include all learners and bring your subject to life. Some learners may work quicker than others, giving them an extension activity could help develop and challenge their learning further, without compromising the learning of others.

If you can encourage your learners to let you know of anything that you can do to help them, you will improve their learning experience. Simply asking, '*is there anything I can do to help the learning process?*' should ascertain this. Alternatively, ask yourself '*what can I do to give everyone a good learning experience?*'

Differentiating your teaching, learning and assessment approaches should lead to more confident learners who feel included, are motivated to learn and able to achieve. Whilst it may take longer to plan and prepare your sessions to differentiate effectively, you will find your learners are more engaged and motivated rather than being bored and disinterested.

Teaching and learning environments

A suitable learning environment is crucial for effective learning to take place. This involves not only the venue, rooms and resources used, but your attitude and the support you give to your learners.

- Venues e.g. colleges, the workplace, adult and community learning centres, training organisations, the forces, public, private and voluntary sectors, prisons etc
- Rooms e.g. classrooms, workshops; the way the furniture is laid out; access, heating, lighting etc
- Resources e.g. teaching equipment such as presentation packages, new technology, books, flip charts etc

You may be restricted by the availability of some rooms or resources; therefore you need to be imaginative with what you do have. Your learners don't need to know any problems your organisation has, as your professionalism should enable you to teach your subject effectively. However, you do need to take into account any health and safety issues and let your organisation know of any concerns.

You need to establish a purposeful learning environment where your learners feel safe, secure, confident and valued. The venue, toilets and refreshment areas should be accessible and suitable to everyone. If your session includes a break, make sure you tell your learners what time this will be and for how long. If you don't, learners may not be concentrating on their learning but thinking about when they can go to the toilet or get a drink.

If you can also make your session interesting and varied, your learners will enjoy the experience and remember more about the subject and you, rather than the environment or lack of facilities.

If you are teaching a practical subject, you will need a suitable environment so that you can demonstrate and your learners can practise. If you are teaching a theoretical subject, you may be fine in a classroom but you might need a computer, projector and interactive whiteboard. You might be delivering a seminar in a venue you have never visited before. If this is the case, it would be useful to telephone or visit in advance to check what facilities are available.

Creating a good first impression, being organised and professional should help your learners feel they are in good hands.

Motivation

Motivation is either *intrinsic* (from within), meaning the learner wants to learn for their own fulfilment or *extrinsic* (from without), meaning there may be an external factor motivating the learner, for example, a promotion at work or a pay rise. Some learners may seem naturally enthusiastic about learning, but many need or expect you to inspire, challenge, engage and stimulate them.

Whatever level of motivation your learners have will be transformed, for better or worse, by what happens during their learning experience with you. You therefore need to promote a professional relationship that leads to individual learning and trust.

Many factors affect a learner's motivation to work and to learn, for example, interest in the subject matter, perception of its usefulness, a general desire to achieve, self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as patience and persistence. Not all learners are motivated by the same values, needs, desires, or wants. Some of your learners will be motivated by the approval of others, some by overcoming personal challenges.

To help motivate your learners you can:

- make tasks interesting, practical and relevant
- negotiate clear targets
- maintain an organised and orderly atmosphere
- treat learners with respect and as individual
- vary your teaching approaches to reach all learning preferences
- give praise and encouragement
- ask open questions (not closed questions which just lead to yes or *no* responses)
- avoid creating intense competition, although some competition can be fun
- be aware of attention span limits

- support those who need help
- give ongoing constructive feedback.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow (1987) introduced a *Hierarchy of Needs* in 1960 after rejecting the idea that human behaviour was determined by childhood events. He felt that obstacles should be removed that prevent a person from achieving their goals. He argued there are five *needs* which represent different levels of motivation which must be met. The highest level was labelled *self-actualisation*, meaning people are fully functional, possess a healthy personality, and take responsibility for themselves and their actions.

He also believed that people should be able to move through these needs to the highest level provided they are given an education that promotes growth.



Maslow's (1987) Hierarchy of Needs expressed in educational terms

When learners satisfy their needs at one level, they should be able to progress to the next. Something may set them back a level, but they will keep striving upwards. It is these needs that motivate learning to take place. However, some people may not want to progress through the levels, and may be quite content where they are at that moment in their life.

Always try to establish a purposeful learning environment where your learners can feel safe, secure, confident and valued. To help your learners' motivation, always ensure that the learning environment you create meets your learners' first level needs. This will enable them to feel comfortable and secure enough to learn and progress to the higher levels. You will need to appreciate that some learners may not have these lower needs met in their home lives, making it difficult for them to move on to the higher levels.

You can help meet your learners' needs at each level by:

- first level: allowing access to refreshments
- second level: discussing any concerns they may have
- third level: using icebreakers to help ensure everyone gets along
- fourth level: making the learning relevant
- fifth level: assessing and giving constructive feedback.

Reading list

Ayers H (2007) *An A to Z Practical Guide to Learning Difficulties* London David Fulton Publishers Ltd

Gravells A and Simpson S (2012) *Equality and Diversity in the Lifelong Learning Sector* London Learning Matters

Gravells A (2014) *The Award in Education and Training (Revised)* London Learning Matters SAGE

Gravells A (2013) *Passing Assessments for the Award in Education and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE

Ioda (2010) *Diversity Fairness and Equality Information Booklet* Ioda Limited

Maslow, AH. (1987) Edited by Frager R *Motivation and Personality* (3rd Revised Edn) New York; Pearson Education Ltd.

National Skills Forum (2010) *Doing things differently: step changes in skills and inclusion*

Powell S and Tummons J (2011) *Inclusive Practice in the Lifelong Learning Sector* Exeter Learning Matters

Reece I and Walker S (2007) *Teaching, Training and Learning: A Practical Guide* (6th Ed) Tyne & Wear Business Education Publishers

Website list

Differentiated teaching and learning activities - www.tes.com/teaching-resource/challenge-toolkit-6063318

Disability Equality in Education – www.worldofinclusion.com/inclusion_education.htm

Disability Now - <https://disabilitynow.org.uk>

Disability Rights UK - www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Equality and Diversity Forum – www.edf.org.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission – www.equalityhumanrights.com/en