



**Maynooth
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Fostering Inclusion; Challenging the Illusion

**Critically Reflective Educational Stories: Facilitated by students and graduates
with different learning abilities on a Fully Inclusive Higher Education Initiative
in Ireland.**

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Community Education**

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Abstract

This thesis is about how students experience and facilitate inclusive higher education. It will be represented as a story using the metaphoric *path* to sign post the research journey. This metaphor is of personal significance to the contributors in this study. The creative outputs of the research will be at fore of this thesis illustrating the learner voice in a manner which also supports the demonstration of inclusive research and learning methodologies. This demonstration in form, which can be readily accessed by all, reflects the diverse learning styles of students, as well as providing a clear space for readers to engage with the study, should they choose to do so.

This research facilitates narrative inquiry through creative facilitation to explore the research question. Contributors are adults with intellectual disabilities who are current students and graduates of higher education and who registered on a *fully inclusive* educational initiative in Ireland. A learning process was co-designed with the contributors who were also the co researchers in this study, which would support the expression of story through creative learning methodologies.

If we are to construct inclusive learning initiatives or support experiences with students, as a pedagogical principle students should be involved in the process of naming and facilitating what inclusive education is for them as well have the opportunity to critically engage with perspectives on inclusion and disability. This connection appears to be absent in some of the educational practices and policy processes associated with equality and higher education.

Furthermore, this study examines if students/graduates felt there were helpful practices or issues hindering inclusive higher education. This was explored by facilitating the conditions for adults to share their own higher education experience in a collective learning space where the authentic voices of learners could be captured in a process which facilitated inclusive teaching, learning and assessment strategies.

The intention of this Masters thesis is to support and enrich educational practice, as this study and its form, also presents as a continuous professional development tool for educators, with the emphasis being on the student voice and their experience, critical perspective on education and student and researcher recommendations for educational development.

Acknowledgements

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Saranne Magennis, Josephine Finn, Des Aston and Liam Cassidy who continue to strive for an education system which embraces difference and supports human flourishing. I have and will always value your approach and friendship.

To all of the students, learning partners, staff and families who were actively involved in supporting inclusive education and collective action in so many ways throughout the years.

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To the contributors of this research study for your time, generosity, trust and incredible openness. You have all enriched my life immensely.

My family, friends and Tom for their extraordinary tolerance and love.

My mother and father who lived the tribulations and jublations of this journey and many other learning experiences with me.

Daphne who is a beacon and the light that guides me in my practice every day.

Format and Reference Note

- The thesis is longer than the standard length reflecting the visual nature of same, text size, as well as the emphasis on including the findings, perspectives from the contributors in their totality.
- I will use the terms *adults/students with intellectual disabilities and adults/students with different/ diverse learning abilities* interchangeably in this study as to directly address issues with language and terminology people with intellectual disabilities experience and upon guidance from the adults involved in this study.
- The term research *contributors as opposed to participants* will be used in this paper, as was determined by the group who contributed to this study.
- The terms learners and contributors will also be used interchangeably to reflect the participatory nature of this study relative to the facilitation of learning with groups.
- Further discussions on the above rationales will be evident and discussed throughout this thesis, the intention to provoke educators to reflect on the various approaches to inclusive research and inclusive education more broadly, including how we *name* and listen *with* learners, with reference to language as well as how we define support programmes and services with students.
- The font size and back drop colour of this thesis will support learners with specific learning needs to access and read the document, so will be presented, as advised by these particular contributors, as Calibri, dark blue text, font 14 with a light yellow, pastel colour page colour.
- Numbers, for example using number 3 instead of using the text based, *number three* or 1980's instead of nineteen eighties, will be made explicit in the presentation of this research, as to support information accessibility.

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Prologue

Changing Tide

The assumptions on you breathe life into falseness

It's easy to buy into

Easy because it's all we know

Taught to love

Perceived knowing

Know to care

Know to laugh

Know to scold

No thought to see you

No demands

Seeing you

Now we are

We always have

We are not taught

You made us see ourselves

L Burke, 2017

Introduction

The opening prologue, *changing tide*, is a very honest account of my interpretation of my family's experience with the system and society. It explores how these two entities have influenced how we are expected to support and see Daphne as a family, my auntie but raised and referred to as my sister. She is a 1960s Ireland baby. At a time when the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities Report 'A Strategy for Equality' relayed that Irish society excluded people with disabilities from almost "every aspect of economic, social, political and cultural life." (NDA, n,d).

Thankfully, exclusion was not Daphne's experience because she and we never saw it as an option, but the defining of people in a manner of *deficit*, *I believe, aimed affiliations*, certainly purposefully endeavoured to distort views on what disability was, as so people could be *managed*. This management has manifested itself in the form of *different supports* to assist people with ID, intellectual disability. It is clear to see that the deficit view has been embraced by our societal structures, people with disabilities having, what Bogdan and Taylor, term "a cloak of incompetence" (Klotz, 2004). Thus, now we are in an arena of movements towards supporting deinstitutionalisation, inclusion and continuous social movements in support of and with people with disabilities, as well as the development of scholarly work which seeks to challenge the very nature of disability and social constructivist analyses of disability (Klotz, 2004). My grandmother and mother opened the doors to a lot of other families in the county who were experiencing the same annotations in this poem.

The assumptions in the first line, refer to those that still, to this day, reside in the “hierarchy of disabilities”, the moderate, severe and profound *people with intellectual* disabilities having a “cap” on what they can or may do and achieve and persons with “mild intellectual disabilities” much more capable of integrating or engaging more meaningfully in society (Edgerton, 1984), with Daphne having been placed in the forward, not the latter, premised on her diagnosis. We see this “hierarchy of disability” and categorisation of people now being challenged in a higher education context (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012).

The false consciousness, as Marx would say, that has been created *around and about* people with disabilities was heavily influenced by the classification of people. This was also accompanied with the socio, political, economic and cultural components of the time and the medical model of disability, as well as how research studies were facilitated. This will be discussed in the literature review chapter of this thesis.

The “taught to love” being, if you love “them” that’s all that matters, further constructing a more implicit indoctrination of expectations and assumptions on ability.

The system ideas families could “buy into” were to “mind her” and realise that her challenging behaviour and support needs” were as a consequence of the *debilitating effects of her disability*. She would need minding.

We saw some these effects too because we were made to see them but we actually discovered that what we saw here was not Daphne. What changed this perspective was Daphne’s ability to make us see ourselves, our expectations, our approaches and the organic yet complex nature of care and love. This process enabled us to see her, her engagement with and the way she wanted to be in the world. The keyworkers in her life and her ability to guide them.

Coming to the Research

The students I work with in education have also supported me to see myself and be valued in my practice. For me if we can see ourselves first, then we open the gateway to understanding others, thus how we help and engage with others in meaningful ways.

If education can yield this view, then we just see people in learning, but the existing climate of perception, means people have to support us to see ourselves, and be at the fore of *movements* such as that of facilitating inclusive education. Included in this movement *towards* inclusion are learners with intellectual (dis)abilities, of who I refer to as learners with different or diverse abilities. Learners who have been *defined as* being one of the most “educationally *marginalised*” groups in our society.

In this Masters thesis, I wanted to gage authentic accounts of what learners saw and valued in inclusive education approaches, as if this is, or should be, way that education in this regard is contextualised. This also meant to capture what learners thought of some of the definitions applied to people, inclusion and educational development. I have observed alot of things over the years in perceived inclusive practice that have made me very uncomfortable. When you are uncomfortable you know significant learning maybe just around the corner. There are numerous studies *telling us* what people with disabilities experience or want in education, perspectives of students, but within this study I wanted to make the assumption that learners are already showing us the way and capture learners’ experiences of how they have engaged with education, what they think about the system, and see if there are both practical and broader issues we need to be considering when it comes to facilitating inclusive higher education with students.

I am connected to all of the learners in this study having worked as their learning facilitator for a number of years on an initiative which supports access and inclusion for students with intellectual disabilities wishing to study in Higher Education.

The initiative termed (ILI), is premised on the “fully inclusive individualised model of inclusion” meaning that students individually engage in college life with the intention of **gaining autonomy**, including choosing preferred existing modules of study, no special education courses and utilising the existing support resources in a university with support from the learning facilitator who assists all aspects of the person’s college life and supports the university to be more inclusive in their facilitation of learning and supports with students.

I was attending an event with some of the learners in 2015 where I heard some of them speak about how lucky they *felt and were* to be in college and this really bothered me because of my own ontological position and wish for the students to know that they deserve to be in college. My view that all persons in the world should be provided with the space to be exposed to life, to avail of opportunities which facilitate desires and preferences, including education, regardless of the persons perceives or determined “level of (dis) ability”. This experience for me heightened the cloud of exclusion that still lingers in our education system through various cultural forces such as ideology, which remind us of the **exceptionality** of higher education. The luckiness statement and student’s accounts of the everyday, also reminded me of the broader issues still affiliated with the *positioning* of people with disabilities in relation to “typical” life activities or circumstances, and peoples’ (including the persons engaging in activities), interpretation of these, as *exceptional things to do* or experience for people with disabilities, rather than natural instances of life or the questioning

of what is typical. Klotz (2004) notes the need to challenge the very social and cultural foundations, such as what our perception of “normal” personhood is if people with intellectual disabilities are to be accepted and engaged with as inherently social and cultural beings. (Klotz, 2004).

It is this trail of implicit inequality, the positioning of people, which effects many of us in society, not just people with disabilities. However, how we are defined by or relative to our struggles certainly influences people’s expectations on us and the placing of people in a societal subgroups can support both responsiveness and exclusionary practices. One arena of responsiveness has been the development of initiatives to provide access to higher education for persons with intellectual disabilities and will be the emphasis of this study. We see how these expectations become more distorted when we come to talk about the trajectory of *disability*, as is further discussed throughout this paper.

My assertion of exposure, is not to say that students with diverse abilities do not have particular support needs, they do, we all do, but the categorisation of support in addition, has left a legacy of doubt and control over people, stifling educational growth, development and providing legitimacy to practices which seek to “support” people but through exclusionary practices, such as the “specialisation of intellectual disability” rather than education or education for all.

It is these types of practices (supporting) that we also need to review in order to challenge the instances of illusion that exist within stated “*inclusive education*”. It is imperative that we explore with students, if the feeling of compliance with support options is there or students feel they are in a position to critique, alter and change them.

This is why aside from exploring what “the inclusive educator actually is, or if it exists, a critical dimension to this study is important because it opens the door for us to discuss supports in the context of how we, and importantly students, perceive inclusion.

I wanted to evoke this discussion in a critically reflective space which would support the authentic voices of learners to be captured through learners framing of their education experience. I also wanted to challenge my own assumptions on the issues as a practitioner.

So I decided to turn to learners, the students and graduates, to tease this out and explore the possibilities in both inclusive research and in thinking critically about inclusive education. This exploration is this study, based on our collective experience of being learners and involved in an initiative which provided us with both an experience, a voice and a platform to bring issues of inequality and good educational practice to the national educational agenda.

My Research Question is: How are students with intellectual disabilities experiencing and facilitating inclusive higher education?

The sub questions which accompany my rationale and reasons for wishing to engage in research of this nature are reflected in Appendix 8.

Chapter 1: Research Findings: Creative Outputs

Don't tell me show me



What?

The creative outputs of the research, which involved three planned facilitation sessions, resulted in the findings illustrated in this section. These findings are standalone expressions of narrative and learning but will also be discussed in relation to the broader aspects of the study in the methodology and analysis sections of this thesis.

This Chapter

- The first collection of images and reactions to them are in relation to an exercise we facilitated called “*objects in learning*”.
- The second collection of Images are aspects of learners’ “*college paths*”, poignant thoughts or moments for them in their learning experience and how they felt about these as illustrated in their art canvas creations and comments on same. The learners were provided with a blank canvas and the next step was to just create!
- The third section illustrates learning from what the group felt was an inclusive educator based on their experience of being in and engaging in higher education, college.
- The concluding fourth section illustrates the learning from an evaluation activity we facilitated in session two, “our creative poem”.
- The text accompanying the images in the demonstration of findings in this chapter are quotations recorded directly from each contributor, with the exception of certain speech mannerisms that have been removed and names have been changed to support the protection of contributor anonymity.

Our Memory Book



The link to learner's creations and reflections is provided here:

https://app.picovico.com/play/vid_NRyGYFXxZD5rCFACuDMcSJ/8a4743bdca_c99fc7d6ab1fb0f568aaf0

Objects as a Means of Reflecting on Experience

Session 2 Group Check In

The Instruction was:

To bring an object that meant something to me in my college experience or an object that represents education for me.

The purpose of this exercise was to support learners to begin the journey of reflecting on their higher education experience.

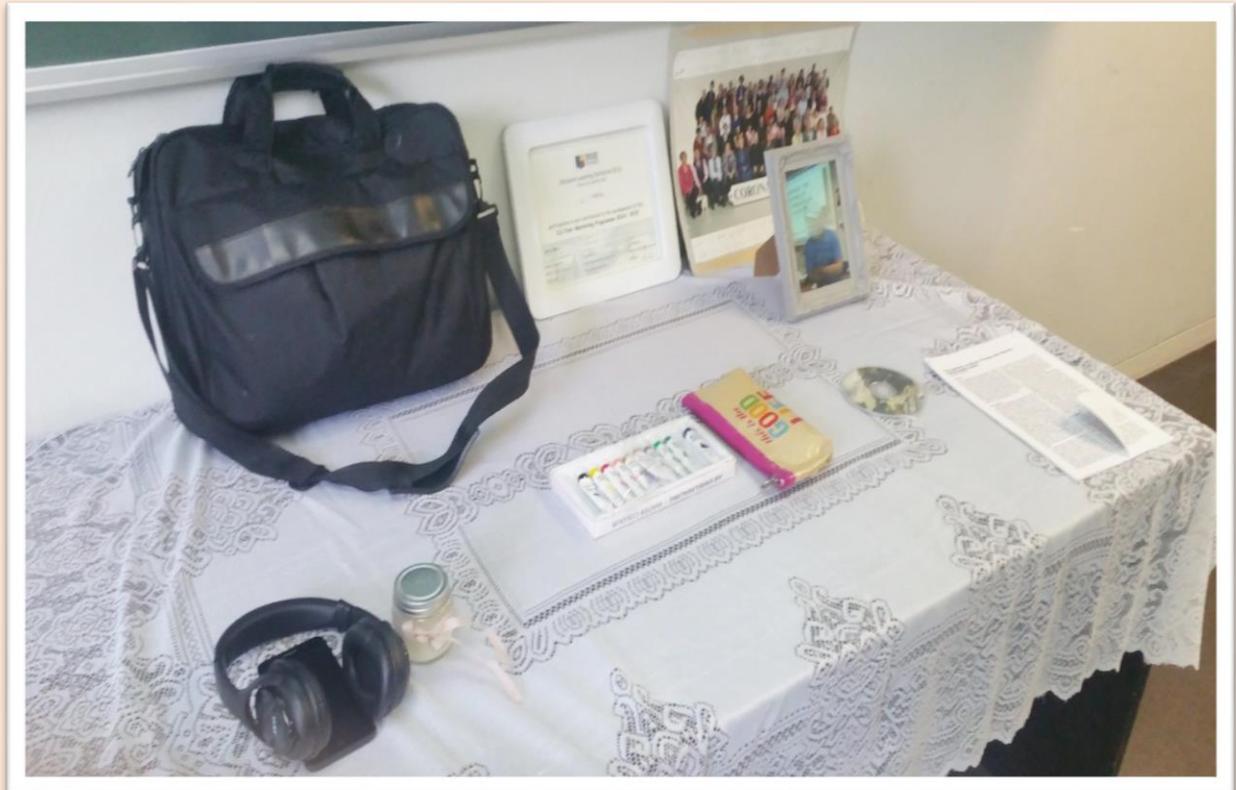


Figure 1 Session 2: Group Objects on Display

Sam's Object



Figure 2: Sam's Chosen Object

“Hi everyone my name is Sam and the reason I chose this object is because I have all of likeya know... my college work in it and its really important for me.....ya know if I forget it I can't do any college work so that is really important to me”.

Sam on his chosen object

Harry's Object



Figure 3: Harry's Chosen Object

“Hi my name is Harry [fullname with emphasis] [group laughs] and my date of birth is [DOB shared]. John says “ok we don't really want to hear that”. [group laughs]. My object is actually my phone and the reason why I chose my phone....because I still have contact with Laura during the summer and we are doing things like em..apart of the college and I am still in contact with Laura and (name) and sometimes I meet up with (name) aswell so yeah... it's good though that way. So there you go that's me!”

Harry on his chosen object

Dave's Object

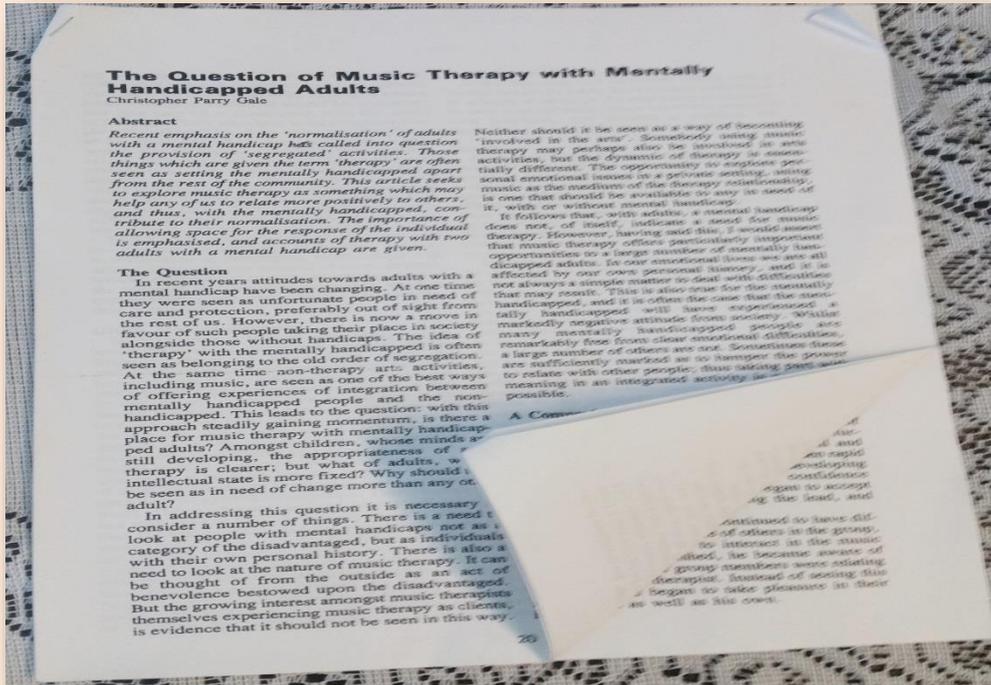
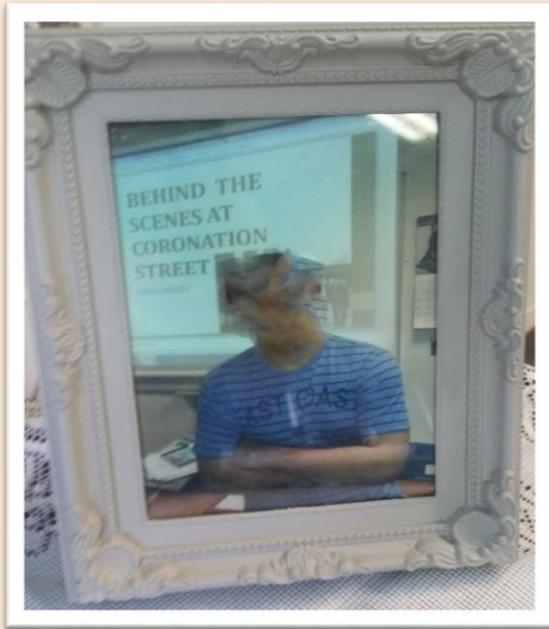


Figure 4: Dave's Chosen Object

"My Name is Dave and I am a third year music student and I brought this with me...its em ...it's a music therapy reading. I had to do my assignment on the reading. It was very interesting because I am very passionate about my music so to get to study it here and solely focus on it is a big thing for me... em ..as well.. em the music therapy the actual reading ..was very em...difficult...it was very hard to read because it was about people with....eh.. Intellectual disabilities and how they were treated in the 80's.. em and it says mentally handicapped and that...But I don't like that word at all em.... so ...well it is because during that time that wording was ok.... so that's language opening up the view of that.. it was em...so I kind of put that into my assignment saying I don't agree with that type of language and I find it very hard to read that type of language because I wouldn't like that myself..... the lecturer gave us the reading and we had to talk about it....the lecturer said I was right.....so we talked.... so it kind of took me a few minutes to comprehend that type of language back in the 80's".

Dave on his chosen object

John's Objects



Object 1 Figure 5: John's chosen object



Object 2 Figure 6: John's chosen object

John decided to bring 3 objects which represented learning in college. The third object could not be included in the picture illustrations due to the formatting required to protect John's anonymity.

Object 1 - "So yeah.... these are my objects that I brought. What I have done in my three years of college.....em... I done em.....recently a presentation I think it was of course my favourite ...Coronation Street... I done a presentation on this a couple of years ago and I was talking about the cast and everyone that was there. This is a big passion in my life and em...someday I would love to be in it and acting out.....so that's one of my goals that I would love to do. So that's one of the objects that I brought.

Object 2 - This was behind the scenes of Coronation Street that I did with Laura before she went off [me departing role as facilitator]. I was in Return to Learning with ...well Laura knows these people [with reference to the tutors] they are just fantastic...they are inspirational.....Harry knows them aswell....[name of tutors/lecturers] they are just incredible em yeah those were my lecturers. They were teaching me...I still know it... about the Greeks and that.... [laughs, smiles]and about Troy and all of that.. That's what [names of tutors] were teaching me and everyone that was in the class, lecture whatever it is called.

John on his chosen objects

Ryan's Object



Figure 7: Ryan's Chosen Object

“My name is Ryan and eh.. my object is a DVD. This DVD I did insums up how I feel about Maynooth University for me. I wanted to be a student in Maynooth and I got the chance to be a student with my two best mates beside me here [points to two members of the group] to make me realise how important college life is for everybody. This is where we belong. This is our dream and that dream has come true for the three of us [with reference to graduates present in the room] and for the other two people [with reference to the students who were the first to go through initiative] who unfortunately could not be here today. Wishing them well in whatever they do in their lives. The way I feel about Maynooth this in a poem about us, a university poem and I think we have to fight for the ILI *because the ILI means a lot to people”.

Ryan on his object

Sarah's Objects



Figure 8: Sarah's Chosen Object

“Hi my name is Sarah and I brought my objects of art and paints. The reason I actually chose them was that I like doing art and different things things ..like em...I have things for painting like all about summer painting like everytime I go to collegelike the arts block [venue in the university] I tell ya it's full of bloody art [laughs] so that's why I brought these here today”.

Sarah on her Objects

Laura's Object

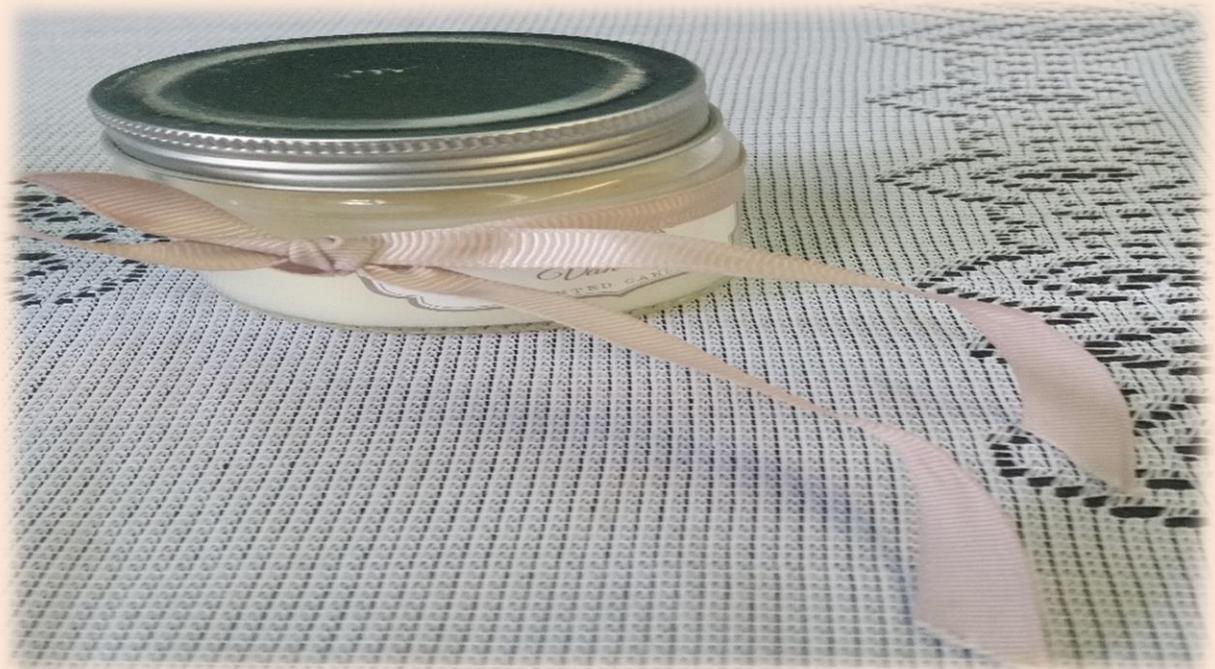


Figure 9: Laura's Chosen Object

"This is my object. So I chose to bring this [shows group object by holding it]. It's a candle and for me, do you see the bow that kind of holds it all together? Group – Yeah. "For me that was me [with emphasis relative to my role as a learning facilitator on the initiative]. The candle being held together, sometimes by a string [smile] and the project, the ILI is on a shoe string without the string but it got by through the sheer love, care and determination [emphasis] by everyone involved. Sometimes this string [with reference to the bow] comes away altogether and you open up the top of this right? [Laura demonstrating] and there is a massive fire [laughs Laura and Group]. This is how I saw it [laugh]. Sometimes the fires would get bigger. C6 – Does the fire remind you of Maynooth? Yeah so the fire is reminding me of the challenges in Maynooth, and the challenges within myself in terms of keeping going [with reference to work and advocacy]. Before I'd put out the fire. That's exhausting. Sometimes you need to close the fire [screwing back on the cap Laura demonstrating] and you move on. And you close the fire and put things back in their place. That's like you getting up in the morning and you put every back, maybe new things in a new position and you keep going. That's how I felt about this experience [in relation to my work as the initiative facilitator and also with advocacy] Why do we keep going? C6 because you have to? No not that we have to [with reference to conformity] but because you see the beauty in the world which for me has been working *within* this project [with emphasis] with each and every one of you. There is a difference between fire within and fire without for me".

Laura on her chosen object

Language and Experiences of Discriminatory Practices

The following text is an extract taken from the group discussion that accompanied Dave's analysis of his chosen object.

Group Discussion

Dave- "My Name is Dave and I am a third year music student and I brought this with me...its em ...it's a music therapy reading. I had to do my assignment on the reading. It was very interesting because I am very passionate about my music so to get to study it here and solely focus on it is a big thing for me... em ..as well.. em the music therapy the actual reading ..was very em...difficult...it was very hard to read because it was about people with....eh.. Intellectual disabilities and how they were treated in the 80's.. em and it says mentally handicapped and that...But I don't like that word at all em.... so ...well it is because during that time that wording was ok.... so that's language opening up the view of that.. it is was em...so I kind of put that into my assignment saying I don't agree with that type of language and I find it very hard to read that type of language because I wouldn't like that myself..... the lecturer gave us the reading and we had to talk about it...the lecturer said I was right.....so we talked.... so it kind of took me a few minutes to comprehend that type of language back in the 80's".

Laura: I don't know if people are familiar with what kind of language that was used, are people following ...Dave? [checking in with the group].

Sam – Yes sorry Laura, yes that is the exact question I was going to ask, was he ok with the language that was used at that time?

Dave- I was but ...not to say I was...but it took me a while to get used to the language that was used... I am trying to find the right word.....[pause]

Laura- It's ok.

Dave – If you were reading this you would be very emotional.....

Laura – Ok .

Dave- It's the language.

Laura – The language you mentioned was mentally handicapped are people familiar with this language, have we heard of this?

Harry – I've got a few bad ones by the way.....it was in Ya know.... (restaurant) and I went down and bought myself and coffee and I was sitting down having a coffee and this lady...I think she was in her 50's or 60's and she said why are you having a coffee you are "a Down Syndrome"and there was another incident at the bus stop aswell.....there was a guy and he says you are a down syndrome f**k and you shouldn't be going on the bus at all on your own.

Sam – This is really.....ya know I in some way..... I would totally agree with what Harry is saying

Dave – Im kind of shocked about that.....

Sam—People do tend to take things the wrong way completely and I totally dislike those kinds of people, totally.

Dave – You say that happened in ...(name of the town) I am kind of shocked about that because I am here three years I've never felt like I've been discriminated against while I am here [relative to town and connection to college experience].

Sam- It can happen.

Sarah- There are some bad people in (name of town) aswell.

Extract from Group discussion in relation to Dave's chosen object

Mapping and Exploring My College Path

Each learner created their "college path" using art and design methods that supported them to demonstrate their learning relative to their "college life" as illustrated in figure 11.

Learners' descriptions of their creations were recorded and can be seen accompanying each photograph in this section. The elaborations on descriptions of the images in brackets have been provided by the researcher based on field notes, communication with each contributor as to determine the context of the statement where applicable.

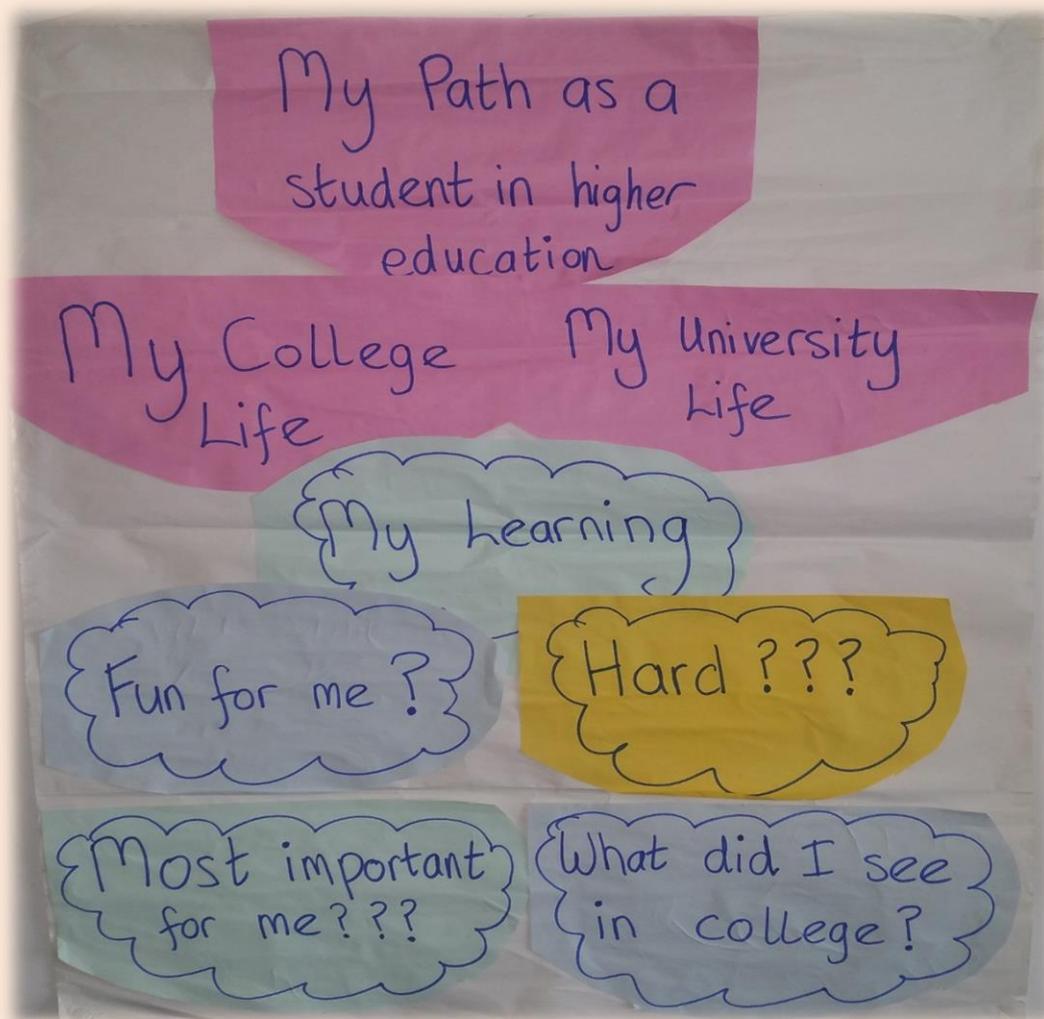


Figure 11 Session 3: Support Guide and Prompts for Learners in "Mapping My College Path" relative to the research objectives of this study whilst they were working on their art and design creations.

Sam's College Path



Figure 12: Sam's College Path Creation

“My painting represents my life in college. How I got into college and eventually... ya know... went to classes, done the work assignments and all that. What else I hope this represents is the fun side of college as well together within the work part and all that. I know when you look at it now it doesn't really represent that but that's what I wanted this to represent for me”.

“It is windows to different parts of college”.

Sam on his Creation

Harry's College Path

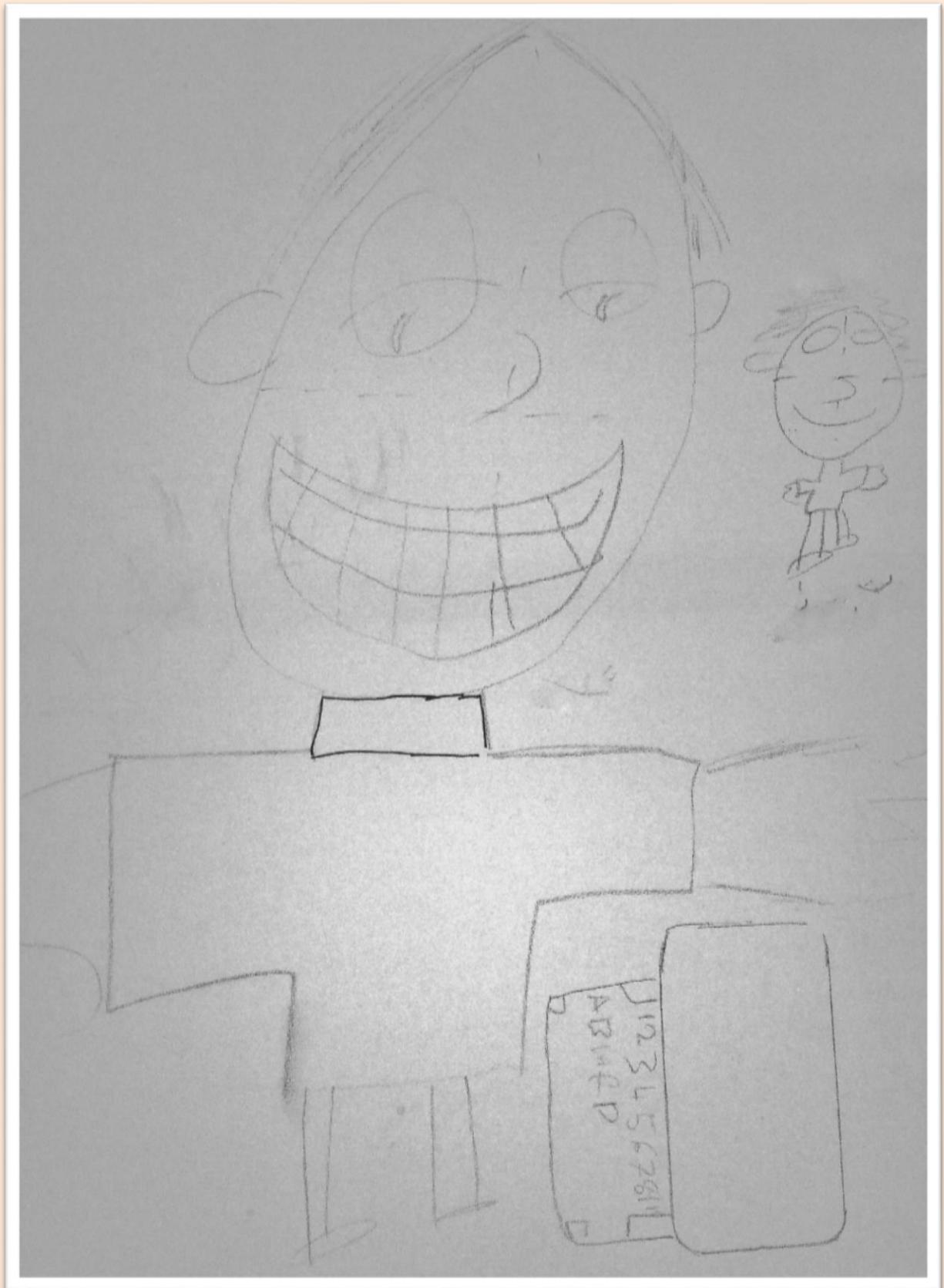


Figure 13: Harry's College Path Creation

“This is the day I actually met up with [name][friend and learning partner in college] and the reason I actually put in the laptop as well because that was the year I actually studied this thing with live aid [with reference to studies in famine] and I learned a bit more on this. My college path is my laptop and the reason why is because that was my potential because every day you have to do something with your laptop like look on You Tube and Google and you have to check up on all the stuff I have been doing with {name}. So yeah.

Harry on his creation ¹

¹ Learning Partner is the term some students use to describe those persons who assist in the various aspects of their college experience including academic studies, social inclusion and other aspects of planning as a college student . The initiative (ILI) mentoring programme is termed the Learning Partnership Programme.

Dave's College Path



Figure 14: Dave's College Path Creation

“Well why I drew the tree was because [pause].... it’s kind of my growth when I started college it’s kind of like eh...I started off like a tree and the .. ya know where the leaves come out and blossom? [looks to group]. That’s exactly what I was going for and then why I chose to put music notation onto it was because music means so much to me. It just seemed right to put the music notation in and eh... music to me it’s my life and to get to study it here is a great opportunity for me especially because I like my music”.

Dave on his creation

John's College Path



Figure 15: John's College Path Creation

Yes this is my em... path..after my assignment gets through all I have to look forward to is the summer and then *finally* [with emphasis, laughs]..... but I am going to miss college I really am. Let's just say it's been a hectic 3 years of good, bad or worse but it was an experience and what a great way to end my 3 years than my graduation. I know it will be a great day for everyone. Hopefully like today it will stay dry and sunny. This is ..yesthis is a picture of my graduation. This is me walking up the aisle to my graduation.[demonstrates areas through pointing] . This is the clock. That's the grass down there and that is the path I am going to be walking on and that is the sun em.. and then these are the clouds in the sky and the birds aswell singing away and em.. so that's my path for my graduation and I can't wait for it and I know it's going to be a great success for me and for everyone else that's.. for everyone to be there and celebrate my 3 years of hard work. All the presentations that I have done and all the essays I did [laughs] and everything. Yeah it's been a great 3 years and emm I can't wait for September so we're going to have a party after that so thanks and I hope everyone will look at this path and see what I am going to be doing in September so yeah that's my own words that I am saying so yeah thanks again. I think it's a lovely picture. I thinks it's good. It kind of brings out the sun. I like the grass and the sun and that".

John on his creation

Ryan's College Path

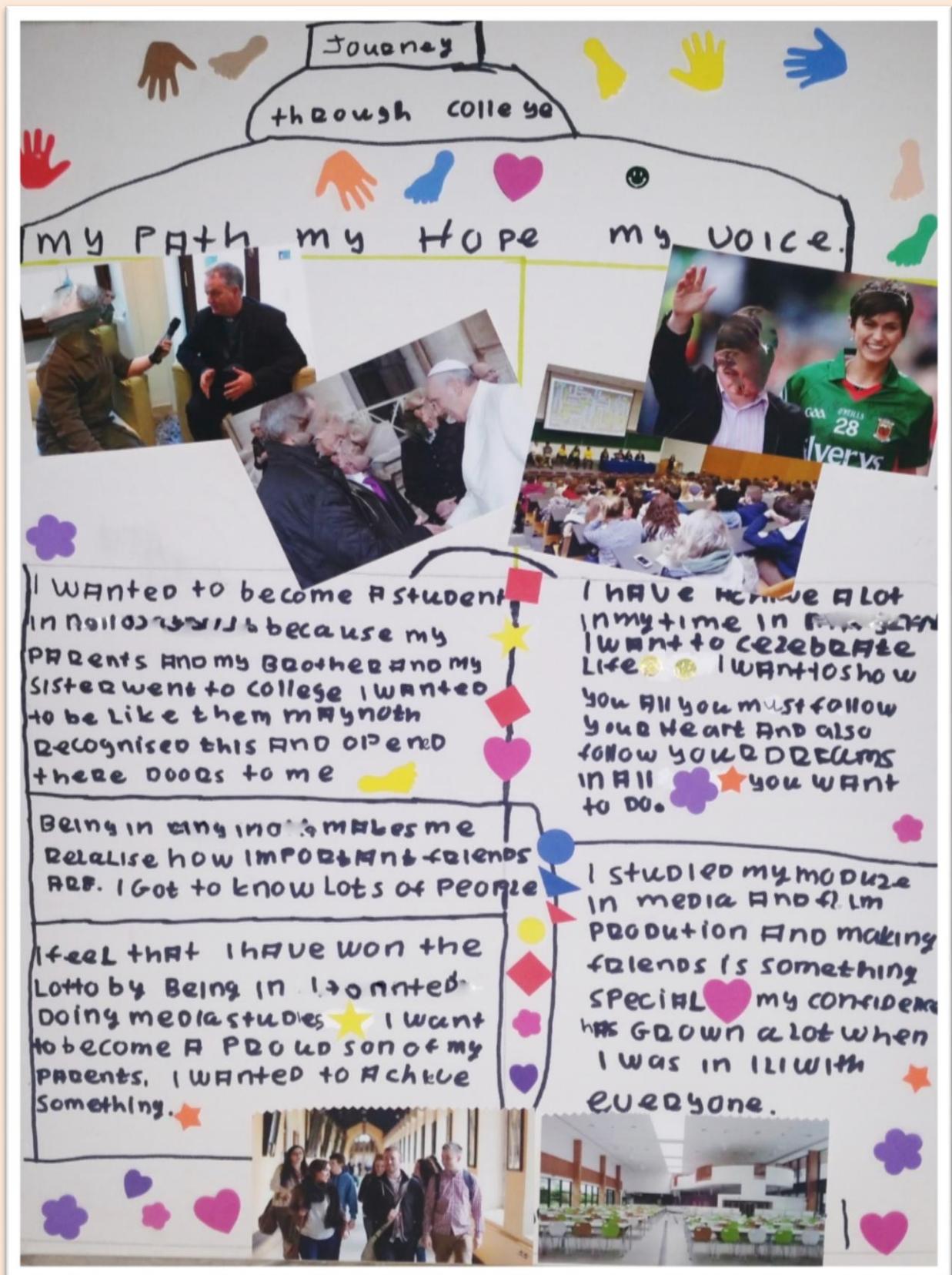


Figure 16: Ryan's College Path Creation

So this is basically called my journey through college. My Path, my hope, my voice. One picture was about meeting Pope Frances which was the main highlight for me. [with reference to third year college placement in Rome]. Then being in Maynooth and the green that symbolises my journey through life and I have different codes that I wanted to use so I'll read them out to you now.

I wanted to become a student in Maynooth because my parents and my brother and my sister went to college. Maynooth recognised this and opened their doors to me.

Being in Maynooth makes me realise how important friends are. I got to know lots of people.

I feel that I've won the lotto by being in Maynooth doing Media Studies. I wanted to become a proud son of parents and I wanted to achieve something.

I have achieved a lot in my time in Maynooth.

I wanted to celebrate life. What I wanted to show you all is that you must follow you heart and follow your dreams in all that you want to do.

I studied my module in Media and Film Production and making friends is something special.

My confidence has grown a lot when I was in Maynooth with everyone.

Then I just signed it there at the end [points out signature].

Just a thank you to everyone.

So that's why I decide to do something outside of my comfort zone and I want to show people what I can do basically.

The song that was playing there [this learner put music on during group art work creation activity in the session]. It was the voyage* and that is a symbol of my faith through music which I saw in Maynooth.

Ryan on his creation

Sarah's College Path

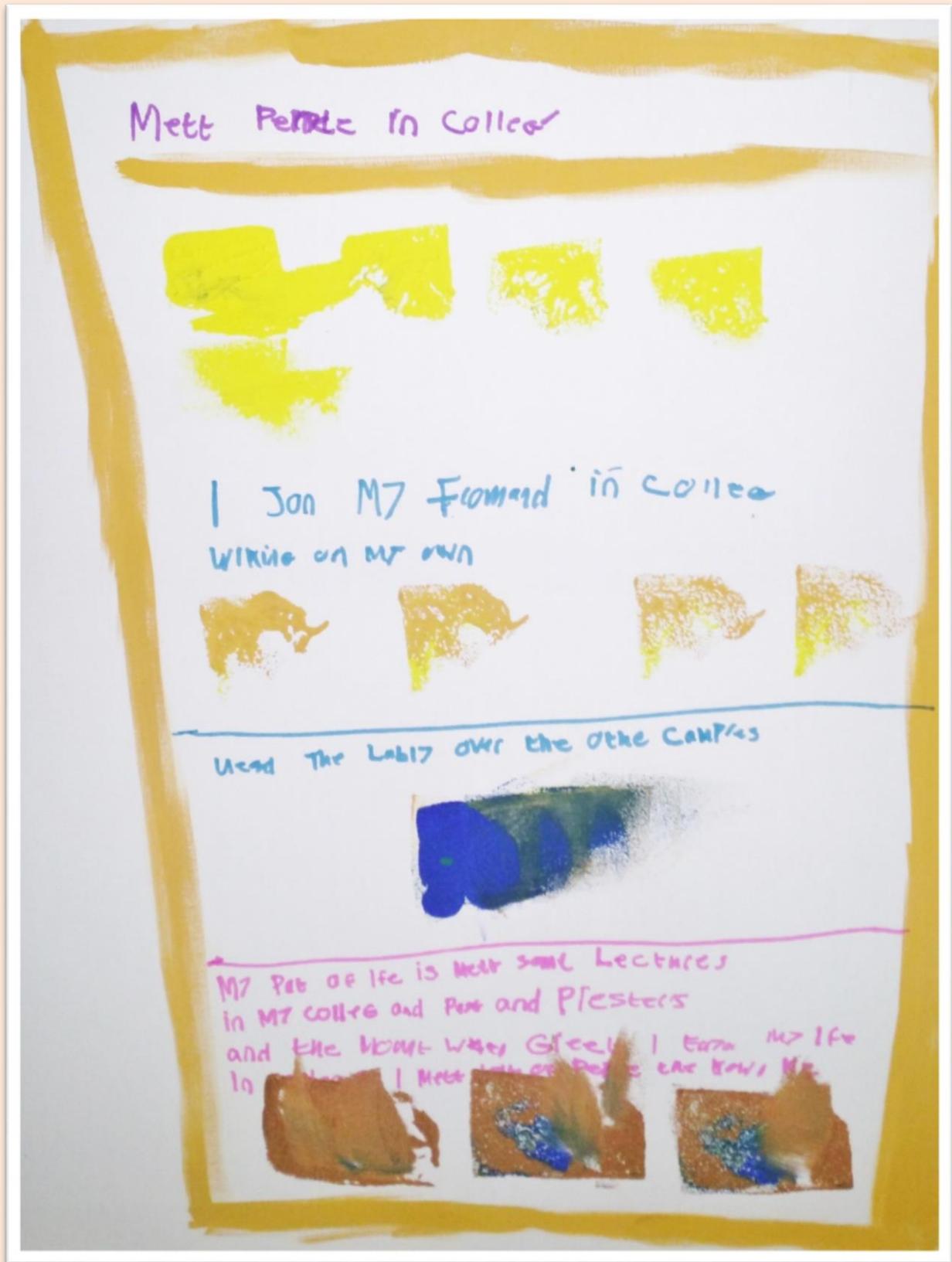


Figure 17: Sarah's College Path Creation

I wrote down like meeting people in college and [pause} I actually enjoy my freedom in college.... walking on my own and I used the library in the other part of the campus. Doing things on my own without you [with reference to me/Laura /learning facilitator]. My path of life is meeting some lecturers and my colleagues past and present and I met loads of people that know me and the moment I went to college I enjoyed my life in college. My path in college was interesting. I had loads of essay to do. So it was stressful. I think of.. I kind of find doing other things takes my mind off missing other people in college. My painting is fantastic. There are so many different colours. And em.. I like meeting people past and present like [names of two mentors] and the other mentors*.

Sarah on her creation ²

² Mentors – is also with reference to ILI learning partnership programme change in language.

The Inclusive Educator?

The following statements are in response to the following question in Session 3 and illustrate what the group felt was “an inclusive educator”.

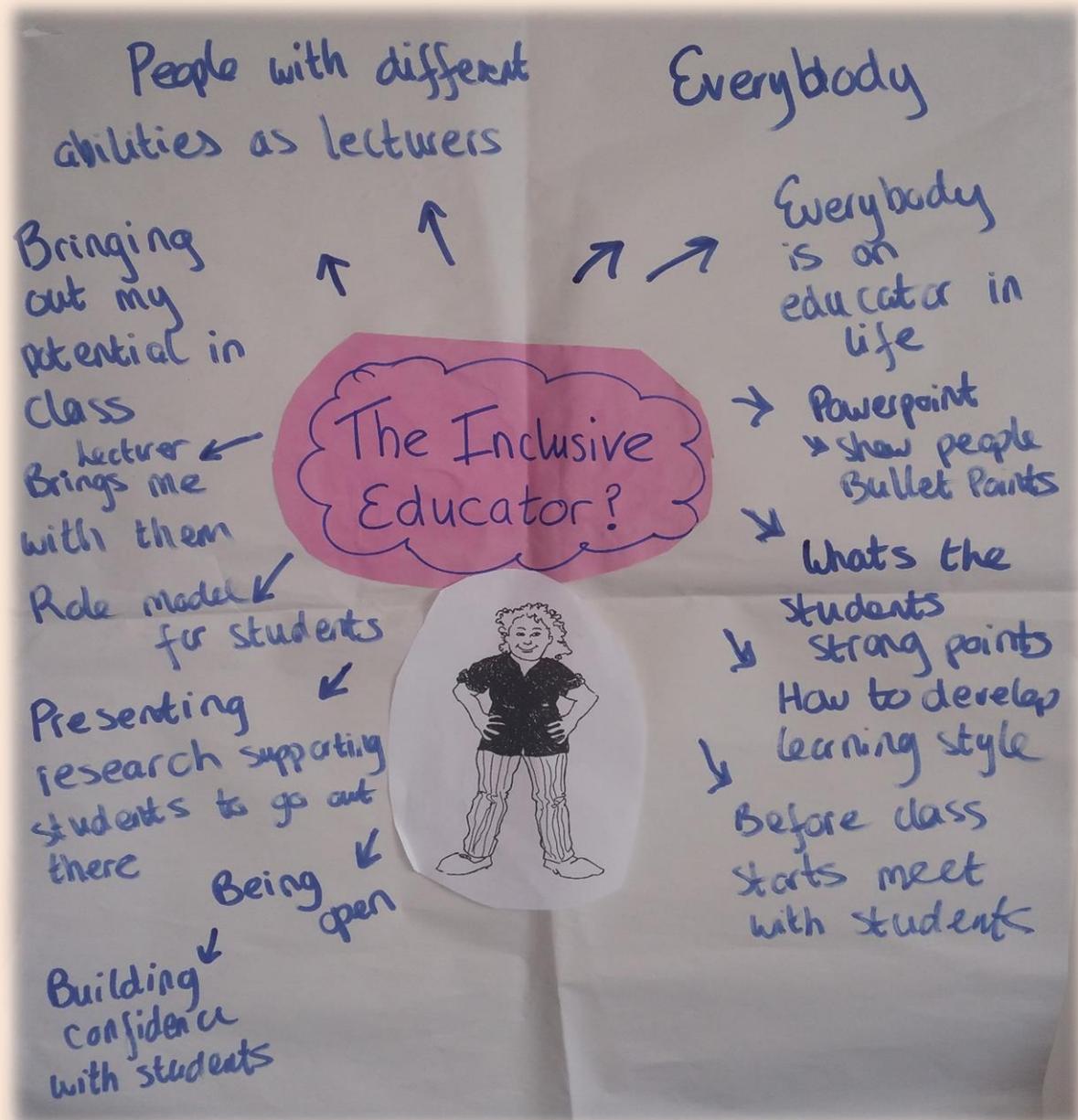


Figure 18 :Session 3 – “The Inclusive Educator” according to the group

Figure 19: Direct Text from what the group felt was an *Inclusive Educator*

People with different abilities as lecturers (with reference to people with and without disabilities)

Bringing out my potential in class

Lecturer “brings me with them”

Role model for students (the lecturer)

Presenting research – supporting students to “go out there”(with reference to presenting research in different ways and going outside of the college]

Being Open

Building Confidence with Students

Everybody is an educator in life

PowerPoint – Show people- bullet points

What’s the student’s strong points?

[with reference to lecturer learning about this]

How to develop learning style

[with respect to lecturer supporting students]

Before class starts meet with student [with reference to support planning meeting, if student wants it- choice to disclose disability]

Group on what they feel is an inclusive educator

Evaluation of Learning Session 2 - Group Poem

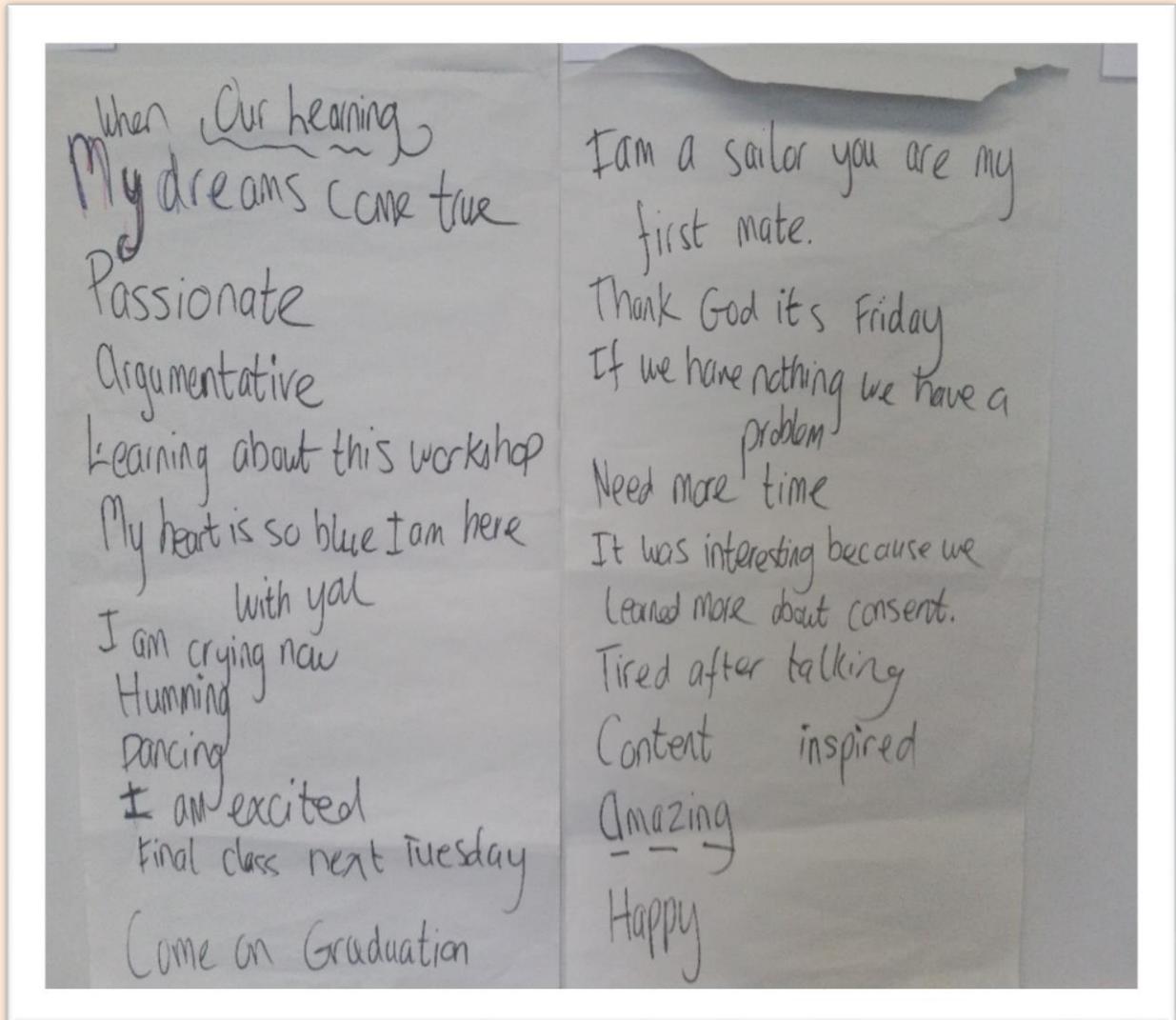


Figure 20 : Session 2 Check Out Creative Poem of Learning- Reflection Exercise - Session 2:
Facilitated by Ryan and Laura 2017

The instruction for this exercise was ...

One word or a sentence that describes how you feel right now or your
learning today?

When my dreams come true
Passionate
Argumentative
Learning about this workshop
My heart is so blue I am here with you
I am crying now
Humming
Dancing
I am excited
Final Class next Tuesday [with emphasis]
Come on Graduation [with emphasis]
I am a sailor you are my first mate
Thank god it is Friday
If we have nothing we have a problem
Need more time
It was interesting because we learned more about consent
Tired after talking
Content
Inspired
Amazing
Happy

Figure 21: The group poem on their learning and feelings at the end of Session 2.

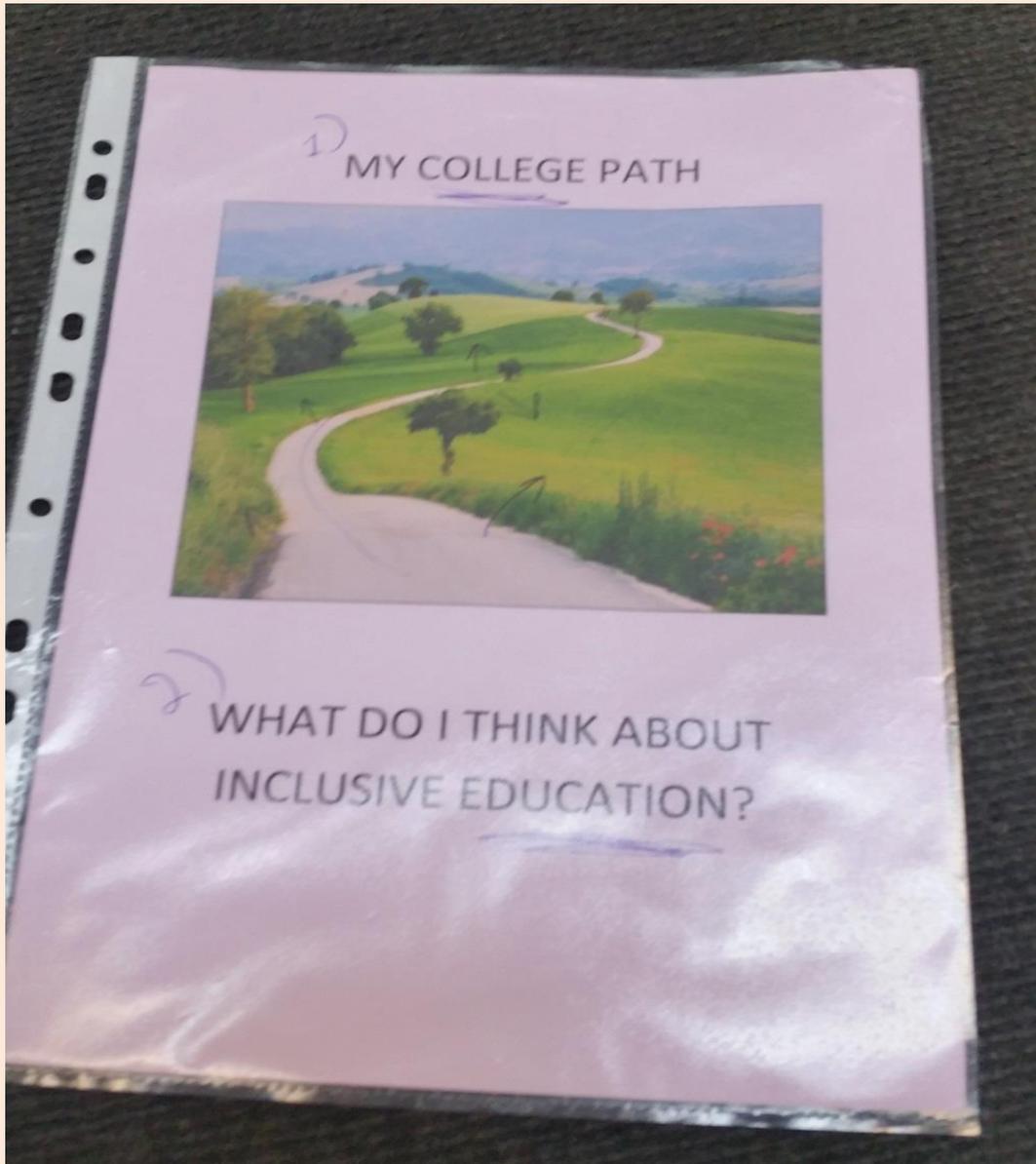


Figure 22: Picture of information to learners on the intentions of the sessions and visual support aid.

Session 3 Feedback

Some of the learners provided feedback to the group and each other at the end of session 3. The following are extracts taken from John and Ryan's feedback to the group and when in dialogue with each other:

John- I did enjoy today and I did enjoy what Sarah was looking for [with reference to her comments on her college path creation]. It was good. I liked the discussion we had this morning. I thought it was good. What Dave and Sam were said were good I thought everyone did a great job.

Ryan—Well it is text that I like more about Maynooth [with reference to his canvas, creation]. But I think what John has done here [with reference to John's canvas/painting] is that he wanted to show what he can do thought art, and through music and express how he feels through (name of university) and looking at that I think that John is very artistic as well so hopefully in next couple of months' time he might take up art.

John- Yeah.



Putting the Pieces Together

Findings Summary of the Overall Research

This research shows that:

That our expectations of college* have an impact on how we see inclusion in college.

That we have very different ways of understanding inclusion and it means something different for each person, ranging from participation to inclusion as a feeling, something you feel.

That language plays a very important part in how we look at both issues of inclusion and discrimination.

That we have different ideas about luck and what it means in relation to access to college, why students feel it and higher education for people disabilities.

That going to and being in college might be harder for some students more than others, for example students with physical disabilities and physical access.

That the transitions, experiences in our lives before college, in college and after college are very important in how we talk about and facilitate inclusion.

That student's self-define, talk about who they are, including disability, ability, in lots of different ways and language is something educators* need to question when supporting students.

That there are ways of being inclusive as a lecturer, educator and students are apart of this.

The role of support is very important in college and we all have different views of how we see the role of support.

That there is a need for a learning facilitator in college but the support needs depend on the person.

That college provided the space for personal growth and development.

The important things in college to us are things like mentorship, friendship, freedom, family, friends and yourself, what you want to do while you are here in college.

Tools like our phones, PowerPoint, art, music, pictures, presentations, talking with others help students to learn and show their learning.

That we all have different views on initiatives in higher education supporting people with intellectual disabilities and our connection to initiatives, which range from, education should already be there in the first place, we should not have to fight for it, to an initiative feeling like home, like family, means a lot to people and an initiative just as a stepping stone to further study.

*The group decided to use the word college and college also means a university in higher education in this study.

*The group decided that the word educator in this study, which would be used to describe an array of teaching positions and styles such as that of lecturer, tutor, teacher and facilitator.

*This findings summary was constructed by the researcher and proofed, edited by two of the contributors to support *context relevant* information accessibility as well as acknowledging vocabulary expansion.

Themes in Research



Figure 23: Main Themes Identified in the Study

Thematic Analysis

There were a number of themes evident in the discussions throughout the three sessions. The intricacy and complexity of the data is reflected in the overlapping themes and contextual nature of the contributors views in each of the session discussions. Findings relative to group discussions are presented as a collective and each theme is not necessarily the viewpoint of all individuals within this research cohort.

These themes have been collated based on the full data set including some of the physical pieces of work demonstrated in the learning sessions as well as my own observational notes and viewpoints of the research contributors, which were voice recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

The discussions the group co facilitated were also premised on generative themes via the learning process (Freire, 1972). The students' accounts of experiences themselves, directly addresses the research question and sub questions in this study. Figure 23 is an illustration of the main themes. The descriptions of learner's particular accounts are accompanied, in cases, by the particular contributor's name (pseudonym), as to provide context to the statement and connection with learner creations, objects and group work as illustrated in the earlier visuals and illustrations of findings in this chapter.

Perceptions on Disability, Difference and Expectations

Perception was noted by three of the contributors as one of the primary issues with regard to expectations of people with disabilities, in broader terms, of which Dave states the perception of "people with different abilities", "people need to take a good look at that themselves" with Harry concurring that Dave "got that nailed". It was also three of the contributors primary reasons for wanting to participate in the research in the first place as stated in session one. One of the contributors said they wanted to participate because "people have low expectations of people with disabilities and it's about breaking down that wall, to change people's perception".

In informal discussions with me and in the sessions, three of the contributors provided accounts relative to not knowing what a university was or what it would look like.

Two of the contributors remarked that they did know what a university was and what would be involved because all members of their family had attended college. One contributor said they knew a bit more after attending the university open day.

The expectation *of and around* people with disabilities was highlighted by one of contributors as the *perception that “they can’t do it”* with reference to perceptions on disability in general. The group also noted how the low expectations that exist *on* people with disabilities has been a factor for many in “not being able to access college”.

This statement led to further discussion about proving ones position as student with one contributor saying “that’s why you need to prove it?” “I mean to prove it you yourself”. Dave disputed this need to prove however, Sam felt there was some element of resilience required to respond to the “bad things people hear said about them” and it was to “not care about what people are saying about me and I can do it, go and do it end of story”.

Sam also referenced Dave’s “smartness”(with reference to his intelligence) and relayed to him not to “let the bad things that are said about you get into your head”. This issue of bad things and negative or discriminatory statements about contributors was mentioned in two of the sessions, quite explicitly in the group discussion which accompanied Dave’s object.

However, in the college realm and remit, up to this date none of the contributors reported having bad things said about them in the college space itself but all of the learners did acknowledge that there was still an element of “them and us” in and outside of college [with reference to general societal views) with one referencing *us*, as “disability people” and us as “students on the ILI”. Thus, there were different interpretations of us and we, including descriptions of *us* as a group, in a general descriptive context relative to this particular study, which incorporated group work facilitation. The other being descriptions of “us” in relation to people with disabilities and society.

Ryan felt that the way to address these issues on perception was through education, as illustrated in the following extract:

Ryan- I think for me it's all about communicating more with people. It's about telling people what they want to hear from people. Like on (contributors work with a national organisation) now we are the voice of the ILI. That's where we are coming from. That's what you are talking about Sam...that we are doing what we want to do. We don't need to say anything about ourselves but we need to show it. So that's why I did this DVD [with reference to object] its relation to the ILI, how I felt about myself and about where I came from – so my DVD is called [name excluded, protection of identity] and that is what Sam is talking about. (Title of DVD is also a metaphorical statement the contributors are acknowledging here).

Sam- Yes I saw a lot of people saying this “title of DVD”. Laura showed me your DVD. That's what inspired me. This DVD really inspired me ya know to get where I am today.

Ryan- Yes. We are showing everybody what we can do in the ILI. ILI is basically about when dreams come true and we have done that. It is all about what Sarah was saying about past, present and future. I think that's important aswell. I hope you agree with that Sarah and Harry?

Harry – Yeah

Ryan- When I was graduating from ILI I was a bit emotional in the beginning because I didn't want to leave the ILI. I was at the graduation talking to Harry and we were both talking about what the ILI means to people and I was right beside Harry at the graduation and that was my highlight of Harry at the graduation. Yes we have our own friends but they are also apart of what we have become.

Perception and Language

Contributors had very different views when it came to language and self-defining relative to disability. Some contributors noted how this is influenced by the disability support sector itself with “person first campaigns” ads with Down Syndrome Ireland, referring to person before disability, the noting of and embracement of difference stating:

“Its person first language and that’s important for people, I am a person first, I am an adult with Down Syndrome and you have to look at the person first, for people to understand what Down Syndrome is about. Yes we are different. Yes we are doing our own things like the path we took to university, look at the outcomes?. That’s important for people to understand. And you might look at your life and you look at it in a positive way and everyone has that together. Its about participation, consent and respect...respecting other peoples wishes...and stuff that we have done together in a group like this...Its about communicating with people”.

The term “different disabilities” was mentioned by one contributor as a term that they use when describing people.

Another contributor stated “I don’t see myself as having a disability”. The same learner said “I don’t need to justify myself or label myself with a disability”.

The term “different abilities” was mentioned by three of the contributors at different stages throughout the three sessions including feedback to me about the session planning. One of the learners advised me to reference this when naming, putting a title on my thesis.

Dave felt that the issues with language was generational stating “it’s not the younger generation that’s the problem. It’s the older generation because it depends on what era you were brought up in and what type of language was used at the time”. This contributor also said they had “no problem” with “someone asking me what is wrong with me” and “taking the joke out of myself” “I just say I am too lazy to walk” [with reference to being a wheelchair user].

Sam agreed that language was an “era” issue but responded relative to asking people what is wrong and joking that:

“but we all have to remember that there is all different kinds of people as we were talking about...there maybe people that are so emotional so there might be people that take that completely out of context.....if I can use that word...em ya know..em yeah so..

