EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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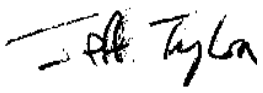
DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this material which I now submit for assessment on the program of study leading to the award of Doctor of Education is entirely my own work and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not, to the best of my knowledge, breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signature: 

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ABSTRACT

Exploring Perceptions of Inclusion in Higher Education

Jeff Taylor

This research took place at one Irish Higher Education Institute and explored the perceptions of staff in a variety of roles with regard to inclusive education. The purpose of this research is to explore attitudes toward inclusive education, as well as how inclusion manifests in teaching and learning practice within the Institute. The selected institute recorded the highest rate of participation of students with disabilities at 10.2% (AHEAD, 2018) and thus is a compelling site for this study.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 staff members. The staff represented management, lecturers and support services. Staff were asked about their understanding of inclusive education, how it is represented within the institute, and to discuss how they perceive supports for and barriers to fostering inclusion within the Institute. The results of these interviews were analysed in the context of the most recently published institutional strategic plan. The conceptual framework for the study is Rouse's (2006) knowing, believing and doing related to inclusion and inclusive practice. Specifically, the framework provides that inclusion depends on educators 'knowing' about theory, policy and legislation; 'doing' being the application of that knowledge; and 'believing' in the role in the inclusive practice to support learners in their education.

The study finds that staff have an inconsistent understanding of inclusive education which leads to challenges in teaching and learning applications. Whilst there is an appetite for professional development in this area there are concerns as to the efficacy of offered supports and the scale by which such support will be utilized by staff. Analysis of the strategic plan, together with interview data, reveals a perceived mismatch in the pursuit of higher education elitism versus true inclusion. The strategic plan's advocacy for policy and action to promote inclusion is perceived to be inconsistent with the perceptions of staff as to how policy is formed and implemented within the institute.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

RESEARCH CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

There are a variety of Irish government publications that act as a call to action and justification of this research. The Association of Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) report on the number of students with disabilities in Irish Higher Education (2018) makes a series of recommendations including positing that as the population of students with disabilities increases across higher education institutions, it is imperative that such institutions are able to create inclusive environments. Indeed, the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 calls for professional development of lecturing and institutional staff around access and disability. This strategy document argues that it is no longer sufficient for academics to be experts in their disciplinary area but that, additionally, they need to know how best to teach that discipline. Lecturers, the strategy suggests, need to have an understanding of learning theories, and to know how to apply these theories to their practice. They need to appreciate what teaching and learning approaches work best for different students in different situations. To that end, it is both timely and valuable to examine the knowledge of not only lecturers but a variety of staff at the national institution that is a leader in the recruitment of students with disabilities. By exploring their knowledge, experiences, opinions and practices of inclusion this study may provide a valuable contribution to the agenda that is clearly evidenced in governmental and educational planning documents.

This study is structured to mirror a similar study, conducted in Portugal by Martins, Borges and Goncalves (2018) that explores the attitudes of staff toward inclusion and what barriers and supports for inclusion exist at a higher education institute. They found that staff perception of disabilities as deficits prevail. Given the statistics provided by AHEAD and the call for the development of inclusion in the

National Strategy, it is compelling to explore the attitudes, barriers and supports to inclusion at an Irish higher education institute with one of the nation's largest percentages of students with disabilities enrolment per capita.

Additionally, Rouse (2006) proposes a framework to explore the ways by which educators' thinking, beliefs and actions could be developed that might further inclusive attitudes and practice. He suggests that staff knowing, doing and believing in the benefits of inclusive education is essential to a legitimate and sustained inclusive educational environment for all students. By combining the core question structure of Martins, Borges and Goncalves (2018) with the pillars of inclusive development presented by Rouse (2006) this study provides insight into the current situation of inclusivity as perceived by the staff who are tasked with the day to day implementation of inclusion initiatives.

The research is conducted via semi-structured interviews with a varied sample of staff from a variety of roles within the institute as to their perceptions of inclusive education and how it manifests within this institute. For greater contextual understanding the most recently published institutional strategic plan will be critically analysed from an inclusive education perspective. The data from the interviews will be considered in the context of the strategic priorities as published by the institute.

RESEARCH RATIONALE AND POLICY CONTEXT

Exploring Perceptions of Inclusion in Higher Education

Inclusive education has been interpreted in a variety of ways in a variety of different educational contexts. For this research, a broad understanding proposed by Hockings (2010) will be considered as a viable amalgam of inclusive higher education literature that will be discussed further in chapter 2. The definition used here is:

> "inclusive learning and teaching in higher education refers to the ways in which pedagogy, curricula and assessment are designed and delivered to engage students in learning that is meaningful, relevant and accessible to all. It embraces a view of the individual and individual difference as the source of diversity that can enrich the lives and learning of others." (Hockings, 2010: p.1)

Indeed, the inclusive education question is both complex and contentious. Barton (1997) talks of conceptual, ideological and practical difficulties inherent in consideration of inclusive education, and how it often involves passionately held beliefs and values. Miles and Singal (2009) also address the beliefs and values concerns around inclusive education, noting a shift in the underlying understanding of the inclusive education concept from the original focus of access, to more recent concerns toward quality of education. While Miles and Singal (2009) speak of completion of primary school; it is possible such concerns resonate at a higher level where simply providing access to Higher Education may not be sufficient, and ultimately the quality of education provision must be considered.

Where Barton (1997) talks of conceptual, ideological and practical difficulties, Miles and Singal (2009) present the inclusive education question as conflict, contradiction and opportunity. Singal (2006) argues for a need to develop a contextual understanding of inclusive education that is reflective of current educational concerns. This call for a contextual understanding is repeated by Singal again when advocating for the development of local understandings of the complex concepts of inclusion in order to develop appropriate and sustainable policies on teaching and learning (Miles and Signal, 2009). It is thus critical to contextualise this study in the Irish Higher

Education sector, and understand local Irish developments around higher education and inclusive education.

Inclusive Education in an International Context

Before considering inclusive education in an Irish context, having an understanding of inclusion internationally may be useful, as it will provide an opportunity to identify trends of interest and best practices within the international community. Initially, the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) endorsed the concepts of inclusive education and provided a catalyst for educational decision-makers to consider inclusion. Morina (2016) notes that for many years, inclusive practices and principles have been influencing university agendas, policies, and teaching and learning practices. In the context of higher education, she argues, there is still quite a distance to go before full inclusion can be claimed, and many complex challenges that followed the Salamanca Statement must be addressed to align the principles of inclusive education with higher educational practices. From a European perspective, provision for such alignment exists in the creation of services and support plans that improve access and educational inclusion of non-traditional students from the European Strategy 2010–2020 (European Commission, 2010) which shows the European Union is committed to inclusive education within the framework of higher education.

In 2006, the United Nations presented the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006) which applies to people with disabilities and reaffirms that all people with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Article 24 recognises the right of persons with disabilities to education, without discrimination and based on equal opportunity, and that the state has the obligation to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels. This establishes a link

between inclusive education and higher education provision on a state level and is consistent with the Hockings (2010) idea of inclusion presented earlier.

Further to this, Article 24 states that all people have the right to education and that education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Specifically, Article 24 states that higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. This mention of a meritocracy may provide some legitimacy for lecturers who have concerns about the quality and credibility of courses when students outside traditional education conventions are included. Article 24 also notes that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and that education shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among nationalities, and racial or religious groups. Once more, the breadth of the inclusion agenda is present.

Of particular interest to this research is concerns around implementation present in Article 24 (CRPD, 2006). Namely, the general comment on the article notes potential barriers to inclusion from Article 24 as:

1. Failure to understand the human rights model of disability.
2. Persistent discrimination, low expectations, prejudice and fear.
3. Lack of knowledge about the nature of and advantages of quality inclusion education.
4. Lack of disaggregated data for development purposes.
5. Lack of political will, knowledge and capacity including insufficient education of teaching staff.
6. Inappropriate and inadequate funding.
7. Lack of legal remedies and redress.

The extent to which such barriers may manifest at this site of study is of particular interest to this research. Furthermore, the article stresses a quality component to education, extending beyond simply the provision of access to education.

Participation for students from a diverse range of circumstances in higher education has become a consistent theme for inclusion agendas internationally, referring to it as a widening participation agenda (Whiteford, 2017). Burke (2013) agrees that widening access to and participation in higher education has become a central policy theme nationally and globally. Arguably this agenda has focused attention and effort towards initiatives with a view to improving the representation of disadvantaged groups in higher education (Whiteford, 2017).

Social inclusion is presented in the literature as encompassing themes of recognition, individual capabilities, provision of opportunity, access to resources, choice, participation and access, solidarity, involvement in decision-making, rights and citizenship (Pereira, 2013). The Australian Social Inclusion board also hits similar themes, namely stating that all their citizens have the opportunities to learn, work, engage and have a voice (Whiteford, 2017). Returning to the Hockings (2010) definition of inclusive education it may be argued that similar themes of participation for all, as well as opportunity, choice and voice, are reoccurring through the literature.

However, perception and consideration of such themes may be insufficient in practice. Gibson (2015) explores the UK inclusion in Higher Education situation and highlights positively the presence of the UK Disability Discrimination Act (1995), Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001), Disability Equality Duty Act (2006), Equality Act (2010). She accepts how it may be reasonable to presume that equality exists, and where access to university education is more readily available for all. Despite appearances, the practical reality within Higher Education in the UK may

be quite different. Beauchamp-Pryor (2012) is concerned with low student retention rates and negative student feedback. Her concerns extend to what she refers to as the genuineness and effectiveness of participatory approaches and identifies several barriers that are likely to impede student progress. These barriers include the influence of a dominant ideology amongst higher education professionals and their attitudes towards the capability of students with disabilities. For the purpose of this study, it will be necessary to assess institutional staff ideology and attitude toward student capability and the impacts of such positions.

Additionally, Shimman (1990) who highlights potential cognitive dissonance in higher education inclusion provides another challenge evidenced in the international literature. On the one hand, participation in Higher Education provides advantages in the form of engagement with an adult atmosphere that places responsibility on the student for their own attendance and behaviour in a less protective system than primary or secondary schools. This can introduce the student to new disciplines and new approaches and attitudes to learning living and work which can foster the development of individual interests and talents. However, on the other hand, Shimman (1998), suggests that the very aspects of higher education that can provide advantage may also generate potential problems and specifically mentions that lecturers upon whom much of the inclusion process is bestowed are often not trained in facilitating the student transition into higher education. This impasse is often a source of student isolation and defection and often withdrawal from the higher education process. This mirrors the concerns of Beauchamp-Pryor (2012).

Interestingly the higher education environment itself has changed due to international influences with direct impacts on equality, diversity and inclusion. Gidley, Hampson, Wheeler and Bereded-Samuel (2010) believe the higher education sector

faces a variety of challenges from across the globe. They note how tensions between global, national and local interests found in other areas are beginning to influence the higher education literature, arguing that a shift has taken place in Europe by which the previous national and cultural role of higher education is being replaced by an economic orientation. With the Bologna Process, the harmonisation of higher education environments and increased globalisation has stimulated mobility of students, academics and knowledge with the effect of enabling new insights into the diversity of higher education systems and a richer range of student backgrounds. Effectively, the Bologna Process has created a need for inclusion to facilitate an ever-increasing range of students. For lecturers in this study, the impact of international and Erasmus students on the day to day activities in the classroom should be considered.

With specific regard to lecturer perception of inclusive education in a higher education context Lombardi, Vukovic, and Sala-Bars (2015) measured and compared the attitudes of college lecturers in Spain, Canada and the United States. In this study, the authors believed that while academic staff showed a positive attitude towards students with disabilities, and although they valued the strategies of inclusive education in theory, they did not implement them in practice. Indeed, Morina (2016) identified the attitudes of the college lecturers towards students with disabilities as the most significant barrier in the careers of those students. These observations are particularly relevant to this study and the consistency of the above research with the perceptions of faculty participating in this study may be very compelling.

Morina (2016) highlights another issue from international studies on lecturer perceptions of inclusion in higher education. Namely, the linking of teaching faculty to the principles of universal design for learning (UDL). She suggests that training in UDL and its practical implementation in higher education can be advantageous. “Universal

design for learning is an approach to teaching that is characterised by the proactive design and use of inclusive strategies that benefit *all* the students. That is, the range of possible learning needs of the students is anticipated, designing curricula with everyone in mind, for example, providing information in various formats at the same time (for example, printed and online books)" (Morina, 2016, p. 11-12). The arguments in favour of UDL suggest learning benefits all students, with or without disabilities. Blamires (1999) also suggests that potential for UDL to be an opportunity for staff to share resources and work together to benefit all students. To this end UDL specifically, and its potential as a support for inclusion will be considered in more detail later.

It is evident that inclusion in higher education can be beneficial and advantageous, though there are cautionary examples from international studies that provide areas of debate within the area. These subjects may offer interesting data from this study and may offer insight if applied within an Irish context or, indeed, to this institute as the study site itself. What is clear is that UDL and lecturer training in this area provides positive experiences for atypical students, but importantly for all students too. From reviewing the international context, it will be insightful to explore how lecturers at this institute perceive not only inclusion as a broad subject but also their perceptions around UDL and professional development. Next, the contextualization of this study will move from the broad international context for inclusive education to a local Irish context.

Inclusive Education in an Irish Context

A contemporary study of inclusion in Higher Education such as this research can contribute to the ever-developing story of special and inclusive education in Ireland. To do this requires an understanding of the context from which inclusive education has arrived and an exploration of various potential manifestations of

inclusion in Irish Higher Education. A review of key legislative and policy publications informs how the concept of inclusive education currently exists from multiple stakeholder perspectives.

In 1994, following efforts made by the Association for Higher Education Access & Disability (AHEAD), which was established in 1988 by the then Minister for Education, Mary O'Rourke, the Fund for Students with Disabilities was created. The purpose of the fund was to offer financial assistance to further and higher education institutions for the provision of services and supports to students with disabilities. The Fund is managed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The HEA stated that the fund "aims to ensure that students can participate fully in their academic programmes and are not disadvantaged by reason of a disability." Following a review of the fund in 2017, the fund was extended to part-time students as well as full-time students. The review celebrates how over €70 million has been allocated through the Fund since 2008 and has enabled the participation of over 38,000 students with disabilities in further and higher education. Furthermore, the number of students supported by the Fund has grown from 3,800 in 2008 to almost 10,500 in 2017 with €9.6 million allocated through the Fund in 2017.

It must be noted, however, that the success of the Fund in widening access to Higher Education for students with disabilities has established a potentially problematic model of inclusive education in the sector. A position paper published in 2017 on behalf of AHEAD cautions that the inclusion of students with disabilities has been built on a model of add-on supports provided to students through the Fund for Students with Disabilities. The paper argues that 23 years on from the introduction of the Fund (1994) that the model is no longer fit for purpose and requires an overhaul to sustain its merit.

Indeed, the paper states that “there has since been a steady annual increase in the numbers of students with disabilities in higher education, a rise in the cost of adding-on individualised, specialised supports and, furthermore, a general shift in thinking regarding the concept of inclusion of students in college life” and even cites the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which “advocates a human rights model of inclusion and argues that persons with disabilities deserve the same treatment as anyone else” (p. 4-5).

The evolution of special and inclusive education has seen a shift in policy in Ireland, notably with the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) (EPSEN) and then the Disability Act (2005). Both followed on from the Education Act (1998) which championed inclusivity and equality of access, emphasising provision for persons with disabilities or other special educational needs. The 1998 Education Act resulted from work by SERC, the Special Education Review Committee, in 1993. The EPSEN Act, while designed with primary and secondary school children as the focus, proposed that children are to be educated in an inclusive setting unless this would not be in the best interests of the child or the effective provision of education for other children in mainstream education. Considering the Education Act (1998) together with the EPSEN Act (2004) and the Disability Act (2005) highlights a potentially challenging contrast in attitude toward inclusion, away from the add-on model present in the Fund for Students with Disabilities, and toward a model that favoured an educational design into which non-standard students could more readily assimilate.

While this signalled a shift on the inclusion landscape, the 2005 Disability Act extended the concept of people with differences. As the Act advocated for individual service statements to be drawn up that set out what services people with disabilities

should receive, it could be argued that it reaffirmed the add-on model of the 1994 Fund. It should be noted that while the add-on model of provision has aided numerous students across education levels, Forlin (2010) laments that such a model perpetuates the notion that inclusion presupposes a mainstream to which students with disabilities do not belong. This is similar to the proposition by Slee (2010) to reconceptualise and reconstruct concepts of mainstream education. The Disability Act did, however, draw attention to the design of public buildings and the issue of access. These policy documents reveal an increasingly ill-defined idea of just what inclusion may be, though compelling areas of consideration have become part of the discussion.

In more recent years, the National Plan for the Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019 extends the scope of inclusion, beyond those students who present with disabilities. The plan speaks of broadening participation in higher education to groups and communities who have been under-represented – in particular, those living with social disadvantage, mature students, Irish Travellers in addition to students with disabilities. The dynamic understanding of how inclusion is considered in the Irish context enlightens discussion on the future direction of Inclusion in Higher Education in Ireland.

Additionally, with the March 2018 ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the Irish Government, there is a renewed emphasis on equality of opportunity and a pathway to funding for required services, and programs are being established by government departments and local authorities. While inclusive education is seemingly now to the fore of education planning agendas in Ireland, it should be noted that Ireland was the last of the EU member states to ratify the convention which has led to concerns that people with disabilities are not a priority for the Irish government (Inclusionireland.ie, 2019). This

is perhaps mirrored in the 1997 Universities Act which includes only one mention of higher education participation "by people who have a disability and by people from sections of society significantly under-represented in the student body". However, positively, this mention determines that governing bodies must produce their own institutional statement in this regard in a site-specific context (Equality Policy, Universities Act, 36.1, 1997).

Inclusion can mean many things, from the add-on provisions advocated in early Irish policy through to the inclusion for the benefit of all mindset. This aforementioned shift can be categorised as an evolution away from the medical model of disability toward a social model of disability. The social model of disability positions disability as being caused by the way society is organised (Terzi, 2004). The medical model of disability, on the other hand, suggests people are disabled by their impairments or differences (Shakespeare 1996, 2006). Florian (2008) advocates for inclusive education to be distinguished by an acceptance of differences between students as ordinary aspects of human development, positioning inclusive education in the social model context. Furthermore, in an educational context, inclusion has been defined as including a number of key perspectives, policies and practices such as, firstly, reducing barriers to learning and participation for all students and, secondly, learning from attempts to overcome barriers to the access and participation of students (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). This is echoed in the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 which states their ambitious vision of Ireland leading Europe in "harnessing education to break down barriers for groups at risk of exclusion" (p.1).

Indeed, the Department of Education and Skills has presented a number of interesting objectives in the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019. Of particular interest here are goals #2 and #3 which are: improve the progress of learners at risk of

educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs; and help those delivering education services to continuously improve. The plan also mentions the need to enrich teaching and learning with new curricula, new assessment methods, and technology-assisted learning. This document alone supports the need to explore Higher Education Lecturers' perceptions of inclusive education in practice.

Achieving positive support for students with disabilties requires more than legislative change (MacLean and Gannon, 1997). Thomas (2002) talks of inclusion across multiple plains, namely academic, social and cultural inclusiveness. In arguing that inclusion and accepting of difference, and not prioritizing or valorising one set of characteristics but rather celebrating diversity and difference mirrors the attitudinal shift in Irish Policy from the Fund for Students with Disabilities (1994), and continues through to the National Plan for Equity of Access (2015) which broadens the scope for inclusion from students with disabilities to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, minority ethnicities, sexual identification and more.

From here, this discussion moves to expand these concepts of inclusion in a Higher Education context.

Inclusive Education in Higher Education

Increasing diversity of higher education students has often been defined more by ethnicity, culture and gender than by disability or impairment. A truly inclusive higher education system would take account of multiple forms of difference and intersectionality. In recent years, many highly developed countries have worked hard to make universities more accessible to people with disabilities and diverse backgrounds and advance the inclusion in higher education agenda (Claiborne, Cornforth, Gibson and Smith, 2011).

Hoffman and Mitchell (2016) explore the challenges of inclusion in higher education. They note how institutions assert inclusion as a prerequisite for excellence yet lack in the definition and delineation of what such excellence may be. They lament a distinction between academic excellence and social justice, stressing that they are often isolated and unique concepts at many higher education institutions. There is an implication in this study that the achievement of academic excellence and social justice are mutually exclusive and how both are considered by staff at this institute will be interesting. This concern challenges the position offered by Soares and Dias (2017) that inclusion ought to involve the participation and integration of all students regardless of their intrinsic characteristics and help them to not only perform academically but also to develop civic competences.

Development of citizenship is a theme present in much of the higher education literature. The EU Youth Strategy 2010–2018 declared fostering active citizenship, solidarity and social inclusion between young people as one of the main objectives. In 2008, the European Commission published an agenda for all educational institutions, reinforcing the improvement of civic competences for the twenty-first century in their students. Developing students' responsibility for their own learning, independence and autonomy, and their creativity and their intercultural and civic skills became an academic objective to be reinforced by educational institutions (Soares and Dias, 2017). In higher education, it appears, in particular, the development and promotion of civic-minded graduates is highly valued. From this research, it may be possible to discover staff attitudes to the scope of their responsibility, their awareness of policies governing higher education, and indeed the extent to which staff may be charged with the task of creating social citizens.

Despite the advances made in the expansion of and access to higher education, equity of access and outcomes in higher education have not yet been achieved (Dias, 2014), implying that the democratisation process has not been fully accomplished. This suggests a merit to this particular research as any output may contribute toward the realisation of a more equitable and inclusive higher education environment, even if only at one Institution.

Personal Motivation Statement

This research was initially motivated by the experience of students with dyslexia to the fore. Having been diagnosed as dyslexic at an early age the researcher completed undergraduate and postgraduate studies in Irish higher education institutions and is currently employed as a lecturer in higher education . Both the researcher and family members with dyslexia had similar experiences of higher education that could for us be categorised as ill-fitting and frustrating. Given this background, exposure to the universal design for learning (UDL) principles (Morina, 2016; Rose, 2000) during formal professional development programs communicated the value and potential of innovative pedagogies and professional development more generally. As a lecturer, the researcher witnessed student frustrations with an educational environment that bore similar frustrations experienced as a student themselves. The potential for UDL and professional development were to be the guiding motivation of the research thesis.

Indeed, the researcher has undertaken personal professional development that sought to advance knowledge of UDL and innovative teaching methods so as to have greater potential to serve a diversity of students. The researcher has been teaching at the site of study for five years, and has witnessed first-hand the increasing diversity on campus and in the classroom, and so too the value of a breadth of pedagogical skills designed to facilitate inclusion. This doctoral research is designed to further the

opportunities to improve personal teaching techniques and explore how inclusive teaching and assessment is currently perceived and how it may be developed in the future.

During the taught module stage of a professional doctorate the study by Martins, et al., (2018) regarding faculty attitudes, obstacles and supports for inclusive education provided a compelling insight into how inclusive education manifests in the day to day operation of a higher education institute. Given the research site's position as a leading recruiter of diverse students (AHEAD, 2017, 2018, 2019) applying a similar research model as the Martins, et al., (2018) study to the Irish research site could prove to be very valuable and offer important insight into the opinions of staff within the institute. Additionally, as the initial research plan was being designed the institute itself was in the process of developing its five-year strategic plan for 2019-2023. Exploring the nature of inclusive education at this institute where the research is employed both in the strategic plan and the opinions of the staff is believed to be both timely and relevant as student populations become increasingly diverse (Basit and Tomlinson, 2012; Smith, 2012).

Throughout the taught elements of this practical doctorate experience the researcher sought to align ideas and concepts of inclusion with their practical teaching experiences at the site of study. Opportunities to develop personal pedagogy and teaching and assessment methods in line with contemporary research on inclusion were frequent. Such experiences amplified the motivation to research further the perceptions of inclusion from other institutional staff and explore how inclusion could be further developed both personally and institutionally.

STUDY FOCUS

The Irish Higher Education Institute – Study Site

Dyson (2004) suggests that no single form of inclusive education makes sense in every situation, and that inclusion has to be interpreted differently in different national contexts. Exploring the challenges and trends of inclusion in various educational contexts can facilitate understanding of inclusion in Higher Education. Specifically, this section seeks to establish a base knowledge of the debates and knowledge around practice, namely inclusive teaching and learning practices in Higher Education. Furthermore, the site of study is presented as a valid context for analysis.

Florian (2008), working in Teacher Education in Scotland, highlights the tensions presented by attempts to implement inclusion in practice. She advocates an analysis of educational practices and calls for the undertaking of a thorough examination of how teachers work in their classrooms. She suggests that it is through such an examination of teaching practice that we will begin to bring meaning to the concept of inclusion. This position of meaning-making (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011) is of particular interest for this study as understanding how lecturers in this institute derive meaning, if any, from the concept of inclusion will be important given the diverse student population present in the student population as detailed below.

This study seeks to explore staff knowledge on inclusion, from a single Higher Education institute in Ireland. The selected institute has two faculties; a humanities faculty and a creative arts faculty. It is home to approximately 2500 students and 250 staff. The institute places an emphasis on innovation and creativity in its promotional material. The rate of participation in Higher Education of students with disabilities varied greatly across the Irish institutions from 1.5% to 10.2% of the total student population, in 2017. Indeed, this institute recorded the highest rate of participation of

students with disabilities at 10.2% in 2017 (AHEAD, 2017) and 10.1% in 2018 (AHEAD, 2018). In 2019 this rose to 11.1% (AHEAD, 2019), second only to one other institute at 11.4%. This institute has set forth a policy of commitment to equal opportunity in education and to ensuring that students with a disability have as complete and equitable access to all facets of institute life as can reasonably be provided (Strategic Plan, 2019). They say this adopted code of good practice is applicable to all students with disabilities studying in the Institute, and is in accordance with the Disability Act 2005, the Equal Status Acts 2000-2012, the Institutes of Technology Act 2006 and The Employment Equality Acts 1988-2011. As such, given this institute's position as one of the leading recruiters of students with disabilities, it will be worthwhile to explore how educators in the classroom at this institute understand and manifest inclusion and potentially bring meaning and knowledge to their teaching, that of the institutes' faculty and potentially to a wider audience. To achieve this a framework is required to connect this study to existing knowledge.

Conceptual Framework: Knowing, Doing, Believing

A conceptual framework is important to the quality of research as it provides a connection between existing knowledge and new research (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2011). For this study, where attitudes and the related obstacles and supports for inclusion comprise the three research questions, it is worthwhile to consider a frame against which the findings may be considered. One means by which deterministic views of student talent and ability may be challenged is to explore inclusive education from the perspective of educators as proposed in this study. In this sense, educator not only relates to lecturing staff in the classroom but also to support staff, administrative staff and managers; all of who have the potential to impact, positively or negatively, the educational experiences of all students on campus. Rouse (2006), in an article born of a

keynote address to the Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EEPiSE) national workshops held in New Zealand in June 2006, proposed that developing effective education for all is about extending educator's knowledge, encouraging them to do things differently, and getting them to reconsider their identities and their attitudes to inclusion. This is a strong frame of educators *knowing*, *doing* and *believing* with regards to inclusive practices and serves as a compelling frame to which collected data in this study may be interrogated.

Knowing.

In this paper, Rouse (2006) explains how for many years professional development sought to extend educator knowledge. Courses focused on characteristics and teaching strategies associated with various learner types. Rouse stresses the value of the knowledge but highlights how evidence suggests that the knowledge alone is insufficient as many educators failed to implement new knowledge in their classrooms. This suggests a considerable gap between what staff know and what staff do. This research may provide insights that can bridge the gap and link individual and institutional concepts of inclusion. In exploring the research questions for this thesis it may be possible to contribute to this theory and practice gap as well as identifying the extent to which such a gap may be present at this site.

Doing.

Indeed, Rouse (2006) believes the *doing* has become an essential element to professional learning and this research may provide insight as to the extent to which educators are doing what they are learning in professional development programs. Furthermore, Rouse suggests the importance for inclusion to turn knowledge into action; use positive rewards and incentives for staff; and for staff to work with

colleagues as well as with students. While it is proposed to use the Rouse framework to interrogate inclusive practices in this study, similar processes have been used by Florian and Spratt (2013) to provide a framework for documenting inclusive pedagogy. In their study, they too revealed a link between inclusive theory and practical application when staff engage in self-reflection, thus fostering more *doing* of inclusive practice. Florian later, in Pantic and Florian (2015), urges educators to be agents of change toward inclusion. They suggest that such agents of change must work together, to embrace a collaborative practice to challenge the status quo. This suggests that the *doing* phase need not be a solitary endeavour but can, or should, be a collective one. Exploring the extent to which staff at this institute work individually, or embrace collectivism, toward innovation may be critical to creating an inclusive environment.

Believing.

It is suggested that professional development has the potential for positive outcomes and changes in practice, and it will be interesting to see the extent to which this is true at this institute. However, Rouse (2006) laments how often staff present obstacles in the form of negative and deterministic attitudes toward student abilities. Not only may some staff *believe* that some students may struggle to learn much of their higher education module content, but there are some staff who may not *believe* they themselves have the skills or confidence to make a positive difference to this student learning. This research will illuminate the current state of staff beliefs toward inclusive education at this institute and provide valuable knowledge upon which a future strategy for inclusion may be designed. The framework will connect this research to existing knowledge and provide a structure to interrogate the research questions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions for this study are influenced by the Martins, et al., (2018) study into the perspectives of staff toward inclusion at a Portuguese higher education institute. The research questions here follow a similar structure around understanding, attitudes and perspectives; and then the obstacles and supports to inclusive education at an Irish higher education institute. Specifically, the research questions are:

1. How do staff define and understand inclusive education?
2. How do staff describe obstacles to inclusive education?
3. How do staff describe supports for inclusive education?

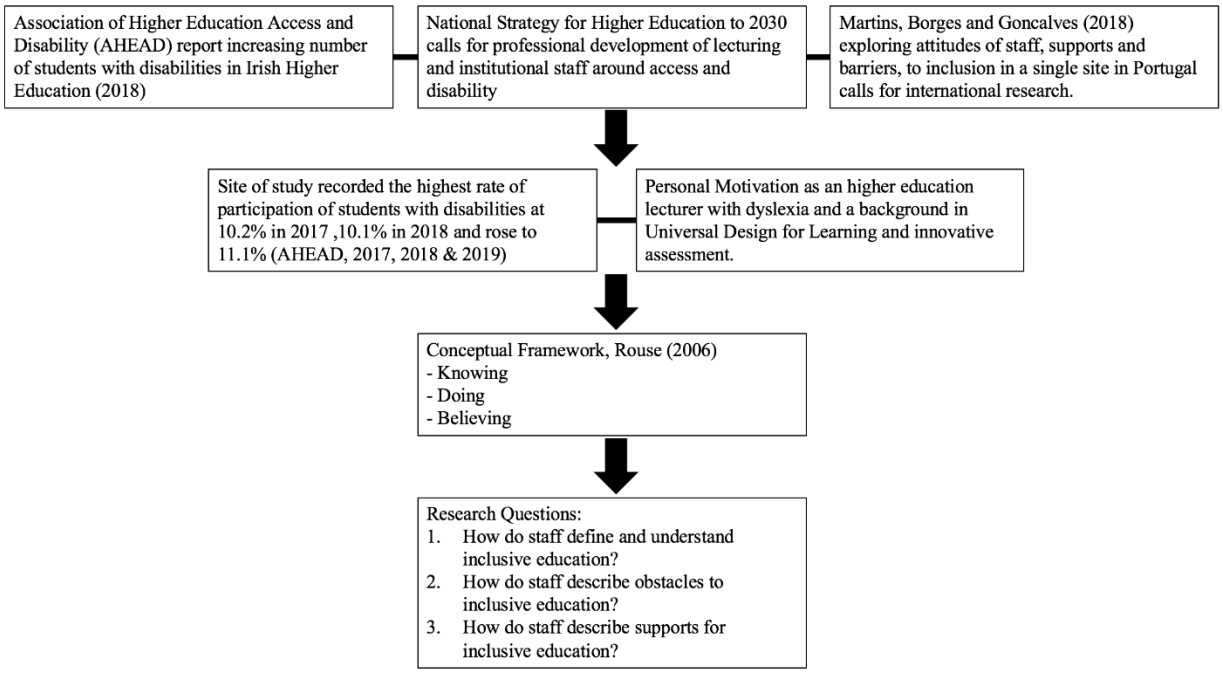

Figure 1: Thesis Framework

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This chapter offers the reader a detailed overview of inclusive education both internationally and nationally, as well as how it currently manifests in higher education contexts. Background information as to the site of the study and the researchers' motivations provide further context and introduces the framework of staff knowing, doing, believing in inclusive education as a catalyst for a valuable and equitable

experience for all students in higher education (Rouse, 2006). Chapter 2 explores pertinent literature on inclusive education to provide the reader with an understanding of the current state of research in this area. In Chapter 3, the research design is outlined to ensure a robust and valid research process has been implemented throughout the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. It allows for the voices of participants to be shown in tandem with the institutional strategic plan to explore the attitudes, obstacles and supports to inclusive education. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the findings and the broader application and implications of the data revealed in this research. In Chapter 6, the contributions that this research may provide to both literature and practice will be presented, and recommendations for the future will conclude the thesis.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of pertinent literature around inclusion and inclusive education to provide the reader with an understanding of the value provided by inclusion as well as an exploration into related themes. The nature of inclusion is broad and often interpreted in a variety of ways throughout the literature and this will be considered in this chapter. As this research is primarily concerned with the attitudes, obstacles and supports around inclusion these themes will be ever-present throughout this chapter.

DEFINING INCLUSION AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Consistency in application and understanding of terminology is critical to frame the work of this research. Problems in consistency occur when inclusion is considered at various education levels, scale and degree of inclusivity, and type. Qvortrup and Qvortrup (2018) discuss in their study of inclusive education definitions how terminology has evolved from a story about children with special needs onward to a broader story around inclusive schools and inclusive learning environments for children with diverse variety of physical, cognitive and social backgrounds. Many researchers have considered broadening and extending the definition of inclusion through primary and secondary schooling, for example, for the child (Booth and Ainscow, 2002; Florian 2008; Forlin, Douglas and Hattie, 1996), however, the context of this research is for higher education. While many principles of definitions can be considered across the different education levels, it would be remiss to dismiss them as effortlessly analogous. For this section, literature that specifically considers inclusion in Higher Education contexts has been considered.

O'Shea, Lysaght, Roberts and Harwood (2015) in their Australian based study position their discussion on higher education academic staff perceptions of inclusion with principles of social inclusion to the fore. Inclusion, for them, considers diverse students, particularly from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and the assimilation of these students into higher education. Intriguingly, their work speaks of trying to reduce the apportion of blame, suggesting that a failure to include is present in their conceptualising of inclusion. They speak of the provision of inclusion in higher education as opportunities that will allow all individuals to feel valued and to participate fully as members of society. Blame, or perhaps more fairly, responsibility is a key theme in their study.

It is interesting to see that in much of the higher education literature the word inclusion has progressed beyond simply students with special needs and students with disabilities. Inclusion is presented by Whiteford (2017) as meaning that people have the resources, opportunities and capabilities they need to learn, work, engage and have a voice. Inclusion is often presented as simply assimilating or absorbing a student into the dominant culture of the institution (Bernstein, 2000). However, Bernstein suggests that to be included can also be the freedom to be autonomous and separate, to be different. He further proposes that inclusion is the condition of *Communitas* - an unstructured community in which people are equal, though Atkinson (2011) has questioned the community consideration of inclusion as theoretically unsound. Burke, Emmerich and Ingram (2012) defend the ideas of *Communitas*, or as they call it *Habitus*, and stress how inclusion is both an individual and collective concept. *Habitus*, argues Bourdieu (2017, 2018), are a socialized body of constructs that may have the capacity to change but laments wholesale changes are very exceptional. This suggests for this study the

perspectives of the staff should be considered in the context of the individual and of the institute as a whole with consideration given to the possibilities of change over time.

On the other hand, inclusion in a broader context suggests a need for acclimatisation for students who may struggle to enter into the higher education habitus. Couvillion-Landry (2002) suggests that while many first-year students often experience feelings of isolation, for students who differ from the mainstream such experiences intensified exclusionary feelings. However, by fostering strong student-faculty relationships it may be possible to significantly mitigate negative campus climate and support the formation of inclusive learning communities (Cress, 2008). In a specifically Irish context, Byrne (2009) questions the exclusionary effects of the Irish Higher Education entry system, and that often, in the context of institutional *habitus*, students not successfully obtaining their preferred institution may have additional feelings of non-belonging. Creating an inclusive community (Bernstein, 2000) and the staff role in doing so, may be a critical element for the inclusive agenda in Irish Higher education.

Remaining in the Irish context, O'Brien and O'Fathaigh (2007) provide a broad range of groups to whom inclusion may apply. Namely, against the backdrop of demographic changes in Ireland that have led to an educational policy focus on social inclusion, groups such as "lone-parent families, travellers, the long-term unemployed, refugees, those with a disability, low socioeconomic status groups, and adult learners" (p. 595) are given particular attention. For this study, based in an Irish higher education institution, it is wise to consider those for whom inclusion seeks to support and should be as broad and as diverse a definition as possible.

Exploring concepts of inclusion, both from a societal perspective and exclusively an educational perspective there are many similar positions as presented above. However, one compelling position is present in the social inclusion research on

immigrant experience in Dublin by Fanning, Haase and O'Boyle (2011). In their definition of inclusion, they propose "ensuring the marginalised and those living in poverty have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives, allowing them to improve their living standards and their overall well-being" (p.3). Of note here is the emphasis on participation in decision making. With this position in mind, it may be significant to pursue this research with a definition of inclusion and inclusive education that provides for those students being supported to be active contributory participants in the design of inclusive practice.

Given the breadth of scope of the term inclusion in a higher education context, it is important to settle on a definition that can be applied throughout this research. To this end, a published definition was sought that captured the complex and nuanced nature of the subject matter detailed in the literature discussed above. In simple terms, inclusion involves actions around treating all with fairness, dignity, respect and opportunities (Connor, 2014). However, the definition offered here by Hockings (2010) embodies the principles and breadth of inclusion in education that are pertinent to this research. That definition is:

> "inclusive learning and teaching in higher education refers to the ways in which pedagogy, curricula and assessment are designed and delivered to engage students in learning that is meaningful, relevant and accessible to all. It embraces a view of the individual and individual difference as the source of diversity that can enrich the lives and learning of others." (Hockings, 2010, p.1)

This definition and the contribution of the inclusion agenda to the broader university experience for all will underpin this research. The Hockings' (2010)

definition covers several noteworthy plains of inclusion; namely pedagogy, curriculum and assessment design – so too that difference and diversity are to be celebrated. Going forward it will be important to consider these elements positively but with an awareness and appreciation of dissenting voices. Having considered, thus far, what inclusion and inclusive education in Higher Education may be, the approaches to inclusion currently evidenced in Irish Higher Education are now considered.

SYSTEMIC APPROACHES TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

This research aims to contribute to the discourse surrounding higher education inclusion; how it manifests in practice and the means by which it can be optimized for educational performance for all students. In a study on developing teaching and learning Awad (2017) advocates a systemic approach to development; as something that has or can affect the entire system. A systemic approach describes efforts that belongs to, work together with, or can affect the entire system as a whole. The systems that are designed to support inclusion exist from the international level (e.g. UNESCO and OECD policies) to the local institute specific level to be considered in this research.

In their critique of international discourse on inclusive education policy, Hardy and Woodcock (2015) question the extent to which inclusion is a substantive concern within educational policies at international, national and local levels, especially if it is not a readily identifiable, stand-alone entity in such policies. Opertti, Brady and Duncombe (2009) suggest that many international efforts around inclusion focus on access, and that issues of equity and quality of education in practice at a micro-level may not be in receipt of sufficient attention. This, they argue, is a consequence of the Education for All goals developed from a human rights perspective with an access-oriented perception of inclusion; which may manifest with an orientation toward equality over equity. This assumes that learners would be able to adapt to homogenous

education systems and curricula regardless of their differing abilities and circumstances. It will be interesting to explore how staff at this institute consider access, equity and equality within the system that they operate.

It is worth noting that nations experience the conceptualization of inclusion in very different ways. Acedo (2008) considers the challenges to inclusion in South Africa, for example, as being substantially focused on poverty and issues related to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Whereas, Finland, in contrast, is presented as having one of the more comprehensive approaches to inclusive education (Acedo, 2008). Interestingly, both nations are pursuing the same goal of the inclusive development of Education for All, progressing the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994).

It is particularly interesting to consider the arguably contrasting approaches employed by the Finnish system and that of the Irish system to inclusive education. Halinen and Jarvinen (2008) believe Finland's success in achieving both high quality and equality of education which promotes social cohesion is the result of a determination to create educational structures that prevent exclusion while developing activities and pedagogies that facilitate inclusion. Arinen and Karjalainen (2007) agree inclusive success in Finnish education is based on the achievements of all students:

> "The results have not been attained by teaching special needs learners and those learning at a slower pace in separate schools, but by bringing them into regular classes and schools, into comprehensive education. The underlying feature is the equitable comprehensive school that benefits all students alike." Arinen and Karjalainen (2007, p. 69)

Halinen and Jarvinen (2008) believe the concept of inclusive education is based on the value choices a society makes; and that both locally and nationally, inclusion requires a common will and an operating culture that values participation by all members of society. This calls for collaborative working models and inclusive pedagogical processes, which enable everyone to contribute equitably. Furthermore, they argue inclusion relies heavily on teachers' positive approaches and high professional skills – raising questions regarding staff perspectives on inclusion and professional development efforts to achieve inclusion. Finally, they stress that the curriculum should express the core inclusive values of education and the consensual will to develop education. It should support the local design and implementation of inclusive instruction. Working on their own institutes' curricula can enable educators to commit to common goals and inclusive operating procedures. Processes for evaluating and assessing curricula should be open, supportive, and interactive (Halinen and Jarvinen, 2008). In contrast, however, Shevlin and Rose (2017) suggest that in Ireland while national policies generally seek to support the development of inclusive education environments, institutes can struggle to implement these policies in practice.

Shevlin and Rose (2017) celebrate the transition to the majority of pupils with special education needs to mainstream schools, similar to the successes identified in the Finnish system, but note that this gives rise to challenges in establishing inclusive learning environments as mandated by government policy and increasingly expected by society. They stress the challenges of developing inclusive institute policy and organising support provision. In Ireland the EPSEN Act (2004), details guidelines to govern the delivery of resources to students with special educational needs including an emphasis on individualised assessment processes, educational planning and monitoring of student outcomes (National Council for Special Education Working Party, 2014;

McConkey, Kelly, Craig, and Shevlin, 2016). This shifts focus back on to the individual student rather than a broader conceptualization of inclusion for all.

It is evident that across the international landscape, countries have responded to a range of policies such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). However, ensuring that these policies positively support inclusion in practice remains an ongoing challenge (Florian and Spratt, 2013). One of the most significant challenges is the inconsistencies within approaches and the management of education systems toward inclusion (Slee, 2013). Indeed, Kinsella and Senior (2008) call for a radical shift from Ireland's focus on the individual pupil toward an examination of existing institutional policies, pedagogies and practices to enable inclusive learning environments to become established in the Irish education system. Interestingly, Shevlin, Winter and Flynn (2013) question the capacity of Irish institutions to develop more inclusive provision given what they consider to be a shortfall in appropriate professional development opportunities for educators. This research is an opportunity to explore the relationship staff have with the implementation of inclusive initiatives; how they relate to institutional policies and their perspectives on professional development.

Having considered the breadth of interpretation around international policies on inclusion, Opertti and Belalcazar (2008) ask several questions pertinent to this research; who participates in the design and implementation of inclusion; does curriculum matter in achieving inclusion and how can educators' roles be improved in education settings. These questions display themes similar to those presented by Halinen and Jarvinen (2008). This research can inform and contribute to such questions, and consider how staff at one site are engaging with inclusive education. Additionally, this research

considers a whole schooling approach to inclusive education and the potential for inclusive education has for such an approach at the site of study.

The goal of the whole schooling approach is to "promote excellence and equity in schools and to build inclusive and democratic societies" (wholeschooling.net, 2019). Supple (2013) promotes the idea that whole schooling is important to reshaping influential deficit views of disability and difference in society. Whole Schools create cultures and utilize practices to achieve eight aims, which are stated as:

> (1) create learning spaces based on the needs of students learning together;
>
> (2) help students learn the tools and skills of genuine democracy;
>
> (3) create a sense of belonging, care, and community;
>
> (4) include all students in learning well together;
>
> (5) support learning through the efforts of peers, colleagues, and specialists in the classroom;
>
> (6) develop genuine partnerships between educators, parents, and the community;
>
> (7) engage students through authentic, multilevel, differentiated instruction — connecting learning to the real world and drawing on the gifts, voices, experiences, and cultures of all students; and
>
> (8) assessing students in ways that will contribute to learning.
>
> (wholeschooling.net, 2019).

What can be seen in these objectives is a more holistic view of the educational process that combines equity and excellence. The whole schooling approach values replacing a medical-model oriented provision of support for individual students with a

system that seeks to personalise learning through innovative engagement with the whole class (Ainscow and Miles, 2008). It could be argued that the whole schooling approach is one that most readily supports the adoption of universal design for learning (Katz and Sokal, 2016; Rose, 2000). Edyburn (2010) suggests the new era of UDL needs to extend focus beyond just educators in the classroom but also to schools and policy makers, aligning with the scope and purpose of this research. Additionally, Katz and Sokal (2016) argue that authentic, multi-level instruction offers more accessible learning for all. Students were found, both in the classroom and outside of it on campus, to experience social gains from working and engaging with diversity that would otherwise be unavailable through individualistic pedagogies (Bertucci, Conte, Johnson, and Johnson, 2010). This supports the whole schooling approach as all students benefit from exposure to greater diversity in the communities they build throughout their education.

The purpose of whole schooling is considered as a means by which a fairer, more equal society can exist (Aguerrado, 2008). Whole schooling may be the architecture upon which inclusion may be realized, in pursuit of social justice in education, conceptualized as a set of moral values around justice, respect, equity and equal opportunities for all regardless of race, ethnicity, creed, ability and disability, gender, class, economic status and other marginalizing circumstances (King and Travers, 2017). By exploring how staff across a range of roles at this site of study view themselves; their responsibilities and the responsibilities of the institute as a whole this research can contribute to the practical development of inclusive efforts on and around higher education campuses.

This whole schooling approach is not simply to be the remit of lecturing staff, but so too all staff within the institution. Indeed, Blamires (1999) called for a versatile

school, with differentiated approaches from all staff. As such, assessing the extent to which the attitudes of staff within this institute are oriented toward, or ready for, a whole schooling approach may facilitate the development of inclusion via such a collaborative, holistic approach to educational reform and development.

Having considered both definitions of inclusion and the approaches to the development of inclusive education, consideration now turns to the models of provision currently identifiable in Irish Higher Education.

MODELS OF PROVISION

Discussion as to how inclusive education manifests in higher education centres around two dominant forms of delivery. These are the medical model of provision and the social model of provision. Ostensibly, exploration in the models of provision space is grounded around students with disabilities. For the purpose of this research, as has been addressed, the concept of inclusion considered here is a broader definition that encompasses and is represented by students from diverse and minority backgrounds too. That being said, the two dominant models of provision allow for important discussion as to how this research into inclusive education can be of benefit, not only to students with disabilities but to all students that such inclusion seeks to support. This section will discuss both medical and social models of provision and how an appreciation of both can inform this research.

Haegele and Hodge (2016) suggest the medical and social models of provision have been the two prominent models of disability discourse and in their 2016 study into the impacts of both models have compared, contrasted and critiqued how a teacher's actions with students are heavily influenced whether they subscribe more to the medical or the social model of disability. As such, for this study, which orientation lecturers in

this institute have toward the models of provision may influence their teaching and learning strategies.

The medical model positions difference as a person or medical phenomenon that results from impairments in body functions or structures; a deficiency or abnormality. Haegele and Hodge (2016) suggest that the medical model is characterised by attempts to fix or normalise such differences. In their study where they mention perception under the medical model position, they talk of the individual being faulty and that being different or disabled is negative. It is evident in their study that they prefer the social model of disability, believing disability to be a difference; a social construct that is imposed on top of impairments by society. Rather than seeking to fix the individual, the social model advocates social or political change in an effort to decrease environmental barriers and increase levels of understanding of both disability and difference. They conclude that with the social model society may evolve to be more inclusive, to celebrate the individual as unique and that their disability or difference is neither positive nor negative.

Indeed, the social model of disability has been the concept upon which disabled people have chosen to organise themselves collectively. The result of this has broadly been successful in changing the sentiment and discourse around disability and shifting away from the medical model and toward the promotion of civil rights and the provision of autonomy and control to such people and students (Oliver, 2017). It must be noted that while there is evidence within the literature that may favour the social model of provision, it is not without its criticisms.

Palmer and Harley (2012) believe one reasonable criticism of the social model of provision is the attempts to separate an impairment or difference from the lived experience from the person in question. Fitzgerald (2006) highlights issues of

intersectionality and argues that the social model does not adequately consider differences between individuals with disabilities. Interestingly, continuing the complexity presented by intersectionality, Lloyd (1992) considered the position of disabled women in relation to both the women's movement and the disability movement. She argues that the former is oriented towards non-disabled women and the latter towards disabled men, with a consequent further marginalisation and disempowering of disabled women. This is perhaps an argument that may give rise to considering alternative models, for example, Bernstein's Democratic Model of Education, wherein both students and teachers/lecturers have equal voices in education design. It would be interesting to see to what extent students believe their voice, their difference and their personality is present in the courses they study.

Given the influence of the arts within the site of study, it may be prudent to look to the arts for any concepts on provision that may be popular or growing. One such model of provision in the literature is what is called the affirmative model. It is in essence a non-tragic view of disability, impairment and difference which involves positive social identities, both individually and collectively, for disabled people grounded in the benefits of lifestyle and life experience of being impaired and disabled. It is, in effect, a positive model. The affirmative model has arisen in direct opposition to the dominant personal tragedy model of disability and impairment, and builds on the liberatory imperative of the social model (Swain and French, 2000). What is clear is that the debate over which model of provision - or indeed, which model's principles – best facilitate inclusion and inclusive education suggests that this research is timely and relevant. The role staff play in this process of developing inclusive education will now be considered.

HIGHER EDUCATION STAFF AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The consideration of the role of staff in promoting or enacting inclusion is a very complex concept. Many staff report feeling limited in terms of education to support students; knowledge of resources; skills for making adjustments and unfamiliarity with disability laws (Leyser et al., 2000). Additionally, physical adjustments for students with disabilities are easier to achieve than an attitudinal change in staff (Beilke and Yssel, 1999). These ideas regarding staff perspectives on inclusion are not limited simply to students presenting with disabilities, but also for non-standard students from diverse backgrounds. Thomas (2002) believes staff need to be aware of the different social, cultural and academic backgrounds of students, to accept and respect students and develop an inclusive model of teaching, learning and assessment.

Implementing the principles of inclusive education, or the inclusive model, within higher education can be challenging, argues Morina (2016). She continues saying inclusive education was originally developed for younger students, prior to its application within higher education. This would advocate that any exploration of inclusion in higher education, should consider to some extent the complexities of inclusion at primary and secondary levels. Indeed, as more students with disabilities successfully complete their early schooling, the need to move towards inclusive practices within higher education has increased (Morina, 2016).

To this end, discussion around the future trends of inclusion has been presented by Florian (2008) in the context of primary and secondary education, but can be applied to discussion of higher education challenges too and will now be discussed.

Practitioner Knowledge and Attitude to Inclusion

Inclusion and how it manifests in the learning journey of students at all levels is influenced by the knowledge of the educator facilitating that learning. Forlin (2001)

laments the absence of efficacy in attempts to understand such required knowledge, arguing that a lack of knowledge on the part of educators, resulting from a lack of training, is one of the main barriers to inclusion. This section explores the literature on knowledge of inclusion for teachers at school level, as well as lecturers in higher education with a view to exploring the impact of the presence, or absence of inclusive education knowledge.

Following their study on teacher attitudes toward inclusion Wilkins and Nietfeld (2004) propose that those with specialist knowledge of inclusion are far more likely to actively implement inclusive practices. Professional development for educators is likely to foster positive attitudes to inclusion, argues Sharma, Forlin and Lorman (2008) who note that research tends to suggest that there is a positive correlation between the amount of education and educators' positive attitudes. Establishing positive attitudes is a valuable element for furthering inclusion by practitioners. Beacham and Rouse (2012) echo this sentiment stating that the beliefs and attitudes of teachers are an important element in the development of inclusive education and its associated practices.

The understanding and development of knowledge of what inclusion is, and how it can exist in classrooms and lecture halls for educators is likely to be the catalyst toward a more inclusive reality for learners. In fact, Van Reusen, Shoho and Barker (2000) highlight the consequence of an informed attitude toward inclusion, stating that teachers who feel less positive toward the idea of inclusion will not implement effective instructional strategies as often as teachers with a positive attitude. Thus, the successful implementation of inclusion reforms depends largely on the goodwill of educators. Teachers with positive attitudes towards inclusion more readily change and adapt the ways they work in order to benefit students with a range of learning needs (Sharma, Forlin and Loreman, 2008). However, in contrast, Lombardi (2010) assessed faculty

attitudes and perceptions toward students with disabilities at universities and although she found that faculty with prior disability-focused training had more positive attitudes toward students with disabilities than did those without such training, she suggests no evidence emerged that they were more likely to adopt inclusive instructional practices or provide accessible course materials - an important link required between attitude and behaviour in such settings. Indeed, Dean, Lee-Post and Hapke (2017), while advocating for the adoption of UDL, call for professional development design oriented to affective outcomes rather than objective learning outcomes to address the gap between knowledge and practice (Rouse, 2006). Given this, it will be important to not only consider the nature of lecturer attitude and opinion, but also the practical output of this knowledge in the classroom and with students directly and exploring why success and failures occur.

It must be considered, that while a positive attitude toward inclusion and associated accommodations being implemented for students by faculty members may be considered as an ideal – such positive attitudes and willingness is not always commonplace. There is considerable evidence in the literature that this is not always the case. For example, Vogel, Leyser, Wyland and Brulle (1999) studied quantitative feedback from 420 faculty members at a US university relating to their background knowledge about learning disabilities and legislation, their personal experience teaching such students, their willingness to offer accommodations, and their judgment of the fairness of providing such accommodations vis-a-vis students without disabilities. The study found faculty members unwilling to provide class materials in alternative formats; and while they were willing to extend the time for exams, they were not willing to alter exam formats. Interestingly, the study reports that lecturer knowledge and attitude was influenced by age, academic discipline, experience teaching students with disability,

and professional rank. A caveat to this discussion is presented in their analysis, citing Hill (1996) who reported in a similar study where faculty members had expressed concerns about extending accommodations, that students themselves had rated faculty willingness to accommodate as 'good' or 'excellent'. It will be interesting to see if such patterns around lecturer knowledge and attitude is born out in collected data at this institute where students with disabilities form a considerable percentage of the student cohort.

Campbell, Gilmore and Cuskelly (2003) found that when student teachers had acquired more accurate knowledge of a specific disability that more positive attitudes towards the inclusive education of children with that disability were developed. They also found that their attitudes towards disability, in general, had also changed, and they reported greater ease when interacting with people with disabilities. They propose the value of combining information-based training for educators in changing attitudes towards disability and inclusion. This study mirrors the findings of Swain, Nordness and Leader-Janssen (2012) who lament that while teachers continue to have mixed feelings about their own preparedness to educate students with disabilities in the general education setting, teachers with more positive attitudes toward inclusion are more apt to adjust their instruction and curriculum to meet individual needs of students and have a more positive approach to inclusion. Given the inconsistency in the literature around educator attitudes toward inclusion and students with disability, it would be worthwhile to explore the development of knowledge and shifts in attitude (if any) experienced by faculty at this institute.

Exploring this debate in the literature further can aid in the identification of issues worthy of consideration in the design of any study into inclusion in higher education (or other levels). Forlin and Chambers (2011) conducted an evaluation of pre-

service teachers' perceptions regarding their preparedness for inclusion which adds to the complexity already presented above. Their study found that increasing knowledge about legislation and policy related to inclusion, and improving levels of confidence in becoming an inclusive educator did not likewise address educator concerns, or perceived stress, about having students with disabilities in their classes. This is a compelling observation as it speaks to the nature of professional development sought by practitioners for their classroom activities. Indeed, in a study on the dimension of inclusion in Irish education, O'Gorman and Drudy (2010) suggest that educators seek professional development supportive of traditional practices belonging to a medical model-influenced, deficit approach to inclusion. They call for a more revolutionary approach to professional development that challenges conventional wisdom and promotes a more inclusive system. It will be interesting to explore the extent to which these findings are evidenced amongst staff at this institute.

As Forlin and Chambers (2011) explored sources of stress with pre-service teachers, so too did Shippen, Crites, Houchins, Ramsey, and Simon (2005) only with a focus of their study not directly on stress, but rather on dichotomous scales of hostility versus receptivity and anxiety versus calmness regarding the education of students with disability included into general education settings. As with Forlin and Chambers (2011), Shippen, et. al. (2005) found a decreased level of anxiety and hostility toward such students following education and knowledge development in this area. The theme of educator knowledge development and impacts on their attitude and practice is a persistent one in the literature. Testing the prevalence of such a theme in this institutional context may furnish forth compelling data.

