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Every Child Can Learn Podcast

Episode 19: Mr. Samuel on teaching inclusively

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. 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.

Jackson: Welcome to our 19th episode of Every Child Can Learn. My name is Jackson Abe. I work at Backup Uganda as a trainer. Today, I am delighted to have this moment with our guest who is going to introduce himself where he works. Of course, anything he wants the listeners to know about him. Thank you

Mr. Samuel: Thank you so much, my brother from Backup Uganda, thank you for this time that you have met together. I am called Mr. Samuel Kenneth Owiny from Gulu High School, I am a teacher, and what I would also want people to know is that I am as well, persons with visual impairment, but I'm also teaching both Special Need learners and other inclusive students. Thank you.

Jackson: Yes, thank you so much, Samuel, for that quick introduction that you have given to us. As we move forward, please, you have said you are a teacher in this school, Could you please feel free and also share with us the subject that you teach?

Mr. Samuel: Thank you, my teaching subjects are Christian religious education in A' level and then entrepreneurship but I teach in both O' and A' level at this very school.

Jackson: Wow, thank you. Thank you so much. We already know the subject that you teach and that is Christian religious education and of course the subject then the class that you handle, could you also please feel free, and of course, share with us what is your best or favourite part of your job?

Mr. Samuel: Thank you so much. My best and favorite part of my job is that my job is quite unique to any other job, that I work and deal specifically with students with learning difficulties in this school, especially the visual impairment that I always feel so proud of and unlike teaching in these other normal classes, this is quite different. Thank you.

Jackson: Thank you, thank you so much Samuel for sharing with us your favourite part of your job. It's really interesting. And of course, please, I would also love to find out or inquire about from you, what do you understand about inclusive education and how does inclusive teaching look like to you? Thank you.

Mr. Samuel: Thank you so much, my brother again. Inclusive Education, it is a type of education where all learners at school, be it learners with any kind of disability or learning difficulties are brought together and able to learn in a same classroom with the same teacher, and they are all able to enhance their skill where learning and teaching is always understood by everyone, irrespective of any learning difficulties.

Jackson: Thank you so much, sir, for those wonderful words that you have shared with us pertaining your understanding of inclusive education. And you made it very clear that it's a form of education where all learners are catered for irrespective of different learning difficulties and disabilities, they are all given the same knowledge as designed by a teacher, I really appreciate that, and of course, I would also love to ask you another question, and that is what can you say about visual impairment? And what do you think could be the causes of this impairment? Thank you.

Mr. Samuel: Thanks so much, when talking about visual impairment, visual impairment is the state of somebody's visual or eyes, which is not able to see anything, or the one that cannot now be repaired. As someone who cannot see or can see something little, or maybe having some problem with the sight, that is what we call visual impairment. And according to what I know, and what I've gathered from doctors, and also what I've been able to read from the reports of our learners, the most and the common causes of this impairment, one of it is diseases, like diabetes, it's also one of the very serious cause because it affects the nerve, and it goes up to the part of the sight, and it damages it. And not only that, we also have trachoma, which is a very serious disease that can always disturb people. And we also have the over aging effect is also another thing that is really becoming a very serious, you will find someone who is somehow aging, begins feeling problems with the sight, and then eventually, it makes someone to have problem with his/her visual. Not only that one thing that people like most is smoking, and as well over drinking all those are causes of visual impairment to mention, but a few thank you.

Jackson: Thank you so much, I really appreciate you for sharing with us what you know about visual impairment, and of course, the causes of the visual impairment, among others, you have been in position to mention a situation may be like old age, in most cases I have seen several times, you realize that when you're aging, you begin to lose your sight. And it's very common. He made mention things to do with diseases like diabetes. So those are some of the diseases that also play a role in causing the visual impairment. I thought of adding on to that, I really appreciate that, let me also ask you another question. Could you also share with us some example of how inclusive you have been teaching and what you have learned about inclusive education, thank you.

Mr. Samuel: How I have been teaching and making it more inclusive, is that in our classrooms, we normally go, and we do a lot of observing, who has what type of disability who has which type of impairment, so that we can cater for that person in lesson planning and class organization. So that is what we've been doing. We're making sure that each learner is able to understand what we are teaching, and in all time, when it comes to the variations in writing materials, and understanding ability, we normally cater for it and make sure that we

plan it before we could reach the class. That is one of the inclusive nature that we've been doing in our classroom. And also another thing that we have been doing is setting up the classroom to accommodate all other nature and types of learners. Well, what I've learnt about inclusion is that when students or children are brought together with different kinds of impairment, and the teacher is very organized and brings them together, they can easily learn better, and then they feel good part of learning in that inclusive settings. Thank you.