The discussions about experiences in college also challenged assumptions within the group itself, primarily when discussing disability. Some contributors felt that wheelchair users *may* “have” a more challenging experience in college.

One contributor said:

“I am into music as well, You are doing something different” [with reference to a different type of engagement with music]

Dave challenges this saying:

“Well for me music is more than notes written on a page. It is freedom. Like ya know sometimes when your legs can’t work ...for music your legs don’t have to be working. You can play an instrument with your hands or you can sing...has nothing got to do with your legs”.

The Importance of Language in Education

The overarching theme in this study was language. I used terms like *spotlight* and *intellectual disability* in my questioning with students as these would be “general phrasings” , as to gage learners opinions on some of language and phrasing that is generated in education and also with *relevance to their experience*. This was an incredibly insightful learning experience for me and provoked me to think about what I thought I knew about questioning with students.

There can be a presumptuousness in a lot of things we say but phrasing can have a significant impact on the student experience and how we make assumptions about peoples self-positioning on inclusive education programmes. The following is an extract from one of the discussions in the sessions relative to ***students in the spotlight*** , where I make the assumption that the students acknowledge themselves as being “in the spotlight” as a consequence of the national interest, international promotion of this initiative and learners promotion of the initiative as a very important learning experience.

Laura – You have all presented at events, conference people are looking to you now. Looking to talk to you. How does it feel being in the spotlight, in this project? Is it something that you are ok with? Is it something that needs to change – how does it feel being in the spot light talking about inclusive education?

Sam- The way I look at it is that it’s not about me being in the spotlight but people that are like me, for example, that were afraid of college, so ya know I think people like me will see the documentary on me [with reference to Sams speeches and illustrations of learning when talking in public] saying how it really is and all that it will really change those people’s ideas about college. That’s the way I look at it. Not in the spotlight.

Dave- Why should we have to be in the spotlight? It should already be there [with reference to inclusive education]. We shouldn’t have to fight for it. Should be already there.

Laura - Is there a fight for initiatives like ILI in Ireland?

Sam- There is a fight. Remember we went to the seminar in the [name of hotel]. There were so many people who stood up and said my son or daughter wants to get involved how can they do it? And what you [with reference to me Laura] had to answer, that we cannot take anyone else in and that’s because of finances.

Laura – Yes

Sam- And that's what I think we should really fight for. Not for the ILI but for people, for colleges to do a programme like the ILI.

When asked about learners with intellectual disabilities, not generally going to college some of the contributors felt that this was because of "discrimination". A number of comments were made in relation to the difficulties that students with physical disabilities experience and may experience in accessing higher education, which when intellectual disability was mentioned prompted one of the contributors to say the following:

Laura it's not, can I interfere for a minute, I don't think it has anything to do with if your in a wheelchair or having an intellectual disability, I don't think it has anything to do with what [contributor name in the group] has said, well obviously it does a bit, but the main thing I think those people should have is confidence. [pause] sorry am I wrong? Do you get where I am coming from?

One contributor responded to this by saying

If people believe in you?

Then the contributor who first referenced confidence said

Yes that's it. You have to believe in yourself. Because ...Im going to use myself as an example here. I was terrified of college. Absolutely.... I never thought myself that I would get near a door of a college never mind getting into one.

One of the contributors concurred with this statement saying

Yeah that's how we felt (names in group) when we started [with reference to first cohort of students, graduates who registered on the initiative].

Confidence was also mentioned by three other contributors relative to the various transitions involved in going to and leaving college and the impact of college itself on student wellbeing.

One contributor states

When I left school I had nothing and I ended up in [name of day service] and I wasn't happy there I felt very depressed, I felt anger. I wasn't going to college, I wasn't getting any more education and I was told no you are not going to college. I said no I want to go to college like everyone else, I want to work with anyone, meet with people, help anyone. That's why I think its important that we should speak our minds".

Another says

"Before I started college my confidence was on the floor. So the first year was kind of building my confidence back".

Perspectives on Inclusion

The group disagreed when it came to discussing how they saw their affiliation with the university. Three of the contributors felt that ILI, college and university "are apart of the whole thing" and the others disputed this saying that they saw themselves as "a student of the college, university, not just on the ILI. Dave elaborated on this saying:

"But ya see I don't define myself just because I am on the ILI. Like next year I am on the general one going to be just here [student has mature student application success for another existing course in the university and was referencing general university disability access support systems, not that of ILI]. It [with reference to ILI] just gave me the break that I needed. I just say I am part of the college".

This prompted one of the contributors to reflect on their initial statement and agree with what Dave at stated saying "I do agree. We actually grow up. We actually do things to grow up into the college".

Students also saw the initiative they had registered on in different ways with one contributor stating "the ILLI is home" and another stating "but for me the ILI was just a stepping stone for further potential. After first year I always said I was going on for more than 3 years".

When learners were asked what inclusion was for them responses varied from “participation” to “the same as everyone else” and being included wasn’t just about having support in college but as one contributor’s phrased it “having the drive and determination to do it”. Another of the contributors referred to Barak Obamas phrasing of “Yes we can”.

Inclusion to one contributor was a *feeling* experienced as is relayed in the following illustration of this person’s experience:

Id just like to come back on and continue with what [name] just said ...during these two years that I’ve been going first year was this [with reference to a contributor’s previous comments about first year being a “getting used to” thing]... this second year with classes and all that was one of the best moments for me because and the reason for that was because I really felt included like I wasn’t just left there like. What I am trying to say was that I really felt I was apart of the class ya know with everyone else and that’s the main thing, apart from learning. That’s the main thing that I enjoyed. It actually pushed me to go to classes every week again with doing to work and all that. I think it is one of the best experiences of my life so apart from getting to college, ya know going different places and making different friends but Im just talking in class wise.

Another learner responded by saying “yeah learning happens inside and outside of class”.

Another contributor said inclusion was:

To include everybody to include students and mentors and get help from them all to focus on education to focus on being as good as a student as you can be.

When asked if learners felt there was a difference between inclusion and full inclusion some learners felt it was the same and others felt there was a distinction to made as illustrated in the following discussion:

Laura - What is inclusion and what is full inclusion? Is there a difference?

C2- Well I think there is a slight difference because the way I see it is alright your included right....you go and lets say do things with people do stuff with a group of people one day

C6 - I don't think there is a difference because for me its all inclusion, we are students in NUIM.

C4- I think there is a difference. There is. Because eh you can be included in something but ..like in the class but that's inclusion in the class. Lets say you want to live on campus. That's not inclusion I had that problem myself. [with reference to the student's on campus living application being denied].

Luckiness in College

The following extract from discussions within the group was the most contentious issue in the research. This issue was discussed in session two and three and was described by contributors as a big “debate” and “argumentative” at the end of the session and the follow up session with learners. I described it as debatory given the learners tone, so this may have had an impact on learners descriptions of how they found this discussion. It is on this premise that I include below dialogue in its entirety. The c's at the start of the sentencing stands for contributors and the numbers were just assigned during my transcription of the three sessions. It commenced when one of the learners stated that they were “surprised” when they found out they got into college. Three of the contributors also said they were “surprised”.

Laura –Why were you surprised?

C3- The reason why I got in and very very lucky because there is a lot of people around us knew like straight away like..... [name ILI steering group member] she knew like [break in sentence] I remember on the day with 50 people in [name of day service] .

I remembered when [name ILLI steering group member] me and C7 she comes to me I remember she said this guy has potential in college education so that means she was talking to my mam and from there then I got in. Studied Anthropology and it was two pieces so work like my (name of school] and [name of service] so that why there was a bit of a call for me anyways[with reference to previous education] .

Laura – and you were saying previously C3- you feel lucky to be in college. Why do people feel lucky to be in college?

C6 – Because we are.

C3- No because

C6- I feel like I have won the lotto

C3- The main reason why we are lucky because

C2- No, its

C3- so the main reason why we are lucky is because the amount of people around us gave us the opportunity to come here ..to bring us to the college.....to learn a bit more.....

C4- Its not about luck. I don't think it has anything to do with luck. Its got to do with your personality and whether you have the drive or determination to do it.

C2- Yeah that's it.

C4- Because

C3- The reason why I got lucky because

C4- It's not about luck [with emphasis]

C2- No

C3- the reason I got lucky because it actually was when I met with Laura straight away....thought it was going to be a granny with a cane and when I actually met her then ...wooo...19 year old coming in [laughs]

[group laugh]

Laura- Did you think the person with the cane was going to be like school?

C3- Yeah

Laura- Ok

C3- Heres the thing. You are very very lucky because I had the education in my two schools [names schools] and then I knew thenmy mam told me I had potential for college so its kind of good for me because my mam was in college here in Maynooth , 6 or 7 years because she actually studied youth work and development working with young kids because now shes in a fantastic job. Shes been working very very hard...because she actually lost her dad, lost her husband, I had put up nearly 20 stone . She was my inspiration because the reason why because she wanted me to go to college was to have more confidence and grow and that's why I am here.

C6 – I agree

Laura – C7 do you want to come in there?

C7- Yeah the first time I got into college my mam said it was like winning the lotto [laughs].

C2- Im just going to interfere for a second eh C3 there I totally respect your opinion but I totally disagree with that in the sense that its about your ability and about what you can do. Ok you can get help ok C3 use yourself and example but I can continue using Laura as an example she helped me in the college when I got in and now [name of current facilitator] is but if I have the confidence and ability to go to classes to do my work ya know to do my assignments ..to prepare for ya know em... projects whatever [name of current facilitator] is not going to do that for me. Its not about luck its about you.

C4- You're the foundation to succeed in life.

C2- Yeah you have to have the ability on yourself to do it.

C6- Well that personality shines out in everyone in NUI Maynooth and that's how we started in NUIM.

C6- The way I think about my experience in NUIM , my time in NUIM was I didn't get a phone call I got a letter I opened the letter, from there I wanted to work in Media I studied to be a freelance TV reporter. From there it was into NUIM media studies was my area. I had experience before anyone started in NUIM. RTE took me in because they wanted to work with me, to show them what I could do and that's all about luck and that's all about your personality. And that's where we come across. I know we have difference of opinion C2 but that difference of opinions **will be** breaking down the barriers and that breaking down the barriers means we can challenge and there's where luck and your personality come together.

[pause] [at this point sensory support needs had to be taken into consideration by the facilitator].

Laura- So the debate is very rich here..... I am going to ask if we can come back to our discussions as I am sensing some people might need a break?

C3- This is like Jerry Springer.....or like Vincent Brown

[Group Laughs]

Views on College Supports

There were a number of statements made about me and the current initiative facilitator in two capacities. Firstly, views on the role of the learning facilitator itself and secondly views on me and my growth and development as part of this experience.

When asked the question if there was a need for a learning facilitator in college, the group collectively agreed that there was a need. One said "I do think you need that extra help, for modules and stuff and writing" another said:

“It depends on the person”. What I mean by this is if the person is very nervous about going do something like meetings and that. That’s where you need the facilitator. Id people are well capable of meeting themselves then there is no need”.

Another added that “people in general might not have the confidence to do it then there” (with reference to attending a meeting).

There was a strong appraisal for me relative to my perceived wishes for the students and the views of me “taking students in” to the initiative and “making students stronger” which was mentioned on multiple occasions at different stages in the sessions with two of the contributors saying:

“She has her work ethic. She wanted her confidence to grow as a facilitator on the ILI programme. She took us in. She wanted us to be as good as we could be in the ILI as students so basically it’s all about Laura and the ILI. That’s how I felt. I turned from a student into a man”. “Hope everyone agrees that Laura has made us better students that we are in NUI Maynooth” . “To be honest anytime I go here (with reference to the university) I miss Laura”.

“She helped us to be ourselves again. She helped through thick and thin, through tough times. I really appreciate that. You helped us to be strong no matter what people say about us, we feel strong, we feel passionate about ourselves because we have something like ya know... that wasn’t there.

The same contributor said

“what brings me here today Laura is you because you are my inspiration. When I first came to college I found you and I really feel like your’re my sister and I love you to bits. I thank you for bringing me into the ILI because without you all I wouldn’t be here. Don’t get me started crying [laughs]”.

Four of the contributors commented on how they saw my growth as a learning facilitator, practitioner, in educational development and in a personal capacity with one stating:

“Laura was like the head of the ILI, she had a few slip ups like her nan passed away and that and she’s kind of coming back into herself. This masters for her means that she will be one of the main people in the college here, the best in this thing she is doing in college”.

“If I could pick a song for Laura it would be light up my life because it sums up Laura’s life... she’s kind of opening up and blossoming like a rose that’s why so..You are in a good stage now”.

Another contributor who I work with regularly and know for a long time responded to this statement and said:

“Both of us see a different side to Laura in a different light. We are a formidable team”.

Another said

“She has an easy life now, she has her parents now [with reference to a significant illness in the family], her boyfriend, and it’s a great opportunity for her now to express it”.

Two of the contributors challenged some of these views on Laura at different points over the three sessions stating with reference to what they saw as the role of the ILI learning facilitator:

“I agree with things you said about Laura but let’s not forget that after all it’s our work, our opportunity. If we didn’t take the opportunity and if we didn’t go to classes and that like ya know it wouldn’t make a difference. Laura was there (name, with reference to current learning facilitator) is now just to help us with stuff we might (with emphasis) need help with.

Another contributor concurred with this and said

” if you don’t show up to classes then that’s not Laura or (name of current facilitator’s) fault. They elaborated by saying “no offense but it’s not all about Laura. Its not solely about you”. [Laura Laughs].

Another stated

“Its about inclusive education because we have been educated already. Before ILI even started”.

One of the contributors provided an account of how at the start of their college experience they felt the “need” to ring the facilitator if things didn’t go to plan in the day. This contributor then questioned to themselves “would any other student do that? No only cos I feel I was on the ILI I have to ring to get (current facilitator’s name) permission like I’m alright”. Another contributor “totally disagreed” with “this type of pressure”.

The contributor who provided the account later went on to say that the current learning facilitator said to them one day during the contributor’s first year of college “It’s not about me it’s about you”. “And I took that and I ran with it”.

Another contributor added to the discussions around “thankfulness” when describing different college experiences and views highlighting the need not to thank anyone but to acknowledge college, the experience and the political environment itself stating:

I just wanted to say that its been athis Maynooth....[pause] it’s a great place to be in and around all the areas and its really,[pause] I am not thanking anyone. It’s near seeing everyone. That’s what I want to say about this place em about anyone. It’s the place you want to do the work. It’s also for the people that want to come into college aswell like disability people whoever decides to come into college. If it gets shut down people may not be able to come in and I think it’s an important experience of a lifetime for them, like they might not know what to do with their life like they might have to stay at home and not enjoy life, it’s about getting out

there doing the work and if anyone decides to come it's a great place to be.

The political context and landscape the ILI resides in was mentioned by all contributors in this research in a number of ways primarily naming issues with educational access, opportunities, funding for students with intellectual disabilities and sustaining initiatives in Ireland such as the ILI. All contributors saw their role as advocates for change but very differently.

One contributor provides a detailed account of their political views on the issue with reference to “the fight” which was mentioned by some contributors in the sessions:

I agree with both of the guys because we should spread the word about the ILI and I think the government are not paying any respect for us and I think they should and I think that they are not doing their jobs right and if they did their jobs right we would be still here today and tomorrow [with reference to continuation of the ILI]. I think that we should just hope for the best because don't get sad about it. I felt angry going to that march that day with the government [with reference to march outside Leinster House on ratification of the UN convention of Rights of persons with disabilities 2017]. I felt outrage, I felt anger, I felt left out by them and I'm telling you I'm not going to be let down by them. I'm a fighter and you are fighters. [with reference to the group]

Thankfulness

At multiple times throughout the sessions and research process itself the contributors thanked people including ILI staff, myself, their own families and one of the contributors felt “we need to thank the lecturers for all of the work we have done together in different modules”.

Another of the contributors described their mother as “inspirational” and in Ryans description of his college path creation he says “I wanted to be a proud son of my parents”.

Both of these contributors referred to above, noted how all in their family went to college before them and they wanted to do the same.

Learning Partnership

Aside from support coming directly from the ILI learning facilitator, academic departments and university support services staff, all students engaged with the learning partnership programme, which is a natural support network comprised on fellow under and post graduate students in the university who are there to “assist” students in all aspects of academic, social learning and personal development. Termed mentoring in the infant stages of the ILI, the students and partners made the decision to change the name from mentorship to partnerships programme because mentors felt that they were gaining as much as the students they were working with and didn’t see the need to incur a power distinction in naming due the nature of their relationships and friendships with students. Some of students, graduates were gone from college during this decision thus they use the term mentoring.

All contributors made reference to the significant role learning partners or mentors played and meant in their college life with Sarah, John and Harry in particular referencing the importance of this connection with fellow students in college. Sarah described mentorship as “friendly enough, too friendly” [laughs from Sarah and group] but for Sarah the expression of too friendly for her was the “closeness” she felt with one of her learning partners in particular who became her closest friend in college.

Sarah says that aside from working on academic work we had a “close connection” and she felt this was important in learning partnership. She describe her closest friend in college as “fun and lively” and “we have a little bit of a close connection with em country and Irish” [with reference to musical interests]. The development of her friendship with this person was as a consequence of both being involved in the learning partnership programme.

Sam also emphasised the aspect of fun as an important part of the college experience via his college path creation. See figure 12.

John also emphasised the importance of learning partnership as both a component of his experience and as a collective experience in dialogue with the group stating:

John- When me and Dave go to our graduation in September.....

Dave-Yeah It will be a good night alright [with emphasis]

[group laughs]

Harry- Go on Dave [raises hand and cheers]

Sam – Yeah

John- Hopefully it won't be just me and Dave just graduating it will be some else aswell [smiles, directs group attention to Laura by winking and pointing finger]. My mentor her name is [name] she is graduating with me too. She is finishing up in September. Hopefully it will be the three of us graduating.

Harry referenced his connection with [name of partner and friend] in his college path creation See figure 13 with reference to some of the academic work and research he had undertaken with support from [name of partner and friend].

Two of the graduates said in our discussions they are still very close to **“a few”** of the friends they met in college even after graduating in 2014 and regularly meet up with their friends for catch ups, lunch, breakfast, having dinner and staying over and doing other stuff together. One contributor doesn't retain that connection with friends in college but provided an account of their social experiences and friendships in their own locality.

Thus, partnership connections led to friendship connections and different social networks for all of the contributors, current and graduate student accounts and in some cases, some friendships continued post- college some did not from the graduate perspective.

Friendship in College

All of the contributors noted the importance of friendship in college.

The following is a dialogical encounter between Ryan and John in session 3 which reflects one of John's most poignant experiences in college relative to “connecting with people”.

Ryan – What has been your highlight in the past 3 years?

John –Well like Sarah didn't know what Maynooth University was until I got into it. When I was in return to learning I wasn't really myself back then as I am now because I was kind of ya know.. going off.. sleeping .. and I wasn't myself and I wasn't really communicating with people and that so that's what I have done since I started my three years I have connected with people....

Ryan – Were you nervous at the beginning? Nervous like panic??

John- Emm [pause] yeah I was a little bit of a panic but once the weeks and the months went on I started to be independent myself and that's what I have been doing since then.

Dave referenced the difficulty with making friends in the initial stages and getting used to having a personal assistant in university.

Disability awareness week in the university was mentioned relative to support for students and different wheelchair activities that were happening in the university and Dublin to support the “No labels no limits” campaign. Dave was involved in some of the activities on campus and one of the contributors remarked that “you can be late to things like because of your wheelchair” [with reference to having to pre book and wait on the train].

Another responded to this and said “Because you’re in wheelchairs. It doesn’t mean anything. It is the ability of someone and the abilities that we can come across in NUI Maynooth and in life and that’s important”.

Overall Experiences of College

The learners co facilitated questions with each other throughout the sessions around what learners thought about college or the experience of college in general.

Dave made the following remarks:

Em had the least lecture last week and after that I didn’t know what to do. Cant believes its 3 years. As they say as one door opens another one closes. Ye see I seen the ILI another pathway to what I want to achieve. Just because Im finished here doesn’t mean I am going to stop. That’s why I am very passionate about keeping my studies up. Especially my music. To me music is more that words written on a paper. It doesn’t matter whether you can walk or not. Whether your sitting down playing an instrument its nothing got to do with it really. If you now how to read music your ahead of everyone else. To get the chance to study music was absolutely incredible. I never thought Id get the chance to focus in on just one subject.

Sarah said

My experience here was great, I have my own cluster. I met different people. I met [name friend and learning partner, and then I met [friend and learning partner] I meet her for lunch.

John reflected on his experience in his final year by saying:

To be honest this place is unbelievable. The place collegeeverywhere I go...All the work I have done.....all the people I met. They were just so unbelievable. They were so supportive... I am going to miss everyone when I go. But I do wish you well in the future – I know I'll be seeing ye around and that and I'm going to miss ye all.

Conclusion

This findings chapter sought to capture the direct experiences of learning demonstrated and discussed in the planned learning activities in the sessions. An outline the main themes were also discussed relative to the learning in this research in its entirety. The first part of the chapter, in terms of its form , was also a means of structuring information in a way which would support learners and practitioners, with a different learning abilities, to engage with the study and learning materials in a way that recognised the variation in learning styles and how information is presented, in a manner which supports the development of educational practice, conceptual and vocabulary expansion and information accessibility.

Chapter 2: My *Coming* to the Research

Ways of seeing and being.....



Introduction:

The following chapter is an outline of my own ontological, epistemological and pedagogical position which informs the research approach and framework.

My Ontological and Epistemological Position

Delving into this research has made me more aware of the importance in framing what you do in a way which questions, enriches and tests your value systems, judgment and your personhood. It is through *this way, in these sites of our lives*, that I believe we grow our resilience and capacities as educators. Framing my research position and identity was not an easy feat given the ever changing nature of my work and the fluctuating paradigm shift of research frameworks and disability.

As I illustrated in this thesis introduction, I have come to I believe that the world *should* encompass the “seeing of people” and the trust in oneself, premised on the unique make up, attributes and features of people, which also embraces diversity and diverse ways of knowing. So my world view is quite aspirational in light of prevailing inequality but it is a part of who I am. This view necessitates we explore how people make meaning which has the capacity to expose us to new ways of thinking and seeing, which for me always has emancipatory potential.

I believe education and indeed knowledge is never neutral and always has a power dimension but we can use knowledge and our understanding of power relations to “aid people to improve society” including how we support *marginalised groups*. (Creswell, 2013, p.26). This transformative framework is concerned with the action and process of consciousness raising which has the ability, on a collective scale, to change society (Freire, 1996). I, similarly to (Mezirow, 2003, p.1), understand transformative accounts of learning and transformative learning itself as “ the epistemology of how adults learn to think for themselves rather than act upon assimilated beliefs, values, feelings and judgments of others” and I think this is something that should be fostered in all

aspects of life and education. The recipe of what Thompson (2007) refers to as really useful knowledge”, the critical , agentic processes which can be a catalyst for collective movements in social change.

In my view, this vision extends from the personal to situating the personal in the social and the importance of critically understanding forms of oppression in order to facilitate critical social justice. Critical theory is certainly a framework that I have adopted in this research and it requires we “empower human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class and gender (Creswell, 2013, p.26) as well as the acknowledgement the of *forces* in *culture* such as that of beliefs and ideologies which restrict, and develop our capacities as human beings. I concur with Hussey (1999) who states that empowerment doesn’t exist when “that empowerment is defined only in terms of removing the status of *marginalisation* by means of adapting to the wider community and accepting the wider community's norms and values. (Hussey, 1999, p.45). This means we must support people to critically engage in their own social realities including how they perceive their being in the world and education is a catalyst for this in a multiplicity of ways. Within this statement I am also acknowledging normativity, “reflecting on the ideologies and values implicit in our education goals” (Finnegan, p. 67). Thus, this statement and the outcomes of critical pedagogy for me reflects ones attuned ability to be in the world with awareness of the social and political contexts shaping it as so people can engage with and challenge issues of inequality.

Some theoretical research positions, including critical theory have excluded disability from the analysis on the premise that it was not perceived as a social justice issue but something “else”.

The response to this is emerging paradigms, such as that of, disability studies, disability pedagogy and critical disability studies. However, I see the relativeness in expanding upon critical theory to incorporate an intersectional feminist analysis of disability on the basis of multidimensional analysis, where counter narratives can prove as valuable as subgroup represented ones.

Hence the notion of disability should be understood in conjunction with issues of race, socio-economic background and gender, as well as other sources of social disadvantage, thereby providing alternative analytical lenses to challenge deficit-oriented practices and make transparent the ways in which wider social structures and institutions create/ perpetuate inequality. (Liasidou, 2013, p. 303)

This is not tackling issues monodimensionally but through the *range* of social structures and relations which oppress people including how people are *objectified* and “*othered*” through cultural representation (Shakespeare, 2007). However, there remains one thing in the assumptions of how I conceive knowledge and the *positioning* of disability I have just outlined. The first form, as I have just stated, conceptualisation relative to an intersectional understanding of disability and the socio cultural forces which impact on meaning making and emancipatory learning experiences. The second is the need to question the very nature of disability and how it has been deployed in theories, models and frameworks which requires the emphasis to be on changing ways of thinking, including how we deconstruct language and examine contradictions and dominant meanings. Postmodernism offers us this way of thinking. Thus, the essentialness of reflexivity in all aspects of inquiry as so we can critically explore the constructions and meanings in our world. I do not believe that we autonomously create our worlds, that, as Corker and Shakespeare (2002) relay, we are embedded within a complex set of social relations. The issue with meta or grand narratives, as first discussed by Jean-Francois Lyotard in 1979, is that they offer a *supposedness* of truths, failing to illustrate the complexity involved in societal relations and constructions.

This is important if we conceive of knowledge as an interweaving process of creation, ongoing inquiry, which brings with it a complex shifting or instability in our world and our ideas but also the space for new knowledge to arise.

Summary of Position

This research certainly has a political and social justice schema, which is in its approach to “change orientated forms of narrative research” (Creswell, 2013) via the recognition of the subjective experiences of the learners and the socio political sphere inclusive education of this nature resides in. The references to this sphere are still in relation to “*disability* in education”, reflecting a homogeneity in the analysis of people. Critical theory challenges this by exploring the nature of cultural forces which have perpetuated inequality and dominant discourses.

However, I would extend this approach, in light of how I have approached this research to encompass intersectional ways of experiencing oppression as highlighted in feminism. Feminist analyses of disability drew attention to the importance of personal experience in understanding the complexity of disability, and highlighted the ways in which disabled women experience simultaneous discrimination (Barnes and Mercer 2010; Thomas 1999). (as cited in Liasidou, 2013). The understanding of experience and meaning making also warrants me to adopt a postmodern stance as to question the very nature of experience and dominant ideologies such as disability, marginalisation and to critique the subtexts in dominant discourses as so contextual considerations can shed light on both the researcher and learners views of experience.

In this analysis I have endeavoured to provide an honest and reflective account of my ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological position which frames my research, my ways of being and how I conceive knowledge.

My Pedagogical Position

To this day intellectual disability remains a specialism or perceived specialism in areas of employment and academic disciplines. The intention of the “education for all” or fully inclusive agenda (UNESCO, 2005) and the nature of adult education itself, for example, directly challenges this view of specialist education. Adult Education acknowledges learning as a collective process where learning experiences and opportunities are made available and facilitated with all learners, regardless of ability. It has a multiplicity of discourses as noted by (Murray, 2014) however one common principle adult education has fundamentally is its focus on;

the humanising process of education, the purpose and the focus of education to make us better human beings, the dynamic combination of the *what* and the *how* is the hallmark of adult education, that which distinguishes it from all other forms of education. (Connolly, 2006, p 41, as cited in Murray, 2014)

We can talk about phenomenological learning, how research can illuminate or shed light on various experiences or issues in education and we can interpret, however, a critically social justice perspective warrants us to act on and alter how these experiences and issues can be developed, challenged or eliminated, through as (Connolly & Hussey, 2013) relay, changing the system to meet the needs of people, not changing the person.

One of the ways we can do this in practice as a collective, as is the intention of this research, is to support capacity building with staff, educators, as opposed to seeing staffs’ presumed “*inability* or misplaced interest” to be inclusive in their teaching as the issue. This also requires an intricate exploration of the systems and structures which have isolated and oppressed both staff and students in the first place but this analysis should not take precedent over the fact that both students and staff come to the educational arena with capacities as human beings.

As educators we also have to grow our own capacities in order to help students develop theirs. Self-authoring matters in today's world because as Drago-Severson (2015) relays "we also need to grow, our own because our internal capacities influence how we can support each other". (Severson, 2015, n:p). The approach and purpose of adult education and critical pedagogy is by nature supporting capacity building through various means of engagement, that have a recognition of the individual and the life experience (Dewey, 1938,1997) that they bring to a collective shared learning space. (Freire, 1996)

The Relational in Education

The value of the relational for me, is also intertwined with social change, transformative learning, relative to my unique position in adopting a multiplicity of roles when working with students in higher and further education. This is an enriching, complex, intricate and challenging experience which sometimes places me on the margins of system conformity against my will, trying to retain or reconfigure my principles, values and ethos in a system of which I think needs to be challenged to rethink education, thus the power and significance of moral and critical education becomes a reality for me and the students I work with daily.

Even though unequal power relations do exist in our society according to Noddings (2012), doesn't mean that there is an immediate power imbalance in care relations because "both parties contribute to the establishment and maintaining of care" and I see and feel this in my relationship with the students as both carer and cared for.(p.772). It is important not to affiliate the word care with a specific population or label led thinking such as that of people with disabilities as "dependents of care" so for me the importance is framing the importance of care as an *educational process* and vital, particularly in the initial stages of qualitative research. My role as a programme facilitator was to support students to "*feel safe, secure and confident in the university community*", perhaps an aspirational statement, but consequently, action and feeling for me are embedded in the process of caring encounters.

Moreover, as illustrated in this study and a previous study which explored student experiences on the initiative (Finnegan, 2013), for the students relationships are at the core of their college experience (Udisky & Hughson, 2012) as well as the personable approach from a lecturer, support person.

In discussing the benefits and difficulties of the initiative and in the warp and the weave of how they talked about everyday life on campus are human relationships of care and concern. In this respect the empirical data supports the feminist argument that care and relationality should be far more central to theories of learning and education (Finnegan, 2013).

This ability to engage should also coupled with how learners themselves, engage in self-directed learning. As Brookfield (1986) notes

Through individual reflection and personal interaction with the facilitator, adult learners are able to become more aware of their unique learning styles and to develop a sense of direct control over the method and direction of learning and through this learners will find that their personal investment in, as well as their motivation for, learning is enhanced. (Brookfield 1986, p. 61)

This statement is important because it is not saying that adults are intrinsically self-motivated or will engage in self-directed learning (Knowles) but acknowledging that these reflections and interactions are processes. *These processes* are assisted through facilitation and have varying consequences, such as increased self-awareness, as well as discovering what motivates the self in dialogue, *with* the person holding the process in a session, the facilitator or co facilitators.

Perspective in Light of Practice

For me, an approach to teaching is an approach you live, with adaptations and alterations to meet the needs of groups, regardless of ability. By live I mean you are in it, it doesn't leave you, like a way of life which provides you with that self-belief to steer the wheel and know that you are going to be knocked off the ship at times too. My approach to facilitating learning is a philosophical stance I take when working with all of my groups.

I would question the meaning of disability /ability in a learning context because both will have variations in meaning for individuals and in socio cultural analyses, so I would always try to support learners to name what they are or were experiencing at their discretion.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an reflective account of how I see knowledge and learning as process of co creation acknowledging the various socio political forces at play as well as the prevailing impact of culture and cultural change from a critical theory perspective but with intersectional importance in providing more holistic accounts for oppression. A postmodern lens is also important to adopt in this research given the distinctions and subjectivities in meanings and issues with conceptualising disability in a meta narrative framework. This view is also rooted in the significant of meaning making in exploring emancipatory and transformative accounts of experience. From a pedagogical position the relational is vital as well as assisting students to critically reflect on experience through dialogical processes fostered in critical pedagogy. This being said, there is a need also for practitioners to focus on the complexities of power relations as so socially justice forms of education can prosper. The next chapter is a review of the literature and policy relevant to the nature and form of this research.

Chapter 3: Research Context and Critical Review of Literature

Who's Context?.....



Introduction

This chapter includes a policy analysis given the socio political landscape the ILI resides in and endeavours to critically discuss the overarching issues and helpfulness in how disability is perceived as well as how inclusive education is positioned in the higher education arena.

Literature Review

Context of This Study

One initiative is the focus for this study as it is one of the only fully inclusive models of support in higher education for students with intellectual disabilities in Ireland at this time. The initiative is entitled the Inclusive Learning Initiative (ILI) and it is an access and support system for students with intellectual disabilities wishing to study in higher education in Maynooth University in Co. Kildare Ireland. (Magennis, Finn and Burke, 2015). The initiative is based on a model derived from the state of Alberta Canada, who have been facilitating fully inclusive education with people with intellectual disabilities since the 1980's. (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012, Hughson, Moodie, & Uditsky, 2006; McDonald, MacPherson-Court, Franks, Uditsky, & Symons, 1997; Uditsky & Hughson, 2008).

The ILI emulated the Alberta model underpinning it with adult education pedagogies that embrace different ways of knowing and seek to include diverse student groups. In this paradigm, divergent experiences give voice to different knowledges that challenge habits of thinking in this context, habits of thinking about education; what it means to become an educated person and what is the purpose of education? (Finn, Magennis & Burke 2016).

The majority of students with an intellectual disability, attending higher education in Ireland are *placed* on various programmes which have been defined in a certain way to reflect the philosophical underpinnings of the particular programme or initiative and its intentions.

To date, as is relayed in international literature, inclusive education programmes are stereotypically classified as *models*, including the segregated model, mixed /hybrid model and individualised fully inclusive model, but each programme is also very context dependent. (Hart, 2006, Noonan 2012, Uditsky & Hughson, 2012).

The USAs programmes of inclusion or transition programmes of which are entitled comprehensive transition and postsecondary (CTP) programs, situate them as structured entities, more *credible*, in light of federal funding with changes to the Higher Education Opportunity Act grant, submissions or allocations of federal funding as opposed to the piloting of projects or initiatives.

In Ireland the endeavour to include students with intellectual disabilities has exhibited itself in a number of formats and processes. These range from individual's connections to higher education with support from their relevant disability service, to individual educational institutions offering higher education opportunities to students (O' Brien et al, 2008) to initiatives of a collaborative nature between disability services and higher education institutions. The establishment of these various pathways is an explicit response to the limited opportunities and access routes learners with intellectual disabilities have in higher education progression in Ireland.

Despite legal rights, recent figures estimate that people with an Intellectual disability are amongst the most disadvantaged in the educational system. For example, only 4% have a 3rd level degree and 63% have not progressed to second level (compared to 19% of all adults) (WALK, Watson & Nolan, 2015, p.20).