Where discussions around stress, anxiety and hostility exist, it is prudent to explore areas of the literature that may have the potential to mitigate against such

concerns. One such study, based around the teaching of mathematics, noted that teachers did not feel that teacher education programs at the preservice level and professional development at the in-service level were sufficient in preparing them for teaching students with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms (Desimone and Parmar, 2006). This is another contribution to the debate on the efficacy of training and development efforts for educators, but perhaps the more note-worthy finding from the study was that teacher collaboration was judged to be the most beneficial and available resource by general educators teaching students with learning disabilities. This reflects the findings from a review of international literature by Ainscow and Sandill (2010) that champions the value of a collaborative workforce and culture as being central to inclusive education. This suggests that an inclusive education climate is not the purview of individual educators in classrooms alone, but a more collaborative effort from multiple participants.

Again in the area of pre-service teacher training, inclusive practice and the reflection of attitude in classroom activities is the subject of a study by Leatherman and Niemeyer (2005). The study reflects observations made in the above-mentioned literature, namely that educator attitude and knowledge is impacted by previous experience and training, but continues to make additional observations regarding the supports that may be of benefit to trainee teachers. They observe that while teachers implemented inclusive practices, they indicated that appropriate preservice education, support from administrators, and support from resource personnel are important to provide a successful inclusive environment. This finding could be of significance for institutions at a management level in terms of resource allocation in supporting a more inclusive culture. Weisel and Dror (2006) discuss institutional climate as being of critical importance to supporting inclusion. Namely, they identify six support factors

worthy of consideration: supportive leadership; teachers' autonomy; prestige of the teaching profession; renovations; teachers' collaboration; and workload. It will be interesting to see if faculty members discuss the institutional supports available to them and whether the general culture of the institution toward inclusion reflects the content of their policy documents in practice.

It is often argued that a lack of knowledge on the part of classroom teachers, attributed to a lack of training, is one of the main barriers to inclusion (see, for example, Forlin, 2001). Interestingly, a large scale comparison of effects of different characteristics of professional development identified a focus on content knowledge; opportunities for active learning and coherence with other learning activities as core professional development features that have significant positive impacts on educator's self-reported knowledge (Garet et al., 2001). The same research advocates professional development design that considers the format of professional development activity; collective participation of staff sharing characteristics such as subject focus or faculty membership, and the duration of the activity to maximize tangible impacts in practice. Cohen and Hill (1998) agree that professional development should have a considerable content or subject focus, to better facilitate practical application after the training process. This research study may shine a light on what this institute's faculty believe to be noteworthy and effective in inclusive education practice and whether the research from Garet, et al. (2001) is reflected in the perspective of the staff at this institute. The development of knowledge around inclusion is important as a review by Cook and Schirmer (2003), which sought to identify what is 'special' about special education, showed that teaching practices that are effective for students identified as having special educational needs also work with students who are not identified as having special

educational needs. Such impacts to practice are the very embodiment of inclusion and inclusive teaching and highlight the value of this research.

Lewis and Norwich (2005) and Florian (2008) echo this position and emphasize the use of an inclusive strategy rather than additional different teaching approaches. A central challenge for teachers who wish to develop inclusive practice is to consider the way they think about inclusion (Florian, 2008). Weisel and Dror (2006) suggest that educator self-efficacy is the single most important factor affecting attitudes; a position echoed by Timperley et al. (2007) who propose that the success of professional development is often dependent on educators having agency in their own learning. To this end, inclusive education is not a series of additions to an existing skillset, rather it is a holistic shift in attitude and knowledge to a broader understanding of the purpose and nature of education. This study can add to the knowledge area by examining educator perspectives on inclusion in the leading Irish institution for recruiting students with learning disabilities.

Professional Development for Inclusion

The importance of professional development is highlighted as a consequence of many university lecturers not being trained teachers (Moses, 1993). Kennedy (2014) proposes the existence of a variety of models of professional development, serving a multitude of purposes, and argues that both individual and collaborative professional development have merit though collaborative models tend to be more transformative. The literature is broadly in agreement as to the potential value that professional development can foster (Kennedy, 2014; King, 2019), however, the scope and purpose of what professional development should be is evidently rife with debate (Evans, 2019; King, 2019) and exploring how staff at this institute perceive professional development and its role in fostering inclusion will be important for this study.

Indeed, King (2014), in an evaluation of teacher professional development, stresses the need to assess and evaluate the teaching impact of professional development. Experts and professionals have in the past promoted the concept that only those with special qualifications and training are equipped to assess, teach and make decisions about learners with special needs (Blamires, 1999). Alternative points of view exist in favour of professional development being a management and administration issue as part of a site-wide re-culturing toward inclusion (Robinson and Carrington, 2002). Staff believing that educating students with unique characteristics is the remit of specialists and/or management may limit the ownership and responsibility being taken to champion inclusive education measures and serve to prevent a whole schooling approach to fostering an inclusive environment (Ainscow and Miles, 2008). Griful-Freixenet et al. (2017) highlight that academics feel they are not required to develop their teaching skills to be inclusive as long as an add on accommodations model persists.

Furthermore, Hourcade and Bauwens (2001) describe education as a 'lonely profession' and argue that professional development ought to include opportunities for educators to discuss with their peers the successes and failures in the application of their new strategies, ultimately advocating for professional development to be the catalyst toward a community of practice. This is further supported by Kennedy (2014) who argues collaborative professional development is the most transformative model.

Developing knowledge of inclusion may, seemingly, be an ever-changing dynamic challenge regardless of how the situation is interpreted. Florian (2012) highlights three dimensions that render professional development for inclusion challenging, namely: different understandings of inclusion; the search for common ground; and uncertainty about evidencing inclusive practice, once again reflecting the

need for collaborative PD to foster a collective understanding and responsibility for inclusion (Kennedy, 2014).

Challenges to inclusion are persistent across higher education (O'Shea, et al. 2016, Whiteford, 2017). Professional development will be one of many elements that can have a positive impact on furthering the experience of all students. Changes can only be implemented by already overstretched teaching staff that may not have the time, or the incentive to prioritise the inclusive aspect of their work (Smith, 2010). This highlights the importance of seeing professional development as a right and a responsibility (National Forum, 2016).

However, there exist additional challenges that professional development providers, and indeed institutional management, must consider. In an evaluation of Higher Education faculty professional development programs, Ebert-May, et al. (2011) found that faculty who had undertaken professional development learned what was taught in the professional development workshop, but they were left alone to successfully develop and implement new teaching methodologies. There was no on-site network of expert support. Indeed, the researchers concluded that their expectation that faculty members would synthesize and expand on what was learned in training workshops was not met (Ebert-May, et al. 2011). Arguably, when PD is conceived as something that is 'done' to teachers (Timperley, 2007) or 'provided' for faculty there may be less engagement by staff, less autonomy and as a result less responsibility for changes as a result of the PD (King, 2019). Conversely, Thomson, et al. (2003), studying staff training programs across three universities in New Zealand, report great variation in both the conceptual understanding of inclusion and the willingness of educators to engage with it having engaged in a collaborative community of practice where they were enabled to overcome challenges in a collaborative manner. It is

important to consider that professional development is not a linear process that results in change (Boylan et al., 2018), rather it may be a complex process that requires support through implementation (Fullan, 2007, 2014). For the purposes of this study, it would be interesting to explore the attitudes to collaboration from faculty; the disability and access officers and the Teaching and Learning Committee given that unlike the studies mentioned above there is a support network present on this campus.

Beyond collaboration Rouse (2008) argues that the possibility of successful inclusive practice requires educators to accept responsibility for creating learning environments where learners feel they belong and can thrive. This is consistent with principles of the whole schooling approach to inclusion (Aguerrado, 2008; Ainscow and Miles, 2008) whilst evidencing the barriers to inclusion outlined in Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006). Rouse (2006) introduces the importance of beliefs. That is to say that it is critical for educators to believe in their own ability to be inclusive educators. This belief system is intrinsically linked to confidence in one's own ability which can be fostered via professional development. Florian (2008, 2014) furthers this in strong terms, stating that educators need to be disabused of the notion that they are not qualified to teach non-standard learners. She argues that while educators have much of the knowledge and many of the skills required to teach all learners, often they lack the confidence to put this knowledge into action. Knowledge must come from somewhere, and professional development can contribute to the knowledge base of a faculty. It would be wise for this study to explore lecturer attitudes toward the completion of formal teaching qualifications; and whether they would have an impact on their beliefs regarding their own abilities as inclusive educators. It should be noted that positive attitudes and relative knowledge may not be causal in promoting inclusive education practices. Guskey (2002, 2009) argues that

beliefs and attitudes are a prerequisite to promoting inclusive practices, though King (2014) believes professional development to be an iterative process that may take considerable time. This is likely due, in part, to the complexity of attitudinal change and knowledge development (Opfer and Pedder, 2011).

A source of confidence in inclusive teaching and learning for practitioners can come from formal qualifications. Butcher and Stoncel (2012), in a study on the impacts of higher education teaching certification, report evidence of positive, sustained impact on new staff resulting in more confident teaching approaches; a shift to learner-centred conceptualisations; reflection on practice and cross-institutional dialogue as a catalyst for personal change. However, they cautioned that often following such a qualification there were limited opportunities for teaching staff to continue such initiatives of professional development within the institution. This may potentially be an avenue for institutional leadership and management to review and present a sustained support plan for their staff beyond initial accreditation. Indeed, Fullan (2007, 2014) stresses the importance of sustained support during the implementation phase. Butcher and Stoncel (2012) continue that the challenge for any institution is to embed positive outcomes in a framework of continuous professional development that supports career-long learning at a time of great change in the sector. It is this attention to career-long learning that is critical; that PD for inclusion not be limited to stand-alone courses and qualifications, and needs to be supported by an encouraging environment as advocated by a whole schooling approach (Ainscow and Miles, 2008) and the National Framework for Professional Development in Higher Education (National Forum, 2016).

The promotion of inclusive education, in part, is most effective with a top-down improvement agenda from visionary leadership figures in managerial roles, argues Powers, Rayner and Gunter (2001) in their UK based study on the PD needs of

management and senior staff in special education. They worry that with special education, most efforts cluster around the learner as the unit of analysis, rather than holistic organisational goals in which the inclusion agenda can be a critical success factor, highlighting the importance of a whole schooling approach to inclusion. Such a contentious position requires further dialogue, and the authors argue that debate over how inclusion ought to manifest persists. They advocate the need for professional development that enables and supports participation in debates and action regarding the implications of inclusion for education settings. This could be argued as further support to the collaborative nature of PD (Thomson et al., 2003).

Powers et al. (2001) propose a high need for professional development but interestingly, noted that many senior staff and management wanted professional development and training for their current positions, rather than training for promotion purposes. Indeed, research suggests that a willingness exists to pursue PD amongst teaching faculty and that notions of staff resistance is inappropriate when describing teaching staff's attitudes to inclusive practice and that implementation needs to be underpinned by support and guidance from management (Smith. 2010). King (2016) supports this, arguing that while changing attitudes and increasing knowledge is important, so too is the provision of guidance on practical steps to improve the implementation of inclusive practices. Evidently, the literature stresses the role management play in PD design and efficacy, consistent with the National Framework (National Forum, 2016).

Posing the question of what lecturers' actually desire and find valuable from professional development provides a different perspective on professional development design. In a study of what lecturers at an Australian University find valuable in PD, Ferman (2002) favours involvement of participants in the learning or development

process, particularly where participants are highly educated and self-aware. In Ferman's study (2002), the recommendations are for a collaborative and integrated attitude toward professional development; arguing that attendance or participation in singular isolated activities or events is insufficient, rather the provision of a diverse range of professional development activities together with opportunities for networking and collaboration are both more effective and desired to a greater extent by lecturers. This advocacy for mentoring and for fruitful peer engagement relies on the creation of an intangible climate of collegiality and goodwill – likely to be the remit of management to be leaders and champions of change toward inclusion; but equally providing further support for a positive community of practice over standalone professional development activities (Desimone, 2009; Garet, et al. 2001; National Forum, 2016). To this end, it will be interesting to observe how participants in this research view both the community of learning and the role management plays in its advocacy.

One of the more compelling studies which proposed a less common form of professional development is presented by O'Connor, et al. (2012). In their study, university lecturers permitted students with intellectual disabilities to audit their classes. The study also included students who are of mature age, parents or carers, international, from ethnic minorities, or who have a disability or study part-time. The authors of the study noted the willingness to participate on behalf of the lecturer was often underpinned by a sense of social justice having had direct experience working with people with disabilities either through family or previous work connections and thus were committed to the process. Not only does such a practice act as a learning opportunity for faculty, but it also provides a dimension toward the inclusive curriculum by providing nonstandard learners with a voice in how lectures design their courses. It could be argued that this provides lecturers with an opportunity to align their

professional development with their own goals and motivations (Cordingley et al., 2015).

Presenting participants in this research with the concept of their courses being audited for inclusive practice by students may illuminate understanding from both perspectives. The sentiment here is agreed by Ballantyne, Borthwick and Packer (2002) who posit that while evaluation of teaching is a commonly accepted means of obtaining feedback on the quality of university teaching, its usefulness in contributing to improved teaching performance is dependent on the extent to which staff respond to and apply the information obtained in this way. Simply allowing students to audit a class or lecturer methods for inclusion as per O'Connor, et al. (2012) may be fruitless if the lecturer does not, perhaps, possess a positive attitude toward the inclusion agenda, though willing engagement with feedback and reflection may be valuable to the professional development process (Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner, 2017).

It is evident from the literature here that PD may be considered as more than just a singular experience, but rather an iterative process (King, 2014) requiring opportunities for collaboration (Thomson et al., 2003), a willingness to engage with feedback (Ballantyne et al., 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; O'Connor, et al., 2012) in a supportive environment (National Forum, 2016). These areas of interest give rise to potential barriers that are a critical element of this research and specifically inform research question two, regarding obstacles and barriers to inclusive education.

Additional Barriers to Inclusion

Inclusion in Irish Higher Education in a contemporary context can be considered with the social model of disability to the fore. Given the call to action, evidenced from Booth and Ainscow (2002), is to reduce and overcome barriers to education, it is worthwhile to consider what additional potential barriers exist for inclusion in higher

education contexts. Their sentiment regarding the reduction of barriers is echoed by Fuller, Bradley and Healy (2004). They argue that in looking to create an inclusive environment higher education should be looking to reduce the barriers that students encounter in teaching, learning and assessment. A flexible approach to education and inclusion through responsive teaching and applying principles of UDL may be a means to overcome such barriers (Griful-Freixenet, et al. 2007). If inclusion is to be considered in unison with teaching, learning and assessment, it is wise to consider those who are responsible for the same, namely, the academic faculty in higher education institutions.

The analysis presented in the study by Reupert et al., (2010) is compelling and of significant interest to this study. Respondents discuss the barriers to inclusion and how they have addressed the challenges presented. Frequently, the discussion stresses the increased codification of the higher education experience, and the administrative need for transparency and equality – effectively a shift toward managerialism of the curriculum and faculty. This is noteworthy given the previous discussions in this literature review pertaining to the role of management in fostering an inclusive environment. Throughout the findings there are numerous examples of lecturing faculty frustrated by the rigidity of the systems within which they operate, and further, finding creative ways to circumnavigate institutional regulation. Exploring staff perceptions of the potential barriers to education identified thus far in the literature will be valuable to understanding the current nature of inclusive education at this institute.

While many staff may be positively minded toward inclusive education, the literature suggests that institutional and staff oriented concepts of academic elitism within higher education and institutional purpose may hinder the development of inclusion. Brennan (2004) suggests one of the most common forms of higher education is an elitist institution – shaping the mind and character of the ruling class in

preparation for elite roles. Indeed, Altbach (2009) suggests the dominant institutional focus in higher education is one characterized by research prowess, a reputation for excellence and long-standing academic traditions. Brezis (2018) expresses concern that countries with high levels of elitism in higher education display high levels of social inequality. Indeed, in an Irish context, Finnegan and Merrill (2015) note that higher education is accessed by a high level of the potential student cohort, this access remains inconsistent across various socio-economic sectors. This suggestion that higher education remains the prevails of the elite is particularly noteworthy with the widening of access for a broader variety of students to the opportunities of higher education (Basit and Tomlinson, 2012; Smith, 2012). This suggests a higher education institute with ideals of elitism may struggle to embrace concepts of inclusive education.

In a comprehensive review of higher education typologies, Trow (2006) provides a detailed insight into the concept of the elite higher education institute that may provide barriers to inclusion. These include highly structured forms of curriculum and forms of instruction; homogenous institutional characteristics with high and common standards; a small locus of power and decision making with shared values and assumptions; and access and selection determined by meritocratic achievement based on school performance. Such concepts could be considered antithetical to principles of both universal design for learning and inclusive education more generally. Scott (2019) conducted a contemporary review of Trow's work and suggested the modern move to mass access to higher education is one of a number of hopeful social and cultural revolutions, positioning an inclusive higher education as favourable to society over one that may exhibit elitist characteristics. Exploring the opinions of staff at this institute as to the prevalence of such elitism or potential barriers perceived in the literature will provide insight as to the readiness of the institute to develop inclusively.

However, it must be noted that the extent of institutional readiness for inclusion is one of many potential supports or barriers that may be present on campus. The extent to which staff take individual responsibility for developing an inclusive environment may be further indication of institutional readiness for inclusion. Florian and Rouse (2009) caution the likelihood that students with non-traditional educational needs could be perceived by many education staff to be the responsibility of specialist educators with specialist knowledge. If this perception is evidenced at this site it would be counter to the development of an inclusive environment where staff have a responsibility to educate all learners. This mirrors the findings by Pijl (2010) in a study of Dutch educators who were found to be hesitant to accept responsibility for students with diverse needs. In this study, staff did not have positive attitudes toward inclusive education, citing a lack of knowledge and skill for teaching such students. In contrast, Subban and Mahlo (2017) show that educators who exhibit a positive attitude and willingness to take responsibility for inclusion of all students are more likely to modify their teaching approaches to help students with additional needs. Such findings suggest the exploration of staff attitudes at this site of study and the potential value in professional development is timely.

It is reasonably clear that the attitudinal orientation of staff to inclusion plays a pivotal role in its development at a given site. Subban and Sharma (2006) researched the attitudes of staff towards inclusion of students with disabilities in Australia and suggested:

> "while [educators] appear accepting and positive of inclusionary programs, there remains some concern about implementing inclusive education in the mainstream classroom" (Subban and Sharma, 2006, p.51).

Boyle, Anderson and Allen (2020) make the case that ultimately in their review of literature on attitudes to inclusion there exists a similar thread. Educators talk of and hold broadly positive attitudes towards inclusion as a concept, but feel less positive about their ability to implement inclusive practices in their classrooms. They contend that this theory to practice gap is of concern if inclusion is something to be pursued, and is definitely worthy of exploration at a leading recruiter of diverse students in Irish higher education. Indeed, the extent to which staff know, do and believe (Rouse, 2006) in inclusive education may be the best lens through which to frame the future of inclusive education.

It should be noted that many of these additional barriers to inclusion mirror Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities presented by the UN (CRPD, 2006). Article 24 notes the following barriers:

1. Failure to understand the human rights model of disability.
2. Persistent discrimination, low expectations, prejudice and fear.
3. Lack of knowledge about the nature of and advantages of quality inclusion education.
4. Lack of disaggregated data for development purposes.
5. Lack of political will, knowledge and capacity including insufficient education of teaching staff.
6. Inappropriate and inadequate funding.
7. Lack of legal remedies and redress.

Researching the extent to which such barriers are perceived by staff at this institute may inform institutional strategy and practices. Importantly, the barriers listed in Article 24 consider impediments to inclusion both inside and outside of the

classroom, considering the institute as a whole when considering the development of inclusion. It should be noted that many researchers point to UDL as a means by which such barriers can be address (Blamires, 1999; Griful-Freixenet, et al. 2007). It is, however, essential to consider inclusion also from the context of the classroom.

INCLUSIVE TEACHING, PEDAGOGY, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Teaching and Learning Practice

Inclusive teaching practices have been described as ranging from applied, interactive and authentic learning tasks (Reupert, Hemmings and Connors, 2010). There are numerous specific concepts offered, including practical workshops where the lecturer observes students running a meeting or a classroom; facilitating online teaching (Reupert et al., 2010); and the provision of a breadth of resources consistent with principles of universal design for learning (UDL) (Rose, 2000; Morina, 2016). An inclusive pedagogy shifts the focus from individuals identified as having additional needs to learning for all; rejects deterministic beliefs about ability; and a collaborative approach to learning (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). The extent to which these traits are evidenced from institutional staff will offer insight into the current state of inclusive pedagogy at this institute.

One compelling area of the literature on inclusive pedagogy discusses multiple intelligence theory. Barrington (2004) articulates the argument effectively in favour of higher education lecturers embracing the theory of multiple intelligence. The concept of multiple intelligence proposes that there are not only two types of intelligence, but rather many ways. The theory challenges the idea of intelligence as a unitary capacity that can be measured by IQ tests and also challenges the pre-eminence of verbal/linguistic and mathematical/logical ability as a measure of intelligence.

Barrington (2004) contends that this multiple intelligence view is inclusive as it is not culture-bound, and accounts for differences in time and place.

Gardner (1993) proposes eight intelligences:

1. Linguistic: the ability with the use of language, sensitive to the order and meaning of words.

2. Logical/mathematical: good with abstract patterns and relationships, problem-solving.

3. Musical: notice non-verbal sounds in the environment, sensitive to pitch, melody, rhythm and tone.

4. Visual/spatial: strong sense of the visual world, remembers best by visualizing.

5. Bodily/kinaesthetic: good hand-eye coordination, good with tools.

6. Interpersonal: understands and relates well to other people.

7. Intrapersonal: self-motivated, conscious of own motives and feelings.

8. Naturalistic: understand and relate to the natural world, good pattern identification and observation.

The implications of the eight intelligences for teaching and learning are enormous, according to Barrington (2004). Specifically, he argues, for higher education institutions that often focus mostly on just two intelligences, namely verbal/linguistic and logical/mathematical. He suggests that lecturers ultimately teach, test, reinforce and reward these intelligences. Campbell, Campbell and Dickinson (1996) discuss the potential consequences of narrowly designing higher education to focus on linguistic and mathematical intelligences. They argue it minimizes the importance of other forms of knowing, and that those students who struggle to demonstrate such traditional academic intelligences are held in low self-esteem and their strengths may remain

unrealized and lost to both the institution and society at large. This emphasizes the barriers to inclusion of persistent prejudice, and lack of knowledge and education of staff (CRPD, 2006)

While discourse on teaching and learning can be more inclusive by appreciating multiple intelligence, it is wise to consider what lecturing faculty should not do or curtail in order to be more inclusive. To illustrate this discussion a compelling study by Linder et al., (2015) into the higher education experience of black students identified a breadth of teaching and learning strategies that ought to be addressed. The study discusses microaggressions that include everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages. Importantly, the study notes that often these microaggressions are carried out by well-intentioned peers, faculty, and administrators. It is critical to consider lecturer perceptions of such concerns.

In the Linder et al., (2015) study, they identify how students of colour experience microaggressions perpetuated by peers and faculty at individual, institutional, and structural levels. They propose that racial microaggressions directed toward students include assumptions of criminality; ascriptions of intelligence; allegations of oversensitivity and white student denial of racism; isolation, marginalization, and tokenization; questioning of credibility; and white faculty's fear of providing challenging feedback. All these are counter to the ideals of inclusive education. While the discussion mentioned in the Linder et al. (2015) study concerned with issues of race, it must be noted that race may be analogous to other concepts of difference such as disability and sexual orientation. These observations have a direct impact on classroom dialogues and it is worthwhile that lecturers possess an open mind to address such concerns.

Additionally, Reupert et al. (2010) investigated whether those who are tasked with educating teachers of the future about inclusive education are, themselves, practising inclusion in the classrooms. In their study, they found that even though the lecturers they interviewed self-identified as inclusive educators and adopted various inclusive teaching and assessment practices, ultimately barriers exist that impede the adoption and utilization of inclusive practice in higher education settings. This mirrors one of the apprehensions that is acting as a catalyst for this study, assessing the extent to which even those lecturers at this higher education institute who self-identify as inclusive educators are indeed being inclusive in their practice, and if so, how is this supported, and if not, why not. Reupert et al. (2010) speak of these self-identifying lecturers as advocacy agents and role models to champion the inclusive education cause.

One of the more standout observations present in the literature was the hypothesis that the provision of additional time between lecturer and student was more valuable for both parties than the provision of digital resources. This may reflect the relational and emotional aspects of teaching (Akinbode, 2013; Hargreaves, 2000). This may be of interest in the context of this institute given the design of lecturing contracts where time is allocated in very specific ways and some lecturers may feel the provision of extra time to students under the auspices of inclusion may have a negative impact on their overall work.

Inclusive Assessment and Curricula

With regard to inclusive practice evidenced in assessment, the elements of universal design seem to be prominent. It should be noted that "understanding UDL can be seductively easy" (Edyburn, 2010, p. 40) and that the doing of UDL ought to be considered as a subfield of instructional design. Indeed, throughout the literature, there

are calls for assessment to provide learners with options and self-directed choice within the framework of course learning outcomes (Reupert et al. 2010) consistent with ideas of UDL. There appears to be an appreciation for more creative or visual learners and a suggestion that presentations and posters ought to compliment traditional written assessment formats (Blamires, 1999; Rose, 2000). Where formal examinations are required there is support for both open-book and open-note exams, to some extent distancing current practice with traditional examinations. It must be noted though, that frequently through the literature there is significant emphasis that any and all accommodations do not compromise the integrity of a course and that academic standards must be upheld in all situations.

As higher education has sought to provide for non-standard students via the medical model process of additional provision, often what is evidenced during examinations is a separate room and additional time during the assessment. Waterfield, West and Parker (2006) discovered that only approximately one-third of disabled student respondents entitled to such special arrangements actually received them during assessments and thus questioned the consistency and efficacy of special provisions as per the medical model for supporting the assessment of non-standard students in higher education. Madriaga et al. (2010) explored the legitimacy of alternative assessments for students outside of the mainstream cohort and considered the applicability, possibility and equity of inclusive assessments. The latter, they argue, are suitable for a diverse student population, regardless of disability. This position is also present in much of UDL literature (Morina, 2016; Rose, 2000). While recognising that some students may require a particular assessment, Madriaga et al. (2010) sought an assessment toolkit that reduces the likelihood of discrimination and ghettoization of students with disabilities. They state “the common higher education practice of placing disabled students in

separate examination accommodation from non-disabled students perpetuates the ghettoization of disabled students, and vice versa" (Madriaga et al., 2010, p. 649).

Assessment methodology challenges are persistent in higher education, exacerbated when inclusion is considered. From an Irish perspective Hanafin et al., (2007) claim it to be apparent that for students with physical disabilities and those with dyslexia, assessment practices were fraught with additional limitations. They believe access issues within higher education have been ineffectually considered and consequently have failed to address fundamental concerns around assessment for students with physical disabilities and with dyslexia.

The Hanafin et al., (2007) study offers two passages of discussion on assessment design that is of particular interest to this research. Firstly:

> "Assessment practices are created, not given. They are decided at an institutional, departmental or faculty level. Every assessment practice represents a selection of one method of assessment over another. Decisions are made about modes and techniques of assessment and about the purposes and audiences that are prioritized. It is worth noting the very wide range of available assessment options from which assessment selections are made. Decisions about modes include whether the assessment approach is summative or formative, formal or informal, external or internal, terminal or continuous" Hanafin et al, (2007, p. 438).

The emphasis on lecturer choice in the creation of assessment is very pertinent to this study. There is a growing emphasis on continuous assessment in the Humanities Faculty; and a breadth of assessment methods in the Creative Arts Faculty. There is an

opportunity within the institution to design contemporarily appropriate and inclusive assessments, consistent with the principles of UDL. The second passage of interest states:

> "Decisions about techniques—the means through which assessment data are gathered—are made from a very wide range of possibilities that include, at least, written, essay, multiple-choice, thesis/ dissertation, oral, aural, practical, fieldwork, laboratory report, individual project, group project, profile, portfolio, diary, log, work placement rating, report, skills record, summary, research project, review, poster, and exhibition… A commitment to including learners with disabilities requires more analytic consideration of modes and techniques of assessment" Hanafin et al, (2007, p. 438).

The presentation of a range of assessment methods is, of course, noteworthy for this study, but so too is the concluding call to action requiring faculty commitment to include learners with disabilities and from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds and advocate for more analytical assessment design. The extent to which this exists, or indeed, how faculty have changed their assessment design over their careers may produce some compelling data.

