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Introduction

LINK is an innovative network where higher education professionals and institutions and students can share good ideas and practices on supporting students with disabilities in higher education. Link is coordinated by AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability in Ireland. A team of six managing partners work with AHEAD to collaboratively develop the network and its activities – SIHO (Belgium), The Netherlands handicap + studie (the Netherlands), Universell (Norway), DSIS (Slovenia), Stockholm University (Sweden). The network has also benefited from our colleagues in the UK, Skill and continues to work with Alan Hurst and Barbara Waters. The managing partners have a wealth of experience in the field of disability in Higher Education. Together they collaborate to examine best practice in inclusive teaching, learning and service provision in partner countries and aim to promote these practices across Europe.

Information about LINK is located on our website www.thelinknetwork.eu. Check it out!

The LINK website is where announcements and information regarding student disability support services and developments can be posted with the idea of keeping colleagues across Europe and beyond up-to-date on upcoming conferences and programmes, research and other collaborative projects, student organisations, blogs/discussions, and much more. You can also post questions to colleagues from across the world and access our shared LINK library with a wealth of publications posted by LINK members. All you have to do to gain access is to visit the website and sign up free of charge.

LINK is about sharing know-how and there are many benefits to joining. The objective of the network is to share knowledge, best practice and experience with the aim of raising the quality of service for third level students with disabilities across Europe. The network should then contribute towards a more uniform approach to the experience of students with disabilities participating in higher education across Europe.

Become an individual member (no fee at this time). To do this, please go to our website www.thelinknetwork.eu . You can join and communicate with other members via our forum.

Affiliate with LINK as an organizational member: By doing this, you are indicating your support of the LINK efforts to promote and enhance inclusive education in higher education.

List key information about your organization/institution on the LINK website: We would like to promote your activities and help our members and others in tertiary education around the world to become more aware of your work in this area. When you join online as an organisation, you can include a URL which will be published along with the organisation name and a short bio.

Give LINK a presence on your website by providing a link to the LINK website (www.thelinknetwork.eu).

On behalf of LINK and our membership, I want to thank you in advance for participating in this conference, both by way of presenting and by networking and sharing your experiences with other colleagues and for your ongoing support of our network.

Mary Quirke,

Assistant Director, AHEAD

LINK Coordinator

The View from LINK

Below, the managing partners of the LINK Network give their recommendations:

AHEAD (Association for Higher Education Access & Disability), Ireland
www.ahead.ie

AHEAD, Association for Higher Education Access and Disability is the Irish national centre for expertise in inclusive education. AHEAD is an independent non-profit organisation working to promote full access to and participation in further and higher education for students with disabilities and to enhance their employment prospects on graduation.
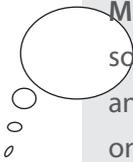
> **Mary Quirke (AHEAD):** "Be open to change, accepting that sometimes you don't need to understand something to work with it and not forgetting that the student – teacher relationship is based on good communication"

AHEAD provides **information** to students and graduates with disabilities, teachers, guidance counselors and parents on disability issues in education.

AHEAD also works with graduates and employers through the **GET AHEAD** Graduate Forum and the **WAM** Mentored Work Placement Programme.

DSIS (Slovenian Association of Disabled Students), Slovenia

www.dsis-drustvo.si

The aim of the Slovenian Association of Disabled Students is to promote the rights and interests of disabled students and to respond to their needs by providing information, services and support in order to improve the educational and employment opportunities for disabled young people and to enable them to live a full and independent life.

Support and services

- Accessible transport
- Personal assistance – support in activities of daily living, guiding, adapting study materials, etc.
- Use of modern information and communication technology and internet access
- Photocopying, enlarging and digitizing study materials
- Information about studying
- Information about student accommodation
- Information about career planning and employment
- Supporting higher education institutions and organizations to include disabled students

Alenka Bera (DSIS): "We would like to see that all disabled students would be their own best advocates and activists. We don't want them to feel bad when they sometimes ask for help or do things differently. We don't want them to think they are not equal to their peers. But we would also like to see that everyone is involved in making higher education more inclusive – from policy makers, higher education institutions, teachers, student organizations, and disability organizations, etc. and that they would actually listen to the students and put their proposals into practice."

handicap + studie, the Netherlands

www.handicap-studie.nl

Handicap + study, the Dutch expert centre for studying with disabilities, stimulates the participation of students with disabilities in higher education. The mission of handicap + studie is to allow students with a disability to successfully participate in the higher education course of their choice. Handicap + studie works mainly for and with Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and HEI staff to realise accessible higher education.
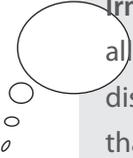
> **Irma van Slooten (handicap + studie):** "It would be great if we could all look at possibilities instead of impossibilities! When students with disabilities finish prior education with a diploma, they have proved that they have the capability of entering Higher Education like any other student. Let's accept that as a fact and focus on possibilities to make their study in Higher Education as successful as their study career in prior education!"

SIHO (Support Centre for Inclusive Higher Education), Flanders

www.siho.be

SIHO supports all higher educational institutions in Flanders in order to realize inclusive higher education. The Centre wishes to contribute to the creation of equal opportunities (remove barriers) and full participation of persons with a disability in higher education.

SIHO tries to achieve this goal by means of:

- The provision of services to higher educational institutions and students' facilities.

- The extension of a network of students and (inter)national partners related to inclusive higher education and the support of students with a disability in higher education.

- Practically-oriented research on inclusive higher education.

SIHO chooses to work bottom-up and in dialogue with students, universities, university colleges and organizations. Therefore SIHO wants to list the existing expertise in every higher educational institution, seek for new (inter)national expertise, support expertise scientifically and make this expertise available for the Flemish Higher Education. It is a fundamental choice to verify, in close contact with the Flemish Higher Education, what the needs and suggestions are and to test out the Centre's work to the expertise in practice.

> **Katrien De Munck (SIHO):** "Every teacher should be aware of the diverse population that attends his class. They should all be informed about ways to meet this diversity and take the rights of students with disabilities into account. Therefore SIHO gives disability awareness training and promotes Universal Design for Learning. UDL helps to make lessons and materials more accessible for a wide range of students. The challenge is to take a diverse student population into account from the beginning, while designing lessons and materials, rather than adapting when a student or teacher with a disability applies (although in specific situations reasonable adjustments will still be necessary in order to realize equal opportunities). This universal way of working is less time-consuming (and therefore cheaper) and benefits all students (not only students with a disability)."

Stockholm University representing Swedish National Coordinator's Network, Sweden

www.studeramedfunktionshinder.nu

Stockholm University has been approved by the Swedish Government to coordinate the National Coordinators' Network. This network is cooperation between all fully or partly state-financed Higher Education Institutions in Sweden. The objective is to continually develop access in higher education for students with disabilities. This cooperation is lead by a National Reference Group. Lund University

has always played an important role in this network leading the development of knowledge and exchange of good practices. Stockholm University is also a contact point for other actors of relevance, such as interest organisations and public authorities etc. and international organisations.

> **Monica Svalfors (Stockholm University):** "To support the development of an inclusive higher education, disability perspectives should be included in a continuously developing training course for all new teaching staff with focus on a variety of pedagogical methods and tools. This would be beneficial for all students since the awareness and use of varied pedagogical methods and assessments of knowledge would lead to better study conditions and a more open learning ambiance."

Universell (The Norwegian National Coordinator of Accessibility in Higher Education), Norway

www.universell.no

Established in 2003 by the Ministry of Education and located at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim.

The role of Universell:

- Support the Norwegian institutions in higher education in creating an inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities
- Support the HEI's Learning Environment Committees in order to strengthen the learning environment for all students
- Promote inclusion of universal design(UD) as a subject in relevant study programs

Universell organizes conferences, seminars and workshops on Inclusive Learning Environment. Universell assists the Ministry of Education with research work and distribution of project funding for UD projects.
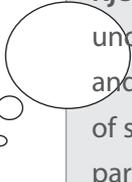
Kjetil Knarlag (Universell): "In Norwegian universities there is understanding and acceptance for the ideas that universal design and individual adjustments are important tools for the inclusion of students with disabilities. Still, new barriers shoot up constantly, partly because of a lack of knowledge and expertise, partly because in many cases the notion of an inclusive learning environment is merely words and is not followed by any action-taking. If we are to succeed the aims of diversity and inclusion of students with disabilities must pervade the institutions' strategic and economic planning and the ownership to these aims must belong to the management and not merely to the disability experts as is the case today."

How Do You Make Change Happen?

There is representation at this conference from over twenty countries including Austria, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda, UK, USA, and Yemen.

Below you'll find a selection of quotes on making change happen from LINK members, students, presenters at the conference and other actors.

