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Editorial

Welcome to the latest edition of The Journal of Inclusive Practice in Further and Higher Education (JIPFHE). Thank you to our contributing authors and editorial team with particular thanks to Lynn Wilson from the office for coordinating everything as well as providing editorial input, and to Dr. John Conway for providing essential backup and having the ability to proofread effectively.

The fine collection of papers here reflect NADP's ethos in relation to evidence-based research informed inclusive practice. The student's voice underpins research work presented in this edition and the principle of 'nothing about us without us' is in evidence as usual. Universal Design for Learning is increasingly referenced in work submitted to JIPFHE. This is a reflection of the times. Quirke *et al.* usefully consider UDL in relation to the university community rather than focussing exclusively on curriculum and pedagogy. Intersectionality is becoming a more prominent concern.

The paper by Quirke *et al.* reflects the Irish perspective and follows a more international language than is currently preferred in the UK – the variation in preferred use of language was reviewed by Wilson & Martin in their paper "Models of Disability affect Language: Implications for Disability, Equality and Inclusivity Practice" in the last issue of JPFHE (vol 10.1 page 4-19)

The Leadley Meade and Goodwin paper, Quirke *et al.* and Soorenian's contribution specifically consider aspects of identity beyond disability and the interrelatedness of factors which can impact on student success. Ravet's book (reviewed by the editor) is a timely reminder of the necessity to think carefully about transitions particularly in relation to moving on to employment. Another timely reminder is presented in Benoist's research on the potential disconnects which can cause delays in the DSA process making the transition into higher education bumpier than it could be.

All the papers presented here have something practical to offer. Readers may take from them something to inform practice and or ideas about possible approaches to research. Articles are selected because of their potential to inform practice and authors should keep this in mind. The Editorial Guidelines at the end of this edition are very specific about the purpose of JIPFHE in relation to informing practice. The Editorial Board anticipates that readers will find this edition thought-provoking and helpful.

Professor Nicola Martin, London South Bank University

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Pre-entry self-assessment and mapping to relevant services as a means of developing learner autonomy in undergraduates.

Zoë Leadley-Meade and Russell Goodwin

Abstract

A pre-entry self-assessment protocol was developed by academics and professional services staff with input from students at London South Bank University (LSBU). It was trialed with a cohort of undergraduate students in the Division of Education. The purpose was to help the students to identify the practical and academic skills they would need to develop in order to succeed and to understand what sort of support would be available to help them to do so. By completing the exercise pre-entry, students were able to generate a personal profile and access advice on how to go about developing their skills. The profile formed the basis of a useful conversation with their academic advisor in the early stages of the course. Self-assessment was repeated during the first semester enabling students to consider their changing requirements. Students reported finding the exercise helpful and empowering in that they were able to take control of their own help-seeking. They were surprised by the support available. Staff reported an uptake in accessing services. Principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) underpinned the project. London South Bank is a university providing the sort of infrastructure which enables students to access support easily and not assuming that they will know what sort of skills they need to develop and where to find help proved to be a useful and positive starting point which was of benefit to all students. DSA reforms are prompting the sector to think more coherently in terms of embedding UDL and inclusive practices. This initiative represents a practical response to the task with the potential to be useful beyond LSBU.

Introduction

Members of the Education and Social Justice (ESJ) research group at London South Bank University (LSBU) are interested in research which benefits students. Many LSBU students come from Widening Participation (WP) backgrounds. They do not necessarily enter their courses with high tariff points and their prior educational experience may not necessarily have equipped them with the skills they require in order to succeed academically. The institution, having offered places, has a moral responsibility to support students and the project was conceived with this idea in mind. This concern prompted a small-scale piece of research designed to consider ways in which students could be helped to access the support they might need as easily as possible.

Experience with previous cohorts indicated that students, as well as not being sure where to go for help, did not necessarily understand what sort of skills they would be required to develop. Working together, academic and professional services staff, therefore, developed a self-assessment protocol linked to appropriate sources of support. This was trialed with an undergraduate group and the results are reported here. The activity was

timely as it coincided with Layer's (2017) review of The Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) which recommended further embedding of inclusive practice and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to benefit all students.

Aims of the Research

- To consider why we need to support undergraduate students through the transition stage into Higher Education.
- To examine the implementation of a pilot self-assessment tool with undergraduate students pre- and post- enrolment.
- To reflect on the impact of both the self-assessment tool and the collaborative project as a whole.

Context

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics include 'Learning Environment', and ESJ colleagues welcomed the opportunity to consider aspects of the learning environment which impacted on student success, including the development of learner autonomy and agency. The project group included staff from professional services as well as academics. Initial discussions revealed that a comprehensive joined-up map of all services which students could access in order to support their learning was something participants thought would be useful. Further desktop research indicated that very few universities seem to have an easy-to-locate map of all the services a student might need to access on their website. Having identified this gap at LSBU, the group, therefore, worked together to create a coherent picture of the services available to students before developing a self-assessment pre-entry questionnaire designed to help the students to think about the support they might need. The self-assessment included links to services.

An ethos of co-operation between staff in different roles, inclusion and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) laid the foundations of this project. UDL and inclusion are related terms which apply not only to all students but also to other stakeholders at university including staff (Al-Azawei *et al.*, 2016; Bracken and Novak, 2019; Everett, 2017; Hockings, 2010; Lawrie *et al.*, 2017; Martin, 2017; LaRocco and Wilken, 2013). Respect for diversity extends to planning for diversity within an approach informed by UDL and inclusive principles.

Inclusive learning and teaching recognise all students' entitlement to a learning experience that respects diversity, enables participation, removes barriers and anticipates and considers a variety of learning needs and preferences without directly or indirectly excluding anyone. (Layer, 2017, p.12)

The philosophy underpinning UDL and inclusion mirrors that of The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (Advance HE, 2019b). Planning, design, delivery and evaluation of curricula (goals, assessments,

methods and materials) all come under the UDL umbrella operationally as well as strategically (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2011; US Congress, 2008).

At the time this research was undertaken, services for disabled students were under review (Willetts 2014; Layer 2017; Wilson and Martin, 2017). Layer's (2017) review recommended Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) reforms which accept that the sector has an ongoing responsibility to disabled students under the Equality Act (2010) and that the DSA will continue to be necessary for some. The review presented a compelling case for developing UDL and further embedding inclusive practice both to reduce the reliance on DSA and to enhance the student experience for all. Layer's rationale was that both students who may no longer be eligible to access the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA), and those who were not eligible in the first place, but still require support in order to be academically successful, are likely to benefit.

The UK Quality Code is in favour of support that is accessible and inclusive of all students, but not the same for all students (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2018, p.2). Layer (2017) found pockets of good practice across the sector in relation to UDL and inclusion but could not draw any conclusions about the overall picture. Currently, there is no sector-wide baseline against which to make comparisons between different universities (Draffan *et al.*, 2017; Williams *et al.*, 2017).

Self-assessment Tool: Methodology & Construction

Student and staff focus groups worked together at LSBU to develop the self-assessment, which included links to appropriate services to help signpost students early to sources of support. The project team comprised academic staff from the Education Division and professional services colleagues, including library staff, academic developers, digital literacy staff and members of the Dyslexia, Wellbeing and Disability service teams. Following ethical approval, a series of questions was developed by the group with input from students coming up to the end of the first year of their BA Education Studies degree. A digital skills expert turned the questions into an accessible Bristol Online Survey (BOS) which was piloted with students who had been offered places on the course.

The self-assessment was designed to be simple and accessible. It was sent out in August by email to an undergraduate cohort of pre-entry Education Studies students by The Course Director and framed in terms of enabling students to take a proactive approach to maximising their chance of academic success. Students did not have to report the results of their self-assessment to anyone but what they learned about themselves formed the basis of a productive early conversation with their academic advisor.

A second protocol was devised for use two months into the course, in November, in order to ascertain the degree to which students had taken the initiative to access services. Staff felt that by helping students to grasp their own academic development early on, the deficit model could be avoided and that early intervention was essential in order to

sidestep a scenario in which a student felt they were failing before seeking help. The second self-assessment was designed to keep up the momentum.

Feedback from students indicated that the exercise made them feel both proactive and reassured. Some were amazed at the sort of services available to them and all were very encouraged by the process of self-assessment and independent help-seeking. Professional services staff noticed increased uptake in their provision as well as a more proactive stance in relation to sourcing assistance on the part of the students.

In both self-assessments, the questions were fairly generically rather than course specific. The rationale was to create an instrument which could be useful beyond the Education Division and potentially beyond LSBU. Underpinning the approach was the intention to provide easy access to supporting resources and services, therefore links were created within the questionnaires to take students to where they needed to go for help in just one click.

Pre-Entry Survey

In order to encourage students who may feel reluctant to share concerns about their own level of academic competence at an early stage, the pre-entry survey was designed to be anonymous. Thirty-five completed the task. They were encouraged to engage proactively and assured that they would certainly identify some areas in which they would need to develop their skills and find appropriate signposts to help them to do so. Opportunities were created for students to access support over the summer, both to reduce potential anxiety and to encourage a positive approach to study.

The survey included only minimal relevant demographic data, focussing on existing qualifications and family HE-study history. Fifteen questions were presented under the following four headings: Wellbeing & Practicalities, Academic Skills, Library Skills, and ICT & Digital Skills. Each section included downloadable signposts to appropriate resources and services. The BOS was set up in order to record responses anonymously for research purposes. 'Are you confident about academic writing including using appropriate academic vocabulary and language?' is an example of a question in the 'Academic Skills' section.

Post-Entry Survey

During a Study Skills session in November, the Post-Entry Survey was completed in class by forty-eight students. It included the same demographics plus information gathered pre-entry in order to provide points of comparison. Nineteen questions were divided into the following five areas: Wellbeing and Practicalities, Academic Skills, Library Skills, ICT and Digital skills, and LSBU-specific Digital skills. Downloadable signposts to resources and services were included as in the pre-entry survey. Responses were recorded again for research purposes.