Jackson: Thank you so much Sir, Samuel for that, and of course, I believe the listeners out there, now have a clue of what inclusive education is about pertaining what Samuel has been in position to share with us. Of course, he has been a teacher who has taught for a number of years, and he has experience of dealing with learners of different learning background, those with the learning difficulties and those without the learning difficulties. So it's really amazing to hear from him his experience and what he has learned from the teaching that involves every learner. Of course, I know out there, many people always use names or words, or they refer to people who have visual impairment, some of the words or the things that they talk about attributes to the people with visual impairment, sometimes it's not really pleasant. So I would love also to hear from him. What do you think is the biggest myth people say about visual impairment?

Mr. Samuel: Thank you so much for this question. What we should know is that a myth is something which is not true about something. So in this case, the biggest myth that people normally say about visual impairment is that a person with visual problem is not able to live an independent life. This is very wrong, because each one of any person living with a disability or visual is able to do anything that someone outside there can do be it digging, washing, bathing, and doing all other things that you think is impossible. Another myth is that people normally say when you have visual impairment, then you are unable to operate the machines like a digital machines like computers, smartphones, and any other types of machines that people normally fear and this is not true, because as I talk now, we have visual impaired learners, who are very, very curious in these machines personally talking, I also have my personal laptop that I uses every day, it has a software called JAWS, which is Job Access With Speech. And whatever I touch, or whatever button it's always said out. So it can now

that one bridge all the gaps and the barriers that people think using those machines is a problem. In smartphones, we have talkback that comes with a system development, where once you buy it, you just go to your accessibility, and you enable it and it will begin talking. So it bridge the gap of someone thinking that a visually impaired person is unable to use those digital devices. Another myth is that people do say that if you have visual impairment, then you cannot see anything at all. And this is very, very different. Because when someone say I have visual problem, I am blind, it does not mean that this person can't see anything at all. Some people can see something small, others are short sighted others are long sighted, others are completely blind, but all we term them to be having visual impairment. So those are some of the myth plus others that I can talk about it today. Thank you.

Jackson: Wow, thank you so much Sir Samuel for that. I believe he has explained it into detail that some of the myths that have often time. Many people use it against people with visual impairment, of course, to mention some of the things that he talked about it. Some people think that someone who is visually impaired cannot operate a machine or maybe computer but here I want to confirm to you that in Samuel's office here, we have several digital appliances like the computers, some of the things that I don't even know how to mention their names, but it's really working here of course, the habit to operate these digital machines, they are able to use it well and they can get the best thing out of this machine. So it is a myth that a person or maybe people with visual impairment cannot operate maybe like a computer, he talked of the smartphone. Yeah, they can also use it very well. So that is something that out of the many things he mentioned or he talked about, I thought of bringing it or elaborating it once again. So thank you so much Samuel. I would also love to inquire from you, are there things parents can do to prevent their children from having visual impairment, looking at after birth causes?

Mr. Samuel: Thank you once again, there are so many things actually, that parents can do to prevent their children from attacking or be attacked with visual impairment. One of it is that they should make sure that their children's eyes are always checked from a recognized health clinic or eye clinic, this will always make them know the problem that may arise that causes blindness in their children much earlier than they see a possible way of working it out. Not

only that, they should also make sure that once a child is born, they have to follow up each and every medical issues pattern and that child like immunization is in all corners of all the diseases. So that to prevent this kind of blindness or visual impairment, not only that, they should also be so much vigilant on how these children relate with their peers, especially when they are socialising like playing, they should be able to know what kind of games they're playing. And then parents should remove all other dangerous substances, like stick, sand soil and all other sharp instrument that in that time of their playing one of them may pierce the eyes of so many, there so many children, so many students in my school, who has that kind of problem, they have visual impairment. And when I tried to ask, I find so many numbers of students saying my eyes was pierced, my eyes was damaged in this form, due to reckless play, and so on. So we need to guard against that as parent and then parents should also respond to any sign of visual impairment in their children earlier whenever they hear or see about it, they have to respond in to it faster, in order to avoid their children having this impairment to mention, as I conclude for now, is that one thing that parents should also make sure that they are very acquainted with is to know the history of each other, a parent, Mother Should Know where the fathers come from, and the mother should also know where this one so also come from so that in case of anything developing, they can get proper advice from the Doctor, what they can do, so that in case there was a problem of high issue from the man's home or from the woman's home, they are able to address that issue. Thank you so much.