One area where lecturing staff could make impactful developments to their assessment methodologies is in the design and provision of feedback. Morris, Milton and Goldstone (2019) in a study on staff and student opinions of assessment call for feedback to move beyond just the giving of feedback but to ensure quality receiving, understanding, interpreting and action by the student. Specifically, as an example of non-inclusive feedback, they cited the barriers presented by written feedback to a

student with dyslexia with comments on structure – thus focusing feedback on mode of delivery rather than knowledge and comprehension of subject material. Interesting, Knauf (2016) explored student reception to audio feedback and found that students believed such feedback to be more personal and easier to assimilate. Knauf (2016) did stress, however, that audio feedback was not proposed as a solution or alternative, but rather sought to highlight the value in considering feedback that may be multi-modal in nature.

It is appropriate that this research consider how faculty perceive inclusive assessment and feedback design. However, assessment is one functional area within a broader higher education experience. Much of the student's experience is not limited simply to assessment, but also directly and indirectly to the curricula of their chosen course. As such, the discussion now moves from inclusive assessment to inclusive curricula.

Across the literature, there is a compelling line of thought regarding the nature of inclusion. In addition to a discussion of knowledge development and individual attitude recent studies introduce a call for an emphasis on modification of curricula for inclusion and related issues to be infused across all disciplines (Bunbury, 2018; Morgan and Houghton, 2011). This is evidenced in the area of initial teacher training (Forlin and Chambers, 2011) but so too in third level institutions. The ethos of inclusive curriculum initiatives of a university can provide a solid foundation for students to enjoy successful academic and social outcomes from completing their awards. An inclusive curriculum, regardless of discipline, can enhance learner self-image as valued and contributing members of the institute, according to a student audit of classes at an Irish University (O'Connor et al., 2012). Indeed, in the same study, the authors suggest that university lecturers are responsible for providing high-quality and challenging courses for all

students and that this ensures lecturers are being challenged to make the teaching and learning environments accessible to a wider range of learners by using more flexible approaches that engage and motivate students by including them in the design of the curriculum. An inclusive curriculum design approach is one that takes into account students' educational, cultural and social background and experience as well as the presence of any physical or sensory impairment and their mental well-being (Morgan and Houghton, 2011).

In this regard, Reed, Lund-Lucas and O'Rourke (2003) propose one way to analyse the presence of discrimination is through programme evaluation; and that programme evaluation is necessary to ensure that students are treated equitably. It is within the curriculum, often, where a lack of inclusion exists. Positively, Kearns and Shevlin (2006) advocate for a range of teacher education courses designed to help trainee teachers explore the teaching implications of alternative approaches to curriculum and pedagogy. Such courses can facilitate teachers to engage with contemporary curriculum reforms and the challenges of greater discretion in curriculum planning at the micro-level. Bunbury (2018) promotes a similar message in the higher education space, arguing that having an inclusive curriculum can in some cases minimise or obviate the need to make reasonable adjustments or additions to teaching practice in the pursuit of inclusion.

A curriculum designed inclusively considers students' cultural and social background taking into account an individual's physical or sensory impairment and mental well-being (Morgan and Houghton, 2011). Inclusive curriculum design benefits both staff and students when it is based on principles of equity, collaboration, flexibility and accountability. The curriculum as a home for inclusive education promotion is a fascinating concept with scope for numerous benefits. Offering students choice in

curriculum content and delivery can improve motivation towards ‘deep’ learning (Smith, 2002). As Reed, et al. (2003) suggest, evaluation of programmes and curriculum can be very effective. Evaluation can help educators to analyse curriculum values and curriculum delivery, to see what and who is left out and to make changes where possible to benefit all students. It is argued that often the bias in curricula against the visual, and, on many academic courses, against the experiential, makes it particularly important that inclusive methods are adapted to counter such issues (Smith 2002). In the context of this study, it will be interesting to see whether much emphasis is placed upon curriculum design toward an inclusive curriculum for all learners, regardless of discipline.

Florian (2008) also calls for consideration of the curriculum, advocating for the development of new strategies intended to support students in accessing the curriculum, rather than aiming to remediate underlying learning difficulties. Academic freedoms and maintaining academic standards, as well as more prosaic issues such as time, support and resources, are all common and valid concerns raised by those teaching in Higher Education in addressing inclusivity (Croucher and Romer, 2007). Concerns of academic integrity in the pursuit of inclusivity is common. Smith (2002) notes concerns with equity and inclusion gives teachers and curriculum planners the opportunity to use learning styles to make learning more accessible to a greater range and number of students. Critically, however, it should not be seen as a compensatory or remedial move. There are positive benefits for all students in recognizing and valuing differences inside and outside the classroom, however, academic integrity should not be compromised. Florian (2008) stresses the importance of fitness-for-purpose; that is, selecting strategies on the basis of what is to be learnt rather than what is wrong with the learner. The most important thing, she argues, is that objectives and content are

made accessible to the learner, not that the content be made easier or less valid. This position advocates for a universal design for learning (UDL) approach.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

A common theme in the literature around inclusive teaching and learning methodologies is that of universal design for learning, proposed as a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all students (CAST, 2019). UDL has the potential to not only increase access but transform the learning process for everyone (Rose, 2000) that proactively values diversity (King-Sears, 2009). Hitchcock et al., (2002) explain that in a UDL curriculum, goals provide a challenge for all students; materials have a flexible format to support all students; methods are diverse enough to provide appropriate learning experiences, challenges and support for all students; and assessment is sufficiently varied to provide accurate and continuous information that helps educators adjust instruction and maximize learning. UDL has three pillars; multiple means of engagement (the *why* of learning); multiple means of representation (the *what* of learning) and multiple means of action and expression (the *how* of learning). The focus on multiple means across the pillars suggests a breadth of options for a variety of students and learning styles to engage with.

Edyburn (2010) promotes the idea that UDL is ultimately about design, and ascribes a level of responsibility on educators to think about how they design their classroom activities, develop their assessments and even how they orient their classrooms and learning spaces. He continues that innovations aligned to UDL do not occur naturally and requires proactivity. To that end, this research can help in exploring the extent to which staff at this institute are already innovating, perhaps with UDL in mind, and the degree to which they are proactively engaged in the process.

Additionally, this may serve as a call for advocacy toward UDL themed professional development.

In a qualitative report of student voices, Katz and Sokal (2016) showcase data from empirical studies documenting the impact of UDL. They suggest UDL has been shown to support access, participation and progress for all learners as well as positive outcomes both attitudinally and in terms of achievement. Significantly, students with disabilities were shown to increase their interactions with peers without disabilities and be more engaged in their learning. One of the most compelling observations from this study, however, is that accepted limitation of an absence of research of the impact of UDL on traditional, typical learners without disabilities and from the dominant background – though they believe despite this limitation that the three pillars of UDL are effective for all students. Exploring the understanding, perceived value and application of UDL principles by the staff at this institute may illuminate their conceptualization of inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

In this Literature Review, an insight into the current state of research and published literature in inclusive education is provided for the reader. Ideas of inclusive education, what it is, who it is for, how and where it is provided offers the reader a strong basis upon which the attitudes of staff and additional obstacles and supports to the development of inclusion might be understood. The relationship between inclusive teaching practices such as those aligned to UDL and the attitudes of the staff utilising these practices has been provided with further context. Finally, a case has been made to understand the potential development of inclusive education via the knowing, doing, believing framework proposed by Rouse (2006) and how this may potentially foster a whole schooling approach to inclusion in the future. This literature review has shown

the value of this research and from here the research design will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research adopts an interpretivist paradigm within the constructivist tradition using qualitative research to explore the attitudes of staff at a higher education institute in Ireland toward inclusive education, and their perceptions of the obstacles and supports to developing inclusion. This study is exploratory, descriptive, and follows a qualitative methodology (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2011). Semi-structured interviews with institutional staff were used together with document analysis of the institute's 2019-2023 strategic plan to address the research questions of this thesis. This research design has been selected given its ability to provide "an empirical investigation of a particularly contemporary phenomenon within its real life context" (Robson, 2011, p.136).

This chapter will outline the research design with consideration of the research questions and implementation of the design. The researcher's ontological perspective is that of a socially constructed world wherein multiple participants may experience a phenomenon in differing ways. Epistemologically, the research follows a perspective that individuals create their knowledge through their own interactions with people, ideas, and events (Mertens, 2019; Ultanir, 2012).

Limitations of the design and ethical concerns are acknowledged and explained. The strategy for inquiry of using both semi-structured interviews and document analysis is examined in the following section. Efforts to ensure the quality of research are outlined in detail.

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Staff in a variety of roles across the campus were recruited. The profile of participants is detailed as:

Role	Descriptor	Value of Selection
Management	Manager 01	Decision-Making Level, Board of Management Access
Support Staff	Support 01 - 04	Administrative Roles, Student Support Services
Academic Staff	Lecturer 01 - 10	Faculty Members from both Faculties

Figure 2: Selection of Participants

At the time of data collection (January 2020) the institute employed 123 academic staff and approximately 200 staff in total, encompassing a breadth of experience levels, contract nature and role. As this is a single site study a target of 16 participants or approximately 10-15% of staff, was sought. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson's (2006) landmark study found that data saturation occurred within the first twelve interviews, although basic elements for meta themes were present as early as six interviews. In a follow-up study, Hagaman and Wutich (2016) found that 16 or fewer interviews were enough to identify common themes from sites with relatively homogeneous groups. Their research also reveals that larger sample sizes—ranging from 20 to 40 interviews—were needed to reach data saturation for meta themes that cut across multiple sites.

Purposive sampling was the primary approach used in recruiting staff to participate in this research. Such sampling is used when there are certain criteria and characteristics required by the researcher (Johnson and Christensen, 2019). Following the Martins, (et al., 2018) Portuguese study of a similar nature, this study uses a non-probabilistic, convenience sample. Study participants were sought from administrative, managerial and student support services. The aim was to gather participants in a

purposive manner so that the data might comprise variations in gender, age, role, academic qualifications, contract type, etc.

Faculty mailing lists within the college were approved for recruitment of participants by institutional management aware of this study, following approval from the DCU Ethics Committee. Lecturers, management, administrative and student support staff were contacted via email to detail the nature of the research (see plain language statement/recruitment advertisement in appendix A). An electronic meeting schedule was provided for would-be participants to select times appropriate to their schedule to participate. A topic guide and sample question themes were provided in advance to participating staff members and reflected themes identified in the literature review (Cohen et al. 2011). This was done to offer interviewees an idea of the subject matter to be discussed; provide guidance for the structure of the interview while still allowing for a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting information from the interviewees (McNamara, 2009; Turner, 2010).

An initial round of emails to the all-staff mailing list recruited 12 participants. A second follow-up email recruited three more participants. It was determined that 15 participants met the criteria for legitimacy given research by Guest et al., (2006) and Hagaman and Wutich (2016) on data saturation in qualitative interviews.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS AND DATA COLLECTION

Two forms of data collection were considered most appropriate. Primarily, semi-structured interviews were chosen, and complemented by analysis of the most recent institutional strategic plan which provided situational context.

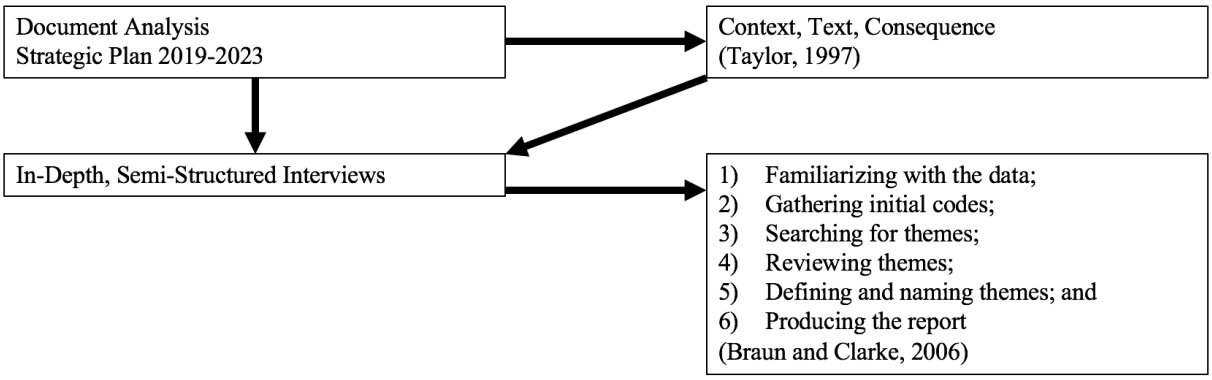

Figure 3: Research Design

Semi-structured interviews provide a means of social interaction that can explore the many different ways people may experience similar events and reflects the researcher's ontological position of a socially constructed world experienced by different people in different ways. For these reasons, and the possibility of participants being influenced by dominant voices in a collective setting, it was believed that interviews would generate more compelling and legitimate data in this instance than both focus groups or a Delphi study (Cohen et al., 2011; Lewis, 2003). The chosen methods are detailed below.

In-Depth, Semi-Structured Interviews

In-depth interviews were the primary method of enquiry for this study and offered an opportunity to gather the perceptions and experiences of staff in a variety of roles within the institute. Using interviews afforded participants the opportunity to explore their perspectives on the supports and barriers to inclusive education, together with their own knowledge and experience. Semi-structured interviews were deemed the best research instrument for gathering rich data on experiences and perspectives as they afforded the researcher the opportunity to further clarify and understand the expressed opinions (Lewis, 2003). The interviews allowed staff to share "their interpretations of the world in which they live and to express how they regard situations from their point

of view" (Cohen et al., 2011, p.409). The focus of the semi-structured interviews reflected the research questions and looked to test the findings and gaps identified in the literature review (see appendix C).

A pilot interview was conducted prior to the commencement of the interview process to explore the efficacy of the interview guides, fit for research purpose and timing and structure. One interview was conducted with a colleague who engaged with the full research process including the research invitation, plain language statement and informed consent form (appendix A and B). The colleague expressed a willingness to participate in the pilot study but not the final study as the pilot interviewee is a direct manager of the researcher and it was decided that the potentially complicated power dynamics may impact the validity of data collected and how it may have been analysed. Following this pilot interview, small changes were made to the topic guide and the ordering of questions on the interview schedule before the study proceeded.

The interviews were flexible in nature and allowed for an emergent exploration of inclusive education at the research site. The themes identified in the literature, and oriented to the research questions of attitudes, obstacles and supports, provided consistency across the range of interviews without rigidly adhering to pre-determined questions (Cohen et al., 2011). Throughout the interviews every effort was made by the researcher to remain neutral and unbiased, allowing for the opinions of the participant to dominate proceedings.

All 15 interviews were conducted on an individual basis at a time and location of the participant's choosing. 13 interviews were conducted in a private room on campus at the research site, and two interviews were conducted over the phone from private homes. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. The format of the interview was designed to promote a reflective and relaxed space for the participant.

The researcher started with an opening explanation of the purpose of the research and re-established the consent of the participant to engage. Participants were given the option to withdraw. All participants gave their consent and allowed the interviews to be recorded.

Interviewees were provided with an overview of the research themes in advance of the interviews. Participants opinions were facilitated by the researcher to enable them discuss their understandings, feelings, views and experiences in relation to inclusive education; and where ideas of particular participant interest or where an original perception on inclusive education was expressed, further exploratory and explanatory probing questions were added to ascertain the participant perspective in more detail (Legard, Keegan and Ward, 2003). The process enabled interviewees "to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live and to express how they regard situations from their point of view" (Cohen et al., 2011, p.409). The method of ensuring the interviewee's voice was dominant in the process facilitated evidenced-based research.

Simple note-taking was used by the researcher during the interviews to facilitate later data analysis. All interviews were audio-recorded on two devices with the participants' agreement. All recordings and transcripts were stored on a password-protected computer and recording device. Transcription was completed by the researcher, and coded for thematic analysis using methods advised by Bree and Gallagher (2016); thematic analysis was then conducted using six-step analysis techniques (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Document Analysis – Strategic Plan 2019-2023

Prior to the interviews of 15 staff in a variety of roles at the institute a detailed analysis of the institute's most recently published strategic plan was carried out. Fairclough (2003) argues that texts are social events and, as a result, have causal

effects. Texts can bring about changes in knowledge, beliefs, and values; and contribute to changes in people, actions, and social relations. These linkages, between texts and wider implications, are relevant to the exploration of policy documents (Taylor, 1997; Fairclough, 2003) such as the Institute's Strategic Plan. However, Fairclough (2003) does argue that the effects of texts are mediated by meaning-making, and indeed within an arena of struggle over meaning (Taylor, 1997).

The purpose of this document analysis is to provide supplementary data, which will help contextualize and analyse the exploration of data from the 15 interviews. The research questions focus on the attitudes, barriers and support to inclusive education, and as such the strategic plan will be analysed with consideration specifically to the attitudes, barriers and supports for inclusive education. While the document is presented as a multi-purpose strategic guide for the institute across a variety of perspectives, this document analysis is concerned with inclusive education and related concepts.

A systematic approach was used in analysing the strategic plan, influenced by the context, text and consequence framework proposed by Taylor (1997). Following an initial reading of the strategic plan, consideration was given to sections and sentences that could be deemed linked to relevant areas of this research, such as inclusion or professional development. These sections of the document that could be considered related to staff, inclusion, professional development, responsibility for implementation, etc, were highlighted in an annotated hard-copy of the strategic plan. This contextual data point was present during analysis of the collected interview data.

The strategic plan identifies 11 priorities to be addressed across 5 years (2019 - 2023). These 11 priorities are considered to be "of equal significance" (p. 25) and cover three broad areas: 1) Excellence 2) Growth and 3) Community. Of particular relevance to the pursuit of inclusive education and related goals the priorities of interest are

Educating Students; Attracting Students; Developing an International Institution; Engaging and Supporting our Community; Engaging and Supporting Staff and Developing our Culture. Other strategic priorities are concerned with operational effectiveness and are considered beyond the scope of this inclusion focused research. The institute's strategic plan outlines the introduction of "a number of equality and diversity initiatives" and support for "good physical and mental health amongst our students and staff" (p. 17).

Analysis of this strategic plan provided greater contextual understanding to the exploration of staff attitudes towards inclusive education and the obstacles and supports related to inclusion, consistent with the research questions of this thesis. The context of the strategic plan was considered together with the impact it has on the area of inclusive education for staff and students (Taylor, 1997). Taylor stresses the importance of exploring the linkages between the various levels of a policy with an emphasis on highlighting the power relations that may be present. In this context, the extent to which the voice of teaching staff, administration staff, students, students with SEN, students from diverse backgrounds and senior management is evidenced in the document was considered. The strategic plan was analysed from an inclusive education perspective. The strategic plan was considered to provide context and support analysis of the data collected from semi-structured interviews with staff at the site of study.

DATA ANALYSIS

The interview process provided a breadth of insights from the staff within the institute as to the current attitudes, obstacles and supports for inclusive education, in line with the research questions. Additionally, the context and text of the strategic plan was considered (Taylor, 1997). Throughout the analysis, the impact – or consequence – of the strategic plan was present in order to provide a means of data triangulation and

depth of value to the opinions expressed by the staff. The strategic plan was analysed in detail in a deductive manner for themes of inclusion prior to the interview process so that interview responses could be considered in the context of the institutional position.

Thematic analysis of interviews was conducted using a six-step technique: 1) Familiarizing with the data; 2) Gathering initial codes; 3) Searching for themes; 4) Reviewing themes; 5) Defining and naming themes; and 6) Producing the report (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This framework is designed to evidence thoroughness and accuracy in the data analysis process. Firstly, a broad review of the data was undertaken, and then 406 coded data items (quotes of interest) were revealed throughout the interview analysis. 38 initial sub-themes were identified, loosely guided by the research questions (see appendix D). A review of all sub-themes was completed and observations were documented to generate core themes, by research question. Where applicable, relationships between sub-themes were observed and documented relative to both the strategic plan, and the knowing – doing – believing framework for enhancing inclusive education (Rouse, 2006).

Conceptual Framework (adapted from Rouse, 2006)	Research Questions	Evidence
Knowing:	**How do staff define and understand inclusive education?**	Interviews Strategic Plan
teaching strategies		
• disability and special education needs		
• how/what students learn		
• what children need to learn		
• classroom organisation and management		
• where to get help when necessary		
• the best ways to assess and monitor children's learning		
• the legislative and policy context.		
Believing:		
that all children are worth educating	**How do staff define and understand inclusive education?**	Interviews Strategic Plan
• that all children can all learn		
• that they have the capacity to make a difference to children's lives		
• that such work is their responsibility and not only a task for specialists.		
Doing:		
turning knowledge into action	**How do staff describe obstacles to inclusive education?**	Interviews
• using evidence to improve practice	**How do staff describe supports to inclusive education?**	
• learning how to work with colleagues as well as with children		
• using positive rewards and incentives.		

Figure 4: Data Analysis by Theme and Research Question

For example, Research Question 1, how do staff define and understand inclusive education, three core themes were identified. These explore concepts of inclusion; assessment and curriculum; and teaching practice and classroom management. Additionally, Research Question 2, how do staff describe obstacles to inclusive education, produced two core themes. These looked at lecturer engagement, responsibility and lip service; and tenure, time and timetable. Finally, Research Question 3, how do staff describe supports for inclusive education, produced four core

themes. These were online resources and technology; student support services; universal design for learning and professional development; and the institute's buildings, facilities and the wellbeing of students.

For this research to contribute to the field of inclusive education the analysed data must be seen to be credible, dependable and transferable.

POSITIONALITY

Acknowledgement of the researcher's role as a lecturer at the site of the study provides the reader with contextual awareness. The researcher works closely with many of the interviewees and as a result was acutely aware of the perception of being an insider (Mercer, 2007). Some such staff may be aware of the researcher's interest and background with regard to promoting inclusion at the site of study. As such it was important to ensure interview questions were asked from a neutral position, and allow the interviewee's opinion to be presented absent any interviewer bias. As the interviewed staff represented two faculties and a range of administrative positions, a breadth of mutual awareness of one another existed between researcher and interviewee. Careful planning in line with best-practice interview design and constant consultation with research supervisors was conducted to mitigate possibilities of bias in the data analysis process (Cohen et al., 2011). The researcher's personal experience both as an SEN student and as a lecturer at the institute where this research was completed proved valuable in understanding the data. This research was designed to provide the reader with detailed analysis of the data gathered so as to maximise the potential to explore and compare their own context with the research site, thus maximising transferability within the acknowledged limitations of a smaller sample size (Cohen et al., 2011).

QUALITY OF RESEARCH

For qualitative research to be credible every effort must be made by the researcher to ensure the trustworthiness of the "inference drawn from data" (Eisenhart and Howe, 1992, p. 644). Questions may be raised about the small sample size and the potential for research influence or bias when conducting the interviews and analysing the data.

As noted, the sample size of 15 participants is consistent with research by Guest et al., (2006); Hagaman and Wutich (2016). The Portuguese study (Martins, et al., 2018), upon which this thesis was modelled, included 18 participants in their study, from a research site more than double the size of this institute. All key domains of management, support staff and lecturer (across both faculties) were represented within the dataset. Two email calls for participants generated the 15 participants, and it was felt that a third call was unlikely to generate additional interest. Applying the methods of the Portuguese study to this Irish context provides an opportunity to make a contribution to context, and provide readers of both studies and future researchers with an additional dataset born of similar research design for their consideration. The additional document analysis of the institute's strategic plan is designed to complement and further inform the research.

ETHICAL ISSUES

This research was completed following approval by the DCU Institute of Education's Research Ethics Committee. Throughout the process approved ethical procedures were followed. As the researcher is currently employed at the institute and is a work colleague of many of the participants, ethical concerns may revolve around bias, researcher interpretation and participant unwillingness or hesitance to discuss their opinions openly. It is hoped that the self-selection nature of the sampling process

filtered those who may have been uncomfortable sharing their opinions, and every effort was made to ensure participant confidence in the research process.

Potential risks to participants were mitigated by risk management procedures. It is possible that a participant may be identified based upon answers provided in the interview process. Every effort was made to anonymize or pseudonymize; though broadly it is anticipated that any personal identifiers will not be directly related to any quotes or observations in the data analysis. Any identifying information (for example, gender) may be discussed in broad terms of the study, and not on an individual or by quote/answer basis. All participants reserved the right to self-exclude from the study at any time.

Copies of the research Plain Language Statement and Informed Consent Forms (see appendices A and B) were attached to the recruitment email sent to all staff to ensure participants had a clear understanding of the research purpose and afforded them an opportunity to seek clarifications as needed. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity; though the site of the study may be identifiable to some. Participants were also made aware that data collected would not be used for any purpose other than those identified at the outset without the permission of the participants. All participants were assured of the right to withdraw from the research process at any time should desire (Cohen et al., 2011).

CONCLUSION

This research was designed qualitatively in an interpretivist, constructivist, descriptive and exploratory manner. The data collected from in-depth interviews were considered together with the 2019-2023 institutional strategic plan to inform the research questions. Considerable steps were taken in the design and administration of the research to create a credible and dependable study. Several themes were identified

for each of the three research questions. These will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the data collected from 15 interviews conducted in January and February of 2020 on campus at an Irish Institute of Technology. This interview data will be considered in tandem with an analysis of the institute's strategic plan through the lens of inclusion. This is an exploratory study which raises questions about inclusive education and discusses this concept and practice based on the perspectives of academic and non-academic staff. The collected data is used to address the research questions posed in Chapter 1:

1. How do staff define and understand inclusive education?

2. How do staff describe obstacles to inclusive education?

3. How do staff describe supports for inclusive education?

Findings are presented under each research question using the themes that emerged from participants' responses and analysis of the institute's most recent strategic plan.

RQ1: HOW DO STAFF DEFINE AND UNDERSTAND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

Data regarding staff definitions and understandings of inclusive education revealed the following three themes, which will now be presented using selected responses from the participants: 1) concepts of inclusion; 2) assessment and curriculum, and 3) teaching practice and classroom management.

Theme 1: Concepts of Inclusion

Interviews with staff members undertaking a range of roles and responsibilities revealed a breadth (Subban and Sharma, 2006) and diversity of understanding around inclusive education as suggested in the literature where the perception of difference as

deficit prevails (Lambe and Bones, 2006; Martins et al. 2018). There were consistent, identifiable links between the role of the staff member and their experience in those roles, and the understanding of the complexity of inclusive education which reflects previous studies on the source of lecturer empathy and knowledge (Morina-Diez, Lopez and Molina, 2015; Rouse, 2008). Additionally, the absence of an agreed definition of inclusion, or how inclusive education manifests on campus at this HE institute is reflected in the strategic plan. While the strategic plan seeks to "celebrate difference", it suggests that this may be done by being "respectful of others" (p. 4). It could be argued that the strategic plan lacks clarity around inclusion and that this is reflected in how the institute staff conceptualize inclusion.

Another observable trend was that lecturers who understood inclusion as considering students with varied characteristics were experienced lecturers who have all voluntarily availed of professional development opportunities. They considered inclusion "on a number of levels, race, creed, background, gender, age, and in terms of specific learning needs" (Lecturer 10) reflecting the UNESCO meaning of inclusive education (UNESCO, 2016). For these lecturers there exists an appreciation for the purpose of inclusion to "include all students toward an even playing field; to have it as even as possible; to treat each student as an individual and give everyone a fair chance to achieve" (Lecturer 01). Inclusion is "about giving students more opportunities" (Lecturer 06) and making efforts to "teach with the needs of everyone in the classroom" (Lecturer 04).

This was further evidenced by a staff member (Lecturer 09) who is very active in the institution's Teaching and Learning Committee. They noted how "inclusion has changed for me over the years and has broadened the interpretation of it" and how "when I started it was all about dyslexia but time has progressed our understanding of

inclusion and it has become broader, more nuanced". This reflects the various typologies of inclusion proposed by Ainscow et al. (2006) and in the transformation of thinking around inclusion discussed by Messiou (2017) who suggests that too often research into inclusive education is focused on specific groups of learners. Interestingly, this narrow understanding of inclusion as relating to specific differences arose in an interview with a recently recruited staff member (Lecturer 02). This staff member has yet to participate in formal professional development, such as the postgraduate teaching and learning qualifications offered by the institute and elsewhere. This lecturer considered inclusion simply in terms of learning difficulty. Indeed, even as the interview progressed the concept of inclusion remained in terms of tangibly identifiable differences, saying "I was only thinking of inclusion around dyslexia or dyspraxia or something like that, not like the whole wheelchair thing."