Comparing Pre- and Post-Entry

Student areas of concern changed between the pre- and post-entry phase as they had been able to address some of the things, they were worried about in their first two months at university, or even over the summer before starting, by accessing help from the relevant service. Pre-entry the top five concerns were: critical reading skills, disability support arrangements, referencing, literature search and spreadsheets. Post-entry they were: housing and accommodation, disability support arrangements, time management, literature search and critical reading.

Feedback on taking the Self-Assessments and Accessing Support

Thirteen students participated in a focus group and provided feedback. As well as finding the self-assessment exercise useful and confidence boosting, students reported that the surveys themselves were: 'Easy to understand', 'Straightforward and Easy', 'They didn't take long' and they were 'Helpful to new students'. A more onerous task would probably have yielded poorer results. In the post-enrolment survey, the students were a bit of a captive audience as the task was undertaken as part of a study skills session. The team feels strongly that embedding this sort of activity into the curriculum did much to increase its efficacy and have taken this approach forward.

Post-entry the top five services students accessed were: student life centre help desk, library help desk, learning resources centre (digital skills) help desk, student union and skills for learning (academic writing). Professional services colleagues are also timetabled to come into classes for specific purposes such as to teach about Harvard referencing. Student feedback about this approach is positive.

Impact

The self-assessment was part of a story in which the opportunity to find out about and access pre-entry skills development workshops and electronic resources were vital components. Momentum was maintained because of the good working relationship between academic and professional services staff. Messages introduced pre-entry were reinforced in the induction and in sessions in which professional services staff came into class to help with skills development. Mapping services benefitted staff as well as students as signposting was made easier by having access to a complete picture of available help. UDL is somewhat dependant on joined-up thinking and this research was certainly an exercise in joined-up thinking and professional co-operation between teams. Student input into the research was valuable and congruent with the principle of 'nothing about us without us'.

Students were asked to evaluate the support they received. Typically they reported developing feelings of confidence and belonging as a result of taking control of navigating support services effectively. They talked about being comforted and reassured that they were not all alone but could access help based on their own self-assessed requirements which they could talk through in productive conversations with academic advisors.

Academic advisors discussed student agency in respect of taking control of their own learning and proactively and independently seeking help with academic development. Professional services staff noted an increase in take-up of the services they offer.

The following comments are illustrative of learners' reactions to the initiative.

'You think oh am I really ready for uni, am I going to be able to finish it? But then when you know there are things out there that can help you it gives you that confidence to take the step to better yourself but know that there is always help just in case you do have difficulties.'

'Because it asks you about how you cope and then it says this could help you rather than saying this is here to help you. It's going from yourself to the help that's available rather than from the help to yourself.'

Reflection on Research Questions

Consideration of why participating staff felt it necessary to support undergraduate students through the transition stage into Higher Education coalesced around the idea that students do not start university with all their academic ducks in a row. Furthermore, students who lack higher education experience do not necessarily know what it is that they don't know. Even if they are aware of the extent of skills they might need to develop, students are unlikely to know how to go about getting the help they require. For these reasons, staff felt that the self-assessment tools described here, along with a coherent map of services with useful links, would be effective. Feedback indicates that the exercise was helpful for students and it is something which will be repeated in subsequent years.

Implementation of a pilot self-assessment tool with undergraduate students pre- and post-enrolment was examined and the initial findings revealed that it proved to be a helpful and practical approach. It is possible to follow participating students throughout their course to gather their perspectives on the extent to which being involved has resulted in long-term benefits. Certainly, in the medium term, the project was greeted with enthusiasm by staff and students.

Spin-off benefits included providing opportunities for academics and professional services colleagues to work together to assist students. In addition, aspects of the Education Studies induction and curriculum were tweaked in order to embed information about sources of support more fully. This is working well.

Reflecting on the impact of both the self-assessment tool and the collaborative project as a whole has led the team to conclude that its value could well extend beyond the originally participating cohort. Initial planning took into account the sense of thinking bigger and making the protocols broad-brush enough to be useful beyond Education Studies at LSBU. In the spirit of social justice in education and promoting inclusive practice, the team are happy to share this work in order for it to be of benefit to others.

Sharing the Resource

At the end of this brief paper is a working link to the survey. Creating a joined-up map of professional services which students can access is part of the process which will have to be undertaken at an institutional level. In practical term users will need to: set up a BOS account, identify a cohort with whom to share the survey, provide students with a suitably encouraging email, collate and analyse results and use the information to support future planning. Future joint cross-institutional research is of interest to the authors.

Links to LSBU Student Support Assessment Tools

[Pre-Entry Survey 2016 Student View](#)

[Post-Entry Survey 2016 Student View](#)

An example of a service map

Need help or advice?

University can sometimes be an overwhelming place, and from time to time we all need a little additional support or information. Here's some of the ways we can help with that:

University Advice Service

Student Advice – Offers a wide range of face to face or telephone advice, support and guidance on issues relating to finance, debts, housing and any aspect of settling into University life.

Student Mental Health & Wellbeing

Mental Health and Wellbeing – Confidential support and advice with personal or emotional difficulties, including access to counselling. Offers face to face or telephone appointments.

Disability & Dyslexia Support

Disability & Dyslexia Support provides advice and information about disabilities, specific learning difficulties (including dyslexia), mental health conditions or other medical conditions.

Drop in to the Student Life Centre
(t) 0207 815 6454 (e) studentlife@lsbu.ac.uk

Skills for Learning

Learning Resource Centre – Free additional support for any student who may want to improve their academic ability or professional skills
(e) studyskills@lsbu.ac.uk

Immigration & International Student Advice

Offering free specialist immigration and visa advice, alongside social cultural information & support for international students
(t) 0207 815 7036 / 6189 /7037
(e) international.advice@lsbu.ac.uk



Advice Service

Students' Union Advice Service

We offer free confidential and impartial advice and guidance to any student who may face difficulties with the university and their studies.

(t) 0207 815 6060 (e) info@lsbsu.org (w) www.lsbsu.org/advice

Academic Misconduct ● Student Disciplinary Matters ● Student Complaints

Full Time Students' Union Representatives

President

president@lsbsu.org

VP: Welfare & Equalities

vp.welfare@lsbsu.org

VP: Education

vp.education@lsbsu.org

VP: Activities & Employability

vp.activities@lsbsu.org

Communities on the Campus

Lesbian, gay, Bi, Trans+ or questioning students

www.lsbsu.org/lgbt

Women students

www.lsbsu.org/women

Black, Asian, Arab & Minority Ethnic Students

www.lsbsu.org/bame

Disabled (incl. dyslexic) Students

www.lsbsu.org/dds

International Students

www.lsbsu.org/international

European Union Students

www.lsbsu.org/eu



Contraception & Sexual Health

Confidential impartial information and advice on anything related to sex, contraception (including accessing condoms)/emergency contraception or sexual health testing/screening available to every student

<http://www.uow.org/unisex>

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Personal Assistant scheme: help or hindrance?

Dr. Armineh Soorenia

Abstract

This article examines the significant impact the Personal Assistant (PA) scheme has made to disabled students' quality of life, specifically in the British higher education (HE) context. Grounded in a group of disabled international students' experiences, the paper explores the reasons why some participants thought the scheme helped with their inclusion while studying at their universities, enabling them to participate in the student community, while others decided against using the service and go it alone. Thus, the intersectionality of students' 'disabled' and 'international' identities, and the confluence of barriers when working with their PAs in a different cultural context to that of their own is central to this article. The research questions, therefore, included: What cultural challenges and practical barriers, if any, did disabled international students encounter when working with their PAs? What are the main reasons given by disabled international students for not using the PA service? The goal of this research was to rely as much as possible on the students' experiences and views of the situation being studied.

The conclusion suggests some practical alternatives. The flexible and creative insights are highlighted in order to improve the PA service provision and work towards bringing about a more inclusive university environment for disabled students with a wide range of needs.

Keywords: Disabled international students, intersectionality, inclusivity, identity, university education, personal assistant

Introduction

Possession of a university degree can be a passport to sought-after positions in the employment market, increasing one's earning power as well as job satisfaction (EHRC, 2010). Completing a university degree is therefore considered to be the "foundation for improved life opportunities" (Hixenbaugh *et al.*, 2012: 285), often with graduates earning over £10,000 more than non-graduates and paying high tax in return. The qualifications and skills obtained while studying at a university are even more significant for disabled people's right to independent living, facilitating opportunities to exercise the same level of choice and control in everyday life of the mainstream as their non-disabled peers (HCIL, 1990).

That said, in addition to its enabling nature, mainstream education can be disabling for various groups of students with different biological and cultural backgrounds (Hurst, 1998; Lalvania, 2013). A wealth of research has evidenced that disabled domestic students experience disabling barriers in areas such as reasonable adjustments, informational and physical access, funding and pedagogy in the HE sector

(Beauchamp-Pryor, 2013; Collinson *et al.*, 2011; Hydera & Tissota, 2013; Kendall, 2016).

This paper defines the concept of 'disability' through the social model lens (Barnes, 1993). In the HE context, the social model acknowledges various environmental, attitudinal, financial and teaching barriers obstructing disabled students' progress, advocating for their removal, rather than blaming individual disabled students for their failure to access and participate in the university environment (Riddell *et al.*, 2005). For this reason, the social model epistemology and the language related to this perspective on 'disability' has been deployed throughout the article. The term 'students with disabilities' has been avoided, since it implies that the disabling effects rest within disabled individual him/herself rather than from the educational system and/or larger society.

Literature also demonstrates that international students experience a range of personal, social, linguistic and academic strains throughout their university experience whilst living and studying in a different country (Graham, 2012; Martirosyan *et al.*, 2015). Besides dealing with the common problems of adjustment to a new culture, international students attending universities abroad "have to contend with novel social and educational organisations, behaviours and expectations" (Zhou *et al.*, 2008: 63). For most international students emotional and affective issues such as homesickness, lack of confidence, stress, time-management, participation in support services; practical challenges: visas, provision of information pre-/post-arrival, accommodation, policies relating to financial support (Amos, 2015; Roberts *et al.*, 2015; Tsui, 2017) are therefore not uncommon.