"Student with disabilities are still a taboo. I would like to see that they have the same choices as other students have. The professors need to give them choices and not be afraid of them. Sometimes disabled students need just some adaptation and they can be as successful as any other student. I hope in few years people with disabilities will have the some choices of study and jobs as other people." **(Slovenia)**

"All courses taught in higher education should be required to meet accessibility standards. In order to facilitate this requirement, each institute of higher education should establish an internal committee made up of experts in the field of accessibility of services and information that would set up guidelines and give workshops to regular staff members in order to help them make their courses and course material accessible to all students." **(Israel)**

"It would be great if non-disabled students and staff could be sensitized at the beginning of their study programmes or employment. As disability emerges in social situations a lot of barriers could be avoided if university members would be more aware of the needs of persons with disabilities." **(Austria)**
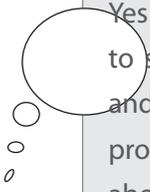
"Raising awareness about the needs of disabled students is vital. Yes they need help but they also have ability and can contribute to society. We should equip students with tools for independent and self-confident life styles. They should have advisors and professionals like psychologists to help them create a good image about themselves so that they can be able to live a life like every other person." **(Slovenia)**

"We need to create an environment in which students with disabilities can participate both academically and socially to the best of their abilities. The introduction of Universal Design across the Higher Education sector would allow this to occur."**(Ireland)**
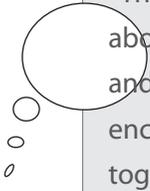
"There should be enough space and time for students to think about and engage in empowering processes in the curriculum and the organization of higher education. When all students are encouraged to show or discuss their process of empowerment together the chances are higher that in their professional life, they'll pay attention to possible barriers in society."**(Belgium)**

"We need Improved access to work experience and more support while on placements." **(UK)**

"University colleges have a huge responsibility in developing adequate perception and in learning to deal with diversity. Being a student with special needs is still a big taboo in education, there are a lot of misunderstandings, people are not aware of their unawareness… they should adjust their prejudices." **(Belgium)**

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"The only way to perceive better understanding is through open and honest <u>communication</u>. Society is fully aware of people with Special Education Needs but we talk *about* them, not *with* them. It's time we all sit together round the table and share our experiences, thoughts, convictions and work towards an inclusive future." **(Belgium)**

"I would ask that faculty consider their beliefs related to admitting and educating students with disabilities. Beliefs inform admission and curricular decision and guide teaching practice. Many faculty react to working with a student with disabilities. It is my hope that by considering beliefs, faculty will stop reacting and proactively develop curriculum that is fair for all students based on these beliefs." **(USA)**
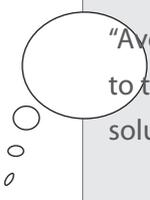
"Avoid prejudices. Have confidence in the disabled student. Listen to the story of the disabled person and work together to find good solutions." **(Belgium)**

"Greater emphasis on preparing & supporting students with disabilities for the transition to employment." **(Ireland)**
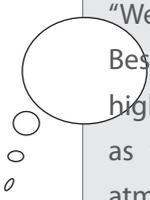
"We would like to see a cultural change made in higher education. Besides the necessary structural adjustments, we would like that higher education institutions guarantee a culture for inclusion as well. Institutions should create a welcoming and positive atmosphere that facilitates an open dialogue between students and staff." **(Belgium)**

"Flexibility in curriculum adaptation is a key to everything, next to allowing more personal assistance. Flexibility is based on a "disability awareness" of academic staff. It also has a political basis: if the university really wants to be a universally accessible place, not reserved for the elite (be it the talented elite, or the socio-economical elite), it has to adopt a really inclusive model, which is at odds with the highly competitive model on which it is now based." **(Belgium)**

"I would like to see the development of more inclusive learning environments and enhanced targeted supports for children with disabilities and learning difficulties at primary and second level. Such an environment, supported by training for teachers and supports for students including mainstream access to assistive technology and appropriate learning support would dramatically improve the performance and retention of students with disabilities in the second level system. It would also holistically support their transfer to third level as independent learners." **(Ireland)**

"In Flemish higher education, change in preconceived opinions is still an ongoing process. Sometimes a lack of creative solutions and flexibility still prevents students with a disability to start or achieve their higher education. A mentality change can be achieved through consultation on different policy levels." **(Flanders)**

"We would like to see a change in the perceptions and attitudes of the public towards disabled people. Too often the work with or for disabled people is seen on the one hand as an extra burden, additional work which would be better avoided, or on the other hand a self-congratulatory feeling of doing good deeds and being noble through work for disabled people. Inclusion of all people should be something ordinary in everyone's daily practice, part of their professional routine. In this way, interests and skills of disabled people should not be pre-judged – their aspirations and experiences are human and should be treated as such, and not reduced to a disability label." **(Sweden)**
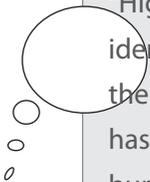
"Higher Education Institutions need to review their course offer to identify what are the real core competences of the course and at the same time move towards an inclusive learning model which has built in flexibility for all students. This would remove a level of bureaucracy where adjustments/accommodations are arranged for students on an individual basis without any strategic change taking place. Built-in flexibility for all students would enable HEIs to concentrate resources on those students with disabilities with very specific disability related individual accommodation/adjustment requirements." **(UK)**
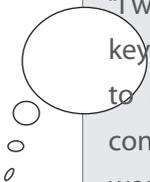
"I would like to see doors that open automatically with no locks and keys. This 'open doors policy' would allow students with disabilities to move freely around campus without repeatedly having to confront visible and invisible barriers. No entrance to one area would impede their growth and development and they would enjoy the freedom of not constantly having to break down barriers to get what they rightfully deserve - a good education, a better quality of life, and to be treated with dignity and respect by all members of the campus community." **(Canada)**

Mobility

Disabled Students Movement in Turkey

By Deniz Aydemir Doke

Before Turkish Disability legislation (2005) disabled university students individually found ways to graduate. Some universities arranged technological equipment and others had accessible environments; however many universities offered nothing. The Turkish Higher Education Council (YÖK) regulation (2006) required each university have a disabled students support unit. While some already had a unit before the legislation, others still do not.

In July 2009, an EU project (Towards Inclusive Universities - TIU) activity in Ankara brought together disabled students from different Turkish and foreign (Holland, Slovenia and Bulgaria) universities. Students learnt about creating possible solutions to their problems. Most important, they were encouraged to form disabled student platforms both international, and national. Starting from TIU participants the mail group tiu_ogrenci@googlegroups.com now with around 90 higher education students and graduates achieved three major goals.

A declaration (March 2010) described the problems and reasonable solutions for disabled university students. Prepared in two weeks, by online meetings of members, it was presented to the "4th Turkish Inclusive Universities Workshop" in Izmir. Although not officially in the program, disabled students protested and were allowed to make a presentation. We gave out printed copies to Disability Unit officers, academicians, etc. For the first time Turkish disabled students announced their needs and showed they know their rights: we are stakeholders struggling for our rights.

A protest (June 2010) outside the National Exam Board (ÖSYM) showed our dislike of unfair exams; our press release was given to media.

A comprehensive 32 page declaration was prepared for the "5th Inclusive Universities Workshop" (March 2011) where 4 students with different disabilities formed the first session. We are now recognized as key partners in the process.

Many universities now have disabled student representatives, and a national student representative is on the YOK Disability Committee, bringing improvements to entrance examinations.

Study Abroad Without Limits!

By Irma Van Slooten

Research from the European Agency for Special Needs Education in 2001 indicated that the participation of students with disabilities in Higher Education in European exchange programmes was extremely low. That is why handicap + studie decided in 2006 to start a project to try to remove barriers that prevent students with disabilities to take part in exchange programmes. We found out that a huge barrier is a lack of information. Above that, especially for students with a disability it is important to *exchange experiences* on the accessibility and usability of the educational environment (university and campus) AND on the social environment (sports, going out). That is why applied for a Socrates Accompanying Measures grant. With this grant we were able to design www.studyabroadwithoutlimits.eu with partners in Austria, Ireland, Sweden en Flanders. Students with disabilities were trained to answer questions and worked in crews together for a number of years. Since a couple of months we work with the LINK network on connecting the website to the LINK website assure sustainability in the future.

Special Needs Aren't Barriers to Participation in Student Exchange Programmes

By Meta Rojsek

Many students have participated in student exchange programmes, but students with special needs are many times afraid of the many barriers they are likely to meet in another country. It is a big challenge to decide to go and I will talk about my own experiences with the student exchange programme.

My special needs are not directly visible. I have dyslexia and this is not a barrier for me, but it is a big challenge when going to another country to live there. I don't have problems with physical barriers, but with language and cultural barriers and this is sometime even harder. Why I decided to go? I love to travel, learn new things, get to know new countries, new culture and new people, get more independent and improve my English.

I have gained a lot from the exchange programme. I am not afraid go alone to other countries and I see barriers as challenges. I am not afraid to speak in English. I am now more independent and not afraid of having dyslexia and having problems with speaking, reading or writing.

Some years ago people with special needs didn't have many choices of study. Now the study courses are more adapted to people with special needs. The exchange programmes are still not so adapted for students with special needs and coordinators of programmes are sometimes afraid because they don't have enough knowledge about special needs and how to help these students.

We need to offer information about special needs and what is different about us to teaching staff and exchange programmes coordinators. I have had such a good experience with my exchange programme so I talk about my experience with other disabled students and I try to encourage them to decide to go on an exchange programme.]

ExchangeAbility

By Annelore Schittecatte

According to the EU 2020 Strategy, at least 20% of those graduating in the EHEA should have had a study or training period abroad by 2020. Although there has been an increase in the number of students with disabilities participating in mobility programmes, the number is still exceptionally low. ExchangeAbility aims at encouraging an increase in their number taking part in exchange programmes by stimulating their mobility through the organisation of site visits connected with different activities. The visits are organised by the partner universities with the cooperation and involvement of the 'ExchangeAbility Ambassadors' from both welcoming and sending universities.

The project itself offers a possibility for young people with disabilities to take ownership in the promotion and improvement of exchange programmes according to their needs.

The main objectives of ExchangeAbility are:

- Encouraging a higher number of students with disabilities to go for an exchange, assuring the quality of these exchanges and increasing the involvement of students with disabilities in the community in general;
- Raising awareness among all the groups involved;
- Creating a group of ExchangeAbility Ambassadors that will promote exchange programmes among other students with disabilities during and after the lifetime of the project;
- Producing an eye-catching video prepared by students able to reach students with disabilities all over Europe;
- Gathering good practices.

All the parties involved in this project would like to share their experiences and raise awareness on all the aspects of sending and welcoming disabled student at HE institutions, the policy of universities on inclusive education, the accessibility of the departments, as well as the social support and involvement in the student life. **This is a project made by students for students and by disabled persons for disabled persons.**

Can we handle this? Exchanging special students

By Femke Ten Bloemendal & Adele Browne

Exchanging students with disabilities, mental health issues or other special needs can be quite a challenge. The presenters know this from their own experience. Over a couple of years they have between them exchanged several of these special cases. In the session they would like to share their experiences. Speakers will offer practical tools and tips for approaching partner institutions.

The two way perspective entails that the approached partner will be able to share their thoughts and challenges at the same time. This includes a perspective on the home and host institution. The presenters had to reach out to other parts of the university (f.ex. disability officers, psychologist, housing, communication department) to meet the challenge and thus worked on changing the organisation at the same time.

This session will be interactive, inviting the participants to share ideas and thoughts on this subject.

Europe across borders; studying abroad for students with special needs

By Femke Ten Bloemendal, Klara Engels- Perenyi & Adele Brown

Although the number of university students with special needs is increasing every year, the number of students with disability taking part in exchange programs lacks behind considerably. The LLP –Erasmus programmes offer possibilities, but the way countries use these possibilities differ very much. It is interesting to take a closer look at these differences. How can we learn from successful countries? Are there advices to give for the new LLP programme?

First we will hear of the policies of the European Commission. We will learn how they think about this topic. After that we will hear and see some experiences and examples of best practice from HE institutions in Europe. If possible we would like to show a (part of) movie made by an Austrian wheelchair student who studied in Finland.
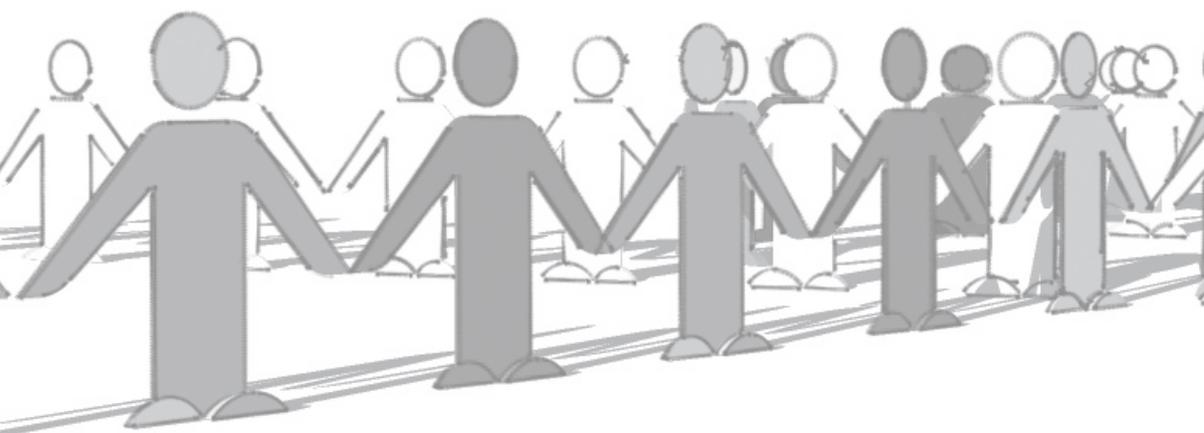
Student Involvement & Empowerment
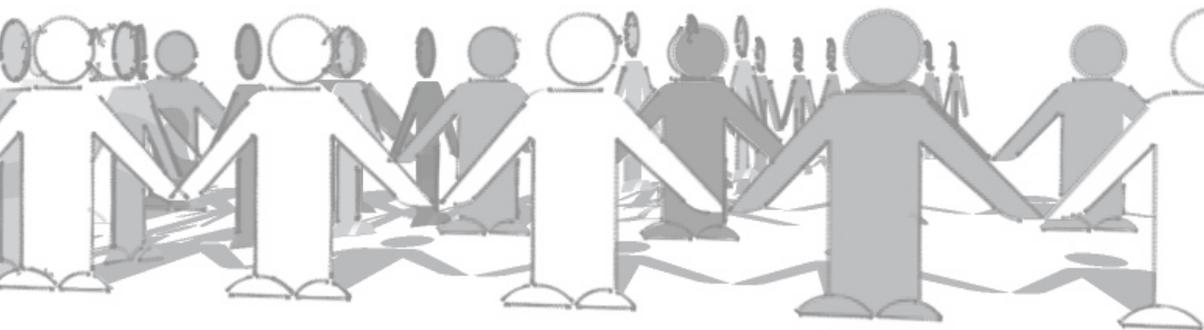
Probing the Limits

By Vincent Boulanger & Sander Van der Maelen

In Flanders student participation is guaranteed by law the "Decree concerning participation" (participatiedecreet) gives students at least a 10% vote in all decisions related to them.

For the last 5 years, the student union of Flanders has been an active partner towards improving equal chances in HE. During this period, we experienced a transition from participation in NGOs who acted as sources of expertise and pressure groups, towards full-fledged partners of institutions embedded in the government structure like the SIHO or the Flemish Education Council (VLOR).

Furthermore, we intend to explore how students, who act as volunteer members in these institutions, can match the challenges related to such participation. How can student representatives compensate for the inevitable lack of experience? What are our strengths? How can we make rivalling HE-institutions work together on the topic?

In the presentation we intend to explore how we improve the situation for students with a disability in the Flemish HE. This will include both best practices and specific cases where we made a difference. We also intend to list a set of challenges towards the future. The general purpose would be to show the audience the potential a student union possesses and which role we can play in creating an inclusive Higher Education system.

Academic Support for Disabled Students as an Example of Social Responsibility of University

By Ireneusz Białek & Dagmara Nowak-Adamczyk

After several years of the operation of the Disability Support Service (DSS) at the Jagiellonian University of Krakow, its staff members worked out specific model of academic support for disabled students. This model is based on very wide co-operation amongst disability officers, academic teachers and students. Looking at results, the model works so well and can be a guarantee for building inclusion and a culture of diversity at the University. This process makes University more and more socially responsible. In the presentation, the model and its practical achievements like modern programmes for students and academic staff were described. Some fundamental conclusions for constructing financial conditions to successfully implement the model were presented. Should you want to learn more, please take a look at our website, www.bon.uj.edu.pl.

Breaching Barriers: participation of students in creating an inclusive Higher Education Experience

By Sander Van der Maelen & Vincent Boulanger

This presentation intends to explain student involvement and participation from the viewpoint of the student. Why does or doesn't he/she participate in social activities or the student unions? What can be done to encourage student participation, what are the issues we should take into account

In general, the participation of students with a disability in Higher Education is not a success story in Flanders. At most, 50% of the students with a disability actually disclose their disability to their HE institution. There is still a strong stigma on the topic but the notion of "empowerment" is gaining ground. In the recent years we also had some success-stories of students with a disability getting involved in student organizations. We intend to bring forward some of these stories, and the effect they had on their surroundings, along with their opinions and motivations.

An examination of the peer tutoring relationship among students with and without learning disabilities in two different academic settings

By Yael Roitman, Ariela Hellwing & Susie Russak

Most academic peer tutoring projects in higher education in Israel are designed to enhance academic, emotional, and social skills for students with learning disabilities (LD) (Dahan, Meltzer, & Finkelstein, 2010; Vogel, Fresko, & Wertheim, 2007). In most of these relationships, a non-disabled student tutors a student with LD. The peer tutoring projects at Beit Berl Academic College (a teacher training college) and at Sapir Academic College (a regional professional college) which are supported by the PERACH/LESHEM organization are unique in that tutors can be both non-disabled as well as students with LD.

Studies of peer tutoring investigated reasons for becoming a tutor, the focus of the tutoring sessions, and the academic and emotional benefits of tutoring.

Findings indicated that the emphasis in the peer tutoring relationship was more on academic content and less on emotional issues. In addition, reported benefits of the peer tutoring relationship for the tutor highlighted three areas: improvement in strategic learning skills, heightened awareness about LD, and breaking of stereotypical thinking regarding individuals with special needs (Vogel, Fresko, & Wertheim, 2007).

This session examines findings from a qualitative examination of actions reported by tutors with and with out LD. Data from this study was analysed using the "Learning from Success" methodology developed by Sykes, Rosenfeld & Weiss (2006). We discuss the similarities and differences between LD and non-LD tutors. Findings regarding best practices for tutoring students with LD are presented, as well as unresolved issues writing the peer tutoring framework. Finally, we will show a 10 minute documentary film where tutors and tutees speak about the contribution of the tutoring experience to different aspects of their academic and emotional lives.

Higher Education in Flanders: Students with disabilities share their ideas and thoughts

By Meggie Verstichele & Jolien Soetaert

With the Support Centre for Inclusive Higher Education (SIHO), we assist every institution for higher education in Flanders (Belgium) to work towards 'inclusive higher education'. Our vision and methods are based upon 'inclusion', 'participation' and 'bottom-up working'. We learn from good experiences in the field and make people aware of possibilities and focus on opportunities. In that way, the support centre promotes inclusion in the field of higher education.

The main focus of our work is on the institutions for higher education. But a main source of inspiration is the insider's perspective of the students with a need of support. The aim of this presentation is to share this perspective, using 'Nothing about us, without us' (Charlton, 1998) as main principle.

How do students with a disability experience higher education in Flanders? Starting from 7 portraits of students with a disability, studying in the Flemish higher education, we identified 6 important themes for further research:

- Importance of family, friends and hobbies
- Disclosure
- How to get assistance
- How to handle difficulties
- Contact with peers
- Effecting change

In the frame of a Master thesis, 28 students with a disability, studying in the Flemish higher education system, shared their experiences on the themes mentioned above in a one to one interview. During this session we will share the main conclusions on how they perceive higher education in Flanders and invite you for a discussion on this topic.

The Student Advisory Board at the University of Vienna

By Birgit Virtbauer

In winter 2009, students were protesting in Austria. They occupied lecture halls all over Austria and addressed the minister of Education and the rectors with several demands: More money for higher education! More participation for students! Equality and accessibility for students with disabilities!

At the University of Vienna the Student Advisory Board "Studying without barriers" ("Barrierefrei Studieren") was funded in March 2010 as one answer to those demands. The Board consists of 8 members: 4 students with disabilities, 1 member of the Austrian Student Union, 1 disability officer, 1 member of the Equal Opportunities Working Party and 1 member of the bureau of the rectorate. The vice rector for students leads the board.

The board meets approximately three times per semester, student members are designated for one or two semesters. We discuss and evaluate existing measures and create new concepts that support students with disabilities, make them more visible and raise awareness among students and staff. One of the main issues that was brought up again and again was the lack of information of students with disabilities. About half a year ago the idea of an info clip arose: Why not produce a film that gives information to students with disabilities but is shown to *all* student beginners? It should be presented by lecturers in the first semester. Students with different kinds of disabilities act in the film, they tell about exam accommodations and how they get along at the University of Vienna. The 3-minute-clip will be publicized at the end of July 2011; it will be made accessible for persons with hearing and visual impairments.

Another measure that has already been realized by the board is a website that addresses lecturers: http://barrierefreielehre.univie.ac.at gives them information about inclusive teaching. It will presumably be translated into English at the end of the year.

If you don't stand up for yourself - who will?

By Ana Lipicar & Natasa Mauko

In our paper we will focus on how self-advocacy can improve the study conditions of a disabled student.

First we will focus on what self-advocacy is and why it's important. We will also talk about where and when we can use self-advocacy skills.

After that we will focus on how to become your own best advocate. First we will look at the qualities that make a student its own best advocate then we will define the key factors that influence person's ability to self-advocate. We will talk about the role of home environment and educational institutions in becoming good self-advocates. Also society as a whole plays a role in how disabled persons see themselves and their role in the society.

At the end we will focus on why self-advocacy is important and show a practical example of what it can achieve. Our organization, The Slovenian Association of Disabled Students, is the result of self-advocacy of disabled students who struggled for better study conditions.

Ensuring the student voice is heard by promoting student engagement in University College Dublin

By Vivian Rath & Gerard Gallagher

"The best benefit of empowerment to me was knowing from my experiences in University College Dublin that students can initiate change and then make it happen."

This is a quote that demonstrates the importance to one former UCD student of being involved in college life and having his voice heard.

The on-campus, face to face experience is taking on less significance and students are having less direct contact with academic staff ("The First year experience 2009"). With the results of the Australian study in mind the question facing many universities across Ireland is how universities ensure students feel like they belong. This paper examined through a series of interviews with past and current students how engagement affected their college experience. The paper goes on to examine through a series of focus group the important contribution the orientation programme made to getting students involved from day one.

The paper will finish by offering a number of key recommendations that could assist in promoting the student voice by through greater engagement in university life. These recommendations also aim to promote a positive student experience for all students.

Creating a timeout space: Is there a need to create a timeout space and what can it mean in higher education

By Stefaan De Munter

My presentation is about the research of creating a timeout space in higher education. It's about the benefits of such a place for all the people who are involved with higher education. I'm using the theory of Universal Design for Learning. I give information about my point of view and my little research in Harvard, Utrecht, Ghent and Chicago. I finish my presentation with a little exercise in constructing a timeout space.

Sharing Student Stories, Hearing Student Voices

By Niamh Hayes

Finding out what students with disabilities think of their services and their college experiences has proven to be challenging for organizations like ours. In an attempt to change this we ran an event specifically aimed at listening to students and encouraging them to talk.We invited students with disabilities from every third level college in Ireland to share their thoughts and experiences through a world café event which asked these questions of the student ambassadors: "What would make your education amazing?, Will your education get you the career you dream of?" We wanted to know what's happening for students, and for them to shape their future.

This event took place over two days in November 2010 in a hotel in Dublin, with 37 students in attendance from 19 Higher Education Institutions from all over Ireland. As is demonstrated in our report of the event, and from the students' evaluations, in the right place at the right time, using the right format, students had lots to say, and many positive, constructive suggestions to make.

The key message to emerge was that sstudents with disabilities want to be able to access and participate equally in all aspects of college life, with a standard level of response from course to course, building to building, person to person, and college to college. Clarity, accountability, transparency, accessibility, consistency of processes, practices and people arose again and again as being critical to the students' sense of inclusion, belonging and welcome.

Understanding how we can make education better for students with disabilities, will hopefully ensure that they can have the same opportunities to access and succeed in work as their peers. Understanding that means listening to students and this was the space for that to happen.

Empower yourself, what are you afraid of! An introduction to empowerment for students in social care work

By Beno Schraepen

Enhancing competences and sharing knowledge are tools that can improve individual empowerment, which is (amongst other things) exactly what higher education is about. Therefore we can say that higher education is encouraging the empowerment of students, but does it work that way? Why are professors in higher education complaining about the passivity of students? And why do we hear the students say "…with my friends or at home I'm not like that but this is school."? We expect that through higher education students become critical, independent thinking professionals that can create change towards a better society but is this possible when students can hide and adapt themselves to a dominant educational system?

In this context, engaging all students in a process of empowerment becomes more than necessary. The first step in empowerment is creating awareness about the dominant structures in your live. In this case we can ask if students are aware about the dominant structures in (higher) education? And what are the consequences? What are the chances that our future social professionals will have an empowering attitude towards colleagues and clients when they don't go through an empowering process themselves?

In a session about text analysis we use an opinion text on empowerment in higher education and social care, as a challenge for students in social care work. The text is constructed around two thoughts: the first is that by participating in higher education we maintain inequality in our society, the second thought is that our higher educational system is full of barriers that prevent the empowerment of students. The confusion and puzzlement created by the text is an invitation to show their will to speak and to reflect on what it means to participate in higher education. What barriers do they see? Do they agree?