The use of dyslexia as a means to convey understanding of inclusive education was extremely common throughout the interviews: "We are really good with some students, with the seen disabilities, with dyslexia - but then there's the other stuff where we are lacking" (Support 01). Dyslexia was frequently provided as the example by which ideas of inclusion were illustrated, "I think in [the institute] dyslexia is very normal." (Lecturer 01). Indeed, for many staff they considered the institution to be very well versed in addressing dyslexia, reflecting Rouse's (2006) believing in their capacity to make a difference to the lives of their students: "I feel like we have mastered dyslexia, people understand it, know how to support it." (Support 04)

Interestingly, support staff were often seen to define inclusion based on their own professional roles. One staff member (Support 04) who interacts with students with SEN commented "I think of disability when you say inclusion, around equity, past the equality piece, not looking for anything special or outrageous, just a level playing

field.” Similarly, a staff member (Support 03) with a job focus on access extended these ideas of inclusion as “not just disability but disadvantaged students, and ethnic minorities, making accommodations, reasonable accommodations” which is evidenced in the progress identified in the institutional strategic plan (p. 16). These contrasting conceptualisations of inclusion between teaching and non-teaching staff reflect the evolving journey of inclusion proposed by Opertti, Walker and Zhang (2014) toward the promise of quality education for all and not solely to consider the learning conditions of specific learners.

This trait of framing inclusion based on personal experiences and professional roles and situations as seen in the support services was also common to management. For example, a manager (Manager 01) said “I came from economic difficulties, I think this gave me empathy, just I’m aware of [inclusion]. I grew up with people who were socially excluded”. Within this interview examples of inclusive education centered on social inclusion and economic disadvantage. For two other interviewees, it was their experience of having a child with special education needs. A lecturer (Lecturer 03) who was strikingly vocal in their advocacy for inclusive education commented “I think becoming a mother has changed things. I think I've learned a lot about learning, that it’s a process -and having a child with special needs has opened my eyes a bit to the challenges.” Another lecturer (Lecturer 08) displayed similar motivations, saying “I have a daughter with inclusive educational needs, it's always on my radar and I approach things considering how she would handle things.” For this lecturer inclusive education means “education for everyone, access for everyone” (Lecturer 08)? which reflects Rouse (2006) suggesting that inclusive education requires a belief that all students are worth educating and that all students can learn.

However, the idea that education is for everyone, that all students are worth educating (Rouse, 2006), may not be shared by all staff within the institute. Worryingly, one of the most recently recruited staff members (Lecturer 02) interviewed for this research warns of "a feeling and an atmosphere amongst the student cohort... They do not feel valued, or welcomed." This concern is echoed by a student support services staff member (Support 04) who laments "often students with needs are often seen as students of the support office, not students of the class, or of the college, but of the support office" which is counter to the idea of inclusive practices being for everybody, everywhere and all the time (Ferguson, 2008) and suggests a disconnect between the perceptions of staff and values around inclusion and access for all espoused in the strategic plan (p. 16, 35).

Staff who operate in support roles within the institution, such as within the student support office or academic development, provide an interesting opinion regarding the perceptions amongst the academic staff on the abilities of non-traditional students. One administrator (Support 01) believes that some lecturers "in higher education, they think that all the dross should be gone... High achievers should be in here" which is counter to the idea that all students are worth educating (Florian and Spratt, 2013; Rouse, 2006).

Differing views are held by support staff members as exemplified by Support 03 who clarified that students "whether they come from HEAR or DARE still have to meet the minimum entry requirements, so no one gets in without that level [of ability]". The implication is that some staff may believe that students who may avail of atypical access routes or present with a disability would have lower capabilities, despite, having met the minimum entry requirements for a given programme which is consistent with

literature regarding lower educational expectations for students labelled with disabilities or difference (Lombardi and Murray, 2011; Shifrer, 2013;).

On this note, there is a perception attributable to staff within the institution that an increase in students with special needs challenges the institution's reputation. This same lecturer (Lecturer 08) within the Humanities Faculty expressed frustration with colleagues to whom such concerns could be attributed, confirming that there is "an elitist perspective among some sectors of the college that is not remotely inclusive." This is in contrast to the position proposed within the institute's strategic plan, which states "equality and fairness are fundamental and core to the Institute" (p. 4)

Evidently, this concern is shared by another lecturer (Lecturer 03) who argued "there is subconscious bias. You cannot have dyslexia and be elite. You cannot have a disability and be elite. That is the conflict of the values that are held at the elite levels... It is a conflict of values and subconscious bias."

Interestingly, both of the staff members (Lecturer 03 and Lecturer 08) who were most vocal in their concerns about the challenges of elitism were those who had personal experiences of exclusion. They were independently affronted at the attitudes of their colleagues. The idea, for these staff members, that their colleagues were reluctant to embrace concepts of inclusion as more and more students present with personal challenges was clearly a source of both frustration and anger.

Furthermore, there are also experienced staff who advocate for inclusion for all but still express concern for the abilities of students with special needs to complete their studies, stating "we need to expect the best from our students, but there are people who college is not where they should be, and we are pushed and pushed to pass them" (Lecturer 10). Indeed, another experienced lecturer and advocate for inclusion (Lecturer 04) commented that "the stakes are so much higher at the bottom", implying the

students who require additional supports were “at the bottom”. Similarly, another lecturer (Lecturer 02) expressed concern when asked about SEN students, asking “am I raising the bar in the classroom, or am I alienating weaker students if I set high expectations", again associating SEN with “weaker” students. Equally, the language used by another lecturer (Lecturer 08) expresses concerns as to the perception of the institute as a “dumping ground for [students with disabilities].” These perceptions are consistent with problems within higher education voiced by Burke et al. (2017) and Hattam and Weiler (2020) concerning the way higher education institutions define who belongs, suggesting the legitimate or hegemonic higher education student is defined by class, ethnic and gendered lines, and is most likely to be white, middle class, able-bodied and male.

Overall, the above shows the varying insights into how inclusion is defined by staff at this one HE institute. Arguably it reflects the lack of agreed definition of inclusion in the literature (Hockings, 2010; Martins et al. 2018; Whiteford, 2017) with many viewing it as being related to a specific disability such as dyslexia. At the same time, the data revealed the importance of an individual's professional roles, personal experiences, and conflict between values and bias related to inclusion or education for all. Evidently, the staff within the institute conceptualize inclusion in a variety of ways and the interview data shows that often this conceptualization perpetuates ideas of elitism and a sustained status quo into which atypical students are to be assimilated. This sustained status quo can also be seen in how the staff in the institute frame inclusion within assessment and curriculum.

Theme 2: Assessment and Curriculum

The second theme revealed in this research regarding how staff define and understand inclusion is through the way assessment and curriculum is designed and

administered. Indeed, the strategic plan for the institute shows evidence of the interest in inclusion and of "the varying needs of a diverse cohort of students… who require differing levels of support" (p. 11). Such supports may be evidenced in assessment and curriculum design strategies. When discussing assessment and curriculum staff spoke of how they value professional development in this regard, though noted concerns about academic integrity. There is discussion supporting the potential for curriculum design to foster inclusion and some uncertainty as to the role of the student's voice in such a process.

The lecturers who display a willingness to provide choice and inclusive adaptations to their assessment practice are those who have completed professional development within the institution (postgraduate certificate) or externally (masters and doctorate in education), highlighting the importance of professional development for inclusive practice for staff in HE and using evidence to improve their practice (Rouse, 2006). There was evidence in the findings to suggest a majority of lecturing staff value the potential of professional development, whilst maintaining reservations as to its efficacy, and/or their ability to implement their knowledge in practice.

That said, a common observation in discussions with these lecturers was the commentary on the perceived lower ability of students with SEN. Discussing inclusive assessment, Lecturer 04 said "there is an importance in assessment for weaker students, it's a marker" which links the word "weaker" with SEN. This reflects the findings of a large scale, school-based study by Shifrer (2013) where students labelled as different have limited expectations and a cumulative disadvantage placed upon them by educators. Many lecturers presented willingness to implement inclusive changes to their assessment practices but expressed concerns for sustaining academic integrity. Such

academic integrity concerns are also shared by non-teaching staff who commented “I do wonder if it is to a high enough standard” (Support 2).

However, on the same subject, another support staff member (Support 03) believes “this college is good in that there is a focus on the continuous assessment rather than the exam; the college is set up to do well.” However, this staff member also highlighted how “there does not seem to be any consistency between how the lecturers apply inclusivity to assessments”, perhaps evidencing a need for a framework such as UDL.

Inclusive education in practice is further evidenced in the curricula both written and employed within the institute. One staff member (Support 01) asks “how do you accommodate these students [with SEN] without dumbing down the curriculum. What are we measuring?” Lecturer 07 has similar reservations, saying “I do have concerns about dumbing things down”. This is further evidence of the association between SEN and lower or weaker academic standards. That said, however, there is support for the idea that the curriculum is one area with which substantial progress could be made. The newest lecturer (Lecturer 02) suggests “when I look at the course specifics now I do not see an inclusive curriculum.” Another early career lecturer (Lecturer 05) suggests “the program documents could have an inclusive section, and they could give examples of inclusive assessments.” A manager (Manager 01) agrees “when you put [personal] identity into the curriculum it makes an impact. Students will go to those classes if they see themselves in it. It’s an open goal for us.” This observation is consistent with the literature, that meaningful progress for inclusive education could be advanced via thoughtful curriculum design (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 2017; Bunbury, 2018; Morgan and Houghton, 2011; Smith 2002).

Consistency of approach to inclusive assessment and curriculum would appear to be very problematic, however. It has already been shown that those who have undertaken professional development have displayed a willingness to adapt and change their practice. However, a support staff member (Support 04) with frequent interactions with SEN students expressed concern how they "know a student here in 2009 and in 2020 they are doing the exact same assessment, this is the way it has always been done." There is evidently a reluctance, or at least a hesitancy toward meaningful changes to assessment, with another support staff member (Support 03) arguing that a universal design approach to assessment "sounds amazing but in practice, some people thrive on an exam." This, too, may be indicative of UDL being misunderstood and also a need for further understanding around assessment practices in HE more broadly (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 2017).

Additionally, what has been illustrated among lecturers interested in introducing inclusive assessment practice is that the more experienced lecturers showed a willingness to do so. A recent recruit (Lecturer 02) questioned "I do not have the power to change assessment, do I? I have not been told I do" potentially evidencing a perceived lack of agency to implement inclusive assessments. This is particularly noteworthy given that research highlights agency as a prerequisite for inclusion (Leach, Neutze and Zepke, 2001). This also reflects the need for confidence to try new things in the classroom (Rouse, 2006). Perhaps this is due to seniority or a lack of tenure. Interestingly, this contrasts with a senior lecturer (Lecturer 04) who says "it is easier for me. I am at the top of the pay scale; I am not trying to get a promotion or a contract... I am supported openly to be inclusive by management" which suggests there may be a perceived risk associated with making changes to assessment practice. This perceived

risk is a very compelling situation within the institution particularly as a manager (Manager 01) suggests “the only people who I have been able to convince to do [professional development] are staff with a vested interest, new staff, and staff on a part-time contract who want a full-time contract - vulnerable or precarious staff.”

An area for debate, however, exists as to the extent to which students should be allowed to influence the design of both assessment and curriculum. Some of those interviewed were in favour of such a move. For example, a member of the institution’s teaching and learning committee proposes that students “should have a voice… but just a voice in assessment. We should listen, and let them have a voice in a curriculum” (Support 01). This is echoed by another member of the committee, Lecturer 09, who believes lecturers should be “allowing students to design the assessment themselves. I'd like to see students with a wider voice, or say in the assessment and curriculum.” This is reflected in the literature advocating for feedback between lecturer and student to inform assessment design (Evans, 2011) and is supported by research from Brooman, Darwent and Pimor (2015) who found student voice in assessment and curriculum design to be considered advantageous to student learning. However, a lecturer (Lecturer 05) who was a student on such modules was less confident, saying “when it comes to students having a voice in assessment - to what extent are they going to create their assignment? Maybe I just do not have the knowledge. I’m open to it.” This reflects the need for ongoing professional development. Another lecturer who has completed teaching and learning courses in the institute provides another warning regarding student voice saying “I tried to get the third years to write their own exam paper, and they had no interest. They did not want to have to go to that effort. They did not like that.” This could be considered as a case for instructional scaffolding which may require further professional development to be successfully implemented (Gibbs and

Simpson, 2004). Additionally, it provides an example of the challenge of implementing inclusive education theory into the classroom in a practical manner.

The attitudes toward inclusive assessment and curriculum at this HE institute indicate a greater interest and effort toward inclusive education where professional development has occurred. However, concerns remain, particularly among more junior staff members, about academic integrity, grade inflation and the role of student's voice. Several staff members believe careful design of module documents and course outlines could foster more inclusion. For staff at this institute assessment and curriculum is likely to be where they believe inclusion can most readily occur. How staff consider inclusion, however, is not limited to assessment and curriculum but also in their daily activities in the classroom and in their teaching practice.

Theme 3: Teaching Practice and Classroom Management

The staff at this institute appear to understand inclusive education as being within the context of their own practice and activities within the classroom. When considering their teaching practice and classroom management in the context of inclusion the lecturing staff frequently pointed to an increase in the variety of teaching methods to cater to diverse learning styles; a shift in the desire from students for more active and interactive participatory learning activities and a belief that smaller class sizes allow for greater potential of inclusion efforts.

More experienced lecturers spoke of how their teaching practice has changed in recent years as a response to the changing profile of the student population (AHEAD, 2017). Often this shift is away from traditional teaching methods toward classroom practice more aligned with the principles of Universal Design. Indeed, the institution’s strategic plan makes note of the changing profile of student applications and the varying needs of a diverse cohort of students. This potentially reflects the importance of

Rouse's (2006) knowing a variety of teaching strategies and how people learn. One senior lecturer (Lecturer 04) commented how their "teaching methods changed a lot when I came [to the institute]. I was 9 years teaching with highly motivated students , focussed, before I came here. The environment here was completely different, [reluctant learners]." Similarly another experienced lecturer (Lecturer 03) agreed "my teaching has changed over the last 5 or 6 years… [though it's] not as inclusive as I'd like." Another experienced lecturer (Lecturer 09) continues this theme, saying "inclusion has changed for me over the years and has broadened my interpretation of it." All three staff members cited here have completed professional development teaching and learning qualifications both within the institute and externally. This indicates that exposure to professional development increases the likelihood that teaching staff will adapt their practice and turn knowledge into action (Rouse, 2006).

Lecturers noted a variety of ways in which their teaching style reflected the needs of a diverse cohort… One of the lecturers cited above (Lecturer 04) explains that they are "trying to teach in a way that helps students in as many ways as possible. I try and do that with universal design in mind." Lecturers evidenced such universal design in the use of clearer "colours and fonts... [providing a] workshop on a one to one basis" (Lecturer 03) and the use of "different methods... discussions, images text, [video], different modes of teaching" (Lecturer 01). These teaching practices are consistent with the principles of universal design (Blamires, 1999; King-Sears, 2009; Rose, 2000) and provide evidence of job-embedded professional development being applied in the classroom (Althauser, 2015; Croft et al, 2010) and Rouse's (2006) doing, turning knowledge into action. Universal design for learning was frequently associated with lecturer understanding of inclusive education, though an appetite for advancing this knowledge was also evident: "professional development courses [should] go into a little

bit more detail." (lecturer 01); "I'd like to learn more. More about universal design" (Lecturer 03). Consistently throughout the research evidence for the merit of professional development was present, though so too was the desire for greater depth and application to practice.

Other manifestations of inclusive education at the classroom level were understood by institute staff as a shift toward "a more active way of learning" (Lecturer 03), "students teaching students, group work, interaction" (Lecturer 04) and technology opening a "whole range of new options and new ideas" (Lecturer 05). Additionally, the dynamic of the classroom at the institute was mentioned by several lecturers as a catalyst for inclusive education efforts to be possible; such as staff-student relationships; subject matter and teaching style. Staff across all roles expressed the value of smaller class sizes within the institute as opposed to larger class sizes that may be experienced in larger institutions.

The desire to maintain small class sizes was expressed by a variety of staff, regardless of experience. Lecturer 09 "we are a small college, what we can do is reach the learners" (Lecturer 09, experienced), Lecturer 02 and "small numbers [have] more an element of trust and understanding" (Lecturer 02, inexperienced). The size and diversity of the student cohort may influence the learning experience (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 2017) as students may be exposed to different experiences and cultural influences. The more interpersonal, dialogic teaching practice (Buber, 2002; Friedman, 2002) is believed to be supported by smaller class sizes, with Lecturer 03 believing "we are fortunate we are not that big - in small classes, I can go around and chat to individuals." This view is shared by Lecturer 06 noting "class sizes are smaller so you get to know them better... but it's harder as the group size gets larger" reflecting the affective dimension of

teaching which is critical to shaping inclusive, student-centered classrooms (Te Riele et al., 2017). Staff appeared to worry about the potential to move toward larger class sizes, with Lecturer 08 implying concern when saying the college “would have to go back to more sage on a stage if class sizes increased.” Class size is evidently closely associated with how teaching staff understand inclusive education, which is consistent with the literature (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 2017).

Class sizes are commonly smaller in the Creative Arts Faculty, with larger groups common in the Humanities Faculty. A Creative Arts lecturer (Lecturer 07) said of the institute “it is a small campus and we do know their names, and it helps" which mirrors sentiment from humanities lecturers, but noted that “if you look at the QQI art and design standards you could not meet those standards with a [large] class.” Interestingly, creative arts lecturers believe their modules are more readily aligned with inclusive education than humanities lecturers. The contrast between both faculties is best illustrated with the attitudes expressed toward team teaching.

Lecturer 07, from the Creative Arts Faculty, explains how “it would be very rare for me to teach a module alone.” Multiple lecturers feeding into one module is common in this faculty, and consistent with the principles of multiple means of representation within UDL (Blamires, 1999; King-Sears, 2009; Rose, 2000). In contrast, lecturers within the Humanities Faculty can see the value in team teaching (Anderson and Speck, 1998; Buckley, 1999;) and working with colleagues (Rouse, 2006) from an inclusive education perspective but believe such practice cannot be implemented. Lecturer 04, from the Humanities Faculty, suggests this, saying “the team [should] work together, more team teaching. The system does not facilitate it” and later saying “team teaching

would be great, but I know there are some barriers to that." These, and other, barriers to inclusion will be discussed in the next section on obstacles.

While all the lecturers from the Humanities Faculty displayed positive attitudes toward inclusive education some evidently felt underprepared to apply their knowledge in the classroom, the 'doing' of inclusive education (Rouse, 2006). This feeling of under-preparedness was also seen previously with regard to assessment and curriculum. For example, Lecturer 08 expressed negative experiences in the classroom, saying "the rationale behind inclusivity is laudable and it is positive, but I can think of experiences where a [SEN] student has damaged the learning experience for classmates - and [other lecturers] would have had similar situations. Maybe I do not know how to manage that situation." Lecturer 09 confirms "the older I get the less I know about how to manage students and classrooms. As time goes on, I do not know how to handle it." Both of these examples arguably exemplify Rouse's (2006) knowing about classroom organisation and management and disability and SEN.

These concerns are further exacerbated as there is evidently a belief that professional development is not helping with classroom management, with Lecturer 08 continuing "I have gone through all the teaching and learning stuff, it was useful in terms of alternative assessments - but did it help me in terms of classroom management, I do not know." Lecturer 05 agrees "when we do the UDL course, it was great, but when it comes to implementing it [it is a challenge]." Additionally, Lecturer 06 suggests professional development being offered within the institute may not be being well-received, saying "I have not heard great things, I have heard rather negative things [about the professional development program]." Meanwhile, a department manager (Manager 01) stated "UDL is probably the most important idea I associate with inclusion" which typically reflects the attitudes of the lecturing staff, particularly those

who have completed professional development, though evidently greater focus on practical applications would be welcome. These examples raise concerns about meaningful professional development for staff whereby they feel an enhanced sense of efficacy (Ferman, 2002).

How staff at this institute define and understand inclusion is shown, via the research, to manifest mostly in assessment and curriculum design; and in their day to day practice. The varying extent of inclusion advocacy builds upon the initial understandings and conceptualisation of inclusion evident within the institution. It is clear that staff often have a limited, or incomplete concept of what inclusion is, and often exhibits a range of bias (such as focussing on a given disability, or atypical students as being weaker). Staff express concern as to the institute-wide perceptions of the inclusion agenda and display a desire for greater breadth of professional development that would turn knowledge into action within the classroom. As such, the findings of this research question are consistent with the knowing, doing and believing principles of inclusion as proposed by Rouse (2006).

RQ2: HOW DO STAFF DESCRIBE OBSTACLES TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

Data regarding the opinions of staff in one HE institute revealed two themes which will now be presented using selected responses from the participants and the institute's strategic plan: 1) lecturer engagement, responsibility and lip-service, and 2) contract, time and timetable.

Theme 1: Lecturer Engagement, Responsibility and Lip Service

This theme illuminates the findings from this research around the extent to which staff believe they should, or are required to engage with inclusive education and

related professional development. The extent to which staff take responsibility for or show reluctance to inclusive education is presented here.

There was a concern amongst the majority of staff that lecturer engagement in professional development related to inclusive education is undertaken by the same staff members frequently. This suggests only some staff value continued, career-long professional development for inclusion as evidenced by a teaching and learning lecturer (Support 01) noting the tremendous engagement from the same people all the time:

> "They come to everything. The same people committed to our students - I'm not saying the others are not committed, they just don't see the value in teaching and learning courses."

This is a definite obstacle to inclusive education as professional development is pivotal for winning the hearts and minds of educators (Ferman, 2002; MacRuairc, 2006).

Similarly, a lecturer (Lecturer 05) questioned the engagement and commitment of some colleagues, saying "a lot of people do not care or think it is fine, it is only a job. I do not think people are proud, they are here for the pay; the pension and have been here a long time." This lack of engagement and commitment is worrying when inclusion is "dependent on hearts in the right place" (Warnock, 2005, p. 39) to influence practices (Brown, 2006). This was further qualified by another participant stating that a "minority of people in our faculty are just playing the system [which] would not be pro inclusivity" (Lecturer 08). It should be noted, of course, that volunteering to participate in these interviews would plausibly imply a pro-inclusion perspective. Indeed, speaking of peers unlikely to participate in these interviews Lecturer 08 said "I think some people have a closed approach [to teaching], and think inclusive education is a load of [nonsense]." Whether this reflects a belief that such work is not their responsibility or

evidences a lack of knowledge about the current legislative and policy context (Rouse, 2006) both within and beyond the institute, is not clear.

This assumption, that some staff with more experience may believe they cannot benefit from professional development, was prevalent particularly among those who have undertaken further professional development. A manager (Manager 01) commented “old hands stay away from teaching and learning because they are going to be told how to do things - everyone who does this job has a bit of an ego and are afraid of change.” While this may appear like a broad generalisation it is perhaps worth noting the fear of change (Hatton, 2012) and knowing where to get help when necessary (Rouse, 2006) if one is committed to inclusive education. It appears as if Manager 01 believes that senior staff are, indeed, resistant to change and unlikely to embrace or engage with inclusive professional development. However, the same manager asserted that professional development is most often pursued by new or precariously employed lecturers or lecturers with a vested interest in inclusion, and one experienced lecturer (Lecturer 06) thinks “a lot of staff development and training days are targeted toward people in early career, whereas a lot of people in [the institute] are mid-career.” which suggests the nature of professional development may need to be reconsidered.

Interestingly, Lecturer 09 who teaches on the internal professional development courses says “what you find is that those interested in inclusion are already engaged - we've picked the low-hanging fruit. There are some academics who do not see inclusion as part of their role.” One support staff member (Support 03) agrees that is often a “struggle to engage academics”. Throughout the interviews, there was a feeling present that a not-insignificant portion of the teaching faculty and management are simply not engaged in inclusion with one training and development staff member (Support 01) saying there is “a lot of commitment from a lot of people and then disinterest from a lot

of people. A lot of people don't see [inclusion] as their problem. They want to come in, teach and leave." Another support staff member (Support 02) felt that often lecturers were not proactively supporting inclusive education, saying support staff are "out there banging a drum; we need the lecturers doing that as well." Despite inclusion and equity being one of the biggest challenges facing education (UNESCO, 2016; Ainscow, 2020) it is somewhat disconcerting that some staff are perceived by their peers to feel there is a choice regarding commitment to inclusive education, particularly given that the strategic plan for the institute advocates for an inclusive educational experience for all learners.

Explaining why the perception of some lecturers being disengaged from inclusive education, one support staff member (Support 03) believes "reluctance [to embrace inclusive teaching practices] just comes from the knowledge just not being there, regarding disability awareness and access awareness." This is consistent with Rouse's (2006) knowing about disability and special education needs and doing; turning knowledge into action. Another support staff member (Support 04) echoed concerns regarding lecturer awareness and engagement, saying "attitudes are the biggest barriers to inclusion [in the institute]... [at professional development courses] it is the usual suspects, attitudes come from a misunderstanding of disability, a lack of awareness." Further such evidence was pervasive through the interviews with both support staff and lecturers but so too with management believing "the attitudes are good in [the institute], good intentions and good practice are following and improving. There is in some parts of some people's practice a lack of knowledge and awareness ... but there are some old practices that die-hard" (Staff 07).

In total, four support staff in a variety of roles were interviewed and all expressed concerns regarding the knowledge and engagement of a cohort of teaching

staff with regard to inclusive education. Support 03 provided an example that "one of our colleagues offered a training workshop on what support services do and not one academic staff member went, there were five [administration staff]", arguably not reflecting a belief that "such work is their responsibility and not only a task for specialists" (Rouse, 2006, p.12). Additionally, it could be considered that support staff are failing to communicate their offerings to staff or failing to timetable accordingly around the work demands of lecturing staff.

This is perhaps symptomatic of a reluctance on the part of many interviewed staff to self-reflect and often place the shortcomings around inclusion in the institute as a responsibility for others. Support staff showed frustration with lecturing staff and it is clear that they believe the responsibility for limited successes of inclusion belonged to the lecturing staff. Lecturing staff themselves projected their inclusion concerns on other staff members from other faculties; and newer staff members projected their concerns to older staff members. Throughout the interviews this pattern was frequently seen; with many staff believing that inclusion is the responsibility of "everyone" or of "the institute"; with only one staff member (Staff 10) stating that they themselves were responsible for inclusion. There appears to be disagreement as to whether responsibility for inclusion comes from the top-down or the bottom-up.

The idea expressed here of good practice improving was present in a few interviews but also with a caveat regarding management support, which the literature calls for in terms of provision of professional development opportunities for all and encouraging teamwork and collaborative problem-solving (Chapman et al., 2011). Lecturer 03 thinks "academic staff are making great strides but I am not sure management is supporting them" and Lecturer 05 believes inclusive education is a "strategic decision". The strategic plan for the institute does discuss the merit of

flexible teaching and learning options but in the context of recruiting more students. The goal, it could be argued, is to use inclusive teaching and learning methodologies to recruit more students rather than to improve the quality of education provision.

Some feel “responsibility for inclusion starts at a policy level” (Lecturer 03) and that “responsibility has to come from the top” (Lecturer 08). In contrast, Support 02 suggests “responsibility lies with the staff... with the academics”, an opinion furthered by Lecturer 10 who says “responsibility for inclusion lies with me in the classroom.” Interestingly, and though it is a small sample size, staff who suggested inclusive education in the Institute is mostly the responsibility of senior management are also the staff most directly associated with SEN in their personal lives. This contrast of opinion is particularly relevant to Rouse’s (2006) belief that inclusive practice is the educator’s responsibility and not only that of an SEN specialist.

To this, one support staff member (Support 01) proposes that “responsibility is everywhere” but that “there is lip service paid to inclusion”. Lecturer 03 uses similar terminology, believing “there is a lot of lip service. Equality [and inclusion] is like a sexy badge. There is a lot of talk but we could do more walk.” Lecturer 07 strikes a balanced perspective saying “I would generally be positive about attitudes to inclusion in [in the institute], but there is some lip service being paid... there is a strong desire to help, [but] with some uncertainty.”

Through the interviews, there were evident concerns about the awareness and knowledge of a significant cohort of teaching staff with regard to the value of professional development for inclusive teaching practices (Ferman, 2002). There was a perceived resistance to change from more experienced lecturers who have established methods of teaching. Within the institute, these obstacles to inclusion were present with a lack of certainty as to the responsibility for inclusion. These obstacles were

complicated further by concerns that management may see inclusion merely as a strategic tool and that tangible, practical action was lacking. These interviews reveal inconsistencies in the pursuit of inclusion which ultimately may require a high level of coordination involving many stakeholders; an effort that will require effective and proactive forms of management and leadership (Chapman et al. 2011) which is perceived to be absent within this institute.

Theme 2: Tenure, Time and Timetable

An obstacle to inclusive education that was frequently reported in the interviews specifically with lecturing staff centred on the time constraints as a result of the influence of contracts and the subsequent impact on practice. As has been shown thus far there is a perception that some staff "don't care" (Lecturer 05), however, one lecturer (Lecturer 07) suggests:

A lot of the barriers to inclusion are around time... I would prioritise having the time for my students, and to improve my own practice [but] we could be more efficient with our time... I am here for the students primarily even if I am not here for them for most of my time.

Lecturer 01 notes how the various demands on a lecturer's time impact their ability to embrace inclusive education practices, saying:

> "I do not think there is time built into our contracts to change [practices]; to accommodate [SEN students]; administration time; changing around your course to suit one or two people. You can't always do it, you can do your best."