For these reasons, most international students are confronted with a degree of culture shock. The way people live and work in the host country may challenge their previous perceptions and expectations. Nevertheless, for disabled international students, the situation is often intensified by additional factors such as physical and informational accessibility, and the type and level of disability-support needed and received, which can indeed significantly affect a successful study period (McLean *et al.*, 2003).

Culture and ethnicity shape family attitudes and social relations to 'disability' and disabled people. The resulting cultural differences in social structures often lead to differential access to social power and participation in the community. Opportunities opened to disabled people, therefore, vary significantly across cultures, presenting differing attitudes to 'disability' influenced by different elements including educational, legislative and social. Disabled international students, therefore not only experience the cultural differences afforded by living and learning in a new country, but often face cultural variation in interpreting and understanding 'disability' (Conway & McDow, 2010). Students from the USA, for instance, may be disappointed and frustrated by some of the barriers they are confronted with in the UK, difficulties that may not exist in their country following various anti-discrimination legislation (Hurst, 1998).

For the international students who need high levels of support in their home countries, additional financial and personal burdens associated with this support in a new context can exacerbate the transition (ibid). These students might initially feel they must cope on their own without assistance, therefore choose not to disclose the details of their impairments (UKCOSA & Skill, 2005). In a British context, where the findings of this paper is grounded, the decision not to disclose might also be influenced by the fact that there are no specific statutory grants available for disabled international students' support needs, who are only allowed to remain in the UK on the condition that they make no recourse to any public funds, including such welfare benefits as Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) (Soorenian, 2008). The DSA grants pay for non-medical support, specialist equipment, and extra travel and other items that may be needed as a direct result of an on-going health condition, sensory or physical impairment, mental-health condition or specific learning difficulty (DirectGov, 2019b).

Linguistic and cultural barriers in assessing and diagnosing international students' impairments and related support needs can pause further problems. The difficulties in the process of testing and diagnosing non-native English speakers for dyslexia have been highlighted and discussed (Cottrell, 1996). The entry tests to English speaking higher education institutions (HEIs) are similarly reported to be problematic for students with dyslexia (Brandt, 2011).

Additionally, preliminary medical tests in some countries may effectively exclude disabled international students from accessing and participating in the host university education (McLean *et al.*, 2003). Farrar (2004), on the other hand, considers non-disclosure of impairments in the university setting to be impacted by historical and cultural barriers. Due to various cultural norms related to previous disability discrimination experiences and a corresponding fear of the effects of disclosure where 'disability' is understood in individual medical model terms, some international students may prefer not to disclose an impairment or choose not to define themselves as 'disabled' (ECU, 2012). Thereby cultural factors affect disabled students' opportunities to participate in the HE sector in a variety of ways (McLean *et al.*, 2003).

The remainder of this article will focus on disabled international students' experiences of using the PA scheme in the British universities, and their relationships with the PAs, to support the case for disabled students' right to inclusive and equal education. This discussion is informed by the findings of a project conducted for my Ph.D. research. Based on my first-hand experience of being a disabled international student in British universities, I conducted a qualitative study with 30 disabled international students with a range of impairments in 11 British universities. Three of the participants were from Africa, four from Asia, six from the far-East, six others from North America, and 11 from Europe. The difficulties participants faced in their HE settings based on their multiple identities of 'disabled', 'international' and often 'mature' and 'postgraduate' students were examined.

Method

I used a snowballing method through networking and chain referral techniques in several national educational organisations to recruit the participants. To begin with, I used the collective data generation strategy of a focus group with five participants to stimulate and refine topics for the semi-structured interviews. The practical and explorative data collection strategy of semi-structured interviews (three telephone, 12 face-to-face, and 15 email interviews) was chosen because of the investigative nature of the study. Participants shared their stories of a range of academic and non-academic experiences associated with being a disabled international student in their universities.

During the transcription and analyses of interviews, I deployed pseudonyms to ensure anonymity throughout. To avoid invention or misinterpretation of interviewees' accounts, participants were asked to read the transcripts through and make any changes, additions or exclusions, as they saw fit. I then read the transcripts several times and coded them based on lists of themes and categories, derived from reading previous research findings and reflecting on theory. Data was matched with each theme carefully and double-checked to ensure accuracy.

The study investigated the extent to which disabled international students' double or multiple identities influenced and shaped their various university experiences such as admission, disability services received and social life. Analysing disabled international participants' experiences evidenced that their disability-related concerns were often amplified due to various linguistic and cultural needs. The data showed that at times participants experienced discriminatory treatments on the grounds of their single identities of disabled, international, or mature students. However, in most cases, they experienced difficulties due to the intersection of these identities. Yet, isolating a single contributory cause for their marginalisation was difficult, since their disadvantages were seemingly so simultaneous, intertwine and intersectional. By using participants' interview extracts related to the PA services received, next a complex interaction of multiple identities will be explained, how being 'disabled' and 'international' students, sometimes in isolation, and other times in combination disadvantaged them when utilising the university PA services, which are often created without their unique and specific needs in mind.

Legislation

The individual medical and social definitions of disability continue to have particular relevance in the practice and policy documents of the British university sector for disabled students. Whilst the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA, 2001) adopts the individual medical model way of thinking when interpreting disability; the Equality Act (EA, 2010) tends to be more in tune with the social model understanding of disability.

In 2001, the SENDA marked the first entry of disability in education into statute books. Although reflecting an individual medical model approach when discussing the legal definition of disability, the SENDA has emphasised 'inclusion' in greater measures in schools, colleges and universities. On 1 September 2002, the implementation began with the duty to not treat disabled students less favourably than their non-disabled counterparts. This was followed by the duty to make adjustments involving auxiliary aids and services (e.g. sign language interpreters and note-takers) on 1 September 2003, and then the duty to make adjustments to physical features in the next stage on 1 September 2005.

In October 2010, as a single equality act, in the public sector, the EA came into force. This act replaced and extended the existing anti-discrimination laws for race, disability and gender. The term 'protected characteristics' (including age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief [or none], sex, sexual orientation) was introduced as grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful. The Act also included 'a combined discrimination' (section 14) for the first time, which purports to protect people who experience direct discrimination based on a combination of two or more protected characteristics. Subsequently, in April 2011 the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) came into force across Great Britain. This duty requires public bodies to have due regard towards the need to eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. In principle, this implies that there is a greater legal responsibility upon universities as any other public body to ensure that their buildings and activities are accessible to a range of students.

The UK's anti-discriminatory legislation has led to the publication of several national guidelines (e.g. ECU, 2012), recommending a number of adjustments and flexible arrangements to different areas of university life in order to improve, increase and promote disabled students' participation in education. Legally universities have a duty to comply with various legislation, policy and guidelines on inclusive education, and whilst the rhetoric found on their website and literature is sound and positive, the degree to which these principles are being practiced in reality is questionable. This is particularly so as definitions and responses within legislation, policy and provision still predominantly reflect the deficit model of disability. The investigation on which this paper is based focuses on the different understandings of disability in university PA service provision for disabled international students.

As evident in participants' voices, equal access to and participation in HE is still problematic for many disabled students, especially those with international backgrounds. Barriers to physical access, curriculum delivery and assessment procedures as well as information and attitude continue to exist. The research participants needed to receive the wider support and understanding of staff, to enable them to remove such multiple educational barriers.

The Disabled People's Movement has identified choice and control over their support arrangements (Woodin, 2006) to be an essential condition of independent living. Accordingly, the PA scheme as “human help with everyday tasks” (Hasler, 2003: unpagged) is considered to give assistance to disabled people to take control of their own lives, deciding how, where, when and by whom the support is provided with no need for gratitude (Brisenden, 1996; Ratzka, 2004). Rather than being dependent on family, friends, agency or council staff, disabled people would be given the money to employ PAs, to facilitate their independence. The practical benefits gained from empowering disabled people to take control of their own support arrangements are therefore multiple (Clevnert & Johansson 2007; Guldvik *et al.*, 2014). With its central ideas of restoring power, choice and control, and disabled people’s full and equal participation (Zarb, 2003), the PA service is considered to be a significant tool for independent living (Shakespeare *et al.*, 2017).

As an essential support service to give a more inclusive university experience to disabled students, the PA scheme is largely organised and managed by HEIs (Earle, 1999). Prior to the inception of this scheme, three options were open to disabled students: firstly the use of Community Service Volunteers (CSVs); secondly residing and studying at a local institution, where disabled students could rely on family and friends; or thirdly through distance learning; otherwise their university choices were extremely limited (*ibid*).

In my Ph.D. project, participants were invited to share their experiences of working with PAs. They reported to utilise this support in a range of academic and non-academic activities, including shopping and guiding them in visits to the library, Student Union, sports centre, student medical practice and hospital appointments. PAs also provided support with reading print materials, scanning, typing and acting as voice-overs (for students with hearing impairments). Participants’ experiences varied across the board. Whilst Ned, for instance, had a PA working with him as little as four hours a week, Ed used the PA scheme for eight hours a day, every day. Mlinda explained how her British university stipulated the number of her support hours and the PA service was in place when she arrived at the university. Sova, conversely, pointed to her having a say in this process: “It was up to me how many hours of PA support and what technical aids I need”.

Toney detailed the help of Disability Service Unit (DSU) in his university with recruiting his PAs. Following his request for subject-specific PAs, the DSU had to find suitable candidates, by publicising the post in Toney’s academic department first. Then they advertised the job more widely, in other university departments and even external agencies. Following this, Tony together with a staff member from the DSU interviewed and recruited the suitable PAs and waited for the checks from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), now the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), to take place. The DBS provides access to criminal records and other relevant information to employers and licensing bodies in England and Wales (DirectGov, 2019a).

Reflections on PA Training

Seven participants were satisfied with the adequacy of the training their PAs had received. Ned capitalised on the positive attributes of his PAs, most frequently associated with a flexible attitude and good communication skills. For this reason, Ned believed that his PAs did not need any extra training and that his support needs were adequately met.

