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# Take 5

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## #Take5 #70 Inclusion and Learning Development

MARCH 30, 2022 ~ LMUTAKE5

### **Inclusive practice in learning development (practitioner event)**

*This #Take5 post is brought to you from the ALDinHE Events Working Group (see <https://aldinhe.ac.uk/working-group/events-group/>). The group organises our LD@3 programme and this post reflects particularly on a practitioner event on Inclusive practice in Learning Development that took place in September last year. In this post **Sandie Donnelly** reflects not just on issues relating to inclusivity but also on the fundamentals of organising an LD@3 – and this particular and very important LD@3.*

*As you read through, we hope that you might also be inspired to run an LD@3 of your own.*

### **Feel the vulnerability and do it anyway!**

Inclusive practice is identified in the second of the **ALDinHE values**: *Making HE inclusive through emancipatory practice, partnership working and collaboration*; I would argue it also forms a key part of all five ALDinHE values. Whilst I recognise the central significance of inclusive practice, I confess to being a bit nervous about it. So when the ALDinHE Events Working Group were talking about creating an event for learning developers to explore inclusive practice, I had hoped we might get some experts and/or presenters with specialist interest in the area: that someone else would tell me what to do!

When we decided we would facilitate the session ourselves, my defences were running high and a wiser member of the working group reminded me that we wanted to acknowledge the challenges and vulnerabilities involved in authentic inclusive practice. Rather than present ourselves as experts, we sought to provide a safe space for learning developers to unpack inclusive practice and to consider how the learning development community might support each other and develop our practice in future.

## Shaping the event

We planned for an event of two halves with the first half designed to get under the skin of inclusive practice. We decided the first part of the event would primarily work through breakout rooms with jamboard activities to explore who and what we are talking about when we use the term “inclusive practice”; what are the challenges we face in learning development practice; what insights and good practice might we share with each other. We hoped that unpacking challenges and sharing positive approaches in the first half of the event would inform a more strategic flavour in the second half of the event. The second part of the event would bring everyone together for more of a crowd sourcing experience, underpinned by the second ALDinHE value: *Making HE inclusive through emancipatory practice, partnership working and collaboration*, where we would collectively consider where we wanted to go next as regards inclusive practice and the learning development community. We hoped structuring and facilitating the event like this would support all of us to connect with the breadth of inclusive practice and to feel more confident in facilitating inclusive practice.

### Part 1: Jamming in breakout rooms

We used jamboards and breakout rooms to explore what inclusive practice is, what it looks like, any challenges, and where we have practised or witnessed inclusive practice. Throughout the activities, we moved participants into alternate breakout rooms to enable people to meet with different people. Whilst breakout rooms get quite a lot of bad press, at previous events people had said that catching up and networking with other practitioners were part of the appeal of events, and we hoped rotating participants through different breakout rooms would help to facilitate a networking opportunity. I would also advocate that breakout rooms can support inclusivity in offering a smaller space where more participants might voice their views and experiences than might be the case if the whole event happened in the main space.