This reflects a lack of understanding of inclusion being for all students (Ferguson, 2008). Additionally, the institute's strategic plan advocates a commitment to positive action initiatives to address imbalances. The extent to which this may be

ignored by staff or unpursued by the institute suggests the concerns expressed by staff regarding inclusive initiatives as lip-service may carry some truth. This is perhaps further evidence of staff not perceiving inclusion as their own personal responsibility; rather the responsibility of others or of the institute.

In contrast, the newest lecturer in the Institute (Lecturer 02) was of the opinion that "the nature of my contract does not impact [my teaching practice] if anything there is probably a greater impetus to do well and have some level of accountability as you may not be here next year" which mirrors the perception expressed by management (Manager 01) that part-time or precarious staff were more likely to undertake professional development. Lecturer 03, a lecturer closely affected by disability, offered the starkest contrasting opinion, declaring "there is no incentives in my contract; time is an issue for everybody - but if it matters to you you'll make time" reflecting that inclusion is not a choice, it is about values (Barton, 2003) and a belief that inclusion is their responsibility (Rouse, 2006)

Several lecturing staff did, however, point to the nature of the contracts as a perceived obstacle to effective engagement with inclusion education practices. Lecturer 09 stated that "contracts need to be much more flexible. The teaching load is overly onerous...[the contract] should allow more time in terms of training; teaching and learning, service activity, such as pastoral care." A manager (Manager 01) agrees "the [Irish Institutes of Technology] need to relook at the teaching contract and need to build in an allowance of time for... work we do for teaching, not just the class prep and admin, but the AND MORE bit." This aligns with Rouse's (2006) position that staff should have the time to consult with colleagues to support inclusion.

Returning to the assertion from Lecturer 03 regarding the absence of incentives, Lecturer 09 agrees "our contracts are very teaching focussed and yet there is no

obligation for teaching and learning training." Lecturer 05 stresses this absence, saying "if you want me to add inclusiveness to my teaching practice there has to be some sort of reward" and expresses frustration that there "are no staff rewards and motivations for staff rewards here." This implies that some lecturers consider inclusive practice as an add-on and not a principle that should inform all teaching (Ainscow, 2020). This obstacle is perhaps best summarised by Lecturer 07 who highlights "this bizarre thing in higher-level educators where you do not need to be qualified as an educator." It also, however, further highlights the importance of professional development for staff in HE institutes, and highlights the consideration of the self by those in the lecturing profession as proposed within the National Professional Development Framework for all staff who teach in Higher Education (National Forum, 2016).

The staff within this institute express concerns regarding the uptake and efficacy of professional development opportunities. There is a belief that commitment to inclusion frequently fails to be elevated beyond lip service and is often tokenistic in nature. Staff had multiple perspectives as to where the responsibility for advancing the inclusive agenda present in the strategic plan ultimately lies. Teaching staff in particular noted time and the timetable as a constraint or limitation on their ability to be inclusive. However, it must be noted that the staff interviewed for this research presented a tendency to internalise successes and externalise failures – noting their own positive efforts toward inclusion and lamenting the inabilities or unwillingness of others to promote inclusion. Equally, where they themselves felt unable to pursue inclusion, it was considered the fault of a timetable, or a lack of engagement of others, for example. The unwillingness to self-reflect, both individually and as an institution, may, in fact, be the greatest barrier to inclusive education in the institute.

RQ3: HOW DO STAFF DESCRIBE SUPPORTS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

Data regarding how staff in one HE institute consider supports for inclusive education revealed the following four themes which will now be presented using selected responses from the participants and the strategic plan: 1) online resources and technology; 2) student support services; 3) Universal Design for Learning and Professional Development, and 4) Buildings, Facilities and Wellbeing.

Theme 1: Online Resources and Technology

Interviews with academic and support staff revealed that while they were broadly positive in their view of online resources and technology as a support for inclusive teaching practices there were, however, notable limitations including lecturers' confidence in using technology; equitable access to technology; over-reliance on technology as UDL and a lack of awareness of assistive technology. In terms of broad support for technology Lecturer 03 suggests technology is consistent with the principles of UDL saying "technology has opened up a whole range of new options, new ideas... assistive technology lets people with different abilities [perform academically]." Technology supports inclusive teaching practice by allowing for "reasonable accommodations... more technology, [for example], allow a screencast instead of a presentation" (Lecturer 03) reflecting the UDL principles of multiple forms of expression and representation. The shift toward broader use of technology and online resources appears to be "driven by students" (Lecturer 05) though even when technology was viewed as a support, hesitance still existed with more experienced lecturers, believing there are "so many issues around using technology - but nowadays [the students are] so much better than me" (Lecturer 09). It could be said this feeling of students being more au fait with technology might be a challenge for some lecturers.

While lecturing staff were consistent in their perception of online resources and technology as a positive support, often it was coupled with a warning from non-teaching staff, such as “you need technology to be inclusive but you need to stay away from technology as a crutch” (Manager 01 - Management) and “technology opens a lot of doors but also creates barriers [due to a disparity of access to modern technologies]” (Support 04 – Student Support Services). Manager 01 expressed similar concern and cautioned that technology as an inclusive education support “is reliant on a whole ecosystem of people having resources.” This mirrors a concern raised by one lecturer (Lecturer 08) about this institution specifically, saying “technology is important but I think the technology [for example, old, slow and unreliable computers; outdated software packages] here is not great so relying on it is not great.”

A support staff member (Support 01) offers an additional perspective with regard to technology as a support for inclusion, saying “inclusion provides students with supports, with confidence that they may not otherwise get. [Online resources] cannot provide [students with] that support; that confidence.” Another support staff member (Support 04) summarises that while online resources and technology were broadly considered as a positive, they are “not a quick fix or one size fits all.” When asked to discuss technology’s role in supporting inclusive education, staff within the institute considered technology as being synonymous with access to and performance of computers and laptops with the fundamental suite of software packages within the college. Across 15 interviews including discussion on technology, only two staff members considered inclusion specific technological supports. Support 03 provided the following observation that the institute has “loads of resources with assistive technology. Some lecturing staff are not too comfortable with the use of technology in the classroom, with recording and scribes” and Support 04 was vocal about the benefit

in exams of “pen readers” and “pinch and zoom” software for students who have reading difficulties. This may suggest that the absence of knowledge around inclusive support technology presents a significant challenge to inclusive education within the institute. Consistent with the principles of inclusive education, technology should seek to benefit all students though currently it is being applied by different lecturers, for different students, in different ways which creates additional challenges to employing online resources and technology as a sustainable support.

Theme 2: Student Support Services

A consistent theme reported as a valuable support to inclusive education within the institute was that of the Student Support Services, which is an office that encompasses the Disability and Access Officers, Student Experience Managers, Career Guidance and Healthcare Supports. One support staff member (Support 02) explained the institute “really do have a good support system. We do not have huge waiting lists for counseling or supports.” One lecturer (Lecturer 06) provides a common perception of the support services, saying they “are very present - I've never ever had difficulty getting an answer to a query I have had.” Another lecturer (Lecturer 01) was full of praise for the support services, saying they are “working really hard, doing brilliant work” but cautioned “I do not know if [all staff] appreciates what they do.”

This concern was similarly expressed by a member of the support services (Support 02) who believes if SEN students had “come to us at the start we could have helped them more and things would not be so difficult for them.” A worrying trend became increasingly evident throughout the interviews that followed this pattern of a strong belief in the work being done by the support services but a disconnect between them and the wider faculty and students, perhaps highlighting the importance of

knowing where to get help when necessary as identified as an important step to cultivating inclusion by Rouse (2006).

Additionally, Lecturer 01 said "I do not know how much the students use the student support services" and Lecturer 10 further stated, "if a student is not accessing supports I worry they will not achieve as much as they would with the supports; they are not achieving their potential." These two specific lecturers who expressed concerns as to the under-utilization of the support services by their students both provided personal examples of positive student experiences with the support services once the relationship was facilitated by the lecturer. Both of these lecturers would be experienced lecturers who have undertaken both internal and external teaching and learning professional development.

Interestingly a mid-career lecturer (Lecturer 07) who has engaged in formal professional learning and development also provided an example of facilitating the positive relationship between student and support services. However, Lecturer 07 did note "there is a lot of anxiety amongst colleagues as to when you pass a student over to the student services" and asked, "what is [a lecturer's] obligation to these students?" This anxiety may reflect the challenges staff face in believing that inclusive education work is their responsibility and not only a task for specialists (Rouse, 2006). Indeed, one support staff member (Support 01) stated that if the institute wishes "to include [SEN students] in our intakes we cannot just push them all on to [student support services], [inclusion] has to be in the classrooms." It appears from this statement that inclusion seems to be thought of as something for students with SEN only and not something for all students reflecting much literature highlighting the frequency with which many educators support inclusion without fully understanding or applying

inclusive practice (Ainscow, 2020; Ferguson, 2008; Lambe and Bones, 2006; Martins et al. 2018; Subban and Sharma, 2006).

The lecturers interviewed expressed consistently that the support services within the institute were, indeed, a positive support for inclusive education. However, one support staff member (Support 03) explained:

> "Every college has to have a disability officer and an access officer but I wonder if those roles would be here if they were not legislated for. I don't know how much value is put on the support's work"

This perception of the work of support staff not being valued was further echoed by Support 04; "we need more buy-in... even just getting to know the [student support services] team... we don't need a big budget, just a bit of energy around inclusion." This casts doubt as to the progress report within the institute's strategic plan which explains that the institute "developed a number of access initiatives to support mature students, students with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds in accessing higher education" (p. 16) though those within the support service team charged with delivering such initiatives may feel they have only been undertaken due to legislation and not any meaningful efforts on behalf of the institute.

Although it appears that inclusion is valued by the majority of those interviewed there may be a gap between values and practice for some, which reflects literature on causes of exclusion (Morton et al., 2012; Slee, 2011). This position is interesting given the institute's strategic plan promotes an inclusive agenda, presenting inclusive values but only providing vague references to inclusive action. Furthermore, Support 03 offers

a considerable caution, once again reflecting a gap between beliefs and the knowing and doing of inclusion (Rouse, 2006):

> I think in [the institute] the badge of the highest number [of SEN students enrolled per capita in Ireland] is like *'aren't we great'* but this may be because of the courses we offer and that is great, but I don't know if the knowledge is there as to what does that mean in the college.

Support 01, Lecturer 05 and Lecturer 08 all suggested responsibility for inclusion "comes from the top." With this in mind, the proposal below detailed by Lecturer 03, notably a staff member very directly impacted by disability, was especially noteworthy:

> "I'd have somebody sit on the board with a disability remit - and not just someone who thinks of disability and thinks wheelchairs. Somebody who actually sits on the board meetings. All the heads of departments sit there, but no one [directly] from disability [support services]. If you want to be inclusive... you need to get someone on the board. It is the most influential group in the college and unless someone is there [inclusion will remain a token gesture]. Someone to be listened to, not just tokenism. They need to be there where policy decisions are made."

It is plausible from the interviews that those working within the support services feel undervalued and disconnected from the institute and that staff with an interest in inclusive education see the value in the support these services provide, but that

disinterested staff simply may not consider the role of the student support services. Staff in support roles may need greater recognition of their leadership and professional role if they are to feel valued and better support inclusive education within the institute (AHEAD, 2018, p.7 and p.14). Given that these support services are afforded to all students within the Institute, it is reasonable to stress the importance for all staff to know about, and believe in, the work carried out by these support service staff (Rouse, 2006).

Theme 3: Universal Design for Learning & Professional Development

Knowledge of Universal Design for Learning was present amongst the interviewed staff within the institute. This section details how staff-related professional development on UDL; how such professional development was responsive and individual rather than proactive and universal; the quality of UDL training and the varied nature in the desire for how such professional development should be provided.

It should be noted that interviewees were not asked specifically about UDL but that professional development was almost universally perceived to be linked to the development of UDL practices. This may be a result of internal professional development courses having an emphasis on UDL development. Staff consider UDL as being concerned with "flexibility, giving options" (Lecturer 06) which reflects knowledge of inclusive teaching strategies (Rouse, 2006). Support 14 saw UDL as being "the way to go [for access and disability]", reflecting Rouse's (2006) important point about staff knowledge of disability and special education needs; that knowledge is a catalyst and a prerequisite for action. A manager (Manager 01) described UDL as "probably the most important idea I associate with inclusion" due to the potential for positive impacts on the learning experience of everyone, perhaps reflective of the National Access Plans (Higher Education Authority, 2015, 2018) where UDL is seen as

a core fundamental principle of inclusion through supporting all students without marginalising any.

Lecturers provided ample examples of the three principles of UDL: multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression throughout the interviews (CAST, 2017). However, with one or two exceptions, all examples of UDL teaching practice designed to support inclusive education were reactive in nature rather than proactive; and designed to cater to an individual SEN student, rather than for all students, reflecting a lack of understanding of UDL (AHEAD, 2017). Despite the awareness of UDL present amongst those interviewed, it was clear that a gap existed between base knowledge and practical application. “We do the UDL course, it was great [for knowledge], but [not so good] when it comes to implementing it,” said Staff 06, reflecting the gap between knowing and doing of inclusive practices (Rouse, 2006).

The majority of interviewed lecturers have undertaken professional development and have studied UDL. Support 03 argues the value of UDL training as an inclusive education support, saying “the UDL module was great, but it should be compulsory.” Lecturer 05 states simply that “I have benefitted from the training”, however, there is a breadth of opinion with regard to the UDL professional development offered within the institute. Lecturer 01 suggests “I'd quite like to have the qualification... but I’ve not heard great things. I have heard rather negative things [regarding the quality of insight into teaching practice].”

This negative perception may reflect a lack of research base for UDL in the literature. Dean, Lee-Post and Hapke (2017) propose the merit of affective outcomes rather than objective learning outcomes, which may be manifest in these observations, effectively proposing that practitioners may benefit more from exploring examples of UDL practice that can be employed in the classroom, rather than discussing the theories

and concepts surrounding UDL. The strategic plan (2019, p. 36) for the institute states the importance of "further developing a suite of initiatives to attract, retain and develop high-quality staff who bring fresh insight and ideas and deliver high-quality teaching, learning and support to students." However, it should be noted again, that these professional development initiatives are considered optional and are perceived by those interviewed to be ignored by a substantial cohort of staff.

Within the institute, UDL manifests in the design of assessments. Lecturer 08 outlines how "everything I do I try to be as inclusive as possible - with assessment I try to give students options." Indeed, the institute has shifted in recent years toward a more continuous assessment based model, embracing the UDL principle of multiple means of expression. One experienced lecturer suggested, "summative exams are for [students] to take it seriously, but formative [assessment] is piecemeal to get quick feedback." These responses suggest that there is a breadth of opinion on UDL and its application to assessment; but that UDL is at the forefront of consideration when inclusive education practice is discussed.

There was, however, some disagreement as to the desired format of professional development around UDL within the institute. Many of those interviewed were actively pursuing professional development, with one staff member saying "I wanted to be more confident in my teaching, I didn't have any teaching qualifications" (Lecturer 05) and another saying staff "don't need doctorates - we need learning support qualifications" (Lecturer 08) which may reflect the perception that there exists a specialist pedagogy for those with SEN. A staff development officer (Support 01) explained that the institute "had a diversity and inclusion module for teaching and learning. It was three hours, then two hours and now it's down to one hour." Shorter courses were advocated by Lecturer 03 who desired "little bite-sized workshops" and to "make the [professional

development] inclusive too" by providing a greater range of smaller courses on "how to grade work, language, unconscious bias, [etc]." In contrast, Lecturer 01 requested for "professional development courses to go into a little bit more detail. We get these short seminars. I'd like a deeper course, rather than variety." Lecturer 05 develops this idea further, suggesting the institute does "informal training a lot in the department. I like formality, structure. A chat with a work colleague is very different to the formal, both can be beneficial." It should be noted that the institute wishes to "further design and implement a programme of CPD support and professional development for all staff to ensure a high performing and flexible community" (2019, p. 36).

It is clear that there is considerable reliance on informal interactions as valuable support for the promotion and application of inclusive education practices. Even the staff development officer (Support 01) concedes "a lot of informal training occurs in the corridor" and a senior lecturer (Lecturer 04) agrees that there is a lot of informal "learning on the job." This peer-led informal professional development was further evidenced when interviewees were asked what worked best regarding their professional development. "The teaching and learning observation swap was the best thing for my practice," said Manager 01, and Lecturer 09, who holds an education-themed doctorate, advocating for "some kind of peer review" as part of professional development. This reflects the value in knowing where to get help when necessary and the importance of learning how to work with colleagues to improve teaching practice (Rouse, 2006).

The interviews revealed an interest in UDL consistent with the institute's advocacy for "flexible delivery options" designed to "encourage participation in education from a broad cohort of students" (Strategic Plan, p. 11). However, while the interviewed staff showed knowledge of UDL there existed clear apprehension around the application or implementation of UDL in the classroom and in assessment. This

reflects a gap between the knowing, believing and doing of inclusive education practices (Rouse, 2006). Staff indicated a desire for more, and better, professional development opportunities in this space. Interestingly, again, there was some evidence of staff internalising their successes around UDL implementation but externalising failures such as poor professional development or time requirements to adapt pedagogies.

Theme 4: Buildings, Facilities and Wellbeing

One means by which staff see opportunity to increase inclusion at this higher education institution is the provision of a more accessible campus with a greater breadth of contemporary facilities. This theme considers the perceived problems with the physical campus and the problems with the ability within the institute to cater for students with varying degrees of mental illness. “We have to improve; make the college more attractive; give [students] a reason to be on campus [beyond their timetabled classes]” says Lecturer 04. This position frequently found support, with Lecturer 05 suggesting that management can support inclusion by “starting with facilities, make them more student-friendly. [Students] have nowhere to be right now. It is not a student centred building or even culture.” Some management agree with such observations, with Manager 01 stating that the institute has “deficits on campus. A sense of belonging is crucial [to inclusion]. [Students] do not see [the institute] as a centre for community and social life” which presents a concern for the college as a place of belonging and *communitas* for students with SEN (Bernstein, 2000; Supple, 2013). Given the origins of UDL lie within the architecture discipline, it is interesting to consider how the physical design of the institute is perceived to impact the potential to support inclusive education. Even the newest employee, Lecturer 02, commented “the physical building needs to be sorted.” Having the materials, resources, space and place to do inclusive

work is valuable to provide a variety of experiences and pedagogy (Rouse, 2006). Interestingly, the institution's strategic plan makes specific comments about presently providing an inclusive environment that is "flexible... and fully accessible" (p. 35); an opinion evidently not shared by the staff.

The perceived lack of quality facilities is considered by the staff to impact on the hidden curriculum; the hidden learning opportunities created by the environment (Kavanagh, 2016). Staff perceive this lack of facilities and student space to be negatively impacting the student experience and their sense of belonging within the institute. Indeed, students may even feel excluded by the design of the buildings and campus commented one lecturer, "I think management should walk in the shoes of a disabled person on campus. When they are making the campus accessible do they actually work with them; someone with a physical disability and someone with dyspraxia" (Lecturer 03).

What was striking in this regard is that a significant number of staff specifically referenced the doors of the buildings as being particularly problematic for some students. "The doors are not always working, the campus is not fully accessible" explains Lecturer 03 and "[the institute has] accessibility issues, it is our biggest issue. The doors, all of them are totally inaccessible, fire exits cannot be used, there are built environment issues here for someone with mobility issues" (Manager 01). Even Support 03 laments "we had to fight to get the doors to the building wheelchair accessible." Put simply "the entire campus matters" (Lecturer 07) and "trying to navigate our college with a disability can be a problem" (Support 04). The concerns of staff are in stark contrast to the progress report of the institute's strategic plan which celebrates "enhanced student access to state of the art facilities and equipment" and "refurbished and modernised our campus" (2019, p. 16).

Staff further noted how the classrooms and lecture theatres may present as an additional challenge to achieving an inclusive campus. Lecturer 01 believes there should be "a more flexible learning space." Lecturer 07 agreed on the negative impact of a classroom in disrepair but suggests "we are often too focussed on the teaching environment but not often on the learning environment" and several lecturers linked the provision of adequate student-oriented facilities and sporting opportunities to challenges not only to learning but also to mental health issues for students within the institute.

In addition to the limitations that were reported in relation to the accessibility and functionality of the physical environment, there were concerns from staff that the institution is underprepared to support all students regarding mental health. Support 04 explains that while the institute is making some efforts to foster inclusive pedagogies "what [the institute] are not prepared for is mental health. We are really bad at self-care." Several staff expressed similar ideas that the "real challenge now for students is mental health" (Lecturer 01). This concern often was coupled with an awareness that the institute is better set up to address seen, tangible characteristics of SEN students, with Lecturer 09 noting "the [students] with things you cannot see [should be] part of the inclusion agenda like mental health is a huge one." Support 03 observes there is "a huge increase in students with mental health issues, and I'm not sure staff have the awareness and tools to support them. It is not sufficient to always just send them to student services" which raises questions as to whether staff believe they have the capacity to support all students (Rouse, 2006). Staff across the institute evidently believe that it should be a supportive environment and be in a position to provide a sense of belonging as advocated in literature (Atkinson, 2011; Burke et al. 2013).

To further provide support to students and to address concerns around mental health, numerous staff consider the improvement of "basic sporting facilities" (Lecturer 04) as essential support that is conspicuous by its absence at the institute. Support 03 summarises this position, stating "one really good way of dealing with mental health is sports and it is shocking that we do not have sports [facilities]."

Staff have identified a variety of sources of support that facilitate inclusion on campus and day-to-day for students at this higher education institute. There is a belief that being open-minded to new and innovative practices, whether in the form of technological advancements or pedagogical processes such as UDL, will have positive inclusive impacts. Often, however, when asked to discuss supports, staff centred discussion on opportunities for increased support in the form of professional development and considerable improvements to the built environment.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the results of research carried out at one Irish higher education institute were presented. Staff in a variety of roles exhibited enthusiasm for inclusive education whilst also showing inconsistent and oftentimes problematic understanding of what inclusion is. Questions were raised as to the extent to which staff subscribed to the belief of education for all. Furthermore, elitist traits and a learner deficit view consistent with the medical model of disability were in evidence. Interestingly, staff were often seen to celebrate perceived personal success around inclusion, but were quick to attribute blame and responsibility for shortcomings to others and outside factors. This may be a leading barrier to the achievement of inclusion within the institute. Many staff pointed to professional development as an opportunity to support inclusion, whilst noting the perceived limited engagement and inconsistent efficacy of professional development initiatives. The staff interviewed here would appear to be in

advocacy for a whole schooling approach that mirrors inclusive education principles, though concerns persist as to the readiness and willingness of the institute as a whole to achieve such a goal. The next chapter will incorporate the major themes from these findings to provide valuable insights into the development of supports for and guidelines to foster inclusive education in higher education.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This research aimed to explore how staff at an Irish higher education institute conceptualized inclusive education, the obstacles to inclusion and the supports that facilitated inclusion. In the previous chapter, the findings from semi-structured interviews and analysis of the institutional strategic plan of one higher education institution in Ireland were presented and synthesis of these findings point to four key areas for discussion;

- Elitism and Higher Education;
- Issues of Personal Responsibility;
- Professional Development and Inclusive Education;
- Staff and Student Relationship.

ELITISM AND HIGHER EDUCATION

The findings revealed concerns amongst staff regarding the pursuit of traditional concepts of academic elitism which, many staff believe, may be problematic for the development of inclusion. Typically, higher education institutions admit students of higher than average social class, learning ability and talent (Armstrong and Cairnduff, 2012), to study subjects taught by educators with difficult to achieve academic qualifications (Trow, 2000). There exists a perception that as society has become increasingly egalitarian, higher education institutes sustain or increase ideals of an elitist meritocracy (Trow, 2006). However, there has been a widening of access for a greater variety of students to the opportunity of higher education (Basit and Tomlinson, 2012; Smith, 2012). This is consistent with the massification of the higher education

sector in Ireland, with the number of students engaging with disability services rising by over 200% in the last 10 years; a 12% rise in the total number of students with disabilities since 2015/16 and this specific institute being recorded as having the highest rate in the country of participation of students with disabilities at 10.2% (AHEAD, 2018). As a result, the institute being researched here, like many others across Ireland, faces challenges regarding implementing the dual objectives of excellence and inclusion as stated in their Strategic Plan (Institute, 2019) against a backdrop of elitism in HE.

Staff Attitudes on Student Belonging

The findings reveal a dominant perception amongst the interviewed staff that their peers and management are products of a traditional higher education system and are likely keen to sustain the principles of such a system. The perceived belief is that this institute should be managed toward and measured against classical concepts of institutional purpose, such as delivering course materials to typical students in an established manner. There is evidence in the findings that staff and management perceive that many of their colleagues do not believe students with SEN or from diverse backgrounds belong or fit within the traditional model of higher education and academic elitism. This is reflected in the language present in the most recent strategic plan published by the institute, where ideas of growth, advancement and development of the institute's 'brand' is noted, whilst also acknowledging the need to provide additional support for diverse students. Indeed, the first strategic priority of the strategic plan is 'excellence'. Staff believe this classical concept of higher education excellence is 'elitist' and a huge barrier to inclusive education, leading to inclusive practices that are reactive and not proactive in nature. As Rouse (2006) highlights the need for staff to *believe* in the abilities of all students, it is interesting to see staff question both the

extent to which the institute believes in all student abilities and what they themselves believe around student ability.

Support staff and lecturers believe management is concerned with the reputation of 'excellence' of the institute, to the detriment of students who do not perform in a traditional academic setting. While staff note how representatives of the institute are often seen to talk positively about statistics around disability and access routes for students from diverse backgrounds, they believe the institute does little practically to benefit such students beyond what is legally mandated. Support staff specifically propose that much of the rhetoric around inclusive education is lip service and the signalling of a virtuous campus, and question whether the support services themselves would even be present on campus if not for a legal mandate.

The strategic plan sets 'growth' in student enrolment numbers and the number of courses running as another strategic priority for the institute. The strategic plan and the staff interviewed for this research agree that with growth, comes greater student numbers and thus greater diversity amongst the student population. The interviewed staff worry that while greater diversity on campus is expected, traditional teaching and learning methodologies remain. This is reflective of a lecturer population most likely having come through traditional higher education formats in pursuit of difficult to achieve qualifications. As a result, they may tend to replicate a system in which they flourished (Trow, 2000), thereby preserving the status quo or current elitism within HE. It is likely, therefore, that the institute's lecturing staff, broadly speaking, may be ill-equipped to respond to the breadth of diversity likely to present on campus in the future and instead preserve established concepts of academic excellence without believing in the ability of, or knowing how to include diverse students (Rouse, 2006). This would be considered a significant barrier to the adoption of more inclusive practices, such as

UDL. The strategic plan places much of the responsibility for adapting to greater diversity on to individual staff with limited practical guidance of how to evolve pedagogies with greater diversity in the student population. Staff propose, therefore, that lecturers are likely to make accommodations on a student by student basis and thus perpetuate the medical model of disability by providing pedagogical fixes to disability or diversity problems (Grenier, 2007). This is troubling for the achievement of a more inclusive teaching and learning experience given that social learning processes are key for inclusion (Chapman et al., 2011). Staff should benefit from a more collaborative, whole schooling approach to inclusion that is supported by management and embedded into future strategic planning and policy documents.

It is noteworthy that equity is also promoted alongside excellence in the strategic plan. However, there is concern from lecturers and support staff that an open and progressive attitude toward disability and diversity, espoused by the institute in the strategic plan, is a popular and pleasant narrative designed to promote the institute. In effect, disability and diversity are being used as a tool to entice more students to join the institute and pursue the strategic priority of growth in student enrolments. However, staff are concerned that little is done to facilitate those students once they are part of the institute; that little is done to aid these students in being part of the elitist pursuit of excellence. Aligning these two concepts appeared challenging in the institute. Lecturing staff stated their colleagues have lower expectations of SEN students. Interestingly, these same staff also exhibited evidence of lower expectations for students with SEN. Lecturing staff often talked of lecturer perspectives of diverse students or students with SEN as belonging to the student support services (Ferguson, 2008) and not the academic elite. Both lecturing and support staff worried that a student being registered in an official capacity with student services may lower some lecturers' expectations as

to a student's ability. In addition, many staff believe a considerable cohort of students present with learning difficulties but may not have registered with the student support services within the institute, as self-disclosure may come with a fear of discrimination and alienation (Swart and Greyling, 2011).