During the 1990s, higher education institutions were largely inaccessible for disabled students and were also reluctant to provide any kind of support to these students (Barnes, 1991). (As cited in Liasidou , 2014)

Contrary to (Grigal, Hart and Lewis', 2011) analogy, in Ireland the question that still remains, in light of slow systematic movement to include students with intellectual disabilities and the establishment of independent initiatives to respond to students needs, is "should students with intellectual disabilities go to college?". However, we are seeing movements to facilitate inclusive education via individual families, learners, disability organisations and higher education institutions. (Grigal, Hart and Lewis, 2011, p.4)

The association between inclusion and disability is very prominent given the history of exclusion persons with disabilities have faced in our world, thus movements to include, the perceived strive for inclusion, as well as the recognition and practice of equality in education. This shift towards *inclusion* is also explicitly evident in the vast array of and development of policies, practices and research which seeks to address the educational needs and experiences of children and adults with intellectual disabilities, including how postsecondary, higher education opportunities are developed for learners with intellectual disabilities, perceived as one of the most educationally *marginalised* groups in our society. However, the understanding and view of inclusion and these practices is wholly and uniquely varied, thus adding another dimension as to how inclusive education is facilitated at an organisational, socio, political and practical level. In more recent times, inclusion in an educational context, has taken the form of a human rights approach to disability and various other frameworks which have been used as a basis of formulating policy, understanding disability and a rationale as to why inclusive education should be facilitated in the first place. This preliminary questioning of *why inclusion and the construction of experiences for adults with ID has further distorted and stifled how inclusive education is facilitated and perceived.*

In this chapter these frameworks and forms of inclusion will be critically discussed in the context of policy and legislative developments, inclusive education as a framework, with particular reference to the Irish educational context and the international higher education “inclusion model landscape”.

Let’s Talk Inclusion

Even within stated definitions of inclusion, such as those contained in dictionaries, we find differences in how inclusion is defined. The Oxford Living Dictionary defines inclusion as “the action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure. A person or thing that is included within a whole”. (Oxford Dictionaries, 2017). Other definitions in their descriptions or examples affiliate inclusion with disability such as “the act or practice of including students with disabilities in regular school classes”. (Merriam-Webster, 2017) This particular act or practice maybe assumed as adherent to the integration movement or assimilation model where “its emphasis was on providing supports to individual students to enable them to ‘fit in’ to the mainstream programme without any changes being made to that programme” (Winter, E and O’Rawl, P, 2010 p. 12) . This issue of *the unchanged* has been one of the biggest barriers to facilitating inclusive education. Hence, the need to look at educational, organisational, pedagogical reform as a consequence of the reconfiguration of special needs and ways that will lead schools, as well as all educational institutions, to respond positively to pupil diversity; seeing individual differences not as problems to be fixed, but as opportunities for enriching learning. (UNESCO, 2005, p.9)

In higher education, the word inclusion is often described with reference to programmes, access, engagement or initiatives which seek to include *non-traditional* students, and within which have multiple meanings.

For example, inclusion might be premised on what's "hot" in policy development at the time or a statement of purpose from a particular programme, which informs how the programme is perceived, funded and/or delivered.

The action in these definitions maybe developments to support inclusion, as like *practices*, outlined in the second definition by Merriam and the *state* maybe determined by the person experiencing the action. The principles and philosophical underpinnings of inclusive education programmes and inclusion itself lends to different interpretations but with a general strive for, towards equality, which is in itself a term with different connotations. According to Corbey et al (2012)

The philosophical underpinning of inclusion is to counter the discrimination, stigma and prejudices that people with intellectual disability often face. It aims to do so by according all members of society the same fundamental rights to undertake valued social roles and become valued equal members of society. (Corbey, et al, 2012, p.71)

One could argue that inclusion is not just within a group or structure but within the self, or inclusion as a feeling or furthermore that power, power relations determine the type of inclusion experienced by the person or being facilitated in a particular setting.

There are different ways of interpreting statements that we can filter through our own view of education or our vision of inclusion. Some may see inclusive as the adjective of inclusion, others may see distinctions between the words. Acknowledging this is important when we come to explore what inclusive education represents or what we think it should encompass.

Organisational responses to inclusion in the higher education realm have been positioned alongside a particular model (Hart, 2006), of which I argue can pose the danger of stationing people in models of disability and inclusion rather than *being in* higher education. These strives for inclusion can become exclusionary if there aren't core principles or student led critiques in how inclusive education is facilitated.

Addressing educational inequality as also brought about with it perspectives on fundamental *principles of inclusion* UNESCO, (2015) which have paved the way for the acknowledgment that being in an educational institution with a disability is not enough (Slee,2017) and does not constitute inclusion. More so, the issue with segregated education has been challenged, particularly with respect to “evidence of the relationship of segregation to increased vulnerability to abuse and to a marginalized life characterized by isolation, unemployment, and poverty”. (Udisky & Hughson, 2012, p. 299).

In Alberta Canada, full inclusion via IPSE, Inclusive Post-Secondary Education, was premised on the concept of embedding individuals with ID within normative pathways to the maximum extent across the lifespan. Normative pathways are the life avenues ordinarily pursued by individuals without disabilities.(Udisky & Hughson, 2012, p.299) The facilitation of inclusive postsecondary programmes with specific aims and objectives, defining what inclusive education should constitute, have been evident and expanding in the state of Alberta, Canada since the 1980s.

However, it is more widely believed and given legitimacy from a policy and human rights perspective, that the concept of inclusive education emerged at the World Conference on Special Needs Education Access and Equality, known as the Salamanca Statement 1994.

Contrary to the Salamanca statement in relation to adult education (UNESCO, 1994, p.34) that “special courses should also be designed to suit the needs and conditions of different groups of adults with disabilities” the experience in Alberta and the intentions of fully inclusive higher education permits the opposite. An education space where postsecondary, higher or adult education does not “develop special third level programmes for people with an intellectual disability and where everybody can be included in post-secondary education – regardless of the level of their intellectual disability”. (Udisky and Hughson, 2009, p.1) The distinction between fully inclusive education, the individual support model, and other forms or models of inclusion such as the segregated, mixed/hybrid models is an important one (Noonan, 2012 & Hart, 2006). However, within the “fully inclusive model” we must also acknowledge that the *intent is also aspirational*, that is to fully include students to the *best possible extent* (Magennis, Finn & Burke, 2014, Udisky & Hughson, 2012, Hart,2006) which acknowledges the individual pathway but also the variation in social realities and the socio- political forces in operation in higher education.

Disability Policy Trajectory Relative to Higher Education

Policy development in assisting educational inclusion for persons with disabilities in Ireland has ranged from the establishment of service directives, initiatives and various policy frameworks underpinned by the existing legislation. These are principally relative the 2005 Disability Act, the Equal Status Act 2000, the Employment Equality Acts 1998, 2007 and the 2004 Education for Persons with Special Needs Act as well as the overarching UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, CRPD. Although Ireland has not ratified this convention it must comply with the convention under EU, European Union Law.

The CRPD applies human rights to disability, thus making general human rights specific to persons with disabilities, and clarifying existing international law regarding disability. Even if a state does not ratify the CRPD, it helps interpret other human rights conventions to which the state is party. (WHO, 2011) The issues with the ratification of the convention are reflected in Ireland's own legislative issues in relation to failure to implement the various national acts in supporting equality for persons with disabilities.

Inclusion and equality policies in higher education are profoundly influenced by the 1999 Bologna Process which directly informs, for example, the Higher Education System Performance framework 2014 - 2016. Objective 2 in the framework seeks to include underrepresented groups in higher education, including groups who have never been represented in higher education.

Other directives and bodies established in support of educational inclusion for persons with disabilities range from the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, to the development of the National Access Plan for Equity of access to Higher Education via the HEA, Higher Education Authority, initiatives to facilitate access (Magennis & Sheerin 2013, Magennis, Finn & Burke 2014), the NIID, National Institute for Intellectual Disability in 1998, established in Trinity College Dublin, now referred to as the Centre for Inclusion and Intellectual Disability, to the establishment of the NCSE, the National Council for Special Education, who are responsible for improvement of the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs in Ireland. In addition, legislation has been enacted that supports the concept of widening access to higher education (Government of Ireland, Universities Act, 1997; Education Act, 1998; Qualifications Act, 1999; Equal Status Act, 2000) as cited in (Shevlin et al, 2010).

The high prevalence of persons with ID registered with disability service providers in Ireland, 27,863 people were registered in 2016 (Health Research Board, 2017), also brings with it intensive pushes towards the facilitation of educational equality with respect to service provision, in line with current legislation and in moves to implement support systems and services with persons and their families. One such directive which was very poignant was the review of disability services in 2008 resulting in the HSE, Health Service Executive's, 2012 New Directions Report and Policy. The establishment of HIQA, Health Information Quality Authority, came in correlation with New Directions, to monitor the delivery of these standards premised on a quality of life framework including access to formal and non-formal education. However the explicit move to support quality of life is also accompanied with changes to the disability service sector. If we explore the dimensions of power in this move we still see the implicit relations in these changes. Power includes both "resources" and "exercise" but, Lukes (2005) offers us an interesting view on the potentiality of power, "potentiality, not an actuality." (Shwartz, 2007). In the era of accountability, policy directives have transcended the gaze into disability services, with the emphasis, as Foucault would say on surveillance, people knowing they are being watched, hence, we have the subsequent monitoring of and shaping of behaviour in human relations. However, Lukes (2005) believed that power was also about, *the power to*, not just power over and recognised the *potentiality* of power both positive, productive accounts of power and in grievances, not just in exercise of behavioural outputs. This may also mean the shaping of peoples, both staff and services users, preferences, as so people will accept their way of knowing and being because it's all they know.

In a study with *consumers*, (persons with intellectual disabilities) who were using a disability service, Whitehead and Hughey (2004), concluded based on the respondents accounts that those with *developmental disability* have been prevented from self-determined action and from reflection upon their actions, which has created a culture limiting consciousness raising and formed a false consensus premised on the third dimension of power as illustrated by Lukes , 2005, p. 49) Some disability organisations are seeking to address this issue through an emphasis on the “voice of adults, users or learners”. The absence of grievances, indicated for Whitehead and Hughey (2004) that people with disabilities were socialised into compliance, through an acceptance of the bureaucratic nature of service provision, that is they come to express and accept “ this is the way things are done”. This was also evidenced in the system set up where some of the persons advocate advisors and support persons, keyworkers undertook both of these roles as a dualism creating a conflict of interest situation whereby the wishes of the self -advocacy group could be in contrast to the intentions of the organisation. (p.49) We see this in a multiplicity of forms through the construction of the “advocate”, a disputable term which has its resonances in supporting the person to *authentically* express their views, opinions and to self - advocate in order to gain in various ways. However, the dualism of these roles ascribed here, is further stifled not just by the perceived agenda of the organisation, which maybe influenced by *the quality and legislative* factors, but through the broader system implications of power, such as that of “staff consciousness” and the conflicting connections of staff and service users to issues such as support, empowerment, experience and wishes, as well as the insight you obtain from the *organic intellectual* or the person with lived embodied experience.

The trajectory and philosophical underpinnings of service providers still has a profound impact on how opportunities are facilitated with users and how inclusion is fostered.

Any analysis of disability and inclusion requires us to critically explore what Lukes (2005) refers to as the *distorting of real interests, through the third dimension of power*, insidious power which is also of significant importance when we examine the socio cultural construction of disability itself. Insidious power in this thesis will be discussed in light of critical policy analysis and learners positioning in inclusive higher education.

Intended Inclusive Developments in Higher Education

In today's era of education support organisations have responded to the development of inclusive higher education in a multiplicity of ways, such as the facilitation of charter for inclusive teaching and learning complied by AHEAD which was signed by higher education institutions in 2007 and online platforms to assist educators in facilitating inclusive teaching, learning and assessment with students (AHEAD, 2009). This support also comes with the acknowledgment that people with disabilities are a "growing" population, comprising of 13% of the entire population with 57,709 people having an intellectual disability, equivilating to 9.7% of the entire population. (CSO, 2011). The 2016 census data on disability has yet to be released.

In a 2015/2016 study by AHEAD in assessing the numbers and profile of students with disabilities in higher education, we can see that there are now a total of 11,244 students with disabilities across 25 responding institutions representing 5.2% of the total student population in higher education. (AHEAD, 2017).

The survey is reflective of the students who have disclosed their disability, are full time students and have registered with a disability access service of a participating institution.

Perspectives on education and disability relative to policy development in Ireland have brought with them the distinction between equality and equity. National Disability Strategy (NDS) Implementation Plan 2013 – 16 refers to equality relative to the recognition of diversity stating

Diversity is part of the human condition, and systems or structures designed for ‘typical’ people can be a barrier to those who are equal but different. The concept of equality recognises diversity, that people are different. (NDS Implementation Group, 2013, p.4)

Equity in an educational sense of the word functions as means of providing students with what they need to be successful. The Employment Equality Acts 1998 & 2004 and the Equality Status Act 2000 to 2004, extend to education with a legal obligation on institutions to reasonably accommodate students with disabilities. The Disability Act 2005 permits that learners are reasonably accommodated in all levels of the education system.

Moving Beyond Reasonable Accommodation in Fostering Inclusion in Higher Education

Reasonable accommodations have been defined in various ways to reflect, at a general level those tools and supports which assist the student to demonstrate their learning in educational assessment. Examples of accommodations include, assistive technology, scribe support or having a personal assistant, sign language interpreter or educational support worker to assist the student’s learning. There are an intricate range of accommodations depending on the needs of the person.

There is a reference to 3rd level education in the UN Convention (*Extract from Article 24 of UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities* “5. States Parties shall

ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.” (United Nations, n, d).

The issue predominately embedded in discussions around reasonable accommodations as noted by the Advisory Group on Reasonable Accommodations, for state examinations in Ireland (2008) is that of the “importance of promoting high standards of quality and integrity in the assessment process, while, at the same time, ensuring access and participation for all students”. (Advisory Group on Reasonable Accommodations, 2008).

However, the vision of inclusive education is moving beyond the facilitation of reasonable accommodations to the explicit facilitation of inclusive teaching, learning and assessment with the intention to facilitate learning with all students. Liasidou (2014) also sees reasonable accommodations as apart of antidiscrimination legislation, however ,what this kind of phraseology does is portrays disability as an individual problem in need of ‘reasonable accommodations’, rather than a systemic problem that results from power inequities and discriminatory regimes (Guillaume, 2011, p.122). In higher education the disability support services are perceived as standalone or separate services which is why Liasidou(2014) sees reasonable accommodations as “embedding exclusionary regimes into the learning process and the student–tutor relationship and as a result, it is occasionally the case that disabled students are segregated from their nondisabled peers so as to have additional time during exams.(p123).

However, there is an acknowledgment in more recent times, both in international policy and practice development, to *legitimately* recognise and facilitate inclusion, even though the legislation to support educational inclusion has been so longstanding. How this is perceived is different adding a further complexity to the defined intentions of inclusive education. Various means of facilitating this include the propositions of approaches such as “mainstreaming equality”, “the education for all agenda” and “universal design for learning”.

Learning for All

As Winter and O’Rawl (2010) relay “The fundamental principle of an inclusive school is that all children should learn together, regardless of any difficulties or differences”. (p.25) The focus on inclusion in education is observable how some higher initiatives define their programmes and the “Education for All” agenda (UNESCO, 2005), aswell as policy specifications and guidelines in primary and secondary education in Ireland (NSCE, 2012). The NSCE (2012) have devised an Inclusive Education Framework to support schools with the inclusion of pupils with *special educational needs*. The principles for this framework were devised upon an extensive review of international literature, acknowledging the whole system process, importance of reflective practice and a commitment to inclusive education development. This promotes a shared understanding of inclusion for pupils with special educational needs and a commitment to its development as well as self-assessment activities schools can facilitate in order to measure their “levels of inclusion”. (NCSE, 2012). However, the measurement of inclusion or any act of this nature catapults empiricism into education sphere, thus the measuring of people.

The move from facilitating reasonable accommodations is also reflected in the UDL Model, universal design for education, which is gaining traction in higher education and the disability service sector with UDL centres of excellence established in the NDA, National Disability Authority and AHEAD, Association for Higher Education Access and Disability. The UDL Model is premised on facilitating multiple means of representation, action and expression and engagement in the learning process. This is so every learner has the means to engage in learning and be in a position to demonstrate their learning in a way which is conducive to the multiple ways we learn, thus the inclusion of all students.

According to (Heelan, 2015) the central thrust of UDL is to “increase access to learning by reducing obstacles (physical, cognitive, intellectual, organisational, etc.) to learning to the maximum degree possible and to do this by designing each element of an education and training activity in a way that absolutely minimises these obstacles for all learners.”

As Liasidou (2014) states

Furthermore, UD should be firmly embedded in a social justice framework that is informed by a serious interest in exploring and destabilising power inequities, which create and project subordinated educational and social roles for disabled and other disenfranchised groups of individuals (Knoll, 2009). Arguably, UD pedagogies alone cannot, according to Johnson (2004), ‘unpack the power inequities that define educational bodies, relationships and structures’. Consequently, a more pronounced emphasis should be placed on incorporating a critical approach to designing UD curricula. (Liasidou, 2014, p128).

Critics of this approach have stated that the UDL model does not take into account the individual in education, the particular nuances of the person and the relational as well as the UDL model’s view “that all curricula should be intentionally designed (from concept stage and not as an add-on)”. (Anne Heelan, 2015).

UDL's approach, although it facilitates a more holistic, opportunist experience for learners, negates the concept of curriculum as a conversation, fluid process acknowledging the developments of people and experiences in the group and the changing nature of learning. (Freire, 1996, Connolly & Hussey, 2013) . The adoption of what Liasidou (2013) refers to as a "generic" curriculum, I argue, will impede on the students ability to become a part of the learning process, unless there is a critical dimension as to how UDL will be facilitated at a broader scale and interculturally. UDL has the potential to become another way of perpetuating just ways of knowing with students unless there is an embedded social justice framework.

The Illusion of Inclusion in Policy Analysis

As stated, the intention of facilitating equity, in access through widening participation, in supporting non-traditional students is acknowledged in higher education via the National Access Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015- 2019, which falls under the umbrella of the HEA, Higher Education Authority in Ireland. An analysis of this plan, with reference to supporting access for students with disabilities, conveys that intellectual disability or increasing access for students with learning disabilities is not within the yearly specified disability "target groups" yet there is a mention to

continuing to support students in other categories of disability (for example, students with a learning disability, with mental health conditions or with neurological conditions) and to ensure that all students with disabilities can access and participate in higher education on an equal basis. (DES &HEA, 2015, p.36)

AHEAD's (2014) response consultation paper towards the development of a new national access plan made reference for the need

to continue to set targets for all categories of students with a disability and not just those outlined within the matrix of participation targets for students with disability outlined in higher education in a National Access Plan Targets. All categories of disability could be embedded within the performance indicators for participation, equal access and lifelong learning. Funding needs to be put in place to support students with disabilities to engage in higher education on a part time basis. (AHEAD, 2014,n.p)

The issue with target groups in light of the fact that nearly ten percent of the population of Ireland has an intellectual disability (CSO, 2011) is that intellectual disability or learning disability is not even a listed disability "target group" in the national access plan for equity of access to higher education nor it is contained within the DARE disability criteria (DARE, 2017) conveying in itself the issues in our education system, supporting learners educational progression through primary , secondary and tertiary education and policy makers expectations on learners with intellectual disabilities in Ireland.

The other aspect of this is that ID is taken out of the categorisation process however within this current system categorisation through evidence of disability gains a student hope of entry and supports. The rational, subtly, inclusionary or exclusionary *creations* behind the intent of these acts, such as widening participation through categorisation, are not always with observable conflict and are sites whereby both our interests and preferences maybe shaped or changed through a multiplicity of mechanisms. This could be for example, if we are told and sold a certain view, and we consciously or unconsciously accept this view premised on the *belief* that "this is an act which will benefits our lives", thus we may not question this belief or the nature of its origins. For example looking uncritically at widening participation as an act of inclusion.

This can also happen to us unknowingly, that is as Lukes (2005) argues, we may not even be aware of our real interests or preferences, yet power is still shaping them.

However, if we look at the nature of widening participation and what it achieves we see the winners and the losers through the systematic reproduction of inequality in criteria. The growing development of initiatives in higher education to support access for students with ID is in itself a response to the failings of the system with the intention to provide opportunity even if such programmes or initiatives have an “education for all agenda” or “enrichment for all” approach. Because very few learners with ID have had the opportunity to be in “mainstream” education or engage in an assessment like the leaving certificate, thus the DARE route and even the criteria within the mature student application system are unattainable for most students with ID, thus the establishment of initiatives, projects and movements to provide access and higher education experience.

The limited amount of students with ID who do “get through” to higher education via the existing access routes to higher education have been assisted by some access, disability support offices in HEI’s, if students choose to disclose their disability. The stigma surrounding disability can be cause for non-disclosure (NDA,2011) but because for most adults, students with ID’s entry to higher education via an initiative is their first time in any “considered mainstream” education space or a space where the person has their “freedom” so the choice maybe to take the journey without the call for supports (Finnegan, 2013) .

Some students and access offices have “listed” intellectual disability as “other” or “general learning disability”, or with institution specific criteria or with some ad hoc agreements, supports and funding determined and influenced by whether the student is full or part time, as is the other prominent issue in facilitating access to funding and supports for part time or occasional students with disabilities. The DARE scheme, disability access route to education, is dependent on individual institution sign up to this scheme. DARE is premised on providing an access route to higher education based on reduced leaving certificate points. The long term national issue which continues to linger in higher education, as noted by the study (AHEAD, 2017, p.14), is that of the part time full time divide.

Students with disabilities who opt to or are studying on part time courses cannot register with the higher education institution’s disability support office and do not receive access to the fund for students with disabilities (FSD) managed by the HEA, Higher Education Authority, which is supposed to be provided as a means of assisting access offices with the implementation of the national access plan and more positive educational prospects for students with disabilities. However for part time, occasional, access or foundation course students what we observe is the opposite. The HEA identified this as barrier in 2008 (WALK, 2015). Consequently, students with ID coming to higher education via an inclusive initiative or program are left with limited or no supports to avail of from the particular institutions’ access, disability support office because the student status means that they cannot access the FSD, which also supports the student’s availing of reasonable accommodations in education. Educational institutions have a legal obligation to provide reasonable accommodations to all students who require same as contained within the legislation. (Employment Equality Acts, Equal Status Acts, Disability Act).

The positive consequence of absences in basic college supports for students who are not eligible to apply to access their college disability service has been the concentration of more focused efforts on students 'connections to the *mainstream* or existing support systems available in higher education, which for example, in an initiative, can be supported by the initiative learning facilitator, and the natural support systems, outside that of paid professional support. One of the objectives of the National Access Plan 2015 – 2019 is to have all student supports mainstreamed by 2019. (HEA, p.28). Some educational institutions are not aware of their legislative obligations (Walk, 2015, p.7). The part time full time divide raises serious concerns about the implementation of and potential breaches of legislation.

The UN convention 'Rights of Persons with Disabilities' has not yet been ratified by Ireland, however, under EU law and the 2005 Disability Act in Ireland, all educational institutions must support and reasonably accommodate all *students at all levels in the educational system* (AHEAD, 2016). This is regardless of programme of study, registration status, disability etc.

Furthermore, because higher education, particularly with respect to fully inclusive programmes, can be the first time adults with intellectual disabilities have ever engaged in "mainstream" educational opportunities, a "normative pathway" or within a structured course of study, a fulltime degree or full certificate attainment may not be feasible upon their commencement in college due the number of credits required to obtain a higher certificate or degree or the learning system in place. However, as opposed to auditing courses students should have the opportunity to engage in flexible learning options, including the "banking of credits" which also supports RPL, recognition of prior learning.

This viable assessment should provide a platform for learning demonstration, progression and formal educational recognition and development, as so students obtain a legitimate qualification relative to the area of study, as is reflected in lots of part time and occasional student study options in higher education. Due to the barriers in access students with ID find it difficult to avail of the various study options in the first place.

Students registered on the Inclusive Learning Initiative (ILI) in Maynooth University avail of, flexible accreditation, meaning the departments the students are studying in assess their work at the level produced thus, study a multiplicity of subjects or a preferred subject, of which all contributes to the student's own certificate of individual learning. The level achieved in each module is illustrated on the student's transcript upon the conclusion of their three year study in university, if the student has been successful in their learning and completed their course. At present to qualify for the certificate of individual learning requires students to successfully complete 20 credits or more over the course of their three years of study. Due to support *not* available via the FSD for the students, in 2012 I established a mentorship, now termed learning partnership programme ,in collaboration with the students I was working with on the ILI in Maynooth University. Partners assisted in the various aspects of students learning such as that of academic, social learning, technology support, library training skills and personal development experiences (Burke, O' Connor & Harkin 2013 (Burke, 2013). The emphasis and focus on existing connections also meant that we could explore how these systems could be altered or adapted to meet the diverse needs of many students. This institutional learning was co facilitated by students who were registered on the initiative and not just "a member or collection" of staff working with students.

There is this misconception created that students with disabilities are “much better supported” in higher education as opposed to further education but this is not reflective of the reality for lots of learners and their families. The further and community education support system does have the absence of an assessment service with NEPS, National Educational Psychology Service supporting primary and secondary education and the national access office in third level, supporting the delivery of needs assessment processes and reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities in Ireland. However, issues still remain in higher education.

The perceived difficulty in “people with disabilities having difficulty with achieving their goals in mainstream education and training” (NSCE, p. 53) tells us explicitly that the mainstream education and training system is not equipped to support the diverse learning needs and abilities of all learners. In a lot of cases the difficulty resides with the person with the disability rather than the questioning of why the person maybe experiencing the difficulties. In the disability service sector, in which services are coordinated by the HSE, Health Service Executive, adults transitioning into adult services, 18 to 24 years of age, can avail of the RT fund, rehabilitative training fund, an educational fund provided by the HSE, as so adults can to engage with, various education and adult education programmes with the intention of supporting “the development of life skills, social skills and basic work skills with the objective of enhancing quality of life and general work capacity” .

Most of these RT programmes or courses people with ID engage in, happen in disability services however there are some moves to support the inclusion of adults with ID through work with both adults and educators in further and community education. (McNamara, 1998)

Unfortunately the setting up of separate, segregated educational opportunities means that the opportunities for adults with ID are located *in* and predetermined *by* the system. Even the word *rehabilitative* training (RT) suggests that adults need some sort of rehabilitation process as a consequence of their intellectual disability. Our work according to Boal (1998) “is not about changing, improving, or fixing the person so that they may better fit into the social systems; rather it’s about changing social systems to meet the needs of the person”. (Hussey, Connolly, 2013, p.85.).

The word mainstream is a societal construction, but it has become an important reference point in the fruition of education and life opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities in Ireland. Consequently, the ethos, means and methods of inclusion become about conformity, individual focused with limited reflection of the system as a medium in meeting the needs of persons.

Further and Community Education is solely dependent on support from the relevant ETB’S, on an adhoc basis, however centres and students in further education are applying and availing of the FSD.

There is something amiss when we see the statement in the Higher Education System Performance Framework 2014 – 2016 first report which says that “the Irish system has met the access targets set in the National Plan for Equity of Access 2008-2013 for flexible learners and for students with a disability” (p.14) , yet students with intellectual disabilities’ access to all forms of higher, adult and further education remains restricted and at “crisis point” with a cloud of uncertainty and no sustainable stream of funding to support, access, via inclusive higher education initiatives, thus the future of initiatives to support access remains adhoc, agreement based and uncertain.

The overarching wish for staff and students, involved in initiatives, is that in the future there are no initiatives, in a universal support system for all students, however, the obvious lack of commitment to access in this regard, frames in itself where Ireland stands, with respect to the embracement of equality in education for persons with intellectual disabilities. The system is still reliant on “champions on the inside” (WALK, 2015), individual members of staff or decision makers in education centres or institutions, to facilitate inclusion and addressing the barriers preventing people with intellectual disabilities in engaging in education, training and meaningful learning experiences.

Students themselves also take the journey, going to adult, further, community or higher education, perhaps applying to an initiative, but also perhaps experiencing and observing this undercurrent of systematic exclusion. Exclusion, in light of the context provided in this policy analysis also comes in the form of Inclusion used a policy borrowing context. Liasidou (2008) discusses how inclusive education policies can be characterized as ‘hybrid legislative documents’, in the sense that they attempt to fuse antithetical discourses in inconspicuous, yet destructive ways, including the presenting of inclusion with documents clauses of conditionality. Liasidou (2008) also states from the context of policy inclusion in Cyprus that the over reliance on ‘professional expertism’, far from constituting an educational panacea, is a dangerous ideological and pragmatic entrapment that obscures and jeopardizes the essence of inclusion (p.238).

Moving from Fully Inclusive as a Focus: Critical Inclusion and what constitutes Social Justice?

Authentic inclusion resides in the experiences and feelings of the individual or collective but the facilitation of these experiences also warrants an inclusive approach.

If we thinking about meaningful inclusion with respect to education we are thinking outside of the *act of inclusion*, the ability to educate learners in the “regular or typical sphere” to what actually constitutes inclusion for the person. Inclusive programmes and initiatives have defined their purposes and/or philosophical standpoints which range from “strengthening citizenship” (AHEAD, 2011) to the life enriching experiences, identity or relationships (Udisky & Hughson, 2012). This defining or stating of purpose influences how the programme or initiative is facilitated but also how it is perceived. For example, the National University of Ireland Galway’s facilitation of an inclusive learning initiative was also shaped by UNESCO’s guidelines on inclusive education, the legal frameworks which support inclusion. (AHEAD, 2011)

There are very limited studies or literature on students’ views of inclusive education and what they perceive *about* postsecondary initiatives, fully inclusive education and whether or not they experience or feel a “positioning in education”.

As Sachs and Schreuer (2011, p. 52) write:

‘most research and discussions on the inclusion of students with disabilities focus on their academic achievements, and neglect the implications of their social participation. This finding calls academic institutions, student organizations, and policymakers to promote social participation programmes as part of the services provided in higher education institutions . . .(Liasidou, 2014, p. 125).

This view on experience is import to explore because it allows us to hear or visualise students’ accounts of inclusion or inhibiting practices for them and what education can do to respond to these developments and issues.

If we do not question inclusion, as Udisky and Hughson (2012) highlight, the acceptance of segregation or implicit exclusionary practices become the norm, as well as what Lukes (2005) relays, the self- acceptance of a person's role in the existing order of things.

In these moves *for inclusion* we must acknowledge that everything we do is laden with value. Aside from programmes outlining their philosophical standpoints "The degree of inclusion embraced by any postsecondary initiative is often a function of the values and knowledge of the architects of these efforts". (Udisky & Hughson,2012, p. 266) At present the architects of inclusion efforts tend to be perceived as staff or educational professionals or particular services, educational institutions and (Wagner et al.,2005) as cited in (Corbey et al ,2012), notes how there is limited research, particularly in Europe, that looks at the experiences of inclusion in higher education of adults with intellectual disabilities as the numbers are still relatively low .

However, what we are seeing now is students with intellectual disabilities in higher education speaking not just about experiences but their *views* of what constitutes education, whether that be described with an inclusive dimension or not. (Finnegan, 2013, Slee, 2017). Some students and graduates see themselves as *ambassadors* for inclusive education (Corbey et al, 2012) or social activists and others wish to have no affiliation with programmes or movements for change. The purpose of this research study is to assess learners' perception of education and how they see this movement to support inclusive education when they are ones living and being exposed to an experience of this nature. In education we must also see students as the architects of efforts and provide an informed decisional space for students to engage or disengage from the inclusion conversation or movement.

The Carriage of Categorisation in Contemporary Society

Seeing people requires us to also explore the landscape disability has resided in, but to not allow the analyses of stigma, labelling and barriers become the descriptions of the lives of people with disabilities.

Aside from the viewpoint that a hierarchy of disabilities exists relative to access to opportunities including education (WALK, 2015) there has also been the construction of various assumptions within the realm of intellectual disability itself, via the distinction of capacities between people with mild, moderate and severe, profound intellectual disabilities and how this is intertwined with the construction of language, ways of being and ways of knowing all premised on verbal language and the ability to reason as the most effective form of communication. This has certainly influenced further efforts to assist students with “severe, profound” intellectual disabilities in making the transition to higher education. (Grigal, 2011, Udisky & Hughson, 2012)

Furthermore, the analysis of hierarchy, relative to capacity within ID itself, was clearly evident in earlier studies which sought to explore the experiences of adults with intellectual disabilities. Edgerton and MacAndrew determined that “people with ‘profound forms of mental retardation’ do have the capacity for intense, emotional and elaborate friendships with one another, however, unlike ‘mildly retarded individuals’ who are able to ‘invest their behaviour with meaning’ (Edgerton 1984c, p. 503), as cited in (Klotz, 2004, p.94)

These presumptuous ideologies have been reinforced through the practices of both clinical and sociocultural studies and analysis *on people with ID*, ranging from the determinants of IQ testing, ability scales, other tools used to diagnose intellectual disability (Carr et al, 2007) and within what I term the “modelisation of disability”, frameworks for understanding and acknowledging how we see

disability, as well as the assumptions around what constitutes active and effective engagement with people, social inclusion.

Klotz says in relation to the ability to reason that People with intellectual disabilities are perceived to be

lacking in this capacity because they score badly on intelligence tests that supposedly measure such cognitive skills. Consequently, people with intellectual disabilities are deemed incapable of generating and sustaining a meaningful existence as they are and must be trained to become more socially 'normal'. (Klotz, p.94).

This way of thinking, perceived issues people with ID have, in capacity to reason, relative to social "normality", has exhibited itself in a number of ways including the exclusionary features constructed in the "ID hierarchy" (Edgerton, 1984) and the continued emphasis on life skills training for people with disabilities premised on the want to improve the quality of life for people and address the barriers to participation (Parmenter et al, 2007).

Life skills training formed and still to this day informs the one of the primary support areas in assisting people with intellectual disabilities based on individual pathology. The emphasis of educating people with ID in life skills development may also be partially due to the fact that intellectual disability is diagnosed relative to a deficiency in adaptive behaviour and everyday living skills, thus these *deficiencies* become something to be *managed or supported*. How this information, as well as initial support plans, are mediated depends on the clinician who has diagnosed ID and their approach to how they define the learning strengths and limitations of the person. Corbey et al, (2012) relay that

While all students need support, particularly at times of transition, students with disabilities may need different or more focussed supports and often a different approach to programme design (Blumberg et al., 2008) or teaching and learning methods (Chanock, 2007).

If we look at *difference* in this statement we see that it resides in the positioning of the term *different* against the person. Different supports or methods maybe required in supporting students with ID but we only perceive these as different because we haven't facilitated or imagined anything else so the affiliation of different serves as way of distinguishing people with ID from others, thus why supporting people with ID is also considered by some as a specialism and the process of *other or othering* becomes socially acceptable. This is also reinforcement by the fact that up until recently disability had not be regarded as a social justice issue on a par with other sources of social disadvantage linked to ethnicity/race and social class. As Liasidou (2014) relays rather, it is monodimensionally regarded in terms of responding to students' 'special educational needs' (Claiborne, Cornforth, Gibson & Smith, 2011; Runswick-Cole & Hodge, 2009). (Liasidou, 2014, p.122).

