

Every Child Can Learn Podcast

Episode 9: Madam Lucy shares about inclusive teaching

- **Intro**

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- **Interview**

Too-lit: Good morning, madam. And thank you very much for accepting us to visit you at your school. And also agreeing to share with us in every child can learn podcast. My name is Too-lit, I work with backup Uganda as a Frostig trainee. And today we would love to share with you about learning disabilities and inclusive education, where we'll hear more from you on your experiences as a teacher in class with the young ones, and in the school, within the community and as well as a parent, we would love to hear more from you on your experiences in this field of profession. But before we go any further, we would love to know who you are, the school you teach in, the classes you teach and for how long you've been in this teaching business, you know, and we would also love to hear maybe some few good stories, things that have happened in the time you've been in the teaching. And also maybe the bad experiences that you encountered during your time that you've been as a teacher and as well as a parent as far as learning disabilities, and inclusive education are concerned. Thank you very much, Madam and you're welcome.

Madam Lucy: Thank you; you are welcome Too-lit. I am called Madame Lucy Lalam. I teach at St Joseph Primary School. And I have already taught for 25 years. This St Joseph School is my second school of teaching. When I qualified from the college, I was posted to Demonstration Christ the King yeah. I taught there for 14 years and the rest of the years I'm still in St. Joseph Primary School here. So you're welcome. Err; actually, I have loved teaching. And I have found many developments in teaching as far as the learners are concerned. I always find a lot of new things with the learners. They impress me a lot and whenever I'm with the learners, especially these young ones, I always feel I'm at home, they can amuse me a lot and they encourage me

even to like my profession the more. Even if I am stressed sometimes from home, whenever I am with them, everything goes away and I just find myself at home.

Too-lit: Maybe there might have also been challenges in the 25 years. Is there anything that you'd maybe want to share with people who are listening out there?

Madam Lucy: Yeah, always we cannot on the go with the positive one. So yeah, sometimes you also encounter some challenges. The challenges that I have encountered and you find that sometimes they are difficult for me to overcome; the number of the learners in some schools we had few number of learners. The ratio was 1:55 that is 55 learners per one teacher. But when this new curriculum was changed, then they said, everybody should every learner should go to school. You find that some classes became so large, such that up to about over 100. And it became difficult for me as a teacher, only one teacher to cater for the individual differences. Yeah. So that is where I find sometimes. So taxing because however much you try, you will not be able to finish within a given time. Yeah, you can go your best Yeah, to be within a given time for lessons. So you need to be postponing, if at all, now, you want to reach everybody. But sometimes you find that it is really needy that you would wish to meet them at that very material moment, but would be really impossible. So that is the most problem that have been fighting for long. But however, in due course, we also got some ways of dealing with them. That is by either postponing or you take a take few number of learners and you deal with them, then the next time you again, pick another one, but you find that testing them on the same thing is rather difficult. You may now test them on a related issue, always. But that's how we are trying to manage however, is still hectic.

Too-lit: Yeah, sure, it's good to know that you're really trying to help them. And that is really amazing. Now maybe I would like to know also one other thing that may not be a little professional, like what food do you enjoy most and possibly like

Madam Lucy: I do from where, from home or just generally?

Too-lit: Generally, whether you cooked it yourself or wherever, just that food that you would always want to eat

Madam Lucy: Me I'm more traditional food- dishes. I like malakwang and potatoes, my best favourite.

Too-lit: I believe so many who are listening right now they will know better who Madam Lucy is. Yeah, thank you very much for sharing with us that now maybe to go into your business now.

Too-lit: I would like you to share with us more about your understanding on inclusive education.

Madam Lucy: Well, for me, inclusive education is that kind of teaching learning process that does not segregate any learner regardless of sex, age, or any learning disabilities. I think that is what I can tell you as far as that-

Too-lit: Okay, that is very good. That is good to know. Now, looking at all that you've given, it's really amazing and we would like to know maybe in specific, like, could you give examples that you know, your teachers out there or a parent out there can pick- you know, when you talk about an inclusive education that maybe this is a very example madam use in class to teach in an inclusive way.

Madam Lucy: You mean the example I can give?

Too-lit: Yeah, yeah, practically, when you now come to the practical aspect of it in class, how do you give up this inclusive aspect of what you've described there into the teaching practice now.