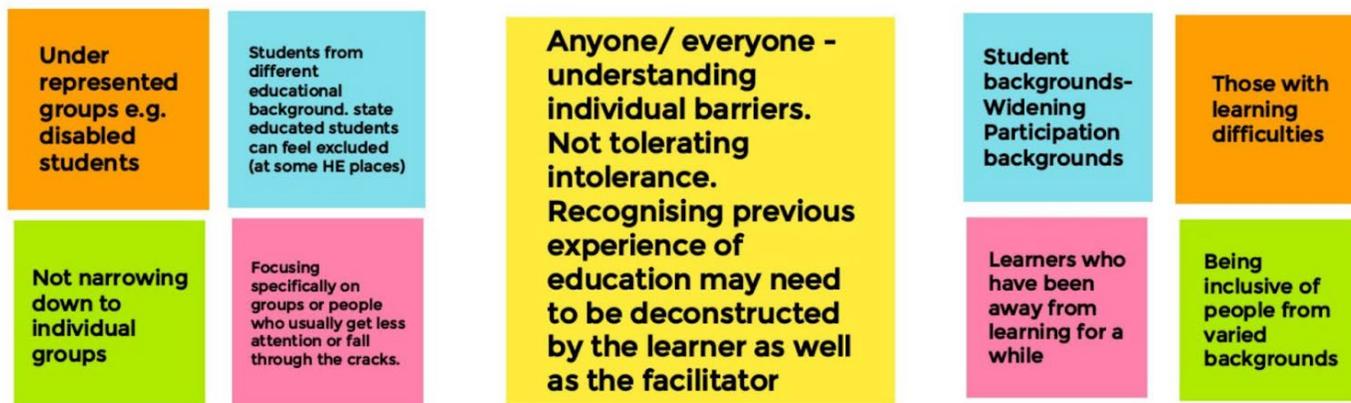
### Cloudbusting

It was encouraging to see that challenges emerged from the outset. In the initial word cloud activity to explore what inclusivity meant to us, words and phrases like *exclusion*, *unhelpful* and *emptied of meaning* emerged alongside the terms that might usually be expected, such as *accessible*, *equality*, *fairness*, and *welcoming*.



## ACTIVITY 1

### Part 1: Who specifically are we thinking about when we talk about inclusivity?



EVERYONE: all races, genders, ages, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, abilities...

disabled, SpLD, ethnicity, ESL, gender, sexuality, low socio-economic backgrounds, mature age, religious-background, first in family, commuter students, distance students, working students, parents

Students. Colleagues. Academics. Staff.

Figure 2 Inclusive Practice Jamboard Activity 1 Part 1 10 September 2021

## ACTIVITY 1

### Part 2: What are the inclusivity issues that may arise in these groups in the context of Learning Development?



Figure 3 Inclusive Practice Jamboard Activity 1 Part 2 10 September 2021

## Problematic activities

Reflecting on this activity, I'm alert to my phrasing 'What are the inclusivity issues that may arise in *these groups* in the context of LD?' and the problematic nature of how inclusivity is presented when discussed with phrases like "these groups". Fortunately, as shown in Figure 3 above, some participants challenged the notion of separate groups, essential characteristics, and reminded us of intersectionality, as well as the need to empower individuals, to recognise individual barriers and to avoid homogenising individual groups according to a dominant group perspective. There were observations about how transparent and inclusive the LD profession and LD practice might be and the need for critically reflexive practice to counteract assumptions and biases. The importance of collaboration with students was also highlighted as key to the successful creation of authentic inclusive practice. This brings to mind the ALDinHE value highlighted at the start of this blog (*Making HE inclusive through emancipatory practice, partnership working and collaboration*) and suggests collaboration/partnership with students is an area that merits more time and space in a future practitioner or LD@3 event. We'd love to hear from learning developers with experience and practice to share.

### **Unpicking challenges through scenarios**

Scenarios had been created ahead of the event in response to areas of challenge participants identified in their booking forms. The scenarios facilitated further discussion of issues, barriers to inclusive practice and potential solutions. A particularly powerful suggestion to support inclusive practice was offering students a wider range of resources and exemplars that were less Eurocentric, and valued the significance of local cultural and geographical influences; see scenario images below (figures 4-6):