Jackson: Thank you so much, Sir Samuel for that good elaboration that you have given us what the parents can do to prevent their children from having visual impairment. Looking at some of the cases which comes after birth. And of course, looking at some of the things that you have mentioned, I would also love to elaborate more on a point that you made mentioned that parents should really be very, very careful, especially when their children are playing. They should not play with sharp objects. I want to give an example about my neighbor, here we have a neighbor who often leaves things like knife, those sharp things anyhow, she could not place them in a place where children cannot easily reach it. Then there came a day when she had like a child who was actually two years so she used the knife for chopping the onions when she was cooking and then she placed the knife down and then this child was playing and the child picked the knife, he was playing with the knife. And of course, the child happened to

prick his eyes, that part of the eye got affected, remember sharp things when it enters into your eye, definitely you lose sight. Up to now this child has lost sight just from the negligence or the problem that the mother was not very careful in placing those sharp objects. So we also need to be very careful about where our children play, what kind of game they do play, and what kind of things that they use when they're playing so that they avoid being a victim of having such problems or losing their sight. It's not really good when you don't take good care of your child out of the negligence of you as a parent, your child begins to have visual impairment. So that is something that I thought of adding or giving my personal experience of what I know in regards to what our guest has mentioned, or he has advised the parents on how they can prevent children from having visual impairment after birth. So please, let me also hear from you. What do you think parents can do to support their children best if they are dealing with visual impairment? And also in terms of the environment? How should it look like for those with visual impairment? Thank you.

Mr. Samuel: Thank you, once again, for this time, when it comes to supporting visual impairment or people with visual impairment in the community, then parents have to play a very big role to make sure that their living around them is enjoyable. First of all, parents have a responsibility to make sure that they first own and love their children with visual impairment, that is accepting the child, the way he or she is in the community or at home. Whatever, no matter the nature of disability, they have to have the ownership that this is our child, we got to do all the possible means to make sure that he or she grows well. That is the acceptance that parents should first do, they should not just see a child as it's a curse as it's a miss trust that has come to their home. That is first of all two, parents should also make sure that the environment where their children with visual impairment leaves are properly set up. Because when a child knows that this thing is always put here, this stone is always here, and that child will navigate the environment very well. But when you go to some homes where people are very, I could say careless with other objects, find this one has put a hoe here, that one has carried this block and placed it here. And the child with visual impairment has not been informed about the misplacement of those gadgets, or those blocks, at the end someone comes and knock and then creates some injury. So we have to be as smart as possible and very well organized at our home to make them enjoy. Not only that, parents should also

observe the facilities that they use at home. Things like latrine, and bathroom. And all those should be accessible for those people with visual impairment. If someone enters there and spoils it before someone with visual impairment enters, the parents should make sure that the place is properly organized. So that will make someone also go and come back when he or she is still clean and can stay among the members. And not only that, parents should also make sure that the learners the children that they stay together with this, other people with visual impairment, know their friends and mind the words the language they use when they are together with their peers so that they always feel wanted in the community. Looking at the time, just to say one or two and then I end here for now, is that first of all parents should also be taking visits and look at other parents who have these kinds of people so that they share information how this one is doing. It will also help to improve their lives and make them feel wanted and accepted in the community. Thank you.

Jackson: Thank you so much, sir, for that advice that you have given to parents on how they can support their children best if they know they are dealing with visual impairment, I really don't want to add or subtract anything in regards to what you have mentioned. I believe the listeners have picked something out of what our guests today have decided to share with us. Of course, it is a responsibility to parents to accept their children the way they are and of course, give them the right treatment so that they also feel that they are supported and cared for. Of course, by doing that, they will also be in position to meet their full potential in life. So I really urge you parents out there who are listening to this program. Please take the advice that our guests have decided to share with you, sir, as we are nearing our discussion for the day. Could you also share with us what advice can you give to the teachers and the school administrators on how they can support the children and the school at large? Thank you.