Joseph was of the opinion that personality differences were in play when he was experiencing some difficulties with his PAs, and no training could solve these differences. Nicky pointed to the crucial issues of boundaries and confidentiality. Boundaries refer to the social and professional norms that guide emotions and actions through tacit obligations upon the self and concomitant expectations of others. In reference to the PA scheme, these rules apply to disabled employers and PAs' feelings about one another, the nature of expected interactions, activities and work (Shakespeare *et al.*, 2017). Nicky talked about her PA, James who also worked as a PA for her disabled flat-mate, Julie, with whom Nicky had fallen out. James would keep Julie's side in the disagreements and Nicky believed this was because James and Julie had formed a romantic relationship. Nicky felt the chemistry between James and Julie not only resulted in crossing of their own working boundaries but also created tension and confusion in her relationship with both James and Julie. However, Nicky too thought this was a personality issue and not a training matter.

Sally, on the other hand, was concerned about the lack of training PAs had in order to assist students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia. As a student with a visual impairment, Tanji commented on her PA not having any academic subject-specific knowledge, particularly for note-taking purposes. Similarly, Ed felt the PAs did not have the appropriate skills to be a sighted guide, as well as helping him to locate where the objects were in a closed environment using touch only. He had previously tried to train his PAs himself but thought it was ultimately the DSU's responsibility to deliver such training. Whilst participants did acknowledge the inevitable impact of some interpersonal issues on their working relationships, the general dissatisfaction indicated that more impairment and academic subject-specific training for PAs may improve some students' experiences.

On a different note, Sova discussed the inflexible, slow and bureaucratised procedure of organising PA rotas. The system did not allow her to make any changes or to attend urgent appointments. Likewise, Joseph commented on how the person who usually wrote rotas was on leave in the busy period of exams. He thought this was confusing and unprofessional, and interrupted students and PAs' routine.

Elaine was the only student, who talked about the importance of having consistency in working with the same PA. She had to allow time and space for her only PA, David, to learn about her impairment-related needs and how to assist her effectively. Elaine's experience reflected Wang's argument (2007: 86) that: "A partnership grows as mutual

understanding increases and thus a period of acculturation is necessary". Elaine explained:

I find it easier if someone just knows where everything is, because it is stress, effort having to constantly say 'Can you help me with this?' 'Can you help me with that?' so mainly working with David has made it easier for me.

Highlighting the importance of consistency further, Elaine recounted a scenario when in the absence of David, the DSU allocated her another PA: "I got on very, very well with the new PA, and he was lovely, but I didn't understand, why they'd given me someone with zero typing skills to help me with typing."

Elaine's wish to work only with David can arguably indicate her dependency on one PA, in a profession with a relatively high staff turnover. This was confirmed later on in her interview when she expressed concerns about David going away during summer, at a critical time when Elaine had to complete her dissertation. Toney, on the other hand, did not mind having several PAs. He did emphasise, nevertheless the importance of a clear communication line amongst all his PAs so that time was not wasted, and support was used efficiently.

PAs or Friends

Reflecting a number of studies, exploring the issue of PA and the way in which this relates to disabled people's increasing independence (Morris, 1993; Oliver & Zarb, 1992; Shakespeare *et al.*, 2017; Twigg & Atkin, 1994), eight participants found working with PAs helped them feel independent. They thought PAs facilitated their personal development, helping them in fulfilling their potential, yet respecting their rights to self-determination and choice. These participants referred to the PAs as enablers and facilitators.

Owing to the amount of trust they had invested in their PAs, Elaine, Mlinda, Nora and Peter described friendship as a significant element of these relationships. Nora talked about the relationship in terms of trust and emotional connection: "My PAs are very friendly and provide a relief for me since I sometimes have the feeling of banging my head against a brick wall". Participants' relationships with their PAs supported Woodin's (2006: 117) description of the "paid friendship"). The fundamental stance being "the decision to treat personal assistants as paid friends rather than 'friends who were paid'" (Woodin, 2006: 133). The hybrid nature of these relationships often results in blurring of boundaries' and shifting of tensions, a process which is complicated, confusing the emotional entailments and appropriateness of behaviour.

However, Vasey (2000: unpagged) advises against this, stipulating: "Be friendly, but do not be friends while the PA is in your employment". Whilst this author raises concerns about the likelihood of friendship resulting in losing control over the working relationship, Ungerson (1999) warns that where the PA/disabled people relationships involve friendship, emotional pain is more likely to occur. Marfisi (2002) associates the

reliance on PAs to be friends with as a sign of weakness and loneliness on the part of the employer. Conversely, Shakespeare *et al.* (2017) argue that even though such defining characteristics of friendships as emotional attachment and shared interests are also present in PA/disabled people relationships, the latter type of relationships also retains fundamental qualities of professionalism, and they must not be mistaken with friendships alone.

Murray (2002), and Vasey (2000) acknowledge the inhibiting effects that the presence of a PA can create on students' social relationships when in group situations. This was reflected in Joseph's experience. Although he needed his PAs to accompany him to different university buildings, he found the presence of the PA problematic when trying to integrate into the classroom. It was only after Joseph started going to the lectures on his own that he felt more included in the class. Similarly, Ed was not used to working with a PA in his home country on a daily basis and pointed out to the constraining effects this had on privacy with his friends. He did not feel comfortable communicating with his friends when a PA was present.

Joseph discussed how his country had more of a culture of volunteering, where students helped on a more spontaneous basis; he thought this style had a more socially inclusive approach. On similar volunteering accounts, Van Acker (1998) refers to a university example in Belgium, where groups of around 15 non-disabled students live together for the full academic year with a disabled student in the accessible residential halls. They provide 24-hours assistance every day of the week without payment, on a rota basis. This author (1998) contends that the involvement of non-disabled students with a disabled student in an everyday setting helps them to confront and rid themselves of any prejudice, generally working towards breaking down of pre-conceptions.

Although fellow students can comprise an important group of people who have been "stimulated to take on greater involvement with their disabled peers" (Van Acker, 1998: 41), the charitable basis of 'help' has been criticised for reinforcing dependency (Shakespeare, 2000). Discussing similar voluntary schemes, Ratzka (1997: 58) argues: "Obviously, users of assistance from volunteers cannot demand the same competent, punctual, and courteous work from volunteers as they might from assistants who are paid competitive wages". The provision of the PA scheme has been designed to prevent disabled people from enforced dependency on informal support networks, enabling them to have healthy relationships with family and friends, and prevent the modification or compromising of the family life and friendships (Martinez, 2003; Ratzka, 1997).

Though from different countries, Ed and Joseph's experiences may indicate a cultural barrier in giving and receiving support, and the expectations from an assistant particularly in a social context. Without any prior experience of working with PAs and lack of clear information received about this working relationship, many uncertainties were expressed. Additionally, working with PAs with international backgrounds created

linguistic difficulties for both parties and resulted in some misunderstandings, due to a lack of fluency in English. For participants, this hindrance in communication proved to be an additional obstacle in a scheme, which they thought was implemented to help remove barriers. Inconsistency and variation in styles of cooking were also noted to be problematic for participants, who were unable to cook for themselves, and who worked with a large number of PAs from different cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, none of the participants had any objections to working with PAs of the opposite sex.

Limitations in the PA Scheme

The reasons why not all the participants used the PA scheme were wide-ranging. Some institutions did not have specialised PAs to meet the participants' impairment-specific needs. Whilst Sally needed ADHD-specific support, Angela wanted a PA to help her with proof-reading and dyslexia tuition. Jenny and Tina would have benefited from having help with domestic tasks. Olivia, on the other hand, expected to receive "counselling" type of emotional support from her PA: "Someone to whom I can explain my problems, someone who can help me solve them by giving useful information and arrange services". That said, Olivia's expectations did not match with the PA responsibilities identified in the Skill's publication (2011).

The service was simply not offered to five of the participants. Because of this, Mary had to rely on informal support. Due to the nature of their impairments, Margaret (with a mobility impairment), and Norman (with a hearing impairment), did not need to use the service. Nathan refused to use the scheme, determined to prove that he could do the work alone. Carol stigmatised students who used a PA scheme by trying to rationalise that, to receive PA support, students had to have a certain type of compatible personality: "I think, you need to be a specific kind of personality to have a PA, and people will find me annoying to deal with".

In reference to their financial limitations, four students commented on the high PA costs. For the lack of funds, Domenic employed his own PAs, who in Domenic's opinion did not have the same level of training as the university PAs. Whilst Peter's sponsors covered his PA expenses, he thought the PA rates were especially high for 'international' students, who could not access statutory funds such as DSA like their domestic counter-parts to cover any impairment-related costs.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrated that the development of PA schemes in participants' universities made a meaningful contribution to their participation in the student community, and they were generally satisfied with using this scheme. However, with minimal guidance received from their DSUs, some participants identified cultural differences and confusions related to their experiences and expectations when working with PAs in the UK. The problems included linguistic difficulties, unfamiliarity with how the PA scheme worked in the UK, and feelings of discomfort with the level and kind of support received. Participants were also critical of the high PA costs for 'international'

students, who were already confronted with high living and study costs. Other issues, not exclusive to international students, such as organisational matters, consistency in PA numbers and training were also important to the participants. Due to both staff and students' lack of awareness of each other's cultures and limitation of funding for 'international' students, discrepancies in expectations occurred and sometimes participants were precluded from readily using, or getting the most out of, this service. For disabled students to be able to benefit from mainstream education, progress in the general curriculum, and to have the opportunity to be educated alongside non-disabled students, barriers in accessing the PA scheme need to be removed.

As such the following recommendations could improve the student and PAs' relationship in the HE context. The DSUs need to communicate with the prospective disabled students about their disability-related needs prior to arriving in the university, and have a culturally-sensitive, more specific mandatory needs assessment procedure in place. The process must be simplified, reducing the stages of translation and the mediators involved. The decision-making power from the service-providers should be directed towards the service-users. This will ensure that at least some support is in place when students arrive at their universities, followed by more appropriate support after the detailed assessment for individual students. The outcomes of the needs assessments must genuinely and accurately reflect students' support needs, rather than based on budgetary constraints or support available. Following the initial assessment, an ongoing effective monitoring scheme needs to be put in place to review any changes in students' needs and the appropriateness of support offered.