Support staff were particularly frustrated and vocal with this situation. They cited numerous examples of management and staff referring to such students as 'support service students' as if primarily these students belonged not to the classroom (Ferguson, 2008), or the institute itself but rather to the support services as if they could be perceived as a burdensome addition who were to be integrated via the provided supports into the established system (Slee, 2011; Supple, 2013). In this sense, they are 'in' but not 'of' the classroom (Ferguson, 2008), not part of the academic elite. It is without a doubt that such a dynamic may considerably impact a student's sense of belonging and contribute to an increasing sense of isolation (Couvillion-Landry, 2002). The support staff were adamant that this should not be the case and it is evidently a barrier to inclusion in the institute. They further stressed that all students were required to meet the minimum entry requirements and as such had proven that they do belong alongside traditional 'elite' students.

The majority of staff interviewed for this research exhibited ideas of inclusion as being opportunities for all individuals to feel valued and participate equally in their education, evidenced in understandings provided that stressed equality of opportunity. The findings are consistent with O'Shea et al., (2015) who found strong support for the notion of inclusive education but that being inclusive was not necessarily enough to overcome the challenges faced by non-traditional students in higher education. The findings of this research are similar here in providing commentary as to staff expectations regarding student abilities.

Staff Attitudes on Student Ability

As per the literature, the expectations staff have of students is important to the impact on student performance (Haegele and Hodge, 2016). Given students believe the knowledge and attitudes of staff to be the most important part of their overall higher education experience (Supple, 2013) it is worrisome that this research reveals a problematic attitude toward the abilities of students with SEN at this institution. Lombardi (2016) mirrors what Rouse (2006) says with regard to the need for teaching staff to truly believe that all students can learn in order for inclusion to be achievable. It is likely within this institute that many students are entering higher education already questioning their abilities and staff can raise student's perspectives of their own abilities by raising their own expectations of diverse students and students with SEN (Lombardi, 2016).

Throughout the interviews, academic staff frequently discussed the diversity of background and presence of disability through a learning deficit lens; a perception that students may struggle due to an individual student's lack of ability, rather than failures of the system in which they operate to fully allow that student and their skill set to flourish. Consistently, staff discussed academic achievement as being predominantly the student's own responsibility; presuming that the lecturer is able, and is delivering content in high quality and appropriate manner for elite students who can succeed with their methodologies. This perpetuates academic success via traditional practices absent of inclusive efforts toward an equitable learning experience. It could be argued that there was a lack of consideration of excellence in terms of teaching all students and that excellence is seen as something that resides within the elite group of traditional students. While some lecturers exhibited an openness to self-reflect on and critique their own pedagogy and practice, this was most often those with close personal experiences

to disabilities in their personal lives, which concords with the literature on empathy and experience with diversity and disability as a driver for inclusion (Navarro-Mateu, et al. 2019; de Boer, Pijl and Minnaert, 2010; 2011).

While those interviewed expressed some level of willingness to review and openness to innovate their practice; evidence of a learning deficit view remained present in part. For example, it would be common for even the most pro-inclusion lecturing staff to discuss adaptations that students ought to be availing of in order to fit within the current system (consistent with the medical model of disability - Haegele and Hodge, 2016), as opposed to discussing means by which individual lecturers could be positive agents of change toward a more inclusive environment to which all students may belong and thrive (consistent with the social model of disability- Haegele and Hodge, 2016). This exposes both support and barrier to achieving inclusion at this institute as many of the interviewed staff have completed UDL professional development, which suggests support to inclusion and knowledge of inclusion (Rouse, 2006). However, the perceived limited application, or *doing*, of UDL measures in practice could be considered a sustaining barrier to inclusion (Rouse, 2006).

It should be noted that many lecturers from within the humanities faculty, citing efforts to be inclusive, provided personal and anecdotal examples, many of which were consistent with the principles of UDL by providing multiple forms of assessment and a variety of content formats, through which they could present their positive steps toward being more inclusive educators. However, these infrequent references to the advocacy of inclusive pedagogies also served to highlight their apparent rarity, and that traditional teaching methodologies remained the dominant mode of delivery. This is perhaps further evidence of the institute pursuing traditional excellence, to the detriment of equity, whilst providing limited support to facilitate the participation of all students in

that excellence. Additionally, discussion within the interviews suggested inconsistencies of ownership and responsibility for inclusive practice within the institute. This will be discussed next.

ISSUES OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

In discussing responsibility for inclusion, with staff in a variety of roles, an interesting pattern was frequently evidenced. Namely, staff often spoke of their own personal innovations and practice implemented in pursuit of including all students; in effect celebrating their own successes. However, these same staff apportioned responsibility, even blame for perceived failures, to other people and groups. These staff were critical of management, other staff, circumstances, the built environment and such factors as barriers to inclusion. O'Shea, et al., (2015) talk of dual responsibilities of students and institutions in enacting inclusivity in order to move beyond reductive standpoints that simply apportion blame. Such findings are not evident in this research, with little dual responsibility evident. Indeed, as participants tended to view others (e.g. support services) as responsible for inclusion, it implies a lack of advocacy (Reupert et al., 2010) which manifests as no significant changes occurring to pedagogy, learning or assessment and is antithetical to principles of whole schooling.

The research here suggests that broadly all institutional staff believe there is a shared responsibility for inclusive education, only one lecturer spoke of personal responsibility to be inclusive. This is particularly alarming given the evidence within the strategic plan of suggesting responsibility for inclusion lies, predominantly, with the lecturing staff. In similar research, Supple (2013) suggested the educators interviewed in her research exhibited traits of an interventionist, those who take responsibility as a practitioner for educating all students and making adjustments and modifications as necessary. The findings of this research, however, suggest otherwise. Here, while staff

showed some willingness to adapt and innovate to be more inclusive, there existed evidence that many projected ultimate responsibilities for inclusion beyond or away from themselves.

Various initiatives exist within the institute for the pursuit of things like art, culture, quality assurance, health and safety, etc. Specific committees exist that report to the board of management with a remit for their area of expertise and specialist knowledge. The staff interviewed exhibited no knowledge of such a committee or group charged with responsibility for inclusion; rather there appears to exist a vague expectation that staff may simply and slowly become more inclusive with the passage of time and the increased diversity of the student population. This is reflected in the strategic plan wherein it could be argued that staff are expected to develop their knowledge base for inclusion absent a clearly articulated and understood strategy to achieve such inclusion.

Additionally, while it could be suggested that management, evidenced in the strategic plan, are placing responsibility and ownership of inclusion on to staff, those same staff suggest management have a significant role to play. Not only this, but the findings here suggest that support staff believe the lecturers need to increase their level of responsibility and engagement with offered support, and lecturers feel the support staff could do more to facilitate the support of non-traditional students. The net effect, revealed by this research, is an institute with at best inconsistent or misunderstood concepts of inclusive responsibility and at worst an institute content to dismiss or delegate responsibility for inclusion to others. This, perhaps, highlights a need for a combination of supportive leadership and educators working collaboratively proposed by Weisel and Dror (2006). For staff to develop their knowledge base, and for them to

turn knowledge into action (Rouse, 2006) the extent to which staff engage with professional development must be considered.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The strategic plan believes the outcome of a "highly skilled and motivated staff community who are engaged and committed to their roles… who seek to meet the needs of students and the Institute" can be achieved by equipping "staff with the future skills and competencies necessary to deliver on the requirements of their roles in a fulfilling manner and to support a diverse student community" (p. 36). Critically, this suggests the institute may consider PD as providing staff with skills, and not as a more complex process (Boylan et al., 2018) that requires support through implementation (Fullan, 2007, 2014). This may be particularly noteworthy with regard UDL themed PD as Edyburn (2010) stresses that UDL implementation is a much more complex process than many may believe. While singular efforts to progress the usage of UDL are useful, complexity grows as more nuanced long-term oriented changes to teaching practice and classroom activities begin to manifest. This aligns with ideas of the whole-school approach to inclusion.

Inclusion is an increasingly important area for the growth of the education sector, nationally, internationally, and at an institutional level as evidenced by the increasingly diverse cohort of students at this site of research (AHEAD, 2018; National Strategy for Higher Education, 2011, Strategic Plan, 2019). Change will always be challenging and the findings from this research reveal areas for consideration for management and leadership to foster an inclusive education in the future; conceptualizing PD and PD activity/design.

Conceptualizing Professional Development

The findings revealed inconsistencies in how staff conceptualize PD for inclusion. This may be one of the factors contributing to the difficulty of designing an effective PD strategy, around inclusive education, at an institutional level. Both support and lecturing staff suggested that many of the lecturing faculty perceived PD as a burdensome activity that was being done to them. This could be problematic as the success of PD is often dependent on educators having agency in their own learning process (Timperley et al., 2007).

Currently, at this institute, according to interview responses, PD appears to be formulated around a managerial model where programs are offered to remedy weaknesses and deficits (such as the absence of knowledge around inclusion), rather than a developmental approach where enhancement of skills align around existing strengths and interests (Kennedy, 2014). The findings here clearly show staff with personal motivations and backgrounds associated with special education and inclusion are already taking responsibility for their own PD. Both academic and non-academic staff need to buy into their PD rather than seeing it as PD programs being done to them, perhaps to comply with policy or to fulfil prescribed metrics (Kennedy, 2014; Rouse, 2006).

Staff perceive PD as an individual activity or event provided by the institute in an ad-hoc manner, instead of PD being conceived as a more complex endeavour or process (Opfer and Pedder, 2011). PD is not a linear activity that results in change (Boylan et al., 2018) and needs to acknowledge the complex relationship between the staff member, the institute and the specific learning activity (Opfer and Pedder, 2011). Perhaps what is most compelling about the findings in this regard is the perceived absence of a relationship between these three components.

Findings point to a need for a more collaborative, social constructivist approach that allows staff to articulate their own values and beliefs in their development (Kennedy, 2014), reflecting the key tenets of the National Framework for PD in HE (National Forum, 2016). The PD activity will now be considered.

Professional Development Activity

Findings clearly show staff dissatisfaction with PD activities or experiences, with particular emphasis placed on a lack of PD strategy with quality, focus and coherence. Effective PD has a number of core features: content focus; active learning; collective participation; coherence; and duration (Garet et al. 2001; Desimone, 2009). Interestingly, none of the lecturers interviewed discussed PD with a content focus around their subject-specific knowledge, arguably because PD designed by the institute focused on practitioner skills development that is generalizable to all staff regardless of subject matter. PD that focuses on specific content and how students learn that content has larger positive effects on student achievement outcomes (Cohen and Hill, 1998; Desimone 2009). This is particularly noteworthy given that lecturing staff discussed the different nature of teaching across the two faculties because of class sizes and content. With the focus of this study being on inclusive education, it is interesting to consider whether framing inclusion within the context of subject-specific PD may be more beneficial than considering inclusion as a general pedagogical development.

Several lecturers spoke positively about opportunities for active learning and collective participation through peer observation and co-teaching but lamented the infrequency of such opportunities. Lecturers welcomed opportunities to discuss their practice with their peers, reflecting the importance of a collaborative (Ferman, 2002; Kennedy, 2005, 2011), dialogical approach in PD (Cordingley et al., 2015; Garet et al., 2001) and the potential effective features of coaching and expert support, and feedback

(O'Connor et al., 2012) and reflection (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Currently, it is clear that such discussion occurs informally and is led by individual staff on an ad-hoc basis. It could be argued that there is a considerable opportunity to offer a peer observation and feedback system of PD aligned to a broader institutional goal.

Adopting a coherent approach to PD (Butcher and Stoncel, 2012; Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2001) based around a common goal [developing inclusive education] (Florian, 2014; Kennedy, 2014) could elevate PD at the institute by providing an overarching theme to which PD could be designed. Findings broadly show that where the Teaching and Learning Committee provided PD programs around a common goal in the past (e.g. UDL), over a duration of time (Cordingley et al., 2015; Desimone, 2009), in flexible formats with formal qualifications as a tangible output upon completion, it enhanced staff engagement and confidence upon their return to the classroom, though some staff did question the quality of offered PD programs. This confidence is a noteworthy impact of PD in the classroom (King, 2014). Supporting staff to use this confidence to implement changes needs to be addressed (Fullan, 2014), echoing the importance of the relationship between individual staff members, the institute and the PD activity (Opfer and Pedder, 2011) and the importance of leadership for PD (Cordingley et al., 2015). The flexible nature of the PD afforded staff the ability to adapt PD activity to their own schedule where time commitments may have been a barrier to participation (Smith, 2010). Aligning PD to participants' needs is a key feature of effective PD (Cordingley et al., 2015) and must be considered in terms of PD design and staff willingness to engage in any form of PD.

However, the extent to which staff engage in PD on a voluntary or mandatory basis was found to be less valuable than an array of other factors (Cordingley et al., 2015). Of more importance in the findings in this study and reflected in research is a

positive professional learning environment, the provision of sufficient time, and consistency between the professional learning experience and the wider social and educational context (Cordingley et al., 2015). This points to the importance of the institutional structures and values which influence individual staff members' engagement with PD and subsequent implementation of changes. Arguably what gets recognized gets valued and practised. Indeed, the National Framework for PD in Higher Education (National Forum, 2016) may provide an opportunity for leadership and management to explore a coherent approach to PD aligned to individual and institutional goals. Another area revealed by this research to have the potential to be either support or barrier to inclusive education is that of the staff and student relationship.

THE STAFF AND STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

The support staff believe the students from diverse backgrounds or with SEN often struggle to navigate relationships with staff within this higher education institute, suggesting a strong emphasis is placed on the staff and student relationship (Supple, 2013). The lecturing staff interviewed for this research were evidently quite proud of the relationships they have been able to foster with their students. These relationships afford such staff greater depth of understanding regarding specific students with unique characteristics and needs. This indicates the relational and emotional aspects of teaching (Akinbode, 2013; Hargreaves, 2000). To explore these findings further the complexity of these relationships will consider staff knowledge of specific student circumstances; willingness to access supports and class size.

Staff Knowledge of Specific Student Circumstances

There is an interesting dichotomy occurring within the institute, with staff extolling the virtue of their abilities to cater to individual student needs while

considering this process under the auspices of inclusion. The findings communicate a self-confidence amongst the participating staff as to the dynamic between staff and students. Interestingly, in championing the perceived positives of good relationships, the findings still revealed an underlying and pervasive dependence on the medical model of disability (Triano, 2000). Several lecturing staff spoke of how their knowledge of a specific student's circumstances, garnered from the quality of the relationship, afforded them greater ability to mitigate challenges perceived to result from a particular disability. These additional efforts were voiced as being evidence of progressive inclusion efforts, rather than perpetuating a learner deficit view (O'Shea et al., 2015).

The interviews reveal that as staff become aware of students with unique circumstance it appears that efforts that they believe to be inclusive in response to such circumstances may, in fact, be preserving a medical model perspective to disability (Triano, 2000) and contributing to the othering of minority students (Koro-Ljunberg, 2007). These findings are particularly interesting in this consideration as the staff perspective is exclusively considered as the dominant norm to which positive relationships may work to include students. There was no evidence in the findings to suggest an awareness from the staff that they themselves may appear as the 'other' to students. An example of how staff as the other may present could be the absence of minority lecturers (Cherng and Halpin, 2016). As a result, the findings may indicate a lack of awareness for the student experience and their perceptions for how authority and power in a classroom currently manifests or how it may be reconfigured more inclusively (Ellsworth, 1997; Koro-Ljunberg, 2007). Mirroring the challenges of elitism earlier in this chapter it could be considered that the staff represent a collective institutional habitus to which many students may not feel they belong (Burke, Emmerich and Ingram, 2013; Cress, 2008).

Staff and student relationships do, however, provide an intriguing pathway upon which inclusion may manifest in the future. While this may be more consistent with a medical model of inclusion, many traits required of a whole schooling approach are in evidence (Supple, 2013). Additionally, to the staff and student relationship, the findings suggest that staff believe they play a pivotal role in exposing students to the myriad supports available within the institute.

Challenges with Accessing Supports

The institute may be better served to address the lack of willingness from students to access support on a more holistic, or whole school level (Supple, 2013). Support staff expressed feelings of isolation; as an entity separate to the core institute, a service provider to non-traditional students. The academic staff believe similar perceptions exist amongst students, that is that the student support services are exclusively for students who came through HEAR and DARE entry routes, or for students with a diagnosed disability or particularly unique set of individual circumstances. Such pervasive attitudes or sustained shared beliefs of the institute, staff and students alike, as perceived by the staff, evidences an accepted norm within the institute to which future staff and students will join (Atkinson, 2011). This is perhaps reflected in the institute's strategic plan which states an awareness of the "varying needs of a diverse cohort of students" who "require differing levels of support" (Strategic Plan, p.11). Indeed, a small number of staff suggested that this may be creating a situation where students are reluctant to utilise supports regardless of whether they see value and benefit in their use.

The findings here suggest that students are most likely to embrace the offered services when a staff member acts as a bridging factor, a guide to navigating the social stigma perceived to be associated with being a student availing of the support services.

This points again to the value of a collaborative and mutually respectful approach to inclusion.

Interestingly, Gadbow (2002) argues that inclusive environments and practices foster self-development and self-advocacy, suggesting perhaps that the findings of this research may position this institute as not being readily inclusive. Supple (2013) extends this to say that an inclusive approach could mean all students being better positioned to negotiate, navigate and solve problems on their own which potentially could actually result in reduced workload and time commitments for support staff and lecturers. To this end, training all students in self-advocacy could be worthwhile (Supple, 2013) and may manifest as such training modules in an inclusively designed curriculum (Bunbury, 2018; Morgan and Houghton, 2011). In effect, the findings and the literature agree that developing a more inclusive environment may have tangible benefits for both students and staff, and not be an additional burden that some staff believe it may be considered as by some of their peers.

It is, additionally, clear that the staff believe their ability to foster positive relationships and to identify and assist those in need of support is made possible by small class sizes within the institute.

Class Size

A reoccurring theme within the findings was staff sharing their views regarding the class sizes within the institute, particularly framed against the class size of other higher education institutions in the country. The overarching theme of this discussion was that there is a greater opportunity to provide support for non-traditional students and their unique circumstances by virtue of smaller class sizes and greater volume of interaction with individual students. This reflects a ten-year study confirming the negative impact of class size on grades (Gibbs et al. 1996) and the negative impact on

teaching when the number of students per class increases (Monks and Schmidt, 2010). There are two concerns raised by these findings, namely, the continuation of principles of a medical model of disability and concerns regarding massification and growth agendas of senior management as evidenced by the increase in student enrolments nationally and at this institute.

As with the staff and student relationships, the findings indicate a sustained misunderstanding of the principles of inclusion. A deficit view remains evident for many of the participating staff who indicated positivity toward inclusion. It is possible to conclude that the peers to whom these staff ascribed concerns regarding willingness to embrace inclusion may also possess a deficit view of non-traditional students. Interestingly, staff who discussed teaching methodologies such as UDL believe that the small class sizes of the institute would allow for pedagogical innovation; and they believe larger class sizes would require a more traditional style of teaching and learning and thus have less opportunity to implement inclusive teaching techniques, mirroring research that suggests innovation decreases as class size increases (Monks and Schmidt, 2010). Staff within the Humanities Faculty believe they are already seeing efforts to increase the number of students in each class; that annual data reviews are often concerned primarily with the quantity and not the quality of education provision. Staff in the Creative Arts Faculty stressed that given their studio-based instruction format a small class size is absolutely necessary; and that efforts to increase numbers in this regard would have significant negative consequences for teaching and learning within the faculty. It could be argued that these findings strongly indicate a need for professional development with regard to the social model of education and how such inclusive principles could foster a more inclusive classroom regardless of whether the number of students enrolled increased in the future.

This is noteworthy as many interviewees noted that the institute's strategy is one of "growth and development" (Strategic Plan, p. 2). The strategic plan constitutes three key goals; excellence; growth and community. There are 11 subthemes across these core themes, and only one is geared to 'educating students'. The words 'growth' and 'development' appear frequently. This is consistent with observations made by interviewed staff at all levels that the institute is more concerned with "attracting students" than "educating students" (Strategic Plan, p. 25-26). Interestingly, under the core strategic goal of 'excellence' and in the subtheme dedicated to 'educating students', it could be argued that the rhetoric is around quantity and not quality, with phrases like "develop and grow"; "evolve our programs"; "expand capacity" and "accelerate growth" (Strategic Plan, p. 27). This suggests that staff may be right to be concerned with institutional priorities around growth and increases in class sizes. This is a definite challenge to inclusion if the staff believe a precursor to inclusive education and their ability to teach inclusively is smaller class sizes. The staff perceptions around smaller class sizes being beneficial for all students are supported by large scale studies that considered grade achievement (Gibbs et al. 1996) and the ability to cater to a variety of learning styles (Toth and Montagna, 2002). Additionally, the findings evidence that larger class sizes are likely to prompt lecturers to teach in less inclusive methods (Monks and Schmidt, 2010).

Through the provided analysis of the research findings it can be seen that while the relationship between staff and students and class size are sources of potential or are catalysts for inclusion, the institute faces challenges regarding elitism and professional development. In the next chapter concluding observations will be provided together with important implications and recommendations to further champion and develop

inclusion at the institute and for other higher education institutions both domestically and internationally.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the attitudes of staff at an Irish higher education institute toward inclusive education, and the associated obstacles and supports perceived by them. This research expanded the scope of previous research carried out by Martins et al. (2018) at a Portuguese University with approximately 8,000 students. While their study focused on staff perceptions of inclusion around students with disabilities, this study utilized a broader definition of inclusion that was mindful of the student from diverse backgrounds and exhibiting unique characteristics. This was considered to be more reflective of the student population resulting from the widening of access to Higher Education (Burke, 2013; Whiteford, 2017). Martins et al. (2018) called for considerable work to be continued in pursuit of a more inclusive institute and this thesis contributes to that work by posing similar research questions of a leading recruiter of diverse students in Ireland (AHEAD, 2018). Indeed, the authors of the Portuguese study called on fellow researchers to extend their research to institutions outside of Portugal and/or institutions that exhibit notably alternative characteristics. This study answers both of those calls as a smaller institute of approximately 3,000 students with a national reputation for embracing inclusion and diversity. The interviews provided staff at this institute with an opportunity to reflect upon and discuss their perceptions of inclusion. The findings of this research may contribute to an improvement in the delivery of education services and positively impact the academic experience and performance of all students.

Document analysis of the institute's most recent strategic plan and in-depth interviews with fifteen staff members informed the data. This was considered against that pathway to enhancing effective inclusive practice, of knowing-doing-believing,

proposed by Rouse (2006). A conclusion of the key findings of this research, their contribution to knowledge on inclusion in higher education and recommendations for practice and professional development are discussed in this chapter. The study concludes with recommendations for future research, policy and practice.

This research studies the inclusion and related practices of academic and non-academic staff at an Irish higher education institute. This was achieved by utilizing research questions relating to staff attitudes and associated obstacles and supports. A worthwhile contribution has been achieved by exploring these questions at this site.

ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Staff Understanding of Inclusive Education

Exploring how staff at the site of study define and understand inclusion revealed three core findings, which are:

1. Dual goals of elitism and inclusion in higher education will remain antithetical goals if staff do not believe in the ability of all students;
2. A deficit view of learners with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds remains pervasive in the Irish context; and
3. Inclusive education requires sustained support throughout implementation from all levels of the institute.

Staff at this institute expressed a significant concern around compliance and objectives regarding student access, namely that access and supports for students are only present due to legislation and may not be truly inclusive. This may suggest that the challenges of marrying both elitism (Altbach, 2009; Brennan, 2004) and inclusion discussed in the analysis of research findings for this study may be evident. Higher education institutes may need to examine the extent to which access for diversity is present simply because of legislation or whether a legitimate belief exists as to the

contribution such diverse students can make to the institute and to the experience of all students, especially given the widening of access for students from a variety of circumstances to higher education (Basit and Tomlinson, 2012; Smith, 2012).

Participants in the Martins et al. (2018) Portuguese study agreed that students with disabilities have the right to access the educational system, however, the participants of this study expressed concern that this belief (Rouse, 2006) may not be universal across all staff. This was spoken about in terms of the elitism versus inclusion dual-goal debate. Significantly, this highlighted two additional concerns presented in the findings of this study. Firstly, the prevalence of staff placing responsibilities for inclusionary failures upon others and not themselves; and secondly, the occurrence where even staff who were strong advocates for inclusion used phrases like ‘weaker students’ when discussing non-traditional students. This suggests that a learner deficit view remains in the Irish context (O’Shea et al., 2015).

Staff at this institute believe that, despite growing numbers of students with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds enrolling in higher education, the institute may remain poorly prepared to welcome these students, and support them throughout their studies. This is of concern to the achievement of sustained inclusion that may require continued support throughout implementation (Fullan, 2007, 2014). It is significant for Irish decision-makers, and management within this institute to be mindful that staff attitudes toward inclusion exhibit similar concerns as their European counterparts (Martins et al., 2018) as to the readiness and willingness of institutions to make tangible, impactful changes to both policies and actions in order to foster a more inclusive higher education environment.

Obstacles to Inclusive Education

Staff at this institute were asked to discuss the obstacles they felt existed to the actualization of inclusive education and revealed the following main barriers:

1. Limited knowledge exists across the campus as to the role and function of the support services;
2. There is a lack of knowledge and (accredited) professional development provided around inclusive education; and
3. Inadequate infrastructure and physical environment for all students.

A striking obstacle to inclusion was identifiable in how staff perceive the offered support services available within the institute. Staff in this study either spoke of a lack of knowledge either on behalf of the staff themselves or from the students as to the role and function of the support services. They confirmed exclusionary perceptions whereby the support services were chiefly for students with disabilities and not for all students in a considerably more inclusive provision. This speaks to the merit of broadening the definition of inclusion used in this study beyond students with disabilities. Staff reported that when they were more informed as to the activities of the support services, their belief in their value went up significantly. Establishing the value of such support services is essential for a whole-schooling approach to inclusion to succeed (Ainscow and Miles, 2008, Supple, 2013). Staff expressed a desire for more proactive dissemination of information as to the role and function of the support services to the campus-wide education community. Limited or flawed awareness of support services may be an obstacle to inclusion and perpetuate a false understanding of the support services being for specifically identified individual students and not for all students. This has an exclusionary impact that may contribute to further othering of students with disabilities or from diverse backgrounds as they may be perceived as

belonging to the support services and not to the institute and its broader community (Bernstein, 2000; Cress, 2008; Strategic Plan, 2019).

An obstacle that was reported by a variety of types of staff with implications for professional development planning is that while the majority of staff expressed a willingness, interest and availability to provide educational support for diverse students they reported a lack of knowledge (Rouse, 2006) and specific training. This obstacle appears as a lack of experience and confidence in changing approaches. Many staff noted a belief that the institute needs to play a key role in developing staff confidence, but stressed a conspicuous absence of programs offering qualifications for the development of a more inclusive approach. This could be considered influential to motivation as staff in this research noted the absence of incentives and rewards to pursue professional development. It could be perceived that staff here exhibited resistance to or a lack of willingness to engage in training for inclusive practice. This, again, raises concerns regarding whether staff truly believe (Rouse, 2006) all students belong or whether ideas of higher education elitism remain present.

Where there can be little doubt as to the extent to which this research confirms the results of the Portuguese study is with regard to "the most negative issues cited by respondents" (Martins et al., 2018), namely old building and infrastructure that, according to the majority of staff, are difficult to navigate and not fit for inclusion purposes. Staff in the Irish institute were vocal in their condemnation of classroom design, lack of sporting and recreational spaces and resources and the generally poor standard of the built environment, which is considered in the literature to be a barrier to inclusion (O'Shea et al., 2015). It is clear that a lasting barrier to inclusion is the physical environment which is deemed by staff to be unwelcoming and not fit for purpose, a stark contrast to claims in the institute's strategic plan of "state of the art

facilities and equipment" and a "refurbished and modernised our campus" (Strategic Plan, 2019, p. 16).

Supports for Inclusive Education

Finally, staff were invited to discuss their perceptions on the supports that may foster inclusion at this site and this discussion revealed:

1. There is a willingness among many staff to adapt their practice to support inclusion; and
2. Existing supports in the Irish site are provided on an individual basis, not broad improvements to the benefit of all students.

The findings of this study suggest a positive sensitivity to diversity and inclusion and that staff expressed a willingness to adapt their practice to support inclusion. However, this study exposed a tendency to talk of personal actions when asked about general supports for inclusion. Common to both studies was a pattern of internalising inclusive success and externalising barriers and challenges to inclusion. Given clear evidence of this theme in this study, it would be wise for institutional management to address notions of ownership and responsibility for inclusion; not in a projective manner as may be suggested in the strategic plan, but rather to embrace a collective and collaborative, whole schooling approach to inclusion (Ainscow and Miles, 2008; Supple, 2013).