We cannot ignore the challenges that people with disabilities face, personally but also socially, stigma, assumptions (NDA 2007, 2011, Liasidou, 2014, Lang, 2007) but if we explore disability more broadly, we see that these challenges have also been societally constructed (Oliver& Barnes, 1990) feeding into what support organisations say they are trying to eliminate in the first place, such as that of stigma around people with disabilities. (NDA, 2011 & Liasidou, 2014) So the danger with this approach in highlighting everything "hard about or wrongful doings on" people with a disability is that we do not acknowledge people with ID as fully human (Klotz, 2004).

the focus on labels, constructs, structures and meanings, useful though these are for understanding the impact of socio cultural practices and attitudes does not allow us to actually enter into intellectually disabled peoples worlds and relate to them as people who are already fully human and encultured beings. (Klotz, 2004, p.101)

Assumptions about the learning capacities of people with disabilities are further entrenched when set against the prospect of higher education. Noonan (2012) authentically notes this *questioning* of how people with ID will fair in higher education, of what she determines as, her “misreading”, in her study of higher educational frameworks that have been used to support student with ID. Grigal, Hart & Lewis (2011) relay how in post-secondary education developed in the USA “*We are entering a new phase of the conversation when the questions focus less on, “Should students with intellectual disabilities go to college?” and more on, “How can students with intellectual disabilities go to college?”*” (p. 4)

Charlton also maintains that the majority of disabled people have been so psychologically oppressed by society that their oppression has become internalised. This is also imputed as Liasidou (2014) relays by the “able bodied order” (p.126). This also has an effect of how the person sees disability and whether or not they choose, for example, to discourse their disability in a higher education institution or to disability support services.

The Legacy of the *Modelisation* of Disability

In recent times there has been a notable and contestable paradigm shift when it comes to analysing disability. The segregation and categorisation of people has its resonance within the medical model, also referred to as the individual model of disability, which sought to provide care or treatment to the person with a disability with the intention of treating or curing the *condition*. The most poignant aspect of this approach in framing disability, is that of it being a problem, something to be managed or controlled. Furthermore, within the medical model framework the person with the disability is perceived as the issue or the problem rather than the environment or socio, political, cultural forces at play.

In Ireland, as noted by (Dollard, 2014, Linehan et al , 2014, Mc Cormack, 2004) the establishment of workhouses, as a consequence of the “edict by the Westminster Parliament in the early 19th century not to provide ‘outdoor relief’ to those in need”, resulted in the founding of specialised institutions to help those who were deemed “destitute or in need of care” and this system was coordinated by the catholic religious order with very limited leadership input from the state, aside from some financial assistance to continue the disability support system.(Linehan, et al, 2014 p.1) Consequently, the charity model of disability, perceiving people as subjects of care came to fruition.

The specialisation of intellectual disability emerged in the 1950s when, the need for ID, intellectual disability services expanded. Nurses were deployed to support the existing workforce comprised of religious staff and professional specialisation in intellectual disability was introduced in nursing and several disciplines including psychology, education, occupational therapy and speech therapy. (Linehan et al, 2014 p.1).

To this day intellectual disability remains a specialism or perceived specialism in areas of employment and academic disciplines. The intention of the “education for all” or fully inclusive agenda (UNESCO, 2005) and the nature of adult education itself, for example, directly challenges this view of specialist education.

Adult Education acknowledges learning as a collective process where learning experiences and opportunities are made available and facilitated with all learners, regardless of ability. It has a multiplicity of discourses as noted by (Murray, 2014) however one common principle adult education has fundamentally is its focus on;

the humanising process of education, the purpose and the focus of education to make us better human beings, the dynamic combination of the *what* and the *how* is the hallmark of adult education, that which distinguishes it from all other forms of education. (Connolly, 2006, p. 41, as cited in Murray, 2014)

The development of the human rights models of disability responds to the message of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, to which, all human beings are born free and equal in rights and dignity. The 2008 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was implemented. The Convention subscribes to a social relational approach to disability to foreground the interaction of an individual's impairment with contextual dynamics that undermine 'their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'. (UN, 2008, p. 122)

In the history of Human Rights violations, there are few social groups who have endured the discrimination and abuse as have people with an intellectual disability. Eugenics, sterilization programs (Kempton & Khan 1991; Hubbard, 2006) and forced institutionalization have been widely perpetrated upon this group, often justified in the name of 'welfarist' paternalism (Ramcharan, 2006) as cited in (Stevenson, 2010, p.4).

These practices have become the point of reference for society in the conceptualisation of intellectual disability, thus the continued yet ever-changing nature of instances of discrimination and abuse people with ID, intellectual disability, experience in overt and covert forms through the impact of power and the systematic reproduction of inequality as well as ongoing assumptions about the capacities of people with intellectual disabilities (NDA, 2011).

Moreover, seeing people with disabilities as a heterogeneous group (Corbey, et al, 2012) as well as a human rights emphasis on disability has come to fruition in an effort to promote discussions around diversity and reconfigure policy and legislative developments on an international scale. In Ireland, efforts towards supporting the deinstitutionalisation of adults with intellectual disabilities in the community are reflected in developments such as the HSE, Health Service Executives', Time to Move from Congregated Setting Report which informed the 2012 New Directions report. Diversity is now acknowledged in the National Disability Strategy (NDS) Implementation Plan 2013 – 16 which refers to equality relative to the recognition of diversity stating

Diversity is part of the human condition, and systems or structures designed for 'typical' people can be a barrier to those who are equal but different. The concept of equality recognises diversity, that people are different. (NDS Implementation Group, 2013 p.4)

Aside from discursive and policy developments relative to acknowledgment of human rights, the medical model of disability has been challenged most notably and situated in contrast to the development of the social model of disability, the term first coined by Mike Oliver, a British academic, author and disability activist, in 1981. (Oliver, 1990). Oliver did not seek to directly challenge “a medical model of disability” but sought to frame what he perceived and understood to be a tool and not a theory, for thinking about issues and developments in disability studies and disability at both a macro and micro level, which would challenge people to think about the social forces which are influencing our world, much connected to a social constructivist position. The social model of disability makes the distinction between impairment and disability, with disability being a societal construction.

Oliver says “the idea of the individual and the social model was taken quite simply and explicitly from the distinction originally made between impairment and disability by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (1976)”. (Oliver, 1990, n.p) Oliver acknowledges impairment as part of the natural life cycle for people but he also states that impairment can be caused by the social.

The social model of disability has gained currency in international policy development and discussions but it has also been challenged in its failure to explore the socio cultural implications of impairment and the stigma that is still affiliated with it, even if all social barriers were to be removed. Discussions on the affirmation model of disability, first published by Swain and French In 2000 in the *Disability and Society* academic journal, carried with it the view that any concentration on impairment will be counterproductive for people with disabilities and impairment is perceived as a personal misfortune thus would remain, even if all social barriers were eradicated. This informed their assertion that disability should not be seen as a personal tragedy but an affirmative embracement. It is essentially a non-tragic view of disability and impairment which encompasses positive social identities, both individual and collective, for disabled people grounded in the benefits of life style and life experience of being impaired and disabled. (Swain & French, 2000, p. 569)

Abberley’s (1987) analysis of social oppression as

specific in the manner in which it operates in relation to form, content and location, “so to analyse the oppression of disabled people in part involves pointing to the essential difference between their lives and other sections of society, including those who are, in other ways, oppressed”. (Abberley, P. 1987, p. 63)

Swain and French (2000) saw the need to address perceptions of disability, in terms of the meaning it has in people's lives and social identity as opposed to differences in oppression and as like the social model of disability, saw impairment as something that can be experienced by anyone but that impairment is regularly equated with personal tragedy.

In their analyses of the development tragic views of disability and how they are perpetuated they make reference to "disabling expectations" centred stating that

There is an assumption that disabled people want to be 'normal', although this is rarely voiced by disabled people themselves who know that disability is a major part of their identity. Disabled people are subjected to many disabling expectations, for example to be 'independent', 'normal', to 'adjust' and 'accept' their situation. It is these expectations that can cause unhappiness, rather than the impairment itself. (Swain & French, 2000, p.573)

This statement is very important when we come to conceive what we think we know about experience. In Colin Cameron's (2011) elaborations on Alfred Shultz ideas of imposed and intrinsic relevance's and the affirmative model, he identifies disability as a productive as well as a restrictive relationship. This supports him to argue

That taking on a disabled identity necessitates involving ourselves in acts of transgression and in making assertions about both the right to be different and the ordinariness of difference. It involves making and constructing affirming decisions and meanings about the embodied experience of impairment and a rejection of contemporary pressures to define the self primarily in terms of one's own individuality. (Cameron, 2011, n.p)

One such upheaval in relation to difference and self-defining comes in the form of neurodiversity. The term neurodiversity was coined in 1998 by an autistic Australian sociologist named Judy Singer, and was expanded upon within the

autistic activist community. Neurodiversity reflects the diversity evident in our human brains. The neurodiversity paradigm is of the assertion that no human brain is the same. This was an extension in thinking from when Jim Sinclair first spoke about the *neurotypical*, which has resulted in development of the neurodiversity paradigm, a framework not just applicable to the analysis of autism. According to Dollard (2014) , when Sinclair (1993) first spoke about the *misconception* that autism was something that someone had, he was calling upon parents of persons with autism to reject the binary concepts of normal/abnormal, embrace the concept of difference and challenge the very notion of the existence of impairment in the first place. (Dollard, 2014, p.22) However, Prof Colin Barnes (2015), a colleague of Mike Oliver's, responds to some of what he terms , the "misconceptions", about the social model of disability, including statements on the perception and nature of impairment, stating that

most people acquire impairment through the life course. Impairment is a common human experience. Most people will be impaired in one way or another as a consequence of the aging process. More people are impaired so to suggest that impairment is a minority issue is nonsense. People who experience impairment and have a disability is increasing. Society's preoccupation with unattainable life styles, living conditions as so on supports the idea that disability is a socially created concept. The social model does not deny the significance of impairment or its limitations on how we function. The focus of the social model is on the way in which society denies access or facilities to enable people with impairments to live a normal lifestyle, the impact. Social model is not a theory it's a tool to which to identify barriers – solutions to eradicate problems, example, anti-discrimination legislation. (Barnes, 2015, n.p)

Contestations around impairment remain in attempts to conceptualise and *unconceptualise* it with reference to the distinct variations in views on disability and its positioning in how we see people with disabilities, disabled people.

The Impact of Modelisation on Perspective Trajectories

A commonly used metaphor relative to the distinction between models is with reference to the flight of stairs or physical access for persons with a disability, as well as the socio cultural constructions concerning language.

Stella Young, (2014) Australian journalist, activist, comedian and adherent to the social model of disability, addresses issues with perception, reality and access relative to the statements which have been conceived about disability such as non-disabled peoples treatment of people with disabilities and the promotion of messages like “the only disability in life is a bad attitude” as infiltrating the mass media. She states as a person with a physical disability, self-authoring as a *disabled person* says that, “no amount of smiling or radiating a positive attitude is going to make the flight of stairs disappear”. (Young, 2014, n.p). She goes onto state that we only see people with disabilities in light of these messages , “no matter how bad my life is, it could be worse”, thus the *pitiful* statements, with reference to disability as being a bad thing.

Furthermore, she argues these messages and visuals that are facilitated in mass media are marketed for the pleasure of others *exceptionalising* people with disabilities in what she terms “inspiration porn”. (Young, 2013, n.p) This analysis is important when we come to think about the exceptionalisation of people or people as subjects and our views of what inspiration constitutes as well as deeply rooted negative connotations embedded in disability.

The social model of disability questions the language assigned to person with disabilities thus the disabled, disabled people is used to reflect the disabling effects of society. Challenges to this phrasing come in forms of person first ideology via language, person before disability.

This position is promoted via various media campaigns aiming to challenge the stigma assigned to persons with disabilities such as Down Syndrome Ireland's, person first campaign which emphasizes the respect for people and that labels matter, in order to shift the view to people with Down Syndrome as individuals. (DSI, 2017)

However, Cameron (2011) believes that within person-first ideology impairment is downplayed and regarded as distinct from primary experience as a person, as a secondary feature of identity. Sinclair (2013) concurs with the latter aspect of Cameron's (2011) statement, relaying that person first language "suggests that the autism can be separated from the person".

I share Oliver's (1990) concern in relation to the "danger" with the overanalytism in discussions around the nature of the various models of disability and the impact of this dialogue on the lives of people with disabilities. He argues that these semantic discussions will obscure the real issues in disability which are about oppression, discrimination, inequality and poverty. However, if we explore the "real issues" in disability through these lenses, relative to barriers, negative aspects of disability or entirely through a social constructivist position then the *danger* can reside in highlighting everything "hard about or wrongful doings on" people with a disability. Thus, through this approach we do not acknowledge people as fully human, as encultured human beings. (Klotz, 2004)

The vision of disability as a *negative thing* has left a legacy not just in the descriptions of people's lives but also now in the developing strives for inclusion, such as that of the affirming, embracement model of disability.

This can be compounded, for non-disabled parents of disabled children, for instance, by beliefs about the benefits that non-disabled people have in education, work and relationships. Such beliefs speak to dominant social values that have broader application than the disabled-non-

disabled divide, particularly through the association of disability with dependence (Oliver, 1993) and abnormality (Morris, 1991). Thus, the personal tragedy view of impairment and disability is ingrained in the social identity of non-disabled people. (Swain and French, 2000, p. 573)

As a consequence of this and the specialisation of intellectual disability (Linehan et al, 2014) the dominant social values serve to *both diminish and support people with disabilities through multiple means*, thus the ability to engage in emancipatory learning experiences becomes very important in challenging these values.

Interpretation and Perceptions of Meaning: Adult Education as Leverage

The dichotomising of models, for example medical versus social model of disability has stifled some of the intentions of models in practice. The development of frameworks, comparisons and distinctions between models do lend to the creation of alternative philosophical standpoints and learning and development relative to the changing pace and nature of society, as well as the intercultural considerations which need to be central to any conversation about disability or inclusion. (Lang, 2007) However, we have yet to be exposed to a prominent model of *being*. Within the disability orientation vision, the affirmative model being an aspect to this, a person's interpretation of his or her *disability experience* and his or her perceptions of the *meaning of being disabled* is central. (Mc Cormack & Collins, 2012) If we can facilitate and respect this in critical educational practice then what we are supporting is people being in a position to express through lived experience and not ones or collective assumptions about disability or ways of knowing.

Adult Education expands on meaning making and sees both the individual and collective as equally important for the enrichment of society. It has something very unique in its philosophy and something which warrants its position in education, the strive to facilitate emancipatory learning.

Emancipatory learning according to Fook (2006), constitutes the ability to understand the social dimensions and political functions of experience and meaning making and the ability to apply this understanding in working and social contexts (as cited in Murray, 2014, p.119). This ability, to understand complex phenomenon, aspects of experience and meaning making supports us to engage with and be in the world but it does not derive directly from our exposure to learning or life experiences. This understanding, I argue, is not linear, is constantly changing, interweaving with other social forces, assumptions on life experience and has to come from something which has the capacity to challenge *the way* we understand, that of critical reflection. Critical reflection allows us to explore our social reality, thus our understanding of how we see and perceive through an awareness of our assumptions. Dryden & Mytton (1999), that “each person perceives reality in a different way and this will frame a person’s behaviour, their internal frame of reference”. (p. 69). For (Fook, 2006) this type of reflection is how a person’s assumptions may carry power dimensions (p.443).

This is important because it shapes the way we self-perceive and perceive the world as well as our awareness of power relations and our engagement in socialisation, the self - external from approved ways of seeing. Critical reflection as a way of life, as illustrated by Brookfield (2012), supports our ability to stay inert when organisations try to get people to act in a way that serves their purposes.

Mezirow (1990) perceives critical reflection as challenging the validity of presuppositions in prior learning, the questioning of the justification for the very premises on which problems are posed or defined in the first place,(premise reflection). (p.12). A particular type of education which facilitates critical reflection in exploring our social realities and the nature of power is that of adult education, and in particular the radical position, which has a transformative dimension to same. Approved ways of seeing and understanding, shaped by our language, culture and personal experience, collaborate to set limits to our future learning (Mezirow, 1991) . We know that in the socio cultural and historic development of education, students including people with disabilities have never or rarely “been encouraged to *analyse* their experiences”. (Tennant, 2006, p.122).

The analytical component in this statement is vital because we know the importance of story and narrative in learning but providing a space to critically engage with experience and narrative, supports the development of opinion, perspective and our viewpoints. The culture of silence has been a longstanding issue for all learners which has its resonances’ in the banking approach to education (Freire, 1996) which transforms students into receiving objects in an attempt to control thinking, leading people to *adjust* to the world and inhibiting peoples creative power. (p.58) This adjustment can also be observed in the *way* that people communicate story or experience. Furthermore, the assigning of “independence” “adjustment” in support structures for people with disabilities make it imperative that we explore ways of thinking and knowing in order to support people to exercise choice in all aspects of life and how they frame their identity, including how people with disabilities self-define.

Adult Education challenges this view of approved ways as noted by Mezirow (1991) and recognises the emancipatory potential of learning through pedagogies that embrace different ways of knowing and learner diversity. In this paradigm, divergent experiences give voice to different knowledge's that challenge habits of thinking.

Transformative Learning and Orientation

One of ways in which emancipatory learning can be facilitated is through that of transformative learning. This has been one of the most profound analysis of meaning making which has an intrinsic emancipatory aspect to it. Transformative learning theory, first introduced by Jack Mezirow in 1975, is based on the experience of women returning to re-entry educational programmes in the USA. It is about changing the way people think and feel so that people can be empowered and community development can be fostered. The fostering of empowerment and community development via collection action has a social justice dimension (Freire, 1996) which consequently has the capacity to change and shape society.

Transformative learning Mezirow (2007) sees as a process of the self, through interactions with various aspects of the world, by which “we transform problematic frames of reference (mind sets, meaning perfectives) sets of assumptions and expectations, to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change”. (p.20).

Critical reflection for Mezirow also has another dimension, “subjective reframing” which “pertains to critical *self*-reflection and involves examining the *reasons* why we have acquired distorted or dysfunctional frames of reference, their nature and their consequences. (Mezirow, 2007 p. 3).

The conformation of assumptions in learning happens as a result of dynamic interactions between habits, the interpretation of the event and this process is often mediated by reflection. (Mezirow, 2007, p.7).

Transformative learning, perceived as an individual experience, separate from collective action and the questions of its *happening* has been much the site of critique of Mezirow's theory.

Another argument is that Mezirow lacks a critical theory of power and the way in which he assumes empowerment and emancipation, which lends transformative learning to a subtle form of self-control, via power not being within Mezirow's analysis (Ingles 1997).

Ingles (1997) relays how transformative learning assumes some sort of voluntary self-reflection, however, Mezirow is clear to note the connection between premise reflection, when the problem itself is questioned and our reasons for engaging in learning, consequently critical reflection, not through a linear process but through as (Hoggan, Malkki & Finnegan, 2016) relay, through continuity, in the flow of experiencing and interpreting in perspective transformation. (p.67) He has his own take on Freires (1996) *conscientisation*, and this encompasses the ability to explore our meaning perspectives but justify our new meanings with social action. (Tennant, 2006, p. 125).

Critics have argued transformative learning's emphasis on rationality, lack of a strong social action agenda (Merriam, 2004, p. 206) and educators like Bowers (1977) and Hemphill (1994), and feminist educators like Michelson (1996), who worry that education for the enhancement of critical reflection and empowerment reflects an arbitrary cultural hegemony of an ideology of Western Enlightenment. (Mezirow, 1998, n:p).

Mezirow (1998) responds by saying

We need not regard educational ideals as fundamentally ideological; nor must we regard critical thinking as itself ideologically bound or as tied to specific cultural or class interest. To take the study of ideology seriously is to rely on the critical leverage afforded by critical thinking and (non-ideological) rational analysis. (n.p).

This is not to ignore the nature and covertness of power in society.

Thus, the importance of remembering and conceptualising transformative learning as a *response* premised on critical awareness, critical reflection on assumptions, critical self- reflection on assumptions. Fleming (2015) adds to this, the recognition of people, when people are looking to reclaim, they look to education to achieve that moment of recognition which is profoundly developmental". (Fleming, 2015, np).

How this recognition is met is diverse and profoundly influenced by expectations and processes of learning to view oneself. Furthermore, Fleming (2011) also relays how identity formation is an intersubjective process of struggling to gain mutual recognition from one's partners in interaction. Thus, the idea that identity is relational.

Contestations about separation of and dichotomising of the individual and collective relative to transformative learning as an individual process ignores the importance of intersubjectivity. This is expanded upon by (Hoggan, Malkki & Finnegan, 2016). Drawing on the work of Malkki 2011, who relays emotions as something that can "instigate the learning process and lead to more holistic ways of knowing and being" (p55). The notion of "emotion as a barrier to reason and knowledge is increasing in being rejected in light of a more integral, central and holistic role of emotion in reason, rationality, learning and meaning" (Dirkx, 2008, p. 8).

Malkki introduces edge emotions and comfort zones to illustrate how they affect our meaning perspectives, which are also shared social resources, relative to feelings, such as being intact (comfort) and uncomfortable (edge). When we are in familiar lines of thinking and interpreting with our social groups we exist in a comfort zone for example, through social bonds. When reflection on private meanings occur (this can happen with edge emotions), the individual is challenging these bonds yet meaning perspectives are also what we need in order to survive and maintain our life, our social connections and fundamental feeling of belonging and more so, if we have this feeling of acceptance or safety in social spaces they can also be a site which supports the critical questioning process. (Hoggan, Malkki & Finnegan, 2016, p.67).

Consequently, intersubjectivity from the authors' view is the argument is that it is impossible to separate the cognitive from emotion the same way as it is to separate the individual from the collective.

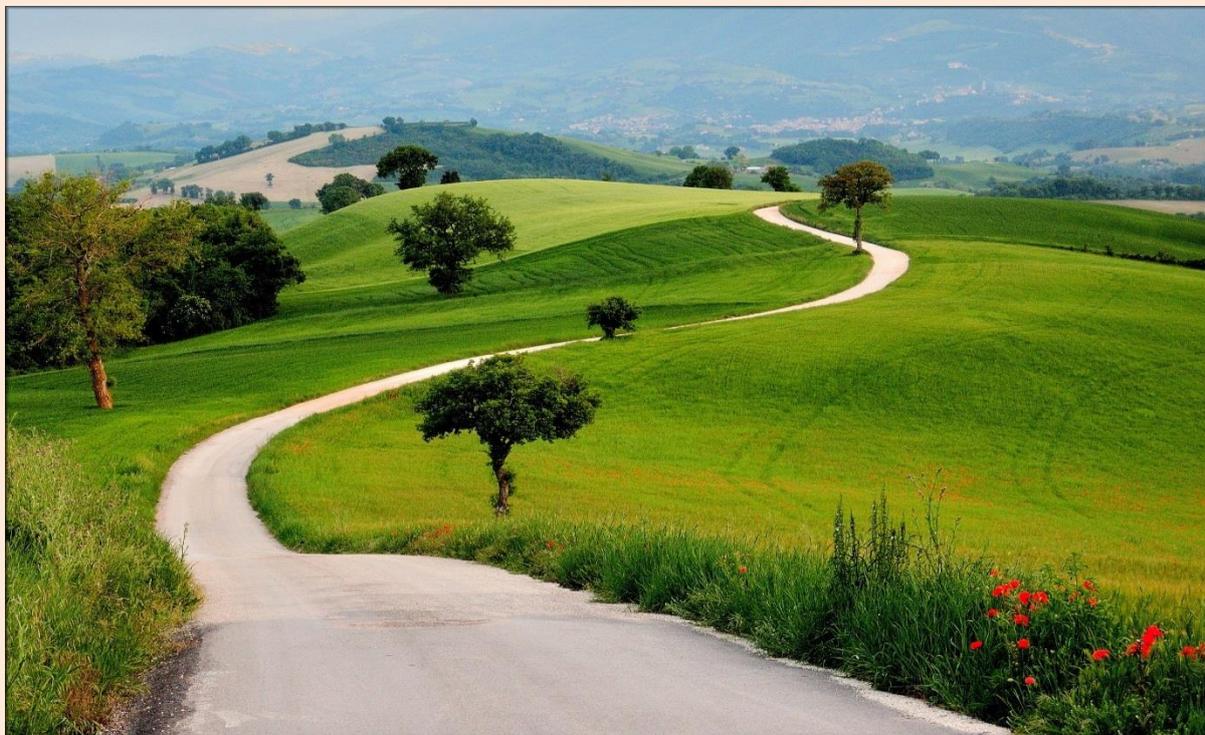
Transformative learning is helpful when we come to conceive disability in a realm of perspectives and models through exploring the processes involved in meaning making, in the formulation of identity and how it is facilitated in educational practices, processes and approaches through adult learning.

Full human flourishing is dependent on well-established ethical relations, of love, law and ethical life achieved through the struggle for recognition and take place in the family, civil society and the state. Each corresponds to levels of relation to one's self. (Fleming, 2011) Distortions in identity are the motivation for struggle and social conflict and this moves the debate about emancipation away from the perceived highly cognitive and rational interest of Habermas toward an alternative theory of intersubjectivity.

This has the potential to resolve the problem in transformation theory as to whether learning is an individual or social phenomenon. It implies that not only is the personal political but the political is personal. Transformative learning becomes both personal and social (Fleming, 2014).

Chapter 4: Conducting the Research

Praxis Practice.....



Introduction

Within this research I want to support adults to become not just the fabric of the process but the foundation of inclusive research in its totality as a moving process where the researcher is guided by the research contributors and where creative and learner centred methodologies could be deployed as determined by the learners premised on informed consent is a living relationship. In this chapter I will discuss my methodological framework relative to this research study as an inclusive fluid process and in light of the legislative and political factors effecting full and informed consent, ethical considerations, the research process itself and the factors influencing the decisions made in this research design, process and presentation of form.

Methodology

The purpose of this research was to critically explore students' experiences and views on *inclusion in higher education* in Ireland with particular reference to students with intellectual disabilities who have transitioned into and graduated from higher education.

The research question is:

- How are students with intellectual disabilities, different abilities, experiencing and facilitating *inclusive higher education*?

In this study the research cohort comprised of students who were current students on and graduates from one fully inclusive higher education programme in Ireland since 2011. This study was facilitated between September 2016 and July 2017 with students and graduates who were between 22 and 38 years of age, thus all were adult learners with varying experiences of previous engagement in education. The intention of learning with students was to capture experiences of higher education *with students*, as co-creators of knowledge and who higher education is supposed to serve.

There is now perceived "*legitimacy*" in "*inviting*" students with intellectual disabilities to be part of research studies, the research process, to be contributors to the body of knowledge. However, historically some people with disabilities have become the subjects *of the research, not actively involved*, as is conveyed in the substantial amount of research conducted *on people with disabilities* or via contributions from various clinicians, writers and scholars who define themselves as *disability experts*. (Klotz J. , 2004).

This is further influenced by medical model of disability and the *perceived and lived issues* in facilitating people with ID³ in research as noted by (Kubiak, 2015,

³ ID is the short form reference to intellectual disability

Carey & Griffiths, 2017). This study was not about facilitating people with ID, in research but facilitating learners to construct this research area, inclusion in education, as a learning process, that would provide lived insight into the ways students experience and want to experience education as well as exploring what educators can do to respond to these experiences on both a macro and micro level, via approach and practice.

This study goes beyond this questioning of *should* to exploring the ways that students *are* experiencing and facilitating inclusive education in Ireland. Gaging learners' thoughts on issues of inclusion meant exploring with learners what inclusive education and research actually constituted, from their point of view, with reference to where the learners are and were, on an initiative, which seeks to *fully include* students with ID in higher education.

In addition, this study captures, amongst many other things, how learners feel firstly, about their experiences in higher education and secondly, inclusive education as an approach, system, framework and a movement.

Inclusive Research

Inclusive research was always an overarching component and influence on this study. People with ID have long been excluded from much of the research that occurs within the area of disability (Walmsley & Johnson, 2003). The nature of inclusive research itself is still very much a developing philosophy unique to the context. An array of studies have been facilitated with people with intellectual disabilities with the prevalence of inclusive research being in SEN, special educational needs and ID, intellectual disability, using "inclusive research" as illustrated in Messiou's (2016) study which focus on the types of inclusive research researchers were facilitating. (p. 149)

As noted by (Carey and Griffiths, 2017, NDA, 2009) the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, has been one of the driving forces in the development of inclusive research with people with disabilities more broadly. One of the central principles of the convention is autonomy in choice and to support full, free and informed consent including research with and not on people with disabilities. We know that people with disabilities do not want to have research “done on them”. Involving people with disabilities in an appropriate way in informing or shaping the research process respects them as active participants in the research and not as passive objects of research (NDA, 2009, p. 7). However, in addition to what the NDA (2009) describes, research as a way of informing, shaping policy and practice, it can also be emancipatory – (Finnegan 2015, Meziou, 2016). Studies supporting persons with disabilities as active researchers and co contributors to appropriate person led research is now making its way into the inclusive research domain. (Kubiak, 2015, Meziou, 2016 & Slee, 2017) One of the first studies which directly explored the life experiences of people with intellectual disabilities from their perspective was facilitated by Robert Edgerton in 1963 (Klotz, 2004 & Dollard, 2014). Edgerton’s (1963) analysis was premised on the deficiencies in individual pathology and the “cloak of competence” people with intellectual disabilities wore to suppress the incompetence’s they possessed.

The disability paradigmic shift has also brought with it a shift in how inclusive research is conceptualised and demonstrated with relevancy to the challenging of perceptions, preconceptions, barriers via a socio cultural analysis of disability. Indeed, as Barnes and Oliver (2012) relay we have gone further and argued that the only way ahead for disability research is through a rejection of both the methodological individualism and investigatory foundationalism upon which ‘scientific’ research is based (Oliver, 2009; Oliver and Barnes 2012).

Research Approach

My reason for undertaking this research was to critically explore students' views on inclusive education as an experience, as a model and as a research framework. In the context of this study this exploration is informed via students *experiencing* learning through accessing a higher education initiative, on a fully inclusive initiative and secondly, students *facilitating* inclusive learning through their encounters, expressions and approaches with educators in departments, with each other, fellow students, campus support services and with the political sphere affiliated with an initiative of this kind in Ireland. I am intertwined in this process as a co learner and initiative learning facilitator given the exploratory nature of the initiative, my relationship with the students and graduates so I am also in a position to provide accounts of experience in the context of this study. If we are to assist students and educational progression in any capacity we need to understand how students and staff understand and experience education. For me, the same goes for inclusive education and critically reflecting on our self-positioning and the positioning of students in inclusive higher education initiatives. This was my rationale for approaching the particular students and graduates on the ILLI. My decision to approach students and graduates was not just because of the current prevailing human rights agenda which makes it now "essential and legitimate" to include students with intellectual disabilities in "respectful and appropriate" research about their lives (Carey and Griffiths, 2017) but because I believe that all students essentially know their own lives (Freire, 1996).

Furthermore, all decisions made in education, including models of inclusion, should embrace the views, capacities and opinions of students, not as beneficiaries of programmes but as a fundamental contributors to all developments in and aspects of education.

I initially envisaged this research as a space to critically explore and reflect on experience in a way which would enrich educational practice, policy development, sectorial influence which included naming the implicit barriers preventing people from engaging in education but most importantly would encompass what meaningful and valuable education constituted for the person, the learner. What came to be was a process of supporting learner's expressions in their own narrative but also in how they saw their social and political contexts. Previous research as stated by (NDA 2009, Liasidou 2014, Carey and Griffiths, 2017) have focused on people with ID as passive subjects in the process with limited agency and space to reflect on the various contexts in their world. The critical approach in this research intrinsically carries a transformative framework because the emphasis is on story and interpretation in a very specific context. Furthermore, the intention of learning in this study was not just to explore perspectival curricula or inclusive learning methodologies in practice, but learner's social context and views on the education system, thus would also be highly political. The research itself is by virtue transformative not necessarily in the lives of all involved but it has both an emancipatory and political component which directly addresses perspectives on inclusion through the sharing of some significant learning experiences which have the capacity to shape educational policy and practice. I knew there would be a relevancy and need for a study like this in Ireland given the current educational, health and political landscape effecting students with intellectual disabilities and their families and quality education on a broader scale.

Thinking About Research

I thought extensively about how to approach this research. I had witnessed first-hand, through my position on the ILI , some intentions to “the use the learners” as research subjects for academic gain without participant respect and care at

the fore. Furthermore, the fact that the learners had already engaged in one or more research projects throughout their studies in university, this warranted consideration. Adults with intellectual disabilities as a “cohort” have been extensively *researched* in various fields. Hence, I was incredibly aware of this and slightly apprehensive about approaching the learners. However, I knew that any research of this nature with reference to a particular experience, social movement or what’s more widely referred to as **an** “*educationally marginalised group*” had to include the people with the embodied experience, the learners. That learners should be in a position to contribute to the body of knowledge in any realm of education. Initially my idea was to conduct this research with staff, mentors (partners) and students as a parallel narratives however, time would not have allowed me to do justice to this wider study so I decided to proceed with approaching learners and to facilitate the student voice as the central component of this study in a way that would as (Kubiak, 2017, 2015) relays, support the underutilisation of *voice* in research. This was informed by what I like to refer to as the “about us with us approach” rather than the “nothing about us without us” slogan.

Aside from, students experiences in higher education, which tell us a lot about context, there were also aspects of inclusive research I felt needed to be developed to acknowledge, not just people with ID as co researchers in studies but as research contributors throughout the research process in its entirety.

Thus, my title fostering inclusion challenging the illusion wasn’t just some existential idea that I could write about but that I could actually put into practice in collaboration with learners who I had already had a profound trust with and who I knew would challenge me to do justice to a piece of work that was person led and would hopefully enhance and perhaps offer another dimension to the

broader equality and inclusion paradigm, discussions and practices in education. Therefore, a co constructivist approach in research was the path.

Stating the Relational

Any discussion in light of this study requires me to name the nature of my relationship with the research contributors. I know all contributors in a professional and personal capacity. I have worked closely with all students and graduates of the university as their learning facilitator. This role is comprised of multiplicity of tasks with the overall intention being to support students with all aspects of their college life. This includes the transition into college, person centred planning, assisting “daily living skills”, working with departments and all relevant campus support services in supporting inclusive education and ways of supporting students with diverse learning abilities, coordinating the student learning partnership, mentoring programme, assisting students in all areas of academic, social learning and personal development so that they can autonomously engage in meaningful learning experiences in university. The overall support vision is to assist students to independently utilise the support services already available to all students in the university.

Through this process I also got to know the students in a personal capacity as well as the people who were close to them in their lives. Another component of the learning facilitator role is also engaging with national and international higher and further educational institutions, disability service providers, the academic community and families. This emerged as a consequence of the socio-political landscape around fully inclusive models, as is discussed in the literature review section of this study. Thus, myself and the students, graduates became involved inclusive education *advocacy*, social activism, staff training and support, public speaking in various different capacities within the university and

wider national and international forums. Each Individuals' level of involvement in this public engagement was unique and dependent on the decision of the person. However, the ILI itself as an initiative became a vocal entity, a tool for others in describing and advocating for changes to educational provision for adults with intellectual disabilities and part of the wider movement towards inclusion, in collaboration with other higher education providers across Ireland. Students embraced this movement in different ways, some students were interested in being "ambassadors for inclusive education" others just wishing to engage in higher education as a student separate to any involvement in a political or social change agenda. This was also a factor in learner's decision to contribute to this particular research study. At present I am working with two of the contributors in this study, on a project which seeks to support capacity building with staff in further and community education in Ireland, through the development of a continuous professional development programme in supporting inclusive teaching, learning and assessment and the embracement of diverse ways of knowing in educational and community facilities.