Madam Lucy: Now, when you're already in the class, of course, me as a teacher I have first to identify learners with learning difficulties before we proceed, so that as I deliver my concept, I am sure each and every learner seem to get it in the same pace.

Too-lit: That is very good. So you're more focused on teaching every child in the class, you want every learner to learn-

Madam Lucy: To learn, to achieve, because I will have set my goal. Each and every learner that is interested in my care, as to come up with something at least though depending on the different level, but at least we'll have got something.

Too-lit: Wow, this is good. So talking about recognizing learners with learning disabilities, let's take an example in your class or within the school. How do you do this?

Madam Lucy: With these, to identify this learners, I could begin with question and answer, because we that one, we will know straight away whether a child is able to talk or not, could even see from the expression, I could also give group work. Because from group this group works, there are some learners who learn best from their peer and I could also give practical work, and in this case, it could be like pronouncing something or reading either a sentence. And, from there you would know straight away, you could identify the problem immediately. I could also give assessment. That is, after now already teaching, you could give some assessment, and then you will check, you check on the individual learner, how the child is both performing, has the child understood and that particular is the time, you give more time to that learner with the learning difficulties, because you're able to know

Too-lit: Thank you, thank you for that. We are really happy to know. Moving on, we understand education is not just a teacher's work; it involves so many parties, like the parents, maybe the community and many others. So in this case, what do you think parents can as will do to support your drive for inclusive education?

Madam Lucy: First of all, it is not the parents' wish or choice to have this kind of children. But because they are now there, say- once God has given life, He has also given at least some talents to individual learner. Therefore, in this case, I would encourage the parents to do follow up these children- actually first, they should love the children because they already there. God has already given them life. So they should appreciate the life given to them. They should love these learners; they should give them time to do a specific task. These learning difficulties they differ according to the different learning difficulties. They should also encourage these learners to have self-esteem. And always they should- these parents should be able to give them positive feedbacks, because we know these learners have something to do in life. They are not there for nothing.

Too-lit: Do you think this inclusive teaching has any impact on you as a teacher, and maybe in your growth and development in this profession?

Madam Lucy: Yes, it has. Of course by living together- staying together with these learners with learning difficulties, you learn more skills and you learn to know them better. It also gives me the teacher a wider thought so that I could maybe read and research about other different learning difficulties and perhaps how to deal with them.

Too-lit: So that you can handle your business really well in class. Yeah, that's a good one. Now, as a teacher, I believe you normally share with your colleagues in your sit out in the staff rooms and all that. What do you know, hear, they say about inclusive education? Well, what are their thoughts on it?

Madam Lucy: Mr. Too-lit, you know, we teachers? We are all not that, we don't have the same personalities? So here I have, I have two options. The way we see. There are some teachers who have maybe taken the profession as a chance to earn a living, they find it just stressful, and just time wasting in most cases. Hmm, let them go away; with me, I'm fed up with this kind of of children, they are not patient. So you find that they just tend not to care. But, in other words, whenever that teacher is really professionally, I could say professionally in born, that teacher would really love even to follow these learners up to maybe the end to see each and every child to in her or his class to do something, to come up with something- at least gain something because you don't teach for nothing, you teach and want the outcome to be there. So, they would love and such kinds of teachers are patient with these learners. So they would give their time, in fact they would give most of their time to such learners to really identify the type of the talent, a particular, the individual learner has, so that he or she really guides that learner according to or drives the learner to what she thinks the learner can achieve. So you will find that that teacher

would really be particular about the learner, works with the learner she finds all her ways to see that that learner achieves something in life. So if in any case, she finds that she cannot continue with it a learner, she can also refer to another teacher, possibly with maybe better skills. So by that you find that she or he is already helping that particular learner with the learning difficulties. And in fact, in the school here, that is where we identify the different learning difficulties with the different learners of course, that's why sometimes you find that there is a referral. If you find that this child maybe has impairment like this, you refer where they can get that skill better. But, initially from the primary school that is the starting point, of course, that's where you find that some children are taken to Gulu Prison Primary School for maybe hearing impairment, visual and then others are taken to vocational schools and you find that they come out important people, they gain skills, that can earn them living and you find that these children are living together with the rest happily.

