

INCLUDE A DUDE...

ABSTRACT

Learners take on the roles of different stakeholders involved in the education of students with additional needs in order to gain an appreciation of the multiple perspectives in inclusive education.

KEYWORDS

Inclusive education; Student with additional needs; Disability



CONTACT

Dr Chris Kilham, University of Canberra, chris.kilham@canberra.edu.au

DESCRIPTION

'Include a Dude' assists participants to collaborate online in order to address a number of problems that commonly confront students with disabilities in mainstream settings. Participants:

- enact the role of a stakeholder (student, parent, teacher, principal, aide)
- react to given stimulus situations according to instructions that assume they are familiar with the literature on inclusion.

AUDIENCE/GROUP SIZE

The ideal number of participants in each group (or 'pod') is 6-8. This role play was implemented in Semester 1, 2008, within the subject "Responding to Individual Needs". This is a mandatory subject which was undertaken by undergraduates in early childhood, primary and middle school education in the Faculty of Education, University of Canberra. The following format was used:

- Participants are allocated to tutorials of approximately 20 participants, each with their individual tutor/moderator.
- Participants are given a choice of a role play or an alternative assignment. (Typically, 5-9 participants from each tutorial group chose the role play.)
- For smaller numbers, tutorials may be combined; for larger numbers it is recommended that participants be split into two independent pods in the one tutorial group.
- Participants communicate within pods but not across them.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

This role play is designed to help participants to:

- Investigate how a role play may be used as a teaching-learning activity
- Reflect on different perspectives on an issue through exposure in a supportive environment
- Develop teamwork skills in an online environment
- Extend online literacy skills
- Expand their understanding of "inclusive education".

TIME AND SETTING

- This role play runs for four weeks plus a reflection week.
- It is set in the present day and explores contemporary issues around inclusive education.

PROCESS

Briefing

- Participants are allocated a role, and given public and private information about their role identity and stance.
- Depending on their role, participant may be given different instructions. For example, they may be asked to:
 - discuss 'least restrictive environment'
 - cite the Disability Standards for Education or other legislation
 - explain inclusion vs integration
 - use disability-first language (or not!)
 - devise a particular teaching or transition strategy
 - suggest a non-age appropriate activity
 - discuss normalization, social role valorization, differentiation, accommodation etc

Interaction / Debate

- In weeks 1-4, participants can email individuals/everyone in their pod. They are expected to research their responses and provide at least two references each week for their comments.
- In week 1, the stakeholders introduce each other and air their views about inclusion at a meeting at the beginning of the school year to decide how the school will approach the education of two students with additional needs.
- In week 2, the stakeholders focus on academic inclusion, particularly literacy and numeracy and are required to evaluate particular inclusive strategies.
- In week 3, attention turns to social inclusion. Participants are informed that pupils at ABC school construe the accommodations for 2 students as unfair, and begin to bully those students. The participants have to react to this situation.
- In week 4, the focus turns to debates about prize giving and the end-of-term concert.

Debriefing

- In week 5 participants write an evaluation of their experience.
- A face to face debrief and 'coming out' is conducted during the weekly tutorial which have been running parallel to the role play.

ASSESSMENT

Individual assessment takes into account the quality of the student's participation on the role play, as well as a reflective evaluation of their experience. The participation consists of contributions of 400 words over several sessions per week. The evaluation asks students to address the following questions:

1. Consider all the postings in your group and choose the best and most important point that was made about inclusive education by one of your fellow role-players. Explain why you think your chosen posting was of such high quality. (NB: You cannot choose your own posting!)
2. Reflect on your role play experience. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using role play as a teaching-learning activity? Did these apply to you, and if so, why/why not? Use benefits/ difficulties/ insights from your own experience this semester to support your view.

FACILITATOR ISSUES

- Participants need to be encouraged to interact rather than posting their 400 words in a single submission at the end of the week.
- Some participants are instructed to act contrary to good practice (e.g. not to use disability-first language) and they may need reassurance that this is 'OK' because it is in-role.
- Facilitators are encouraged to take on the role of a new teacher at the school to highlight relevant issues or ask naive questions that encourage participants to explain their decisions.