## ACTIVITY 2 (Scenario 1)

Capture the most challenging issues & most helpful insights

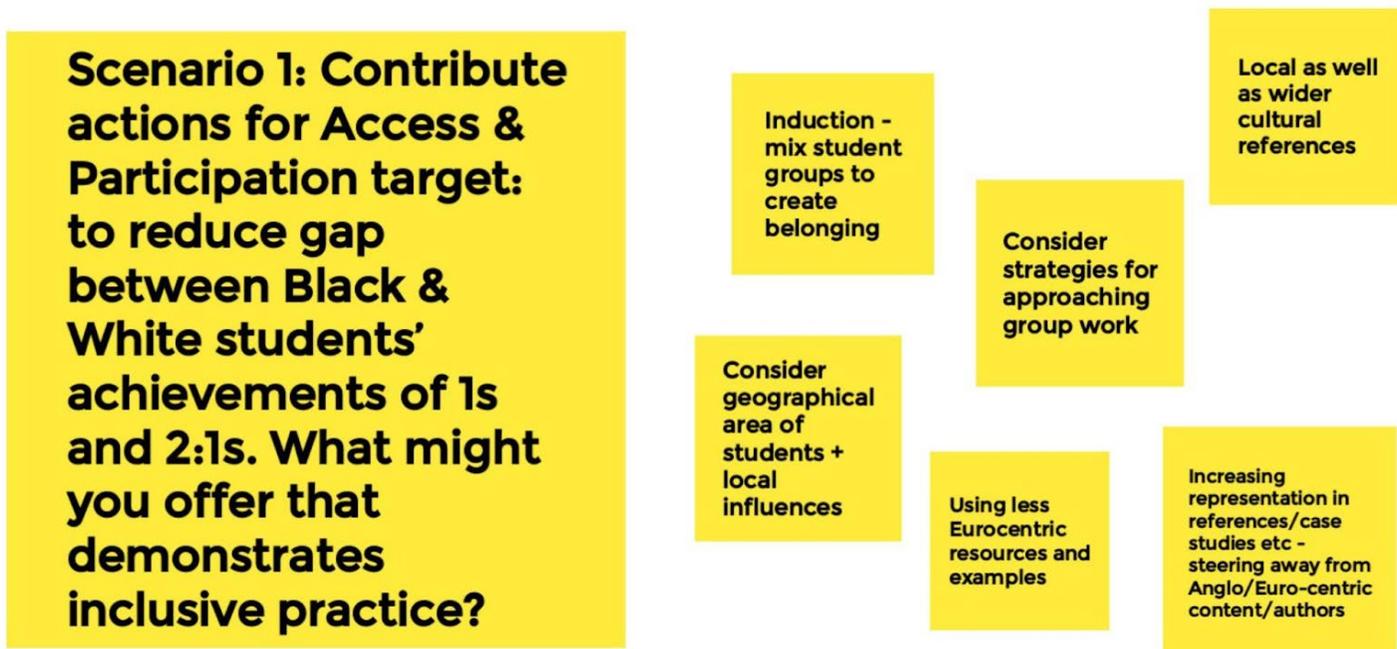


Figure 4 Inclusive Practice Jamboard Activity 2 Scenario 1 10 September 2021

## ACTIVITY 2 (Scenario 2)

Capture the most challenging issues & most helpful insights



Figure 5 Inclusive Practice Jamboard Activity 2 Scenario 2 10 September 2021

## ACTIVITY 2 (Scenario 4) Capture the most challenging issues & most helpful insights

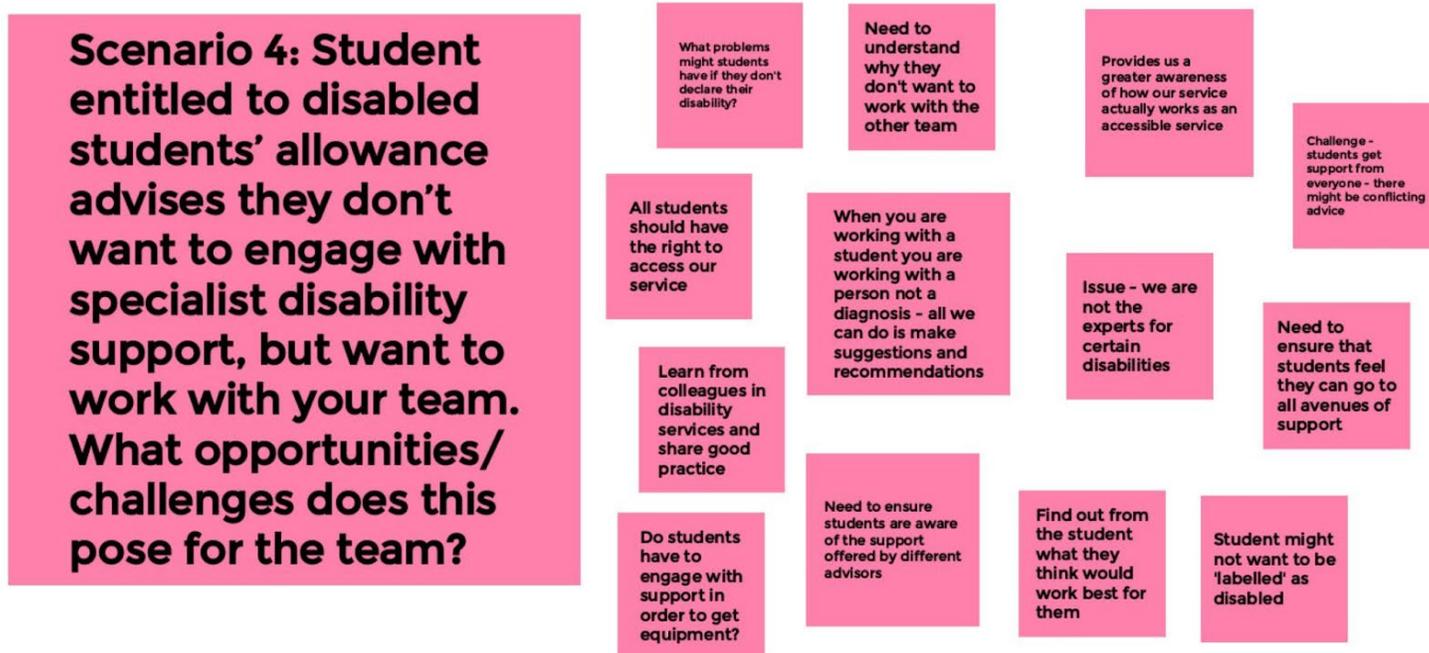


Figure 6 Inclusive Practice Jamboard Activity 2 Scenario 4 10 September 2021

### Jamboards Activity 2: issues and insights

We were encouraged to reflect on the language used: for example, how helpful are terms like “lost learning” when considering transition to university during the pandemic and whilst we may want to support students, did we risk stigmatising students’ experiences with labelling like this? We considered that students’ resistance to some support might well be more of a resistance to the labelling of that support. How might we avoid potentially framing support in terms more aligned to tick boxes and targets that risk turning students into “issues” rather than engaging students with services supposedly intended to support them.

### Jamboards Activity 3: sharing good practice

Throughout the event participants had been talking about good practice and activity 3 provided the space to capture and share this practice as seen in figures 7 and 8 below.

### Sharing good practice thumbnails:

Some popular discussion points included:

- the importance of student voice and collaboration with students when devising resources and support

services;

- flexibility of support offer to accommodate different circumstances and needs (eg how offering traditional 9-5 Mon-Fri office hours services might limit access to support for many students);
- to provide choices in how students might engage with materials;
- using strategies like journaling to help engage and include less dominant voices who might find it more challenging to speak up in group settings.
- **AND:** Participants were encouraged to write up their practice as case studies to share via the ALDinHE website.

## ACTIVITY 3 Sharing good practice

Converting a course specifically for disadvantaged women into 5+ different languages	Looking for creative ice breaker activities during induction to mix up students (and take photos to remember the event)			
Allowing students to share their experiences in a chat/discussion function.	Giving space for students to discuss their own concerns/anxieties or expectations.	Getting a variety of students to contribute to the design, content and delivery of a course.	Short video tutorials (with closed captions) that demonstrate how to access resources online (Skype, virtual classrooms, e-books etc)	Student - Staff games night (cards, chess, board games etc). Level playing field, equality - Students find beating staff motivating.