Too-lit: So in general, if I got you well, to other teachers' perception on inclusive education is 50-50. Like for the case of maybe St. Joseph here you would say they are quite supportive in the sense that they are implementing an inclusive way of teaching.

Madam Lucy: Yeah, here they are implementing, but I could not say 50-50, those take care of those of the learning difficulties are more than those who don't care, Yeah, but majority are pro inclusive education.

Too-lit: Maybe you earlier mentioned something about curriculum change, and you brought it on the side of the negative impacts. So, we would like to know more at the moment, what do you think about the present curriculum? Does it support your implementation of inclusive teaching or inclusive education?

Madam Lucy: Yeah, the present curriculum supports, I say this because when you check on the curriculum, the curriculum is designed from, they start from what the child knows, from simple to complex and the curriculum goes on the child's daily life experience, like in the market, you send the child to buy something in the market, the balances there the child comes back with and you find that in the school they are learning mathematics. Yeah, that is already the concept of mathematics. You send the child to maybe, err from home you see children making this- making this, actually they say they make their motorcars. When you come to school, you find that in the curriculum, there is also that technique. So those are the kind of things- so that we find that the curriculum is built on the day to day life experience of a child. It is not new and even in the registers, when they send the registers, you find on the back they have also written inclusive or what others whether it is inclusive and when you find yours is inclusive, you tick that. So it means they are concerned, though it may also have other repercussions as I say, but it is not a larger of degree. When they are also assessing, when they assessing this, the learners, they also grade- there are grading, you find found that there is that grade for everybody- there is for those in the middle

and those exceeded and at the end we find that and those in the first grade and those ones on the third have all gone ahead, they have all pushed maybe the next level.

Too-lit: Maybe something on the grading there When you say the grading maybe also has it, it varies for maybe particular groups, does it mean there is a specific grading maybe that also caters for specific learners with some learning disabilities.

Madam Lucy: The grading; because the assessment is for everybody. Yea, they grade and sometimes you find that a child might not maybe done well in a particular subject and that will vary the grading and you will see if the child, they will check from there, where the child has got, maybe some good credits. And that is when they will know that at least this child when taken here can or to this school can perform. And that's why and the government is saying, even with these current results of the candidates of the P.7. Even those who had done examination fine, but had not attained the good grades, or had the chance to go to the vocational schools. By that, it mean; because they know that the child might have finished the seven years, or at least, at least got some skills that can help him go ahead. That's why he's also advising those one even they have not got good grades should go to, they should continue, they will go to skill training. Some children are not good at practical, I mean at theory, but very good at practical. So straight away, they will have to go for practical learning.

Too-lit: That is really good to know, maybe still something around the curriculum there. You've been in the business for now 25 years. And that's really a good time of experience. And possibly would you say there is maybe something still that the National Curriculum Development Center and all these other institutions that are reviewing maybe our education system can still do to improve our education maybe especially when we talk about inclusive education looking at learners possibly with learning disabilities

Madam Lucy: Perhaps, I could say they should bring more different learning materials that cater for different groups with the learning difficulties. Yeah, they should extend it even after the lower stage like, at early stage. So that it once identified you gear the child along that skill, you develop the child along that skill, and the child can perform. Because here we see that generally, it is above the primary level that is when they begin to send their children to various skillful learning. But I if they lower it to the level of the primary, so that when the teachers identify, they straight away start building the child from there, it will be better because it would encourage them to build more skilled from that and they go with and that's how I look at it.

Too-lit: That is very good. And we believe your voice will be heard at least from somewhere. And that is very good. We are happy to know that madam Lucy. Now coming down to now St Jo where you teach, how supportive is sent to towards promoting inclusive education. Maybe before you answer that, we would also like to know maybe the cases of children with learning disabilities, possibly if the school has or if there are some numbers you have particularly in your

class or the general the children community in the school and that will help us to know how best the school is helping maybe those ones

Madam Lucy: Yes, for me I say the school administration is supporting because once identified, the teachers would refer to the administration. And, you find that such children are given more time. When they are given a task, they given more time and even during assessment some of them are given more time when they if they appropriate time is over for them and at least for them it is extended. Yeah, they are given extra time. And there are others that the school is helping them invite maybe to come and work in the school gardens. When they see that they are good at digging, they come and dig and instead the school pays, the school admission instead turn that money to their fees and they will just be recording like so that by that they're also helping. And to some extreme cases, they are referred to other schools.