Approach and Recruitment of Contributors

I wanted to approach learners who were studying or who had graduated from a *fully inclusive initiative or programme* in higher education in Ireland so the research sample was always going to be purposeful.

This was so I could learn more about the authentic experiences of students relative to their interpretation of experience and how they felt about inclusive education as a growing entity, support system and form of political leverage. The fully inclusive model is intended to support *full inclusion to the best possible extent* and I wanted to critically explore this vision with students.

This warranted revisiting what education actually constituted for the learners so the idea was to map the most significant moments of this experience with learners in a way which would shed light on what is important for students, which would consequentially inform the important aspects of education for students. Secondly, the intention was to look at inclusive education more broadly with reference to its connection with support systems, initiatives, the political arena and how this is impacting both people and education, essentially how students see education.

I had direct access to one of the two fully inclusive higher education initiatives I was aware of in Ireland, through my own practice. I was informed that another initiative *maybe* running again but I did not receive correspondence which could confirm same or support my approach with this initiative so my decision in light of this, within the nine month time frame, was to approach students I had worked with on the ILI in Maynooth University since 2011, one of two fully inclusive higher education initiatives supporting students with ID in Ireland, with more now in situ since I commenced this research study.

Purposeful Sampling

The research was qualitative inquiry, the emphasis being on the subjective experiences of the adults and data collection in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study. (Creswell, 2013, p.44).

I approached all of the students and graduates who had registered on the ILI Maynooth University from years 2011 – to present (2017) which was nine in total, five graduates and four current students. This was completed via phone calls and emails to the potential contributors, including the ILI management team, who are responsible for supporting the current students and their well being in the university.

I received a full response rate in my initial communication with all but I also allowed time for the provision of accessible and timely information as well as space to communicate, regarding any initial questions. Contrary to some studies as outlined by Carey and Griffiths (2017) , I did not have to approach service gatekeepers as all of the current students and the ILI management team were based in the university and graduates had no connection to a disability day service before and/or upon transition from university. The ILI management team are responsible for assisting students who register with the initiative, including supporting students with the critical assessment of information and self- protection from harm thus, would be an important support and guide to me and the learners in this study.

This is particularly important in light of previous research approaches which sought to interview the students on the basis on their intellectual disability with no epistemological or philosophical rationale or outline of risks or benefits of being involved in research. The first port of call was to highlight the *research intentions* and importance providing space for students to have the choice to participate in research about their lives as well as an understanding of the research intentions. Unfortunately the legislation automatically classifies adults with intellectual disabilities as “vulnerable adults” (see ethics section of this thesis for further information) under the Children and Vulnerable Persons Act 2012. So even though all learners are over the age of 18 and we are “to presume capacity” as is stated in the Capacity Act 2013, the 2012 legislation requires all persons working with adults with ID to undertake garda clearance. The learners had mixed views on this when we spoke about the issue of vulnerability. Some were offended at the prospect of being referred to as a *vulnerable adult*, others saw the value and “safety” in the Garda clearance process. The process is intended to protect *vulnerable adults* from harm.

Regular contact in relation to research activities is also included in the act. I had previously completed Garda clearance in the university so I had this, up to date, prior to the research.

Viable Information

A substantial amount of time was put into this process in the initial phases of information circulation, choice, control and understanding of, critique of my proposed approach. I felt that students and graduates collectively would create a more holistic picture of what they felt education had become, having come themselves from two very different stages within the development of the initiative from its infancy in 2011 (first students entered college) to a more embedded provision, when current students entered in 2014.

Seven of the contributors decided that they would like to hear more about the research and two decided not to proceed at the time. One of these two adults who decided not to proceed expressed an interest in receiving information about the research, so was included in all email communication with the adults in the initial stages of the research around information dissemination.

Research Methods

Narrative Inquiry through Creative Facilitation

One of the most powerful gifts we have is our ability to story. It exposes us to the helpful and hinderful ways of the world. We demonstrate it in so many ways. Through our movements, expressions, interests, practices, what we say, don't say and the way we express and present the self. In so many ways the self is also stifled, and this includes positioning in research.

I did not want this research to be an analysis on the research cohort but a space for learners to share story in a way which would support the unfolding of lived

experience (Creswell, 2013, p.75) but would also challenge learners to critically explore their personal, social and historical context in a safe, trusting environment premised on dignity and respect. Furthermore, the intention of the research methodology was to support storying in a non-linear way conducive to the interests, learning strengths of contributors and which would foster critical reflection and creative lines of thinking and action. Thus, my idea to facilitate narrative inquiry through art and design through a learning process. Researchers who facilitate creative arts narratives such as (Atkinson & Williams, 1990) have emphasised the importance on narrative inquiry in shaping and providing meaningful contexts to experience in the lives of person with disabilities. There is also a potential as Granville (1999) notes in the experience of art creation to find and express meanings that have an individual integrity beyond functional literacy. This research process, much like adult education philosophy, was an acknowledgment of people, of the divergent ways of learning and knowing. Furthermore, a narrative perspective on learning also allows the exploration of the research activity itself as a story. (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006).

I knew this research had to encompass the fore fronting of story but I wasn't sure what this would look like until the learners became my guide. I had read countless studies on research with people with intellectual disabilities where the findings had become concealed, and in some cases abundant, within the multifarious displayed "intricacy" or "challenge" of methodology and process, with limited opportunity for the research contributors to react to and engage with the produced study throughout the process and in its final form.

Studies which recognise the complexity in human form and expression through the centring of experience, **voice** as one of the primary focal points for readers (Kubiak, 2017) provide the opportunity for the reader to engage with and interpret the personal which will be distinct and dependent on how the research is perceived. (Clough, 1996) This is also acknowledging that narrative is not a one dimensional method of inquiry but a collection of means and representations of story. The demonstration of story as the primary form in a research study can have a power impact on the reader (Tuffery –Wijne ,1996)

Another aspect of co constructivist research through narrative inquiry is that it assists more needs led support given how “needs are now considered more universal in groups” because it follows the co creation of knowledge and learning in way which supports engagement from all. It also dilutes the role of the researcher (Oakley, 2000) and can be conceptualised on the basis that “the group can look after itself”.

Pre Fieldwork Territory

It was agreed collectively in my initial communication with potential contributors that two learning sessions be held in the university as a space of familiarity and comfort for the contributors’ as well as meeting some of the learner’s sensory needs. The first session would focus primarily on information about the research, full and informed consent and information to support learner’s decision to proceed with participating in the research. This later materialised into three sessions due to the flexible nature of the sessions, at the pace of the group and emphasis on one particular aspect of discussion in session two, in which more time was required to complete college path creations. (See appendices 1 to 6).

Prior to meeting with the group, I circulated information about the research (see appendix 1) which was proof read and edited by one of the contributors prior to circulation.

This included information about estimated time commitment, what the research was about, my ideas and why I had approached students. This was to support information accessibility, the diverse learning styles and needs of students and preparation for our first session which was about the context of the research and a space for contributors to make decisions about whether to proceed with participating in and contributing to the study.

Process Design

Two of the contributors suggested PowerPoint as a tool for information sharing, so information about my proposed research was designed on same. (See Appendix 1). All contributors had used PowerPoint in their studies in university thus, were familiar with same and would be in a position to edit pictures and text. Furthermore, all contributors were also in a position to access and utilise email services so we used email attachments as an editing and communicative space throughout the research process. My intention was to facilitate this research through creative facilitatory sessions which would foster contributor engagement and meaningful contribution in the design and delivery of the pedagogical process.

The learners responded positively to the initial idea of context and very simply said to me “show me what you are talking about and what you want to do” so my process vision from there was:

- Informed Choice
- Informed Process
- Inform Cohesion (and fun)

The three sessions which accompanied this research approach and process were semi structured in nature to reflect the parameters of the research and guide questions were incorporated into the session discussions and planned learning activities (see Appendix 8). However the facilitation of same was flexible in nature premised on generative themes which emerged for the group as the learning process unfolded. Thus, there was a research purpose but also a creative process which recognised the unique interests, attributes, viewpoints, needs and learning styles within the group. (See appendices 1 to 7).

Sessions Outline

Session 1: Informed Choice

The purpose of the first session was to facilitate learners understanding of the research, what participating in the process would entail, ideas for the learning sessions, as well as exploring the formulation of consent with the group including what this would contain and look like in this research study. (See appendices, 2,3 and 7). We also spoke about who the research was benefitting and why research of this proposed nature.

We had naturally become a collective as result of the factors outlined in the beginning of this chapter, so there was no question that I was also going to be a research contributor and the learners immediately responded to this in their initial questioning of the intentions of the research in session one.

This was certainly not a piece of research where I was removed in order to relay the voices of students. Learners felt that the research should be approached in two ways 1) As a group, learning from one other, doing fun things 2) Follow Up with each individual.

Two of the learners were undertaking facilitator training at the time so were comfortable in facilitating some of the planned learning activities.

It was agreed that learners who decided to continue with being involved in the research would bring an object of significance from their college experience to the next session. Ideas from session one included completing a story book of the work produced as a collective which would be a way to show group learning but also as so people who picked up Laura's thesis could read it in a more inclusive way, if there was an audio visual component.

Seven contributors attended the first session and six attended sessions two and three. Due to unforeseen circumstances "Jane" was not in a position to attend the concluding two sessions hence did not get the opportunity to engage in some of the practical learning activities, but consented for her contributions from session one to be included in this study. Jane's contributions are included in the discussions components of the research findings which were analysed thematically. (See thematic analysis section of chapter 1).

I ensured that the learners didn't just know about the support organisations available to them but that they had links to accompany this information and numbers they could put these into their phone. At one point during one of our breaks in session 1 one contributor asked me "what if you get upset Laura, this [with reference to the experience of college] must effect you too? Will Jerry (with reference to my Masters Thesis supervisor) be there to support you? I had never thought of this aspect of self- care in research.

It was a very important learning experience for me because it not only illustrated care in education but students' attuned ability to see the bigger picture and acknowledge the journeys of staff and researchers in education who are or have been apart of a profound, emotional educational journey with students. This is discussed further in the *views on supports, Laura* in the findings and analysis sections of this thesis.

The factors for learners to consider upon the conclusion of this session were, decision to contribute based on information and session one discussions, anything to add to the consent form (which was to be circulated by Laura and proof edited by learners) and to think about the college path picture (see figure 22) which were to two core, foundation questions for learners to think about in this research. 1) My college path/important moment for me (would be later created through art 2) what is inclusive education to me?

Session 2: Informed Process

The second session focused more on the process of coming together as a group and sharing our experiences. (See appendices 4 and 5). The first part of the session was spent clarifying and discussing consent which would take its form on PowerPoint (see figure 24) and also through a signed copy of the form. One of the activities we facilitated, centred on the use of objects as a tool in supporting us to reflect on our college experience and prompt discussions relative to how we were experiencing education through exploring an aspect of college that was meaningful for the person. By our and we, I mean the group in its entirety, including me as a learning facilitator as part of this process. Each person's response as to why they chose to bring the object was recorded and are included in the "Memory Book" section of this thesis, in the findings section.

The purpose of the activity was to support the learners in beginning the journey about reflecting on college life and to support learners to voice and express in a group setting. (See figures 1 to 9).

The chosen objects were a laptop bag, laptop, a phone and headset, an academic paper a student was reading in one of their course modules, a photograph of a learner presenting to his class group, a signed photograph from the cast of Coronation Street relative to the learner's presentation, a certificate of participation and contribution to a peer mentoring programme in the university, A DVD based on a documentary one student created as part of their studies in Media, watercolour paints and a pencil case.

There was an in depth conversation about one of the objects (see Dave's object) which captured the attention of the group so at the end of session two it was agreed that at third session would mean more time to complete college path art creations. Some of the conversation was integrated into a discussion on what constituted "the inclusive educator". (See figures 18 and 19).

One of the learners facilitated a check out activity, creative poem, in which each person provided one word or a sentence about their thoughts at the time or what stuck with them in session two. (See figures 20 and 21).

Before the conclusion of session 2 the support organisations available to contributors were emphasised given the emotive nature and response to the questioning and topics covered in the session.

Visual Aids (See figure 22)

We broke down what we wanted to discuss in the group sessions into two points, as opposed to me exploring all of the research study sub questions with the learners and launching straight into in depth discussions about my assumed line of questioning.

These points came to be, our college paths, thinking about our experiences, and secondly, what we each thought about inclusive education more broadly.

This was discussed with learners prior to the first session so that each learner could have a simple aid to think about what they wanted to say and any preparation work or support they required before we commenced the more practical, dialogical group work sessions. (See figure 22).

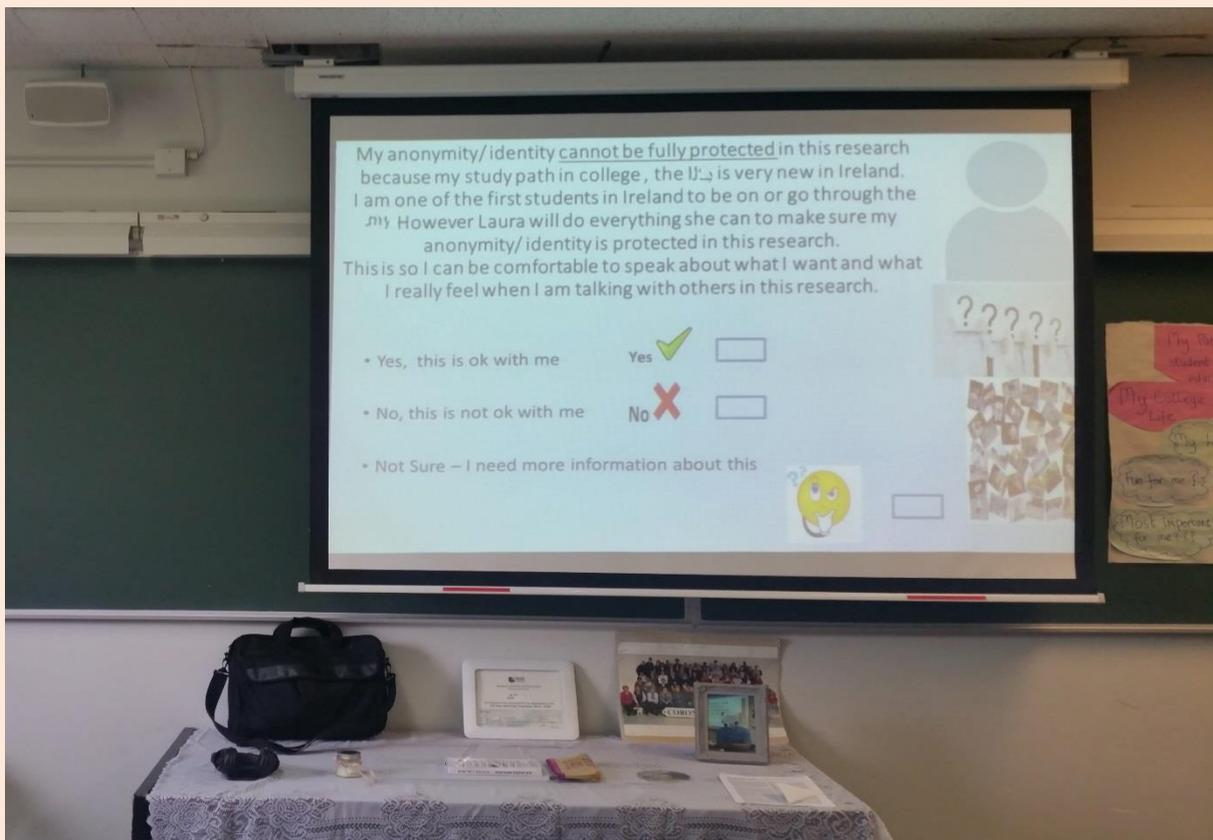


Figure 24: Session 2 – A learner to the left of this image is facilitating the informed consent aspect of this research with the group.

Session 3: Informed Cohesion and Fun

At the start of the session there was some questions, comments and answers on the discussion in session two and learners who wanted to present their object in session three did so in this space. In session three learners illustrated what we termed “our college paths” using art and design materials that would assist them to demonstrate their views and learning with respect to reflecting on their college experience, including poignant moments for each individual or what they felt college was for them more broadly. (See figures 25 and 26).

Furthermore, to support learners with this exercise and learning within the parameters of the research I displayed a support guide with some prompts and questions that would support learners in thinking about and demonstrating their experience. (See figure 11 and appendices 4,5,6).

Learners were encouraged to create, in which ever form they wished, using an array of materials, paints, crafts, stickers, colours and the facilitator was there to assist in various capacities including scribe support, movements of pieces and answering questions where necessary. I supported the group by conveying that creations could be any form, from precise to abstract art, once they were in a position to reflect on and describe what was meaningful for them in college. The notion of the path reinforced the idea that it was the reflection on “a journey” and not a particular confined aspect of college life. (See figures 11 and 22). This assisted learners in thinking about college more holistically as well as assisting the methodological approaches in narrative inquiry through creative and design as a research tool. When each learner had created their college path they presented their creation to the group and described what it meant for them. (See figures 12 to 17). I adapted some of art brushes as so learners with physical needs could fully participate in the activity without the need for a support person in the process.

I was also an individual support to learners who required assistance with spelling or scribing depending on the nature of their creation. Learners also helped each other to move materials, edit and provided advice on colour schemes and techniques.

Music which was of significance to some of the learners was played during this activity so some learners sang along whilst those who wanted a more quieter, less formal space to work set up near tea , coffee station.

Evaluation – Learner Feedback

Learners provided feedback through the one word exercise and some of the learners provided more comprehensive session feedback to each other in their comments at the end of session three.

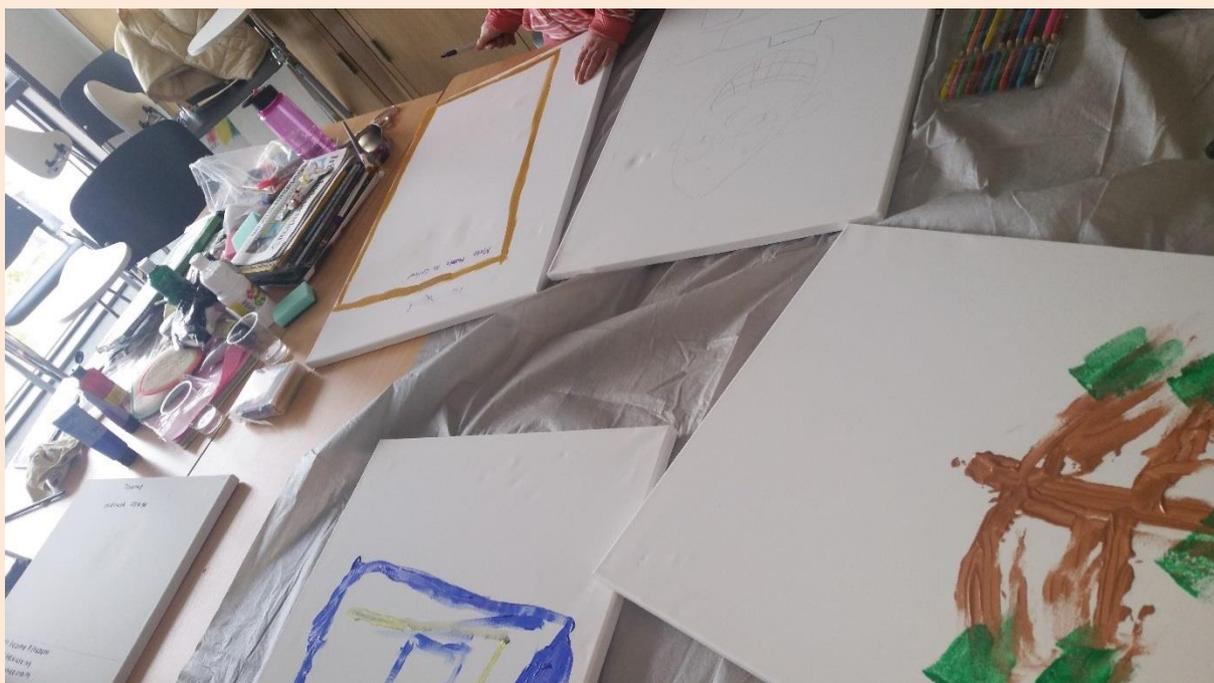


Figure 25: Session 3 – Learners exploring their college paths through art and design.



Figure 26: Session 3- Learners Art work from Session 3

Creative Outputs of the Study

Memory Book

Some of the learners referred to their collection of work as like a “memory book” because these exercises supported the each individual to reflect on and recall some of their experiences in college. The wider discussions accompanying each picture are included in the discussion of findings section of chapter 1. The group felt that the work demonstrated in the sessions would be best presented using a photo video pieces with music to support reader insight. I was in a position to support this from an IT perspective so I compiled the imagery from the sessions with music chosen by one of the learners in session three as an accompaniment to the exercise. One of the learners helped me with sequencing and I sent this to learners for review. The “visual memory book” as learners termed it, includes music that became symbolic in their college journey, *The Voyage* by Christy Moore, played during the art creation activity in session three. The learners’ memory book represents an interactive view of the findings in this research.

Summary of Components of the Study

1) Inclusive Research Design and Support: Informed consent built into the entire research process and research contributors constructing and defining what consent was to them, including addressing the ethical issues affiliated with people with disabilities in research.

2) One focused information and informed consent session and two creative arts sessions to facilitate a space for contributors, learners to demonstrate their learning in lots of different ways relative to the parameters of this research study.

3) Consistent conversations with contributors in relation to inclusive research approaches, design, facilitation, information accessibility, session preparation and contributor well-being throughout the research process.

Data Collection and Analysis

The findings illustrated in this study are derived from various sources which make up the data set and are illustrated in various forms in this thesis.

These findings and learning experiences are:

- The learning *in and as a consequence of the process*, the process being the learners experience of being the contributors/ co facilitators of this research and the shared peer learning experiences facilitated in the three sessions as documented and recorded by the primary researcher.
- The learning demonstrated by the group as a result of set learning activities in these three sessions, creative outputs.
- The informal meetings and communications between the researcher and research contributors relative to the development of this as an ethical, inclusive research study.
- The researcher's observations of the learning process as documented in study notes and conversations with the contributors.

Data from the research process in its entirety, was stored on an encrypted computer. The data was a complex variation of subsets including inclusive research considerations, group discussions, session check in and evaluation activities, learner's demonstration of work and learning as individuals and as a collective through art, imagery and dialogue. Although I co lead the design and facilitation of sessions I was also apart of the process, as Creswell (2013) relays a "complete participant"(p.166). Therefore, my practical work and reflections on the sessions are included in the presentation and analysis of the data.

All sessions were voice recorded with consent from learners and were transcribed. A copy of my notes from the sessions was integrated into the electronic communication with learners which also included a summary of sessions (see appendix 3) and email reminders to the group of what to bring/consider for the next session.

The data gathered from the discussions and creative outputs in the three sessions was analysed via thematic analysis with the creative outputs forming a standalone demonstration of findings through narrative inquiry via creative facilitation. Learners self-assigned pseudonyms. The main themes which arose in the research are examined in detail in chapter one.

Limitations of the Study

The learners who contributed to this study do not represent the experiences or viewpoints of all students with intellectual disabilities engaging in higher education. Yet due to the incredibly low number of students with ID accessing HE in Ireland, learners contributions will be a valuable lived subjective insight into the experiences of students in HE but also in conjunction with how inclusion is perceived by students.

Even with my strong epistemological position, I am also aware of the limitations of the production of critical emancipatory knowledge in research and in relation to collective effort. This has “rarely been the primary source of egalitarian ideas and practices” (Finnegan, 2013). However, this study commences the conversation in exploring how education can respond to the ways that students perceive learning in a predefined inclusive educational space.

Furthermore, I also have the addition of being the primary researcher in this study meaning that illustrations of learning are produced by me, through my interpretivist lens but also with a particular consideration relative to meeting the criteria of this Masters thesis in content, form and structure. So aside from the subjectivity it is important to note that even within a co researcher, co facilitatory process where learners may have creative influence and control over the design, delivery , presentation of the research, this particular study is also fulfilling another educational requirement which impacts on how information is demonstrated.

Tensions in this Research

Narrative enquiry through creative facilitation was the primary research approach I was adopting in practice but the tension was between facilitating learners in, the telling of story, in its authentic form and supporting them to critically reflect on their experiences in a group work setting which also incorporated discussions and elaborations on their stories through different lens’.

This was challenging for me because I was aware of the “want not to offend Laura” and the “say what I want to say” territory, perhaps one of the few limitations of “insider” research.

I say insider because I was apart of this group as a learner too, thus there was an adoption of various roles by different people at different times throughout the sessions. There was no static positioning of “researcher and contributors” as all of us co facilitated and participated in learning activities at interchangeable times, were involved with the design and planning of the research and its form aswell as the collective generation of knowledge, even though I was the person producing the research with a set research topic and analysis.

Chapter 5: Learning from the Methodological Process and Ethical Considerations

Legislative Lathery



This chapter will explore some of the primary ethical considerations and some accounts of learning as a consequence of the engagement with the research methodological framework.

Ethics and Full and Informed Consent as a Process

Considerable time was spent working with learners to ensure that *the informed* was at the fore in learner's decision to proceed with the research, to know what was involved, to have meaningful and valuable contributions to the study as co-facilitators, researchers, creators of knowledge and to understand, guide and assist the intentions of the overall study, relative to the research process, the form it would take and its dissemination.

As the narrative of the research process unfolds, the "informed" bit changes with each word added. How can you at the beginning give "informed consent" to such a dynamic process when you do not know what the end result will be unless you remain constantly vigilant, and as the researcher, always hold the participants in mind" (Dale, 2011, p. 212).

My research position was that *the informed* need not be constructed *for people* but devised, delivered and supported with contributors as a living relationship in a collaborative learning space which directly addressed power relations, issues of vulnerability and ethics when working with societal sub groups that have been defined as vulnerable adults, such as that of adults with intellectual disabilities.

Legislative Messages: Learning for Future

When I was conceptualising my research approach I was acutely aware from experience, my position as a family member and the nature of my employment, of the overarching legislation and recent reforms relative to the safe guarding and protection of vulnerable adults in Ireland. Adults with intellectual disabilities are affiliated with this category of vulnerability as they are "regarded as some of the most vulnerable or marginalised in society" and are "entitled to have opportunities to be recruited for and participate in research projects while

having their interests safeguarded by ethics committees (Smith, 2008, as cited in Carey & Griffiths, 2017).

Within this research I assumed capacity, as I always do when working with any student. There is an explicit dimension to capacity when it comes to facilitating learning with adults with ID, however it is primarily in both a legislative and historical context. There have been issues with capacity which have restricted adults with ID's rights and freedom to make decisions and restriction in terms of the perception of capacity that people with ID have.

In the strive to respect contributor autonomy and adhere to appropriate and respectful research I found myself in murky waters. The Children and Vulnerable Persons Act 2012 is a safe guarding protective piece of legislation which requires that persons engaging with vulnerable persons in "relevant work or activities" go through the garda disclosure process as to ensure vulnerable adults are safeguarded from various forms of abuse and harm.

Relevant Work or Activities Relating to Vulnerable Persons in the act includes:

Any research work or activities (howsoever described) carried out in a university, institute of technology or other establishment at which third level education is provided where a necessary and regular part of the research work or activity involves contact with or access to vulnerable persons. (Irish Statute Book, 2017)

So even with me knowing the individual learners my positioning or studies in a research capacity permits me to focus on vulnerability, something that has always been contestable for me in light of its emphasis on intellectual disability.

In this act a vulnerable person is anyone other than a child who

(a) is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia,

(b) has an intellectual disability,

(c) is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness or age, or

(d) has a physical disability,

which is of such a nature or degree—

(i) as to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or

(ii) that results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing and bathing.

(Irish Statue Book, 2012)

The “which is of such a nature of degree” is the grey area in the legislation because a person may have an intellectual disability but have no issues in protecting the self from harm yet the interpretation of this act in policy (HSE, Social Care Division, 2014) is that all persons with intellectual disabilities are automatically classified as vulnerable adults via the interpretation of the legislation. This is significant when it comes to exploring ethical practice and label led legislation.

This is the working definition of vulnerability as stated in act. For me making a personal concrete judgement as to whether a person’s intellectual disability restricts their capacity to guard or herself from harm is an impossible feat for a researcher who does not know the participant/contributor and is in itself

unethical practice based on the probable or possible assumption of/on the capacities of the person.

Arguably educators make assumptions on the capacities of learners, referrals to student services, assessment in itself can be subjective but I argue that assumptions premised on a particular societal subgroup warrant consideration.

Research shows that providing specific legal standards to guide judgments of mental capacity significantly improves the reliability of these judgments (Church and Jones, 2008, citing Marson et al., 2007). New capacity legislation then should decrease the general judgments that a person, solely because of their diagnosis, lacks capacity. (NDA, 2009)

In disability services the HSE are adopting a “zero tolerance” framework. This means any member of staff working with adults with intellectual disabilities who is registered with a service who suspects risk or vulnerability has an obligation to report it. A qualified clinician such as a social worker can carry out a “risk or functional assessment with the person of concern” to determine their level of vulnerability. This move towards high volume reporting is a direct response to preventing and identifying instances of abuse of adults with intellectual disabilities, of which we know has been highly prevalent in Ireland. The *functional assessment* is not necessarily required to be carried out on a multidisciplinary basis but an individual clinician can make a judgement in relation to capacity.

There are no such procedures in place in higher education institutions only **good practice** measures to have all persons working with vulnerable persons such as adults with intellectual disabilities go through the Garda disclosure process via the 2012 Act.

I had spoken to the learners in this study about this throughout the years and some were incredibly offended at even being considered a vulnerable adult and others were unclear as to what actually constituted a vulnerable adult because they had never heard of it before only with reference to people with ID, so they assumed it as a “part of disability”. This fact in itself was telling.

The students and graduates on the initiative had very different opinions on the instruction by the university to have their learning partners, mentors, fellow students go through Garda Clearance (now known as Garda disclosure) to work with them.

Initially, I saw this as good practice because I was looking through my own lens of what would be *good for* the students not considering that these learners have spent the majority of their lives going through assessments, policies and procedures **on them**. What I see now is the explicit reproduction of power relations through the mask of **protective legislation** directed at certain societal subgroups as opposed to society in general.

This bothers me because again the state is looking at vulnerability from a disability specific lens, as classified vulnerability. For example, what if a researcher was working with undergraduates students who did not fit into the legislative bracket of being a *vulnerable person* but who became vulnerable in the research process?

The term vulnerability is open to individual interpretation even with the specification of what a vulnerable person is in the act, thus there needs to be clear guidelines as to the determination of capacity. This is where the Capacity Act 2013 clouds some of the discrepancies in prior legislation in which we make an assumption of capacity with every individual, regardless of disability or mental health condition. The determination of vulnerability still remains a grey area given the safe guarding vulnerable persons policy is undergoing national review and the Capacity Act has yet to be fully enacted.

This particular issue certainly requires attention from the HEA and it will be interesting to see what emerges from the enactment of this legislation in the field of research and more important its impact on forms of inclusive research.

Proxies/Advocates

So when thinking about capacity in research, one thing I was sure of was the students' abilities to express in lots of different ways and to make decisions on their college experience. The National Disability Authority's Ethical Guidance for Research with People with Disabilities Report (2009) addresses the need to minimise the use of proxies in research, those who speak for people who "lack mental capacity to consent" (NDA, 2009, p. 34.)

Aside from capacity I asked the group about what they thought about proxies, of which were termed advocates in the research process, as this was what the group could relate to, having all studied self-advocacy in some capacity in their previous education or day service. There was an assent that the use of proxies did not apply to them but learners did mention that some students who are non verbal, deaf may need support from someone else in the research or perhaps assistive technology support.

The learners in this study used third party support in different ways. In this study third party support did not come in session (as the group were in a position to assist with various support needs that everyone had), but it was in session preparation, time planning of which some of the learners families and keyworkers assisted with.

Inclusive Research for us existed outside of the process itself from the person's home to how it impacted and influenced their daily life practices. The learners also supported each other, for example with finding the room in the building that I had booked for us to meet and assisting some of the learners with physical disabilities with personal assistant(PA) requirements, thus eliminating the need for a PA or support person to be present in any of the sessions.

Anonymity and Process

A second tension which emerged for me in this research was the difficulty with endeavouring to protect contributor anonymity in the writing up and presentation of this research. We spent considerable time discussing anonymity and risk in research (Bond, 2015) with relevance to this study, particularly in learning Sessions 1 and 2.

I expressed to the learners that their anonymity ***could not be fully protected*** in this research, due to firstly, the naming of the particular initiative which provides the context of this study and our experiences and secondly, because of the initiative itself being in a unique position in Ireland as a national and international "model of good practice" as reflected in the discussions about the initiative in this paper.

My main concern was that anonymity would be jeopardised when people who knew the students or graduates and their speech mannerisms read this paper.

Nearly every reference and expression made by each learner would allow this to occur. For example, learners naming their experiences with the institution, learning in different disciplines and accounts of context relevant experiences with reference to the initiative, locality, subjects, people thus making this study impossible to fully anonymise, even with excluding the name of the initiative or institution.

I have also named auto ethnographic honest open accounts of experience which are apart of this study but also bring with them accounts of students' interactions and experiences. When I discussed this with learners in session one some said they did not mind being identified in this study and were comfortable in expressing views knowing that these maybe in the public domain.

The learners are all very used to doing this on a regular basis in a public arena. It was through this discussion and consultations with each other that learners stated not only their understanding of non-full protection of anonymity but that some learners had been through a research process before when registered on the initiative, as an internal initiative piece of research where the ILLI was explicitly named and participants had no issue with this naming once they were allocated numbers or pseudonyms. In this study learners decided to self-assign pseudonyms and review the findings section of this research before it was finalised as a piece of work.

I wanted to delve into this more so in a research context to ensure there was collective understanding and when I spoke with learners about the measures that can be taken to protect research contributor's identities, to encourage free speech they all welcomed this.

The variations in assent and dissent throughout the process in relation to this particular discussion told me that the contributors, although all have granted consent relative to naming of the study and expressed an understanding of no guarantee of anonymity, need to be involved in any future public dissemination of this study given the variations in discussions around anonymity.

The decision to consent cannot be reduced to a conscious, cognitive process but is a continuing emotional awareness that characterises every interaction and revolves around the principle of guarding against harm. (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, p.82).

My self-positioning as the learning facilitator who worked on this initiative with students and my immediate connection to the initiative would also mean that readers of this study, may be in a position to identify the learners. Some expressions in this study are also similar to expressions we have made at public events, for example finding a comfort in the way you describe things so you say the same things again but in different arenas with different people.

