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## Every Child Can Learn Podcast

### Episode 13: Head Teacher Patrick on leading an inclusive school

**Intro:** You are listening to the Every Child Can Learn podcast. The podcast is offered to you by Backup Uganda and Brainstud. You can listen to our podcasts online on our website, [www.backupuganda.com](http://www.backupuganda.com). And if you are in Gulu, you can pick up the audios offline from Mega FM, Radio Rupiny, Divine Video and Music Library. Head teachers from the district's schools can pick this podcast from the District Education Office. And head teachers from city schools can pick theirs from the City Education Office. You can as well pick up the podcast episodes from the following schools Highland Primary School, Gulu Prison Primary School, Gulu Town Primary School, Mary Immaculate Primary School, St. Joseph Primary School, or Christ the King Demonstration Primary School. Do you like our podcast? Feel free to share it with your family, friends, or neighbors. The more people learn about learning difficulties, the better we can help our children.

**Fred:** Hello, my name is Fred Onyango and I work with backup Uganda. Today, I'm honored to have our special guest for our 13th episode of the Every Child Can Learn podcast, please introduce yourself.

**Mr. Patrick:** Yes, thank you so much. My name is Mr. Oywak Patrick. I'm the head teacher at Gulu Prison Primary School in Gulu City. Gulu Prison Primary School is a special school where we are taking care of children with disability, especially the mentally challenged, who are here and they are mixing with the mainstream, so we are moving to them together.

**Fred:** Okay, thank you so much, Mr. Patrick, and it's a pleasure to have you on our episode today. What do you understand about inclusive education?

**Mr. Patrick:** To the best of my knowledge, inclusive education is the integration of children with special disabilities, to mix up with the mainstream with a normal group, so that they can cope up together as they struggle to achieve the best for their future.

**Fred:** Wonderful, that's interesting. And how does your job as a head teacher relate to inclusive education? What do you do to promote it?

**Mr. Patrick:** Yeah, that's a very good question. My role as a head teacher is to promote the learning and the teaching process that takes place in the school, through the supervision of both the teachers and the learners. Other things that I do is to coordinate, to make sure this school is connected with other organizations and bodies that may fill in the gap, which we may not be having here. So that the process of teaching and learning moves smoothly, and that includes the Ministry of Education and the local government.

**Fred:** One of the things you do is to reach out to different organizations and institutions to help. What are those that have been able to help you to fill in those gaps? Which organizations are those?

**Mr. Patrick:** So far, the main body that has been constantly helping us is the government through the Ministry of Education, and in particular, the UNICEF that works with the Minister of Education, because they provide us with some training. They also give us some assistive devices, which may be used for this special group of learners, and other children in the school as well. So we also have other organizations, and the local government who support us, financially and materially.

**Fred:** Okay. How inclusive do you think schools in Uganda are at the moment?

**Mr. Patrick:** What I have observed is that still, there is a bit of challenge, starting with the policy formulation. The policy about inclusive education is not very clear yet, because as I talk about the policy, we need to look at the curriculum, the best curriculum, which can be adapted, because of the special nature of these groups of children. Even the teachers themselves need to be updated and then train more frequently, so that they can catch up with the current trend of changes that we have, as far as technology is concerned. And also what I have observed is that we need to take a keen look at the environment in which these children are staying in because of that special nature. They require a lot which can promote the learning and the teaching process.

**Fred:** On that note, what do you think parents and teachers can do to make learning more inclusive? Because I know you are a head teacher but same time you interact with parents. What do you think the two categories both the teachers and the parents can do to make sure that learning is more inclusive?

**Mr. Patrick:** Number one on the side of parents first need to try very much to see that attitude change is managed because many of the parents of these children tend to be pushing these children to the school without thinking that at the end of the day, this child may still come and do something useful. So change of attitude is number one. Number two, in an inclusive setting, we need specialized service provision, which some of the teachers do not have, because teachers do get general training, but only a few take time to study to become special teachers, are very few. So when you bring them to an inclusive setting, you'll find that you still have a lot of gaps because other teachers may not know exactly what to do. So what I think the teachers should do, or the government should do to support the teachers, number one, is to train them and also sensitize the parents. So that we can jointly help these children because, at the end of the day, this child will not remain at school, at one point the child will have to go out in the community to live with their parents. So there should be continuity so that we don't miss out on what is expected from these learners.

**Fred:** Okay, thank you so much. And I also want to find out from what you just said, I know the focus has been more on talking about the parents and also the gaps that the teachers have. What would you advise teachers that can do if they think that their learner has a learning difficulty or disability?

**Mr. Patrick:** Number one thing, the teachers themselves need to take a keen interest in trying to go about with these learners. Otherwise, we may not realize the expected goal, at the end of the day. The teachers who are not trained in an inclusive setting should be given the opportunity to increase their knowledge by way of training so that they can help these children well. Like particularly in Gulu Prison I can mention here that we have only five special teachers, of which now the active ones are only three. So, we need to have that gap in the human resource also added. Another challenge that the teachers need to address getting materials that can be appropriately used for these learners. So the current approach to

inclusive education, which focuses both beyond traditional transitional practices of special education and integration. The present trend should include education and policy trust to embrace modification in curricula, teaching methods, teaching and learning resources, medium of communication, and adjusting the learning environment to meet individual learning needs. Also, the teachers should always not forget that the emphasis on a learner centered approach is the most suitable method for this category, which sometimes they forget about it. The teachers should also be able to be more flexible so that they can adjust at any moment as required by these special groups. And this approach is going to mitigate factors that form barriers to children's participation in learning and development. So it means in order for us to widen the opportunity for all children to interact, play, learn and experience the feeling of belonging and develop in accordance with their potentials and difficulties so that they can obtain good quality of life within their respective environment. So it is all about changing attitudes, behavior, teaching methods, curricula, environment, and allocation of human and material and financial resources to meet the educational needs of all these learners.

**Fred:** Thank you so much, Mr. Patrick, for your time, and for more insight into the work you do and how your school is pioneering inclusive education for every child to learn. For today this comes to the end of our 13th episode.

**Outro:** Thank you for listening to Every Chance Can Learn. Please share your thoughts with us. Join the conversation on Facebook, or send your questions to 0772630078. Do you want to learn more about Backup Uganda and stay updated about our activities? Check our website on [www.backupuganda.org](http://www.backupuganda.org) and follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn.