

Hear My Voice: The Educational Experiences of Disabled Students

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Abstract : Historically, a variety of methods have been used to access the student voice within higher education, including module evaluations and informal classroom feedback. However, currently, the views articulated in student-staff-committee meetings bear the most weight and can therefore have the most significant impact on departmental policy. Arguably, these forums are exclusionary as several students, including those who experience severe anxiety, might feel unable to participate in this face-to-face (large) group activities. Similarly, students who declare a disability, but are not in possession of a learning contract, are more likely to withdraw from their studies than those whose additional needs have been formally recognised. It is also worth noting that whilst the number of disabled students in Higher Education has increased in recent years, the percentage of those who have been issued a learning contract has decreased. These issues foreground the need to explore the educational experiences of students with or without a learning contract in order to identify their respective aspirations and needs and therefore help shape education policy. This is in keeping with the 'Nothing about us without us', agenda, which recognises that disabled individuals are best placed to understand their own requirements and the most effective strategies to meet these.

Keywords : education, student voice, student experience, student retention

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