Access to Higher Education and a Professional Career

Into Teaching – a bespoke information day to encourage more disabled people to consider teaching as a career

By Yana Tainsh

The *Into Teaching* event was a collaborative event to encourage more disabled people to enter the teaching profession. The School of Education worked with the *AccessAbility Project (a widening participation initiative with disability as its focus) and Skill – the national bureau for students with disabilities in further and higher education. The three organisations are dedicated to encouraging disabled people to consider university as a viable career option. This particular event was specifically to discuss teaching as a specific profession.

The day was limited to sixteen attendees to ensure each visitor had plenty of time to ask questions and to talk to the presenters and ambassadors. The workshops included various topics – why more disabled teachers are needed, the financial, technical and human support available at university, the practicalities of the university qualification and placements, and the different types of teaching qualifications available. The attendees experienced a lecture in a 300 seat lecture theatre, a tour of the ICT suite, a tour and talk from library staff; and seminar-type discussions. Although the day was mostly structured, ample time was set aside for informal discussions between our visitors, staff and the Ambassadors.

The workshops were delivered by staff from the school of education, *AccessAbility Ambassadors (university learners who have a disability themselves) and Skill Ambassadors – disabled teachers who also encourage more disabled people to consider teaching as a career. There is a distinct lack of disabled teachers in the UK throughout all levels of education. Disabled teachers provide positive role models for young disabled people and provide a diverse teaching body within schools, colleges and universities.

Into Teaching – Promoting access for disabled people

By Tony Stevens

This presentation will describe the background to Skill's Into Teaching project which ran for 18 months up until April this year. Skill took a particular interest in the teaching profession and always got more careers enquiries about working in schools than any other subject. Teaching is seen to be a stimulating and rewarding profession, offering excellent career and development prospects. This project benefitted from the support of the TDA, the government agency responsible for teacher training in the UK. It recognised that maintaining the highest possible standards in schools means attracting skilled and talented people from a variety of backgrounds. Disabled teachers can also help young people raise their aspirations and educate them about respecting diversity and individuality.

The Into Teaching project consisted of a helpline, online resources including videos, and an ambassador scheme.

The presentation will share what Skill found to be the main barriers that disabled people face in making the decision to become a teacher and completing their training. It will show how the project tried to change attitudes and policies and it will demonstrate some of the successes using video case studies.

The presentation will also share some best practice guidelines for institutions that offer teacher training.

Improving the transition to work for teachers with special needs

By Griet Van Balen, Leen Stoffels, Wendy Vinck & Nick Brackeva

Students with special needs face additional challenges during their study path. The pressure of these challenges increases when they start looking for a job.

In contemporary society, education and employment are important keys to social and professional inclusion. This is even more important for students with a disability. Because of their needs, they experience many difficulties in education and employment. In particular, if they wish to become a teacher.

To optimize the success, Karel de Grote University College of Antwerp, developed a vision: "design for all", an advanced form of personalized education.

Concrete measures to implement this vision, are mainly developed in terms of an individual approach to students with special needs. For them, we aim individualized measures of differentiation, stimulation, compensation and /or dispensation.

Thanks to these measures, several students with special needs successfully obtained a degree in elementary or secondary teacher education.

 Several of them are now working not only as a teacher in primary education, but also as an expert in the Bachelor after Bachelor Special Educational Needs and Bachelor after Bachelor Special Needs and Remedial Teaching.

We do realize that the transition from education to work comes along with a lot of problems for people with disabilities. Obtaining a degree does not necessarily guarantee the success in the labour market.

Starting from concrete cases, we face the challenges of a graduate teacher with special needs from the moment she/he looks for a job as a teacher. We seek answers to following questions:

- What conditions in the school are important to function as a teacher?
- What are the main constraints they face in their job?
- How do they deal with the complexity of an educational context, the unpredictability, the flexibility that is expected?
- On what concerns can we anticipate to facilitate this transition?

Faculty Beliefs related to Admitting and Educating Nursing Students with Disabilities

By Diane Dahl

This study described the views of nursing faculty related to admitting and educating nursing students with disabilities. Participants consisted of 10 nursing faculty from baccalaureate nursing programs with experience either admitting or educating nursing students with disabilities. Two semi-structured open-ended interviews were conducted, audio-taped, and transcribed for each participant. Young's framework of oppression and Oliver's medical/individual model and social model of disability informed this interpretive study.

Findings revealed that a medical/individual model of disability informed nursing faculty's decisions and actions in relation to admitting and educating nursing students with disabilities and that nursing faculty lacked awareness of resulting oppressive behaviours. The findings should encourage nursing faculty to examine their beliefs related to educating nursing students with disabilities and change them if those beliefs endorse or actively support the oppression of students with disabilities.

Teachers with a disability, a big asset! But what can teacher training institutes do to improve their transition to teacher training programs?

By Karin Goosen

Including teachers with disabilities in school teams is a big asset. Those teachers can contribute to the education of pupils more than other teachers in two ways: 1) they can provide the pupils with a truthful representation of society and 2) they can be role models for possible pupils with a disability.

Unfortunately, people with disabilities are underrepresented in teaching teams in Flanders. Therefore the Flemish government supported projects during the last three years that aim at attracting and retaining more people from diverse groups. To accomplish this goal, the Expertise network of Teacher Training Institutes of Antwerp (ELAnt) composed a team called 'Teachers of Tomorrow'. This is a very diverse team, consisting of teachers and aspiring teachers, who try to inform and motivate potential applicants to become teachers by visiting schools, youth movements, recruitment organisations and inform them through a website.

We asked some 'Teachers of Tomorrow' with disabilities what (had) inspired them to become a teacher and which barriers they had to conquer during their teacher education program, the internships and the job performance. Their stories yielded three difficult main questions for teacher training institutes:

- To what extent is the teacher training institute responsible for informing student teachers about their opportunities on the labour market at the start of the teacher training program?
- How can teacher training institutes avoid on the one side patronizing and on the other side neglecting students with disabilities?
- Which actions can teacher training institutes take to improve the facilities for students with disabilities?

Those questions were used as a starting point in a meeting between the managers of the teacher training institutes in Antwerp. The outcome of this meeting and the interesting experiences of 'the Teachers of Tomorrow' with a disability will be presented in this presentation.

Welcoming and Supporting Disabled Students: a resource for academic and clinical staff in Allied Health Professions

By Jane Owen Hutchinson & Karen Atkinson

Since 1991, RNIB's Physiotherapy Support Service (PSS) has provided support to both blind and partially sighted students on mainstream qualifying degree programmes at universities throughout the UK.

Following our annual review, it was agreed that PSS should extend its services to include support for disabled students undertaking qualifying programmes in other Allied Health Professions. Consequently, we have re-launched PSS as AHPSS: Allied Health Professions Support Service. In addition to Physiotherapy, we can offer services to potential disabled applicants, disabled students and their academic and clinical tutors, and disabled qualified practitioners in the following professions:

- Dietetics
- Occupational Therapy
- Podiatry
- Speech and Language Therapy

It is a fact that disabled people are half as likely as non-disabled people to be qualified to degree level and twice as likely as non-disabled people to have no qualifications. Consequently, they continue to experience high rates of unemployment. As the level of qualification increases, the disparity between the numbers of non-disabled and disabled people entering employment decreases. This would suggest, therefore, that the role of the higher education (HE) sector is vital in enabling disabled people to realise their potential in terms of employment.

Our experience confirms that there are many more students now studying on Allied Health Profession (AHP) programmes who disclose a disability including those who have dyslexia/dyspraxia, sensory and physical impairments and mental health issues.

In spite of the improvements in support, students continue to encounter significant barriers particularly in the teaching and learning environment.

In view of this issue and as a result of requests from members of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP), we have produced a new resource: "Into Physiotherapy: Welcoming and Supporting Disabled Students". This document has been written by the AHPSS team and is published jointly by RNIB and the CSP. Whilst written, in the first instance, in relation to physiotherapy education, much of the content is relevant to students on any allied health related programme. The resource addresses the barriers encountered by disabled students with a wide range of impairments in both academic and clinical settings.

The AccessAbility Transition Support Programme: a unique support service for young disabled learners preparing for their transition to higher education

By Melanie Thorley

The *AccessAbility Transition Support Programme (*ATSP) is a core component of the *AccessAbility Project which proactively recruits and trains disabled university learners as positive role models to work with younger disabled learners. Disability, within the context of the *AccessAbility Project, covers physical disabilities, specific learning difficulties, long-term health conditions and mental health conditions. The *AccessAbility Ambassadors all have a disability themselves and are in an ideal position to provide information and share their experiences with younger learners. The ambassadors can discuss the barriers they have faced, and the strategies they have adopted to overcome these barriers. Our ethos is an example of a transformative model of widening participation which welcomes a diverse student body and actively adjusts its practices to suit difference and diversity.

The transition support provides one-to-one and small group work for eight months. The ambassadors provide information on the Disabled Students' Allowance; whether or not to disclose; preparing UCAS applications and personal statements; revision strategies; note taking skills; confidence-raising; finance; assessments; and the financial, human and technical support available in universities.