Ensuring names and images throughout a course are diverse ethnically and for other characteristics like age and context.	Online workshops/ teaching/ 1 to 1s	Ensuring that students in other countries could still access resources (e.g. not providing YouTube links in case they were not visible to those working in China).	Encouraging the student voice through podcasts or similar platforms	Podcast series for 1) Placement Students 2) Pre-Arrival students. Podcasts gave both these groups access + connection (=inclusivity?) to the university in the absence of physical proximity.
Making sure you're not using idioms or colloquialisms that some people might not be aware of.	Reaching out to students who are quiet or not contributing and giving them space to contribute.	Be sensitive when choosing sample texts for workshops.	We have student champions that promote and develop the digital learning provided by the uni.	Creating resources eg vox pop videos to show variety of cultures, participants, backgrounds, experiences
Getting insight from a variety of stakeholders about how a course should be designed and run, as well as the content.	Partner with WP students to: understand barriers to engagement; co-create/review resources; co-create communication/marketing material; identify areas for further work.	Giving students options about what format to submit an assessment in - e.g. video, slideshow, weblink or document.	Simple but - becoming comfortable with asking students how to pronounce their name, their preferred name or pronouns	Commenting on the student voice provided throughout the course in an end-of-week summary. It used quotes that students had written.

Figure 7 Inclusive Practice Jamboard Activity 3 Sharing Good Practice (part 1) 10 September 2021

**Giving students a choice about the activity they will complete for their assessment, such as different scenarios to analyse.**

**Ensuring video are fully captioned (not auto captioned), especially for technical terminology**

**Allowing students to write a journal throughout the course to note their thoughts and feelings about it.**

**We have worked on intercultural awareness sessions for our embedded teaching which are co-designed and delivered with the academic and international office**

**Journaling to capture the voice/ experience of quieter students & those with neurodiversity differences. Also useful for international students who have come from different education cultures.**