DSUs need to provide a 'reasonable' amount of PA support, as a base provision to those students who need this essential assistance, regardless of their nationality or financial status. Students must be given briefing on the practicalities of this working relationship. They must have choice and control as to whom and how many PAs to work with and a flexible working rota. Universities need to have links with external organisations to provide specialised support with relevant expertise in meeting a range of disabled students' impairment-specific needs. The HEIs must also provide ongoing training and support for PAs. The training must be responsive to disabled students' concerns and as a bottom-up activity involving them in the design, delivery and review of the programmes.

Through these insights, the intention is to work towards creating a more inclusive education system, where the PA scheme could work more effectively in removing education barriers for disabled students. It is in this dynamic framework that difference is not being excluded or merely tolerated, but it is understood, publicly identified, engaged with and celebrated (Ainscow, 2005; Barton, 2003). To achieve this, the "irrelevance, discriminatory and exclusionary features" (Barton, 2003: 14) of existing policy and practice should be understood and challenged. Thereby inclusive education contributes towards a wider strategy to promote an inclusive and democratic society, achieve education for all' and remove prejudice.

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Tomorrows Disability Officer - A Cornerstone on the Universal Design Campus

AHEAD with TCD: Mary Quirke, Patricia McCarthy, Declan Treanor & Conor Mc Guckin

“there are no strangers here – only friends you haven’t met yet” - W B Yeats

This paper will explore the evolution of one of the key roles on campus for students with a disability in the context of Universal Design for Learning - that of the Disability Officer. The role of Disability Officer, while neither a teacher or a learner – is primarily occupied with all those engaged in making learning accessible. It is a role that is very much part of the learning experience for any student with a disability. The challenge for Disability Officers on a UDL campus is that while they are part of the learning environment on campus they - similar to other non-teaching professionals - can find it challenging to position themselves on the current UDL framework. In recent years Disability Officers in Ireland started an exploratory journey on their role in the future of Higher Education on a UDL campus and developed the first role document. As higher education becomes more attainable, the curriculum develops and technology improves; making decisions about what will work for a student with a disability can require knowledge and expertise about not just teaching and learning, but also disability in the learning environment in and of itself. In creating this document, it became increasingly evident that UDL on campus was transforming not just the world of the student but also the world of others on campus, including that of the disability officer. Thus, while UDL is making waves on campus and redesigning not just pedagogical approaches; is it timely to explore the UDL principles and ask – what do we mean by learning community?.

This paper will explore one of the nine principles of UDL – the eight principles that focuses on community - and examine what this means for others engaged in learning communities.

Keywords: Universal Design for Learning, Third level learning, Disability Officer, Community of Learners

Fitting the Job to the woman: Fitting the woman to the job?

Stemming from a history of design and ergonomic principles that sought to answer the conundrum of “Fitting the job to the (wo)man: Fitting the (wo)man to the job? Universal

Design for Learning (UDL) has moved design principles forward to the same extent as we have deviated from the medical model of disability. However, until now, these two important and conjoined concepts have not been fully explored in relation to the non-curricular issues that affect the modern learning environment.

As a concept, UDL has been adopted across the higher education system in Ireland as the key UDL principles support accessibility and inclusivity for an increasingly diverse student population. There is an increasing emphasis on supporting not just students with disabilities but a diversity of students and working to promote engagement within more diverse fields of study in Ireland.

This paper sets out a position that argues for a wider implementation of the theoretical underpinnings of the UDL principles to HEI policy and practices – notably that UDL provides a robust framework that can provide solutions to all HEI students and staff that extend beyond pedagogical instruction and built environment issues. Explicitly, we argue that the role of the Disability Officer can evolve and develop to become a cornerstone of a UDL centred campus of knowledge exchange.

They Have Arrived: Non-traditional Students . . . Students with Disabilities

The increase in the numbers of students with disabilities has risen significantly in recent years. Between 2009/2010 and 2016/2017, the numbers rose from 6,321 (3.3% of the student population) to 12,630 (5.7% of the student population). Such rises can be attributed to societal, policy, and legislative shift from a medical model perspective, and that of special education, to that of a social model paradigm which argues for the need to reduce the systemic barriers that obstruct students with disabilities “. . . from gaining access to the same academic benefits . . .” (Wendelborg & Tøssebro, 2010, p. 702) as their non-disabled peers.

Expanding the post-compulsory education opportunities for students with disabilities has become a priority national and international in recent decades. Many factors have contributed to this including the implementation of government-sponsored access policies and the increased level of supports available to students with disability at all levels in the education system. The Fund for Students with Disabilities in Ireland was established in 1994 with the explicit goal of supporting disabled students in further or higher education (Higher Education Authority (HEA), (2005). It was then recognised that students with

disabilities lacked sufficient opportunity to access and participate fully in Higher Education (HEA, 2008). Consequently, in 2009 the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) was launched nationally an innovative admission scheme used by colleges and universities to offers places to students with disabilities.

And so, Have They: Rising Numbers and Increased Diversity of Students on Campus

Importantly, the developments for students with disabilities can also be aligned with increases in numbers from other diverse groups. Admissions schemes for those from socio-disadvantaged communities (HEAR), adult learners seeking opportunity and programs such as 'Springboard' for graduates and professionals seeking career change in a recessionary world all have led to approximately 40% of the student population now being from a non-traditional group. This together with the decreasing retention rates have created a perfect storm and placed a demand on providers of education to rethink their engagement with learners.

UDL – a new phenomenon on campus

UDL is a new phenomenon that seeks to create inclusive and accessible environments so that greater numbers of learners can realise their potential. However, it could be argued that the principles of UDL have suffered as they may have been considered as primarily of use to a pedagogical approach that requires teachers to redesign their instructional methods. Rather, we argue that UDL can present educators with flexible tools and approaches that can be deployed to address contemporary educational issues – notably the importance of the wider educational experience that exists beyond the lecture hall and seminar room. As a solution-focused approach, UDL presents useful challenges - not just for those designing and teaching the curriculum, but also to those colleagues who have traditionally been tangential to the formal learning relationship.

UDL Principles – some challenges

The nine UDL principles are focused on teaching and learning in the classroom (e.g., Principle 1: Equitable use; Principle 3: Perceptible information [effectively communicated]). For our argument, we focus here on Principle Eight – a “community of

learners”. We also take the approach that community is a broad concept that can have multiple meanings and participants in a traditional HEI setting.

To place this in context, we have already examined the changes in the higher education system that have led to the adoption of the UDL principles. We will now tease out how UD and UDL provide a framework that will lend itself to a more inclusive curriculum on campus. However, on campus, there are more involved in successful learning than just students and academics/professors and we propose to explore this through a UDL lens. The challenge, when doing so, is that while it is easy to envisage this in relation to teaching staff, it not as apparent when positioning the “others”.

We will tease out the 8th principle in particular and seek to propose that it could be “redefined” to include all others in the learning environment, thus enabling a shift from inclusive curriculum to inclusive learning environment. To do this we will particularly focus on the role of Disability Officer as it is a cornerstone for many students with a disability. The challenge is that if it is to emerge and align with the UDL theories it will need to find its place as it embraces and adapts to a new role in the future world of learning.

Universal Design Thinking adopted as a Solution in a Physical World

UD originated in the United States having been identified by Ronald Mace, an architect and wheelchair user. He proposed that design could be pre-emptive and that physical environments could be designed from the “get-go” to meet the needs of increasingly diverse individuals, thus making them more functional while also being more inclusive (Wilkoff & Abed, 1994). The term *universal design* (UD) emerged as a definition and was seen as a positive development of the social model of disability as it minimized the need for individual accommodations (Center for Universal Design, 1997).

UD and its original principles emerged from design thinking in the fields of architecture and technology and are very much aligned with the physical environment or physical things.

As noted by Welch (1995):

The concept of UD goes beyond the mere provision of special features for various segments of the population. Instead, it emphasizes a creative approach that is more inclusive, one that asks at the outset of the design process how a product, graphic communication, building, or public space can be made both aesthetically pleasing and functional for the greatest number of users (p. iii)

UD as a concept was considered very desirable and was soon to be embraced in the world of policy – as a solution. The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD), adopted by the General Assembly on December 13th, 2006, identified UD as a key concept in protecting the rights and dignity of people with disabilities in all aspects of life.

UD was soon to be explored as a model for the development of more inclusive physical learning spaces for an increasing population of students with disabilities accessing the mainstream. As the world of education embraced the concept “*universal design underwent various linguistic permutations, including universal design in education, universal access design, universal learner-centered approach for instruction, universal curriculum access, and the more commonly used terms UDL and UDI.*” (P. 172 McGuire, Scott, & Shaw, 2006)

Whatever term is applied, a common theme is the focus of making educational strategies, curricula, and assessment approaches as inclusive as possible for as many students as possible with a view to ‘enhancing the educational engagement for students with disabilities’ (McGuire, Scott, & Shaw, 2006).

Thus UD offered solutions for things that were once considered inaccessible and as a theory, it continues to offer an exciting framework for many disciplines including education to redesign themselves. It promotes a pre-emptive approach that designs for the greatest diversity of people from the outset.

UDL – a pedagogical approach

Universal Design of Learning as aforementioned is an outgrowth of the UD model, and it uses UD principles, to design courses “to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (Burgstahler, 2009.) As students with disabilities attended education with their peers at primary and post-primary

level it was thought that moving away from a traditional approach of 'one size fits all' to one of 'universal design' might enable inclusion for a greater diversity of learner. The disconnect between an increasingly diverse student population and a 'one-size-fits-all' curriculum, and how this limits success for learners was highlighted by Rose and Meyer (2002). They further discussed how the UDL concepts are grounded in emerging insights about brain development, learning and technology.

In third level education, it is thought that universal design can offer access to an increasingly varied student population, including more "otherwise qualified" students with disabilities who will need fewer accommodations because inclusive features have been factored into the curriculum design and environment (Brinckerhoff, McGuire, & Shaw, 2002).

While a common theme of UDL is that it allows for a more inclusive environment for *everyone*, Welch and Palames (1995) acknowledge that UDL has its origins in the classroom or in the curriculum. CAST (Centre of Applied Special Technology) a not-for-profit organisation founded in 1984 have described UDL as an approach to planning and developing curricula so that it is designed for all learners (CAST, 2018). CAST identifies with three philosophies of UDL: (a) curriculum that provides multiple means of representation; (b) curriculum that provides multiple means of expression; and (c) curriculum that provides multiple means of engagement (CAST, 2018).

Thus UDL, as a further development of the UD approach, is firmly grounded in both theory and subsequent practices in the curriculum and classroom. It is considered the domain of the teacher.

Re-examining the UDL principles

UDL is premised on 9 Principles. These being:

1. Equitable use
2. Flexibility
3. Simple and intuitive instruction
4. Perceptible information (effectively communicated)
5. Tolerance for error
6. Low physical effort

Note: This principle does not apply when physical effort is integral to the essential requirements of a course.

7. Size and space for approach and use
8. A community of learners
9. Instructional climate (Reference required)

These 9 principles are predominantly a framework to assist teaching practice. To embrace these principles can mean a new and more inclusive curriculum but can also present challenges for tradition teaching and pedagogies. While this is clear – what often remains, unclear and has not been explored are the challenges presented for the wider learning community – those outside of the teacher/ student dyad. The UDL ideology in and of itself presents an opportunity to not just rethink the classroom but also to explore who and what is involved in today's learning community (the 8th principle).

A deeper exploration of the 8th principle: A Community of Learners

This principle has its origins in the classroom – and in the teacher/student relationship. It refers to the instructional environment and encourages an environment of interaction and communication among students and between students and faculty (Scott, McGuire, & Shaw, 2001). However, on-campus learning relationships cannot be confined to the lecture hall/classroom as learning happens across the campus in a variety of ways. This has been influenced by technology, the increased emphasis on social learning and a recognition that there are places outside of the lecture hall such as the library where learning takes place. If UDL is to be embraced on campus – it cannot just be aligned with the student with a disability, peers and teachers – it demands that it engages all of the community in higher education – no prisoners! To do so means taking the opportunity to explore new paradigms and thinking.

The “Nexus”: Positioning the Role of the Disability Officer in UDL Framework

As UDL is embraced and curriculum is redesigned for an increasingly diverse group of students, the role of the Disability Officers evolves from one of 'expert in disability' supporting the shift to inclusive learning environments to one of coordinator and advisor of reasonable accommodations.

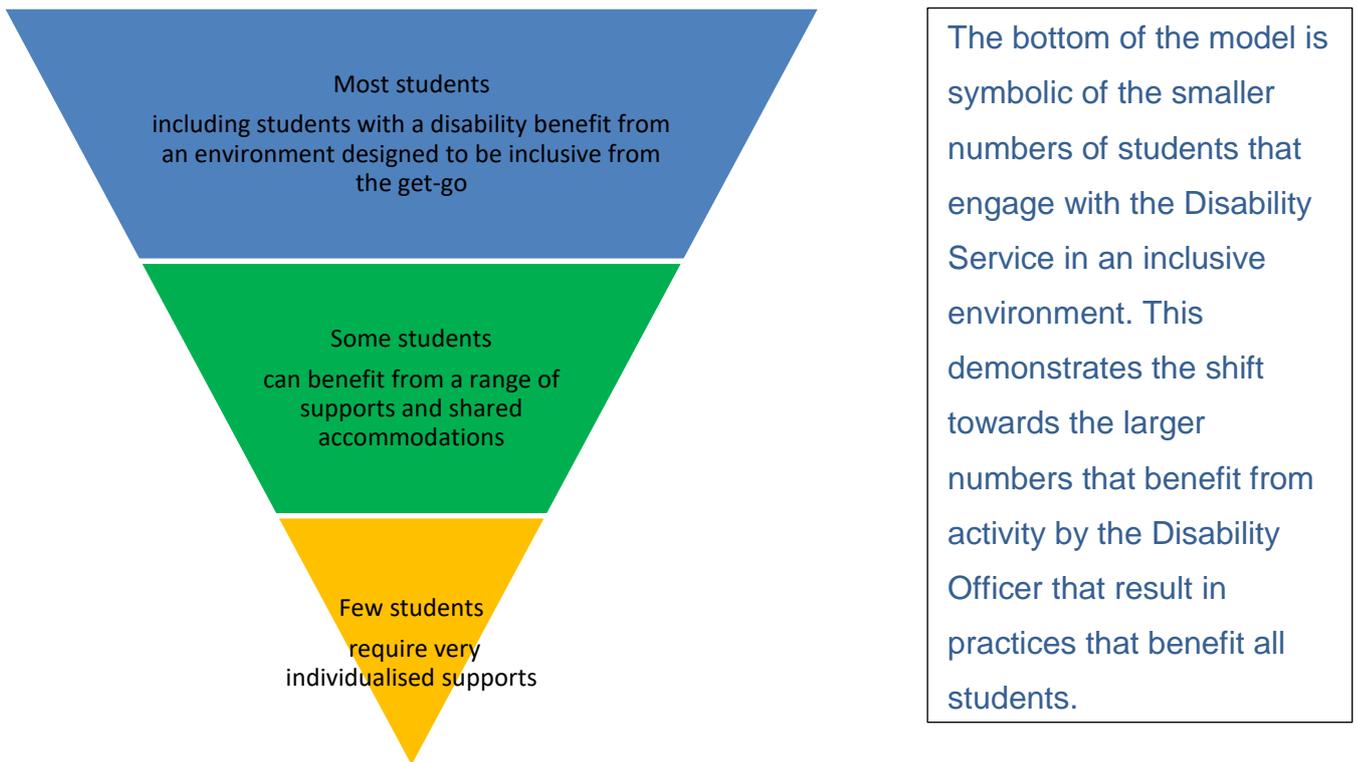


Figure 1: Disability Service funnel effect - Most, some, few approaches to needs assessment and increased inclusive teaching, learning, assessment and student independence. Shared by Trinity Disability Service, September 2018.

The needs assessment is a systematic tool that is used to advise on modifications or additions that are identified as reasonable accommodations that enable a student with a disability to learn independently. Having an understanding of disability and education in learning environments is necessary and therefore this knowledge can also be used to ‘disability proof’ new curriculum. In doing so the disability officer can engage increasingly with curriculum development and examinations as well as with students who require accommodations. This leads us to examine the idea that on campus – the disability officer can play a key role in and for the community of learners.

UDL – a shared responsibility

If it is accepted that learning takes place outside the lecture hall and seminar room, UDL then becomes a shared responsibility. A UDL campus will support learning across campus, and so truly redesign the learning experience for not just students with a

disability but all students. If “equity of participation in education” (Kinsella & Senior, 2008, p. 63) is to be realized – this needs to ask more from not just the teacher/academic in reconsidering their role in learning and how they apply it on campus.

The Disability Officer is very much part of the community on campus and is also a resource that can be utilised for more than a student with a disability. The role was often considered an administrative role and a broker of support services working exclusively to ensure that students with a disability are supported in all aspects of learning. As third level education seeks to ensure that these students are included in a system that is embracing Universal Design for Learning – the role in and of itself has to adapt. If the “challenge is to make staff internalize inclusivity as a general ethos” (Hopkins 2011, p. 723), the added challenge for the Disability Officer is to redesign their role to support more than just the student with a disability. They now have to step up and become a true ‘inclusivity expert’ in the UDL world.

Re-examining the Role of Disability Officer through a UDL lens

The journey of one of the ‘community’ of learners - the Disability Officer

#Evolution from Administrator to Professional Resource#

Old

- Disability Support Services - an administrative function predominantly addressing problems for students with a disability.
- The terms “support” and “services” and such medical model terms are often used.
- The implication is that students with disabilities need “support”.
- This language and approach continues to keep the focus on the student as the problem.

New

- Disability Resource Center - a resource for students and the campus community
- Evolving into an ‘expert role’ on campus in the creation of more usable and inclusive environments.
- Disability is now taking its place as part of the diversity agenda.
- Students with disabilities are increasingly seen as a driver in the inclusive learning discourse.

- The Role of the Disability Officer on a UDL Campus is a significant player in the learning community

UDL – Moving from Inclusive Pedagogical Approaches to Environment of Learning

The idea of community is about relationships that develop a culture of learning – and while that may have been initially considered based in the classroom and pedagogical approaches – perhaps it needs to be a bit more on a UDL campus. In developing the Role Document for the Disability Officer, it led to an investigation of UDL in and of itself and the ecology it seeks to base itself in. We have established that the Disability Officer should be recognized as part of the UDL campus – but where to position this role is a challenge. It is perhaps new thinking for the theoretical model– be that a new principle in and of itself or an expansion of Principle 8 should be considered.

Conclusion

This paper set out to explore the emerging role of Disability Officer and how it is to be interpreted and implemented in the UDL lens. To appreciate the emerging role – more needs to be investigated about UDL – as a theoretical framework and principles of practice, most particularly in the context of those involved in learning – beyond the teacher-student relationship.

1. To take the UDL principle community of learners as a broader concept than was previous understood – it must include those that were tangential and are often utilised as scaffolding to the learning experience.

There was a thinking that on a UDL campus – no disability officer would be needed. However, when reviewing UD and UDL it was never claimed that an environment would be totally inclusive. They aim to be “*accessible to the greatest number of users*” (P. 172 McGuire & Scott 2006). What is emerging is a new disability professional and their role in the UDL world. It is apparent from this exploration that the new role changes the relationships on campus between the disability office and its people. It is also clear that disability officers have unique expertise and knowledge about disability, one that will continue to be a strong voice in the inclusive agenda on an inclusive campus.

2. To review a true UDL experience we should explore the habitat of the university and learning environment and reflect on the wider ecological perspective (e.g.: Bronfenbrenner or Vygotsky), so that all people are positioned and have a clear idea of their role. The academic/ researcher, the administrative/support staff, the student population – they are all part of the UDL revolution. It is timely to appreciate and rethink engagements on campus going forward. It is also worth exploring what we understand by ‘community’ in a learning environment in the broadest possible sense.
3. These changes, as already discussed, in turn have created an opportunity to engage all involved in learning. If this engagement is to take a true UD/ UDL ethos, it needs to be inclusive, diverse, authentic, holistic and egalitarian. It also demands that disability be considered from the viewpoint of what it has to offer – rather than what it lacks. While this paper examined the theories of UDL and the evolution of the role of Disability Officer, it uniquely did this by bringing together the different perspectives of those engaged and living this discourse on campus – a Disability Officer, an Academic, a Disabled Academic and a Ph.D. student (mature!). UD and UDL afford us the opportunity to reexamine the world and community of learning – as a principle embedded in the ethos of design – should it not continually be evolving to recognize and embrace the continuing changes for all involved in education.

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Students' Experiences of Accessing Support at University.

Fabienne Benoist, London South Bank University

Abstract

With the number of disabled students in Higher Education (HE) increasing year on year, student support services, which offer much-needed provision to this heterogenous group of students, have been affected by cuts in Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) forcing the university to become more creative with their funds. There is moreover still a significant gap in achievement, progression and retention between disabled students and their peers and it is therefore important to review students' experiences of accessing specialist support services whilst at university.

This small pilot study explores the experience of two students in their final undergraduate year at a south-east England university which is part of the Russell group. It reveals issues and concerns around systems and processes associated with DSA. The main purpose of this pilot is to determine the viability of extending the research into a fuller investigation as part of a doctoral thesis.

Literature Review

Legislations and Definitions

Prior to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) (1995), few disabled students accessed higher education and moreover, it was not unlawful for UK universities to discriminate against disabled students (Jacklin and Robinson, 2007). DDA (1995) placed responsibility on Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to create an environment that is inclusive to disabled students and these institutions are now required to anticipate their current and prospective disabled students' needs, make provisions for reasonable adjustments as well as encourage disclosure (Lukianova and Fell, 2016; Jacklin, 2011).

Following its ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006), the UK agreed to recognise disabilities as the "results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (CRPD, 2006, p1) and article 24 (5) made clear that member states had a responsibility in ensuring non-discriminatory access to tertiary education as well as the provision of reasonable accommodation to people with disabilities (CRPD, 2006, p7). The Equality Act (2010) further enshrined the rights of disabled people, made disability a protected characteristic and it is now unlawful to discriminate against disabled people.

The Equality Act (2010) defines disability as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities (Equality Act, 2010, 6(1)). One could argue that this definition is problematic as it views impairment as the main cause of the problem and does not acknowledge social, environmental and attitudinal barriers. Within the higher education context, for a

student to become a disabled student, professional assessment and sometimes diagnosis are required. Moreover, in order to access university support services, disclosure of a disability is also necessary. Jacklin (2011) argues this situates disabled students, and consequently impairments, as 'other'.

University Support Services

The nature of the support will be dependent on students' requirements and may include extra time for submission of assignments, borrowing library books and examinations for example. HEFCE (2017) report on models of good practice for disabled students identified assistive technology as a key element to inclusive practice. Assistive technology may include video / audio recording of lectures, provision of specialist software such as mind mapping, document reading or speech recognition and note taking, and lecture notes made available on the VLE prior to the taught sessions as well as being provided in paper format. Taylor *et al.* (2016) predicted changes to DSA may have a significant impact on support provision and identified non-medical helpers, dyslexia screening process, library services and assistive technology as areas that will require many changes.

Organisations such as HEFCE as well as HEIs tend to view disabled student support from a perspective of reasonable adjustments provision, accessible environments and inclusive practice in general. Not denying that these are important, for those students disclosing a disability, and hence in receipt of various types of provision as mentioned above, their understanding of support in higher education seems to be different and seen not only in terms of resources. Jacklin and Robinson's (2007) paper focussing on what makes support effective from the students' perspective found that it was the personal and interpersonal aspects of support that overwhelmingly emerged as being the most important to students. Students acknowledged the resources provided to support them were important, but it was the interaction between formal and informal university structures and systems which made the support effective. More specifically effective support systems included academic and non-academic staff engaging with students formally as well as informally and crucially communication between academic and non-academic staff. All too often, academic staff are not aware of their students' additional learning needs (Madriaga *et al.* 2010).

A literature search on the experiences of disabled students accessing university support services resulted in identifying a rather important gap in academic research and literature, especially since the recent changes in DSA funding.

Methodology

Participants

A theoretical sampling was required in order to carry out the pilot project. Based on Grounded Theory, this type of sampling method means the selection of participants who are not only relevant to my research question or my theoretical position, but to the argument I am attempting to develop (Mason, 2018). It could also be argued that the sample selected is also to some extent representational, that is participants are representative of the population under study (Mason, 2018). However, it is important to acknowledge here that a sample of 2 participants will not allow for generalising patterns across said population under study. Moreover, given the heterogeneity of needs in the group of students under study, depth of analysis of the data generated can only be superficial. If this pilot research were to grow into a doctoral thesis, I will need to consider the sampling method very carefully, which in this case could involve the tightening of participants criteria in terms of their additional learning needs or type of impairments. Further problems with sampling that could arise may also be contextual. For instance, and with regards to the topic under current consideration, university support services across the UK is not a homogeneous entity and there will be differences in terms of structures and processes as well as student demographic.

Two undergraduate students (L and S) not belonging to my institution took part in this study. L is 21, female, and has had a diagnosis of dyslexia since the 6th form. She is currently in her final year of an English Literature degree. S is also 21, male and has recently been advised to go through the full diagnosis testing for dyslexia. He is in his final year of a chemistry degree. The decision to select students outside of my division was based on possible problems arising from being known in my position as lecturer/course director which could possibly affect data validity due to the power relationship in place between myself and the students. In my search for possible participants, I had to call on my personal network which in itself is also problematic – one of the participants is known to me in a personal capacity. As noted by Hampshire *et al.* (2014), when the boundaries between friend/researcher are blurred, objectivity could be compromised.

Research Instruments

Data was created through the use of a semi-structured interview. The rationale for using this most commonly used method in qualitative research is that this particular format is more informal and affords flexibility. It allows for exploring issues and/or topics as and when they may arise (Mason, 2002). Moreover, the aim of exploring students' experiences stems from my own ontological position which is underpinned by the notion that people's views and experiences need to be valued. These experiences are meaningful to the social reality my initial research question is attempting to explore (Mason, 2002) and as Kvale (1996, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2011) posited human interactions are central to knowledge production. From an epistemological perspective, a

legitimate way to generate data arises from my ontological position which means talking and interacting with people, asking questions and listening then analysing language use and discourse (Mason, 2018).

Procedure

The interview took place during the Christmas break when both students returned home from university. As S is known to me, as the son of one my friend, the recording took place in his parents' home. Prior planning means that a short interview schedule had been prepared. Questions were open-ended to allow for flexibility during the interview process as well as give the interviewer the ability to probe further when necessary (Cohen *et al.*, 2018). The interview was audio recorded to allow for better listening and avoiding taking notes which may have affected the flow of the interaction (Mason, 2018).

Ethical considerations

LSBU ethical protocols were followed. Both participants were made fully made aware of the purpose of the pilot research, and were informed about their rights to confidentiality and anonymity during the recruitment process. This was further acknowledged on the day of the interview and participants signed a consent form to this effect (Appendix 1).

Data Analysis

Mason (2018) suggests the main challenge in interpretivist approaches to research regards demonstrating the data is not made up or invented and that participants' views and perspectives have not been misrepresented. The interview recording was transcribed to help with analysis and I took an interpretive reading approach. The transcript was coded thematically and manually. I selected not to use a coding / indexing software as the transcript is short (seven pages) and therefore manageable and in no great need of cataloguing for retrieval. Moreover, this allowed to be more actively involved with the data, reading and reading the transcript over again and organising it into themes.

Results and Discussion

The pilot research attempted to capture disabled students experience in accessing support whilst at university. It is important to clarify that the research was conducted with only two students, therefore, it is only their experience which can be presently discussed and no comparison or generalisation to the population under study can be made. The purpose of this pilot study was to identify whether the research could be developed into a more substantial project as part of a doctoral thesis.

Questions in the interview schedule focused mainly on the process of accessing student support services and what type of support students had access to at their institution. Responses were therefore descriptive of the process, access and dissemination of information, support arrangement details were also covered. Themes arising from the discussion included the time, effort and the cost students had to go through in order to

access support arrangements. There was also an unexpected result which I have categorised under the theme of resilience. The term resilience denotes the ability to recover quickly from difficulties. In the context of the two students involved resilience apparently encompasses a strength of character in dealing with studying in HE with dyslexia with an added touch of stoicism and endurance in relation to navigating processes around accessing support.

Process: time, effort and cost

In order to access student support at her university, L. took her educational psychologist report to student services in the first term of her first year but she was told it could not be used:

"I took along my original report and they kind of had a look at that and then got back to me and decided that it wasn't sufficient. There wasn't quite enough evidence. So I had to pay to have another report done."

L. had been diagnosed with dyslexia the year before starting university and could not remember why she had to go through the diagnosis process all over again.

"We paid for another assessment with an educational psychologist and I've forgotten what the difference between... the original one wasn't valid and new one was... although the experience of doing the test seemed quite similar to me."

As a consequence of this, L. was not able to have any support arrangements in place for the whole of that first term. She mentioned that the time it was taking for her to have access to support as a negative aspect in her student experience:

L. I think it's the time that it takes for everything to go through, because for me like even though I felt like I was very organised and immediately wanting to set it up, there were still kind of lots of delays and lots of emailing. And then during the exams I didn't have that in place..."

Moreover, it seemed to be taking much effort and stress on the part of the students to go through the process:

L: I think it does just take quite a lot of emails and meetings to set up so I think you have to be quite um kind of determined to get it. and obviously for a lot of people it's quite a stressful thing to admit that you need more help. So I think that is maybe a problem.

S.: When I went to speak to them and asked about would I be able to get extensions for this week and for my exams and stuff they said no you have to wait till afterwards which was 3 months after I originally went to them.

Both students' experience seemed to have left them with some frustrations over the time and effort that was required and suggested:

L.: "I think it could just be more straightforward. I don't know. I think just a kind of more centralised system not having to email like maybe your tutors..."

S.: "And if it just took quicker to do things."

Another issue arising during the process was that of cost. As seen in L. statements above, she mentioned having to pay for the educational psychologist report and S. who is as yet to go through the diagnosis process, which took months to organise, is also expecting to pay for the full assessment.

S.: I have to pay for it myself but if my parents' income was below a certain amount I wouldn't.

L.: But also the cost of it because I feel like you have to be quite privileged before you can be dyslexic which like... £300 so that just doesn't seem fair to me that I was lucky enough to kind of have it... more people might consider it as a thing, maybe get tested if it were more affordable or free. So maybe for some people it's not even an option that they could.

Both students' experience seems to suggest that there are problems with accessing support. Interestingly, Jacklin and Robinson (2007) are academics from the same university that the participants currently attend. Their study had identified issues with formal structures highlighting the need for communication between academic and non-academic staff in order not to create separate support systems. It seems that recommendations need to go further. Universities are governed by the 2010 Equality Act and therefore obliged to anticipate disabled students' needs and to provide appropriate reasonable adjustments (Lukianova and Fell, 2016). This study suggests that this anticipation should apply at the point of registering for access to support and that a portion of the funding may need to be directed to speed up the process. For instance, in L.'s case, her educational psychologist report was only a year old and since her experience of the second dyslexia diagnostic assessment did not seem to differ from the first one, it may be safe to assume here that there was little difference between the two reports. Using the original report would have not only accelerated the process of L. receiving support arrangements from the first term but would also have saved her and her parents the cost of another educational psychologist assessment.

In the case of S., the waiting time between the university preliminary assessment which suggested possible dyslexia to the full educational psychologist assessment amounted to months. He had started the process during the autumn term but had to wait until February 2018 for an appointment with the educational psychologist. He may have to wait another number of weeks before the report gets back to his university with recommendations for support arrangements. This means that S. could continue to be penalised until semester 2 examinations.

With regards to cost, L. commented that it seems to be a privilege to be dyslexic, this is a powerful statement. Unfortunately, it is not unusual for disabled people to face extra

costs in all aspects of their daily life (Extra Cost Commission, 2015). What could be worrying is, as L. stated, some students may be put off by going through an educational psychologist assessment because of the cost attached. For those students already diagnosed with dyslexia in their previous education career and armed with the necessary paperwork, there is little reason to not accept this as evidence. With regards to new assessments, universities could possibly adapt their staff structure and employ educational psychologists and hence fulfil the anticipation criteria.

Resilience

Possible difficulties with access to support services and with the process in general were anticipated, but as mentioned earlier, the theme of resilience was unexpected at the start of the pilot project. When questioned about the type of support she was receiving, I asked whether assistive technology was something that L. had access to. Her answer was telling in two ways:

L.: No I haven't actually gone through the process of applying for a disabled student allowance because I think coz my diagnosis was so late on I feel like I have developed quite good kind of coping mechanisms. And I'm just getting on with it so I think it was just more the extra time. I haven't felt like there's been anything specific that I've needed actually.

L.: I mean with my subject it is hard because there is so much reading to do each week and I do struggle with that. But then it needs to be done before the seminars so that that can take place in a kind of productive way. So like more time for kind of week to week tasks but then I don't see how that would be possible.

When I questioned whether 7 days additional time to complete work would be sufficient, S. also demonstrated resilience and stoicism in the face of his difficulties.

S.: Just because sometimes it takes longer to do things than does my peers so being set the same, having the same deadlines as them is quite difficult when we've got the same amount of time to do it but it takes me longer. So even if I didn't get lateness extension thing, it would be good to even just get the work earlier, set it earlier as well would be helpful, I think. ... Uh quite nervous to have to do some of the modules I know that's some of them there's a lot more writing involved in one of them I'm a bit worried for it.

And when he occasionally submitted work late:

S.: they just take off like 10% off if you hand in within a week. But then after a week then it's just not accepted. Which is actually not as bad as a lot of other universities. So at xxxxx university if you hand it in like a second late then you can you get capped at 40%. So I think ours, our university is quite good for it, because a lot of the time if it's within 24 hours it's only 5% off so it is alright. Obviously, it's not what you want but like sometimes it just takes a bit longer so...

It is not unusual for disabled students to show resilience. For Escobar Delgado *et al.* (2018) resilience is a complex concept and “can be understood by the ability to recover, overcome and adapt successfully to adversity and develop social, academic and vocational competence despite being exposed to unfavourable events” (p23). In terms of education, they further conceive that it is an ability to resist and an exercise of strength. Both L. and S. have clearly developed coping mechanisms to deal with their learning impairment and they are also fully aware of how this puts them at a disadvantage compared to their peers. In line with Moraña (2017)’s study, L. and S.’s disability means that they have to invest more time and effort than their peers to achieve their objectives and further perceive “that they have to work twice as hard to achieve half” (p223). It is therefore crucial that HEIs adopt efficient systems to support disabled students with learning from the onset.

Conclusion

This small exploratory pilot study seems to indicate that there may be scope to develop the research further. Although based on only two students’ experience, it is clear that there are problematic issues with the system and these have a direct impact on the students accessing student support services. In order to address these issues, it is important to listen to what students are telling us about the process.

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Book Review: Ravet, J. Supporting Change in Autism Services: Bridging the Gap Between Theory & Practice (2015), London: Routledge.

Reviewed by Prof. N Martin, London South Bank University

Title: Supporting Change in Autism Services: Bridging the Gap Between Theory & Practice (2015), London: Routledge.

Author: Dr Jackie Ravet

Review

Ravet's book is beautifully and coherently structured and presented. It is clearly theorised, well-argued and practically useful. She is careful to unpack terminology and concepts which are often based on taken for granted assumptions in literature. Terms such as 'challenging behaviour' for e.g. mean different things to different people and Ravet thoughtfully articulates the contested nature of the idea. She follows the thinking through by discussing 'challenging situations' with reference to social model thinking.

'People with autism' is Ravet's chosen people first term and she argues this through and refers to the alternative identity first term 'autistic'. The word 'disorder' is also discussed and thankfully rejected in keeping with the views of many autistic people who have written on the subject.

Her discussion of ideas such as labelling are theorised in relation to medical model thinking and applied in a pragmatic way in relation to service delivery. Ravet carefully articulates the necessity of understanding the autistic person as an individual operating within a context, i.e. moving beyond the label.

Importantly she clarifies the requirement to understand the impact of environmental factors on the autistic person. Gender and ageing are themes which are given less attention but there is always scope for a second edition. Similarly, college and university are somewhat neglected but could receive careful attention in future publications.

Ravet uses excellent diagrams to put across her understandings in ways which practitioners and policy makers can apply in context. She underpins her thinking in relation to policy drivers relevant to the UK. Although the book is UK focussed in relation to policy and legislation it has international reach in terms of practical application in other respects. The Equality Act 2010 is mentioned briefly but could possibly have played a more central part alongside international human rights legislation and conventions. This could be strengthened in a future volume.

Vignettes are effectively deployed and Ravet is careful not to compromise individuality and to represent the life world of autistic people with respect. It is difficult to represent a wider range of experience in a small volume. Autistic parents, university students and elderly autistic people access services and these examples could be explored in future.

My slight disappointment is that few autistic scholars are referenced here, although the book was produced four years ago and the relative explosion of the work of autistic authors such as Chown, Milton, Stewart, Ridout and Lawson is more recent. This is something for next time and I am interested in collaborating in a volume which places autistic voices centre stage. The Participatory Autism Research Collective is gaining international recognition as a rich source of autistic scholarship.

This book will be on the reading list of LSBU's MA Education / Autism. I feel that it would do some good in the world if it were to be widely used. The work has the capacity to influence positively the thinking of people who work directly with autistic individuals as well as those tasked with developing policy and services. The idea of 'nothing about us without us' of course would strengthen the narrative.

If you want to know about autism ask an autistic person.

Journal of Inclusive Practice in Further and Higher Education (JIPFHE): Editorial Guidelines

- JIPFHE is the open access, refereed journal of the National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP). All JIPFHE academic papers are peer-reviewed and share the common aim of furthering best practice to promote disability equality in post-compulsory education.
- Papers which focus on any part of the student journey from pre-entry to post-exit are in keeping with this over-arching theme, as are those which consider issues relevant to staff in Further and Higher Education.
- The main audience for JIPFHE is staff who work with disabled people in FE and HE and the journal should be of practical use to this constituency. It should enable readers to gain a deeper theoretical underpinning in critical disability studies upon which to develop their day-to-day professional work.
- Based on the principle of 'nothing about us without us', contributions directly from disabled students and staff are encouraged.
- A general edition will be published each year with consideration given to a themed edition if resources are available.
- Sufficiently robust research papers, as defined in these guidelines, may be submitted for the general or themed editions. Narrative pieces reflecting the personal experiences of disabled people or staff will also be considered for publication. Work submitted for NADP Accreditation can be considered for the journal, including short articles.
- All submissions for JIPFHE need to fulfil the guidelines set out here. Articles of interest to the NADP membership which do not meet the criteria set out for JIPFHE may be considered for the NADP website.
- Articles for the JIPFHE general or themed editions should be a maximum of 6,500 words.
- Communication on your submission will be via the NADP office admin@nadp-uk.org
- Two referees will be nominated by the edition editor, who will be a member of the editorial board.
- An abstract, maximum 300 words, is required for academic articles.
- Harvard referencing is compulsory and authors need to ensure references are as up to date as possible.
- Contributions should reflect ethical participatory/emancipatory research, which involves disabled/neurodiverse participants and results in interventions which

improve services for disabled/neurodiverse people in the education and training sector.

- Ethical guidelines prescribe that research participants should not be identifiable and confidentiality must be respected.
- A clear ethics statement is required for academic articles.
- Language reflecting the social model of disability is expected.
- Articles must be original and should not be being considered by another journal when presented.
- Formats must be accessible to screen reading software

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