Whilst the benefits for the young disabled learners are apparent, the *AccessAbility Ambassadors also reap rewards. They have the opportunity to work as positive role models and can be viewed as experts, possibly for the first time; their own skills develop; and their work as ambassadors will benefit their employability opportunities. The work also fits in around their studies and the ambassadors select how many hours they work per week.

The workshop will be delivered by the Project Co-ordinator and one of the *AccessAbility Ambassadors involved in the *ATSP. A power point presentation will be given for thirty minutes, followed by ample time for questions and answers.

Disclosure of Disability: Employee v Employer

By Niamh Hayes

Disclosure of disability consistently arises as an issue for all parties involved in improving the transition to work for students and graduates with disabilities. Based on our experiences in WAM & GET AHEAD (both projects of AHEAD - the Association for Higher Education Access & Disability) we have learnt how this challenging issue is perceived. From our learning we have developed guidelines and training to try and change the conversation, attitudes and practices around disclosure.

Disclosure is frequently cited as one of the most challenging aspects of having a disability, especially in relation to employment. It's complex, and influenced by a number of factors such as self-identity, personality, type of disability, context and previous experience. It presents a major concern within the recruitment process for both employers and graduates with disabilities, and in the education system, especially for service providers. From the AHEAD experience it would appear that there is a slight disparity between the view of employers and graduates with disabilities when it comes to the subject of disclosure with the former preferring to have as much information as possible as soon as possible and the latter weary of the impact of providing such information.

The decision to disclose or not seems to be made on the basis of weighing up the benefits of reasonable accommodation, workplace considerations and awareness against the cost of labelling and potential discrimination/differential treatment in recruitment, and employment. The same can be said for education. In an intensely competitive environment– this is proving to be a difficult decision to make. Ideally, employers, education bodies, students, and graduates all need to start the discussion from the same point of view i.e. disclosure as the process of making (relevant) information known at appropriate times during education, recruitment, selection and employment.

Embedding Best Practice, Inclusive Teaching & Learning & Influencing Policy Making

Digital Archive Access to Course Literature in Swedish Higher Education - Students access to instant download

By Pia Hasselrot

In Sweden, students with print disabilities have the right to receive their course literature in an adapted form such as a Talking Book, E-textbook or Braille. The books are produced by the Swedish Library of Talking Books and Braille, TPB, but administered via university Libraries. The number of students who rely on support from TPB has increased from 550 to 4000 in 10 years, while the production cost for adapted media remains at the same level. TPB has, among other things, invested in technical solutions that allow for parallel production of Talking Books, E-text and Braille using the same mark up source file. The Talking Book is then created using speech synthesis. Another strategy is to allow students themselves to borrow Talking Books using the Personal Download Service, that is, download the book from TPB's Digital Library. The opportunity to download one's own books is very much appreciated by students. The number of loans by students has increased by 75 % in two years, while at the same time, the amount of work the libraries devote to administration of borrowed books has decreased.

Today's technology has created promising opportunities for persons with print disabilities to gain access to printed material. To further ensure such accessibility it is therefore important to utilize and, if necessary, develop mainstream technology.

Trying to respond to exploding needs: Services for Students with disability at the University of Antwerp

By Jo Lebeer, Danny Boeykens & Sara Backx

At the University of Antwerp there has been a steady increase in the number of students with impairments, rising 25% per year to now 235 (on a total of 13777, i.e. 1.7 %). Together with the Belgian ratification of the UN resolution of the rights of people with disability in 2009, this confronts the University with a particular challenge.

A first measure was to install a team of 5 "SEN-coordinators". Students with a learning-, autistic-, physical-, chronic disease or psychological impairment can call for assistance from the Study Advice and Student Counselling Service. The student counsellors act as liaisons. They can help find solutions to practical problems and curriculum adaptations. Every year, the service organises a number of group sessions on study skills and strategies. It also offers individual counselling options throughout the academic year. The student counselling services are adapted to the individual needs of students with learning difficulties.

 A second measure was to compose a procedure of a set of standard and of special tailored "reasonable adaptation measures" during teaching and examinations.

Standard adaptations are guaranteed whatever the kind of impairment and do not need to be agreed upon, e.g. More time to submit written tasks; the use of an FM device for hearing impaired; organizational adaptations, adapting examination modalities, spreading and time. *Tailored* adaptations may be needed, on principle without limits, as long as they are reasonable and they do not interfere with the minimum competences required to obtain a degree. When e.g. compensation for absence, more intermediate feedback to tasks, replacement of group work by individual tasks , exams in a separate room, to let dyslectics be exempt from reading aloud, etc.

Mostly the students bring their own assistive technology. Centrally available are FM-amplifiers for students with auditory impairment, a Braille-adapter for visually impaired, a VOCATEX magnifying computer in the library, a ring-guidance orientation system, computers with speech technology, reading enhancing software (SPRINT).

A cooperative research group has started to make an inventory of the specific needs and experiences of and with students with functional impairments. A 2009 survey (with 41% respondents) found a general satisfaction about the adaptation measures in 70% of the students (10% dissatisfied). Students would like even more flexibility in spreading exams, in extra time, in modalities, and they request a quicker availability of digital course material.

Despite the general satisfaction with the current procedure, there are a number of organizational and conceptual impairments. There is an urgent need to enlarge the staff of counsellors; also there is a need to engage "practical assistants". There is a need to train academic staff, especially in making them aware of the conceptual issues regarding "reasonable adaptations", "disability awareness" and "universal design" in curriculum design, didactics and materials.

Students with impairments are "allowed" and up to a certain degree coached and supported, but they are far from being a priority target group. Despite the rapidly rising numbers of students with impairments, we are far from a real inclusive policy and philosophy. Inclusive education is still not a universal right in Belgium. So there is an area for political and societal action, which has to take place in the very near future, in order to make the Belgian education system compatible with the UN Convention. Inclusion means real participation. If we want to create real opportunities for all people with impairments, some "invisible" barriers need to be slashed.

Assessing the degree in which the UDL-principles are implemented in the OT-curriculum at the PHL

By Karen Hendrickx, Elke Meerten & Carolien Luyck

Occupational therapy always aims to improve human occupational behaviour. For a student participating in a postsecondary educational program the daily task of study is a very important daily activity and thereby occupational behaviour. As such the improvement of learning opportunities and outcome for all students is a point of interest to the OT.

Universal Design for learning is based on theories concerning universal design and offers a framework that can make curricula more inclusive, flexible, and accessible to a very diverse population. And it is safe to say that the student population in any bachelor program can be very diverse.

This study aims to describe the implementation of UDL-principles in the educational program of OT at the PHL (Hasselt). The first step is to obtain an overview of the degree in which the UDL-principles are implemented in the curriculum using the CAST-checklist as a starting-point. Secondly it will assess if the UDL-checklist is suitable for screening an educational program like this one. Furthermore a student survey gives a glance at the student's point of view concerning this subject.

In further studies this work could be used to develop a curriculum that is more UDL-based.

Diversity and Inclusion: action through interaction

By Marieke De Smet & Ruth Cnockaert

We would like to present the results of the research project 'Diversity and inclusion: Action through interaction'. This is a threefold, mainly qualitative research project, situated within Howest, a university college in Flanders (the Dutch speaking part of Belgium).

In a **first part of the project**, we listened to the voices of students with a need of support. We used 'need of support' as an umbrella term in our search of participants. This made it possible to reach "hidden" students who don't identify with a label. It gave room to their self-identification and focused on their experiences with support and support systems in higher education. Consequently, the group of students we interviewed was a very rich and diverse one.

From the beginning of the research project, we worked together with a group of staff. They found it important that their colleagues were also being heard in the research project. The **second part** of the project focuses on this perspective of the staff. What are their experiences with diversity? What are their needs?

In order to change things, it's important to take several views into account. Methodologically, this second part of the research can be seen as **action-research**, because we start from specific questions out of a practice (Harinck, 2006); with the goal to improve that practice (Cain & Milovic, 2010). We intend to make the teaching practice more inclusive. People who work in that practice get a voice in the action-research (Cain & Milovic, 2010; Kelchtermans, 2007).

Next academic year, this research will lead to the creation of specific tools. As for now, we present you the results of the research project: what are the perspectives and experiences from students and from staff with regard to diversity and inclusion?

Special Needs Facilities and Intensive Personal Mentoring: A two lane road towards success of LD learners in higher education

By Anny Cooreman & Antoon Cox

Specific accommodations for LD-students such as extra time, the provision of course minutes and technological devices such as Word and text-to-speech programs, and the accompanying equal opportunities policies have become more wider available in higher education. Research however has shown that many students still fail due to learned (self-)helplessness. In this paper, we outline how accommodations can be matched to self-efficacy and self-determination in combination with proper calibration of a bad performance through a detailed error analysis report. We argue that accommodations are not just a set of rules to which an LD student should be entitled, but that they are rather a tool to be incorporated in a broader personal study plan. If this approach is taken, the returns to both the accommodations and the student's efforts can be substantially enhanced, and the learning process will be more transparent to both the teacher and the student. This in turn may reduce stigmatizing and "disabling" of LD students.