However, if we did not express a connection to our experiences then there would be no forum or space to firstly to have our views, opinions and voices heard. Secondly, there would be no means to facilitate and present contributor expression because the study would be so diluted with caution thus very small subsection of data would have to be presented in this paper, further diminishing the authentic accounts of experience as well and disrespecting the time allocated and knowledge generated by the group, through poor moral reasoning and handling of data. There would be no way of capturing the learning relative to the intention of the research and addressing the research question as a personal and collective account of experiences in Inclusive education.

In consultation with my supervisor and the learners I decided to retain in their original form, all contributor references to the initiative, the educational institution and my own references to these with the exception of verbal mannerisms and reference to particular individuals in our account of experiences, which have been omitted in all writings. Follow up communication will be required with contributors to determine any potential dissemination of this research.

Learning from the Methodological Process

Fluidity in Research

I used information provided by learners to update the PowerPoint presentation which had information about the research should learners wish to review same at any stage. Learners did not want written transcripts to be forwarded but all session voice recordings were made available should they request same. This was my initial idea. None of the learners requested access to the voice recordings of the sessions. I emailed learners to ask why, as I thought this piece of information may need to be addressed or clarified, even with respect to uptake and choice and some of the learners informed me that the recordings were too long to listen back to. I think learning for future perhaps editing, cutting or stopping and starting recordings in shorter sections may address this issue of longevity in form making the circulation of learning more accessible.

As a more reasonable use of time for review of this research, learners asked that I send the findings section of the research with pictures included so they could see what way I had grouped the findings. Learners who had other literacy abilities aside from direct reading were in a position to use text to voice assistive technology software to read passages of text from the findings if they wished.

As anonymity could not be guaranteed we discussed various ways that the research or aspects of it could be presented as an inclusive viable piece of work and the session one when discussing our “memory book” learners suggested through voice and imagery. One of the recommendations from the sessions was to present the findings in a photo voice style format. I explained to the learners that I thought this was a great idea but that there would be issues with voice in relation to anonymity.

If learners voices were accompanying the images this would have an impact on contributor identity and if my voice was present it would distort the expression each learners personal account of what was relayed about their objects and art creations. I could hear form the group that there were still variations in views on anonymity, some learners expressing that they did not mind revealing of identity others relaying that they were “happy with my pseudonym”.

So I suggested to learners in my follow up communications with them in relation to the findings and presentation the research that images with the musical accompaniment suggested by and facilitated in session 3 by one of the contributors may present as a better option.

Supporting information clarity, accessibility and wellbeing was of the utmost importance and I continuously checked in with learners in both a formal and informal capacity throughout the research process. Learners allocated approximately 10 to 12 hours of their time over the course of the research, (9 months). I felt and upon guidance from the learners that, demanding feedback in the concluding stages, in relation to how learners found the overall process of engaging with the study, was unethical and placed undue demands on learners who were studying for exams at the time so I did not proceed with generalised follow up feedback in relation to learners perceptions of the research as a whole. This may happen organically when learners decide to or have had an opportunity to read the final submission, question and process the information and come back to me but I think this necessitates further consideration in inclusive research as well as learners acting in an advisory capacity on research committees in higher education and within the education sector as a whole.

Easy to Believe

Our experience of facilitating learning together over the past few years has exposed us to the fact that not all information needs to be or should be in “easy to read format” or “designed specifically for adults with intellectual disabilities”.

The very nature of accessible information itself should be explored with contextuality, brevity, dignity and respect. The learning for us within the initiative and this research is that information accessibility in access, form and in engagement is very individual and context dependent. It also warrants scope for both educators and learners to be challenged to broaden vocabulary and expansion of knowledge through the fostering of and engagement with new forms of knowledge. See (appendix 1- wordbank).

As for any student in higher education that means the active engagement with new terms, new ways of attaining knowledge, presenting knowledge, including abstract concepts and engaging in critical analysis. How each student engages with learning and knowledge is very different. It does not have to be about conformity because of the “*intellectualist*” nature of higher education. As the learners relayed, we are all “educators in life”. There are ways to inclusively assist both the breaking down of information into more *stereotypical* plain English or other methods which work for the individual or through the engagement in the everyday, for example students kinaesthetically engaging in research tasks and secondly, the development of information itself in relation to knowledge , cognition, vocabulary, visual literacy and so on in collaboration with *students*. Involvement in research and higher education does not always mean students have to try and engage with what Freire (1996) terms “an alienating intellectualism”(p.67) .

Acknowledging the process as context dependent with an emphasis on student learning style and strengths means students can engage in and be exposed to learning in different ways through individual, collective and dialogical learning experiences. In this research supporting clarity was assisting contributors to make informed decisions on how they wanted to engage, what supports they might need and how information maybe conceptualised, organised, circulated and/or presented. More so, it is also the way that myself and the students, graduates have worked together all of these years with the addition of critically reflecting on and challenging each other in all of these processes. We also need to be in a position to say yes learning is challenging and difficult.

Another poignant illustration in this study was that learning is not necessarily disability specific and learning experiences should reflect authentic exposure to contextual academic experiences which do not just focus on the construction of accessible information for students with disabilities but the exposure to challenging nature of learning, language, conceptual analysis and abstract thinking.

However the facilitation of this can be inclusive, and student led, via inclusive learning methodologies which seek to explore various ways critically reflecting on experience. Questions have always centred on adults ability to engage in abstract conceptual analysis. In “intellectual disability research” researchers are encouraged to use “open ended questions” but this wasn’t my experience in practice and in this research process.

Learning from Perspectives on Terminology in Research

The learners decided that the term *sessions* as opposed to *workshops* would be *more appropriate* when naming the learning events in this study. Observing this now in contrast to my appendices (see appendices), where I use the term workshop substantially is very interesting for me because it is something I did not factor into my initial descriptions of learning. Furthermore, this change in terminology took me time to get used to because workshop is such a prominent way of describing classes or sessions in adult education. The learners suggestions were partly due to, for some, the affiliation of the word workshop to that of the sheltered workshops some of the older adults had heard of or been exposed to when they were younger and general agreement consensus by the group. Sheltered workshops were places for people with intellectual disabilities to go for access to vocational training opportunities but have been critiqued for being a segregated form of education and living.

Even though learners used terms with the perceived same meaning interchangeably such as college, university, these terms had difference resonances for each individual. Learners collectively chose to use the word educator as opposed to facilitator, lecturer, tutor or teacher when describing those working in education because they felt this was more widely used universal term.

The term college or Maynooth rather than university was used in learners' descriptions about college illustrating the importance of college not just as an institution but as an experience and the vision of place, the locality in which the college was situated, as opposed to solely the vision of the university.

One of the most powerful features of this study in terms of its relevance to research and educational practice came when one of the research participants stated that they felt being assigned the term “research participant” did not reflect their contribution to this piece of work. Thus, the suggestion to myself and the group was to have research participants in this study termed research **contributors**, due to the collaborative nature of this work and how all were adding to the body of knowledge by sharing experiences in their lives. Contributors’ self- assigned pseudonyms, with some having poignancy in their own lives, so this process was also about bringing forth the connection to the self.

Conclusion

I have provided in this chapter an account of poignant ethical considerations and learning experiences for me with regard to the ambiguity in same and the impact of label led legislation for people and for educational research more broadly. I also note some of the small but significant learning points in the sessions, process as a researcher but also as part of the collective learning experience.

Chapter 6: Analysis and Discussion

What tells, what shapes?



This chapter comprises of a discussion of the findings with reference to the literature and the learning to be gained from the study.

The research question was:

How are students with intellectual disabilities experiencing and facilitating inclusive higher education?

The Intricacy in Language

One of the most significant findings in this study was that of the ever changing complex nature of language. How learners co constructed language was so diverse and in opposition to some “modelled” ways of knowing or understanding disability yet learners individually had very clear views on how they self- defined relative to ability or disability . This ranged from not seeing disability as part of the person to “students with different abilities” as opposed to disabilities, which is in contrast to affirming and neurodiverse ways of contextualising and conceptualising disability as something to be embraced or seen as inherent to the person, part of their diverse nature (Swain, French, 2000 and Sinclair, 1993) and some who take issue with person first ideologies.

In this study there was no mention from individual learners of impairment or “issues” with disability yet in descriptions about disability learners collectively noted the disabling, dehumanising effects associated with disability with reference to some of their personal experiences and perceptions on disability more broadly. There was an acknowledgement from all learners that disability and the ILI was “othered” in some learners references to “disability people” and “students on the ILI” but this wasn’t perceived by all in a negative light with one of learners seeing the ILI as a “stepping stone” to further potential and the ILI “feeling like home” symbolising a sense of belonging.

This research illustrates that the language around the socio construction of disability needs to be addressed by educators in practice through providing the space for learners to self-define, and recognise the person, externally to predefined notions or *right ways* of framing or communication.

This is most notable in McCormack and Collins (2012) analysis of disability orientation, afforded the ways in which the person interprets the lived experience of disability. However, its not necessarily an immediate adherent to affirming accounts of disability. This is reflected in the various accounts of how learners self - defined from person first language to “not seeing myself as having a disability” , not having to justify my disability, to Daves “Im ok with someone asking what is wrong with me”.

It is impossible to *assign* a framework for the complex nuances and values of the person but learners did relay that part of understanding this process comes from the educators ability to connect with the learner as they illustrated in the “Inclusive educator planned activity” in this research . This encompassed someone who was also apart of, in what learners referred to time and time again throughout the study as the most important aspect of college and also the purpose of higher education, *confidence building*.

Contributors felt that issues with language with reference to the negative connotations around disability was an era or generalisation issue, depending on what language was used at the time. How this was also carried through was reflected in Dave’s presentation of his object which was the site of much emotive discussion and further illuminated the discriminatory practices adults still encountered in their everyday lives as well as the reminets of the individual pathology of disability (Liasidou, 2014). There were no reports of experiences of discrimination in the college environment and the views on college experience overall were overwhelmingly positive illustrating the benefits of the experience of being in higher education and studenthood.

In this experience learners noted freedom, friendship, self-determination and learning partners as fundamental aspects of this experience with Sam illustrating in his art creation the “windows” to different parts of college conveying the holistic experience it offers to students in developing multiple aspects of their life. The learners emphasis on the confidence that university provided, particularly in the initial transitionary into college phase, was expressed relative to the limited opportunities available to adults with intellectual disabilities progression to education further compounded by expectations (WALK, 2015).

One of the most interesting aspects of this study was that the learners’ views on the “disability hierarchy” (WALK, 2015) did not mirror the general view that the hierarchy accommodates “visible disabilities” such as that of a person with a physical disability, first, thus creating more access opportunities for students who can be categorised, relative to their disability. (AHEAD, 2011) This view was, however challenged by one of the learners reflecting the unhelpful nature of categorisation in accessing higher education.

This contention is also reflected in the AHEAD’s (2014) response consultation paper towards the development of a new national access plan which made reference for the need to continue to set targets for all categories of students with a disability and not just those outlined within the matrix of participation targets for students with disability outlined in higher education in a National Access Plan Targets. The extension of this, as is the intention of adult and fully inclusive education, is to facilitate learning with all learners regardless of their assignment to particular societal sub group.

Perception and Social Justice

A proposal from the group in response to addressing the issues with perceptions on people with disabilities was education and communication with the intent of showing people what students with disabilities could do. This also came with the acknowledgement of difference so there was variations in how learners self-defined relative to disability yet they recognised and acknowledged difference as part of a response relative to people with disabilities.

This has informed a lot of the responses from higher education initiatives seeking to continue and illustrate the learning in this context where students on initiatives are taking up “ambassador roles” (Corbey et al, 2012) but it is also placing learners in the sphere of objectification as (Young, 2014 and Shakespeare, 1996) note, based on ideas of inspiration which are also perpetuated in the mass media. This statement from one of the contributors “We don’t need to say anything about ourselves but we need to show it” conveys an explicit view of their own objectives but also the prevailing debate around people with disabilities *positioning* in society. This positioning is perceived as a binary analysis between just being without any social justice agenda and wanting to have a space to express lived issues which will support a social justice change agenda. The learners envisaged and embodied this in different ways. The most mentioned being the want to “help others” and see similar initiatives like the ILI rolled out into other higher education institutions.

The learners noted the failings in the government to provide a consistent financially sustainable access and support system for students with disabilities in higher education. In this analysis ID was not the reference point but disability more broadly.

One of the learners expressed anger that the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities had not been ratified by Ireland and had engaged with various protests to challenge same. This analysis is important when we come to think about the effect of power in the *exceptionalisation* or objectification (Shakespeare, 2007) of people and our views of what inspiration constitutes as well as deeply rooted negative connotations embedded in disability.

Furthermore, as Grigal (2012) relays, the expectations on people with intellectual disabilities, can also help or hinder authentic inclusion experiences via preconceptions on what is needed for people with id or what they are capable of in post - secondary environments. The learners consistent mentioning of perceptions, spoke to named issues with same in the lives of persons with disabilities. Changing perceptions was also one of primary reasons some of the learners wanted to become involved in this research in the first place.

This *nature* of inclusion as mentioned by Grigal (2012) has the means to *create* experience for the person of which they respond to based on their ways of knowing and being. The persons view of a “normative pathway” (Udisky & Hughson, 2012) as well as student hood can be distorted through the construction of experience which serves others and not the person at the heart of the experience. Aside from accepting their positioning or role in the existing order of things (Lukes, 2005), learners may conceive their experience as “normative” or even “exceptional” in light of the power dimensions which have entrenched their ways of seeing because as (Udisky & Hughson, 2012) note postsecondary environments are highly valued so many individuals and their families are thrilled to be allowed on campus which leads to a further risk of segregation. (p.229)

This feeling of *being allowed* also makes students with disabilities feel very lucky to be in college, higher education and for a lot of the learners it is their first time in “mainstream education”, thus the task also becomes about figuring out how acceptance works, which can be a social minefield with obvious power implications.

Lucky Me

Contributors feelings of luckiness in college in this study however, were more complex than the *feeling of being lucky in college* but descriptions of luckiness were also framed in relation to the family and support systems *external to the college sphere*. The group were also divided on this issue of luck , with some of the learners saying luck had nothing to do with being in college but “Its got to do with your personality and whether you have the drive or determination to do it” thus the access and retention in college for this learner is premised on the personal, your ability to connect with people which resides in the personality and not just within an analysis of the value laden environment and culture that is higher education. However, the implicit and explicit power dimensions could not be ignored in learners accounts of this discussion around “luckiness” with one of the learners relaying that the reason they “ got lucky because it actually was when I met with Laura straight away....thought it was going to be a granny with a cane.....” So college for some learners was a space to *unlearn* what had been previously exercised in their own educational or schooling experiences in traditional forms of education.

There were a number of accounts about the negative experiences previous education have provided learners. This was reflected in the system failing to acknowledge the learners as students and secondly, meeting their needs.

Learners spoke to me throughout the research process about getting into mainstream secondary school only to spend most of each day in the resource room and one of the learners was denied an opportunity to take exam subjects. Learners contrasted these experiences with those of college however one learner they did also acknowledge exclusionary aspects of higher education with being denied the opportunity to live on campus. Students views can also sit within insidious power with the want not to challenge and to accept, which can also have an effect on how authentic inclusion is experienced by students, as Usitsky & Hughson (2012) relay some “adults are just happy to be allowed on campus”.

The trajectory and various transitions learners spoke about in their lives emphasises the importance of supporting learners to engage in critically reflecting on their social and political contexts as is the intention of emancipatory learning practices (Fook, 2006).

Inclusion

It was very interesting to see how some of the learners conceived inclusion as participating and yet in the context of this research they saw themselves as more than research participants but as contributing to the research and knowledge in this area, thus the change in research terminology. When learners were asked what inclusion was for them responses varied from “participation” to “the same as everyone else” as well as something learners inherently felt such as “having the drive and determination to do it” and a “feeling like I wasn’t just left there.....that I really felt I was apart of the class ya know with everyone else and that’s the main thing, apart from learning”. One learner noted how inclusive education was apart of being educated already, “before the ILI even started”.

The former statements in this summary are in direct contrast to the intentions of equality and inclusion, which acknowledge the significance of diversity. This can be observed in changes in policy development such as that of the National Disability Strategy (NDS) Implementation Plan 2013 – 16 which refers to the concept of equality recognising diversity, that people are different. (NDS Implementation Group, 2013 p.4) Because difference has not been embraced in our education system, the sub sections of society such as those categorised as having intellectual disabilities are transitioning into a into a space where ID has always been a perceived as something or a specialism or maybe perceived this way in higher education, thus this will also frame how students want to engage in equal ways of being through *sameness*, “*same as everyone else*”. The latter statement recognising education as life path illustrates the importance of educational opportunity in all aspects of life from early age engagement.

The Educator in Education: Learning In Practice

Learners felt the inclusive educator possessed certain traits and attributes but was also everyone. As one of the learners said “everyone is an educator in life”. The most prominent aspect of the exercise and how inclusive learning can be projected was that students saw themselves as supports to teaching staff.

Although, recently Minister Bruton has allocated 1.5 million to teacher training support for teachers with disabilities in some higher education institutions, learners with ID are not making it to higher education to engage in such opportunities. As one of the learners noted they “had never seen a lecturer with Down Syndrome”.

Learners collectively saw the need for a learning facilitator in higher education but the nature of this position varied for each contributor.

This study conveys that an educator, facilitator or person facilitating the learning process is not someone to be viewed or perceived as this existential entity or someone who as Freire (1972) relays, “deposits knowledge” onto the student. It also shows that in situations where the educator is more actively involved in supporting the student, the self, can manifest itself in different ways.

The sharing of the self with students thus enables students to observe and interpret how they see the growth of the person in front of them, such as that of their learning facilitator, which the learners in this study referred to a number of times. This was me but in different selves, as a learning facilitator, as a friend, an educator and as a person, the assignment of each of these, dependent on the nature of my relationship with the student.

The reference to my blossoming like a rose is an incredibly important statement because when you go through such an intensive experience with learners for five years magnified by the battle for resources and fostering inclusion you also, as one of the contributors states, “grow up” but we also foster our personal development in different ways. This account of how students see me is so important if we want to understand what can enable or inhibit our approach and practice. The statement of Laura “making me a stronger person” reflects the perspective of the person, yet for me I see this as an internalised co achievement, when I know the individual has the personal means and mechanisms to feel that way. Conditions such as that of the political landscape this project resides in and the nature of the people view of life, mean that we become close as Jane says “we are like a family, I feel like Laura is my sister”. You become part of a collective learning experience, developed meaningful friendships, you become agents for social change and thus you establish immense care relations with the students you work with.

However, within this in the college experience the want to care so much for students can put you can into a position of carelessness and being perceived as what Hussey (1999) terms the force of salvation, for students so the acknowledgment of this relative to the intentions of inclusive learning is vital if we are to support autonomous ways of being with students.

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter with a summary response to the research question acknowledges one primary experience and practice. That of diversity. It is in the ways learners described experience and in the way they engaged in the research process and demonstrated their learning and I was apart of this process. This research shows us that distinctions are helpful such as those of models of inclusion in educational approach, the difference between special and inclusive education and the conditions which constitute authentic inclusion, such as inclusive research. However, distinctions can also *other* and take the emphasis away from the individual to recurrent accounts of oppressive experiences which make up our narratives but the learning is in that they do not define who we are and our capacities as students. The capacities of students should also be fostered in contributing to the learning process with teaching staff. The nature and feeling of inclusion is very different for each individual, yet it is an acknowledgment legitimate way of describing experience with a purpose, such as *that of fully inclusive education*.

Chapter 7: My Personal Reflections on Learning

What sits must fit.....



Introduction

This chapter seeks to illustrate learning gained from the various research approaches, learning methodologies and learning experienced in this study through learning demonstrated and my own reflections on learning as a critically reflective practitioner, which also forms part of my epistemological position. Some of writings are taken directly from my research reflective journal, of which became my educational *guide* this year.

A Reflection on the Sessions: My Interpretative Framework On the Research

In terms of my own ability to critically reflect on my experience and social reflexivity in research, this variation brought with it a complexity to how I thought about and framed what I understood in this research. I was acutely aware of what Alvesson & Skoldberg (2000) highlight in relation to the different uses of reflexivity which “typically draw attention to the complex relationship between processes of knowledge production and the various contexts of such processes as well as the involvement of the knowledge producer” (p.5). One of the learners actually addressed this in conversation stated “No offense Laura but it’s not all about Laura, you have to have the drive and determination to do it”. This was when I knew critical element of engagement was there within the group. I can *know* what I have outlined in my assumptions about learners initial responses to questions, but learners may have a completely different interpretation of this statement. This is where I acknowledge a phrase by (Oakley, 2000) “who knows” when she references the different ways of knowing and the implications of researchers *reading of* participant accounts including how interpretation is phrased. (p. 12). In this thesis narrative and critical accounts are provided as well as autobiographical experiences, including my own, of facilitating learning thus it’s an interweaving yet connected collection of truths, which in themselves are complex in nature, form and can be contestable claims of knowledge.

Thinking About the Role of the *Researcher*

I was very uneasy with some of the discussions centering on me in various sections of the sessions but it wasn’t until I listened back to the recordings of the sessions that I realised, this was and is the study.

My position is a part of learners' experience in education and the learning facilitator does play a role in how students decide to take the journey and how inclusive education is facilitated in the university. Initially, I was apprehensive about myself in the research. I knew there would be "me in this research" in a lot of ways, all research is subjective, but in terms of raw data I had envisaged it being primarily derived from the contributors. I was conscious that my self-positioning, my view point would in some way *dilute the study*, take away from the voices that matter, but this process brought me back to recognition of the researcher as contributor and the importance of acknowledging all perspectives within a group and I reside in this space too.

If I believe a certain idea I tend to "*gather*" the language or communication tools to support me to express it. Isn't it the intention of critical education for learners to demonstrate the same? Maybe this is what learners are developing as opposed to "relaying responses that the researcher is looking for" as was my assumption based on my observation and "sensing of the events and statements". We must also consider how our assumptions are rested in light of knowledge and learning as a moving wheel.

The learners ability to critically reflect on my position, as a learning facilitator, my level of involvement, is exactly what is required if we are to support learners to express what approaches should be facilitated in assisting the facilitation of inclusive education and education more broadly. It wasn't necessarily that I had *pedagogy of fear* in my mind, as is discussed in (Husseys 1999 study) but a discussion about me and the nature of my position made me uncomfortable because it had the potential to expose the personal. The part of me that I hold outside of the arena of education. One of the learners wanted to shut the conversation down but I expressed my openness to continuing and I realised from listening to the learners that me, my life and education were and are

intertwined and I have very different relationships and connections with each learner. I could facilitate my disclosure and express my wishes in the discussion, including what I did not wish to discuss but this never arose because the learners connected their accounts of my growth to the self, me, in relation to our personal connections (relatability,) to my role as a sister, partner, daughter, learning partner, facilitator, educator including an analysis of some of my attributes but not my *personhood*. Moreover, having a knowledge of the students' interests, desires and goals makes you "receptive and relatable" (Noddings, 1984, p.22). In this case I was the student.

Session Learning

It was clear that learners took the documentation and presentation of their lives seriously, even with consistent contextual humour evident throughout all sessions. When some of the learners expressed to me that they wanted to take their art creations home to work on I knew there was an engagement with learning. This was a signifier to me that there was free and active engagement with the learning.

The overarching theme in this study was language. I used terms like *spotlight* and *intellectual disability* in my questioning with students as these would be "general phrasings" , as to gauge learners opinions on some of language and phrasing that is generated in education and also with *relevance to their experience*.

This was an incredibly insightful learning experience for me and provoked me to think about what I thought I knew about questioning with students. There can be a presumptuousness in a lot of things we say but phrasing can have a significant impact on the student experience and how we make assumptions about peoples self-positioning on inclusive education programmes.

I assumed the positioning of spotlight in my questioning with learners where I make the assumption that the students acknowledge themselves as being “in the spotlight” as a consequence of the national interest, international promotion of this initiative and learners promotion of the initiative as a very important learning experience. However, this was not how learners saw it or wanted this line of questioning to be phrased. It was a really interesting learning experience for me.

Issue with Specialism

I did not do anything that I would not do with any other adult learning group in the sessions which accompanied this research study. This statement provokes interest all of the time because people are waiting for you to relay the particular and “special” techniques you have used when facilitating learning with adults with intellectual disabilities. There are certainly strategies I use like the pacing of sessions, how information is discussed and demonstrated but these are so unique to each individual and group, which is why within my epistemological position, I see the construction of knowledge in education as a co- facilitatory process and curriculum as a fluid entity, context dependent with emancipatory potential, premised on the Freirean perspective which views curriculum as a conversation (Connolly & Hussey, 2013).

The Fire

The fire for me was illustrative of both challenges and political battles affiliated with continuing the initiative. The “fire within doesn’t always have to manifest itself to the surface. It’s still there but without it students are also in a position to be students”. Students can chose to be part of the battle (with reference to funding, political objectives, advocates for social change) but one of things I was always mindful of when facilitating learning with students and staff on this

initiative in the university was that the students' experience did not become the initiative experience where students felt they had to be apart of the broader educational agenda. This was a really interesting experience and one of the ones that constantly made me feel uncomfortable or uneasy because I was always questioning what this experience was supposed to encompass, student access not activism??? I had wished for a space where students felt they were working and achieving within their own agenda, as a student and what that constituted for the person, even though there was and is an explicit national and international interest in this initiative. In this research I have found that students have identified with and reacted to this in very different ways further illustrating for me the complexities associated with learning and how we define aspects of educational policy and practice. I also think now that my wishes for students are quite aspirational but I continue to hold them. Even my reference to students on the initiative warrants exploration as a *positioning reference* to students and the contributors in this research have certainly shed light on how we think about inclusive education in this capacity.

Research as a Space for Expression

The learning, within this study, was one of the most remarkable experiences I have ever been apart of because I got to hear very concise, assertive views and opinions, from people that I had known and worked with for a number of years, that I had never heard before. Some views that had just never come out in our daily experiences and discussions. Views that provoked me to think about the way that I have been facilitating learning with students and feeling pulled into the realm of accountability. This study really conveyed to me the importance of the foundations of the relationship and how research can be facilitated as a space for exploration *of and within* a variety of social realities, if it is conducive to expression and learning with meaning, as determined by the group.

We worked hard, through pre session planning, preparation and information circulation, to create an environment in the sessions where comfort in expression would be felt, that the sessions would be something to experience, to support learning motivations, stimulating and supported particularly through discussions around what confidentiality and anonymity actually meant, from our perspective. I say we *worked hard* because the adoption of planning and knowing was very important to some of the contributors if they were to engage meaningfully *in and with* this research, which meant lots of logistical tasks and communication, thus the challenging nature of facilitating *conducive and inclusive research*. With this group there was an overarching presumption of and not acceptance of diversity.

I could see that learners' engagement with the learning activities in the sessions supported their ability to connect with what was being discussed or highlighted. The manner in which learners' viewpoints were expressed in the sessions, fieldwork component of this study, was also mesmerising to me because I can recall the day that I met each learner for the first time and I can say, in all cases, that I have witnessed incredible transformations in how learners interact with and be in the world as adults. The sessions with the group enabled me to reflect on these observable changes. Perhaps, this is an account of my own emancipatory experiences. The learners noted similar observations, like those I have just expressed, with respect to my own transformation in various capacities, as highlighted in the findings chapter of this thesis. Students' attuned ability and confidence in storytelling, debate, critical reasoning, critical questioning of their own assumptions, openness to learning, as well as their incredible analytical and abstract thinking is everything you hope to see as an educator and everything I have been told by some, that people with intellectual disabilities struggle with or will/can never achieve.

Connections

Learners acknowledging the significant challenges that accompany being in college, as John said “the good the bad or worse” was realism in its finest form. The connections learners had to humour, music and emotions in learning was clearly evident in the study, particularly when it came to the checkout evaluation activity in session 2.

For me, facilitating this research made me realise the importance of taking time to reflect on and really engage with your own experience and how others perceive what you do because it can expose you to new dimensions, perspectives on life and learning you never envisaged, which for me in this research was questioning my assumed ways of working with students. This experience removed me from the “bubble of battle”, which for me is representative of my work in social activism with respect to inclusive education. I began to think about how I was and behaved in both worlds, in “the battle” and “the facilitation of experience”, and the impact of this on students’ learning. We can talk about the purpose of reflection and the benefits of reflexivity but in an era of accountability and as (Devine et al, 2011) relay, performativity, where you are running to support people every hour due to the demands on resources, a reflective space can be non-existent, unless you are already in a space which embraces this type of learning and pedagogical approach.

Harry’s account of me “running around in the first year, everywhere” to “Did you get any easter eggs this year Laura?” relayed the descriptions of pressure to the everyday connections with people and that education is and should be comprised of so much. Educators are not these existential beings *outside* of the process.

This is still very difficult for our education system to comprehend. Students and educators are responding to difference and diversity but for me, witnessing responses with the unquestioning of diversity and dignity, is where meaningful and respectful education derives. For this group it wasn't about accepting difference or diversity, these were a given. The only questioning of these was that of understanding, understanding more about the *nature* of difference and diversity in people and why people are saying and doing the things they are doing, as to gain insight. During one of the sessions, one of learners proceeded to get up from their seat and move sporadically whilst repeating certain words. I knew from working with this student that this was one their ways of processing learning and engaging in sensory needs fulfilment.

Rather than question this, "unsterotypical classroom, student behaviour" one of the other learners in the group signalled , through a hand gesture, the intention to join in with the movement. When this signal was received with the person's consent, the learner joined in. Consequently, everyone in the group participated and it became a movement exercise led by this particular learner with unique intentions, experiences of engagement and learning for each person in the group. As Klotz (2004) relays in relation to her discussion of meaningfulness in studies and gaining insight into people with intellectual disabilities lives, "peoples particular actions and behaviours must be acknowledged and engaged with as legitimate, meaningful and purposeful, rather than making them conform to normative social practices and behaviours as a means for their social inclusion and acceptance". (p.101)

Reflexivity in Practice

Another feature I could sense, particularly with some of the speech mannerisms and statements I had heard the learners say before, was that some of the learners, initially in session one, had the responses they felt *I was looking for, like they were presenting their story at one of the events students are invited to, to speak from experience.*

I felt this because I had heard these type of statements before in my general daily conversations with the adults and in their preparation work for presentations to others before, which were directed at various audiences including higher education institutions, human rights organisations, politicians and fellow students. So the importance of connecting learners to the purpose of the activities and scope of the research was a challenge.

However this ended up happening quite organically through learners connections to songs and music as well as humour and emotional learning. I understand “I am a sailor you are my first mate” to be this learners connection to Christy Moore” having spoken to the individual many times where this song was sung to me, holding significance for this person. To see it transpire in this session was very interesting.

Emotional Learning

“I am crying now” may have been reference to the emotional learning that was embedded in all three sessions so I was mindful of this in both and positive and negative light. Positive in the fact that the space was there for learners to share, be emotive and feel that they had the space to be, to express.

Negative in the fact that because emotions were so heightened in parts of the sessions particularly when students were reflecting on their experiences of missing college, the potentiality for emotional distress was there.

I can use these words as indications to improve my practice and how I plan the next sessions, such as “need more time” but there maybe more to each word, others aspects of this for the person that may not be articulated in the session. I really liked the “if we nothing we have a problem” statement as it was abstract maybe not in its intention but I think it sends a powerful message.

Questioning

Aside from asking the usual questions and what do you think? I tried to facilitate questioning that I knew would encourage opinion and debate. , aside from the importance of experiences in learning and narrative inquiry I knew these adults had opinions about education and about stereotypical taboo subjects I wanted to explore this further. This way of knowing comes from my belief that all persons can be self-determined critical agents if they are provided with the collective means to engage in meaningful learning experiences. This insight and knowing of ability was also through what I think is one of the core aspects of education, the relational. My relationship with and knowledge of these learners, as students and foremost people.

Chapter 8: Conclusion and Recommendations

The Revival.....



Introduction

This research critically explored the learning experiences of students and perspectives on the inclusive dimensions of higher education. It was enriched through the narrative forms of seven students and graduates who transitioned into higher education through the inclusive learning initiative (ILI), an access and support system assisting students with intellectual disabilities to experience the challenge and benefits of learning in a university. The support system adopts a *fully inclusive* approach meaning that students are assisted to autonomously engage in the life of the college and their studies receiving needs led support as directed by the person.

A learning facilitator assists the students in navigating the aspects of university and supporting the staff body in the adoption of more inclusive educational and student support services.

The Study

This study sought to critically delve into how students saw education through incorporating a research methodology which would recognise diverse ways of learning and demonstration of learning in an environment where creative input could be nurtured in a shared learning space facilitated by inclusive adult education pedagogies. The storying of the journey is reflected in a multifaceted way throughout the thesis from the conception of the research design, to the demonstration of findings, to the learning as a consequence of the methodological process, thus offers an integrated account of the most significant learning experiences for both contributors and the researcher with the intention of supporting educational practice.

Making Connections

As learners supported the design of the sessions and have been in co-facilitatory spaces prior to this research, via their studies in university and in adult education, contribution from learners in all sessions was quite organic, in the sense that questioning, feedback and understanding the nature of the activities was already there and did not have to be initially prompted or assisted by the facilitator. Furthermore, the existing trust we had as a collective meant that we could explore new learning experiences together and could challenge analytical thinking through quite explicit and not “delicate dialogue”, with the intention of fostering a more critically reflective connection to experience.

This is not to say that an experience like this cannot be facilitated with new groups who do not know each other or have never been in an experiential learning environment. One of the questions that maybe useful for educators is; what point or space do you want to get to and what facilitates you to get there?

The connection I had with the group enabled me to explore this assumed but viable statement in my research question, which was that learners also facilitate inclusive education, not just practitioners. Learners are not just the recipients of education, knowledge or an experience (Freire, 1996).

Within this connection premised on the relational, was a knowing that the learners were already facilitating learning with groups, speaking publically about their experiences, hence “how are learners facilitating inclusive education”?, as well as knowing that the interest, insights and skills were there to explore the “inclusive” education dimension in a critical way with learners and not as a product of experience.

Another aspect of the learning from this research for me was seeing and being immersed in the *approach to education* which occurred in this collaboration. The encompassment of dignity, respect and flexibility. Flexibility ensures you have the space to create and within this research space was meaningful creation and co- facilitation. I feel privileged to have been apart of this experience.

Observing the unique learning journeys, accounts of self and the experiences of all involved relative to their own path in education was and is indescribable. I have observed each of these students go through life changing experiences. It wasn't until Ryan and Harry pointed it out in this research that I realised that the students had also observed my own.

Recommendations and Further Study

Learning partnership was not explored within the parameters of this research but it is central to the experience of these students and graduates in higher education. I think further exploration of the *nature and role* of learning partnerships in higher education would foster our understanding about how students learn and ways learning can collectively be supported and facilitated in education.

A more holistic larger scale research approach with learning partners, teaching staff, and families would have provided a more distinct holistic account of inclusive learning in this context as highlighted by Messiou, (2016) and the impact this has on education as well as the staff and student body more broadly. This also means researchers *not perceiving or engaging just with persons with intellectual disabilities* as the main focal point of studies in inclusive education, but *all cohorts* who are in a position to inform and develop inclusive education.

