

TRAINING TEACHERS ON NEURODIVERSITY

Exploring the possibilities for improvement in additional learning needs training for post compulsory teachers. There is currently a module in place but this focuses primarily on laws and legislations for reasonable adjustments. Adjusting this module to include ND training could benefit the university, the teachers and their students.

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INTRODUCTION

As a neurodivergent student studying for a Professional Certificate in Education, I understand the struggles ND students go through. I also know that the PCET's Additional Learning Needs module is missing an opportunity to educate trainee teaching professionals on what neurodiversity means, what the most common neurodiversities are and how they can affect their students and how they learn.

OBJECTIVE

Identify gaps in teacher training that if filled could help the success and wellbeing of neurodivergent students.

METHODOLOGY

Neurodiversity research limited to the last 10 years for relevance. My own experience with undiagnosed ADHD, dyspraxia and dyscalculia as evidence

RESULTS

Staff, teachers, neurotypical students and neurodivergent students can all benefit from understanding neurodiversity, the destigmatisation of neurodiversity, and equal and diverse teaching and learning methods.



ANALYSIS

Destigmatising Neurodiversity - when teachers, staff and institutions take measures to destigmatise neurodiversities they help to ease the diagnosis process (DSA), help with low self esteem and confidence (common in ND students), help students feel safe which in turn helps them learn. Implement the social model.

When teachers understand ND they can monitor their approach or response. EG - repeating things can be frustrating if a teacher assumes the student wasn't listening, however many ND students need to have things explained a few times to take in the information.

Inclusive teaching benefits everyone - varied teaching tools and styles keep students engaged (Race 2014)

Medical Model	vs	Social Model
- The person is disabled by the abnormalities and deficits of their own body and/or brain. - Disabled people are broken, abnormal, or damaged versions of human being and should be fixed, cured, and/or prevented. - Since the disabled person's impairments prevent them from functioning normally, they need caregivers and professionals to make decisions for them. The disabled person is an object of charity and receiver of help. - The disabled person should adjust to fit into society, since they are the one who is not normal. Being part of society means rising above disability.		- The person is disabled by their environment and its physical, attitudinal, communication, and social barriers. - Disabled people are normal, valid varieties of human being and should have equal rights and access to society, just as they are. - Since the disabled person is inherently equal, they have a right to autonomy, choice, and free and informed consent in their own lives. - The disabled person should be supported by society, because they are equal and have a right to inclusion. Their community should adjust its own barriers and biases.

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CONCLUSION

Key findings - the PCET already gives teachers all the tools needed to successfully teach ND students, as best teaching practices all include varied assessment methods and teaching methods, tasks etc. Teachers just need to be given a fundamental knowledge of ND so they can understand their students, and all students and staff will benefit greatly from this.

Proposed action - an educational short film with student voices depicting every day student life with different ND's. Accompanied by a handout of basic info about different neurodiversities that teachers can keep.

Related literature

Pollack, David. (2009) Neurodiversity in Higher Education: Positive Responses to Specific Learning Differences. Germany: Wiley

Pollak, D.E. (2005) Dyslexia, the Self and Higher Education: Learning life histories of students identified as dyslexic. Stoke on Trent: Trentham.

Pollak, David. Brain HE Proceedings (2008). Available at: <https://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/about-dmu-documents/professional-services/academic-professional-development/conferences-and-events/enabled-and-pathologised-14-05-08/bdabrainheproceedings2008.pdf> (accessed 4th April 2022)

Race, P. (2014). Making Learning Happen: A Guide for Post-Compulsory Education. United Kingdom: SAGE Publications.