National Change: Collaboration across the Irish Higher Education System to Increase Participation of Students with Disabilities

By Rose Ryan

Historically the participation of students with disabilities in higher education in Ireland has been exceptionally low. In 2007/08 academic year, only 1,389 or 4.2% of all new entrants to higher education indicated that they had one or more disability (HEA, 2009). These participation rates were well below the national entry rates of 60%. They are also lower than the entry rates of any socio economic group.

In response to this challenge a number of colleges have developed DARE (Disability Access Route to Education, www.accesscollege.ie/dare), a national supplementary admissions route to increase the number of students with disabilities in higher education. Essentially DARE offers college places on reduced points to students with disabilities.

The development of DARE required strong collaborative relationships with the participating institutions, strong working relationships with national agencies, and buy-in and support from advocacy groups and support organisations.

DARE has been embedded into the CAO, the national application process for school leavers applying to college. Specific indicators and criteria have been identified and independently endorsed. The scheme is promoted nationally through a combination of direct mail shots, open days, engagement with the media, and a dedicated website and materials.

This presentation will outline the development of the concept, the criteria used to screen eligibility, the evolving infrastructure to support the scheme, sourcing financial support through the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF), and the role of the Irish Universities Association (IUA) as lead partner. The presentation will also review the challenges in developing DARE, the outcomes of the scheme in terms of applicants and collaborations, and future proposals to develop DARE.

Accessing Study Materials

By Karl-Fredrik Ahlmark & Alenka Bera

The presentation will give a brief overview how disabled students from different countries access study materials. We will show that even in the best of systems students have difficulties with accessing certain materials. The problem is even bigger in countries were less resource are available adapting printed materials into alternative forms. The presentation will continue with a few international examples and the books without borders campaign. We will conclude with the European developments and try to encourage participants to think about what European higher education institutions can contribute to the support of the campaign and help shape policy on EU level.

Using Data to Improve the Disabled Student Experience

By Barbara Waters

Higher Education Funding Councils in England and Wales reviewed policy relating to disabled students, looking at policies and practices and seeking evidence for more inclusive practice. Following this the Equality Challenge Unit (UK) was asked to implement further research to look at concerns about the limited use of data monitored and acted upon to improve HEIs performance in supporting disabled students. The HEFCE/HEFCW review also identified a wide variation in disability disclosure rates and take up of Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) support by disabled students, of particular concern because of the finding that disabled students in receipt of DSA are more likely to be awarded a first class degree than those who are not.

The ECU identified positive actions taken by HEIs including the importance of early information advice and guidance on DSA and reasonable adjustments; clear explanation of how disclosure of disability would be used by the HEI at admissions and on course. There was a need to continue and improve staff training and confidence building on disability awareness and equity and equality to remove perceptions of 'special' treatment. There was evidence of the impact of inclusive learning and teaching on embedding reasonable adjustments, enabling all students to experience a more flexible approach to assessment, study and exam arrangements. The inclusive approach was also of benefit to international students who were not eligible for DSA. The use of data to identify the progression and achievement of disabled students contributed not only to equality and diversity goals, but also continued quality improvement measures for disabled students. Particular attention is recommended to data on progression and achievement of postgraduate students.

ECU will publish guidance for HEIs in England Scotland and Wales in summer 2011 based on the findings of the research. www.ecu.ac.uk/publications

Supporting Students with ADHD: Indications for and effectiveness of teaching and exam accommodations and support

By Dr Dieter Baeyens & Lotte Van Dyck

Objective:

Three to five percent of all primary school children are diagnosed with ADHD. Up to 60% of all children continue showing symptoms in adulthood. Adolescents and young adults with ADHD show higher drop-out rates and lower grade averages. Additional care for and follow-up of this group is necessary to enable them to manifest their potential. In this study we set out to make an inventory of all teaching and exam accommodations used for young adults with ADHD in settings of secondary (SE) and higher education (HE) in Flanders, Belgium. Next, we explored the effectiveness of these accommodations.

Methods:

Firstly, 91 settings of SE/HE were enrolled in a quantitative study. We investigated the presence of teaching and exams accommodations for ADHD as well as learning disorders (LD). Secondly, we discussed our study results in a series of interviews (n=23) with the disability service offices and students with ADHD in order to give adequate interpretation to the findings and to investigate the effectiveness of the most common accommodations.

Results and discussion:

In SE/HE significantly more accommodations are available for LD (100%) than for ADHD (83.3%). However, in the case of ADHD extra effort and motivation will often be insufficient to deal with the school/academic impairments. If some specific conditions are met, accommodations are potentially effective to alleviate these impairments. Firstly, accommodations should be individually designed and based on a recent comprehensive assessment of the students' strengths and weaknesses. Secondly, open communication and a better knowledge of ADHD will result in more goodwill on the part of the teaching staff, as is already the case for students with LD. Finally, a clear (national) policy on accommodations for disabilities should guarantee sufficient and effective (individually designed) support for students with ADHD as well as adequate resources school settings to organize these accommodations.

Inclusive Higher Education: The perspective of professors?
A qualitative survey.

By Nathalie Heurckmans & Sophie Jackmaert

The Support Centre for Inclusive Higher Education (SIHO) assists every institution of higher education to work towards 'inclusive higher education'. One of their tasks is doing research to support their practice with academic knowledge. The support centre has done research on the perspective of students with disabilities. Using the perspectives of insiders is a main source of inspiration. It can be used as good practices and can contribute to the further realization of inclusive higher education. Therefore the aim of this research is to consider the different perspectives of professors on Inclusion in Higher Education. It is still an 'uncovered field'. With this research we also try to gather examples of good practice through an insider perspective. The main question is: How do professors experience education in higher education in Flanders? Four themes were identified for further research:

- Experiences with students with a disability
- Influences on their competences as professor
- Knowledge of disability policy
- Attitude towards (aspects of) inclusion in higher education

There was also space for other input of the teachers themselves. In the frame of a Master thesis 10 professors in the Flemish higher education system were seen in a one to one interview, through a semi-structured qualitative questionnaire, on the themes mentioned above. Positive and difficult experiences where shared. One of the main teams that reoccurred was the expressed need for help in supporting students with disabilities in their lessons. Another important result was that all lecturers worry about the transition of these students to the working field. During the presentation we will share the main conclusions of this research on how teachers perceive inclusive higher education in Flanders and invite you for a discussion on this topic.

Studying with a disability item in the National Quality Control System

By Irma Van Slooten

In the Netherlands a new accreditation system has become effective on the 1st of January 2011. An important difference with the old system is that 'studying with a disability' is one of the accreditation themes.

Within this theme the Institutes for Higher Education will be validated on seven aspects concerning studying with a disability. These are 'information and pre-entry activities', 'physical & digital accessibility', 'support and guidance', 'expertise', 'learning routes', 'assessments and examinations' and 'checks and balances concerning quality and continuity'.

The fact that studying with a disability is now a theme in the Dutch Accreditation System is a consequence of a lobby of the expertise Centre handicap + study. In 2006 handicap + studie started a lobby to get this item in the system. Handicap + studie talked with several parties in the HE system and in parliament to convince them of the need to involve this theme in the new accreditation system. This led to two activities. Firstly the Education Inspection carried out a research to the situation of students with a disability in Dutch HE and published a reference chart with a number of items concerning studying with a disability.

Secondly the Minister of Education installed the 'Maatstaf' committee. This committee had the duty to bring out a recommendation to set a number of criteria for the services and accommodations offered to students with a disability in Higher Education. The committee used (an adjusted version of) the reference chart that was developed by the Education Inspection. Her advice was based on this reference chart. The minister of Education followed the advice of the Committee and adjusted the Law on Higher Education and Science. By doing so the theme of studying with a disability became a part of the Accreditation system.

Balancing Expertise, Societal Input and Political Control in the Production of Policy Advice: The Flemmish Education council as an actor of change in the policy on students with disabilities in higher education

By Dr Isabelle De Ridder

The Flemish Education Council (Vlaamse Onderwijsraad – Vlor) is the "strategic advisory council" for the Education and Training policy of the Flemish Community. It plays a role in the Flemish policymaking process.

The Vlor is an advisory body. It gives advice on request of the Flemish Minister of Education and Training or on its own initiative. In both cases it translates the expectations and suggestions of society and the educational field into recommendations for the government. The named Minister has to seek advice of the Council on every draft act (projects of decree). The Vlor evaluates the propositions of the minister and decides if they are desirable, achievable and acceptable for the educational partners. The Vlor reflects on the outlines of certain educational policies, or draws attention to themes that might become important in the near future or to themes in other policy domains that influence Education and Training. By way of this proactive counselling the Vlor actively contributes to the education policy making process. The theme of equal opportunities is a common thread in the work and the handled principles of the council. Studying with a disability in Flemish higher education is one of its reoccurring themes. The Vlor organizes consultations about this theme and unites all players involved in the process: higher education institutions, staff, students, experts, social partners, cultural partners and the ministry of education. In the council they consider their differences and try to compromise in order to make one proposition of policy to the Flemish government. The last few years the council has worked on proposals for the registration of students with a disability in higher education, the realization of inclusive higher education and the implementation of the VN-convention for persons with disabilities. The council had several in-depth discussions with the Minister on the financing mechanism of higher education and the part attributed to students with disabilities.

This presentation will show how the wide and democratic consultation mode of the Council leads to a slow change of mentality in policy making. It will illustrate this with a few case studies.

How to Prepare Studying Young Adults with ADHD for the Transition to a Working Situation?

By Katrien Boone

Based on research and day-to-day experience, we can state that adults with ADHD more often have problems in the workplace. They regularly have jobs below their (education) level and are not satisfied with their job. Adults with ADHD more often change jobs or are laid off quicker. These events have negative consequences for their self-esteem, which mostly has been damaged before, and for their CV, which limits their chances at new employment.

Adults with ADHD who know how they function, who accept their condition and who have acquired adequate skills at the beginning of their working career to search for and to keep a job, mostly tell a different story.

In this workshop, we examine how a school can support young adults with ADHD, not only during their school career, but also in the transition to a working situation. The school can promote the young adults' (studying) behaviour and can learn them to develop skills that are also useful in future working situations, such as cooperating, planning, and organising. The school can stimulate young adults to transfer these acquired insights and skills to the shop floor or to practise these skills during an internship.

Not only can the school help to prevent school-leavers from failures and to stimulate a satisfactory working life. Also external professionals can offer them insight by means of psycho-education. Psycho-education helps them to acquire a notion of their qualities and of pitfalls, on the shop floor and in daily life. In continuation of psycho-education, skill training can be useful for many of them. In this training, working skills and job application skills are practised.

During the workshop, we examine, based on our experiences with students and job seekers, all elements that prepare these socially and emotionally frail young adults for working life.

How to Create a Higher Education Support Service for Students with Mental Health Disabilities

By Enid Weiner

Just as students with mental health disabilities face many challenges as they enter the realm of higher education, so too do disability counsellors who work with these students. This presentation will highlight key factors to consider when providing a support service for students with mental health disabilities on your campus. The professional staff hired to do this work have to be able to perform a multitude of tasks above and beyond individual work with students. Some of these tasks involve raising awareness about mental health issues, providing workshops to faculty and staff on how to best work with these students, offering skill building workshops and groups to the students themselves, and building a community of peer support. The program needs to have depth as well as breadth. A systemic approach is essential so that Disability Services is not shouldering all of the responsibility. These students are just like other students, rightful members of the campus community, and should not be labelled as students only of the Disability Office.

Taking the letters of the words M-A-K-I-N-G C-H-A-N-G-E H-A-P-P-E-N, this workshop is meant to provide you with the key tools for both developing and maintaining an educational support service that is accessible, comprehensive and dynamic.

Stip 'The Dot': One door opens all possibilities

By Laurence Dhaene

Howest offers a whole range of student services. It is not always that clear to students to whom they should turn or where they can get help for a certain problem or question. Consequently, it was concluded that student services could be optimised.

Howest's strategic and operational objectives aim at a high-quality and easily accessible service to students. This service has been brought together in the 'stip' (the dot), which functions as a gateway to students. The central idea which has inspired us has been the inclusive approach.

A large-scale survey (carried out by Howest in 2007) has revealed that optimal student coaching is a top priority to both lecturers and students. This has led to the formulation of the following operational objectives:

Every student should get the opportunity to receive individual coaching;

In all communication with lecturers and facilities, the emphasis is on easily accessible services.

In the stip, these objectives have been realised. Involvement of actors at all policy levels has led to the creation of this easily accessible service stip.

In order to guarantee optimal student support, it would be ideal to have all services physically joined. The creation of a stip on every campus is the main objective: there, students can get individual information, advice and guidance. Students can also be further referred from there. There is also a digital stip within Howest's online learning environment. Students can find a personalised survey of all services available, there. Moreover, a common communication policy regarding the stip has been developed.

In our paper, we explain how these changes have been implemented. These changes have been meaningful to policy makers, student services and students, as well.

Current Status and Legislation in Israel

By Guy Finkelczstein

The lecture will describe the Israeli model for support for students with learning disabilities developed by the Leshem Association. The model has been adopted by most institutions for higher learning in the country and now serves as the model for support for adult students with other handicaps as well.

The model was recently anchored in groundbreaking legislation that, in addition, regulates the diagnosis of learning disabilities and attention deficiencies. In light of growing demand, the Leshem Association was established in 1994 to advance and minister to adults with learning disabilities. Its activities are based on international models, especially those in use in North America. As a result of its activities, several significant achievements can be noted:

1. Support centres for learning disabled students have been created in fifty-five institutions of higher learning. They offer a wide range of services, including tutoring, accommodations in testing, psychological and academic counselling, seminars, technological aids, help with English, specialized academic courses, training of staff, specialized preparatory courses, diagnosis, and counselling at the end of schooling in transition to the job market.

2. The Israeli Council for Higher Learning appointed a committee to study and take responsibility for the matter. This committee budgets the individual support centres according to the quality of their teaching and services. In addition, the Council developed a reliable and valid tool for diagnosis in the Israeli adult population. The Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Labour also provides a budget for support centres in vocational education frameworks.

3. A unique peer tutoring project was created cooperatively with Perech (an acronym for the Israeli Tutorial Project) that is active in more than forty institutions. It offers personal support to over 1200 students each year.

4. The National Insurance Institute has formulated a special basket of rehabilitation services and out of its budget funds support centres in institutions of higher learning.

Groundbreaking laws and regulations have changed the attitude towards academic support for learning disabled students. What was once considered a privilege or favour is now the right to integration and equality. The Rights of Students with Learning Disabilities in Post-Secondary Educational Institutions Law, passed in 2008, asserts the obligation of post-secondary educational institutions to provide accessibility. This legislation, in fact, anchors the model developed by Leshem in law. It also, for the first time in Israel, and perhaps the world, defines the profession of diagnostician and sets down educational requirements for qualification.

Deconstructing the Curriculum, a Stepping Stone Towards Inclusion in Higher Education

By Beno Schraepen

Despite the fact that there are good examples of students with disabilities and students with different socio-, cultural, or economic background with successful careers in higher education, we have to admit that these are rather examples of good integration and not of inclusion. We have to be careful that the inclusion process doesn't get stuck and remains limited to eliminating physical or financial barriers or developing support systems for students. These efforts are valuable but not sufficient because they don't lead to fundamental change of the educational system and that is what inclusion is about: challenging excluding systems in society. The inclusiveness of higher education cannot be measured only by the inclusion of students in higher education but also on the impact it has on a more inclusive society. This ethical (and political) dimension of inclusion in higher education goes beyond creating equal opportunities for everyone. Higher education prepares professionals and experts for the future, for solving complex problems in the future. Crucial in this process is the curriculum and how it's organized. Taking inclusion seriously we have to focus on the curriculum. The values and views (implicit and explicit) where the curriculum consists on are perhaps bigger obstacles for a diversity of students than the lack of support.

What view on society is presented through the curriculum? How empowerment of students is realized through the curriculum? Can a diversity of students identify themselves with the curriculum? What relationships (with knowledge, people, the world …) are presented through the curriculum? Who constructs the curriculum? These reflective questions can help to deconstruct the curriculum in order to create more awareness about the curriculum as a resource towards more inclusion.

Not a Favour, But a Right: A human rights based approach of inclusive education

By Prof. Machteld Verbruggen

The *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) that came into force in May 2008, formally confirms the shift of paradigm from viewing persons with disabilities as "objects" of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as "subjects" with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society**.**

In particular as far as education is concerned, the Convention is very explicit: inclusive education is a right to which all students with a disability are entitled. The mere fact of the existence of this treaty, and its wordings has not yet reached everyone in the educational community. Still, it is hardly possible to overestimate the impact of this treaty on education. Being a right means that you can enforce it, which is a really new view to inclusive education in most states.

This paper examines the consequences for the educational practice of viewing inclusive education as a human right. It explores the legal concepts such as non-discrimination, reasonable accommodations and disproportionate burden in an educational setting. It also examines the implementation process and the legal protection persons with a disability can avail themselves on when the right to inclusive education is denied, or when they are discriminated against. Although a human rights treaty is in principle addressed towards states that have to implement it into their own legislation, some provisions are so explicit that they can be awarded 'direct effect' and can be availed upon in court, even awaiting further implementation.

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