Mr. Samuel: Well, for the teachers the advice that I can give, as me I'm as well a teacher is that teachers should always visit their lesson plan time and again, whenever they are preparing to teach, especially when we are to embrace the inclusion, in their lesson preparation should cater for all kind of persons with various disability, especially for the visual which seems to be very difficult for some teachers to make sure that in their lesson plan all those what you want to present as your content is covering that part of visual impaired learners not only that,

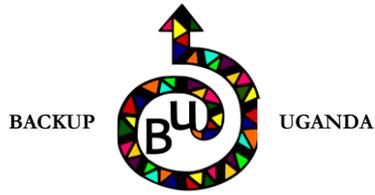
teachers should also make sure that their classrooms are properly arranged, especially the way their seats are arranged, their writing and all that should be neat and bold, for persons with visual impairment to be able to read. And if in case in your class, you're having someone who can't see totally, then if you have someone to consult, we should always be people who like consultation, so that we give a right content to the right persons for the right purpose. Not only that, teachers should also embrace further studies, especially as they go and do further studies, they will get more knowledge and skills on how to handle different categories of impairment in their classrooms. Talk about something for the administration is that we know that some time, handling the visual impairment or any nature of addressing learning difficulties in different schools seems to be very expensive, but administration should look into it and have provision for all detects to embrace inclusion, things like writing materials and effective environments, like putting ramps in all the classrooms for easy movement and, immobility and not only that schools should also make sure that their peers, the peers, the learners, socialize and work together with these learners with visual impairment so that they achieve a better outcome. And to mention, but a few is that schools should also make sure that they acquire their sporting activities or games. In most cases, it's realized that students with visual impairment or children with visual impairment lack materials for different games, so when others are going for games, then they are always redundant and idle. So schools should make sure that they have all those necessary equipment that will also keep them busy as we know, exercises, refreshes our minds and makes us feel good and also make us feel healthy. So we need to embrace that if we are to have quality education, as we embrace inclusion. Thank you.

Jackson: Wow thank you so much sir for that wonderful advice that you have given to teachers and of course the school administrators. I believe it is going to help teachers who are out there and of course the administrators on how they can help children with different or various learning difficulties and disabilities and how they can easily incorporate with other learners who do not have any learning difficulties and disabilities because the aspect of inclusion, he talked about it and he also made mentioned things like to do with facilities as teachers or as administrators, you need to put in place the facilities that definitely help or support every child within the school compound like he talked of ramp which will also help

children with other forms of disabilities, so they also feel the same, they will also be in position to access every point within the school, so those are some of the things that he has also made mentioned, I know he has made mentioned quite a good number of things out there and of course I also do request you our teachers out there please, take these advice very well and of course, it's going to help our children out there, sir, our last question for today, I know we have shared a lot, this is now the final one, could you please share with us what recommendation do you think you would like to give to government, thank you.

Mr. Samuel: This is a very sensitive part that you have asked me, it's what we normally request that it should be done, first of all for the government, is that we have very many schools with annexes and they do say that doing this work, giving them quality education becomes very expensive so I really argue and request the government to always support these schools to acquire all what it takes for the learning of the visual impairment. Not only that, the government should also come out with policies, you see when someone studies and after studies the person needs to get jobs but in our labour fields sometimes some people with visual impairment or with any nature of disability feel somehow discriminated when it comes to location of jobs, so government should make sure that we do a lot of sensitisation on emphasis on job creation for the persons with disability and not only that, government should also ensure that they do quite good number of research and find out, how many children living with visual impairment or nature of disability and create environment for them to go to school, most parents of these children does not have enough money or others may have but would feel offended to sponsor them, so government should also give out some bursary possible or any other thing to make sure that all these categories of learners attend school and get knowledge, even if they may not get knowledge for the jobs but at least the knowledge for their living as individuals, thank you so much for this sharing.

Jackson: Wonderful, thank you so much sir for sharing with us your experience of inclusive education and you have made mentioned a lot of advices to the parents, to the teachers and the administrators of the school, I really appreciate that and you have also been in position to give some recommendations to the government on what they should do to ensure that they help or support people or maybe children with learning difficulties and disabilities and they are all



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brilliant recommendations, I continue to urge the parents out there, the teachers or all the listeners out there who are listening please take this advice very seriously it is going to help our children out there and of course they will be in position to get the best out of their life and they will be in position to meet their full potential in life if we really treat them as required so that they be part of the society so that they get to know that they are supported and of course they are cared for, thank you once again as Backup Uganda, we always say that every child can learn thank you.

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 and follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn.