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NADP
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DISABILITY PRACTITIONERS
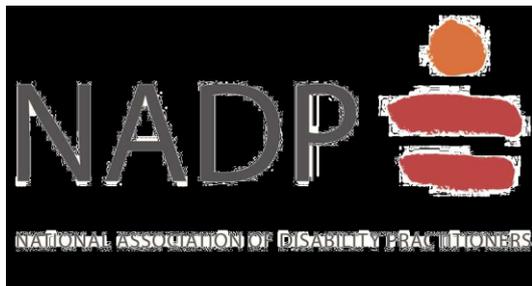
Editorial

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This edition of the Journal of Inclusive Practice in Further and Higher Education brings together a range of articles from academics, researchers and from disability and inclusivity practitioners. I would like to thank everyone who submitted an article for publication and encourage all our readers to write up their research and experiences from their own area of practice.

We have been going through a time of change in our professional field since the first announcement of changes to the funding of Disabled Students Allowances (Willets, 2014). The changes were initially happening so rapidly that people did not have time to fully adapt to new ways of working before they needed to change again. One of the most challenging parts of uncertainty is the inability to plan and the feeling of being out of control. However, the Government emphasis on promoting inclusive practice has provided a lead and the NADP Annual Conference in 2017 illustrated how some of our institutions followed this lead to tackle change and embed good practice. Some of the articles in this journal are in-depth discussions of presentations originally given at the Annual Conference and I hope that this journal will enable a wider audience to experience some of the knowledge imparted in the workshops and lectures.

I was honoured to be asked to be editor for the current edition of JIPFHE and the process has given me the opportunity to read through all the articles in detail and consider them carefully. It is clear that the majority of them emphasise the need for 'buy-in' at all levels of our institutions: everybody from senior leadership, through academic and professional staff to the students themselves are needed in order for projects to be successful.

We start this edition with a paper which has been written by Wilson and Martin. This paper was originally based on a timeline of support for disabled students in England drawn up as part of a bid for research funding in 2016. Once written, it was realised that this could be useful information for members and disability researchers so this article was developed for the Journal. We would like to ask for member-input in order to develop the history section into a timeline for disability support throughout the UK. Please contact the NADP office if you have information that you believe would be useful to include in this timeline. Our conclusion firmly identifies input from all sectors of the HEI to be a key factor in the success of disability support.

Our second paper by Draffan, James and Martin reviews the Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group's Report and also highlights this need for 'buy-in'. They particularly emphasise the need for a baseline of sector-wide agreement on minimum expectations for inclusive support with a fair degree of flexibility to adapt to the needs of students.

Holtam and McLaren discuss the setting up of a network of assistive technology specialists with the challenges they face; once again highlighting the support AT specialists need from senior leadership as well as from their peers in order to be a driving force in the movement to inclusive practice.

Newman and Conway continue to illustrate the need for support from both participants and senior management in order to produce successful inclusivity projects. Of particular interest to me were their conclusions that a joined up approach to inclusivity which covers all areas of disability, gender and race etc. may result in measures that may disadvantage disabled students. This was food-for-thought for me as my own opinion was that we are in danger of designing programmes that may be siloed to inclusion for disability and, if we do this, we may have to return to the drawing board to redesign for other protected characteristics in the future.

Moving away from the broader application of inclusivity projects, Walker and Whittles critically discuss the implementation of lecture capture to aid inclusivity at their university; highlighting gaps in initial provision and suggesting that using universal design prinicples may have placed disabled access more centrally in the project plans. They also highlight the concerns that a technology that has been in existence for several years still has not addressed inclusion issues such as capturing BSL interpretation. As an alternative, Wald and Li demonstrate a system where speech recognition is used to capture lectures and students collaboratively correct errors thus aiding their own learning and providing accurate information for their fellow students.

Santulli and Scagnelli present their findings on another intervention that has been used with both dyslexic and neurotypical readers. They describe the implementation of SuperReading as a strategic approach to improve reading speed and comprehension and report very encouraging results with both categories of readers. They plan to carry out further research to examine differences in reading patterns after intervention.

In our final article in part one, Waywell raises concerns about the understanding of the role of the learning support assistant. This is a very small study but it actually mirrors results that I found in my own research in

2011 situated at a different university. These two small research projects suggest that there is a need for further investigation and a determination of clear procedures for communication across institutions.

Part two of the journal contains narrative articles that are written by disability and inclusivity staff who critically reflect on their current practice. Our first article also returns to our theme where there is a need for all staff to 'buy-in' to inclusive support for it to be effective. Brady and Flegg describe the interdependent activities of staff seeking to promote and support inclusive practice and disability staff seeking to improve reasonable adjustments. In this case senior-staff support and a raised profile of disability professionals are giving focus to the needs of disabled students.

Our final article for this journal describes the start of a qualitative research project to ensure that day to day practice is based on sound research. A really important principle which shines through so many articles in this edition of the journal. Faithful and Atherton describe their planned research with Jack, a learning assistance dog, who works full time within the learning support department. A lot of anecdotal evidence for a beneficial effect has arisen from the sessions that are offered to students and the literature tends to back up this evidence but it has also been accused of being a gimmick and so the team intend to qualitatively explore this type of canine support and, if beneficial, the most effective way to use this support with students.

We finish with two reviews of recent publications which, I am sure, will encourage all readers to access these valuable resources.

The demand for innovation in the workplace has grown tremendously in recent times. The articles in this edition of the journal show that, in response, we have become increasingly creative and flexible in our working practice. I believe that it is crucial that we have a strong focus on maintaining the quality of provision during this change process and it is heartening to read that so many of our colleagues are working hard to ensure this quality.

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Part One: Academic Articles

Disabled Student Support for England in 2017. How did we get here and where are we going? A brief history, commentary on current context and reflection on possible future directions.

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Abstract

Provision for disabled students studying in England's HEIs is at a crossroads with the simultaneous review of the DSA and push towards embedded inclusive practices governed by social model principles of universal design for learning. The National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) has come of age at a time of huge change and now seems to be the the perfect moment to reflect on its underpinning values and ask where the organisation has come from and where it is going in relation to promoting disability equality in post compulsory education. The authors of this paper have condensed the history of disability support in England from the early 1980s to the present time. During this time NADP has grown into a powerhouse of social model thinking focussed on disability equality in post compulsory education. NADP's success is surprising given that the infrastructure is tiny and the Board of Directors is made up of unpaid disability and inclusivity practitioners who work for NADP in their spare time. NADP has grown to over 1300 members in 2017 and their lively contribution contributes to the success of our professional association. This paper contextualises the challenges which face the HE sector in 2017 and considers the areas where NADP could help, in relation to ensuring equality of access and parity of experience between disabled and non-disabled students.

The Higher Education Sector in the UK

Universities in the UK are generally financed by government with a small but increasing number of private universities who receive no government subsidy. The private universities include both charities and for-profit institutions with the Higher Education and Research Act (2017) effectively opening up the sector to an increasing number of diverse HEIs of this nature.

The Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE, 2017a) produces a register of those providing higher education who agree and comply with the terms and

conditions set down in the Memorandum of Assurance and accountability that reflect HEFCE's responsibility to provide annual assurances to Parliament that: funds provided to HEFCE are being used for the purpose for which they were given; risk management control and governance in institutions funded by HEFCE are effective; and value for money is being achieved (BIS, 2015).

There are 160 'recognised bodies' who have degree awarding powers granted by the Privy Council and recognised by the UK authorities with another 700 'listed bodies' which provide courses leading to recognised UK degrees which are validated by other institutions who hold degree-awarding powers. These include colleges of further education and some schools.

Universities in the UK have been categorised in a number of different ways. The term 'mission groups' was employed by Boliver (2015), referring to the idea of a group with a defined membership. Boliver's research performed cluster analysis of publicly available data on the research activity, teaching quality, economic resources, academic selectivity, and the socioeconomic student mix of UK universities. Findings demonstrate that a longstanding binary divide persists with Old (pre-1992) universities characterised by higher levels of research activity, greater wealth and 'more academically successful' and socioeconomically advantaged student intakes. New (post-1992) institutions were found to reveal levels of teaching quality comparable to that associated with older institutions.

Non-Governmental Organisations within the HE Sector

There are an increasing number of non-governmental organisations included within the HE Sector which act as representative bodies or professional associations in the sector. These include Universities UK (UUK), the representative body for universities in the UK; Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE); National Association of Managers of Student Services in Colleges (NAMSS); and the National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) which is the professional association for those working with disabled students in both colleges and universities.

Smaller groups also exist to support staff and/or students in more specialised areas. These include the Association of Dyslexia Specialists in Higher Education (ADSHE); the Association of Non-Medical Help Providers; the Consortium of Higher Education Support Services with Deaf Students (CHESS); and the University Mental Health Advisers Network (UMHAN).

Student Funding

Student loans and grants in the United Kingdom are primarily provided by the government through the Student Loans Company (SLC), a non-departmental public body. The SLC is responsible for Student Finance England (SFE).

SFE takes advice and guidance from various groups including the Disabled Students Stakeholder Group (DSSG) which advises and supports the delivery of specialist services for   disabled students and the Disabled Students Allowance Quality Assurance Group (DSA-QAG) which is a non-profit making regulatory body.

Historical Context of Disability Support

Prior to the 1980's, support for disabled higher education (HE) students in the UK was sparse and numbers were not reliably recorded. The focus of this brief history is England and it needs to be recognised that arrangements to assist disabled students differ between the countries of the UK. England has Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) whilst Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own systems of support which are very similar to DSAs. Those from outside the UK have no access to DSAs and this clearly results in an equity issue which universities have to address from their own funding.

The number of disabled students accessing HE has been steadily increasing, as figure one illustrates. This increase appears to be as a direct result of initiatives that can be traced back to the 1980s, including the inception of the DSAs. However, the latest figures suggest that the number claiming DSAs has reduced in the last two years although total numbers of disabled students are rising.

**First degree entrants with a known disability**
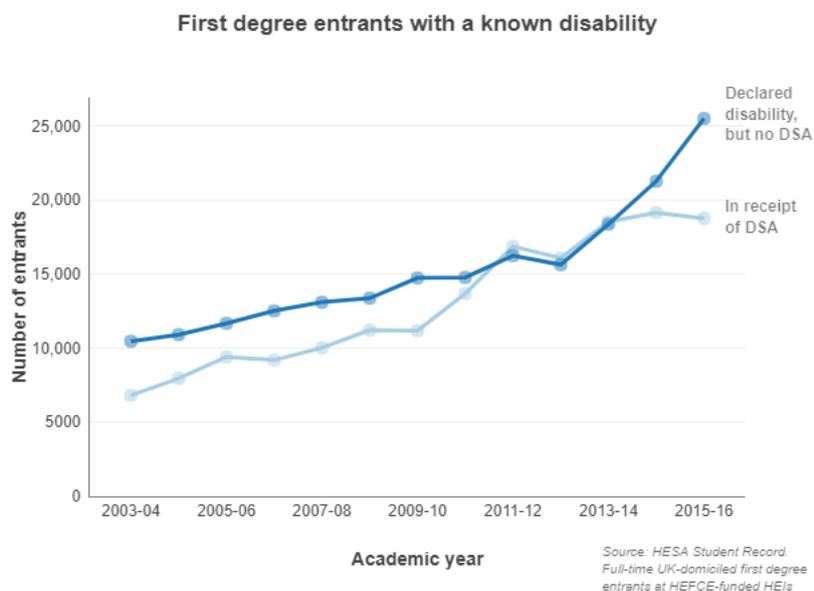
Figure 1: First degree entrants declaring a disability (HEFCE, 2017b)

The Early Years of the 1980s

During the 1980s there were several initiatives to support disabled students, especially with the use of information technology. These included the formation of the National Federation of Access Centres in 1986 which assisted students to secure funding from charities to support their studies (NNAC, 2016). The Disabled Students' Award (non-means tested) was introduced and amounted to a maximum of £750.

Legislation was introduced in 1989 to change the Award to Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) and government funding was supplied to set up DSA assessment. In 1989 there were approximately 500 students who received DSAs towards equipment and travel but these students had to fulfil certain conditions. They had to have physical or sensory impairments and had to be under 25, on full time courses. They were means tested (NNAC, 2016).

Rapid Progress in the 1990s

Throughout the 1990s the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) resourced a series of projects to encourage universities to develop their own support services. University staff detailed with assisting disabled students in the early 1990s were often working alone at this stage. Many had a position which combined several roles such as the one at the Institute of Education which included financial support, disability support and examinations (Woods, 2017, pers. comm.). As a result, disability practitioners were often isolated

within their institution, although some were accessing support from those in similar roles at other institutions.

The need for a Professional Association for Disability Officers who work in the post-16 education sector grew out of deepening concerns that staff in the sector were reporting a perceived lack of professional status and very high variance in conditions of employment.

A 'Partnership on Campus' conference was held in 1997 by the Association of University Teachers (AUT), the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) and the Commission on University Career Opportunities where overwhelming support for a professional association for Disability Officers was apparent. Advocates included David Triesmann of the AUT and Baroness Warwick of the CVCP. Progress on formation of the National Association of Disability Officers (NADO) was rapid with the establishment of a mailing list in February 1998 and an inaugural conference 'Raising the Standard' in March 1999.

HEFCE produced guidance in 1999 for base-level provision for disabled students in higher education institutions (HEI's) (HEFCE, 1999) which recommended one Disability Adviser for every 200 students and 0.5 of an administrative post for each Disability Adviser. HEFCE also financed a round of 'improving provision for disabled students' in order to encourage smaller institutions to catch up with the support provided by larger universities. Many small universities applied for funding to increase their disability provision and some of the HEFCE funding was also used to formalise the set up of NADO. NADO aimed to promote and widen the support that some universities were offering each other. The National Federation of Access Centres (NFAC) already had a strong network and their expertise was utilised during the formation of the professional organisation. The first NADO website was launched in June 1999.

Alongside these HEFCE projects, the government was concerned with disability discrimination and gradually increased the reach of DSAs to include provision of non-medical helpers (for example notetakers) and a general allowance for things like additional photocopying (1991). Legal guidelines were introduced in the form of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and then, in 1996, student eligibility for DSAs was increased to include those with specific learning differences and mental health conditions (NNAC, 2016).

A New Century – the 2000s

At the end of the 1990s there were a couple of reports that initiated policy development from successive governments over the start of the new century.

The Kennedy Report (1997) investigated patterns of participation in, and access to, further and higher education. The Dearing Report (1997) was a series of reports looking at the future of higher education in the UK. A stated aim of the policies resulting from these reports was to remove barriers to progression to HE and extend provision to assist disabled students once they arrived at university.

The government's stated intention at this time was to continue to focus on removing discrimination at all levels and the Disability Discrimination Act was amended to become the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). The Disability Equality Duty which followed in 2005 placed a responsibility on Public Bodies for pro-active change (the anticipatory duty) and the need to publish Equality Schemes which outlined specific action plans to address barriers.

DSAs were also becoming more inclusive as, in 2001, part time students became eligible for support providing they were studying for at least 50% of a full-time course and the age limit of 50 years was removed. Open University students also became eligible for support. (NNAC, 2016).

Universities were facing a great deal of change and continuing to require support to implement various equalities initiatives focussing on the disabled student experience, and the membership of NADO was growing. NADO appointed their first member of staff, Rachel Orme, in March 2000 and it was registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee in 2003. The name was changed to the National Association of Disability Practitioners in 2006 with the aim of accommodating DSA assessors within its ranks.

At the end of 2009 the HEFCE report on the Evaluation of Provision and Support for Disabled Students in HE was published, providing information about variance in support for disabled students across the sector. Equality impact assessment, inclusive practice, staff training and focused funding by HEFCE were highlighted as key areas for development (HEFCE, 2009).

The Latest Changes (2010-2017)

In 2010, the Equality Act brought together a wide range of previously separate equalities legislation under the umbrella of nine protected characteristics which included disability. A stated aim of the Equality Act was to make various systems and procedures easier to administrate. Rhetoric around the advantages of nurturing diversity began to permeate the sector, a world view enthusiastically endorsed by NADP. (Martin 2017). An interesting omission in the nine strands of the EA was socioeconomic status or the obvious disadvantages of poverty. Philosophically, and arguably a more

interesting point, is that the notions of multiple identity, multiple disadvantage and intersectionality gained prominence from the introduction of the Equality Act 2010.

Reform of DSAs has been rapid since 2010 with a charter and reference manual for non-medical helpers produced by the NADP (2012). This document is now contained within the DSA Quality Assurance Group guidance document (DSA-QAG, 2016).

The rate of change increased with the issue of David Willets' ministerial statement (2014) which signalled a systemic review including a rebalancing of responsibility with institutions funding and providing certain aspects of disability related support previously funded via the DSAs.

Elaine Shillcock, vice Chair of the NADP, crystallised this rebalancing statement with the diagram in figure 2.
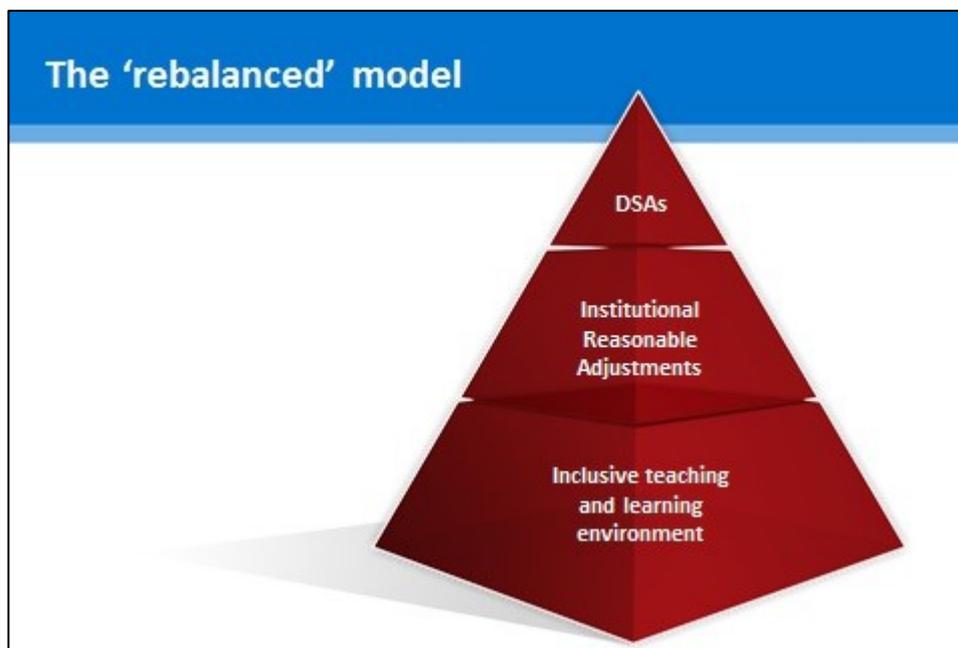
Figure 2: Elaine Shillcock, University of Manchester.

In 2015 two HEFCE-initiated reports were produced looking at provision for specific groups of disabled students – those with dyslexia who are the largest group for which HEI's cater and those with mental health conditions who were identified as the group who were least likely to feel that their needs had been met (HEFCE, 2015a & b). Publication of the reports was followed by two national conferences in 2016 which were planned to disseminate information about student mental health and wellbeing. During these conferences Millward (2016) reported that there were seven key issues to address in the support of student mental health and wellbeing:

- Early disclosure
- Development of inclusive culture and curriculum
- Building student resilience and promoting good mental health
- Improving relationships between academic and support staff
- Staff training/development
- Developing partnerships between external health and social care agencies (statutory and voluntary)

These events signalled a refocussing towards 'Universal Design for Learning (UDL)', often termed 'inclusive education' (Milton *et al.* 2016), and away from individualised adjustments other than for students with complex requirements. DSAs guidance produced by BIS/DfE for 2016/17 (DSA-QAG, 2016) stated that:

> 'The learning environment should be as inclusive as possible, so that the need for individual interventions is the exception, not the rule. Institutions should engage in a continual improvement cycle that develops inclusive practice, with the aim of reducing the number of individual interventions required.' (p.3)

> 'We expect institutions to strive to provide the best possible support for all their students, including their body of disabled students, to continue to remove or reduce the need for individual support through DSAs.' (p.14)

> 'Institutions should not take the continued provision of DSAs as setting the limit to their reasonable adjustments.' (p.14)

In order to assist HEIs to restructure their support, HEFCE doubled the baseline funding to £40 million with the aim of further developing inclusive provision for disabled students in 2016-17. The April 2016 letter to institutions reports that:

> 'The increase is to support institutions to meet the rapid rise in mental health issues and to transition towards an inclusive social model of support for disabled students. The distribution of this funding better reflects the actual numbers of disabled students at   each institution by no longer assigning institutions to quartile groups for weighting purposes.' (HEFCE, 2016)

A variety of conferences focusing on inclusivity were held across the sector throughout 2016 and 2017 as Higher Education institutions worked quickly to address the situation. These conferences enabled sharing of good practice

and showcasing of some creative approaches to support for all aspects of the student journey, not just the academic (Hastwell *et al.* 2017), as well as inclusive teaching and learning.

The Disabled Students Stakeholder Leadership Group (DSSLG; 2017) designed guidance for senior management which further unpacked the idea that institutions are required to develop an inclusive teaching and learning strategy to ensure that course design, delivery and assessment is accessible to disabled students. HEIs are also expected to consider how they deliver information about available resources to students and staff and ways in which strategies can be put in place to reduce the need for support workers and encourage greater independence and autonomy. The expectation that there will be a systemic institution wide plan which is driven from the top is articulated clearly.

Bringing this completely up to date, in this current edition of the Journal of Inclusive Practice in Further and Higher Education, James *et al.* (2017) have commented in detail on the report of the DSSLG and posed the question 'what next' i.e. how can its recommendations be translated into practical applications designed to have a positive impact on the experience and successful outcomes of disabled students. Their conclusions were that embedding universal design for inclusive learning at the planning stage and throughout the student journey from pre-entry to post-exit requires a strategic approach with senior leadership support. The DSA clearly has an ongoing role to play but the sector is moving into an era in which everybody within the institution needs to take responsibility for inclusion. James *et al. (ibid.)* also suggest that the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) could clearly play a pivotal role in ensuring that academics plan for the diverse range of students they teach.

The Current Arrangements for Disability Support within HEIs

Structure and Organisation of HEI Teams

The teams of staff working with disabled students are variously named in a continuum of terms from Disability Support, Disability Advice or Access to Student Wellbeing with many FE Colleges using the term Additional Learning Support. Some institutions highlight the differences between impairment and neurodiversity with the use of terminology such as Disability and Dyslexia Team.

Organisation of the disability team structures are varied with some teams situated within the University Registry department, others in Student Services and a minority within Teaching and Learning /Academic development. The

disability service may be co-located with a cluster of medically related services such as counselling, wellbeing and GP provision or may be located with libraries and guidance services.

Disability support in universities and colleges may consist of individual members of staff or full teams with Heads of Department plus Disability Advisers (DAs). Some teams are configured such that DAs support a wide range of disabled students, whilst others have DAs who specialise in a certain area such as mental health or Autism.

Some university disability services host their own Assessment Centres for DSAs and /or run their own in-house Non-Medical Helper (NMH) support. Others have traditionally relied on external suppliers for some or all of the resources their students require.

Administration of DSAs

Individual support for eligible disabled HE students, including those studying HE courses in FE, comes from DSAs. Students submit medical evidence to Student Finance England (SFE) and, once approved, attend a DAS QAG approved assessment centre. The result of a meeting between the student and an approved DSAs assessor is a report which includes a detailed set of recommendations for the support required to assist the student to progress with their academic study. This support can come from the HEI or from DSAs. Reports are submitted to Student Finance England (SFE) for approval. The process can be lengthy and often depends on the student knowing that the DSA is an option. It has been suggested that this is not always the case (Walker, 2015).

HE disability teams navigate a number of different routes to ensure that recommended support is put in place. The English route to DSA is described here. Similar but slightly different processes are in place for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Courses linked to the NHS have alternative process; self-funded PhD students qualify for DSAs but those studying under Research Council funding receive funding from the relevant Research Council based on a needs assessment similar to DSA. In addition, those studying on work based courses, such as teaching, often require assistance to apply for Access to Work funding for the periods of their course which take place within a work setting.

The historic increase in DSAs is levelling out and starting to reduce in a short space of time since the reforms began in 2014. Changes to eligibility criteria and non-medical help have added to the additional planning needed by HEIs. Smaller institutions, and FE providers offering HE, have arguably done a great

deal to widen participation of non-traditional learners. However, these HEIs have not had the time or money to invest in new projects while some institutions with more resources have been able to introduce changes to moderate the impact. The University of Cambridge and the Royal Agricultural University, for example, have worked fast to get funding routes approved to enable two aspects of non-medical help to be brought in-house: academic mentoring and specialist tuition. This will mean that they can exercise quality control more easily and have a free hand to sustain and even enhance disability support.

A significant percentage of students do not qualify for DSAs or require provision which costs more than DSAs can offer. DSA ineligibility applies to international students and those without medical evidence. Obtaining medical evidence to confirm eligibility is not necessarily always straightforward. A student with a childhood diagnosis of autism, for example, may be asked by SFE to prove that the information still applies (despite the fact that autism is lifelong) and a pre-sixteen diagnosis of dyslexia is not deemed acceptable by SFE. Deaf students who may require extensive help from highly qualified interpreters, specialist English tutors and notetakers often exceed the top of DSA funding and disability teams need to negotiate for additional institutional resources. Charitable funding (such as the Snowdon Trust) and support from Social Services is available on occasion but accessing money from these sources require separate processes. It can be argued that the cumbersome nature of the system creates additional barriers.

Other Services for Disabled Students

At an institutional level the HEI is also required to provide other services which are outside the remit of DSAs. This can include making alternative examination arrangements and supporting some aspects of fieldwork, placement and practical aspects of the course. Most commonly the package is co-ordinated, usually by the disability team, in the form of a learning contract or agreement which can be securely shared across the institution with the permission of the student. The expectation is that staff in receipt of the document read it and act upon its recommendations. Ideally, academics and relevant professional services staff will be sufficiently informed and involved to, at least, buy-in and, at best, contribute to the process.

Some universities have specialist academic staff who provide a link between the disability team and the academic team with the aim of ensuring that appropriate provision is put in place. When professional services teams are also involved and senior leadership commitment is evident there is a better chance of embedding inclusive practice. Widening Participation practitioners,

Equality & Diversity practitioners and the Student Union also have a useful contribution to make. When disability equality is viewed as an integral part of the broader equalities agenda and universal design is conceived as a way to include all students everybody benefits. Recording lectures, for example, can help students for whom English is a second language, and automatic doors ease the flow of movement for everyone. Benefits for students can also translate into benefits for staff.

Although Health and Safety training is usually compulsory for HE staff, and some universities offer an online overview of the Equality Act 2010, there is no similar mandatory requirement for personnel working with disabled students in various capacities to understand the relevant entitlements and processes and this is a concern. If an academic, for example, receives a learning contract amongst six hundred other emails and does not really know what to do with it, or an ICT or estates update fails to adequately consider accessibility, the chances of the student receiving a joined-up service will inevitably be somewhat reduced.

Most Recent Research

Williams *et al.* (2017) were commissioned by HEFCE to conduct a study of the support available to disabled students across the English HE sector in 2016/17 and examine the progress made towards inclusive practice. In-depth case studies of 13 providers, and feedback from 59 individuals supplemented the online data obtained from 137 providers. In summary the report concluded that the HEI's surveyed delivered effective training and organisation for staff to support disabled students. Participating providers reported making progress on inclusive curriculum design and teaching and learning practices. 30% identified a priority for developing their use of both general and assistive technology. The report listed various recommendations including: using inclusive practice champions; identifying alternative funding streams to resource the longer-term embedding of inclusive practice; improving accessibility of digital resources; staff development, engagement and senior leadership buy-in to foster an inclusive institutional culture.These recommendations are in keeping with James *et al*. (2017) and chime with NADP's active support to progress disability equality in post compulsory education. NADP advocates the use of social model language and would therefore not have used the term 'students with disabilities' in the title of the report. However, the report does make substantial recommendations about the reduction of barriers experienced by disabled students.

NADP Experience

Members communicating via the NADP JISCMail list suggest that HEIs are in various stages of preparation for the new conditions. In response to this, NADP has organised a series of 'Inclusive Practice' conferences in the last two years with the aim of sharing good practice across the sector. However, indications point to a patchy picture across the sector with some institutions struggling to cover the basic guidelines and others working towards a higher standard of inclusive practice.

Support for students who do not qualify for DSAs, such as international disabled students, has also been a topic for intense discussion on the NADP JISCMail support line and at NADP conferences. The lack of financial assistance has appeared to result in a system where provision for international disabled students varies widely between institutions.

NADP aims to be an inclusive organisation and seeks to engage with: leaders, academics, researchers, staff from services beyond disability teams and external agencies. NADP is growing in influence and it offers advice and guidance to many organisations not directly engaged with disability equality but understanding of services for disabled students from professionals working with disabled students can be limited. NADP members are very clear that what is required is a shared responsibility, an 'all-in-it-together' approach, which views disability as part of diversity and understands intersectionality. The organisation is striving to collaborate with others in order to provide something useful to this agenda.

Conclusions

Joined up thinking is a pre-requisite to ensuring that disabled students receive an equitable experience. Students do not access aspects of university life in little boxes and the component parts which go together to make the whole journey both enjoyable and productive need to be viewed as a whole, from pre-entry to post-exit.

Universal design for inclusive practice demands co-ordination and above all leadership which is modelled from the top. An arrangement that systematically incorporates all aspects that affect the student journey would be ideal: everything from staff induction through inter-departmental communication to the social aspects of student life. Only in this way will we ensure that unacceptable levels of variance between institutions are minimised. In these new systems DSAs will be included as additional support for those who need a little more.

When universal design underpins all aspects of strategic and operational planning, everybody (staff, students and others) can benefit. Intersectionality and multiple identity are factors which require consideration. Within university populations there will be disabled and non-disabled people who may experience disadvantage if their requirements are not considered and advantages to the institution of nurturing diversity and recognising all the talents will also be missed.

The pace of change poses organisational challenges which need to be addressed on a practical as well as strategic level. If a disabled student needs resources to be in place at the start and to follow through coherently from pre-entry to post graduation but services do not kick in for months or finish too early, then the system will fail. If there is no co-ordinated support for work on placement or lecturers are unaware of their responsibilities, then the system will fail. A robust, joined up system designed to fully support all aspects of the student journey is required.

Success demands leadership from the top with higher management buy-in, policy and guideline development with input from all areas of the HEI and stakeholder involvement. Disability advisers, researchers, lecturers and staff from a wide range of professional services have expertise to offer. Students are the experts in their own lives and disabilities and usually have a very clear idea about what would work for them as individuals. Their feedback and involvement in the development of services is vital and has been required, although not carefully monitored, since equality impact assessments were introduced.

We are undoubtedly living in very challenging times and our Prime Minister has already told us that there is no magic money tree. The challenge is to mobilise our capacity to work with and for students in order to promote disability equality as a vital aspect of a broader equalities agenda, in our rapidly changing university sector. NADP, despite its tiny infrastructure and unpaid, voluntary Board of Directors, is a fierce and influential force for social model thinking around disability equality in post-compulsory education. The strength of the organisation lies with its lively and engaged membership.

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Inclusive Teaching and Learning: What's Next?

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Executive Summary

This paper reflects the 'Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Higher Education as a route to Excellence' published by the Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group's (DSSLG) in January 2017 and highlights actions that may be required to attain the goals set out in the report. Here we link Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles with the Social Model of Disability and highlight how successful inclusive teaching and learning practice supports all students. The main findings that will require further consideration are:

- **Successful inclusive teaching and learning practices involve planning, design, delivery and evaluation of curricula outcomes** as part of a UDL agenda.

- It is essential to **have sector wide agreement about the minimum expectations for inclusive teaching and learning practices** that adhere to the Equality Act 2010.

- Strategic leadership is recognised as essential, but without **collaboration with students including those with disabilities**, results may not represent the needs of all stakeholders.

- **Outcomes must be open to public inspection** in particular those that involve maintenance and measurement of quality over time.

- **Training and support to embed inclusion is vital** to assist faculty, researchers, teaching support staff and other service providers.

- **Being flexible, equitable and proactive in the provision of multiple means of curricula presentation and assessment modes**. This includes making 'reasonable adjustments' and allowing for personalisation to support a diverse student population.

- **Effective implementation and training in use of technologies is required to enhance productivity and enable inclusion.** This includes tools for planning and organisation, note taking, reading and writing support.

- The need for **clear pathways for student communication with named personnel** to ensure the success of anticipatory actions and the requirements for reasonable adjustments.

- **The sharing of expertise to support research into evidence of good practice.**

Introduction

In January 2017, the Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group published a report entitled 'Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Higher Education as a route to Excellence' (Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group (DSSLG), 2017), hereafter referred to as the DSSLG (2017) report. This paper examines the risks, recommendations and evidence base presented in the report in more detail and further explores the requirements for a successful implementation of the principles of inclusive teaching and learning.

The principles of inclusive teaching and learning have been variously described, but perhaps best summed up in a Teaching Essentials Toolkit from Sheffield Hallam University (Sheffield Hallam University, 2016) as:

- "Being Flexible – open to change and versatile

- Being Equitable – ensuring consistency and accessibility for all

- Working Collaboratively – involving students and stakeholders

- Supporting Personalisation – recognising that successful learning and teaching is governed by personal difference

- Embracing Diversity – creating opportunities to develop awareness of diversity and global issues"

Developing inclusive and accessible learning practices can only be successfully embedded if seen as an evolving journey at a national, organisational and professional level. This has been highlighted by the continuing publication of evidence and guidelines in other jurisdictions, since the release of the DSSLG (2017) report.

Although clearly driven by the government changes to the Disabled Students Allowances (DSA) (Hansard Commons, 2014) the report bases many of its recommendations on the Equality Act 2010 (HM Government, 2010) and the concept of 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled students and the anticipatory nature of these duties. The report introduces the use of the Social Model of Disability in order to achieve inclusive practices across Higher Education Providers (HEPs).   These concepts encourage providers to pursue a proactive approach to removing barriers and to mitigate the possibility of disadvantaging disabled students in their wish to study to degree level and beyond.

The DSSLG (2017) report notes that in the literature and research different terms for 'inclusive teaching and learning practices' are used in different regions and disciplines. This report quotes the Higher Education Academy saying "Inclusive learning and teaching recognises students' entitlement to a learning and 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". In addition, the report indicates that the terms "inclusive approaches", "universal design for learning" and "inclusive teaching and learning" may be interchangeable. While there are pitfalls to defining inclusive teaching and learning (in particular a risk of reducing aspirational planning and out-of-the-box thinking), the broad concepts covered by such terms as "inclusive approaches" can be understood to encompass a wide range of equality, diversity and widening participation priorities. The Equality Act 2010 (HM Government, 2010) requirement for HEPs to anticipate the needs of prospective and current disabled students, through inclusive teaching and learning practices, is only applicable to individuals with disabilities, not those with other protected characteristics (EHRC, 2016).

If the sector is to leverage evidence based-practice in order to implement inclusive teaching and learning practices, as well as put in place systems to monitor, measure and evaluate the effectiveness of their actions, there needs to be an accepted model of what inclusive teaching and learning practices comprise for disabled students.

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework provides a proven model for inclusive practices. It is defined by the US Federal Government as "a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged. UDL reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students including students with disabilities" (US Congress, 2008).

Some may feel that being mindful of 'reasonable adjustments' and 'anticipatory duties' are additional requirements, but using a UDL framework offers a positive approach to inclusion, from the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of curricula (goals, assessments, methods, and materials) (National Center On Universal Design For Learning, 2011). UDL also aligns with the 'UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education' (HE Academy, 2011) by sustaining a vision that involves the student voice in diverse learning communities.

The advantage of applying a UDL ethos to underpin inclusive practices not only extends beyond disabled students to the wider student body, but also allows for different teaching and learning situations. These may include accessible elearning or distance and blended learning using multiple formats for curricula resources and the use of accessible digital technologies. If the UK HEP sector considers the UDL framework in the context of inclusive teaching and learning practice, it will be possible to build on and access a growing international evidence base.

Planning

Evidence has shown that if the goal to embed successful inclusive practices is to be achieved then careful planning is required. Successful planning for change only happens if there is an understanding regarding the disconnect between the 'diverse populations' within HEPs and acceptance of behavioural change with both 'top down' and 'bottom up' pressures, attention to departmental contexts, and a strong evidence base (Lawie, *et al.,* 2017). Whilst DSSLG (2017) recognises the role for strategic leadership and the value of external scrutiny, it offers little evidence of the importance of student involvement in this aspect of strategic or curricula planning, which has been acknowledged by others.

Planning for inclusive curricula is part of the anticipatory duty of the Equality Act 2010 (HM Government, 2010) and includes all 'qualifying institutions' and all students whether international, part-time, distance learners or those who do not qualify for DSA. This not only requires the simple actions to effect change as mentioned in the report, but also an underlying belief that inclusive teaching and learning adds value for all learners.

The report recognises that there is a need for culture change as well as support to engage staff with sector wide initiatives. This has been recognised as critical to the success of inclusive teaching and learning practices internationally (Mitchell, 2014) and nationally. The concept of sector wide frameworks for inclusive teaching practices is already embedded within school teaching standards and the OFSTED framework for England (NASEN, 2015) and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (Dept. for Education, 2015), where 'Quality First Teaching' and a 'Graduated Approach' to support ensure that the needs of learners are considered within day to day teacher planning.

A recent European initiative has provided frameworks to guide HEPs through the process, including the use of UDL principles, to achieve inclusive teaching and learning. The AHEAD 'Licence to Learn' Guidelines suggest the need to

'create a sustainable and coherent policy through clear visions and strategies' (UDLL Partnership, 2017). The report provides ideas for creating the vision and offers the roles that should be involved when thinking about questions such as:

- Do you have an over-arching institutional policy for inclusive teaching and learning?

- Are you using the expert knowledge of the diverse learner?

- Is a clear and challenging vision for UDL understood by all?

- Have sustainable strategies at all levels been implemented?

- Have you developed action plans for implementation coherent with budgets and other important plans?

- Have you used/developed a system for evaluation and quality assurance?

- Can your policies, procedures and systems for evaluation with outcomes be internally and externally scrutinised?

In order to be successful, planning for inclusion must involve all stakeholders with a consistency of approach across HEPs. This means that those in leadership positions, departments, faculties and services not only collaborate to deliver policies and procedures, but also listen to the student voice (all student cohorts including disabled undergraduate, graduate and research students). In addition, both internal and external scrutiny is necessary in order to achieve measurable outcomes and progress. This process would also allow for comparisons to be made across the sector in order to raise standards.

Where inclusive learning, teaching and assessment frameworks are developed and implemented, the outcomes should be open to public scrutiny so that they are available for prospective students as well as for Quality Assurance.

Design and Delivery

There is nothing new about the design and delivery of curricula and the concepts of the UK Professional Standards Framework can easily be adapted to suit the principles of Inclusive teaching and learning. Based on these ideas there are several Inclusive learning, teaching and assessment frameworks that have been developed by universities such as York St John University Inclusive learning, teaching and assessment framework (York St John

University, 2016) and Anglia Ruskin University's Inclusive Teaching Checklist (Anglia Ruskin University , 2017) to indicate good practice.

It may seem self-evident that academic staff could complete these checklists and there would be an audit trail to ensure that the outcomes are reviewed over time. However, as these initiatives are relatively new there is little public guidance as how to begin this process of designing and delivering inclusive teaching and learning or how to check for compliance. The UDLL Partnership UDL guidelines (2017) suggest that it helps to "Build on strong networks and value all partnerships" in order to progress the process. They ask:

- "What kind of networks could exist for collaboration to create change and address UDL as a best practice solution?

- What structures are there in your institution, and if you were to invite a group of colleagues to discuss diversity and UDL, where would you start?

- Who are your key colleagues for developing and implementing universal design (UD) and UDL thinking where you are?

- In what way and on what level can students be involved?

- What does it take for you or someone in the right position to be the UD and UDL coordinator at your institution?"

Clearly, the Quality Assurance process must be transparent to enable the management of expectations, encourage engagement of diverse learners and balance the degree to which reasonable adjustments have been achieved.

The practical elements required to ensure delivery of teaching and learning considers inclusion with access for all students and has been documented in the report with examples from such universities as De Montfort who offer lecture capture, advanced notes and other good practices. Further examples can also be found on the AHEAD web pages on inclusive teaching (AHEAD, 2015) and a recent project by the Institute of Physics (2017) examined the state of inclusive teaching and learning within physics departments. It found that while individual reasonable adjustments were embedded, there was little evidence that academics were familiar with inclusive practices beyond those who had a personal interest in the area. It will be necessary to provide ongoing support to faculty, researchers, teaching support staff and other service providers to enable them to develop the necessary skills and ensure evidence-based practice is the norm. A recent Massive Open Online Courses

on Digital Accessibility and Inclusive Teaching and Learning Environments have had over 7,000 enrolments with comments that have highlighted issues related to appropriate training across the sector (Draffan, et al., 2017). These courses have also resulted in the sharing of expertise demonstrating best practice.

The question remains as to how one judges a baseline for provision for diverse learners when technologies, curriculum design, delivery and assessment are changing. Nevertheless, multiple means of presentation, action and representation as well as engagement are considered essential for successful inclusive teaching and learning practices.

Evaluation

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education Part B (2013) suggests that "Those involved in student development and achievement are routinely represented in internal decision-making processes to enable realistic goal-setting and monitoring of progress" and that "where possible equity of access is achieved through inclusive design, but in some circumstances, arrangements are made to enable access for individuals." Also that "Higher education providers work in partnership with students to understand the implications of their specific needs." It appears at no point are clear indications offered as to who should be involved in these tasks and how the process will be routinely undertaken in the light of the DSA changes.

If those with expertise in disability matters are suggesting ways in which inclusive learning and teaching practices can be implemented with examples of good practice, it would seem that questions need to be asked once again, as to how these ideas will be monitored and progress judged across the sector. The implementation of aspects of The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) could possibly fill the gap (Department for Education, 2017). Although the TEF does not specifically mention disabled students under widening participation or "the desired outcomes of the work described in the Access and Participation Statement", it does aim to provide all students "with high quality experiences and outcomes" (Higher Education Funding Council, 2016). However, there is no specific mention of inclusive practices or UDL within the TEF, so some joined up thinking will be necessary in order to make use of it in this regard. Assessors will need to depend on criteria that show "evidence of how far a provider demonstrates teaching and learning excellence across its entire provision". There is mention of student involvement in the TEF guidance and, in order for the TEF to help this agenda move forward, disabled students should be included in discussions.

The DSSLG report notes the role that professional bodies can play in evaluating academic programs and the importance of identifying competence standards. It is also noted that reasonable adjustments should be provided in order to enable disabled students to demonstrate required competence skills. Indeed some professional bodies have collaborated to produce and disseminate information on reasonable adjustments within their professional networks (ECU, 2015). However, lessons learnt from these activities are often retained within the specific academic fields, while they could be included in institutional planning across a range of disciplines, as well as strategic planning. Therefore, in order for inclusive practices to be embedded within courses, internal and external evaluation of required competency skills should be commonplace.

Embedding inclusive teaching and learning practices form part of HEP's anticipatory equality duty and it is important that any resulting actions are regularly reviewed to evaluate how effective and appropriate they are in the light of changing circumstances as outlined in 7.26 and 7.727 of the Equality Act 2010 Technical Guidance on Further and Higher Education (EHRC, 2014). The Public Sector Equality Duty (EHRC, 2014) also requires HEPs to regularly publish equality information and objectives in an accessible format while Section 149 of the Equality Act (2010) (HM Government, 2010) requires that these equality objectives "must be specific and measurable". Therefore, it is important that HEPs consider how to monitor, measure and evaluate inclusive teaching and learning practices in order to meet their Equality Act responsibilities and to comply with the legal obligation this information is published "in a way that is easily understood by the public".

Having comparable information on approaches to inclusive teaching and learning as well as reasonable adjustments would be of particular interest to prospective students when assessing the suitability of a course and HEPs to match skills and needs. This is already provided to learners at earlier stages of their educational journey as local authorities, schools and colleges are required through the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (Dept. for Education, 2015) to publish annually a SEND information report detailing the provision and resources available, as well as an evaluation regarding the effectiveness of these activities.

HEPs can only meet Equality Act responsibilities and anticipatory duties if there is a sector wide agreement regarding the principles, requirements and evidence of inclusive teaching and learning practices and how they are measured.

Conclusion

This paper has identified, outlined and started to unpack issues the authors have recognised as key in the document under discussion and proposed ideas for practical implementation, assessment of progress and ongoing sector wide monitoring of developments towards inclusive practice in the HE sector.

Senior leadership buy-in is clearly key. Effective action planning, review and monitoring of progress appears to require the identification of a solid baseline from which to move forward. Staff development is an essential component of effective change management working towards a strategy for inclusion which is underpinned by principles of UDL and informed by an ethos influenced by The Social Model of Disability, but applicable to all students who may experience barriers to learning. Embedded UDL comes with long-term cost benefits and quality enhancers, which reduce the requirement for bespoke individual adjustments and make the benefits of accessibility available to all. While the report focusses on sector responsibilities towards students, including the requirements of the TEF, the whole university community could benefit from UDL.

A sector wide analysis of progress in this arena would clearly be easier to implement if a common framework document could be developed for evaluation purposes in order to facilitate comparisons effectively for research purposes. The benefits of taking a strategic evidence based approach are that progress towards the goal of improvement in inclusive practice can be made tangible. Underpinned by UDL, further gains can be made in the enhancement of all aspects of all students' experiences with the potential to improve quality across departments, the institution and the sector. The benefits to staff as well as learners are obvious. There is a need to facilitate comparable minimum expectations for inclusive teaching and learning practices. This could be built on the TEF requirements as suggested in the DSSLG report along with more rigorous guidance and monitoring of the action plans required by the Equality Act (2010) where lessons can be learnt from the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2015 (HM Government, 1995) and the Children's and Families Act 2014 (HM Government, 2014).

As part of the process, the authors have identified the need to capture current information on how HEPs are adapting to the changing environment, in particular regarding the mitigation of the risks mentioned in the DSSLG (2017). A survey could also include questions about plans to embed inclusive practices and knowledge of the personnel involved, as well as the type of technologies being used to support UDL.

However, there remains a need to develop a long term plan to support the sector in developing the necessary tools and skills to embed these inclusive practices within the academic and teaching staff communities. There also needs to be a way of establishing a means of evaluating the effectiveness of this approach to ensure the goal of reducing barriers for disabled and disadvantaged students is achieved.

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Perspectives, Challenges and Opportunities: the Role of Assistive Technology Specialists within Universities in England.

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Abstract

In recent years, the number of assistive technology (AT) specialists employed by universities has increased dramatically. Due to the infancy of this role, little has been known about how this post is being developed. In June 2017, an AT network was established as a peer support group for those who work in this capacity in universities. This paper discusses research carried out using this network and provides an overview of how the role of AT specialists is being developed, the challenges these individuals face, as well as the support they need. This paper also explores how AT specialists are establishing themselves as a driving force for institutional change, especially in relation to developing inclusive practice.

Introduction

Judging by the number of job advertisements in recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of universities who have created the role of AT specialist. However, many of those who work in this capacity do so in isolation from one another with no opportunities to meet as a professional network in England. In addition, little has been known within this community, or the wider field of disability support, about the development of the post across different universities, the challenges these individuals are facing, or the support that these professionals felt they needed as a group. To overcome this issue, in 2017 a support group for AT specialists working in universities was established. The aim of the group is to develop a peer support network in the form of a Community of Practice (CoP) (Wegner *et al.,* 2002).

A CoP, may be formed as an on-line or face-to-face group. In this case, it is a group of professionals who meet regularly to discuss and develop their practice. A CoP has three main elements which are a domain, a community and a practice (*ibid.,*2002). The domain enables the members to establish the focus of their interactions; once the domain is established the community begins to form to examine the practice; interest in the domain brings the group together; the community keeps the group connected and the practice moves the group to action (Byington, 2011). In this case, the shared interest

of this group is a specialism in AT and employment in a university setting. The members' interactions focus on their role and it is hoped that as a community they will work together to overcome shared challenges and to support each other with common projects.

Many of the individuals within the group are still shaping their role. Consequently, the first meeting explored variations in the main duties set out for AT specialists, as well as the challenges they face within their post and with their career development. This paper shares the initial findings from this research and will discuss the ways in which the network is developing.

Methodology

The study was undertaken by two authors who are AT Officers. All participants are directly employed by a university and are either employed in the post of AT specialist or hold a student services role from which they have specialised in AT.[1] The strategies that were used to gather data for this research were a questionnaire, semi-structured group discussions and an analysis of job advertisements.

The questionnaire was disseminated by posts on a number of professional email lists. Despite these emails being distributed nationwide, only individuals working in England responded. This was mirrored in the discussion groups, which despite being open to assistive technologists across the UK, were only attended by representatives working in England. This may have been due to the location of the first event, which was held in London.

Twenty eight universities across England are represented in this study. Twenty nine survey respondents gave their consent to share their results from the questionnaire and twenty eight participants gave their consent to share their results from the discussions. During our research we discovered thirty-one English universities had developed an AT specialist role; therefore, although we do not know the exact numbers of universities who employ AT specialists directly, we believe that the majority of individuals employed by English institutions were included in the study.

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[1] The study did not seek to include needs assessors or staff who work in needs assessment centres, even where the centres are affiliated with the university. Needs assessment, as a form of AT specialism, is an established part of UK higher education, while this study aimed to learn more about the more recent development of AT specialism within student services.

The role of AT specialist

AT Officer was the main title held by AT specialists, other titles include: Technical Adviser, Disability IT Support Analyst and Assistive Technologist. Twenty three participants were employed on a full time basis, whilst 6 were part-time. The survey highlighted that majority of participants are based in one of three departments: disability services (44%), the library (34%) and computing services (17%), although 1 individual is based in a staff development department. The number of participants who had never undertaken accredited or certified training from the list provided (see appendix) was 40%. Of those who had completed at least one qualification, 41% were certified MindView trainers, whilst 31% had completed Read and Write's accredited training course. The list contained the most widely used tools and on reflection should have included a larger range of software. For example, one participant specalised in supporting students with visual impairments but none of this software was on the list.

Sixty nine percent of participants had applied for a newly created post, 10% had developed the role as part of their previous employment and 20% applied for a position that already existed. The fact that the majority of AT specialists are working in a newly created post demonstrates that AT is a relatively new specialism in universities. Participants suggested that this role had been created in response to the Government's ongoing reforms to the Disabled Students' Allowances (BIS, 2014). This includes an expectation that universities will do more to make anticipatory adjustments for disabled students by developing inclusive practice across their institution. The Disabled Student Sector Leadership Group's (DSSLG) report on inclusive teaching and learning in higher education, published by the Department for Education (2017), included De Montfort University's creation of an AT Officer post as part of a case study of proactive response to policy changes. The purpose of this post was to develop workshops and author online resources to support disabled students in effectively using technology to develop their academic skills (DSSLG, 2017). Results from the questionnaire revealed that most AT specialists carry out these duties as part of their employment as 86% deliver AT training to students, plus 79% create written and video help guides. It is interesting to note that only 55% of participants deliver training funded through Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA). Many of those individuals had a dual role, which included administering the AT service, meaning there was only a limited amount of time in their working week to provide training. Other participants focused on supporting staff rather than students.

Agents of change

AT specialists appear to be a driving force in influencing institutional change, with 96% providing advice and guidance to academics and professional services staff on inclusive practice. This includes;

- One-to-one support
- Delivering workshops at departmental away days and internal conferences
- Project work
- Academic research

For example, one participant had led an accessibility audit on the four Virtual Learning Environment courses their university promoted as examples of best practice. The audit was undertaken by a team of disabled students who documented the accessibility issues they faced, as well as the design features they felt supported their learning. As a direct result of this project, the institution's central learning technology team changed the advice they provide to academics in relation to course design.

To support the wider educational community in developing their practice, AT specialists are actively involved in disseminating their practice at conferences and events. For example, Holtam (2016) presented a JISC funded project capturing video interviews in which current students discussed how they had used technology to overcome disability related study skills challenges. Walker and Whittles (2017) carried out research into the accessibility of lecture capture recordings, especially in relation to students with hearing impairments. Whilst, Peak and Marin (2017) created a website that contains advice on developing inclusive teaching, learning and assessment materials.

Additional duties

In addition to the duties named above, a check box exercise revealed assistive technology specialists are also involved in:

Duty	Number of participants involved in this task
Developing and delivering staff development workshops on AT	23
Assessing students AT needs	22
Providing AT training for staff	20

Administering a loan service e.g. laptops	19
Staff inductions e.g. teaching Library Support Workers how to create accessible formats	11
Managing student ambassadors	2

Several discussion groups also highlighted that they are also responsible for procuring, installing and maintaining AT at their institution. The participants that performed the majority of the duties stated in the table above reported feeling overwhelmed. One participant commented that 'there is not enough time to do everything'. Among the potential solutions that were raised in response to this were:

- The separation of the role of university-provided one-to-one AT training from the role of the AT or inclusion specialist,
- Recruitment of more than one AT specialist at an institution[2]
- Engaging students in the delivery of AT projects, such as writing case studies

Salary

An analysis of job advertisements revealed that the salary for this post usually ranges from £25,000 - £38,000 exclusive of London weighting, with the majority earning within the £25,000 - £29,000 range. Several discussion group attendees, whose salary was at the lower end of the pay range, felt that the role was underpaid in relation to the knowledge they needed and the duties they undertook. They highlighted similar positions at their institution, including academic skills tutors and learning technologists who provide institutional wide support, are paid at a higher grade. As a CoP the network could work together to ensure that the level of professional status associated with this post developed in line with the duties of the role.

Common challenges within the role

Developing links between different departments

Nearly three quarters (72%) of participants felt that developing links between different departments was challenging and several discussion group attendees

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[2] Some universities follow this practice but most of those who have an AT Specialist have just one position..

believed that they had been placed in the wrong department to facilitate their work. Some participants reported that their role requires close work with members of different departments at different sites, others noted that confidentiality policies had the effect of siloing student data within different departments to that of the AT specialist. Those based outside of their institution's disability services felt that the lack of information they could access about a student's disability and their needs negatively impacted upon the quality of service AT specialists could provide. For example, in some institutions, due to confidentiality policies, disability advisers often referred an individual for AT support with no disability information. This prevented the AT specialists from being fully prepared for initial sessions. The lack of information sharing had resulted in students being repeatedly asked to disclose information about their disability-related needs, which are often upsetting conversations for the student and was reported to give them the impression that their support is not joined-up.

'Lack of AT knowledge within my institution or department'

A concern shared by 69% of participants were that outside their own post, there is a lack of AT knowledge within their institution or department. One consequence of this is a lack of internal support, especially for individual practitioners. The lack of internal support means professional email lists were the only form of assistance many of these individuals could access and they could not guarantee that their questions would be answered. Furthermore, using professional email lists were reported as a daunting experience as users hesitated to reveal their weaknesses or lack of knowledge to their peers. The discussion groups also highlighted that many AT specialists have their own diagnosis of a specific learning difference, most notably dyslexia, and due to this, some reported finding the archives of these email lists difficult to navigate.

Several attendees suggested that lack of AT skills and knowledge amongst colleagues prevented AT from being integrated into the rest of student support. Some attendees would like more opportunities to disseminate their knowledge to colleagues to enable this. Although they recognised that not every member of staff could become an expert, they felt it would be beneficial for key members of staff such as specialist study skills tutors, disability advisers and library customer service assistants to develop stronger AT skills, commensurate with the status of AT as major and pervasive tools of enablement. Attendees noted that the staff training they provide is voluntary

and consequently it is sometimes poorly attended.[3]

Career Development

A lack of career opportunities was the main challenge that participants felt they faced in relation to their career development. The only direct promotional route for this post is to become an AT Manager, which involves overseeing the training provision, as well as the procurement and installation of AT. These posts usually arise from internal promotions and the opportunities are currently few and far between. Furthermore, these positions often involve line management responsibility, which does not appeal to all. Another major concern for participants is that, due to the infancy of this role, there are minimal opportunities for peer support and mentorships. As a community of practice this is something the group aims to address.

The discussion groups revealed that there is concern over limited continuous professional development opportunities that are available, especially for those at the lower end of the pay range. One issue is that others who are employed in roles that focus on teaching and learning, such as learning technologists and academic skills tutors, are awarded funding to attend formal courses, including the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching for Learning in Higher Education. Yet these opportunities are not readily available to AT specialists, even though many of these individuals develop and deliver learning and teaching activities in group situations. Many participants noted that they are limited to free and low-cost staff development opportunities. This included the webinars and training events provided by software companies. A number of participants have also applied for professional recognition schemes, including the different levels of the Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy, and Certified Membership of the Association for Learning Technology (CMALT).

The future of the community

To develop the CoP, participants have requested that one face-to-face meeting is organised per semester. Part of the meeting will focus on key areas that the group want to develop. For example, as a significant part of their role involves developing the practice of others, a topic that the group want to focus on is positive influencing skills. In addition to this, these events will also provide opportunities for AT specialists to share their practice and to network. To provide daily support, an online platform is being developed, this

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[3] Note that attendees suggested that declining to attend a volunteer AT related training session may not reflect a lack of desire to develop AT skills; rather non-AT specialties staff may feel their workload prevents them from participating in a voluntary training. This has the consequence of reducing the status given to AT as an inclusive practice.

will contain answers to the most frequently asked questions within the sector, as well as discussion boards.

Conclusion

This paper has focused on the experiences of assistive technology specialists employed by universities in England. It has demonstrated the breadth of activities with which these individuals are involved in including: delivering AT training to staff and students, authoring on-line resources, administering loan services, repairing faulty AT and managing casual staff. Despite the infancy of this post, these individuals have completed a number of projects to develop accessibility within their institution, including providing advice on accessibility issues with lecture capture software, as well as the virtual learning environment and how these can be overcome. This suggests that AT specialists could be key players in developing inclusive practice across the sector. Career development was a key concern for these professionals, especially the lack of opportunities to progress within their careers while remaining AT specialists. Furthermore, due to the infancy of this role and the limited number of people working as AT specialists within universities, a significant number of respondents felt that there was a general lack of support for the role generating more concerns with professional development.

To assist AT specialists with developing peer support mechanisms, the newly formed CoP is committed to hosting regular face-to-face meetings. These events wil provide opportunities for AT specialists to share their practice and network. To enable these professionals to develop their community an online platform is also being developed to allow members to maintain contact and increase collaboration oportunities.

Appendix

List of certified or accredited training providers

Read and Write

Inspiration

MindView

Audio Notetaker

Notetalker

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Sisyphus vs Hercules: A Year in the Life of Implementing HEI Inclusivity Projects.

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Abstract

This paper explores managing implementations of inclusivity at eight UK Higher Education Institutions over an academic year. Using semi-structured interviews with 'inclusivity officers', the research explores institutional support, successful and unsuccessful strategies, frustrations and 'wish lists'. Key findings are that successful projects need executive and participant level support, require cross-functional management, benefit from the 'inclusivity champion' role and that ultimate responsibility for implementation should lie within faculties. Additionally, if it is used, Universal Design for Learning needs contexualising to become useful. However, projects focusing on one area of disadvantage, eg gender or race, can significantly detract from improving inclusivity for others, eg disabled students. Management reorganisations cause major disruptions to inclusivity efforts. Metrics for inclusivity need development, being absent from both the Research Excellence and Teaching Excellence Frameworks.

Introduction

The primary aim in this focussed research amongst colleagues working at eight UK Higher Education institutions (HEI), whose job role, if not title, was that of *inclusivity officer*, was to understand what it was, indeed is, like for them to be managing or deeply involved with inclusivity-related projects.

My objectives were to understand how their HEIs define and implement inclusivity; to hear about successes and frustrations over an academic year (2016/17); to understand what strategies had and had not worked and to learn how they would change their roles to become more effective. Finally, I wanted to determine whether their work was Sisyphean, back-breaking and ultimately futile, or 'merely' Herculean, requiring strength and determination, but ultimately successful.

Source: www.slideshare.net/clhendricksbc/camus-the-myth-of-sisyphus-first-set-of-slides	Source: Creative Commons. Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labours_of_Hercules
Sisyphus – forever pushing a rock uphill only to have it roll back down. The definition of futility.	Hercules – 12 apparently impossible labours. A virtuous struggle leading to fame.
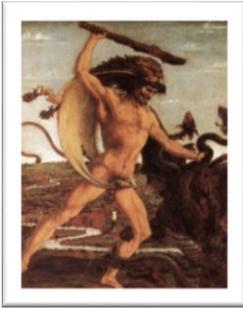
Inclusive learning and teaching in higher education are defined as "the ways in which pedagogy, curricula and assessment are designed and delivered to engage students in learning that is meaningful, relevant and accessible to all. It embraces a view of the individual and individual difference as the source of diversity that can enrich the lives and learning of others" (HEA, 2010).

The impetus for greater inclusivity at HE institutions derives from the UK Government's HE policy to deliver widening participation (DfE, 2015); (DfE, 2016); (DfE, 2017); (HEFCE, 2016b), compliance with the Equality Act (2010) and the modernisation of Disabled Students' Allowances (BIS, 2015). Together these require HEIs to shoulder more responsibility for delivering inclusive education, particularly in fully assuming their anticipatory Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act, 2010).

This paper comprises three parts. The first summarises respondents' individual 'stories' – their 'take' on the academic year as regards pushing forward an 'inclusivity agenda'. The second gathers together these experiences under various emergent themes. Finally, a conclusion offers some suggestions, based on these respondents' shared experiences, for those wishing to implement more inclusive teaching & learning environments.

Methodology

From an initial single acquaintance, I snowball-contacted seven people with some responsibility for operationally driving forward their HEI's inclusivity agenda, the sole criterion for selection. Their reporting lines were variously into Disability Services, Learning Development, Registrar, Information Services, Library and Student Services. Their time in post, varied between 5-24 months when first interviewed. Each agreed to be telephone or face-to-

face interviewed using a semi-structured set of 20 questions (Appendix 1). First interviews occurred in the early part of the academic year, December 2016–February 2017, follow-ups July-August 2017. By the time of the follow up interviews, one respondent had recently changed universities but consented to answer questions about her previous role.

The questions were piloted with the initial acquaintance and proved robust throughout the initial interview process. For the follow up interviews, rather than merely repeat the questions, respondents were asked, for each previous question, "what has changed?"

Respondents informed consent was requested at the outset of the interview, having received the questions by email beforehand. Interviews were recorded, then transcribed by an independent 3rd party. Each transcript was checked against its recording and minor errors corrected. The transcripts were subsequently examined iteratively to reveal the common main themes, which latter are used as sub-headings, below.

Respondents' identities are fully anonymised by the use of pseudonyms. The research was conducted under the British Educational Research Associations Guidelines (BERA, 2011)

Respondents 'stories'

Adrian – "small steps rather than giant leaps, which terrify people"

Adrian felt he had a successful year through building personal relationships with academics and initiating small achievable projects which academics identified as solving problems and which they, therefore, supported. His title was widened beyond student disability support to include inclusivity. This change was accompanied by closer working with the teaching and learning development team.

Adrian established 'inclusivity contact' with 80% of academic departments through personal meetings, which, although time consuming, worked better than more impersonal means, "I've found that by hearing staff's concerns, engaging in that one-to-one discussion, and actually giving that time, I've found that actually staff have responded very positively to that." Adrian's HEI ran a successful inclusivity pilot having identified an important area of student dissatisfaction with assessment feedback. This pilot will be further rolled out in 2017/18.

Adrian also delivered departmental workshops, both raising awareness but also identifying practical responses to challenges identified by staff and/or students regarding inclusivity. These workshops allowed "staff to identify the

project work that we can develop over the course of the year." Additionally, the workshops looked at student feedback so that suggestions for change were not seen to come from Adrian, the 'expert' [who may know little about the academic subject] but are seen to have a credibility in coming directly from students.

The language of inclusivity was not always popular or understood, so the workshops were used to deconstruct that language into the academics' context. Adrian also ran "going beyond the label" workshops to help academics understand patterns of difficulties, to which they could adapt their teaching as an alternative to labelling individuals' disabilities.

Adrian also secured funding to develop an inclusivity toolkit pilot based on staff and student input. The toolkit aims to allow students, peer mentors and academic staff to support students in managing their learning.

Hence, Adrian had an effective Herculean year.

David – deeply frustrated by funding cuts

Up to the middle of the academic year David's inclusivity strategy was making good progress through the various management committees. Additionally, other projects were progressing, such as proposals for conducting inclusivity audits in eight schools of the HEI, giving workshops to academics to raise inclusivity awareness, creation of an alternative assessment strategy working with the teaching and learning development team, presenting to faculty education committees and forging links with academics with a view to identifying curriculum projects for enhancement projects.

In progressing these initiatives, David found that the Higher Education Academy's (HEA) framework for inclusion was neither sufficiently "concrete" nor "robust" to form the basis for conducting an inclusivity audit. David also found Universal Design for Learning (UDL) unsuitable as a tool with which to conduct inclusivity audits. [UDL is a concept originating in the US comprising a framework for teaching and learning, often harnessing technology, to address the needs of the broadest possible range of students. It is based on three principles: 1) Providing multiple means of representation; 2) Providing multiple means of action and expressions; 3) Providing multiple means of engagement. (Rose & Gravel, 2010; Rose, *et al.*, 2006)].

Early in the year, David's HEI made changes in the way it delivered study skills support, moving some of the function from the disabilities support team into the faculties and making the support available to all students. This change was based on NSS feedback about weakness in students' knowledge

of study skills. However, David reported that the change also reduced the HEI's appetite for taking action to improve inclusivity through its teaching and learning development team.

Technology, specifically changing from one Learning Management System to another, also proved problematical, requiring significant investment in time and resource, detracting from inclusivity activities.

David also commented that the Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group's report, aimed at HEI VCs and executive boards, had had no impact, indeed, was neither talked about nor circulated (Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group, 2017).

However, in mid-academic year funding for David's projects was withdrawn, all inclusivity-related projects stopped.

For David, the year had started as one of progress by completing Herculean tasks and moving forward, but it ultimately proved Sisyphean.

Marsha – the year of the "champion"

Marsha's HEI has adopted the role of "inclusivity champion" embedding it within faculties and making tangible progress towards its inclusivity goals. Inclusivity activities are guided from within a single working group and are significantly focused on Athena Swan Certification for the whole institution (Equality Challenge Unit, n.d.). The Athena Swan activities lie within a "mission and equality vision", the Equality Strategy, approved during the academic year despite some senior management turnover. Marsha's team is now working on a framework to enable implementation to start during the next academic year.

During the previous academic year, the equality champions began running their own departmental network events to deliver mutual support. Also, staff and students led their own devolved forums to help identify issues and explore solutions.

The HEI's Equality Strategy's objectives are agreed as: embedding equality in all aspects of university life; ensuring diversity in staff & student intake and attainment; providing flexible and adaptive learning, teaching, assessment to a diverse student community, and delivering a physically & psychologically accessible and inclusive campus.

The inclusivity champion role has been acknowledged as vital to the strategy's success but also recognised as non-trivial, for example Athena Swan 'championing' activities could take 150 hours per annum. Financial

constraints mean that monetary rewards are impossible, but alleviation of other workload is being considered.

However, some problems of differing perspectives and priorities exist. Marsha reported a mismatch of a working group's draft policies, comprising mainly disability practitioners, and the objectives of the approving committee, whose inclusivity perspective was much wider, leading to an impasse.

Marsha's HEI is successfully moving forward with inclusivity using a mixed approach of implementation by faculties/departments whilst maintaining central direction and focus through an institutional strategy. The Athena Swan initiative bears this out, it is centrally mandated but delivered through over 30 faculties/departments and their champions.

Marsha's journey this academic year was of considerable task success, so qualifying as Herculean.

Angela – a mixed year, some progress but frustration with absent management commitment

On the positive side, Angela reported that an HEI-wide curriculum review has started, encompassing design, delivery and assessment, building on a decision already taken to lessen emphasis on a single summative summer exam, replacing it by two end of semester exams and continuous assessment. However, Angela reported a frustrating paradox. Some within the HEI feel that incorporating inclusivity for people with disabilities into the curriculum review, and subsequent curriculum modification, will significantly lengthen the end-to-end process, even though the review's rationale is largely to place inclusivity at the heart of the curriculum.

Angela, who has experience with UDL, is also frustrated that there is no UDL expertise on the curriculum redesign team, and therefore questions the HEI's senior management understanding of, and commitment to, inclusivity. Funding for a UDL post was turned down. Lack of resource was also more generally frustrating in that the disability support service is expected to be entirely operational in supporting students as well as contributing to the inclusivity project but with no increase in resource. This approach limits Angela and support colleagues from providing sufficient impetus to the wider initiatives.

Angela reported progress with the HEI's Certificate in Academic Practice which now includes inclusivity modules, induction training for new academics and workshops for existing academics. Some 64 academics received training during the year, but dissemination will be long process to over 1000 academics at the HEI.

The lack of acknowledgement of resource needs by senior management led Angela to question management's real commitment to inclusivity, thus the potential for Sisyphean futility exists.

Corrine: Significant progress

Corrine's HEI has shown a long-term management commitment to inclusivity by funding Corrine's post within the learning and development team. Corrine had extensively promoted the inclusivity agenda, both by holding numerous cross-faculty awareness-raising workshops, and working with individual academics plus student groups. Inclusivity was included within the HEI's Certificate in Academic Practice and in CPD programmes. Corrine had encountered a range of academic responses from active engagement, through denial of responsibility, to refusal to acknowledge the issue, "I spoke to the Head of [an academic] Department, who said 'Well it's not broke so why change it?'"

During the academic year Corrine's HEI realised it was time to progress from generic statements, hopes and aspirations to practicalities, that is, to have an answer when an academic says "Tell me specifically what I can do within my lecture." Corrine noted that an effective response could only be in each academic's own context; it could not be generic in the manner referred to in the institution's Teaching Excellence Framework (HEFCE, 2017b) submission.

The HEI's inclusivity strategy is now to take an 'academy-like' approach, modelled on the Higher Education Academy's (HEA), which will promote inclusivity throughout the institution and allow academics to gain 'academy' recognition, as well as funding and support to modify their curricula.

Once implemented, over the next two years, this strategy will require all future curricula to be approved for delivering inclusivity, including significant levels of student feedback. Each faculty will have its own inclusive practice, helping academics overcome the feeling of isolation and overloading which many currently feel when faced with becoming more inclusive.

For Corrine, the year proved one of Herculean success particularly in gaining institution wide agreement for the 'academy-like' approach at the project implementation level, backed up by inclusion in strategic plans. [Author's note: Subsequent contact with Corrine revealed that newly appointed management had instigated significant staff reductions and that the project was currently "in limbo" with the potential for a Sisyphean outcome.]

Harry: Significant progress once management changes stopped

Harry's original interview revealed a Sisyphean feeling of futility due to significant recent management changes. However, the academic year proved to be surprisingly productive. Crucially, the management changes ceased and "people are no longer fearful for their jobs". Harry's own reporting changed, providing higher level access and greater responsibility, including becoming an Equality & Diversity Inclusion (EDI) Champion within one of the HEI's schools.

Harry's institution is now focused on gaining both an Equality Challenge Unit Race Equality Charter mark (Equality Challenge Unit, n.d.) as well as an Athena Swan Charter mark for gender equality (Equality Challenge Unit, n.d.). Harry is involved in both projects and notes that the awards are very different in the nature of their execution; Athena Swan works to a set of specified principles whilst the Race Equality Charter Mark works to a looser framework. Within these two projects, Harry has achieved significant success in creating action plans, taking these to relevant people and committees to request that they drive them through, and being recognised within faculties as 'the EDI person'.

Harry has, however, grave worries about inclusion for those with disabilities. Disabilities and curriculum delivery are not discussed together. The need to respond to students with disabilities has been removed from academics and placed wholly into the disabilities service. Integrating inclusion into the HEI's activities is not being considered for disabilities; responding to those with disabilities continues to be a "bolt-on" activity. Additionally, within the teaching and learning development function Harry believes there is little idea about what a curriculum design should look like for inclusivity. Harry is also concerned that without a definition for inclusivity in an academic sense, and with neither the Research Excellence Framework (REF) (HEFCE, 2017a) nor the Teaching Excellence Framework (HEFCE, 2017b) including any inclusivity metrics, there will be little progress.

For Harry, a feeling of Sisyphean futility gave way to one of Herculean achievement and forward direction, albeit with severe reservations about inclusivity for disabled students.

Sandra: Enough momentum to avoid the paralysis of senior management change

Sandra's academic year went well until HEI-wide organisational change started. Consequently, "the university executive board only has one item on the agenda, and that is the organisational change". Strategic decisions about

inclusivity were postponed. However, Sandra's profile-raising activities around inclusivity at faculty level had created sufficient momentum that inclusivity was on the agenda of the annual learning & teaching symposium; Sandra subsequently crystallised the ideas presented into a successful proposal to form a one year, funded to create an inclusive course design checklist. The project will involve expertise, ideas and experience from "academics from various subject areas and support staff so there are education specialists, IT specialists, and we'll also have representation from the student union, student course reps". One area which Sandra hopes the project will address is alternative assessment formats.

Sandra made particularly effective progress with one of the HEI's five faculties, whose Director of Learning & Teaching is acting as sponsor for various initiatives. However, Sandra has never been invited to attend meetings of any of the various Teaching or Student Experience Committees and so questions the real degree of commitment to inclusivity at a senior faculty level.

The Disabled Students Strategy Leadership Group's document (Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group, 2017) has had little effect. Sandra found that whenever it is mentioned the reply from academics was a dissatisfying, 'Oh well, we already do some of these things anyway.' Sandra disagreed, "academics largely do not themselves teach inclusively, we [the HEI] still run a deficit model" with support available separately from the teaching function, through the disabilities service; Sandra is frustrated by this model.

Hence, despite management turmoil and frustration with academic colleagues, Sandra moved forward with a major Herculean task.

Stephen: Successful engagement with academics but wary about HEI's future direction

Stephen's awareness activities have extended beyond support staff to engaging academic colleagues, with workshops encouraging participants to talk about their experience of inclusive practice. Additionally, Stephen has moved from planning and research, into "actually doing stuff and being a bit reflective on what we've achieved so far" with various pilots, for example based around students' issues as they transition into the HEI, another being the delivery of mutual support to all with disabilities through buddy schemes.

Stephen's HEI has provided funding for a UDL expert & project team but Stephen noted that UDL is "not the holy grail", academics do not like its language. Stephen reported that "we've got three or four academics actually engaged with looking at how they deliver and how …inclusion can be

improved through … UDL [and] with those teaching staff we're writing a UDL handbook … contextualised to our … university".

Once these academics start delivering their courses more inclusively, Stephen's team will use "video clips embedded within [Stephen's hand book of inclusive practice] to demonstrate our own teaching staff delivering in that way." Stephen further observed that academics are now examining standards by which to measure their own competency in delivering inclusivity, despite there being no firm definition of the term 'inclusivity'.

As with other respondents, Stephen noted that senior management changes and changes in institutional priorities were a problem, causing momentum to be lost. Additionally, with UK undergraduate student applications at best static, at worst falling, Stephen's institution may look to expand outside the UK, with potential for 'defocusing' on "domestic inclusion".

Stephen now solely concentrates on inclusion and, believing that the academics themselves and their faculties need to own its achievement, is involved in significant 'outreach' to them and working with them, commenting that although the co-operative working "might take slightly longer…I think we'll get a more robust outcome."

In summary, Stephen achieved numerous Herculean goals but is wary of being told to stop working on the 'domestic' inclusivity task if the HEI proceeds with international expansion.

Discussion

This section discusses the common themes which respondents identified as having significant positive or negative effects on their respective institutions' pursuit of greater inclusivity.

Support for Inclusivity Across the Organisation

For any organisational project to be successful, support from colleagues is vital, specifically senior management, academics and support departments. Figure 1 shows the level of support respondents felt they received and the key issue(s) they identified with each group. Half the respondents felt they received good support from senior management, whilst three of the eight thought support poor. Respondents discussed the issue of senior management stability and how its absence caused the HEI's inclusivity agenda to 'fall by the wayside'. All but one respondent questioned senior managements' real commitment to the agenda; one told of 'lip-service' being paid to the inclusivity agenda by including it as an objective in a curriculum

redesign but then omitting to having anybody on that project who understood how to achieve it. The Teaching Excellence Framework's (HEFCE, 2017b) lack of explicit measures was also mentioned as a reason for senior management's lukewarm embrace of inclusivity (see Leverage section below). One respondent, however, enjoyed significant support, meeting the Vice-Chancellor eight times annually.

Respondents were pleasantly surprised by the support they received from academics, having expected pushback, commenting that in such a diverse body there would always be very variable levels of support, based on individual belief and character. Seven respondents mentioned that success was contagious; one academic's successful project would snowball into further requests for projects; academics with successful projects became champions for the agenda. However, providing support for academics to create inclusive materials and to change their teaching to embrace the concept was seen as a crucial success factor. Again, the Teaching Excellence Framework's (HEFCE, 2017b) lack of explicit measurement was cited as a reason for academics not focussing on inclusivity; they would not be measured on its achievement (see Leverage section below). Multiple campuses also caused issues, physical separation seemed to block progress.

As regards support departments backing of inclusivity, although this group combined a range of differing functions, common themes emerged. Broadly, backing for the inclusivity agenda was less forthcoming from support departments than from academics, respondents reported major issues with organisational silos impeding, indeed blocking, cross-functional working. One respondent noted somewhat despairingly, "support staff barely talk to one another, or academics. Management have created functional silos." Conversely, for one respondent, the answer to the problem had been to form a working party which crossed, but did not seek to change, functional boundaries. Another respondent reported that trades unions had given good support. Respondents also found issues of demarcation and, in one case, a department which did not co-operate due to worries about its members being de-skilled by increased embedded inclusive teaching.

Support for inclusivity across organisation

Support Departments
1. Good support 2/8
2. Variable support 1/8
3. Poor support 5/8
4. **Key: Need to remove:**
   a) Demarcations
   b) Poor inter-group working
   c) Blockages due to skills erosion

Senior Management
1. Good support 4/8
2. Variable support 1/8
3. Poor support 3/8
4. **KEY: Management stability crucial**

Academics
1. Good support 3/8
2. Variable support 3/8
3. Poor support 1/8
4. Too early to know 1/8
5. **Key: Success is contagious**

Figure 1: Support for inclusivity across organisations

Key: The figures shown, eg 2/8, indicate that 2 of the 8 respondents reported in the way indicated

Strategies Which Worked

Respondents were agreed that three strategies were most successful: effective internal networking, having champions and using levers to influence policy.

Networking

Networking was seen as a process of give and take. Respondents attended many internal meetings which departments held to communicate their work to others, and found that reciprocating with their own inclusivity orientated meetings achieved engagement. Respondents felt that they had to become known as the 'go-to' person regarding inclusivity. Respondents also found that "How can we …." meetings, where the issues were addressed as common problems, and solved by communal action, worked best. Working to others' agendas worked better than working to the respondents' agendas. Attendance at other HEIs' events and industry events were also seen as important, to gain ideas, to help share problems and discover solutions which had worked elsewhere.

Champions

Respondents identified the role of champions as being important in driving success. However, the word champion was itself slightly problematical, its meaning covering the spectrum of expert practitioner, to a promoter or advocate of the idea to someone who knew who else could be involved to reach a solution or deliver a successful project – a 'fixer'. However defined,

champions seemed to encourage a sequence of small victories, which accumulated to wider success. Success was seen as contagious. Respondents reported that non-financial rewards worked well as incentives, for example, by conferring awards on individuals, conferring post-nominal letters which could be used in a signature block. One respondent reported that academics were encouraged to submit their projects for external awards, noting how a particular initiative had recently won a prestigious international award.

Leverage

Leverage, something used to achieve a desired result (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), seemed to be operating in various ways; personal, within the institution and from outside the HEI. Respondents gave examples of successful personal leverage being a sense of competition between academics who asked, "If him/her, then why not me?" which, they thought, tapped into the emotion of competitiveness and the sense of missing out on a potential gain. An HEI's poor score in the National Student Survey (NSS) (HEFCE, 2016) was also cited as a lever for change. Although the 2017 inaugural TEF (HEFCE, 2017b) results had not been published at the time of the initial interviews, respondents noted on a number of occasions that the Framework lacked explicit measures for inclusivity which therefore detracted from efforts to achieve inclusivity. Whilst their responses reflected the views held by their colleagues, those colleagues may not have been wholly correct in the understanding of the Framework. Guidance issued by the UK Government stated that in addition to quantitative data-based metrics [none of which explicitly measure inclusivity], HEIs' were encouraged to submit written statements about their teaching, which could include descriptions of their teaching and its effectiveness, initiatives aimed at supporting their students and about the 'positive outcomes [which] are achieved for students from all backgrounds, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who are at greater risk of not achieving positive outcomes.' (BIS, 2016, pp. 13-16). Indeed, one respondent who requested a second interview after the TEF results were announced in June 2017 (HEFCE, 2017b) attributed his institution's elevated status in the awards to his HEI's written submission statements about inclusivity acting as a counterweight to the data-based metrics. Three respondents mentioned the Athena Swan initiative for encouraging female participation in STEMM [Science Technology, Mathematics, Engineering, Medicine] subjects as a model for those promoting inclusivity beyond gender (Equality Challenge Unit, n.d.) . Those respondents were keen to use what their institutions had learned from successfully

promoting gender equality, receiving or working towards Athena Swan awards, to help with their wider inclusivity programmes.

Strategies Which Did Not Work

Respondents were clear about strategies which gave poor results, or even engendered hostility.

Newsletters

"Impersonal", "waste of time [and] valuable resources", "expensive" were just three descriptions used to describe newsletters. Respondents also said they were regarded by their recipients as merely advertising, one respondent used the term "propaganda". In one HEI, a newsletter was sent to 500 internal addresses on a mailing list, yielding just 20 opens and minimal further click-throughs. Another respondent reported a colleague who said, referring to an 'inclusivity story' carried by a newsletter, "Well it might work for history, but it wouldn't work for geology." Such a response illustrates the dangers of solutions which appear generic.

Lecturing

Lecturing in the context of this project refers to the idea of telling people what they *have* to do. Respondents noted that lecturing senior management had not yielded results, not least because most respondents had no access to senior management. Lecturing academics on their obligations under legislation or to comply with government policy also failed. Academics felt that respondents lacked any credentials in their specialist subject area and hence were highly sceptical when offered advice, especially if delivered with any hint of compulsion, that they "had to" make changes to their teaching. Finally, respondents mentioned that their colleagues in support functions were quite protective of the status quo.

Inadequate Consultation

In historical times, the Royal Navy, referring to the quality of seamen resulting from the Press Gang believed that "one volunteer was worth two pressed men" (Knowles, 1999, p. 609:6). Human nature is unchanged, most respondents found that attempts to gain colleagues' participation without consultation would fail. One related the story of a lecture capture system, implemented over a vacation, which academics were 'mandated' to use from the start of the next term but against which they rebelled. Subsequent participation rates by academics in lecture capture were therefore very low.

Respondents also noted that their HEIs worked to a series of planning and budget cycles and that their inclusivity projects needed to recognise these and work within the time constraints they imposed. Trying to "buck" the system did not work, but working with the cycles, however long-winded that might seem, yielded better success.

All the respondents referred to the importance of the 'student voice' and participation in identifying, planning and implementing successful inclusivity projects.   The well-known slogan "no about us without us", which was adopted by the US disabilities rights movement in the 1990s (Levinsky-Raskin & Stevens, 2016; Charlton, 2000) , and in the UK, seems particularly appropriate to apply as a mantra to implementing inclusivity projects. However, respondents reported differing degrees of participation and data availability, one complained of too much data which led to "analysis paralysis". The National Students Survey was felt to be too coarse grained for its data to be useful at the level of discreet projects, these latter often being too small individually to affect institution-wide outcomes.

<u>Wish List</u>

Respondents' wish lists divided into two broad categories, those relating to the institution, and those relating to their roles. At the institution level, there was universal agreement that whilst statements about inclusivity were useful, demonstrable management commitment behind the statements was more so, for example by inclusivity being on the quarterly Executive Committee's agenda. However, all respondents stated that their institutions had not adopted, formally or informally, a definition of either inclusivity, inclusive teaching or inclusive learning. Consequently, none possessed measurement criteria, thus making problematical the assessment of progress towards inclusivity goals and led to another two items on their wish list, HEI goals and personal goals. All respondents saw the value of working cross-functionally, reducing silos and demarcations between parts of their HEI were a further wish. Respondents acknowledged that silos would always exist and saw cross-functional working parties as the way forwards – "we're all part of the problem, so we all need to be a part of the solution" according to one. Some of the respondents reported through a learning development organisation, others through a disabilities or student services structure. All respondents felt that to be credible with academics it was better to avoid being "pigeon-holed as a member of the disabilities team"; being a member of or closely working the learning development team was likely to prove more effective.

<u>Conclusion</u>

The study set out understand what it is like for colleagues in eight HEIs to be managing inclusivity-related projects; was their task Sisyphean or Herculean?

In the first round of interviews, early in the academic year, for one respondent senior management instability made matters feel Sisyphean, hard and ultimately futile, as one reorganisation, and its consequences, followed another. The other respondents, felt they needed merely to be Herculean, strong, determined, undaunted, taking one task at a time.

By the end of the academic year, the picture had changed significantly. The one Sisyphean respondent was now enjoying success, another respondent, who had made effective progress, now experienced Sisyphean despair as all inclusivity initiatives were halted by funding withdrawal. For two others, senior management change caused momentum to be lost. Finally, as this article was being prepared, one respondent's Herculean world was in danger of also turning Sisyphean due to management changes and staff reductions.

What general lessons can be learnt?

1. Successful progress can only be achieved by active engagement with, ownership by, and delivery through, faculties and academics.
2. Senior management change can cause significant loss of momentum towards inclusivity, but does not in all cases.
3. Senior management commitment to inclusivity is vital to institution-wide implementation.
4. Definitions of the term inclusivity, inclusive teaching and learning are still mostly absent.
5. Widening the scope of 'inclusivity' may disadvantage students with disabilities.
6. A project approach, with cross-HEI input, especially involving co-operation between the teaching and learning development and disabilities team yields dividends
7. Successfully delivering small, non-threatening pilots appears to generate the most effective results by winning the hearts and minds through example.
8. Universal design for Learning needs contextualising to become useful.
9. Sector-wide mandated encouragement, such as the Disabled Students Sector Strategy Group report (Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group, 2017) appears to have had little effect on influencing my respondents' HEIs.

Finally, it appears the 'inclusivity officer' faces many more tasks than Hercules' mere twelve, needing therefore to be determinedly resilient and possessed of a sense of mission to see the job done. More power to them!

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1.   Summary of Semi Structured Interview Questions

The questions investigated the following:

1. Respondents' short and long-term goals.
2. Respondents' institutions' definitions of inclusivity, inclusive learning and inclusive teaching.
3. Respondents' achievements and frustrations.
4. The most and least successful strategies in furthering respondents' inclusivity work.
5. The levels of support for respondents' work from senior HEI management, academics and support departments.
6. The degree of cross-departmental working.
7. The degree of collaborative working with other HEIs.
8. The three 'things' respondents would wish to change to make their roles more effective.

Lecture Capture for Disabled Students: Asset or additional hurdle?

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Abstract

In 2016, the University of Huddersfield embarked on an ambitious project to set up lecture capture in 120 rooms. This would take place on an 'opt-out' basis i.e. sessions would be recorded unless staff had opted out of the capture. This would make the majority of taught, group sessions available to students, so that they could watch again in their own time. The lectures were automatically available for all students in the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) forty-eight hours after they had been recorded. However, it was quickly recognised that some students may not be able to access the full benefit of this service. This paper looks at how the system was established and the benefits that were gained by disabled students. The gaps in provision, particularly amongst students with hearing impairment, form the main focus of this paper. The video capture of the BSL (British Sign Language) Interpreter is discussed, as is the use of captioning videos after they have been recorded. The paper examines the advantages and disadvantages of both these adjustments. The conclusion points to some of the difficulties encountered and how the University plans to make adjustments in the future to ensure that all students have equal access to the benefits of the lecture capture facilities, which appear to be a particular asset to disabled students.

Literature Review

There have been many studies carried out to date on lecture capture at Universities worldwide and how and why students use such systems. One of the most comprehensive is a study by Loughborough University (Witthaus and Robinson, 2015) which summarises research undertaken from 2012-2015. This highlights many key points to understand when looking at lecture capture systems. It is interesting to note some contradiction in findings from the studies undertaken. Whilst there is an overall sense of strong benefits from lecture capture, some studies do suggest it may be detrimental in certain cases. However, when referring to disabled students, the findings would seem to suggest that students find the capture of their lectures particularly beneficial.

Watt *et al.* (2014) found that in a study of lecture capture usage 80% of students with "accommodation needs" cited lecture capture as being helpful,

compared to 60% without reported needs. Leadbeater *et al.* (2013) found that dyslexic students were 'high users' of lecture capture, meaning that they 'are extremely reliant on recordings if they are available.'

A major consideration for disabled students is attendance. There is often a correlation between attendance and achievement, so not being able to attend can lead to underachievement. Sometimes, a student's condition can be the reason why they do not attend lectures. In a study by Williams (2006), quoted by Karnard (2013), it was found that '24.6% of students stated that their disability affected their ability to attend live lectures, whilst 56.4% claimed to have difficulties taking notes during live lectures.' This means that they particularly value the opportunity to catch up at a later stage.

Recent changes to the DSA (Disabled Students' Allowance) have also meant changes to the way that universities work. From October 2016, institutions have had to take primary responsibility for a number of areas of support. David Willetts made a statement on the 7th April 2014, which stated that 'We will look to HEIs to play their role in supporting students with mild difficulties, as part of their duties to provide reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act.' (Willetts, 2014) This has included note-taking. (THE, 2016). Leicester University stated that they were adopting lecture capture to 'greatly enhance the learning experience for all our students', and acknowledged that 'the policy is largely motivated by a desire to help disabled students affected by the government's decision to reduce the Disabled Students' Allowance.' There is an argument that students can learn better with their own notes, which they are able to take and enhance more easily by using lecture capture. In data collected by Jasmine Beck at the University of Huddersfield as part of an undergraduate research project, one student said 'I can watch it over and write notes in my own time,' and another commented 'I can focus more on the lecture and not worry about taking the correct notes.'

Hearing impairment is little mentioned in the literature. As early as 2009, Brogan (p.5) wrote about the advantages of lecture capture for disabled students. She mentions specifically the use of captioning and video-recording of sign language interpreters. BSL was recognised as a language in its own right in the UK in 2003, which means that for BSL signers, using captions may not be a desirable option. In 2010, Stewart et al outlined a lecture capture system, specifically designed to support hearing-impaired students, known as the 'Talkshow project'. This used an 'off-the-shelf' speech-text package and provided simultaneous captioning of lectures, which were found to be 'sufficiently accurate to provide useful additional information to the deaf students. In their report 'Mainstreaming Captions for Online Lectures in

Higher Education in Australia, Kent and Ellis (2017) give a detailed history of captioning, mentioning the move to Universal design, the concept that 'there is no longer a need to remove barriers, the idea being that the barriers should not exist in the first place.' They go on to discuss how, at Curtin University, the use of captions is now standard practice for many of their disabled students (p.17). In their research, they found that 'the benefits of captioned material are significantly widespread across the student population'. (p.59)

For this paper, data has come from three sources:

1. Jasmine Beck's undergraduate research on how disabled students have used lecture capture. She obtained ethical approval for this at the time of undertaking it.
2. Research undertaken by Huddersfield University's Teaching and Learning Institute. Ethical approval was granted at the time
3. Interview data from an interview undertaken with a deaf student at the end of her studies. Retrospective ethical approval was granted by the School of Education's Ethics committee for use in this paper.

Background to the project at Huddersfield University

The decision to introduce lecture capture at Huddersfield University came about for a variety of reasons. The main driver was the Students' Union, which had seen lecture capture developments at other universities and was keen for the benefits of recorded teaching to be made available to students. There were other changes taking place as well. Changes in DSA funding reduced the availability of note-takers for lectures and newer software, such as Sonocent's Audio NoteTaker meant that students were making recordings of lectures themselves. So, in February 2016, the University went out to tender to find a suitable solution for recording taught sessions. The company 'Panopto' was selected and the University rebranded this as 'HudStream'.

The initial roll-out took place over the summer of 2016, with one hundred and twenty rooms being equipped with suitable computers, cameras and microphones, at a cost of £1.4m. The system was designed to be fully automated against the timetable, so teaching staff were not required to press any buttons. The recordings would begin automatically at the start of a session and the fact the recording was taking place was indicated by a green light on the desk. After recording, staff members had 48 hours to edit their recordings, and then they would appear automatically in a folder for the relevant module on the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment), Blackboard (also called UniLearn). In addition to the fixed systems, the university had 9 mobile

systems available, which could be used in any space, enabling recordings to take place anywhere at the University.

The roll-out of equipment was accompanied by a series of talks and training, provided centrally by the University and by the Schools or Departments. Recordings began in September 2016. By August 2017, more than 22,000 recordings had been made and stored in the system and over 2 million minutes of recordings had been viewed. The graph below shows the usage data for the academic year from September 2016 to August 2017. Usage picks up over the Autumn term, with a slight dip over Christmas, and then resumes for the spring term, with a huge peak as exams approach, a sharp drop for the end of term, and then another peak around the time of resits.
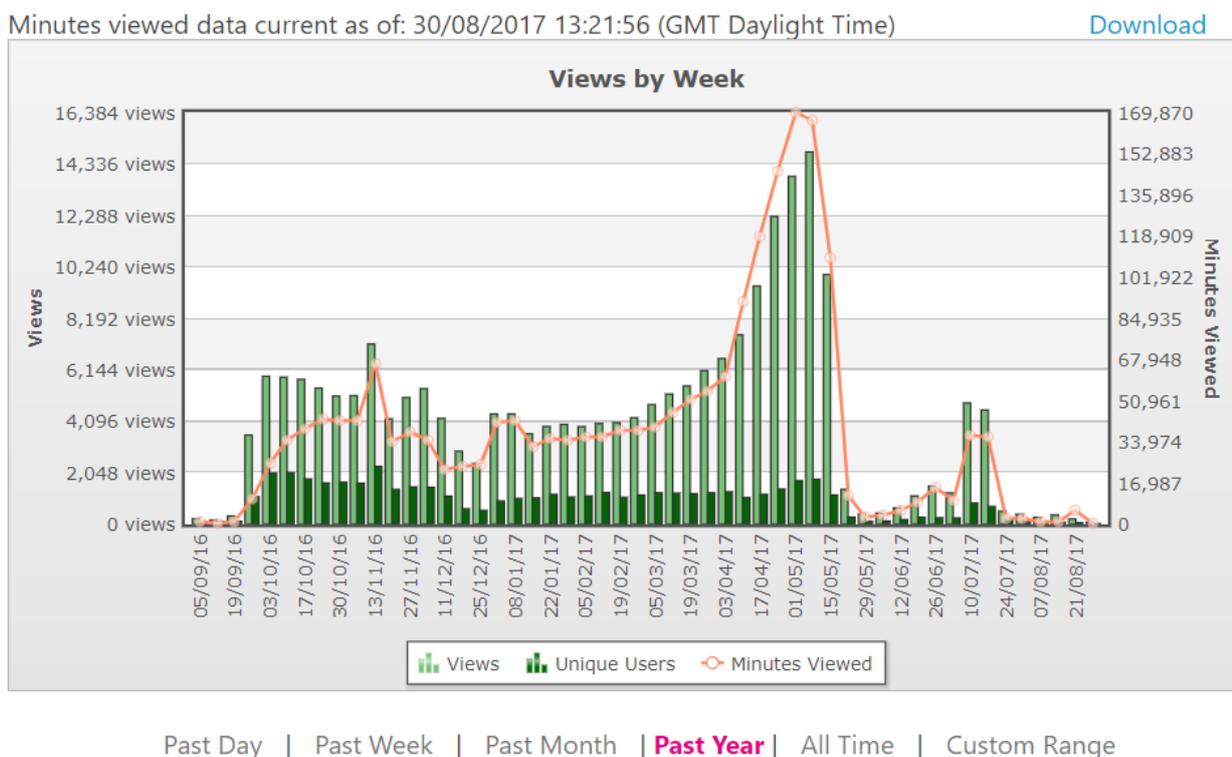
Fig 1: Usage data for recordings made from September 2016 – August 2017 at The University of Huddersfield.

Feedback was, on the whole, very positive. A survey carried out by TALI (Teaching and Learning Institute), at the University of Huddersfield, towards the end of the academic year received the following comments from students:

- Lecture capture is the reason I'm passing this year!
- I was dubious at first, but it was actually very useful, enabling me to catch up with a missed session. I was able to pause and revisit sections as necessary.
- It has truly helped in my learning experience

- I think lecture capture is a brilliant tool for every student to be able to use. A lot of other universities have had it in place, or something similar for a few years now…and this year, I can see how incredibly useful it is.
- The nature of our course has been very intense, and we have been exposed to many fantastic speakers and points of discussion. I enjoy referring back to the lectures using this software to update and refresh my knowledge, use the information for essays and written work and to form better understandings.

Feedback was particularly positive from disabled students and International students.

In the survey, students who self-declared as having a disability, identified the following features of lecture capture as being the most useful to them:

- Helpful for memory problems, loss of concentration, hearing loss and poor processing speeds
- Replaying at the student's own pace allows for better note-taking and things can be looked up
- Useful for reinforcement and confirmation
- A good alternative to a Dictaphone
- Gives time to focus on the lecture itself – not busy taking notes
- Reduces anxiety about missing something
- Useful for catch-up after period of ill health

However, there were some areas that also needed improvement. Some students had not been able to locate their videos in their VLE modules easily and many were unaware that they could use their mobile devices to access recordings. The audio quality in some rooms was poor, either due to problems with the microphone or because the tutor moved around a lot. Sometimes the video camera had not worked. These were seen as technical 'teething' problems and are being addressed within the Schools. Another issue was around staff who decided to opt out of recordings. In some cases this was for valid reasons, such as the teaching being based mainly around group work, but in other cases, staff did not want a recording to be made. In some of these cases, once disability staff had made lecturers aware that they had disabled students in their groups, staff agreed to record the sessions. Some staff remain reluctant to be recorded.

Accessibility

Accessibility was not given any special consideration during the procurement process, although a Disability adviser was a member of the Steering group. It was in September 2017 that the University began to look at inclusive access to the lecture capture system, on appointment of a specialist in Assistive Software and Accessibility. It was at that point that a particular gap was identified in the provision for students with hearing impairments. These students fell into two groups:

1) Those who were severely hearing impaired and fully deaf, using BSL interpreters to access lectures ('Deaf')
2) Those who are hard of hearing, but who managed with lectures by sitting near the front, lipreading and using hearing aids – often a combination of all three. ('deaf')

The University is required by The Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments' to make sure that students receive the same services, as far as possible, as students who are not disabled. In the recent publication 'Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Higher Education as a Route to Excellence' (2017), it states that we should adopt "a shift in approach from a support service to students deemed entitled to it by virtue of a diagnosis to one which empowers the learner and is accessible to and benefits all students." It is in this context that we began to examine our options to improve access for hearing-impaired students.

Discussions were carried out with students and with the BSL interpreters to establish what the best options were to improve accessibility. There were two clear options which emerged:

1. Produce a high-quality video capture of the BSL interpreter as they interpret a lecture and combine this with the video of the lecture to give a signed version of the lecture, much as one would see on television programmes.

2. Make captions available for replay of the video, so that a student can read the tutor's words underneath the video. This service could also be used by Deaf students, but their preference was to have their interpreter. Given the investment made in interpreting services for these students, it was felt that captioning should be a back-up option.
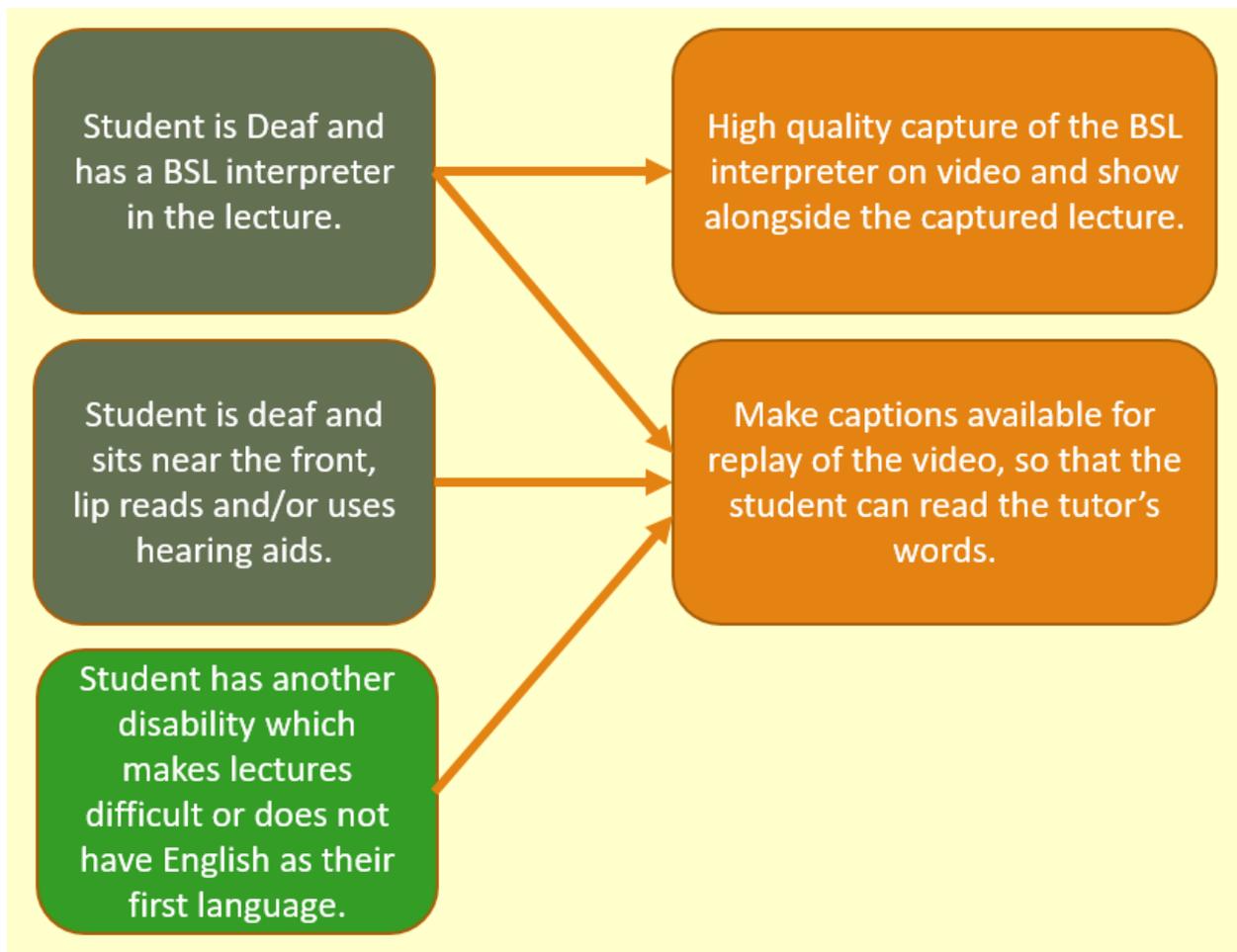
Fig 2: Options for producing accessible recorded lectures for D/deaf students

It became apparent through the conversations we had with several students over the course of the year that there were other students who would benefit from captions being available. These included a student with narcolepsy, who often found he could not maintain concentration through a whole lecture, some students with dyslexia, who found the pace and structure of some lectures confusing and some international students, who struggled to follow the whole lecture when English was not their mother tongue.

It was from this basis, that we began to investigate the options.

Capture of the BSL Interpreter

Before we began any other investigations, we recorded a BSL interpreter using the standard room camera. The set-up in all rooms had been standardised across the University, for good reasons relating to maintenance and simplicity. We wanted to ascertain how suitable this video recording

would be. When we reviewed the recording, the BSL interpreter was visible, but there was not enough detail to show fine finger movements or facial expressions – both of which are crucial to clear communication in BSL.

Our initial trial began with us recording a BSL interpreter using an iPad. The BSL interpreters had expressed concerns over setting up and managing equipment at the start of a lecture, when their primary concern is to provide a good quality interpreting service to the students. The iPad was chosen for several reasons:

1) The iPad is quite an intuitive device and would be easy for the BSL interpreters to use after a short amount of training
2) The iPad is lightweight and can be carried around easily
3) It has a good battery length, which would enable a couple of recording sessions during a day before needing to be recharged
4) It has a very good quality camera available
5) A lightweight stand is available in the form of an iPad music stand, so the iPad can be positioned in the correct place.
6) There is an app available from Panopto, which allows the user to 'Join a session'. This means that any video recorded automatically synchronises with the rest of the session, so the interpreting is 'in time' with the rest of the recorded session. It requires the BSL interpreter to be a member of that 'course'. The recording does not need any additional processing and can be 'switched on and off' depending on which view the user chooses.

An Android tablet was also tested, but the Panopto app did not have the same features as the iPad version, so it was not able to 'Join a session'.

The video worked perfectly almost immediately. Figure 3 below showed how a BSL interpreter can be captured and seen clearly. However, the view was not quite as had been hoped, as there was no way to decide which window showed the interpreter and which window showed the lecture slides or the room. However, it was good enough for us to begin some longer trials.

Fig 3: A screenshot showing how the BSL interpreter can be shown alongside a captured lecture.
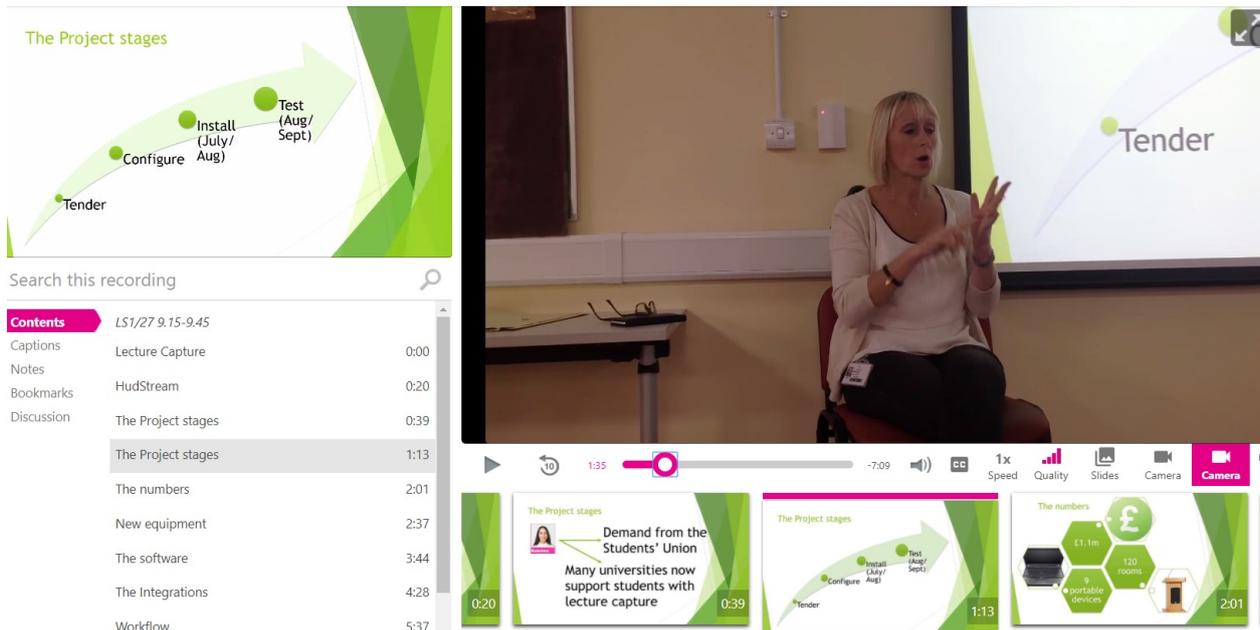
Lectures can last up to two hours. So we made a couple of longer recordings and it was at this point we realised that the iPad may not be the best solution.

- An hour of video took up 2GB of space on an iPad. This is a large amount of room on a device only designed for small recordings
- The video would only upload when the device was open and the Panopto app was the active app i.e. it would not do a 'background' upload. This took over an hour over the University wifi. This would mean that an interpreter would have to sit with an open iPad to ensure that the lecture uploaded. This was unrealistic.

The third device tested was a windows laptop, which was part of one of our mobile kits. This was a possibility, but failed in three ways. Firstly, it did take a while to 'boot-up' and secondly, it was very difficult to find anywhere to position it so that it did not interfere with the view of the interpreter during the lecture and it also required an extra table. Thirdly, we could not get it to show the picture of the interpreter as a 'selfie' so that they knew they were in shot and that it was recording – all of which had been possible on the iPad.

Finally, we considered the use of another camera, either a Bluetooth camera which would link back to the main computer in the room wirelessly or a USB camera, with a long cable. The cable had to be quite long as the BSL

interpreter usually sits on the opposite side of the room to the tutor, and alongside the board or screen. Both of these were potentially difficult to set up quickly and ruled out.

At this point, consultation with the providing company, Panopto, took place. We expressed our preference for the iPad solution for the reasons given above and the company have said that they are due to release an app which will carry out the background upload of the video. We are now awaiting that solution for further testing over the coming academic year.

Captioning

The Panopto service has captioning available at different levels.

The first level is simply to download the captions that are generated when the video is imported. Panopto has a sophisticated search function, which relies on speech in the videos being analysed and a 'transcript' is made, which can be used as captions. We tested this on several videos, but the quality of output was very poor. Panopto says that it is about 70% accurate, but this was not sufficient for any intelligible captions to be produced.

The second level involves working with a 3rd party company, integrated into the Panopto system, to produce human captions. These are companies such as 3Play Media, cielo24 and AST. Once enabled, the captioning can be requested with a single click and payment depends on turnaround time. So, for example, 4 day turnaround is $2.00 (£1.55) a minute, 2 day turnaround is $2.75(£2.13) a minute and 1 day turnaround is $5.00 (£3.87) a minute. (Prices as at August 2017). The University chose to use the 2-day turnaround, as this was in line with the 48-hours that all students wait for the upload of their lectures to give staff editing time after a recording is made.

A captioning service was trialled with a final-year student who was experiencing increasing hearing loss through the academic year. The first video we tested was met with the comment 'The captions are amazing! I didn't realize how much I was actually missing in the lectures….' The student immediately requested captions for the rest of the course. On concluding her course, the student fed back as follows:

> 'It's made a massive difference on my grades and I don't think I would have finished with a IIi if I hadn't had them for that module. That was the module that I was struggling on most, so if I hadn't had those subtitles when I needed them, I don't think I would have got a IIi…..just because in my final year I was struggling so much with my hearing in my lectures, so I think that having that lifeline just there to give me a bit of

a boost and give me a bit more motivation, knowing that actually I can do it now, cos I don't have to worry about asking my peers for information or going back to my tutor – you get told not to go to a tutor at the last minute and ask questions – at least I didn't have to ask him at the last minute, so that was really good. A lot of independence- I like my independence!

This is clearly a big asset to the system that the University uses and can provide substantial benefits to our students, but it does come at a price and that is one that requires consideration. With an hour-long lecture costing almost £130 to caption (August 2017), this system has to be used for the most valid cases. In discussion with University management, it has been agreed that a budget for captioning is available for the students who need it, but that other options should also be considered. In the coming year, the University will be testing other possible captioning systems to try and find a more cost-effective solution.

Conclusions

At the end of the pilot year for lecture capture at the University of Huddersfield, we can conclude that the system has been well received by the majority of our students and that those who have a declared condition or impairment have found it particularly relevant in their studies. The work that has been undertaken at Huddersfield University is not trail-blazing or innovative, as can be seen from the literature already published in this area. However, it has highlighted some of the areas that can be overlooked when investing in new systems. Adopting principles of universal design for such projects could have placed accessibility at the heart of the project, rather than as a bolt-on.

Good progress has been made towards meeting the gap in our provision relating to hearing-impaired students, primarily through the provision of captioning. This is a useful service to be able to offer our students, although the level of service has to meet certain criteria due to the costs involved. Speech-to-text software has shown huge advances over the last ten years, but there will always be a degree of inaccuracy in any automated system that will require human verification. It is hoped that future developments will see improvements to the automated systems and cheaper options for the services overall, enabling HEIs to offer the service to more students. As recommended by the researchers at Curtin University 'Allow any student-regardless of perceived need- to request lecture captioning.' (Kent & Ellis, 2017)

It remains a little frustrating that issues identified as early as 2009 (Brogan, 2009) still do not have standard solutions from the major suppliers of lecture capture software. Principles of Universal Design suggest that designing for inclusion benefits the whole university population. The technology is available to solve some of these problems and yet they are still 'add-ons' rather than included parts of the package.

The University will continue to work in partnership with our BSL interpreters to find a suitable method of capture, as this will enable students who use BSL as their main language to experience equity in their lecture capture service.

Further work and research into students with hearing-impairment and their experience of lecture capture would be beneficial. This initial year has enabled us to have some insight into what may be useful to them, but it would now be of benefit to follow the journey of a hearing-impaired student who is given access to the services that they choose and to see how this impacts on their experiences of studying at University.

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Inclusively Enhancing Learning from Lecture Recordings.

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Abstract

This paper explains how speech recognition captioning with collaborative editing provides affordable transcription/captioning of lecture recordings, supports inclusive learning, retention & recruitment and enables universities to comply with law. It considers how lecture recordings can be inclusively enhanced and what features in a lecture recording system would be beneficial for disabled students. It proposes that all university students learn better when they make their own notes rather than use notes made by somebody else and that a notetaker is not necessary when a time synchronised transcript and slides are available apart from for hearing impaired students who can't check a recording to correct transcription errors. The paper provides evidence that speech recognition can be more accurate than human transcribers and that we should use students to collaboratively correct caption errors as commercial manual captioning is too expensive for universities.

Introduction

Cuts to the Disabled Students' Allowance for notetaking (Johnson 2015) requires universities to fund support for disabled students and HEFCE doubled disability funding to Universities from 2016-18 to help universities move towards a more inclusive approach to learning and teaching to support disabled students (*Supporting disabled students* 2017).

The Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Higher Education as a route to Excellence: Disabled Student Sector Leadership Group report (Layer 2017) stated:

"there are some very simple changes that can make a significant difference to student outcomes around inclusive practice … Allow or facilitate the recording of teaching"

This paper considers ways in which the recording of teaching can be enhanced to better support disabled students.

Notetaking

Piolat et al. (2005) identified how making notes during a lecture is extremely cognitively demanding requiring to "attend, store, and manipulate information selected from the lecture simultaneously, while also transcribing ideas just

presented and processed". Hanafin *et al.* (2007) reported that note-taking remains a challenge for students in face to face teaching sessions while Boyle (2012) identified that students with Learning Disabilities such as dyslexia were likely to miss important points in multiple sections of a lecture. Burgstahler (2015) clarified how 'universal access' to video content was required for students with sensory impairments to make the most of these resources.

James *et al.* (2016) reviewed the notetaking literature as well as surveying 60 disabled students about their confidence and effectiveness with notetaking: "45 % had dyslexia or other Specific Learning Difficulty, 25 % physical difficulties or chronic health conditions, 22 % had a mental health condition, 7 % had sensory impairments and 3 % had social and communication needs. Two students mentioned the fact that they had a hearing impairment but were able to use audio recordings." The researchers concluded that "While transcripts and captions are often considered necessary for students with hearing impairments, the synchronisation of the text with audio and annotations enables students to use dual channels for processing information in order to increase processing capacity."

A notetaker is not actually necessary when you have a transcript synchronised with slides and images from the lecture recording as you have access to all the information. Really only hearing impaired students who are unable to check the recording to correct transcription errors need the support of a notetaker or transcriber because all other students can check the transcript if they think there's a mistake because they can listen back to the recording. An advantage of a transcript is it's much quicker to read the transcript than it is to have to replay and pause the recording. University students also learn better when they make their own notes rather than use notes made by somebody else as trying to understand somebody else's notes is much harder than actually understanding your own notes.

Captioning

In 2015 Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology were sued by the National Association of the Deaf for not adequately captioning their videos (Lewin 2015) and the National Association of the Deaf stated: "the selection of such high-profile defendants will send a signal ... so we are suing them first and expect to ensure full online video access at all other universities and colleges across the country. "

In 2011 the National Association of the Deaf also sued Netflix (Whitney 2011) who as a result agreed to caption all their videos (National Association of the Deaf v. Netflix 2012)

The organisation TED has for example captioned their videos since 2009 (TED's Open Translation Project 2009) which has enabled hearing impaired people to follow the talks and allowed everyone to search the videos. It also allows the transcript to be printed which can be read anywhere allowing people to learn faster and in situations with low bandwidth or where silence is required. Captions also help the understanding of talks from non-native speakers and by non-native listeners. The TED Talks use commercial manual captioning which is too expensive for universities to caption and transcribe lectures.

Wald (2017) describes a 2012 study providing 18 lecture recordings of a variety of topics, lengths, recording qualities, and speaker accents to 4 captioning companies which found an average cost of $260 per hour with the most expensive being $407. The study also established that a university editing speech recognition produced transcripts themselves would require average editing effort of 4.10 hours / media hour and paying $15 to $30/hour to people (e.g. students) to edit would cost on average between $60 -$120 /hr without including the cost of the overheads of running the service and paying for the speech recognition software.

One of the arguments that some of the captioning companies use to persuade customers to use their manual captioning service is to say that speech recognition automatic captioning produces inaccurate captions with silly errors. Paying a captioning company to manually correct errors from speech recognition automatic captioning is too expensive for universities as when the author gave the captioning companies a speech recognition generated transcript and asked them to just correct the errors they said it would cost just as much as captioning a recording because they still had to listen to the whole recording.

The argument about speech recognition errors is overplayed because actually speech recognition accuracy continues to improve and Xiong *et al.* (2017) have demonstrated that speech recognition can now even be more accurate than professional human transcribers.

The Equality Act 2010 requires universities to make anticipatory reasonable adjustments (*Disability Rights UK Factsheet F56*, 2017) and so universities should caption all their lecture recordings rather than only caption a lecture recording if requested by a deaf student.

While universities might claim that paying for commercial manual captioning is not reasonable as it is too high a cost, universities cannot justifiably claim that paying a few pounds an hour for unedited automatic speech recognition captioning is not a reasonable cost.

Recording Quality

It is important for teachers to make a good quality recording and this can be achieved by wearing a wireless microphone and adjusting the recording level to provide a good signal to noise ration. If a teacher uses a fixed lectern microphone and turns or moves away from the microphone to write on the board or walk round the room then the recorded speech level and signal to noise ratio will decrease. If the lecturer repeats any questions or comments or answers from the students then the speech of the students does not needs to be transcribed. It is possible to also record and transcribe the speech of the students using a wireless microphone, either handheld and passed around or throwable (*Catchbox* 2017) or using an app on a mobile phone (*Crowdmics* 2017). It is also possible to use mobile phone speech recognition app to transcribe the students' speech live in the classroom and display it on the main screen and include it in the transcript and enable students to correct any speech recognition errors live in the class (Wald 2012).

Students Collaboratively Correcting Speech Recognition Errors

As the quality of the recording degenerates then speech recognition may still struggle more than human transcribers and a solution to this problem of improving the accuracy of any speech recognition transcription is that it is possible to use students to collaboratively error correct errors and verify the transcript by automatically comparing their corrections (Wald, 2013). Scoring the corrections can increase student motivation, whether through self interest in getting a better transcript, altruism in wanting to help others less fortunate than themselves, or rewards such as micropayments or print credits, badges, high score tables or academic credit. Students correcting errors engage more strongly with the lecture content to improve their learning and so justifying the awarding of academic credit for correcting errors. Universities and students could choose appropriate rewards.

Students correcting errors in their own lectures involves little extra effort while they listen, watch, and read the recording and captions as it is difficult not to notice errors and so it is not like a real job. They also generally know the subject better than a professional captioner as captioning companies do not guarantee to provide a specialist in that subject.

A questionnaire given to 30 students in a class by the author found that approximately one third of the students in the class said they would like micropayments or academic credit but two thirds would not because of various reasons including: "For my own personal revision of lectures", "You shouldn't need rewarding for using a tool like this"; "Wouldn't really need motivation, if I saw a mistake I would correct it"; "It just being there would be enough motivation to use it"; "More accurate transcript gives better search"

Features Required To Enhance Learning from Lecture Recordings

A system like Synote (*Synote* 2017) works as shown in Figure 1 by the speech of the lecture recordings being transcribed by speech recognition to automatically produce the captions. The images and slides are automatically synchronised with the transcript to enable printing out all of the information. Any errors in the captions can be collaboratively corrected by the students resulting in accurate captions for the recordings and the scoring of corrections can be used as a basis for the student rewards.
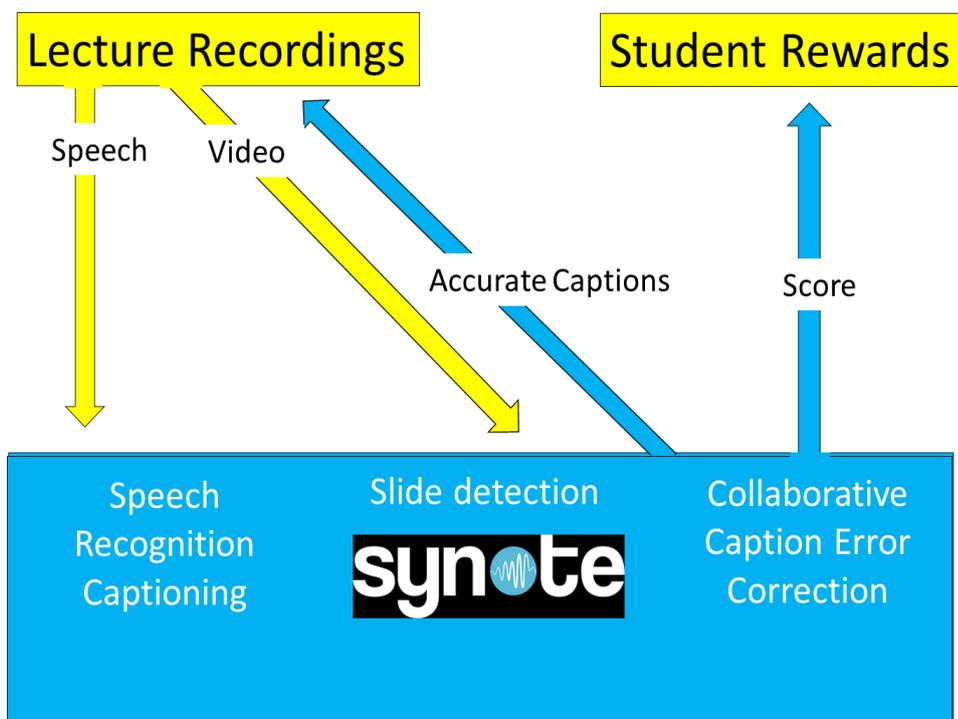

Figure 1 Schematic of Synote

Figures 2, 3 and 4 are screen captures of Synote screens that show some of the features.

Figure 2 shows the caption edit button with the caption shown underneath, the button to show the shortcut key list to speed up correction, the searchable transcript, the button to add a clip to the playlist, the synchronised notes and bookmarks that can be created and searched and filtered. Any section of a recording can be bookmarked to create a replayable clip and a playlist can replay selected clips in any order. This for example allows a student to create a revision playlist for all their lectures in a course.

Figure 3 shows the print friendly selection button option, the next or previous caption selection button to help speed up editing and the button to add bookmarks with notes and tags.

Figure 4 shows the print friendly low bandwidth mobile friendly option which replays only the audio with time synchronised video images, transcript and bookmarks with notes and tags which can be selected to copy to the clipboard for printing or pasting into a word processor. A QR code is shown under each image and when you print everything out you can look at all the notes anywhere and if you want to listen back to something or watch the video you can use your mobile phone QR code reader to scan the QR code and Synote will go to that precise point in the recording and play that video and the audio back on your phone.
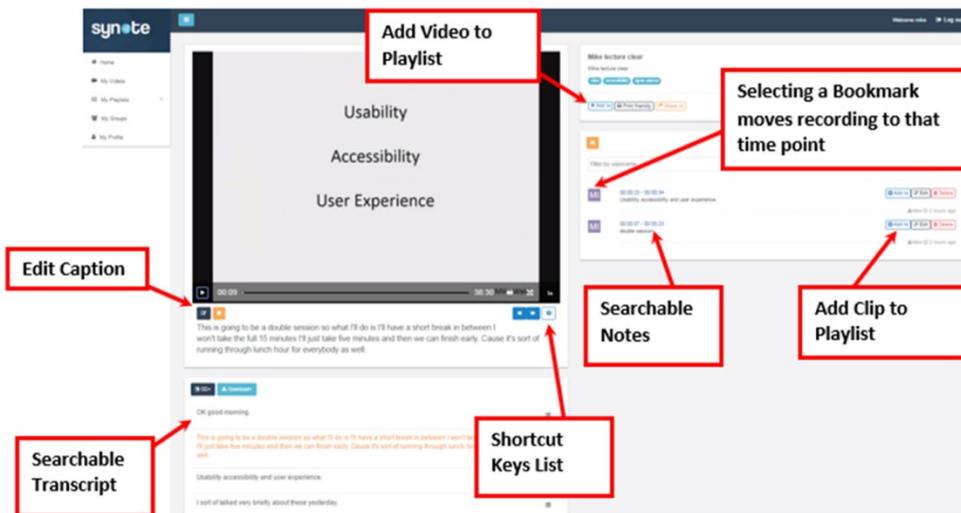
Figure 2 Synote screen capture showing some features of video replay and caption editing
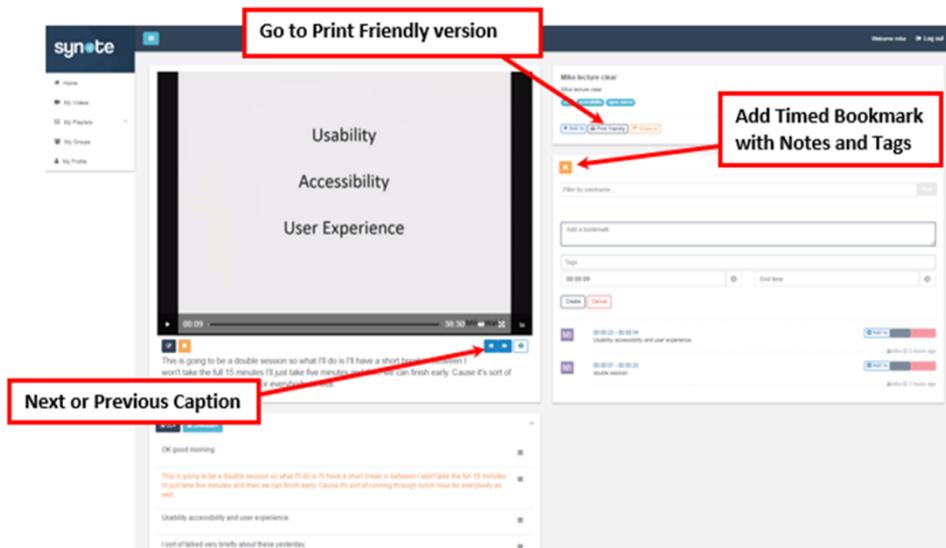

Figure 3 Synote screen capture showing some more features of video replay and caption editing
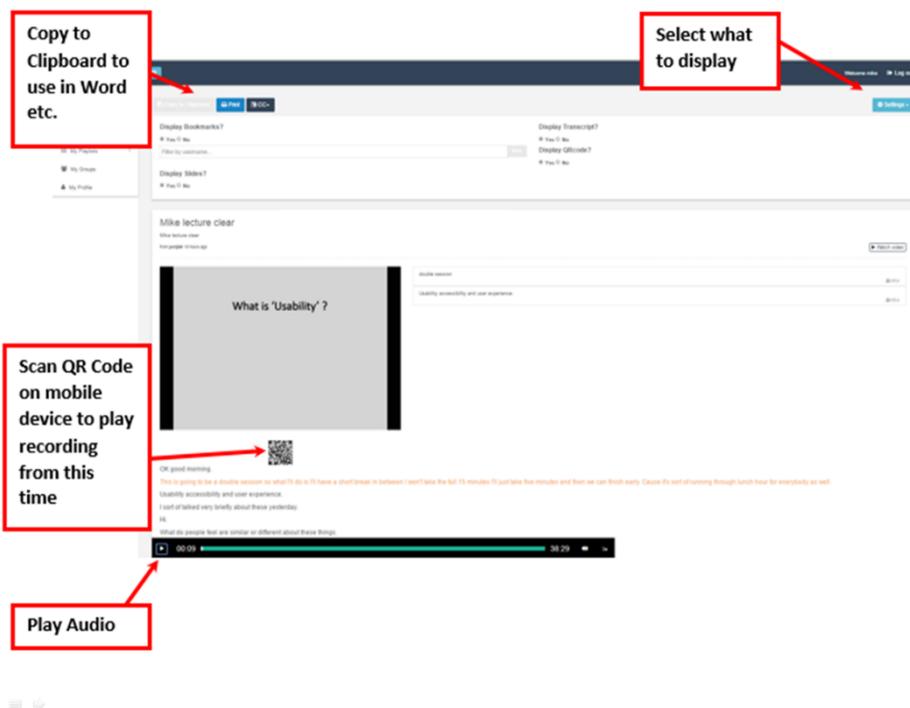
Figure 4 Synote screen capture showing Print Friendly option

While speech recognition, caption editing and annotation may be available in some other systems, they do not offer all the above benefits and features specifically designed for disabled students. While small scale trials have been undertaken using collaborative editing conclusive evidence awaits future larger scale research trials.

Learning from a lecture recording without annotations and captions is rather like trying to learn from a text book that has not got any contents, index, page numbers, chapter or section headings, and does not allow you to add annotation, notes or bookmarks: which is not like a useful textbook but more like a story book. Similarly a lecture recording with no captions, transcript, chapter or section headings or annotation, notes or bookmarks doesn't allows you to search and interact with the recording and so would appear to encourage students go into 'movie mode' wanting to be entertained along with coca cola and popcorn!

Flexible ways and benefits of taking notes with a speech recognition captioning/transcription system such as Synote that allows collaborative editing and annotation include:

- No need to write down what is said during the live lecture because you know that all the information will be available.

- Search transcript and pause and rewind recording when replaying the recording.

- Make brief personal digital notes on a mobile device during the live lecture and copy into Synote.

- Make personal digital notes on Synote when replaying the recording

- Copy the digital transcript, slides, notes into a word processor

- Print and paste/staple digital transcript, slides, notes into Synote print out

- Flexible paper notes which supports diagrams can be pasted or stapled into the Synote print out which can be edited on paper and/or scanned and pasted into Synote

- The recording can be replayed using the Synote print friendly QR time stamped codes and listened to or watched on a mobile device

Conclusion

Speech recognition captioning with collaborative editing could provide affordable transcription and captioning of lecture recordings and so support inclusive learning and help universities comply with equality legislation while also having the potential to improve retention & recruitment.

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The Improvement of Silent Reading Strategies through SuperReading.

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Abstract:

SuperReading is a course aiming to promote a strategic approach to reading. Participants improve their reading performance, increasing both speed and comprehension, as assessed through pencil and paper comprehension tests. The course comprises six sessions over a period of nine weeks, focused on reading strategies, metacognitive awareness, self-empowerment and memorization. At each session a reading test measures Reading Effectiveness, an index which combines speed and comprehension scores. The course, developed by Ron Cole in the US and then repeated in London in the realm of a research project supervised by Ross Cooper, has been translated into Italian and adapted to the Italian academic context. Our research group has trialled the course and analysed the impact with a population of 156 participants, mostly university students, 63 of them neurotypical and 93 dyslexic readers. In this paper we illustrate the different steps of our project and analyse the results obtained so far. Measures of reading time, comprehension and reading effectiveness show a statistically significant improvement, with effect size ranging from medium to large. The positive effects of the course are experienced by both neurotypical and dyslexic readers, and at the end of the course the latter perform better than the former before the course. Further research will be carried out, using standardised diagnostic tests and eye-tracker acquisitions, in order to corroborate the results obtained so far. Through these analyses, we believe it will ultimately be possible to formulate new hypotheses on the way a silent reading task is performed.

Introduction

SuperReading, a course aiming to improve reading effectiveness in nine weeks, was developed in the US by Ron Cole, and was initially used with adults mostly employed in the management sector. Cole claimed that participants who adequately practiced eye-hopping (the crucial training exercise proposed in the course) over the nine weeks would double their Reading Effectiveness by the end of the course. Moreover, he noticed that dyslexic participants were able to obtain higher rates of improvement compared with neurotypical readers. A pilot study carried out with 15 dyslexic subjects at LLU+, London South Bank University, confirmed this claim (Cooper, 2009), and showed statistically significant improvement of Reading Effectiveness (p<0.001). Moreover, readers who had more problems in reading nonwords seemed to profit more from the course. This circumstance suggested that the course was working on the strengths of dyslexic readers, rather than trying to rehabilitate their weaknesses. Further evidence

confirming this conclusion came from the results of the TOWRE (Test of Word Recognition Efficiency). As a matter of fact, sight recognition of words (and, albeit with lower figures, of nonwords) increased significantly – and unexpectedly, as SuperReading does not encourage phonological decoding but focuses on words in combination. Participants with the most difficulties in the nonword recognition task were those who obtained the highest improvement in Reading Effectiveness scores.

Encouraged by these data, the team at South Bank University continued their research, and the positive results were confirmed with a population of 91 adult dyslexic readers (Cooper, 2012). A further report, including data referred to a population of 152 dyslexic students, was published by Cooper on the SuperReading website in April 2012, illustrating similar results. Against this background, IULM University (Milan) in 2012 signed an agreement with Ross Cooper, to be entitled to translate and adapt all the course materials to the Italian context. Francesca Santulli attended the course in London and became the first Italian coach. A group of students of the Master Programme for Translation and Interpreting at IULM University attended the course, using the original materials, and then translated them under the supervision of the coach. Direct experience of the course was crucial to guarantee full understanding of the texts on behalf of the translators, while, on the other hand, teamwork made it possible to make explicit and well-conceived translation choices, which took into adequate consideration language as well as cultural differences. Special terminology was discussed in detail.

As SuperReading includes six different reading tests to be administered during the course, it was necessary to produce adequate tests as similar as possible to their English counterparts. We first considered the topics of the English tests and for each of them we prepared three different tests, one of them being a translation of the original. These tests were administered to a small group of six students attending a PhD course in psychology. On the basis of the analysis of results and of the observations of the PhD students we selected one out of each three-test group and then tested the six selected essays on a population of 150 students (BA level). We administered the tests to the subjects and analysed the mean scores obtained for each of them. Mean scores were similar for the 6 different tests. Moreover, we asked the subjects to evaluate how they perceived the difficulty of each essay and of the relative questions on a 10-level scale. Also the mean score of subjective evaluations was similar for all tests. We concluded that the tests are equivalent in terms of difficulty and can be used interchangeably.

In 2013 we started teaching the course. To date we have run 12 editions, for a total of 156 students, 93 of them had Specific Learning Difficulties, 63 were neurotypical readers. Partial results have been published so far (Scagnelli, Oppo and Santulli, 2014; Santulli, Scagnelli and Oppo, 2016)

The course

The standard format of SuperReading comprises six sessions of 2.30/3 hours each, distributed over a period of nine weeks. In some cases (3 courses so far), in order to meet the needs of the students, we have adapted to the planning of other academic courses, adopting a 9-session distribution (once a week, 1.30 hours). This has helped participants fit the course into their weekly schedule and reduced the dropout phenomenon.

Sessions are guided by a coach (Angel and Amar, 2005), who illustrates the different techniques and, most importantly, supports the participants in the acquisition of a new approach to reading and motivates them to practice. As SuperReading does not aim to merely increase reading speed, but involves the development of more efficient comprehension and recall strategies, the approach to the reading task is multifaceted (Cooper, 2009; Cole, 2011). Metacognitive skill are emphasised, making participants aware of the crucial features of the reading process and developing strategies to improve its effectiveness (as pre-viewing, magnetic questions, revision, etc.). We also teach a memorization technique. On the other hand, self-esteem and self-empowerment are promoted, working with positive affirmations and visualizations, which have a positive impact on anxiety levels as well. This is particularly useful for dyslexic readers, who often have low self-esteem and high levels of anxiety (Novita, 2016). As already mentioned, motivation is enhanced by the coach as well as through the so-called "buddy system": participants make pairs (and change partner at each session), committing themselves to daily contacts in order to remind each other of the importance of practice. In some courses with a lower number of participants, students established contacts using social media, and this seemed to work even better than pairs. The distinguishing feature of SuperReading, however, is eye-hopping practice. This technique requires reading texts printed in close columns, whose width varies from a minimum of two to a maximum of five words. Participants are instructed to "hop" with their eye from the middle of one column to the middle of the other, following the parallel movement of their first finger. They are provided with texts with this special layout, and are also given access to a website where they can produce their own materials using documents in Microsoft Word format. Eye-hopping practice is crucial, and participants are required to practice 40 minutes a day over the nine weeks.

To measure Reading Effectiveness, six different reading tests were administered during the course, following the protocol developed by Cole and Cooper (Cooper 2009, 2012). In addition, we asked participants to fill a satisfaction questionnaire and to make tests to measure anxiety levels before and after the course. For 5 out of the 12 courses, we also asked the students to come to the *Behaviour and Brain Lab* of IULM University for eye-tracker acquisitions, before and after the course. With course n. 11 and course n. 12

an independent measure of reading performance was introduced: participants were asked to undertake a full range of reading tests specially designed for the diagnosis of dyslexia in adults (Ciuffo *et al.,* in print), before and after the course. Results were compared, with special attention to a silent reading task, considering that the course does not work on reading aloud, but focuses on the silent ability. Finally, to investigate self-perception we asked participants to write a short narrative text at the end of the course, to describe their feelings. Follow-up sessions have been organised, roughly one month after the end of the course.

The population

So far, we have run 12 SuperReading courses, 6 of them in our university, 1 at Bocconi University (Milan), 1 at the University of Modena, 1 at the LiceoLuzzago (high school) in Brescia and 2 at the Cooperativa Crescere (a centre for support to dyslexic students) in Reggio Emilia. Initially, SuperReading was offered to students coming from different Milan-based universities (Politecnico, UniversitàCattolica, Università Bicocca) as well as to high school teachers and consultants working in university offices for support to students with disabilities. Since 2016, in our University SuperReading has been introduced as part of the curriculum and entitles students (both dyslexic and neurotypical readers) to obtain three university credits. The courses in Brescia and Reggio Emilia also addressed adolescent readers, most of them over 16.

As a consequence, the population of neurotypical readers consists of teachers, psychologists, tutors, etc. as well as university or high school students. Given their level of education, they can be considered expert readers. The dyslexic population comprises university and high school students with a diagnosis of Specific Learning Disorders (according to Italian legislation, Act n. 170/2010).

We included in the data all participants who completed the course, attending at least 4 sessions out of 6 (or 6 out of 9) and completing at least 4 tests. Dropouts have not been taken into consideration, though most of them had already improved when they stopped attending the course.

Method

In this paper, we shall focus on the performance of SuperReading participants measured with reading tests administered during the course. The investigation procedure fully complies with the APA ethical principles regarding research with human participants. Participants were not identifiable and confidentiality was constantly respected.

To measure changes in the reading performance of participants, we systematically used paper and pencil tests. As mentioned above, during the

course, participants took six different reading texts (in the standard format, one at each session). Tests were randomised so that each individual participant took them in a different order. Each test consisted of a 400-word essay, followed by ten comprehension questions. Readers were asked to read the essay at normal speed to ensure comprehension, take note of the time, and then answer the questions without referring back to the text. They were then asked to review the text, take note of the time, and answer the same questions again (no reference was allowed to the text nor to the previous answers). Reading time and comprehension scores both in first and second reading were recorded. Reading Effectiveness was calculated by the researcher, considering time and percentage of comprehension (words per minute x comprehension %), both for first and second reading. Finally, the researcher calculated the Combined Reading Effectiveness (CRE), on the basis of total time and final comprehension score.

Obviously, reading effectiveness is affected by previous knowledge. Although the essays deal with general topics, we are aware of the influence of previous knowledge or personal interests on the results. However, the sample size is believed to reduce the effect of this factor (Cooper, 2012).

Results

Fig 1 shows the measures of reading time for both dyslexic and neurotypical students. In particular, fig 1.a refers to first reading, Fig. 1.b to second reading (review), and Fig. 1.c to total time.

All of them show a statistically significant reduction. Wilcoxon signed rank test shows a statistically significant reduction between pre- and post- course measures of time at first reading (z= -8.821; p<0.001), second reading (z=-10.488; p<0.001), and total time (z=-10.403, p<0.001). This is true for both dyslexic and neurotypical readers.

It is to be noted that before the course students already need less time for second reading (dyslexic: 173 seconds vs 270 seconds, or 35% less; neurotypical 116 s. vs 143 s., or 18% less). However, after the course the gap widens (dyslexic 75 s. vs 153 s., or 50% less; neurotypical 62 s. vs 98 s., or 36% less.). At the end of the course, dyslexic readers perform better then neurotypical readers at the beginning.

TIME I Reading
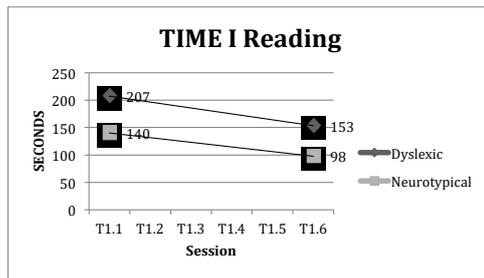
1a. Reading Time: first reading

TIME II READING
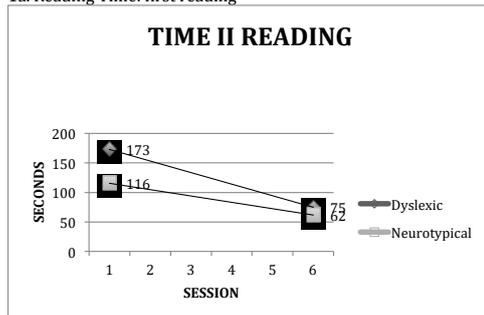
1b. Reading Time: second reading
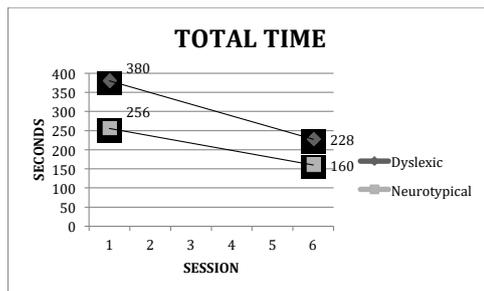
TOTAL TIME

1c. Reading time: total time

Fig. 1 Reading time: first reading (1.a), second reading (1.b), total (1.c)

Fig. 2 shows the performance of both dyslexic students and neurotypical readers in terms of percentage of comprehension. Fig. 2.a refers to first reading, Fig. 2.b to second reading.

Both groups show an increase in comprehension both at first and at second reading. Wilcoxon signed rank test shows a statistically significant improvement between pre- and post- course measures of comprehension both at first reading (z=-4.657, p<0.001) and at second reading (z=-5.536, p<0.001).

At the end of the course, dyslexic students perform better than neurotypical readers at the beginning.
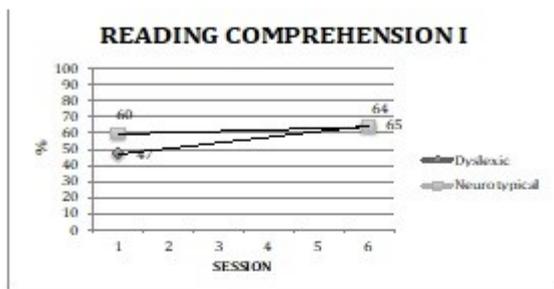
Fig. 2a First reading: comprehension
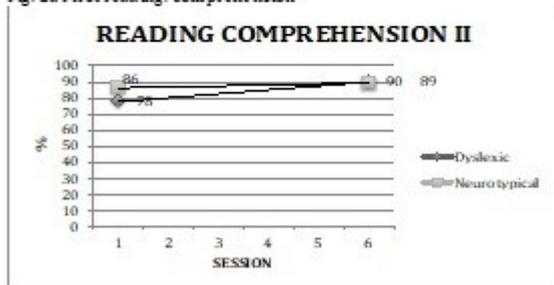
Fig. 2b Second Reading: comprehension

Fig. 2 Comprehension (%): first reading (2.a) and second reading (2.b)

Fig. 3 shows the variations of Reading Effectiveness pre- vs post-course: Fig. 3.a refers to first reading, Fig. 3.b refers to second reading, while Fig. 3.c shows the values of Combined Reading Effectiveness (CRE).

Both dyslexic students and neurotypical readers show a statistically significant improvement both at first reading (z=-8.284, p<0.001) and at second reading (z=-10.310, p<0.001); their CRE also increases significantly (z=-10.935, p<0.001).

At the end of the course, dyslexic students perform better than neurotypical readers at the beginning.

Before the course, second reading's Reading Effectiveness is already higher than first reading's. However, at the end of the course this difference further increases.
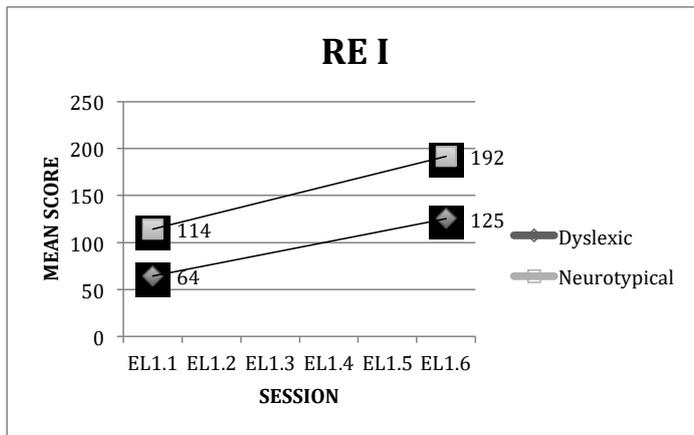
3a. First reading: reading effectiveness
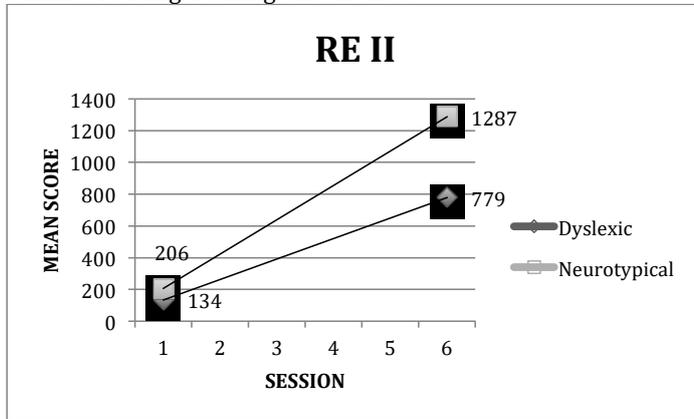
3b. Second reading: reading effectiveness
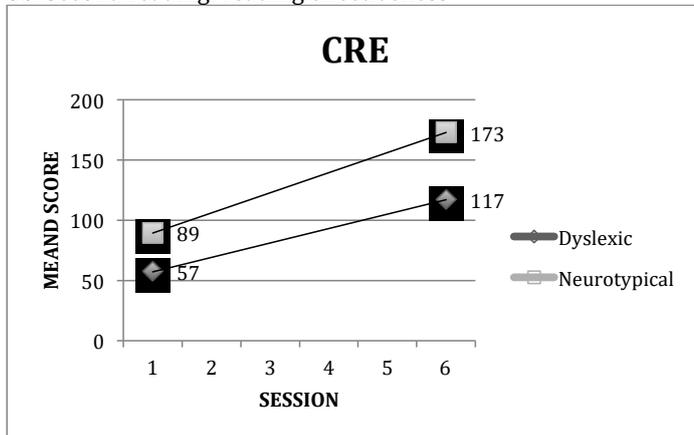
3c. Combined Reading effectiveness

Fig. 3 Reading Effectiveness: first reading (3.a), second reading (3.b), combined reading effectiveness (3.c)

The Wilcoxon signed rank test was used to analyse the data for statistical significance. Table 1 shows the values obtained for the two sub-samples (dyslexic and neurotypical) separately considered.
We considered effect size values as Low ($r \geq 0.1$), Medium ($r \geq 0.3$), Large ($r \geq 0.5$).

|	Dyslexic			Neurotypical		
	Wilcoxon	Significance	Effect size	Wilcoxon	Significance	Effect size
Time						
First reading	z=-6.647	p<0.001	r=0.49	z=-5.816	p<0.001	r=0.52
Second reading	z=-8.229	p<0.001	r=0.60	z=-6.535	p<0.001	r=0.58
Total	z=-8.098	p<0.001	r=0.59	z=-6.534	p<0.001	r=0.58
Comprehension						
First reading	z=-4.845	p<0.001	r=0.35	z=-1.203	-1.203	
Second reading	z=-5.488	p<0.001	r=0.40	z=-1.732	-1.732	
Reading effectiveness						
First reading	z=-6.791	p<0.001	r=0.50	z=-4.888	p<0.001	r=0.44
Second reading	z=-8.014	p<0.001	r=0.59	z=-6.442	p<0.001	r=0.57
Combined RE	z=-8.182	p<0.001	r=0.60	z=-6.360	p<0.001	r=0.57

Table 1: Analysis of data concerning Time, Comprehension, and Reading Effectiveness for dyslexic and neurotypical sub-samples.

Discussion

The analysis of data gathered on a large population of both neurotypical and dyslexic readers shows that SuperReading makes it possible to develop a strategic approach to silent reading. Although other courses enhance speed reading, SuperReading is unique under different perspectives. First of all, the structure of the syllabus originally combines the development of metacognitive strategies, self-empowerment and eye-training, with the aim of reducing reading time and improving comprehension at the same time. In particular, the eye-hop practice is exclusive of SuperReading. Secondly,

considering the effectiveness for dyslexic readers, it is important to emphasise that SuperReading is suitable for subjects in their late adolescence or adulthood, an age bracket often neglected when developing specific training. Moreover, despite its special effectiveness for dyslexic readers, SuperReading can be offered also to normotypical readers, making it an inclusive practice.

As far as the reading performance of dyslexic subjects is concerned, it is to be noted that traditional approaches to the problem have rarely focused on the analysis, evaluation and treatment of silent reading, and have privileged assessment and treatment of reading aloud. This is probably due to the fact that silent reading is not a directly observable behaviour, and as a consequence it is more difficult to measure its fluency. Yet silent reading is crucial in the clinical perspective, for different reasons. On the one hand, it is the most natural and common way of reading in adolescence and adulthood; on the other, it is more sensitive to change than aloud reading. Research carried out with a population representative of Italian adolescent/young adult readers showed a negligible increase in reading aloud speed (from 6.62 syl/sec. [syllables per second] to 7.55 syl/sec) from 14 years to 22, while the performance at a silent reading test improved from 9.13 syl/sec to 12.64 syl/sec over the same period (Ciuffo *et al.,* 2017). It is therefore highly advisable to consider silent reading when assessing reading difficulties in adolescence and adulthood, and above all to offer specific training aiming to reinforce this skill. Under this perspective, it is important to emphasise that SuperReading hinges on silent reading, and encourages the elimination of sub-vocalization in order to focus on "visual absorption" of meaning.
Our data gathered in Italy confirm the results published by Cooper (2009, 2012). The course makes it possible to obtain significant improvements in reading speed, comprehension and reading effectiveness. Statistical analyses of data show that reading time at the end of the course is significantly lower ($p<0.001$) both at first and at second reading. This is also true for total time. A parallel statistically significant improvement ($p<0.001$) in reading effectiveness is recorded at first, at second reading and for Combined Reading Effectiveness.

These changes occur in both sub-groups (dyslexic and neurotypical readers). As for comprehension, the results obtained by the two sub-groups are different. The percentage of comprehension both at first and second reading does increase for both sub-groups, but statistically significant improvements ($p<0.001$) occur only in the dyslexic sub-group, both at first and at second reading, while neurotypical readers show statistically non-significant changes both at first (1.203) and at second (1.732) reading. To explain these differences it is necessary to consider that comprehension has a ceiling effect (the maximum score is 100%). Neurotypical readers, performing better than dyslexic students from the beginning, are nearer to the ceiling and their potential range of improvement is narrower. This circumstance can influence the significance of data. In any case, we want to emphasise that both groups

at the end of the course obtain very high scores (around 90%), which can be considered excellent in the light of a parallel significant decrease of reading time.

The analysis of the data suggests several reasons why SuperReading works. As already mentioned, the course combines different approaches, aiming to promote different skills involved in the silent reading process: visual strategies, metacognition, strategic text analysis based on inferences and pragmatics, memorization. In particular, these skills are usually poor in dyslexic students.

Considering the visual aspects, it is important to point out that eye-hopping practice stimulates a different eye movement during reading, probably enhancing visual information processing, an aspect that is crucial in silent reading (Van den Boer *et al.,* 2014). Metacognition, on the other hand, is unanimously considered to play a pivotal role in text comprehension (Furnes and Norman, 2015). Metacognition is widely and constantly stimulated during the SuperReading course, and different techniques are illustrated in order to activate metacognitive processes.

The importance of metacognition is particularly evident if we examine the data concerning time at second reading. Before the course, time at second reading is already lower than time at first reading, and this seems obvious, since readers already know the text. After the course, not only do both first and second reading time decrease significantly, but the gap between them widens. Reviewing time is so short that it can be inferred that readers adopt a sort of scanning technique, focusing only on those parts of the text they were not able to remember. A combination of metacognitive abilities, pattern reading and eye-hopping practice makes it possible to obtain significantly improved results.

On the basis of these data it is possible to maintain that SuperReading, relying on different combined techniques which help develop crucial aspects of reading skills, improves the reading performance of both neurotypical and dyslexic participants. The latter, having difficulties in this area of metacognition, can specially benefit from the course. Last but not least, in the academic context a course which addresses all students, and guarantees excellent results to all, strongly contributes to inclusive policies.

Conclusions

SuperReading is an innovative course, with some elements of uniqueness: it addresses both dyslexic and neurotypical readers, it is designed for adult subjects and specially focused on silent reading, integrating a wide range of techniques which improve different skills involved in the process of reading (visual analysis, metacognition, memorization, etc).

As data gathered and analysed so far apparently confirm its effectiveness, it seems important to continue this research on a wider testing population, and to include a control group.

As mentioned in the Introduction, it seems also reasonable to look for independent and possibly more objective means to measure the reading skills of participants. To this end, we are developing a research protocol which includes the assessment of reading abilities through a battery of reading tests specially developed for diagnosis of learning disorders (according to Italian legislation) in adult subjects (Ciuffo *et al.,* in print). This battery includes a silent reading test with innovative structure (Gagliano *et al*., 2015).

Participants to the SuperReading course are administered the battery of tests one week before the beginning of the course and one week after its end. Pilot data gathered with a population of 44 subjects were presented at the Conference "Dislessia e DSA nelgiovaneadulto" (Reggio Emilia, 20th May 2017) and further analyses are still in progress.

To obtain more objective evidence of the changes produced in the approach to the reading task, we have also started a further research protocol involving eye-tracker acquisitions. The aim is to verify whether after SuperReading the reading pattern of participants displays differences, which can be observed in the heat maps and measured in terms of number of saccades and fixations. At the 5th All European Dyslexia Conference of EDA (Modena, 21st-24th September, 2017) we presented preliminary data concerning a small population of 15 dyslexic students, which indicate interesting differences in the reading patterns pre- vs post-course. The data gathered so far include a population of 62 subjects, and their analysis is in progress.

We have also decided to analyse the effectiveness of the course from a qualitative point of view, investigating self-perception through narratives produced by participants at the end of the course and at a follow up session. Data analysed so far confirm the quantitative results. Finally, a comparison of our data with those gathered by Ross Cooper in the UK is now in progress.

We believe that the availability of more comprehensive and diversified data will make it possible to formulate new hypotheses concerning the silent reading task, which on the basis of the results of the present research seems to be performed holistically, through the analysis of semantic units that largely exceed the limits of a single word.

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An investigation into Academic staff perceptions of the dynamics and relationship with the learning support assistant.

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Abstract: This study reports the results of a very small-scale research with respect to issues of inclusivity and diversity and the perceptions of academic staff towards in-class learning support in an Art and Design university in the south of England. This study provides insights into the experiences of two academics teaching in an increased diverse teaching environment and their understanding of what the role of the Learning Support Assistant (LSA) entails from their own subjective perspective. The paper also highlights concerns around the proposed changes to the Disability Student Allowance (DSA) funding and its implications on teaching and learning support practice. The findings, arising as they do out of a very small-sample size investigation based on two qualitative interviews are necessarily exploratory and tentative. However, the evidence gathered suggest a need and an opportunity for professional development through collaboration and communication processes for sharing and generating new knowledge between academic and learning support staff.

Introduction

In order to understand the role of academic and support bodies, it is important to be cognizant of the changing context in which Higher Education institutions (HEIs) have found themselves over the past two decades. This study accepts the notion that higher education institutions, as a workplace, is operating in the managerialism paradigm, and that the present (UK) Government's discourse is that of the economy market (White, 2003). Within this discourse, HEIs can be conceptualised as service providers. (Robson and Bailey, 2009).

Service organisations encourage their employees to perform at the customer front-line interface as an approach to be competitive and gain advantage over other organisations.   Universities in the United Kingdom have seen a vast increase in student numbers in the past years, as a consequence of different initiatives promoting diversity and inclusivity in particular the impact of the initiative of Widening Participation (WP) requiring that HEIs consider tailor their support to accommodate *all* students' needs. (Shreeve, A. 2007; Veck, W. 2009).

Higher education institutions in England are presently undergoing a period of transformation with the new changes in DSA funding encouraging institutions to adopt innovative strategies to become more inclusive in the teaching and learning practices available to all students (DBI&S, 2015). Staff has raised salient concerns in the narratives including the ability of academics to cater effectively for a wider range of students' needs, the lack of training about disability and inclusivity and the impact on retention and recruitment of potential students.

Under the equality Act (2010), HEIs have clear expectations relating to promoting good relations between different groups with the added responsibility to pay particular attention to the needs of students from diverse groups to identify the right opportunities within their teaching/support practices especially under the current climate to reinforce inclusivity and accessibility.

The implication of adhering to the present expectations under the new circumstances (DSA cuts) might poses a challenge for faculty staff to ensure that students are not excluded on the basis of their disability and in trying to facilitate inclusion. This small study sought to explore the challenges face by academic and learning support staff in this shifting landscape within the UK higher education sector.

Review of the Literature

Murrey & Flannery's (2008) research suggests that, university staff perceptions regarding disability learning support is limited. Their study designed to examine the knowledge of teachers towards students with learning difficulties at an American university, revealed that staff have gaps in the current knowledge about disability-related issues including a lack of understanding about the various types of support available at this institution.

Humprey & Lewis (2008) study on the experiences of students on the autistic spectrum in mainstream secondary schools highlights the lack of research on

the subject and a gap knowledge from the teaching staff on how to help this group of students effectively with exclusionary implications to both the student and support staff. The article also emphasises the complexities of enacting responsibility as a way of implementing policy in their practice, revealing a lack of awareness or simply a difficulty translating policy into practice:

> *"Even in schools where there was evidence of top-down commitment to inclusion, there were still difficulties in policy filtering down to the ground floor, and evidence of scepticism among staff […]. In other cases, staff were simply unaware of the policy."* (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008:134)

Jelfs & Richardson (2010) state in their study of the experiences of disabled students in higher education that students "…may also receive inadequate pastoral, physical or social support. […] this is often marginalised in administrative units and not mainstreamed across academic departments." (Jelfs, A. & Richardson, J.T.E., 2010:605).

Trahar (2011) highlights a pressing concern in her study about narratives of academics that are "struggling to assimilate larger numbers of students with complex needs. The literature builds on and correlates my previous published research (Waywell, 2017) in which LSAs expressed the frustrations of not knowing how to support the students with no proper training or support from academics or senior management.

Methodology

The context for my research study was the university where I am currently working. This decision was made for two reasons: (i) I have conducted a previous research at the same institution on the role of the learning support assistant and (ii) I decided that I wanted to investigate the dynamics of the academics in relation to the same group of individuals I had researched about. I wanted to find out the 'other side of the story' and I felt I could have not come to a proper conclusion if I had collected data from participants from a different social environment [university].

I was aware of the implications of this decision and of the possibility to come with pre-formed conceptions of what I was going to find out. I avoiding approaching academics that I had worked with already. I approached academics via email inviting them to take part in the study with only two course leaders accepting to participate in the study; the first one from higher education (HE) and the second one from further education (FE). Both participants were

white male with lots of years of experience in the education system who I have never worked with before.

Narrative inquiry

On using narrative inquiry as an approach to collect data for this study, I sought to gather personal perspectives of these two individuals based on their own tacit knowledge and experiences as academics working in a social context (HEI) and their relationships and dynamics with others [LSAs] (Riessman, 2000).

In the process of collecting data I conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant. It is important to point out that, these narratives were constructed within the time and space of the interview process and the interaction with the interviewer [me]. Initially, the interview was planned to last approximately 20 minutes in an effort to gather enough information manageable to later on being transcribed.

Limitations of the study

Although the study has been carefully planned, because of the time limit, the study only involved a very small size population with only two white male academics participating in the project. Reflecting on this, I acknowledge now that, although sample sizes are typically small in qualitative research, the study could benefit from a more diverse population sampling for example, inviting female academics and academics new to the role to participate in the study could have provided with different perspectives in relation to the investigation.

The two academics were approached by email to offer them the opportunity to read the transcribed narratives, to discuss their own stories and to make the study transparent and reliable. Both participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Narrative Analysis

In analysing the data, I took a post-structuralist philosophical stance, as narrators construct their stories using language in the process of making sense and giving meaning to their experiences in their social reality they create (Richardson, 2005).

Interpreting other peoples' subjective perspectives is a struggle and I personally found that words are just not enough to tell a story of 'what happened' equally, images alone would be limited and "inadequate to the task, and some merger of the two [text+image] is required to tell the story of the truth, and the truth of the story." (Gardner, 2012:143)

In the process of coding, I read through the data several times, adding and deleting codes depending on what I felt was more significant. As Silverman (2006) asserts, the researcher has some level of control over the data under investigation. This was a long and repetitive process of changing, renaming and adding codes.

Next, I grouped the codes into common and significant themes, writing headings to represent as 'basic themes'. This then were grouped again, I looked for underlying patterns, similarities and differences between the broad themes I repeated this process. I decided to focus on the themes that were most relevant to my study as well as to my theoretical framework and found paradigms that were becoming visible through the process of analysis.
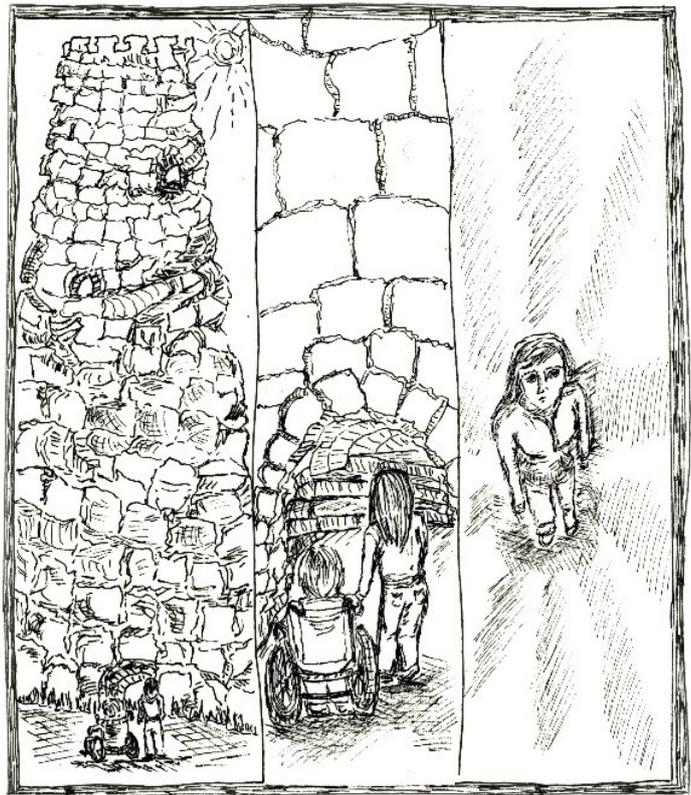
The LSA

The 'gates of education' are wide open to an increasing number of students entering HEIs (Giannakis and Bullivant, 2016) and Universities in the UK are expected to cope with the growth of a diverse students' needs and encouraged to embrace inclusivity. The literature states that the introduction of inclusivity in education has been a challenge for the teaching community (Savvidou,2011). With academics expressing resistance and ambiguity. Such challenges are manifested in relation to the quality of teaching and learning, as well as the development and quality of student services. The introduction of the role of Learning Support Assistant was put in place to meet the needs of those students who would benefit from it. (Edmond and Price, 2009, Robson and Bailey, 2009). These two participants, made it clear that they welcomed the changes towards diversity and inclusivity even though it brought with it situations that were complex and problematic.

One academic observes that:

> *"…The academic community supported the changes and their anxiety was that the opportunities as it were for general learners would not be affected by issues of inclusivity through the engagement of learning support assistance [LSAs] and while these changes were profound and I'm sure there was some resistance (.) it was a deal that was made to do this."* (FE academic)

According to his narrative, the concept of 'inclusivity' seen as a separate activity with LSAs introduced to minimise the concerns expressed by academics at the prospects of the new diverse intake of student culture. LSAs along with other support staff (e.g. Learning mentors, dyslexia tutors), would be supporting students with a wide variety of needs. It can be argued that, the LSA role was invisible from the start as an academic share:

> *"I can't remember the point that LSAs came around (.) I don't know how long LSAs has been, I think they [LSAs] were very thinly spread around the institution. The LSA just turns up in the classroom with a student so if a LSA was sitting with a student (.) they probably think the LSA is another student yeah!"* (HE academic).

This story illustrates a complex picture of the LSA as a stranger, uninvited and invisible amongst the crowd an individual with no identity and not recognition for the work provided. Veck (2009) argues that, the nature of the role of the LSA are connected to the exclusion of both the student and the LSA, he explains that this is because the LSA's role lacks status, training and professional development. Both participants referred to the LSAs are enablers and facilitators for that particular student that needed support. They referred to the experiences with LSAs as been positive ones and, in an attempt to explain their own perceptions of the role of the LSA, one academic shared his own views on the ways LSAs might be perceived by other tutors:

> *"…as an individual in the classroom [tutor] you have someone who is observing your performance and can be a good arbitrator [LSA] in that learning environment (.) the learning support assistant is a sort of chock-chain (.) that kind of control an over enthusiastic member of staff, perhaps with less experience (..) In some ways the principle of the LSA should be that they are invisible actually."* (FE academic).

According to Ashforth *et al.* (2007), the term 'dirty work' represents a conceptual understanding of individuals experiencing social 'taint' in social organisations. Where occupations (Learning Support) involving regular contact with people or group of individuals (students) regarded socially as stigmatised, or where the employee (LSAs) appears to have a servile relationship to others. Individuals (academics) then create a 'work meaning' or an understanding of

what other employees do at work as well as the significance of what they do; actively making sense of the social interaction with others (Teurlings, 2008).

It can be argued that, the two academics have constructed a subjective view of what the LSA role means to them, as well as, how they might be perceived by the LSAs based on their social interactions or lack of. Thus, the narratives illustrate the uncertainty of two unknown entities in relation to one another; one acting as the 'fly on the wall' or unnoticed observer monitoring the performance of the academic whose mechanism to survive the closer supervision is to ignore the LSA's presence in the classroom.

The connection of the conceptual term 'dirty work' and invisibility is understood as a way of creating a distance from something 'dirty' and from those who are dealing with the 'dirt'. Work dealing with 'dirt' is often undertaken by those at the lower levels of the hierarchy "intimately connected to powerful identity categories of gender, race, class and nationality." (Simpson, Ruth *et al.* 2012:5). To illustrate this concept in the study, I emphasise that the majority of LSAs in this particular institution are female workers, caring and nurturing the most vulnerable of students "service and care have a strong association with the embodied disposition of women […] remaining invisible to those higher up the hierarchy." (Ibid.,p.6).
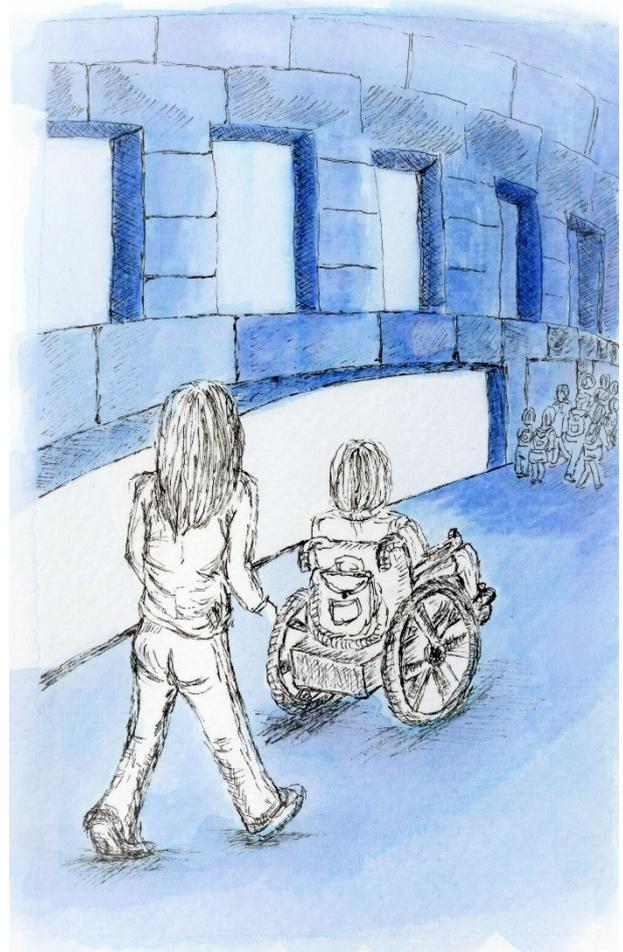
The nature of the role of the LSA on a one-to–one working position alongside the student inside and outside the classroom, library, canteen, corridors and workshops is seen contra-productive as one of the academics expressed that:

> *"I have real problems with the whole kind of notion of reasonable adjustments in that it singles out the disabled person (.) the door disables the person and the idea that you need an LSA to open a door in 2015 for a student to walk in is utterly ridiculous and its completely fixable totally fixable!" (HE academic)*

Research on learning support-working practice at school and FE level has criticised the assigning of LSA to one student, stating that the LSA inhibit independence and promotes exclusion through the LSA coming between the student and his/her peers (Lancey, 2001). Further, students have expressed concerns about the parity of access as not all students have access to learning support in the classroom (Peck, et al,2010). Other studies assert that, a more effective learning support approach should be provided by changing the curriculum practice and delivery (Shreeve, 2007).

Robson and Bailey (2009), observes that ambiguity of the role of LSAs and lack of clear boundaries in the workplace can lead to tensions where feelings of exploitation may exist. LSAs narratives discussed elsewhere (see Waywell, 2017) expressed feelings of confusion and isolation in regard to the academic community about who had which responsibility in relation to the student they were supported. Similarly, academics in this study have expressed uncertainty about the role of the LSA:

> *"I have heard colleagues that have said (.) that actually we are having problems with this LSA because he or she is kind of stepping over the (.) to what they saw as the 'line'." (HE academic)*

The 'line' is perhaps the boundary marking, the abstract limitations of the role that LSAs found difficult to maintain.

Academic's concerns with DSAs changes

Both participants were explicitly vocal about their concerns to do with the coming changes in funding for disabled university students. As our institution decided not to employ in-house LSAs which include note-takers and physical support within the classroom and across the institution. The participants' stories displayed uncertainty about the expectation to adopt a more inclusive and diverse teaching and learning practice for the overall benefit of the student community.

One academic focused greatly on the loss of the Non-Medical Helper (NMH) or LSA as a loss in the learning resource to engage potential new comers into education:

> *"The taking away the general learning support staffing within the learning community (.) within the studio teaching means the situation is not as inclusive" (FE Academic)*

In this story the LSA is perceive as a measure to assure and increase their funding. Robson and Bailey (2009), in fact assert that FE colleges in England employed support staff to "increased their attractiveness in the local

competition for potential students [...] as a way of being responsive to their students as 'customers'." (Ibid, p101). It is important to note that LSAs working in further education are not funded by the DSA. FE colleges have the responsibility for the management of their finances and employment of their staff including LSAs. However, the concern shared by the academic reported a rejection of the new 'managerialism' and decision based on the government changes:

> *"In FE our funding was reduced last year by 17%, this year a further 5% each year, it means that there's an expectation that our productivity would increase as we produce the same outputs with less inputs (.) we have less sessional money, less staff members, less resources and more students. LSAs gone will be a further reduction in the resources that we can offer to individual students of all sorts." (FE Academic)*

The HEFCE report (2015) states that the demand for mental health provision in academia is rising: the findings show that there is an increasing complexity of problems and co-occurring of mental health problems alongside other impairments. The stories highlighted the increasing numbers of students entering HE as a salient point when considering increased enrolment of students with medical and mental health difficulties. A participant observed that:

> *"... inevitably is taken up by students who are not actually prepared for it [education] and suffer as a consequence"*

Participants positioned themselves as overworked and stressed, stating the pressures they have from 'above' to keep and raise numbers (students). From the data, one can argue that, LSAs may be perceived to be as much a facilitator for the academic as she/he is for the student.

The small-sample size data does not suggest that academics in general are less caring and unsupportive towards their learners; it simply shows an insight into how these two participants' relationships with LSAs and their understanding of the role. It is important to state that the data is too

small and cannot be generalised; however, the findings from this very small study highlights a missing opportunity for mutual collaboration and communication between academics and support staff as professionals working in partnership to enhance the learning experience of all students.

Conclusion

Given that the sample size for this paper is very small, the findings cannot be over-generalised; however, the findings from this research highlighted contradicted assumptions about the *role* of the LSA as well as uncertainty express by the two participants as to how to meet the governments' aims to encourage HEIs to take more ownership of their educational provision reducing the reliance on the DSA funding by making teaching and learning a much more inclusive experience for all students (DBI&S,2014).

The findings also suggest a need for exploration around collaboration between academics and learning support staff, which is evident in the data and though arises out of a very small sample size, it offers an opportunity to develop networks of support and collaborative spaces to encourage and motivate both academics and learning support staff to re-think, discuss and challenge

assumptions about the ways students have been supported under a deficit model of support.

Although bigger conclusions cannot be drawn from this study, it is hoped that it triggers a sense of curiosity to further investigate the relationships between the academic and learning support community and to develop strategies to promote clear communication processes for sharing and generating specialist knowledge around disability related issues, inclusive approaches and reflective conversations between all teaching and support staff.

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Part Two: Narrative Articles

It's Just Good Practice Isn't It? Reflections on the Journey Away from Disabled Students' Allowances at the University of Leeds.

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Abstract

Whilst still immersed in the initial responses to the 'DSA changes' this article is a reflexive piece that explores two strands of activity at the macro and micro level within one institution; one strand seeking to address inclusive provision at an institutional level; the second describing service improvements at a local level. It identifies the interdependencies between long and short term initiatives; whole institution and local change. It seeks to describe how the DSA changes have facilitated a more student centred perspective of institutional responsibilities; influencing service provision and priorities. It shares some of the theory and research that has supported the change management process, and informed a reflexive view of the responsibilities and risks that accompany institutional autonomy in policy implementation. It offers examples of new practices and approaches; reflecting on the impact of the changes for the institution, the Disability Service and students.

Introduction

This paper seeks to outline two complimentary strands of the University of Leeds' response to the changes to Disabled Students' Allowances, first announced in 2014 (Willetts, 2014). It reflects on the purpose, process and experiences of staff engaged in two core initiatives; seeking to promote and support inclusive practices in teaching and learning; and improving access to reasonable adjustments for disabled students. The scope, scale and implications of the DSA changes are considered in the context of these initiatives, the Leeds journey and Higher Education more broadly. As a reflexive piece, it does not offer a formal evaluation, nor does it represent a whole institutional perspective; it combines the experiences and learning from two colleagues who have worked collectively and independently on various aspects of the University of Leeds response to the DSA changes[4].

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[4] The views, experiences and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors. They do not represent the views or opinions of the University of Leeds.

The two strands of activity, although intertwined, demonstrate how wide-ranging the impact and response to the DSA changes has been at Leeds. The first strand takes a whole institution approach, addressing inclusion in broad intersectional terms. It features cross institutional collaboration and is focused on supporting colleagues to anticipate and mitigate exclusionary practices in teaching and learning. It embraces the concept of the anticipatory duty and is concerned with the full spectrum of teaching and learning and student education; from planning to delivery, from course design to assessment and feedback.

The second strand of activity has focused on one central service, the Disability Service, and its role in the provision of support and reasonable adjustments for disabled students. This strand of activity has been introspective, requiring staff across the service to reflect on and adapt habits, behaviours and practices. This strand needed to address both the operational issues emergent from the DSA changes but has also sought to deliver general service improvements, guided by student feedback and the University's values.

These strands, alongside other aligned initiatives, have collectively sought to improve the experience and outcomes for students. We are ambitiously seeking improvements in day to day administrative practices through to the 'global' institutional culture. The former realm is within our control (where we can affect quick and tangible results); the latter is more nebulous, long-term, and in this realm, we are influencers not leaders. Such a multifarious approach was recognised as necessary. We have informally talked about a pincer movement; of the idea that we can affect change across all parts and levels of the university simultaneously. We can see the potential to generate cumulative momentum, visibility and impact. Multiples initiatives about which we have been vocal has ensured the DSA changes have had a high profile increasing the likelihood of acceptance and cooperation from colleagues across the institution (Higgins and Mcallaster, 2004). This paper offers insights into the process and progress made so far in these endeavours.

As we reflect on what has passed, and plan for what lies ahead, we are making increasing use of a wide range of research materials. Organisational and public policy theory is assisting our appreciation of the sectoral and institutional implications of the DSA changes; influencing our approach to service development. Similarly, we are utilising change management theory to identify strategies in support of the cultural change we want to promote. Pedagogic research has been foundational in the inclusive practice strand of activity; where engagement and influence of academic colleagues requires

the use of up to date and tested theories and recommendations. Although this paper is a reflexive and personal piece we have referenced those materials we have found valuable as they may appeal to sector colleagues embarking on, or planning similar initiatives at their own institutions.

Background

In the immediate aftermath of the DSA changes, the Disability Service was invited to summarise the changes, and their impact, to senior management, and ultimately the executive. Over various iterations we produced a detailed summary of the impacts, potential solutions and the likely lead times to bring those into fruition. On the strength of that detailed work the Institution committed to funding "like for like" support, to match any lost funding until the identified mitigations could be demonstrated to be working effectively for our students. In addition to ensuring continuity of support for disabled students and a commitment to improving support services and embedding inclusive practice, it also raised the profile of the Disability Service and the concerns of disabled students. It created a space in which we could think long term and one in which those thoughts had an audience.

What do the changes represent? What is their significance? These questions were not our starting point but on reflection they have resurfaced in a myriad of circumstances; they are yet unanswerable in the short time since the changes, we are in process evolution not revolution.

Had the changes been brought in with a longer lead time, such broad questions might have been asked at a sectoral and institutional level. Time to reflect on such questions would have likely been part of a long term strategic approach. However, the changes to DSAs happened quickly, and appeared to take us all (within our own cross sectoral networks at least) by varying degrees of surprise. The expected speed of implementation, the scale of the changes, the lack of detail in early communications, the high number of revisions and clarifications, the introduction of new and unexplained concepts such as the 'non-complex student,' and finally the late arrival of clear guidance, all fed into the seemingly frantic and chaotic first reactions to the DSA changes. After such a prolonged period of status quo, these were the first significant changes to DSAs in 25 years, (Willetts, 2014) the news was met with everything from defiance to resignation. Despite being a sector with many established norms (e.g. centralised disability services), there is evidently significant variation in levels and types of support services for disabled students, and varying degrees of inclusive practice provision (Rodger and Wilson *et al*. 2015); as such it was not immediately obvious what the sectoral response needed to be. It was also not always clear how inclusive

teaching practices were relevant to the types of support losing funding (for example the student needing physical support getting around campus may benefit little from a more inclusive classroom experience). However, the government was adamant that HEIs were over reliant and disincentivised by the extent of the DSA provision; they were equally clear that each individual institution must establish its own remedy; the nature of the changes forced HEIs into a reactive position.

We resisted taking the reactive position at Leeds and continued instead to consider what the changes represented and their significance; how did they fit in to the bigger picture at Leeds? We tried to avoid only seeing the immediate problems and their potential solutions. We asked 'what are we to our students'? What barriers do they face? In what ways do we exceed, meet, or fail to meet the needs of our disabled students? How do we want to respond? What are our values? Do we understand the impacts of our actions, behaviours and attitudes?

The government may have been right to suggest that inclusive practice was too far down the priority list for many HEIs, however, framing the changes as a *mere* case of 'rebalancing responsibilities' was overly simplistic (Willets, 2014: unpaginated). Expanding the responsibilities of HEIs, who are left to interpret those responsibilities as they see fit (DSSLG, 2017), likely exposes students to less certainty, clarity, and potentially less equity of support across the sector. There is no argument that policies which successfully improve inclusive practice are to be welcomed, and Universities can very likely offer all manner of alternatives and improvements to DSAs. The risk for students is how variable the outcomes may be for them as individuals. These changes put further demands on HEIs and make students more reliant on their HEIs to remove disabling barriers. The Equality Act is a difficult tool for an individual 18-year-olds to wield against their HEIs in any disagreement about the 'reasonableness' of a 'reasonable adjustment'. The clarity of the DSA offer (whatever its faults) has been replaced by something much less clear and potentially much less reliable. HEIs can decide 'what happens next?'; nowhere will this be a straightforward question.

A contextual view

As a useful lens, research, and theories relating to 'street level bureaucracy' have assisted us in considering new perspectives; in policy interpretation, our implementation choices and their implications. Disability services[5] contain

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[5] 'Disability Services' is used to refer to the myriad of iterations of the central disability service provision model identified as typical in the sector (Rodger and Wilson *et al*. 2015).

many of the features associated with 'street level bureaucracies' (Lipksy, 1980); they are located at the sharp end of public policy implementation and public resource allocation; particularly following the DSA changes (Willetts, 2014). They operate using public funds, including the HEFCE Student Opportunity fund, HEFCE catalyst funding (Rodger and Wilson *et al*. 2015: iv), and the HEFCE uplift in 2016/2017. Significantly, HEIs and their Disability Services, like the typified street level bureaucracy, enjoy a substantial amount of discretion in how they operate national policy within their local contexts (Lipksy, 1980). The scope of that discretion, we have already suggested, has increased since the changes (DSSLG, 2017). Despite researching public bodies and conceiving of 'street level bureaucracies' in the US in the 1980's, Lipksy's observations appear to offer significant insights into the challenges, risks and opportunities for HEIs and their students; when high levels of discretion are a feature of the policy landscape. Despite the government pointing to inclusive practice as both panacea and priority, until significant progress is made on the expansion and embedding of inclusive practice, the deficit model of support offered by disability services is almost certainly required across the sector (DSSLG, 2017). Universities can operate discretion both in the way they deliver teaching and learning and in how and when they make reasonable adjustments (DSSLG, 2017; Rodger and Wilson *et al*. 2015). This makes the nature and implications of such discretion worthy of further consideration. Undoubtedly the DSA changes have encouraged HEIs to work cooperatively and collaboratively to establish how they will use that discretion (DSSLG, 2017). The need to make progress towards inclusive practices, whilst maintaining sufficient interim support for reasonable adjustments, has been a frequent discussion point at the cross-sector events we attended. Whilst our Disability Service's role in reasonable adjustment provision was an established one, our remit for advising on pedagogic practice, and influencing the progression of inclusive practice, was less established. This paper explores how we fared progressing both requirements.

Strand 1: Development of the inclusive learning and teaching resource

The Disability Service at Leeds has long recognised the value of inclusive practice. Members of our team have long been engaged in the production of materials and guides on a formal and informal level across the institution. Similarly, the central learning and teaching team advocated and trained staff on approaches to teaching which were inherently inclusive; but without always making this overtly evident within the materials and delivery. However, there was little appetite for universal policies or practices. In recent

years a drive towards 'equity of experience' for students had instead encouraged us to focus on service standards rather than engaging in preventative strategies; facilitating the provision of reasonable adjustments to a growing number of students in the most efficient way possible was the priority. Visions of inclusive teaching and learning, and of anticipatory duties, were acknowledged, but not considered *our* priority or responsibility; they were outside the remit of the service. The DSA changes have forced a shift in that perception.

The recognition of the need for a practical resource to promote inclusive learning and teaching coincided both with the DSA changes and with the launch of the University's new deliberative structure and the formation of an Inclusivity Strategy Group (ISG) reflecting *inclusivity* as one of the University's core strategic values (University of Leeds, 2014). The project, earlier referred to as strand one, was set up as a joint initiative between Disability Services and Organisational Development & Professional Learning (central learning and teaching team) reporting up to the ISG, ensuring that the project was centrally located with any outcomes aligned effectively with other strategic University initiatives. HEFCE uplift funds were allocated to support the coordination of the project on 0.2 FTE throughout 2016-17/ 2017-18.

The remit of the Inclusive Learning and Teaching Development (ILTD) group was clear from the outset. In order to influence a cultural shift towards inclusivity, academic colleagues needed to understand what, how and why they were being advised to do something, rather than just being dictated to by new policies. The guidance needed to be practical, succinct and backed up by peer reviewed publications wherever possible. This approach is supported by Adams and Brown who recommend that HEIs should "build credibility by creating a rigorous and evidence-based pedagogy that convinces both disability practitioners and those within the academic community that inclusive practice is not only right but also highly effective, and that effective pedagogy for disabled students is effective pedagogy for all" (2006: 187). It was felt important that the resource was considered a mainstream teaching and learning, and not as something disability specific or relating to peripheral student support services. This would ensure that it appealed to as wide a range of staff as possible.

The establishment of the task and finish group was a great opportunity for cross institutional working. Membership includes colleagues from Disability Services, libraries, Language Centre, Equality Policy Unit, students' union, academic development team, Lifelong Learning Centre (specialising in

supporting mature and part-time students) and academic colleagues from both Arts and STEM subjects. The development of the guidance was a collaborative process with colleagues providing a variety of lenses on pedagogy, student diversity and the potential inequity inherent to many everyday practices in Higher Education. The group co-created a set of 19 guides entitled *Being Inclusive in…* and aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework (Higher Education Academy, 2011) areas of activity in academic practice. Each draft was reviewed by academic colleagues in a range of disciplines to ensure credibility and elicit further good practice. This consultation process helped to create traction and a sense of institutional co-creation.

Aligning the resource to the UKPSF supports its relevance to everyday practice in Higher Education. With increasing numbers of academic staff seeking professional recognition via the Higher Education Academy, this provides an additional motivation to access the resource as applicants for fellowship will be required to describe their approaches to inclusive practices.

In addition to the written guides, the online resource (University of Leeds, 2016) also features videos of students discussing their experiences of inclusive learning and teaching, and staff in a range of roles in student education describing their approaches and offering advice for colleagues. The student videos help to provide personal insights to enable staff to understand the impact of teaching practices on individuals; while the staff videos provide real life examples of how colleagues are putting inclusivity in action.

Promoting the resource and raising awareness of inclusive teaching

The resource was launched at the University's annual Student Education Conference in January 2017. Hard copies of the guides, as well as promotional materials were produced and the web resource was launched on the first day of the conference. Members of the project group delivered a workshop which enabled participants to interact with the guides and discuss issues around inclusive learning and teaching. Following the conference, the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Student Education gave the project a very positive write-up - using it as an opportunity to highlight inclusive teaching, and assessment in particular, as one of his key priorities.

We've employed a number of strategies for raising awareness of the resource, including:

- Sending bound copies of the guides to senior leaders across the institution, asking for their support in promoting the agenda

- Offering to deliver short presentations at all academic departmental staff meetings

- Articles in University-wide publications and e-news letters

- Attending a variety of committees and forums, such as Faculty Equality and Inclusion Committees, to discuss localised solutions for promoting the resource and embedding inclusive practices more widely.

What have we learnt so far about promoting inclusive teaching?

Throughout the process of promoting the resource and the inclusive teaching agenda, a number of key themes have emerged which provide a useful opportunity for reflection:

1. Lack of understanding of the term "inclusivity"

Despite *inclusiveness* being one of the University's core institutional values, there was a surprising lack of clarity and awareness among staff as to what it means to teach inclusively, so in this respect, staff may not be aware of whether they are or aren't being inclusive in their approaches, unless a particular disadvantage is made obvious by students. A common response from academic colleagues when reading the guides is that they consider much of the advice to be common sense, or just good teaching practice, when perhaps they were expecting that *being inclusive* would involve something more specialised.

Many pedagogical advances in Higher Education such as blended learning, can offer greater flexibility by design (Gordon, 2014) and taken together with a drive for clarity and consistency in student experience in our own institution, this means that many current institutional initiatives are inherently, even if not overtly, pushing inclusivity forwards. This therefore means that, although institutionally we may not have a clear and shared understanding of what inclusivity is in practice, we are already making some steps towards it. Heath (2010) advocates *shrinking the change* as a good way of making people feel that they are already part way towards achieving a goal, so a useful exercise in promoting the agenda has been to use the Universal Design for Learning Licence to Learn framework (Knarlag, 2016) to map out the institutional activities and initiatives which could be considered as contributing towards inclusivity, enabling a sense of achievement and an understanding of how big the remaining challenge is.

2. Competence standards

We have frequently returned to discussions around competence standards and "graduateness" with our academic colleagues and have discovered that there is a mis-match in our understanding of these ideas. As a disability practitioner, the concept of competence standards is crucial to understanding and implementing reasonable adjustments and advocating inclusive approaches. However, the term 'competence standards' is legalistic and at odds with the common parlance of *learning outcomes* and *assessment criteria* used by academic colleagues. The Equality Challenge Unit's guidance around competence standards (ECU, 2015) is an excellent resource, but potentially too lengthy to appeal to busy academics. The guides use language familiar to academics, however using more acceptable language risks the full understanding and implementation of competence standards in module design and assessment.

3. Understanding the audience

Awareness raising sessions have been tailored to particular academic schools considering: subjects and discipline variances; cohort demographics, such as international student numbers; experiences of the school including past disability issues and successes; attitudes to inclusive practice; and the appetite for change.

Just as classrooms contain learners with a diverse range of learning needs, styles and backgrounds; the same is also true for staff. There is a continuum of attitudes, willingness, knowledge and experience, as well as a complex myriad of motivational factors affecting each individual's inclination to adapt their existing teaching practices. As we progress in our mission to embed inclusive practices and effect a culture shift we need to find ways for academic staff to recognise that their sense of social justice and personal values as educators aligns with the concept of inclusivity. Gagne and Deci, when describing the concept of Self-Determination Theory, explain that people show more persistence in adapting to a change in practices, when they "personally value the behaviour and have fully accepted its importance for their self-selected goals and their well-being" (2005: 335). This is backed up by what Heath (2010) describes as *finding the feeling*, explaining that simply having instructions on how to do something is not enough to encourage perseverance; people may give up or revert to old ways of working if they don't personally *believe* in it.

It is also true that a lack of action is not the same as a lack of willingness to take action. Some people really want to do the right thing but don't know how

and where to start, in some cases being afraid of getting it wrong. These people have really welcomed the resource, and one staff member reported that she was so keen on equality and inclusion that prior to reading the resources, she regularly planned several separate contingencies and activities; not realising that there might be ways of doing things that could benefit all students.

Next steps: refining the focus of inclusive practice in light of the Government Guidance

The launch of the resource coincided with the publication of the Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group report (DSSLG, 2017) which provided a national imperative for action in this area. The report highlights *simple actions* which HEIs can take to improve access and inclusion. Leeds is keen to understand how widespread these simple actions currently are within the institution; hence an institutional audit of inclusive learning and teaching practices, in line with those listed in the Department for Education report, has been recommended.

To fully embed inclusive approaches, opportunities for reflection and scrutiny need to be integrated into the existing quality assurance processes. In particular at the point of new programmes being approved or revalidated; where existing modules and programmes are being reviewed both by staff and students. Work is underway with the Quality Assurance team to understand how this fits into other strategic initiatives; feedback from a range of academic colleagues has indicated that this will be a major factor in motivating staff to take up inclusive approaches.

There is a clear appetite for inclusivity within our institution. The existence of a supporting resource, and the activity of involving so many colleagues in its creation and promotion, has created a sense of shared ownership for the inclusion agenda. Interested colleagues have started to get in contact with the project working group for support and guidance, particularly when embarking on new ways of doing things (such as redesigning approaches to assessment or creating fully accessible teaching resources.) This type of activity will enable us to collect case studies to inspire others and is really important because it will provide evidence of how the guidance can be put into practice. There is a sense that the whole profile of the Disability Service is shifting, and it is recognised that we have a valuable contribution to make to the learning and teaching agenda within the institution.

The resource will continue to be promoted through academic practice courses run by Organisational Development and Professional Learning (aligned to the

UKPSF) and a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice will be launched in 2018 with a strong emphasis around inclusivity in teaching. In addition, the forthcoming institutional audit of inclusive learning and teaching practices (due to take place in 2018-19) will also undoubtedly incentivise some action around this, and will provide a clear picture of where we are doing well and where there is room for improvement.

Strand 2: A focus on Disability Services

In our second strand of activity we move away from the challenges of delivering whole institutional change to consider what changes might be needed closer to home. The University's commitment to funding "like-for-like" support ensured continuity of reasonable adjustment provision in the short term; but only on the understanding that the need for it would diminish as inclusive practices became embedded. The "like-for-like" funding itself created new responsibilities and necessitated new processes for the Disability Service; establishing what provision the university will offer and what criteria will determine access. A new system for assessing and allocating resources was required; effectively replacing those previously undertaken by Student Finance England through their Needs Assessment Report (NAR) process. NARs had long been used, unedited, as handy summaries of student need, and they were circulated from the Disability Service to schools and faculties for the provision of reasonable adjustments. With the government's contention that NARs no longer outline HEI responsibilities the Service needed to think again how to provide the guidance schools needed.

A new role for Disability Services – As street level bureaucracies

The Head of Student Support, which includes the Disability Service at Leeds, advocated early on for an ambitious approach to the DSA changes. The Service was invited to consider its purpose and function more widely; both administratively, and also in terms of its connection and value to students. The direction could be paraphrased as: 'use this opportunity to decide what we want to be and do… forget SFE, forget DSAs…. This change is an opportunity to ascertain for ourselves what barriers affect our students and how we can meet our 'anticipatory' and 'reasonable adjustment' duties to remove them. It would be disingenuous to suggest this offer came with a free reign as we are always constrained by the institutional context; budgets, resources, service profile and ability to influence, staff knowledge and skills, etc.

Our early Service project meetings were focused on discussing, and at times despairing, of the scale of the task; a culture change towards inclusive

practice seemed a long way off if we dwelt on some of our experiences. The Service has a panoptic view of where barriers exist; in academic schools, lecture theatres, the library, in the campus environment, halls of residence, the curriculum, staff attitudes and more. Facing the temptation to absorb ourselves in these outward looking challenges we were encouraged to inspect our own service and invite student feedback; to ensure we put energy into those things that we could change. We recognised the need, and were supported, in listening to students as a starting point in the process of reflection. We also needed to take stock of the resources we had access to before we could decide how we could distribute them most effectively going forward.

Reflecting on what this means for students, Lipsky asserts when a street level bureaucracy has decision-making power and resource discretion like this they might be considered to 'hold the keys to a dimension of citizenship' (1980:4). Lipsky articulates how the power and impact of street level bureaucracies can be immense in the lives of those affected. That could have been easy to ignore if we had continued to be only asked to focus on internal efficiency and service consistency; to the detriment of quality. Being given the direction to think about our students' experiences of our services, and the impact we had, became pivotal in our service development work.

We were already ruminating potential changes to our service provision based on anticipated additional administration following the changes; but with the instruction to think proactively not reactively we set out in 2015 to undertake some internal research with existing students before firming up any of those plans. We asked broad question about support; the process of accessing it, experiences of receiving it, and more broadly about student experiences of reasonable adjustment provision and teaching and learning experiences. Over four weeks, starting in September 2015, 203 students responded to our online survey.

All of the issues we had anticipated were referenced to some degree; however we were surprised at the significance and impact on students of the process of accessing support. Granted, and unsurprisingly, students conflated their experiences of the Student Finance England DSA process alongside arranging University reasonable adjustments. Regardless, the extent to which the process of accessing support was, in of itself, a significant disabling barrier and burden, was striking. Against a predominantly positive picture of support experiences; the experience of accessing support (the administrative process) was more frequently negative, describing frustration and even despair.

It was immediately evident that there was significant scope for improving access to support; with focus on the processes required to gain access, particularly where we would be taking over some support from previous SFE funded options. It was not all negative, there were many positive comments to build on: individual staff were named as 'amazing,' and various students offered examples of feeling supported and valued. In some instances, students were surprised at the levels of support and the efficiency of the support process. Inequity of experience was evident from the array of respondent experiences.

It was a depressing feature of the complaints that respondents frequently appeared to expect and accept that the process would be a negative one; at least inconvenient, at its worst damaging. Many appeared resigned to difficult, challenging and inconvenient processes with all agencies. Feelings ranged from apathy to the status quo, to outright anger at the impact on wellbeing and their studies. Issues of stigma, a lack of transparency, confusion, wasted time, inefficiency were repeatedly mentioned. A handful of students went so far as to say that the process of accessing support had negatively affected the start of their university career. There were accounts of a lack of support being in place from day one; time wasted in bureaucracy at the expense of engaging with course, inductions, new friends and new opportunities. Whether these respondents were referring to us, SFE or both it highlighted the extent to which access barriers were as important as the long term support for many students; these processes and experiences were things we had the power to change.

The respondents' experiences of delegated public policy in action echoed much of what Lipksy observed 30 years ago in the common features of street level bureaucracy (1980). Lipksy's research reported administrative policies designed for the convenience of bureaucrats rather than clients, complex and timely processes that intentionally or inadvertently dissuaded clients from progressing or complaining, limited client power or influence, the need for clients to adopt identities and behaviours, the pressure to be compliant, low transparency and accountability. Similarly, some of the positive features of street level bureaucracies were also evident in respondent's positive feedback; there were descriptions of flexibility, individualised responses, and empowering interactions. Lipsky (1980) suggests transparency, flexibility, increased client (student) agency, and service accountability are key to making improvements to services; the students in our research concluded the same.

Lipsky suggested that local discretion creates a vacuum which can generate positive or negative manifestation of bureaucratic behaviour; particularly when client and institutional priorities are in conflict (1980). Lipsky's bureaucracies sounded too familiar to disregard and so the opportunity was created to ask what of the good and bad practice he expounds did we embody? Were we guilty of letting our discretion, autonomy and power needlessly disadvantage students? Could our service make changes, within the parameters of what we could control, to address issues of service access describe by students. In the past themes of student 'independence' and 'graduateness' had frequently permeated discussions on service approach and service delivery. Previous managers had been concerned that we did not 'pander to students.' There was a recurrent argument that the process, although burdensome for students, was a valid vehicle for fostering independence.

With the framing of the DSA changes as a direct instruction to Universities to effectively revisit and enhance their activities in support of meeting their Equality Act duties; the purpose of the service could be reimagined. Rather than justifying the student burden as a growth opportunity the Service encouraged acknowledgment that everything about the process of accessing support is a disadvantage and a distraction to the disabled student; additional effort above that required of others student to access their education. We circulated in our networks the concept that aspects of accessing support can disable a student further. An increasing appetite to reduce the burden on students spread out from the service to the executive and cross institutional colleagues. Disability Service staff have always been student focused but now from management down there was momentum to simplify the process; with students in mind. But there is no magic wand; it has been challenging to balance removing the administrative burden from both students and schools without creating an unsustainable and unmanageable staff workload. Our mindset has moved to increase consideration for students and to improve the service we provide to staff responsible for supporting students. At the same time we continue to review to what extent we can sustain these ways of working, or similarly reduce the service burden.

We have sought ways to work in partnership with students and to make ourselves more open, available, transparent and accountable to students. At its most simple we instigated a rule that there was always someone sat at our reception desk, from 09:00 till 17:00. Despite that being mildly inconvenient for staff (in that they may find it easier to complete administrative tasks at their own desks and getting lunch cover is difficult); the improvement in experience for students has been positively received. Feedback from students

directly, and via institutional colleagues, suggests that we are perceived as approachable, efficient and pleasant to deal with; and a surprising number of students have commented on the friendly welcome.

Service development initiatives

From the small and operational to the long term and strategic, we have looked for ways to improve access, quality, and speed; we remain reflexive and flexible as much as we can. We have focused on being proactive whilst also reflecting and acting on student feedback. Where needed we have utilised the HEFCE uplift to create capacity to make significant progress in the coming two years. The range of service development initiatives has been broad and ambitious, for example:

- We launched an online form to assist students in sharing information with us from the point of application;

- We redesigned our processes to begin working with students more intensely over the summer to minimise disruption during the start of term;

- We introduced student induction days over the summer;

- We refocused reception staff to offer extended drop ins for new students at the start of term. We now offer 'no appointment necessary' drop ins daily to help students get the process of accessing support started early with clarity and convenience;

- We have more appointment slots available for students with more complex requirements;

- We launched support summary documents that collated student information in an easy to use format for academic schools;

- Utilising the HEFCE uplift funds we brought in project resources, established a service development project group, and are currently:

  o Updating our CRM system,

  o Putting additional staff resource into processing student information to speed up the availability of information to schools,

  o Improving the connection with, and support, for staff in schools,

  o Improving our communication materials for students and staff across all media.

As a result:

- We have been in touch with more students in advance of their course starting,

- There have been reduced queues at the start of term,

- We have had access to more information about more students earlier,

- Schools have fed back positively on both the intent and results of the service developments,

- Students (and their staff) have fed back positively regarding experiences of engaging with us,

- There was a 1% point increase, year on year, in the number of disabled students registered at the University, as reported in our return to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA); which we have linked to our efforts to be more effective, available, accessible and less bureaucratic with students.

We have sought to give a greater priority to student experience and working quickly to get support in place as early as possible. In addition to the improved service we are offering students and their staff, we hope that our efforts can play a role in influencing others to reflect and improve their interactions with disabled students. The collection of processes, activities, beliefs, norms and attitudes embodied in our Service, are described in change management terminology as 'cultural artefacts.' Theories regarding effective change management suggest that in addition to change strategies that come from the top down; cultural change initiatives are most successful when visible cultural artefacts are aligned with the strategic vision (Higgens and Mcallaster, 2004). In that way the Disability Service has a vital role to play in the University's perception of disabled students and disabling barriers. In addition we would be a poor advert for change if we were not engaged in becoming more inclusive ourselves.

Conclusion

We suggested earlier that the two strands of work in this paper are intertwined; we might even consider them interdependent. Connecting these initiatives at Leeds has been staff from within the Disability Service. Our sector networking would suggest we are not alone in discovering that the DSA changes have elevated the role of the Service at our Institution. There are clearly other factors such as supportive senior management, and in our case a Deputy Vice Chancellor with an understanding and commitment to inclusion.

But that aside the DSA changes have facilitated a rise in the Disability Service's profile; creating an opportunity for us to elevate ourselves professionally but also to elevate the profile of disability issues; and more importantly increase awareness of the experiences of disabled students at our institution. From the first invitation to scope out the implications of the DSA changes to the executive, we have had a voice; with an expanding role in improving inclusion perhaps we are also better positioned to ensure the delivery of recommended reasonable adjustments. With profile and exposure through various project groups, staff from the Service have made new, and expanded existing, connections across the institution; our credibility as professionals has increased. This year a record number of schools invited us to get involved in their induction events, there is a desire to work with us to remove barriers for students and there is a buzz about what is going on.

It is clearly the start, not the end, of a journey, but much ground has been travelled and importantly we have the backing to now increase the student voice in what we are doing. As the Institution grows in confidence (in its inclusive practice provision, services for disabled students and its newly acquired responsibilities) we will be pushing to increase our accountability and the scrutiny we face; not just internally from colleagues but more critically from disabled students. We believe engaging with students remains the singular best opportunity to identify and remove disabling barriers; in accord with University's 'core values of inclusiveness, community, integrity, academic excellence and professionalism' (University of Leeds, 2014:10).

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Canine Assisted Learning: Exploring Perceptions of Disabled University Students. Is there *Really* a 'Jack Effect'?

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Bournemouth University.

This article describes a planned research study exploring university student perceptions of the effects of canine assistance on their learning.

Introduction

Bournemouth University (BU) is believed to be the first university in the UK to have a full-time dog on campus to work with students with learning support needs. The Learning Assistance Dog (LAD) works within the on-campus team which provides academic support to disabled university students. The Additional Learning Support (ALS) Department provides one to one, holistic, individual sessions and programmes of support for university students with a variety of disabilities. These include medical conditions, complex communication differences, mental health issues and physical or sensory impairments. ALS provides a range of learning support including individual tuition and mentoring which supports students to develop strategies to achieve their potential academically through university, graduation and beyond into employment. Within the setting of the ALS service, students may be offered a learning support programme which includes Canine Assisted Learning (CAL) sessions. These are individual learning support sessions with a Specialist Tutor and Jack, the Learning Support Dog.

In recent times, involvement of animals in learning and therapy programmes has gained popularity and momentum, with attention being drawn to reported benefits. This is in parallel with an expanding literature which echoes the reported efficacy of this support and reflects an increased interest for exploring the effects of animal intervention. The extent of beneficial animal involvement in activities or settings, designed to support or improve the

quality of aspects of human lives, is reflected in the expanding array of disciplines which now offer this support. One such example is a current, experimental project with an on-campus, assistance dog intended to support the learning process of university students registered with ALS. Since the launch of the project, a plethora of anecdotal student and staff accounts describe perceived benefits of the resident assistance dog in the university community. However, relatively little is known about the impact of canine assisted learning for disabled higher education.

Further, despite positive student reports for CAL and the wider evidence from the research corpus, provision of this on-campus support has not been without controversy. In contrast to many favourable anecdotal accounts, the value and credibility of a dog having a working role in an educational environment has been questioned; characterised by some as a gimmick with no identifiable value. This contrast of perceptions contributed to the genesis of this research, presenting the opportunity to explore the notion of 'a Jack Effect.'

Planned CAL research

These anecdotal accounts generated a series of intriguing questions regarding the nature of CAL, the qualities of support that were reported to be beneficial and how this support helped students. Thus, this backdrop created the context for a planned research study that aims to illuminate and inform how CAL contributes to ALS student support. To achieve this aim, a qualitative study will explore perceptions of university students and will describe the effects of CAL on their learning. Further, to explore if this support may impact the wider context of the student's university experience. It is hoped this research will provide a clearer understanding of how CAL may be most effectively used and will provide an insight into how CAL support is best designed and delivered to students.

Animal Support Background

As stated, the literature reports an array of positive findings resulting from involvement of animals in environments that include promotion of medical and psychological health and as an aid to facilitate general health and wellness. Potential benefits of introducing and including animals into educational settings have also been widely reported. Evidence supports the notion that animals can significantly contribute to facilitating positive experiences, such as supporting reading in schools, coping with anxiety or stress and elevating mood. Additional psychological benefits are reported from the introduction of an animal, by people declaring a variety of conditions

including, anxiety, depression, autism and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Increased feelings of comfort and safety, enhanced self-esteem and pro-social behaviours have been reported.

Anecdotal student accounts

Echoing the literature, there have been numerous anecdotal accounts from BU students who report that the addition of the Learning Assistance Dog has been beneficial to their university life. Wide ranging benefits have been reported, with students claiming CAL has enriched their university experience and helped with their academic learning. One student claimed sessions with Jack helped him cope with mental health issues, to complete his course and transition into full time employment. Similarly, another reported that Jack helped him manage his mood swings which had caused difficulties with concentration and focus. Further reports from students describe that CAL helps with managing anxiety, can be a calming influence and may be helpful with controlling exam pressures.

Similarly, anecdotal reports from staff and tutors echo the perceived benefits of CAL which   support the notion that CAL can positively support the learning experience. One staff member reflects that Jack appears to help re-focus students and can be a positive factor in improving concentration and focus in a learning setting

Canine assistance at BU

Jack is owned by an ALS Tutor who initially enrolled him as an assistance dog with a Dorset based voluntary group 'Caring Canines.' In this capacity, Jack supported primary school children with reading difficulties. Thereafter, Jack's role was subsequently expanded to include working with the ALS department at Bournemouth University. The aim was to explore novel ways of successfully engaging students who experience challenges with their learning. Jack's role working within ALS evolved from initial positive feedback about CAL from students and tutors, particularly identifying a beneficial effect on anxiety. Thus, a pilot period followed, with the launch of the initiative of the 'learning assistance dog scheme' offered as an option for students with additional learning support needs. During the pilot study, favourable anecdotal reports emerged from students who accessed this support. The positive feedback from students and staff resulted in Jack's role becoming permanent in 2013.

Aims of the research

Thus, the planned qualitative study aims to explore the perceptions of university students who access CAL support. Further, to describe the nature of the support, how this is perceived to contribute to positive outcomes for students in a university setting and to illuminate our understanding of the contribution of CAL to the learning experience for ALS students. It is hoped this research will inform and enrich our understanding of the effectiveness of CAL and that this will be beneficial in honing the design and delivery of CAL-based support.

Method and Ethical considerations

To elucidate and inform our understanding, this research takes a qualitative approach. This method of data gathering will provide descriptive, narrative accounts from each participant to reveal student perceptions of how this support may be beneficial and what differences this may make to their academic experience.

Participants will be two groups of current students: one group who access ALS support and a second group who do not necessarily access the ALS service. Sessions will be individually tailored to each student's needs and will include the provision of canine assisted learning.

Students will be invited to participate in the study and participation is entirely voluntary having no bearing on the provision of their support.

Pending favourable ethical approval, the planned research format will be two groups of participants who will be offered canine assisted learning sessions in two different settings.

- Group One will be offered individual learning support sessions with a specialist tutor and with the learning assistance dog integrated into the session.

- Group Two will be offered short, individual, bookable slots with the learning assistance dog which are separate to ALS support sessions.

Group One will attend sessions which are currently offered to students as an integrated part of their ALS support with the Specialist Tutor. Students have reported this support has a beneficial impact on their learning.

Group Two is an innovative approach to canine assisted learning at the university. In this instance, students may book a time slot with Jack. This novel addition to student support is an extension of an earlier trial and results

from favourable student feedback. Initial student reports indicated that offering bookable times with Jack may be effective to outreach to students currently not registered with ALS. Further discussion revealed reasons for non-registration were varied and included concerns surrounding disclosure. Thus, this extension of the service may provide opportunities to reach students who may benefit from additional help with their learning, but are currently not accessing the service.

Participants will then be interviewed to elicit their perceptions of the support. Each interview discussion will be audio taped, transcribed and analysed. All interviews and transcriptions will be anonymised to protect the identity of the participants. Interviews will then be organised into themes from which student perceptions, views and descriptions will be elicited. This will be achieved by the eliciting of detailed, narrative rich accounts, thus yielding an interesting insight into considering how this provision may benefit the student learning experience.

Ethics approval for this research is currently pending consideration from the University Research Ethics Committee. Significant factors such as the vulnerable nature of potential participants and due regard for the relationship between tutor and student is acknowledged. Due care will be given to ensure that participants are positively reassured that their participation (or choice to not participate) will have no bearing on the ALS support they are offered, or receive. Additionally, factors such as allergies, fear of animals and dogs and other important health and safety issues are carefully discussed with potential participants and detailed in explanatory information sheets. Information sheets and agreement forms for participants will be provided in timely manner to provide the student sufficient time and information to freely consider whether to participate and to ask for any further information they feel may be useful. Additionally, the option for the student to withdraw from the study with no impact on the ALS service or support they receive will be clearly stated and re-affirmed in writing.

Conclusion

The research team will explore student perceptions of the benefits of including a dog as a part of on-campus learning support. It is hoped that this research will shine a light on the perceptions of students, illuminating the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the presence of LAD and contemplate the question: 'is there a 'Jack Effect?' A significant precursor to providing appropriate support is an informed understanding of the perceptions of the students who access that support, as well as an insight into how the support is perceived to help them.

Thus, we hope this research will inform our understanding of how to most effectively use CAL support to enrich and enhance the student learning experience. We further recognise the possibility that CAL may affect others on the university campus and this may be an area of interest for further exploration.

Finally, the findings from this research will hopefully provide a clearer understanding of how CAL can be most effectively delivered when supporting ALS students in the university setting.

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Book Review: Justice for Laughing Boy: Connor Sparrowhawk - A Death by Indifference.
Review by Nicola Martin
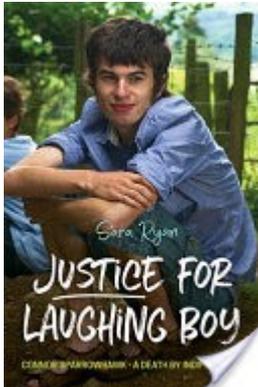
[Sara Ryan](#)

Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 27 Sep 2017

For Connor and John.

Connor Sparrowhawk drowned and his death could have been prevented. Wordsworth, himself a bereaved father, sums up what Sara Ryan's book about the death of her son and subsequent events, communicates about her love for him which exists in the present tense and always will. As a bereaved mother myself I know how she feels.

''I loved the Boy with the utmost love of which my soul is capable, and he is taken from me yet in the agony of my spirit in surrendering such a treasure I feel a thousand times richer than if I had never possessed it''.

Justice………. is an important text for anyone who works in any capacity with disabled people regardless of their discipline. For people working in education, health or social care it is a cautionary tale about things going tragically and catastrophically wrong because of a lack of joined up thinking and the absence of intelligent engagement with the idea of taking simple steps to avoid unnecessary risk. It is far more than a cautionary tale and, as Sara points out, far more than an isolated incident. Indeed, Connor was not the only person who had drowned at Slade House. The previous victim, who also had learning disabilities, drowned in the same bath.

Readers of JIPFHE will be familiar with the 2014 Children and Families Act (CFA) which places responsibilities on practitioners in health, social care and education to work together with disabled people between the ages of 0 and

25. The CFA states that local authorities are expected to map out the local offer so it is possible to see what is available from agencies working together with the aim of ensuring that the young person has what they need in order to thrive. Transition to further education, apprenticeships and work is emphasised although HE is sadly omitted, apparently because the DSA was expected to take care of things. Individuals with the most complex requirements has muti disciplinary Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs), which were designed to improve, replace and extend Statements of Special Educational Needs. Pupil /student voice was expected to be at the heart of the decision making process and this extended to finding out what people who communicated without speech or did not have a secure idea about future plans wanted to do with their lives. Parents and carers were also expected to be fully involved.

I have no doubt that Connor Sparrowhawk (Laughing boy /LB) would not have said that he wanted his life to be over just as he reached adulthood. There was no justice for LB. He was eighteen years old when he died a preventable death whilst in the care of Slade House, a specialist assessment unit run and notionally managed by Southern Health Authority. Although I was never lucky enough to know him I feel very close to Connor and his family because my wonderful son John was 25 at the time of his unavoidable death from cancer at The Churchill Hospital, also in Oxford.

Sara Ryan, Connor's mum, paints a vivid and loving picture of an eighteen-year-old young man who was loved and appreciated by his family and everyone who knew him for his humour, his passions and his unique and quirky ways of being. Connor was good looking in the same way that my John was handsome. Both had thick dark wavy hair, beautiful eyes, great bone structure, an athletes slim build and a certain elegance and energy. Eddy Stobart lorries and buses were Connor's thing and John was passionate about reading, theatre, film and the study of history. Both adored being in the heart of their rather chaotic but very creative families. John was a student at Balliol College Oxford and Connor was a school leaver who if given the chance might have gone on to college or an apprenticeship. No doubt these things were discussed in his EHCP reviews and his plans will have included Eddy Stobart lorries and the local bus station. Connor was able to make informed decisions about his future because he was an imaginative young man with in depth interests which brought him a great deal of joy. His choices would have been based on solid foundations as he had enjoyed productive work experience opportunities and because his parents, as parents do, took his interests seriously and provided him with many chances pursue them. Connor was a hard worker and would certainly have found something which would have

appealed to his boundless enthusiasms. Buses may well have been involved. I always imagined John would end up working in a book shop. Our sons were not concerned with getting a foot on the property ladder or being employed in roles which did not suit their passions or ways of being in the world.

The University of Oxford is associated with labels like 'brilliant'. Despite his brilliance, Connor's records of his life from education, health and social care providers would have used words like learning disabled, epileptic and autistic. I hope his EHCP also used terms like 'Connor is hard working and reliable and has a good idea of what he would like to do when he leaves school'. Sara makes the point that when professionals view a person through the othering lens of such medicalized labels this can contribute to their making value judgements about this person's worth. It is a tragic shame that insufficient attention was paid to the word epilepsy and procedures were not in place to ensure that Connor 'an epileptic' was not left by himself in the bath to drown.

When people sympathize with us as bereaved parents they often talk about John being 'highly intelligent' and I often find myself thinking that they are missing the point somehow. Being 'clever' is not a prerequisite to being loved beyond words forever, in the present tense. Sara's book leaves the reader in no doubt that Connor's family loved him 'to the moon and back' and his learning disabilities, autism and epilepsy had nothing to do with it, as is the case with all disabled and non-disabled sons and daughters. Family experience and over thirty years of working with disabled pupils and students, including people with complex and profound learning disabilities, enables me to say this with certainty. John and Connor's families would both simply use terms like lovely, beloved, brother, son, nephew, grandson, friend, our Connor and our John. When I was first training to teach disabled pupils my tutor advised us to always keep in mind the thought 'if this was a child of mine'. A parent would not leave their son or daughter in the bath if they knew that there was a danger of drowning as a result of a seizure. Connor was a vulnerable young person and the Slade House staff were in loco parentis.

Our boys are still in the same city and always will be, but let's not forget that they are now neighbours in the cemetery which, however beautiful and peaceful it may be, is no place for anyone 18 or 25. Sara and I will never be able to make any new memories with our beloved sons and they will be' forever young', but this is no compensation. 'Forever young is just a cliché'. John and Connor are also forever dead. My broken heart will never mend even though I do not have the extra heartbreaking burden of knowing that neglect was the reason for my son's death. Everyone did all they could to save John's life for the whole year of his cancer treatment and right up until

the end. If it had been possible he would have been saved. John's experience of healthcare was the opposite of neglect and the opposite of Connor's. The staff at Slade House did nothing to keep Connor safe and the absolute tragedy of his death was caused by indifference, ineptitude, lack of risk assessment and the disjuncture between documents outlining his basic life preserving requirements and the implementation of appropriate actions to meet a minimum standard in order to keep him safe.

Sara and her family have been criticized for their tenacity in pursuing the cause of Connor's drowning. If this was a child of mine, I would be tenacious in the extreme. As a family we have met only compassion since we lost our beloved son, this is not the case for LB's parents and siblings. At the heart of LB's story is a bereaved family who have never been directed towards any sources of bereavement support and have not been treated kindly. Organizations such as The Compassionate Friends UK are there for exactly this purpose but I get no sense at all from Sara's book that any professionals involved themselves in the wellbeing of those left behind in the aftermath of the tragic loss of Connor. As professionals, readers of JIPFHE would do well to inform themselves of the availability of the sort of resources which families might need. It is possible that a student might die whilst at college or university or that bereaved family members may make up part of the student or staff population. My daughter was grieving the loss of her brother whilst taking her degree and John's twin was at work. Conner's youngest brother was approaching his GCSEs. Duty of care should extend beyond immediate family to include peers badly affected by the death of a contemporary. Connor had friends who might struggle to understand what had happened and teachers, lecturers and education support workers are often at the forefront in this sort of situation.

Sara's book is mostly about love but she would not have needed to write it if Connor was still alive so the catalyst was the indifference and incompetence which played a huge part in her adored son's death. While her writing is really amusing at times, laughter turns frequently to tears because with every funny story about Connor's escapades and familial dynamics there is the reality that this family was first torn to pieces and then vilified for wanting answers about why Connor was dead at eighteen years old.

The audience for Justice for LB is any member of the human race including professionals in just about any discipline. It is certainly on my reading lists at London South Bank University where I am Professor of Social Justice in Education, and lecturers in health and social care are also expecting their students to know what happened to LB. Sara Ryan is very clear that her son

is not the only person labelled with terms like learning disabilities, epilepsy and autism who has died in similar circumstances and cites Winterbourne View as an example of an institution where abuse was commonplace. When social care becomes a for profit activity it becomes necessary to ensure that those running places like Winterbourne view as a business understand the implications of practice which falls woefully below ethical standards. Anyone who is ever likely to be in a position to make sure nothing like this ever happens again or finds themselves offering support to bereaved family members needs to flex their empathy muscles really hard and listen to the voice inside their head that is saying 'if this was a child of mine'. As a bereaved mum myself It comes very naturally to me to empathise with Sara Ryan and her family but I have heard many parents talking about their worst fear. If you find yourself saying 'I can't imagine what it must be like to lose a child: 1. Yes you can, try harder; 2, think about what you can do yourself to try and make sure nothing as terrible could possibly happen on your watch; 3 consider what you might do to support bereaved families and friends if one of your students dies and 4: read Sara Ryan's excellent book.

On p80 Sara Ryan wrote:

'What to do. What do you do? What the fuck do you do when your greatest fear is realized? Life outside Connor's death stopped. There was no stages of grief bollocks or complicated grief crap. Just raw grief with fucking chips on top'.

Exactly.

Dr Nicola Martin has worked with disabled people in education for over 30 years and is currently Professor leading on research, higher degrees and student experience in education at London South Bank University. Her research interests and approach to teaching are driven by a commitment to equality and social justice, emancipatory research and ensuring that narratives of marginalised people inform her practice.

Article Review: Encouraging disabled leaders in higher education: recognising hidden talents.

Review by Nick Chown

Open access link - Now online at http://researchopen.lsbu.ac.uk/785/

Nicki Martin's (2017) paper on encouraging disabled leaders in higher education (HE) through the recognition of their hidden talents is a well-researched, well-written piece of work that should become required reading for the vice-chancellors of all universities and the members of their management boards. I found it a stimulating read so it more than lived up to its description as a stimulus paper for me. By encouraging better leadership development practice in HE, I believe this paper has the potential to make a significant difference to the management of HE institutions – and thus to student experience and university profitability – as well as improving disability equality, and opening up opportunities for disabled leaders and potential leaders.

As one might expect, Martin's work highlights both positive and negative leadership experiences of disabled people working in the HE sector. She highlights the evidence showing that the ability to lead has nothing whatsoever to do with whether or not an individual is disabled. In fact, she says there are clear indications that disabled people's experiences give rise to hidden talents that may make them especially suited to leadership roles. Furthermore, their attitudes and values often appear in tune with the realisation that leadership is not confined to the 'top team' in an organisation but is spread throughout the organisation (distributed leadership). The difficulties a disabled person faces in an environment of attitudinal barriers, and need for 'coping strategies', forces them to develop problem solving skills which may enhance their ability to lead. I agree with Martin that 'A key finding was that a striking degree of congruence emerged between participants' descriptions of their own values and approaches as leaders and the principles of distributed leadership'. Maybe this should come as no surprise as disabled people often have to take charge of situations in the absence of support. It may also be that the appreciation that no woman or man is an island is that much more obvious to those for whom an environment may be 'unfriendly'. All the recommendations in this report will lead to greater disability equality in HE and should be implemented by all universities. Recommendations of a general nature, such as the need to review university systems from the perspective of the 'user', have a relevance beyond the area of disability equality.

Martin rightly acknowledges that her research has limitations and makes no 'grand claims' for her paper. As she says, there are a 'relatively small number of responses' although about 90 participants is a really useful number which indicates the extent of the work that has gone into the production of this report. The one limitation I want to refer to is the decision to avoid impairment-specific recommendations. Martin states that the justification for this is partly due to the relatively small sample but also because 'participants were concerned about creating a false sense of "homogeneity by impairment label" (a quotation from one of her contributors)'. The contributor concerned makes a valid point although managing this risk by careful reporting could avoid a false sense of homogeneity between physical and hidden disabilities.

The response to the recommendations made in Martin's report has to be from a strategic level in HE establishments. As one respondent stated, disability equality must be mainstreamed (embedded) into organisational decision-making. This requires diversity to be 'visibly championed at the highest level' through leaders at the top of the organisation role modelling appropriate attitudes and behaviours. This standard change management practice is generally very difficult in practice. I recommend that university top teams read Martin's report in conjunction with the findings of Jackie Ravet (2015) who draws attention to the problems involved in implementing good practice. Ravet identifies resistance to change, negative attitudes, lack of time, resources and funding, and incompatible policies, calling the totality of these issues and other barriers the 'implementation gap'. For Martin's many excellent recommendations – which by rights should become standard HE policy – to be translated into practice requires dealing with these barriers to implementation.

Another participant in Martin's survey referred to the 'institutional discrimination' which may be the most serious barrier to implementing equalities policy. Their point is that such discrimination is not 'an aberrant feature of otherwise virtuous policies' but something that is deep-rooted in institutions. They further stated that it is necessary to 'do the work to understand how your own policies might be perpetuating disablism'. Policies can certainly perpetuate disablism but the least discriminatory policy imaginable cannot root out discrimination all by itself. As the previously quoted respondent said, 'if there are no real role models in senior leadership, we've really got an uphill struggle'. Distributed leadership should include distributed role-modelling. And, as Martin concludes, encouraging disabled leaders requires well organised, supportive environments based on inclusive practices and universal design that value disabled people, give them a degree of control, but 'benefit everyone'.

Martin, N. (2017). *Encouraging disabled leaders in higher education: recognising hidden talents*. London: London South Bank University

Ravet, J. (2015). *Supporting Change in Autism Services: Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge.

Nick Chown is an independent autism advocate, mentor, researcher, and trainer but currently spends more time indexing books for a living. He has researched barriers to learning and support for students with autism in further and higher education, autism awareness in the police service, viva protocols for autistic doctoral students, and diagnostic pathways for autistic adults. He has a particular interest in the applicability to autism of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's language game concept and criteriological understanding of the mind. Nick is a member of the editorial board of the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, and a reviewer for various other autism journals. His book on autism theory was published in 2016. He had previous careers in corporate risk management and insurance loss adjusting. His interests outside autism include motorcycling and listening to the likes of Creedence Clearwater Revival.

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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