**We've just created a course with student guides who provide their perspective and examples throughout.**

**Providing resources in a variety of formats**

**Walk and talk 1-2-1s which take away any sense of hierarchy in our meetings with students**

**Always providing instructional text to help students navigate platforms, even as simple as 'select this button to...'**

**Working through 'me and white supremacy' in a reading group - 28 weeks of chapters**

**Providing links to support for how to use the platforms and tech provided by courses.**

**Providing evening appointments for those students with other commitments (family, work, placements)**

**Unpicking own racism through reading group and journaling using Me and White Supremacy by Layla**

**Using clean design and plain English to reduce cognitive load and distractions from the learning.**



Figure 8 Inclusive Practice Jamboard Activity 3 Sharing Good Practice (part 2) 10 September 2021

## Part 2 Crowdsourcing: What next?

The second part of the event brought us all back together for a crowd sourcing experience. Having explored practices, we wanted to take a step back and look at where we might go next with this as a community. Could this be a manifesto maybe or something else? What did we as a community want to do next? With [ALDinHE value 2](#) as our focus (*Making HE inclusive through emancipatory practice, partnership working and collaboration*), we used the jamboard to explore 3 key areas: working with students; working with staff; and working institutionally or strategically as shown in figures 9-11 below.

### Insights for working with students



Figure 9 Inclusive Practice Jamboard: Insights for working with students 10 September 2021

## Insights for working with staff



Figure 10 Inclusive Practice Jamboard: Insights for working with staff 10 September 2021

## Insights for working strategically/ across your institution



Figure 11 Inclusive Practice Jamboard: Insights for working strategically 10 September 2021

## Insights and strategies for sharing ideas and good practice

Unsurprisingly, partnering and collaboration with students figured strongly. There were reminders that inclusion affected staff as well as students and a desire to support staff to better understand intersectionality, to challenge our own assumptions, to avoid labels, and to share practice that is evidence-based and translatable to different contexts such as subject specific teaching. From a broader institutional and strategic perspective, there were questions around the ways in which ALDinHE might further support a community of practice and share examples of good practice.

This practitioner event helped us connect with our shared interests in inclusive practice as well as reflect on our own practice. The Events Working Group enjoyed the rich and thoughtful discussions. I was inspired by this opportunity to explore how to develop practice further as a community of learning developers and glad that I hadn't given in to my initial fears and defences. The general consensus in feedback was that the event had been a positive experience. 64 initial signups demonstrated there was interest in the topic with 60 log-ins at different points throughout the event; 21 people attended the whole event.

### **Resources from this event**

The full Jamboard and WordCloud resources from this event are available at: [Inclusive Practice Practitioners Event Resources](#)

### **Continuing to develop our inclusive practice**

There are numerous ways to continue the conversation and share practice about inclusive practice. In light of the recurring theme of the value and power of co-creation with students, it would be great to see more LD@3 events about partnering, collaboration and creation with students. If you'd like to facilitate a LD@3 webinar or submit a case study or share some research on any aspects of inclusive practice, see links below for more details:

<https://aldinhe.ac.uk/research/facilitate-a-webinar/>

<https://aldinhe.ac.uk/research/>

You might be interested in the ALDinHE Neurodiversity/Inclusivity Community of Practice:

<https://aldinhe.ac.uk/networking/communities-of-practice/aldinhe-neurodiversity-inclusivity-community-of-practice/>

### **Share your practice via LD@3**

More generally, the Events Working Group welcomes presenters for LD@3. We are looking for one hour sessions on all and any aspects of learning development, consisting of a maximum of 20-30 minutes for presentations plus plenty of time for discussion. This could be an opportunity to tell the community about new innovations in your teaching or practice, to test out new ideas with a receptive audience or present part of your

work that you may go on to publish. Take a look at materials and recordings from previous LD@3 events to give you a flavour of the range of areas of practice discussed and shared to date: <https://aldinhe.ac.uk/event-resources/>

Find out more about facilitating a LD@3 webinar here: <https://aldinhe.ac.uk/research/facilitate-a-webinar/>

## Bio

*Sandie is a member of the ALDinHE Events Working Group members and facilitated this practitioner event with Dr Helen Webster, Laura Barclay, Dr Rosie MacLachlan, Maddy Mossman and Alistair Morey. Sandie is the Academic Skills Manager at the University of Cumbria, working with a team of advisors who support students with library, academic and digital skills development. Being part of a university with a portfolio of mostly professional courses, Sandie and her team work alongside non-traditional students and apprentices to help them develop and celebrate their academic voice as part of their critically reflective practice.*

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