Too-lit: Maybe to talk someone listening, understand test, we would like to know, what are the cases possibly that maybe you've been able to identify in St Jo in the past few years? Do you have a specific number maybe, and maybe examples, you cannot mention names here that you can give us those examples of maybe the learning disabilities that you've been able to identify with these learners and possibly the number of learners?

Madam Lucy: It's unfortunate; I have not been able to get them from all the classes. Perhaps when given time, I could do that. Well, I had one in my class after discussing with the administration; the learner was referred to some organization is taking care of the child, like by paying the fees. So that at least that learner, once we've completed the P.7 level, to be able to, to be taken to a technical school. I don't know how to call the organization, but at least they are helping pay the fees of that child.

Too-lit: But what was the learning difficulty with the child?

Madam Lucy: In fact that child is just extremely slow. I don't know how to term it but that's how in class we find it, we can say from class, extremely slow- extremely slow. But likes outside activities, when you bring him out maybe for co-curricular activities, he is always very active, we're active in class, find the child is just too slow and has even little move on. If we're not missing school, you will be able to do something, because already you can see some talent in him.

Too-lit: Maybe before we go any further, you're building my class, my class, but we didn't get the exact class that you teach in your introduction earlier. Maybe you can also help our listeners know the exact class he teach

Madam Lucy: Actually, my- the class I've been here for long in is P.3 but with this lockdown, since lockdown came in- we have been teaching all the- we started with the P.7. They finished

theirs and they went, came to P.6, but I was already based in P.4 full time. So I happen to identify that child in P.4.

Too-lit: That is really supportive. That means the school is using all the available resources to help the learners give up their bests. This is really good. I believe it's quite helping, I guess. That is good. Oh, maybe as we come to at the end now of our session, what would be your advice to, to let's say your favorite teachers, maybe to the parents on to the general community, and also maybe to the different government partners who are working in the education field.

Madam Lucy: I feel I should begin with the details for the teachers; the teachers should not take their profession as a chance. They should take that profession as a choice. They should love their profession. Because when you love your profession, you will be eager to achieve a goal when set and to the parents, the parents have to love those children because like I mentioned earlier, it has not been their choice but they found they already had those children with learning difficulties. So they should stay with them. And they should send them to school. They should not leave them that this is now useless over- there is there is no useless life. Yes, and to the general community, I feel they should be sensitized on the advantages of having this learner with the learning difficulties to be at school because it is the teachers who can find very easily to identify so easily with the techniques they are trained can identify easily. That's why I say the parent should love these children first of all; they should also be close to this, these learners and then send them to school. Yeah, and you know, in some communities may not know about this, that this important. That's why I say they have to sensitize them on the advantage of having these learners with learning difficulties at school, so that they should leave with those children, and also encourages them to do their work from home and be fit better that is my advice. To other maybe organization they should come in whenever they're a call to help, they should also be positive, because these learners have different talents in them that God has given to them, said that once the teachers have identified three should come in to help the entire community, also that they fit in the community.

Too-lit: That was really quite an advice to the different groups. And I believe every group that you've mentioned, you've target your advice to do all this and this podcast, and they'll be able to learn a thing or two. And that will really help towards our tribe for one inclusive education in this community. Thank you very much, Madam Lucy. We are very happy for your time that you've given us and before we close maybe if there's anything you want to say to the listeners out there, maybe you can use this one minute to say it.

Madam Lucy: Thank you Mr. Too-lit. Thank you also for coming because if you had not come, we couldn't have share all these. We share these not only for the benefit of one another but for the entire community. Yeah. And now my advice to the rest, I have greeted everybody who would really love to hear from us. And they should always be ready for any change. We should not be stereotype move with the change. Because yes,

Too-lit: Especially in this time that COVID has brought in place so many changes.

Madam Lucy: We need not to be stereotype and stick to only one thing that people like, things are changing. So we should also move with these changes so that we fit in the community.

Too-lit: Thank you very much.

- **Outro**

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