Worryingly, the findings here regarding pedagogical adjustments may suggest that staff at this institute, whilst well-intentioned, are perpetuating a medical model of inclusion via the provision of add-ons and extras, such as exam time and additional resources. In contrast, faculty directors and lecturers in the Portuguese study perceive teaching adjustments as having an important impact on academic success. They note that when lecturing staff make teaching adjustments for inclusion, students with

disabilities and from diverse backgrounds achieve academic results of the same quality as their peers, and that a positive learning atmosphere can act as an additional element of reinforcement for all students (Martins et al. 2018). The contrast would appear to manifest in whether teaching adjustments are oriented toward assisting individual students (as in this Irish study) versus teaching adjustments that are broadly considered to be more inclusive to the benefit for all students (as in the Portuguese study). This is a critical finding with regard to the efficacy of well-planned supports that champion the value of adopting inclusive practice.

Having considered the research questions, it is important to detail how this study can contribute to both policy and practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The findings of this research provide insight into how higher education institutions can orient their policies in the future. This research also supports a call for staff to engage in inclusion focused professional development.

A source of conflict identified throughout this research is concepts of ownership and responsibility around inclusive education. Where staff believed they were being successful in their practice as inclusive educators, this was celebrated as personal successes. In contrast, staff were quick to point the finger of blame to other staff and institutional management for reasons of failure. The strategic plan (2019) must be held somewhat accountable for uncertainty around responsibility as accountability was deemed to be lacking and staff perceived much of the inclusion themed rhetoric in the document to be little more than lip-service to the related issues.

This research, indeed, acts as a call on the institute and others across the country to consider placing inclusion as a primary strategic objective in the next cyclical institutional strategy. One way this may manifest for classroom-based practice is in

module descriptors having a specific section oriented to inclusion – supported by a more focused approach to the professional development agenda across the institute. This may be achieved by the provision of a broader range of appropriate professional development opportunities (Shevlin et al., 2013) or oriented around affective outcomes (Dean et al., 2017) in a collaborative manner (Ainscow and Sandill, 2010).

In considering how this research may positively impact inclusive education at this site of study, and act as an exemplar for other institutes to follow, it must be considered that the findings of this research are consistent with literature advocating for the whole-schooling approach (Ainscow and Miles, 2008; Supple, 2013). Inclusion will not be achieved in a singular moment, at a specific time. Rather, it will be achieved gradually, with a collective effort from all interested parties at the institute working toward identified and measurable related inclusion goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The Martins et al (2018) Portuguese study called for further research of a similar nature at other sites of study. This study met that call and extended the study from exploring students with disabilities to a broader definition of inclusion that includes students from diverse backgrounds and other unique circumstances. It may be compelling for future research in the Irish context to explore staff perspectives on specific circumstances, as such niche focus may be able to reveal themes beyond the scope of this study.

This research revealed two compelling results that would benefit from additional research, perhaps in other Irish sites, or at international higher education institutions. Namely, the extent to which dual goals of elitism and inclusion can coexist; and the nature of responsibility for inclusion. It would be interesting for other researchers to

examine the prevalence of these two phenomena at other sites and explore how other such institutions react to or engage with such challenges.

Furthering the scope for research around responsibility for inclusion, a compelling area of interest would be to consider developing research around the framework used for this research, namely the Knowing, Doing and Believing proposed by Rouse (2006). Extending a theme of responsibility, or ownership, may be a fruitful and important avenue of further research. Indeed, a fourth pillar of Owning focused on inclusion may provide a strong base from which further research may be designed. It would be interesting to see research as to the drivers of ownership and responsibility regarding inclusion, and so too the extent to which such traits can be fostered through professional development. Research that informed future PD design in the Ownership space would be most useful.

Additionally, of particular interest to the researcher, as an organisational strategist and management lecturer, is whether such findings can be applied to non-educational institutions and contexts. Do corporations believe they can be elite industry leaders or innovators whilst hiring staff with disabilities or from diverse backgrounds, for example? Do staff in commercial organisations exhibit similar characteristics of celebrating personal successes around inclusion, whilst limiting their own responsibility in inclusionary failures? To that end, two noteworthy outputs have occurred that are directly related to this research.

TANGIBLE OUTPUTS OF THE RESEARCH AT THE SITE OF STUDY

Through a focus on inclusion, and with the educational opportunities provided by this research process, the researcher has leveraged this knowledge into three noteworthy outputs at the site of study.

Firstly, with this research to the fore, the opportunity for the development of a Masters in Management (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) was identified that combined the researcher's background in management and organisational strategy, with the acquired knowledge around institutional inclusion. The Master's programme was conceived in 2018, developed through 2018 and 2019 and validated for delivery in September 2020. At the time of writing, the Master's has had one successful cohort, with graduation in November 2022. The second cohort is currently active having begun in 2021, and recruitment is progressing well for the third class to start in September 2022.

Secondly, following the data analysis phase of this research, and with the recommendations for policy and practice from this research in mind, an application was made to the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. Funding was secured for a pilot scheme for professional development titled Inclusive Curriculum Enhancement (ICE) with a view to training staff to make their module descriptors evidence consideration for inclusion, specific to their module (Cohen and Hill, 1998), to be actioned during the institutional programmatic review process.

Finally, the researcher has been redeployed in-part at the site of study to both redesign and deliver a UDL postgraduate diploma to institutional staff and a small cohort of visiting external staff. This programme has been designed with many of the findings of this research influencing the content and assessment strategies. The first delivery of this program is scheduled for June 2022.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research extended the scope of the Martins et al (2018) study, which presented data concerning staff attitudes to students with disabilities specifically. A decision was made to expand the focus of this research to a broader definition of

inclusion, exploring the perspectives of staff around the inclusion of students with disabilities and those from diverse backgrounds. This was done given the diverse and ever-changing breadth of student characteristics as evidenced by the widening participation of a broader student population. It may be considered a limitation to have a less defined unit of analysis, though it was felt the objects under study were the perspectives of the staff, not the circumstances of the students. To that end, the scope for staff to define and understand inclusion however they deemed appropriate was provided.

The use of semi-structured interviews was chosen as a valuable means to explore the opinions and experiences of the interviewees (Cohen et al., 2011; Lewis, 2003). It would be interesting, given the framing of inclusion as a collective endeavour, to have explored the perspectives of staff perhaps in a focus group context, to add interviewee responses to each other's perspectives as a potential additional means of data collection.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research explored staff perceptions of inclusion in higher education. Throughout the process, the complexities of inclusion brought challenges of understanding and analysis. It is clear that inclusive education, and related research such as this, is at the forefront of the education agenda. It is an interesting area of research, and this research has built on the Martins et al (2018) study, through the lens of Rouse (2006) and ideas of knowing, doing, and believing in the value of inclusion. This research contributes to the body of literature on higher education inclusion and has provided insights into existing barriers and how inclusion can be supported. The findings of this research strongly lead to advocacy for a whole-schooling approach, valuing a collective response to the call for inclusion, and ascribing responsibility to

staff at all levels. It is worrisome that challenges identified in this research exist, such as perceived disparities around elitism and inclusion; and uncertainty of some staff perceptions as to their belief that all students are able for and valuable to the institute as a whole. However, positively, this research provided decision-makers and educators with insight into how they themselves, in their own institutions and in their own practice can be a champion for inclusive education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE / PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

Dear X

My name is Jeff Taylor, [redacted], and I am working on a research project to study the attitudes, beliefs and practices of higher education lecturers and staff relating to inclusive education and inclusive practice. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (The Hunt Report, Section 3.10, p. 59) stresses the importance of lecturer professional development, however, there is limited commentary regarding inclusive teaching skills. [redacted] is currently the national leader in recruiting students with disabilities at 10.2% (AHEAD, 2018). Thus, there is significant value in researching how [redacted] lecturers and staff experience inclusive education, related supports and barriers and what professional development they may need going forward. It is hoped both students and staff can benefit from exploration and development of inclusive education as it exists within [redacted].

This email is to request your participation in the research project. Please feel free to ask me any questions in advance about the nature of this research.

The aim of the research is to explore the attitudes, beliefs and practices to inclusive education at [redacted]. Staff who choose to take part in the research will be interviewed individually. **All interviews will take approximately 60 minutes** and will be audio-recorded (with consent) to help me remember what people say, but no video or photography will be used. It is hoped to conduct sessions between January and February 2020 at the convenience of you, the institute and all involved. The results of the

research will be disseminated via journal articles, conference papers and policy documents where appropriate.

The information given by anyone taking part will be anonymous and confidential – this means that no-one else will know who gave the information, no-one else will hear any of the recordings and the recordings will be stored in a password protected location with two factor authentications. The confidentiality of information provided cannot always be guaranteed and can only be protected within the limitations of the law. It must be noted that due to the small sample size and insider nature of the research, there may exist limits to local confidentiality and it may be possible for people to infer the identities of participants though every effort will be made to minimise this possibility. Audio recordings will be stored securely for a period of 12 months and then disposed of.

Taking part in this research is completely voluntary – this means that you can decide not to take part if you do not want to. If you decide to take part but change your mind, you can stop at any time. If you would be willing to help with this work, I would be grateful if you would review the enclosed consent form (to be collected on the day of interviews) and select an interview time that is convenient to you from this Doodle poll X.

If you have any questions or need any further information, you can contact me by phone on 0874150260 or by email at jeff.taylor@[redacted]. This research is being done through Dublin City University, and my supervisors are Dr Fiona King and Dr Elizabeth Mathews. They can be contacted in DCU by email at Fiona.king@dcu.ie / Elizabeth.mathews@dcu.ie .

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact: The Secretary, Dublin City University Research

Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000, e-mail rec@dcu.ie . The research process will be GDPR compliant from the outset and throughout.

Kind regards,

Jeff Taylor

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

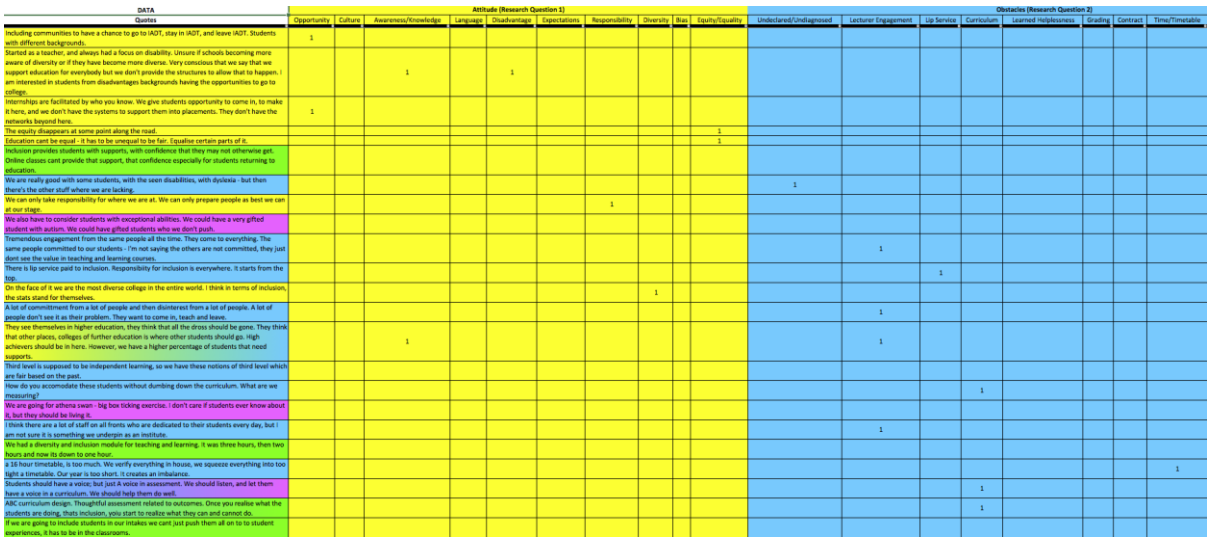
Research Title	Exploring Perceptions of Inclusion in Higher Education
Researcher	Jeff Taylor
Supervisors	Dr. Fiona King and Dr. Elizabeth Mathews
Faculty/School	School of Education, Special and Inclusive Education
Purpose	To explore institutional attitude toward inclusive education at [redacted]
To be completed by participant (PLEASE CIRLCE/UNDERLINE YOUR ANSWER)	
I have read the Plain Language Statement	Yes / No
I understand the purpose of this research	Yes / No
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study	Yes / No
I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions	Yes / No
I am aware that my interview will be audio-recorded	Yes / No
I am aware I may withdraw from the Research Study at any point	Yes / No
I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this Research Study	Yes / No
SIGNATURE:	
NAME IN BLOCK CAPITALS:	
DATE:	
This consent form will be kept confidential by the researcher. All audio recordings will be stored securely and confidentially, and the information given by participants will be used - to write a doctoral thesis - to write journal articles.	

APPENDIX C: TOPIC GUIDE AND INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Research Question	Interview Schedule	Literature
1: What are the attitudes towards inclusive education in [redacted]?	What is your understanding of inclusive practice in education?	Miles and Singal, 2009; Barton,1997
	Have you any background information regarding inclusion?	Lombardi, 2010
	How do you make meaning of inclusive education?	Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011
	What, if any, concerns do you have regarding academic quality and integrity when additional accommodations are considered (for example, spelling and grammar waivers for dyslexic students)?	Reupert, Hemmings and Connors, 2010
	Do you have expectations regarding the capabilities of your students and how does this impact your teaching and assessment?	Florian, 2008
	What is the inclusion/diversity culture of [redacted]?	Slee, 2001
	Where, in your opinion, does the responsibility for inclusion in [redacted] lie?	Rouse, 2008
2: What obstacles exist to inclusive education in [redacted]?	For you, what are the biggest barriers to (inclusive) education and what is your role in overcoming those challenges?	Beauchamp-Pryor, 2012
	Do you believe inclusion can be achieved without compromising standards and quality?	Florian, 2008
	What do you perceive your role to be in creating an inclusive community for students within the Institute?	Bernstein, 2000
	Do you have the time, or the incentive, to prioritise inclusive education aspects of your work?	Smith, 2010
	Does the nature of your contract and associated supports impact your ability to provide value to students with additional needs?	Reupert, Hemmings and Connors, 2010
3: What supports exist to inclusive education in [redacted]?	What teaching methods that you employ do you consider to be inclusive?	Rose, 2000; Marina, 2016
	What teaching methods do you use and how do you design them?	Hanafin, Shevlin, Kenny and McNeela, 2007
	Do students have a voice in assessment design, curriculum and their overall education?	Whiteford, 2017
	How would you describe your assessment practices?	AHEAD, 2017
	Do you think curriculum is inclusive?	Florian, 2008
	How have you changed your teaching and assessment methods toward inclusion throughout your career?	Hanafin, Shevlin, Kenny and McNeela, 2007
	How can technology help with inclusion? In your opinion does technology include or exclude students?	Seale, Draffan and Wald, 2010
4: What are suggested improvements to practice that will enable academic achievement in [redacted]?	What do you perceive your role to be in creating an inclusive community for students within the Institute?	Bernstein, 2000
	Have you / would you avail of additional training/ professional development for inclusive education?	Hunt, 2011; Shimman, 1998
	Do you engage informally with other lecturers regarding teaching and assessment for inclusive practice?	Hourcade and Bauwens, 2001

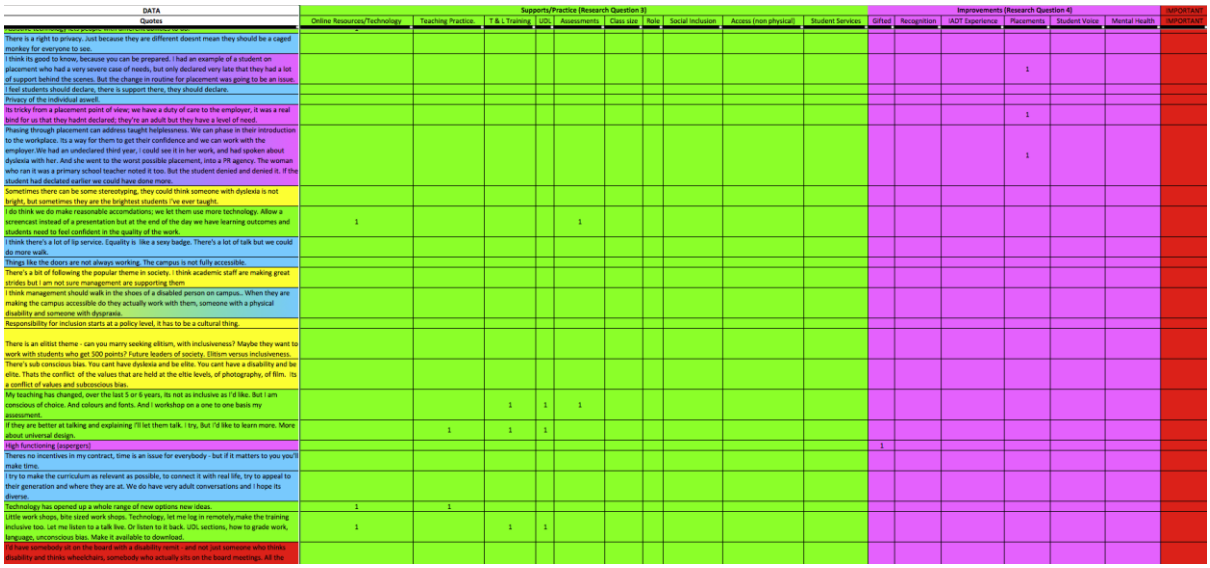
APPENDIX D: DATA SAMPLE, GENERAL RAW DATA

Raw Data Sample 1



DATA	Attitude (Research Question 1)										Obstacles (Research Question 2)							
Quotes	Opportunity	Culture	Awareness/Knowledge	Language	Disadvantage	Expectations	Responsibility	Diversity	Bias	Equity/Equality	Undeclared/Undiagnosed	Lecturer Engagement	Lip Service	Curriculum	Learned Helplessness	Grading	Contract	Time/Timetable
Including communities to have a chance to go to IADT, stay in IADT, and leave IADT. Students with different backgrounds.	1																	
Started as a teacher, and always had a focus on disability. Unsure if schools becoming more aware of diversity or if they have become more diverse. Very conscious that we say that we support education for everybody but we don't provide the structures to allow that to happen. I am interested in students from disadvantages backgrounds having the opportunities to go to college.			1		1													
Internships are facilitated by who you know. We give students opportunity to come in, to make it here, and we don't have the systems to support them into placements. They don't have the networks beyond here.	1																	
The equity disappears at some point along the road.										1								
Education cant be equal - it has to be unequal to be fair. Equalise certain parts of it.										1								
Inclusion provides students with supports, with confidence that they may not otherwise get. Online classes cant provide that support, that confidence especially for students returning to education.																		
We are really good with some students, with the seen disabilities, with dyslexia - but then there's the other stuff where we are lacking.											1							
We can only take responsibility for where we are at. We can only prepare people as best we can at our stage.							1											
We also have to consider students with exceptional abilities. We could have a very gifted student with autism. We could have gifted students who we don't push.																		
Tremendous engagement from the same people all the time. They come to everything. The same people committed to our students - I'm not saying the others are not committed, they just dont see the value in teaching and learning courses.												1						
There is lip service paid to inclusion. Responsibility for inclusion is everywhere. It starts from the top.													1					
On the face of it we are the most diverse college in the entire world. I think in terms of inclusion, the stats stand for themselves.								1										
A lot of commitment from a lot of people and then disinterest from a lot of people. A lot of people don't see it as their problem. They want to come in, teach and leave.												1						
They see themselves in higher education, they think that all the dross should be gone. They think that other places, colleges of further education is where other students should go. High achievers should be in here. However, we have a higher percentage of students that need supports.			1									1						
Third level is supposed to be independent learning, so we have these notions of third level which are fair based on the past.																		
How do you accomodate these students without dumbing down the curriculum. What are we measuring?														1				
We are going for athena swan - big box ticking exercise. I don't care if students ever know about it, but they should be living it.																		
I think there are a lot of staff on all fronts who are dedicated to their students every day, but I am not sure it is something we underpin as an institute.												1						
We had a diversity and inclusion module for teaching and learning. It was three hours, then two hours and now its down to one hour.																		
a 16 hour timetable, is too much. We verify everything in house, we squeeze everything into too tight a timetable. Our year is too short. It creates an imbalance.																		1
Students should have a voice; but just A voice in assessment. We should listen, and let them have a voice in a curriculum. We should help them do well.														1				
ABC curriculum design. Thoughtful assessment related to outcomes. Once you realise what the students are doing, thats inclusion, you start to realize what they can and cannot do.														1				
If we are going to include students in our intakes we cant just push them all on to to student experiences, it has to be in the classrooms.																		

Raw Data Sample 2



DATA	Supports/Practice (Research Question 3)										Improvements (Research Question 4)						IMPORTANT
Quotes	Online Resources/Technology	Teaching Practice.	T & L Training	UDL	Assessments	Class size	Role	Social Inclusion	Access (non physical)	Student Services	Gifted	Recognition	IADT Experience	Placements	Student Voice.	Mental Health	IMPORTANT
There is a right to privacy. Just because they are different doesnt mean they should be a caged monkey for everyone to see.																	
I think its good to know, because you can be prepared. I had an example of a student on placement who had a very severe case of needs, but only declared very late that they had a lot of support behind the scenes. But the change in routine for placement was going to be an issue.														1			
I feel students should declare, there is support there, they should declare.																	
Privacy of the individual aswell.																	
Its tricky from a placement point of view; we have a duty of care to the employer, it was a real bind for us that they hadnt declared; they're an adult but they have a level of need.														1			
Phasing through placement can address taught helplessness. We can phase in their introduction to the workplace. Its a way for them to get their confidence and we can work with the employer. We had an undeclared third year, I could see it in her work, and had spoken about dyslexia with her. And she went to the worst possible placement, into a PR agency. The woman who ran it was a primary school teacher noted it too. But the student denied and denied it. If the student had declared earlier we could have done more.														1			
Sometimes there can be some stereotyping, they could think someone with dyslexia is not bright, but sometimes they are the brightest students I've ever taught.																	
I do think we do make reasonable accomdations; we let them use more technology. Allow a screencast instead of a presentation but at the end of the day we have learning outcomes and students need to feel confident in the quality of the work.	1				1												
I think there's a lot of lip service. Equality is like a sexy badge. There's a lot of talk but we could do more walk.																	
Things like the doors are not always working. The campus is not fully accessible.																	
There's a bit of following the popular theme in society. I think academic staff are making great strides but I am not sure management are supporting them																	
I think management should walk in the shoes of a disabled person on campus.. When they are making the campus accessible do they actually work with them, someone with a physical disability and someone with dyspraxia.																	
Responsibility for inclusion starts at a policy level, it has to be a cultural thing.																	
There is an elitist theme - can you marry seeking elitism, with inclusiveness? Maybe they want to work with students who get 500 points? Future leaders of society. Elitism versus inclusiveness.																	
There's sub conscious bias. You cant have dyslexia and be elite. You cant have a disability and be elite. Thats the conflict of the values that are held at the elite levels, of photography, of film. Its a conflict of values and subconscious bias.																	
My teaching has changed, over the last 5 or 6 years, its not as inclusive as I'd like. But I am conscious of choice. And colours and fonts. And I workshop on a one to one basis my assessment.			1	1	1												
If they are better at talking and explaining I'll let them talk. I try, But I'd like to learn more. More about universal design.		1	1	1													
High functioning (aspergers)											1						
Theres no incentives in my contract, time is an issue for everybody - but if it matters to you you'll make time.																	
I try to make the curriculum as relevant as possible, to connect it with real life, try to appeal to their generation and where they are at. We do have very adult conversations and I hope its diverse.																	
Technology has opened up a whole range of new options new ideas.	1	1															
Little work shops, bite sized work shops. Technology, let me log in remotely,make the training inclusive too. Let me listen to a talk live. Or listen to it back. UDL sections, how to grade work, language, unconscious bias. Make it available to download.	1		1	1													
I'd have somebody sit on the board with a disability remit - and not just someone who thinks disability and thinks wheelchairs, somebody who actually sits on the board meetings. All the																	

Theme Analysis Sample 1

Quotes
Tremendous engagement from the same people all the time. They come to everything. The same people committed to our students - I'm not saying the others are not committed, they just dont see the value in teaching and learning courses.
A lot of committment from a lot of people and then disinterest from a lot of people. A lot of people don't see it as their problem. They want to come in, teach and leave.
They see themselves in higher education, they think that all the dross should be gone. They think that other places, colleges of further education is where other students should go. High achievers should be in here. However, we have a higher percentage of students that need supports.
I think there are a lot of staff on all fronts who are dedicated to their students every day, but I am not sure it is something we underpin as an institute.
I would have known about the supports, the access officer at the time, I knew about the services that were there.
I dont think there is time built into our contracts to change, to accomodate.. Administration time, changing around your course to suit one or two people. You cant always do it, you can do your best.
Student voice can only be heard if academic staff are listening and if they really care.
I dont think of the word inclusive in my day to day, I just sort of see everyone as kind of the same, the students, you, me.
I wanted to be more confident in my teaching, I didnt have any teaching qualifications.
Its free, it didnt clash with my schedule ,but if I hear people dont want to do it I think they dont care really.
The culture here, a lot of people dont care, or think its fine, its only a job. I dont think people are proud, they are here for the pay the pension and been here a long time, and you can fall into that culture.
The attitudes are good in IADT, good intentions, 110%, good practice is following and improving. There is in some parts some peoples practice a lack of knowledge and awareness , and once someone knows that thats fine, but there are some old practices that die hard.
Old hands stay away from T and L because they are going to be told how to do things. Everyone who does this job has a bit of an ego and are afraid of change.
Struggle to engage academics; engage students. I also think it is the responsiblity of the student to come in and put their hands up.
We need to get out there banging a drum; we need the lecturers doing that aswell.
Theres policies and procedures in place that we are supposed to adhere to, but I dont know whether you can make people more inclusive in teaching practice. I think some people have a closed approach, and who think inclsuive education is a load of baloney.
A minority of people in our faculty are just playing the system, that would not be pro inclusivity.
What you find those interested in inclusion are already engaged, we've picked the lowhangin fruit. There are some academics who dont see inclusion as part of their role.
On some levels we are doing well, I dont think we have enough resources, and some areas are doing a lot better, some lectuers are very accomodating.

Data Overview and Key Points	
Theme	Lecturer Engagement
1	Very common concern that inclusion and participation in T&L efforts are from the same people over and over; and that many teaching staff don't have teaching training.
2	Questions raised as to the role of the lecturer - and how this can be handled given teaching nature of the contracts.
3	Concerns about the awareness and knowledge of significant cohort of teaching staff as to the role and function of the support services.
4	Concerns around resistance to change from more experienced lecturers who have established methods of teaching practice.
5	A call to action being the desire to get more types of training to more people in more ways.

Theme Analysis Sample 2

Quotes
We can only take responsibility for where we are at. We can only prepare people as best we can at our stage.
I see myself as an educator, to teach somebody how to do something.
There's a bit of following the popular theme in society. I think academic staff are making great strides but I am not sure management are supporting them
I think management should walk in the shoes of a disabled person on campus.. When they are making the campus accessible do they actually work with them, someone with a physical disability and someone with dyspraxia.
Responsibility for inclusion starts at a policy level, it has to be a cultural thing.
I'd have somebody sit on the board with a disability remit - and not just someone who thinks disability and thinks wheelchairs, somebody who actually sits on the board meetings. All the heads of departments sit there, but no one from disability. If you want to be inclusive, if you want Athena Swan and all that tokenism you need to get someone on the board. Its the most influential group in the college and unless someone is there. And someone to be listened to, not just tokenism. They need to be there where policy decisions are made.
In my own work I self criticize. In the first half of my teaching life I thought that everybody was the same as me. I had a transformation, thanks mainly to marion palmer, who opened my eyes.
I think on paper IADT look really well, and in the board meetings we think we are very good but I think in the classroom we are not that good. For management it is a strategic decision, but I dont think we are allocated any time to do that.
I think responsibility lies with the staff to get the message out there, but I think everyone relies on everyone else. I think responsblity lies with the academics to identify certain students.
Struggle to engage academics; engage students. I also think it is the responsiblity of the student to come in and put their hands up.
I think maybe do we do a lot of check the box stuff, is inclusion in the fabric, how can we put it into the fabric. Where is our representation of students with disabilities around the campus. Could we use all the skill that we have here.
The students now are more comfortable communicating what they need.
Responsibility has to come from the top, whether it is athena swan or stated policies.
It can be frustrating, a silo effect occurs between the two faculties, reinforced by leadership. There is a bad feeling between the two faculties which is perpetuated at all levels
Responsibility for inclusion lies with me in the classroom. Introspection and self reflection.

Data Overview and Key Points	
Theme	Responsibility
1	Recommendation to have disability and/or access officer sit on board of directors or board of management meetings to directly influence policy from the top down is worthy of exploration.
2	Policy is an important factor. Inclusion cannot be an after thought, or an isolated policy. It must be present and evident in institutional policies.
3	Academics need to self reflect, consider their course, assessments, classroom activities for inclusivity.
4	Some responsibility lies with the students themselves to seek out supports and to self advocate for inclusivity.
5	