The importance of facilitators, teachers with intellectual disabilities in facilitating continuous professional development opportunities with staff in all aspects of education is fundamental in the development of inclusive education as a pedagogical tool in addressing issues of oppression as well as acknowledging with disabilities as encultured human beings who do not just comprise of, but embody lived experience.

In addition, the active involvement of persons with intellectual disabilities, different abilities in research management and structures requires a more focused approach in development at an international level.

The future of initiatives like the ILI remain uncertain pending no sustainable stream of funding to support the continuation of individual and programme connections to higher education with persons with disabilities.

There needs to be a concerted effort not just to implement the ailing legislation but the focus on inclusive and not special education, across all aspects and levels of the education system including the introduction of a blanket support system for all students who need or wish to avail of it regardless of their socio- cultural or economic status, outside of the confines of categorisation.

“ Tell me, and I'll forget.
Teach me, and I'll remember.
Involve me, and I'll learn.”

-Benjamin Franklin

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Pictures: Figures - All authors own

Picture: Path - Google Images (2017) Retrieved.

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Image Directory

Description: Figure 1 to 26

Source: Author's Own

Appendices

Appendix 1: Research Study Information

Research information that was circulated to contributors prior to our first session as compiled by Laura Burke and redrafted by one of the research contributors.

Research in Inclusive Education

Masters in Adult and Community Education

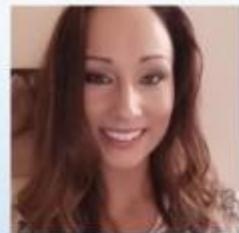
Laura Burke



[Email: Laura.D.Burke@mumail.ie](mailto:Laura.D.Burke@mumail.ie)

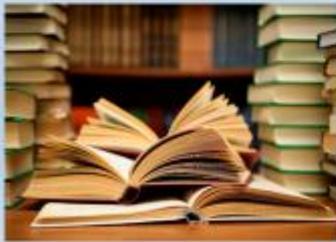
Information for Participants

- My name is Laura Burke – My contact is Laura.D.Burke@mumail.ie
- I am studying a Masters in Adult and Community Education (MED) in Maynooth University.
- My Masters Supervisor is Dr Jerry O' Neill. Jerry's [Contact is Jerry.Oneill@nuim.ie](mailto:Jerry.Oneill@nuim.ie)



Research

- In this Masters I am doing research.
- This means I will be finding out more information about the area I have chosen to study. This is called a study.



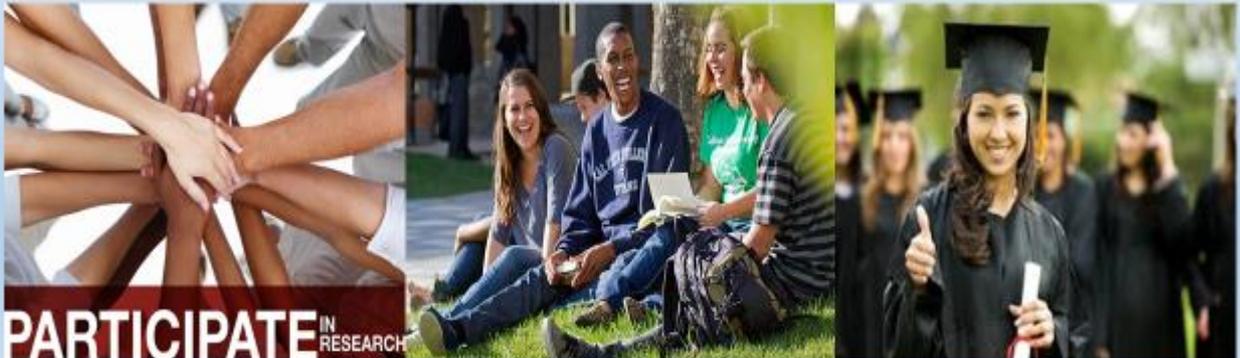
My Area of Study

- Inclusive Education
- I have chosen to look at inclusive education and what it does for education.
- I am looking at this from the perspective of students and graduates with different abilities.
- The journey of students with different abilities in higher education.
- I can get this information from you and I also have my experience to share in this research.

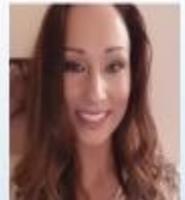


Participants

- Participants are the people who take part in the research.
- In this research if you choose to participate it will be you the student/graduate.



Why this Research?



- I think this research has the potential to change peoples lives - that is educators views on learning, education policy development, social change and it will help people to see that students and their perspectives are a very important part of how we facilitate education.
- This is very important when we come to talk about different abilities in learning and all students with support needs.
- I think that the learning from this will be very helpful for everyone in education in Ireland and in other countries.
- I think this research could be used as a tool to help and support staff and students in education.
- I think students voices need to be heard and learning presented in a way that people can understand.

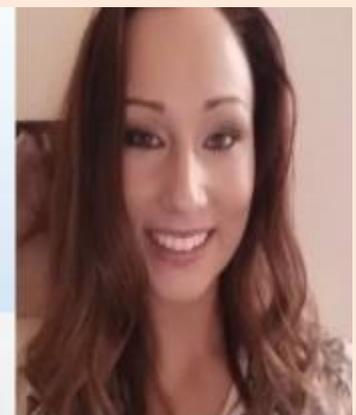
My Position in the Research

- My passion is in learning more about how students see education and how this can help educators, teachers.
- I want this research to **show learners voices** in inclusive ways.
- This is why I have chosen to **co facilitate** a workshop with you.
- I want this research to also help educators be more inclusive in their teaching.

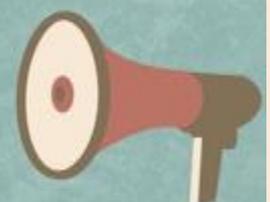


My Position in this Research

- I am interested in how the education system in Ireland can be both changed and supported for the better. I believe the way to do this is to ask students, the people who education is supposed to support.
- Students are experts in their own lives.
- My Masters Research will look at how students see college and the education system.
- So it will be a focus on student **experiences in Higher Education but we will also be looking at YOUR OPINION on educational issues and supports for students.**



SPEAK UP
(WHY YOUR
VOICE MATTERS)



Time Commitment

- I will be asking for about six (6) hours of your time for this research including follow up activities. This time will be your own time meaning that it is voluntary. Voluntary means that you want to be involved and it is in your free time.
- My idea is to facilitate two(2) sessions, workshops:
 - 1) Today which is about the understanding of and views about the research, informed consent and ideas from the group about how this research should be completed, presented and how participants should be supported in the research process.
 - 2) Our College Path Workshop – which will be a creative space for us to reflect on our experiences of college and what education is to us through telling our story in different ways.



What am I doing??? Narrative Research

- Narrative Research is about looking at peoples stories- This will be your story about being in college.



Maynooth University
National University of Ireland Maynooth



Workshops in Research

- To look at inclusive education and peoples stories about being in college I want to facilitate a **workshop class**.
- **This is** to help people in a group tell their story about what education is and should be for students with different abilities.
- You will know the other participants in this research.
- I am looking at your experience of being a student on the ILI – As you know, A fully inclusive education model in university.
- In this research we are going to start by doing two classes/workshops.



Why this Research? A Workshop

A Workshop – Us meeting and learning together:

- Means that YOUR ideas, what you create and what you say is *supported and debated* in this space.
- Your workshop work, what you tell me and the group about your story will be presented in my final Masters for my course.



Data Collection

- Through learning we gather information in different ways, for example, from the pictures, objects and words we create and things we say about our experiences in college.
- In research this is called data.
- I want to record the class with a voice recorder and to take pictures of the learning that happens in the group. My recordings will be kept and what was said in the group will be typed out which is called a **transcript**.
- To do all of this I will need **your consent**.
- No pictures of you or other people will be shown in my Masters. This is to protect something called your **anonymity**.



Storage of Data

- I will be storing all data, voice recordings, pictures and information from our workshops in a safe place.
- My laptop is **encrypted** meaning you need a password to get into it. Only I know this password.
- The data from this research will be stored until after my research has been examined by the Department of Adult and Community Education. After this it will be destroyed.



Research Follow Up

- My connection with you does not stop after our two class sessions. I will be getting feedback from you.
- **You also can request a copy of the transcript I have which is my recording of the words you say on paper, in a recording, through photographs and you can have this information in any way, format you like.**
- I will also be sending you a copy of my research findings.
- You will have an opportunity to reflect on, take out or change any information that we record and that I put into this study/Masters.



To protect your identity in this Research we can do things like:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is you and what you say... • In the research you are..... <p>1)Participant A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Or <p>2) John, Sarah</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number 2 is something called a pseudonym. 	<p>This is something you decide.</p> <p>No photographs of you will be included in the research.</p>	<p>Instead of saying I/I</p> <p>We can say</p> <p>1)A fully inclusive programme in a university</p> <p>Or</p> <p>2)An access and support programme for adults with intellectual disabilities in university .</p>
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Research Risks



- Please note that in this research we will work to protect your **anonymity** **BUT** in this research your **anonymity will NOT be guaranteed.**

- **Why not?**

- **1) Nature of your Course /Path of Study**

- It is your choice, as a group, as to whether you would like me to name ILI in this study. Part of the research is about a very particular path of study in university and your reflections on a particular programme/course in university.
- Even without naming ILI, this is a new course in higher education in Ireland, with very few students coming through this access route to college. This might make you known in this research. Every effort will be made to protect your anonymity in the research study.

- **2) Disclosure of Abuse: Note to Participants**

- In research it is very important than people speak and *feel* that they can speak freely and honestly in a comfortable space.
- However, if someone discloses/ talks openly about a type of abuse that has happened to them that is ,was a significant threat to the persons wellbeing and/or safety then **we cannot guarantee anonymity in research.**

My Choice in this Research???

Choice to Participate: It is your choice as to whether you want to participate in this research or not.



YES

NO

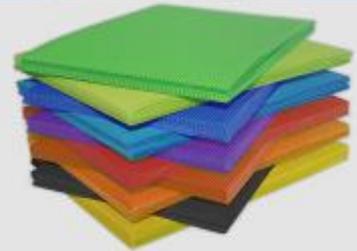
Choice to Withdraw: You also have the choice to withdraw , back out of this research **at any time. It will not effect you badly in any way.**



We will talk about this more in session one.

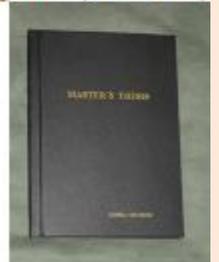
Presentation of the Research

- My idea is to present peoples **INDIVIDUAL story** in a **collage** of pictures, words, quotes from the person and what they say about education.
- This would mean that people could see and hear what the person is talking about.
- I will be guided by you here too in terms of ideas about how I can present my findings in a creative and inclusive way.



Where will I see the final Masters?

- This research will be presented to my Department of Adult and Community Education in Maynooth University.
- It will be read by Jerry, my supervisor and other staff in this department. It will also be shown to somebody outside of the university who is called an external examiner.
- My research being made public depends on something called **anonymity** and how I can achieve this with this Masters. We will talk about this in session one. This is where my contact and follow up with you will be very important.
- **My Idea to have an audio visual masters which shows the findings from these workshops that we facilitate together.**
- **As we all said before in our work together "Don't just tell me Show Me".**



Listening

Our Wordbank

- Inclusive Education
- Research
- Narrative Research
- Participants
- Workshops
- Support
- Debate
- **Encrypted**
- Risk

- Data
- Data Storage
- Transcripts
- Informed Consent
- Choice
- Anonymity
- Pseudonym
- Presentation of Research
- Withdraw

First Workshop Number 1



- 1) Your Understanding of this research
- 2) Your choice of whether to participate in this research or not.

- What is this research about – questions and answers?

- Informed Consent and inclusive research.

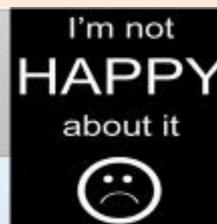
- Ideas for the next session – Group Discussion

Second Workshop Number 2

- Group Workshop
- Our Learning in College
- College Journey Maps
- Experiences of Students – Group Discussion
- Research Follow Up



Where can I go if I am not happy with any part of the research study?



- My Keyworker if I attend a service
- DACE – The Department of Adult and Community Education Maynooth University
- Laura's Supervisor Jerry O' Neill
- National Advocacy Service for people with Disabilities



Telephone: 0 1 708
3784/6062/3752/3937
Email: adulthoodeducation@nuim.ie



Dr Jerry O' Neill
Email: Jerry.Oneill@nuim.ie



Telephone:
0761073000



Where can I go if I get upset?

- Sometimes talking about memories and things in our lives can be emotional. There are supports for you as a participant in research:
- Your keyworker if you are in a service
- Campus Support Services if you are a current study in the university
- Local Supports in your Community



Maynooth University Student Services –
Counselling Service

Website-

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/campus-life/student-wellbeing-support/counselling>

Telephone - (01) 708 3554

The HSE have links to mental health support services in your area:

Website:<http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/Mental Health Services/>

Can I give feedback about my experience?

- Yes you can. I will be checking in with you throughout the research process but you can also:
- Give feedback to Jerry or the Department of Adult and Community Education in Maynooth University. You can do this with or without being known.
- What you say will be confidential unless you say otherwise.
- If you are interested in learning more about research with adults in Ireland you can contact:
- The Inclusive Research Network in Ireland/National Federation of Voluntary Bodies
- Contact: Email - info@fedvol.ie
- Website http://www.fedvol.ie/Inclusive_Research_Network_IRN/Default.241.html



Group Activity

- If you were going to design consent for this research what would you see in it?

Next Session Group Activity

- What ways would best help you to share your learning about college??

Full and Informed consent

To us research is.....

To us confidentiality is

My name in the study.....

Consent is

What does consent to us look like?.....

Storing the information from this meeting / session ...

Appendix 2 : Session 1 Ideas and Process

Facilitating Inclusive Research

10.00am to 12.45pm (March 2017 – Date TBC).

Beginnings of Group and Check In Activity – Photolanguage

- Name
- Why you chose this photograph?
- What brings you here today?

1) What is this research about – questions and answers? (10.15am to 10.40am)

- Laura PowerPoint with pictures to be sent to students in advance of this meeting.
- Laura to talk to participants about this and facilitate feedback – make notes for follow up
- Participants to understand the research, how it will be facilitated and an idea about how it will be presented.
- Students used to “grilling” in research contexts. Group to talk about co facilitation and what it was like in previous workshops. What is a workshop to the group – usually a *class*??

2) Informed Consent and group ownership – As a living relationship (10.40am to 11.15am)

- What kind of things do we need to do and say to make sure we are treated fairly and protected in this research.
- What will go into our consent form? – Laura to draw up after student ideas in session
- When will we sign our consent?
- Where can I go if I am not happy?
- Where can I go if I get upset? – Laura to have logos – list of organisations ready
- Confidentiality here.....CANNOT be guaranteed in this research but here are the things we can do to make sure you anonymous – Laura to bring pictures of Student A, B,C and Joe Bloggs name.
- Right to withdraw – what does this mean??
- Advocacy in Research –What does the legislation and Guidelines say.
- Notion of a vulnerable adult.

- Adults space to question this practice under Children and Vulnerable Persons Act 2012 – National Advocacy Service Details
- Laura to bring picture cards, flip chart paper, markers.

11.15am to 11.30am – Break - Laura have tea and coffee ready

3) What is reflection and how does it help research? (11.30am to 12.10pm)

- Our learning from college – for example – What are the things I really liked in college?
- Thinking about what we want to say in this research- Prep support important in research – supporting students to process topic area and think about what they want to add or say to it – Is not going to work on the spot, example, what do you think about college??
- This research is about our own lives and how we feel about the things that we say - our views and opinions. Learning from each other – means that this happens in a group space. Why might we do groupwork??
- Is there such thing as the right or wrong thing to say in research?
- What would help us before we come to the second session. Concerns or queries???

Reflection Research on pages ready to explore.

4) Research About Inclusive Education (12.10pm to 12.30pm)

- Discuss methods with students - Bringing Photographs and objects to the next session??
- Incorporate Student ideas for next session

What is next??

- Laura to send – Summary of Session One and Session 2 Structure – Group Ideas i.e what kinds of things are we going to do and talk about in session 2 – Our journey in college and what we think about college.
- What the group decided around consent and what form this would take.
- Group to talk about this and discuss new ideas, changes, amendments.

12.30pm – 12.40pm Questions and Check Out

Check Out – One Word

Asking each person for one word on how they found today.

Support Needs of Participants – Inclusive Teaching and Learning and individualised supports

- Movement a must!!!
- Environmental support- make sure learners are comfortable with room temperature – spacing, seating, windows opened or closed!!! Do this early as it may cause distress for a learner later on.
- Remind all learners that noises in the room are usually the screen, new building windows – reassurance.
- Time for short breaks which may need to be taken every 15/20 minutes as guided by the group and individual.
- Pictures instead of written text for some learners.
- Written text a must for structure for some learners.
- Audio Visual resources
- Enable group organise the space and seating
- Have crimped paper ready – sensory support needs

Research Understanding

1. Please tell me, in your own words, what is this study about?
2. What will you be doing if you take part in this study?
3. What are the risks of being in this study?
4. When I say your taking part is completely voluntary, what does that mean to you?
5. What can you do if you start the study but don't want to finish it?

Horner-Johnson W, Bailey D. Assessing Understanding and Obtaining Consent from Adults with Intellectual Disabilities for a Health Promotion Study. *Journal of policy and practice in intellectual disabilities*. 2013;10(3):10.1111/jppi.12048. doi:10.1111/jppi.12048.

(Label thinking in research studies too)

Session 1 Outline 7th of April 2017

Introduction

- I will be writing notes and voice recording this session as part of the research process.
- With your consent I will be also taking photographs of our work today and forwarding to you.
- I will be sending you a summary of today's meeting.

Group Check In - Your name and what brings you here today??

- 1) What do you want to know before leaving here today?
- 2) What is this research about for you?
- 3) What is informed consent?
- 4) What way can we give consent to Laura in this research?
- 5) ADVOCACY SUPPORT /STAFF POSITION IN RESEARCH

The above to be discussed in relation to the PowerPoint research information sent to each individual. Use as a reference point.

To discuss with the group.

- What does consent in this research look like?
- What are my choices moving forward?

Pictures of WORD BANK

- Is there such thing as the right or wrong thing to say in research?
- What would help us before we come to the second session?
- Concerns or queries?

Group Check Out

- Important Learning for me today

Handouts for Participants

- **Copies of Research Information**

Next Steps: *Workshop Date *What to bring

Appendix 3: Summary of First Session

As emailed to group with voice recorded on each slide. Opportunity for contributors to add, amend, omit.

Our Consent and Choice

Research Project Laura Burke
Masters in Adult and Community Education
Summary of First Session

Session 1: Laura and the participants talked about Laura's Research, the choice to participate and how participants can give consent in this research.

- This presentation is the result of comments and decisions this meeting, workshop and the participants' ideas around consent in research.
- Consent on PowerPoint with voice is helpful because we can see pictures and hear what is being said, what we agreed.
- The group decided that contributors to the research would be a more appropriate name than participants.

Our Relationship Together and in this Research

- There are reasons why Laura has come to you for this research.
- We talked about these in session one.
- Why are you here? Why is Laura here?
- We found that there were different reasons between why people were here at session one and why Laura was there. This was welcomed.
- Laura thanked the group for their support but said she did not want people here just to help her but that participants were firstly interested in the research she was doing. It was noted that Laura was a big part of what she is asking the group to talk about – views on Inclusive Education – and the journey together on the project so this was discussed.
- Some participants said that it is not about Laura it is about the research and they were here because they wanted to “help others” “share their experiences” and “change the perspective on adults who have Down Syndrome going to college”. Everyone had different agenda and everyone has the right to know their choices and to participate freely in the research.
- Laura invited participants to think about the reasons why they were here at the first workshop and whether they wished to come to session two.
- Laura said she would forward this presentation as a reminder when people are making their decision.

My Area of Study

- Inclusive Education
- I have chosen to look at inclusive education and what it does for education.
- I am looking at this from the perspective of students and graduates with different abilities.
- The journey of students with different abilities in higher education.
- I can get this information from you and I also have my experience to share in this research.



Our Consent

- We will have consent on PowerPoint with pictures with voice , read or on the computer and then a form which we will sign or Laura will record our consent for those who will be at the next workshop scheduled for Friday 21st of April 2017.
- Workshop 2 Reminders for Group
- 1) To bring an object that means or represents something important for you in college.
- 2) Older clothes for those who are going to work with paints, artwork.

Any Questions or anything to add to this??

- You can get back to me

My contact is Laura.D.Burke@mumail.ie

You have my phone number.

Laura

Appendix 4: Session 2 Final Guide Session Plan – Research in Inclusive Education

Wednesday 19th of April 2017 10.15am to 12.45pm

- 1) Consent in Research - Group Decisions 10.15am to 10.30am
- 2) Objects in Learning - 10.35am to 10.50am
- 3) Thinking about Inclusive Education - 10.50am to 11.20am
- Break – Tea/Coffee- 11.20am to 11.30am
- 4) Mapping Our College Journey - 11.30am to 12.00pm
- 5) Discussion on our College Journeys - 12.00pm to 12.30pm
- 6) Closing Poem /Research Check Out- Learner 1 and Learner 2

My College Path

- 1) Education to me.....

Group Discussions in relation to:

- 2) What do I think about Inclusive Education?

Research Topic Guide Questions

- 1) Why have you chosen to bring this object today?
- 2) Inclusive Education - What is this to you?
- 3) What is ILI to you?
- 4) Is there a difference for you between ILI and College/University?
- 5) Is there a difference between inclusive and inclusion??
- 6) What is an inclusive educator?
- 7) What do you think about this idea of full inclusion?
- 8) Is there such thing as an inclusive educator?
- 9) Advice to – educators – government??

Check Out /Evaluation Exercise

- **Poem of Learning –Facilitated by “Ryan”**
-

Session Close

- Follow Up

Materials My Path Ideas Poster	Table cloth/display space for objects
The Inclusive Educator Poster	Paints, Colours, Markers, Canvas', brushes
Group Consent Form Hard copy and on screen	Magazines, pictures, glue, scissors,
laminated pictures and flip chart paper	Accessible Art and Sensory equipment –
Laura create big handle brushes and soft material ball	Presentation Prep/On screen

Appendix 5: Draft Session Plan 2

Lesson Plan Ideas and Process Session 2

Education to me is

My College Path



Full and Informed Consent:

Process, Questions and Answers – Check In

Questions from Session 1 – Summary email check in.

Activity 1: Objects in Learning /Group Check In Activity

Students to bring pictures, words, symbols and objects that represent their college experience - *very generally* to them – As discussed in Session 1.

Purpose:

- Facilitating diversity in student demonstration of learning
- Supporting self - expression in this space
- This based on my knowledge of student learning styles and abilities
- Interest based Learning

Direction for Students

- Pictures can be anything from colours, academic work, pictures with friends.....e.t.c
- Objects can be certs, medals, my first assignment.....e.t.c
- Whatever you feel represents important moments in your college experience for you

Purpose:

- Supporting learner recall and information processing.
- Experiential connection to experience
- Variation in demonstration of learning

- Developing confidence in self-expression and learning

Materials/Support

- Laura to have materials ready – colours, paints, glue, etc for activity map, activity completion
- Prompts printed, pictorial and laminated

Session Time: 10.15am to 12.45pm

Activity 1: Objects in Learning

Activity 2: Group Discussion

Activity 3: The inclusive Educator?

Activity 4: To start today if time permits– continue individually or in a next session – Session 3- To be decided by the group

Laura use prompts to support learners and reference to the research – Poster /Visual Aid

Prompts: / Lauras Research Questions

- My College Life
- Fun for me
- Hard for me
- Important to me
- My Learning
- What I see/saw in college
- My abilities in college

11.00am to 11.15am

Break – Tea Coffee

11.15pm to 12.15pm

Activity 2: – Discussion about Student Learning and linking it to perceptions on education

Part 1 - ILI and College (Coming up a lot for students but not in literature) – “Placement of Individuals”

- “Buying into Models”
- Assumption is that a model of full inclusion exists and these students are apart of it.
- What do learners think?

Part 2 - Beyond Narrative Description: Students opinions on issues

- My Advice to other students going to college
- My Advice to teachers teaching in college
- My Advice to colleges In Ireland
- What inclusive education means to me?
- What is an inclusive teacher?

Activity 3: Connecting Activity 2 to 3 and overall discussion through visual aid.

The Inclusive Educator?

Group comments on picture.

Activity 4: My College Map - Facilitate the space for students to just create..... Map their own college journey.

Students will *each talk us through their college maps* and what they have created . Gallery walk may not work given nature of support needs – change here). This part of the session is assisted by students previous work, reflections on college and practical learning in activity one – staggering learning.

Following up Discussion

Both students and facilitator will question student on their college map, students may provide feedback and facilitator will provide space for students to comment on aspects of the map and question these in the context of their own experience or what they have observed with each other.

Notes for Session

- Laura /facilitator will voice record the sessions and individual perspectives will be noted for the purposes of this research.
- **I will use my presentation (session 1 – will have pictures of my slides already on the wall) as reference point if I need to bring learners back to the purpose of the session i.e if our conversations go beyond the nature and purpose of the research and why we are here.**
-
- (We can pick up on any further printing, pictures that students want to include after the session – not just confined to the 2 hours).
- For this research – I will only be in a position to photograph some aspects of the student’s maps as to respect participant confidentiality.
- Students will guide the process with each other.
- If I need to support learners with the above – Plan B
- Here already set up I will have the words COLLEGE AND ILI on either side of the room – words in session discussions to be printed put up on wall.
- Supporting learner’s connection to sessions and parameters of the research.

Purpose:

- Acknowledging diversity in learning: taking pressure off on the spot literacy or reading comprehension demands.
- Supporting critical reflection and engagement with college/higher education.
- For me to record individual viewpoints – through the recording.

Session Summary

Pictures and Objects

Will be used as a basis of supporting the participants to be in the space – context of the study.

Group Analysis of Experience

Combine the learner objects and posters, pictures to create our path of learning in college – stimulate discussion.

Poster /College Map

Creation of view of college with poster prompt to support.

Evaluation Check out Creative Poem

Checking learner understanding, wellbeing, learning and supporting expression, course feedback.

Finish

12.15pm to 12.30pm

- Anything else to add or to talk about.
- Follow up session??
- Laura to take pictures of all work.
- Keep participants updated - What is next????
- Going through the voice recordings and pictures.

Appendix 6: Session 3 Outline

Learning Outcome (s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To outline and discuss educational practices in higher education in Ireland • To define and discuss inclusive education with particular reference to initiatives facilitating inclusive higher education for and with adults with intellectual disabilities. • To critically reflect on own experience in education and create a representation of experience through art, design, pictures and creative practices conducive to learning. • Discuss the idea of fully inclusive education • Outline the skills and attributes of an inclusive educator • To convey experience in learning through objects of significance 			Thursday 4th May 2017 10.15am to 12.40pm
Time	Activity/Methodology	Purpose	Learning /Assessment	Materials
10.15am to 10.30am	Recap on Session 2 How are you?	Supporting Student Reflection on Learning Bringing group back into the process of dialogical and peer learning. Know what is happening – Structure and the importance of time for some learners. Space for group to add, amend, and omit. Respect for and recognition of the groups prior contribution to learning and how they feel about all so far.	Questions and Answers Large Group Discussion Visual prompts and supports	PowerPoint Materials Photographs from previous session Objects laid out on table
10.30am to 10.45am	Objects in Learning /Session Check In	To explore ways of learner self - expression, Interest based learning and inviting learners to explore	Large Group Discussion	Table Table cloth

	<p>Learners will have brought an object that means a lot to them in their experience in education. (Prior contact with group)</p> <p>Invite each learner to take their object from the table.</p> <p>Invitee the learner to share</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Their Name 2) Why they have chosen to bring this object here today? 	<p>their own social reality through objects.</p> <p>Supporting sensory needs and fulfilment in the group.</p> <p>Ways of getting to know /re introducing a group via people in the group in dialogue in a safe non-threatening way.</p>	<p>Individual informal Presentation</p>	<p>Objects</p> <p>Photographing of objects</p>
<p>10.45am to 11.20am</p>	<p>Questions – Co Dialogical from Group</p> <p>Types of Support Questions relative to the research aims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is inclusion to you? • Is there such thing as full inclusion? • Why partnership?(L 	<p>To finish follow up Discussions</p> <p>Invite the group to add, reflect on previous large group discussion.</p> <p>Responding to feedback from the group. Areas group would like to give more time to .</p>	<p>Large Group Discussion</p>	<p>Previous Charts on boards throughout the room</p> <p>Blank Flipchart paper to capture ideas etc.</p>

	<p>earning partnership programme)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the inclusive educator?? • What can Ireland do to help inclusive education? • Advice to students, teachers, Ireland??? 			
11.20am to 11.30am	<p>Break Tea Coffee</p>	Break	Break	Break
11.30am to 12.00pm	<p>Mapping our College/University Journey</p> <p>“Our Collages”</p>	<p>Creative space for learners to reflect on the most significant learning moments for them in higher education/university/college</p> <p>Supporting learners in communicating and engaging with their experience of learning and sharing with others in a way which enables all students regardless of learning style to demonstrate their learning.</p>	<p>Creative Art and Design</p> <p>Abstract, Real time representations of learning for the person.</p>	<p>Path and Questions</p> <p>Visual Aid</p> <p>Canvas x 8</p> <p>Art paint, stickers, magazines, brushes, sponges, makers, colours, crayons.</p>

<p>12.00pm to 12.30pm</p>	<p>Presentation of Collages</p> <p>Each learner will talk the group through their creation if they wish to share this with the group.</p> <p>Invite learners to share their collages with the group.</p>	<p>Learner articulation, visual expression and self-expression of learning</p>	<p>Presentation of work</p> <p>Large Group Discussion</p> <p>Peer Feedback</p>	<p>Blank Paper</p> <p>Flip Chart</p>
<p>12.30pm to 12.40pm</p>	<p>Session Check Out</p> <p>My Jar of Learning</p>	<p>Learners can relay the most important learning for them today</p>		<p>Postids</p> <p>Jar labelled</p>

Appendix 7: Group Consent Form



Our Consent

This consent form has been designed for: A Masters in Adult and Community Education Maynooth University

Research facilitated by: Laura Burke

Consent in this Research devised by: Research Contributors
(Group has changed name from Participants to Contributors)

Consent Record and Ideas recorded by: Laura Burke (Phrasing of questions can be in an individual or group context).

Research Workshops co facilitated by: Laura Burke and Research Contributors



I am deciding - making my own choice to be involved in this research. I have my own reason.



• Yes

Yes 

• No

No 

• Not sure I need more information about this



My Contribution in this Research



My contribution in the workshops means my participation in Laura's research project for college. It also means I am adding to knowledge (contributing) by sharing - talking about and showing people in the group my experiences in education.

- Yes, that is ok with me Yes 
- No, this is not ok with me No 
- I would like more information about this 

Laura is voice recording, taking notes and taking pictures in all of the workshops which will be used to inform this research.

- Yes, this is ok with me Yes 
- No, this is not ok with me No 
- Not Sure – I need more information about this 



No pictures of me will be in this research.
This is to help protect my anonymity/identity.



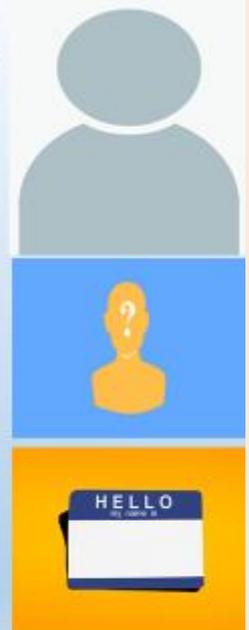
• Yes, this is ok with me Yes 

• No, this is not ok with me No 

• Not Sure – I need more information about this



I will be given another name to help protect my
anonymity/ identity in this research.



• Yes, this is ok with me Yes 

• No, this is not ok with me No 

• Not Sure – I need more information about this



My anonymity/identity cannot be fully protected in this research because my study path in college, the ILI, is very new in Ireland. I am one of the first students in Ireland to be on or go through the ILI. However Laura will do everything she can to make sure my anonymity/identity is protected in this research. This is so I can be comfortable to speak about what I want and what I really feel when I am talking with others in this research.



- Yes, this is ok with me Yes 
- No, this is not ok with me No 
- Not Sure – I need more information about this



Laura is going to take what I talk about in this research to include in writings, reports, and class presentations to do with her Masters in Adult and Community Education 2017.

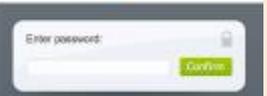


- Yes, this is ok with me Yes 
- No, this is not ok with me No 
- Not Sure – I need more information about this



Laura is storing all information from each workshop and research meeting on her computer with a password. This information is confidential. This information will be deleted when Lauras' college work has been examined by the college and the external examiner.

- Yes, this is ok with me Yes 
- No, this is not ok with me No 
- Not Sure – I need more information about this



I understand that I can leave this research at any time if I want. Nobody will be angry with me.

- Yes, this is ok with me Yes 
- No, this is not ok with me No 
- Not Sure – I need more information about this



Presentation of Research: Laura's research maybe in the public for people to read and to see in different ways. Laura will get my advice on how she presents this research in follow up communication.

- Yes, this is ok with me Yes 
- No, this is not ok with me No 
- Not Sure – I need more information about this




I know where I can go if I get upset any time during and after this research.

- Yes Yes 
- No No 
- Not sure I need more information about this




I know who I can contact if I am not happy with any part of this research.



• Yes **Yes** 

• No **No** 

• Not sure I need more information about this



I can ask for a record of the workshops and research if I want and I know who to ask.

• Yes **Yes** 

• No **No** 

• Not sure I need more information about this



Group and Individual Consent: This PowerPoint is our consent form – Pictures and Voice with Words

Because everyone has different learning styles and abilities consent will be given to Laura in different ways..

- 1) In a recording with my voice
- 2) My name signed at the end of this presentation.

My decision to consent can be made at any time during this research.

I have the choice to look at the research and to change something I say, say more to Laura about the research and take away anything that I have said I do not want in this research.



MY CONSENT

MY NAME PRINTED



My Name *Signed*

DATE



1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____
5) _____
6) _____
7) _____
8) _____

____/____/____
____/____/____
____/____/____
____/____/____
____/____/____
____/____/____
____/____/____
____/____/____

Appendix 8: Research Initial Sub Questions

The following are the questions I had in my mind before undertaking this research of which I also brought to the sessions which were facilitated with contributors:

- **What actually constitutes inclusion?**
- **What impact does the specification of inclusive or inclusion have on the lives of students on inclusive education programmes in higher education ?**
- **How are initiatives and access routes in higher education perceived by students?**
- **Are we all just a cog in the wheel of a much larger educational or political agenda?**
- **Does implicit tokenism come into play and when does inclusion become an illusion?**
- **Do students themselves feel liberated or a sense of liberation through engaging in education, is this presumptuous?**
- **Why do people and programmes assume people with ID need to feel or have some aspect of liberation or empowerment?**
- **Do students feel inhibited coming to college through a particular access route?**
- **Do students embrace disability as part of their being?**
- **How do we understand the context of student's accounts of life changing experiences or outlooks as a consequence of engaging in education?**