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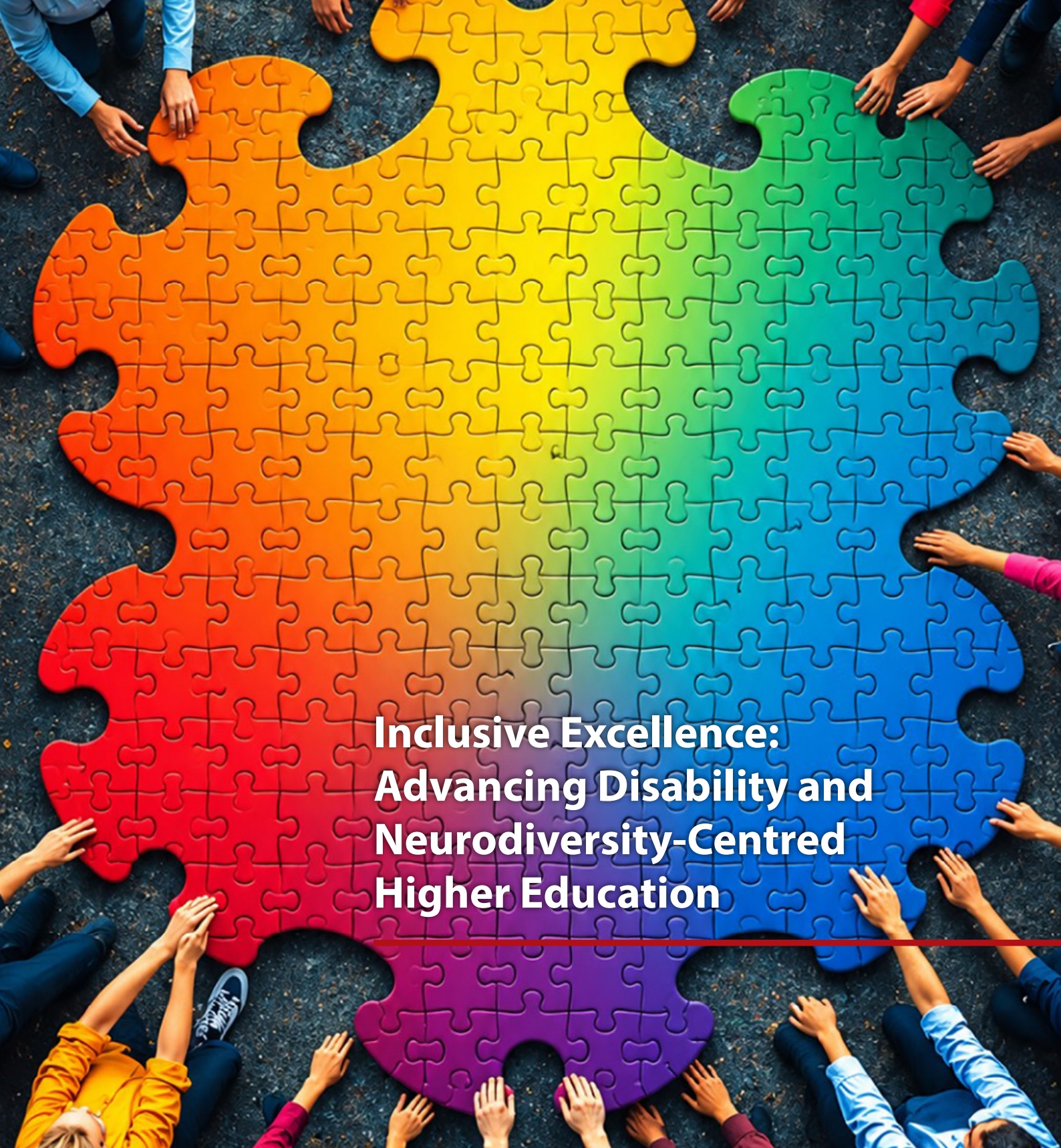
HOLISTIC HIGHER ED

A Resource for Understanding and Reflection on University Education

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**Inclusive Excellence:
Advancing Disability and
Neurodiversity-Centred
Higher Education**

About the Journal

Holistic Higher Ed seeks to serve as a global academic platform for critical reflection, interdisciplinary dialogue and global perspectives. Anchored in a humanistic and ethical framework, the publication is committed to advancing conversations that promote the full development of humans intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually and morally. It aims to bridge thought and practice, uniting voices from diverse academic, cultural and professional contexts to explore the evolving role of higher education in shaping individuals, who are not only competent professionals but also conscientious global citizens.

Vision

Holistic Higher Ed envisions a global academic community inspired by the values of compassion, dignity, service and sustainability. Guided by the principles of holistic education and rooted in the foundational philosophy of the CMI congregation, the journal promotes a deep engagement with the purpose of higher education as a transformative force in society.

Vision statement: To be a beacon of reflective and transformative educational thought across the global higher education community.

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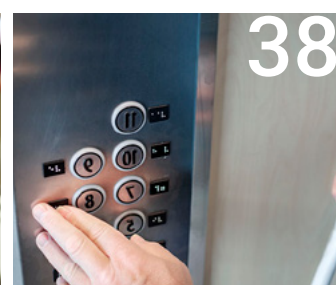
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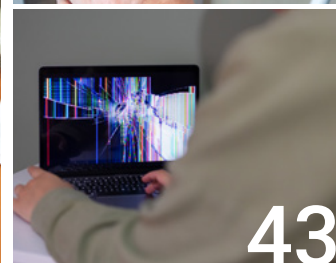
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Higher education has treated disability and neurodivergence as exceptions to be managed within an otherwise fixed system, for example, a ramp added to an existing building, an extension granted within an existing deadline, a note appended to an otherwise static syllabus. This issue of *Holistic Higher Ed* examines what our universities would look like if disability and neurodiversity were treated as ordinary forms of human variation around which excellent teaching, research and institutional life could be designed from the outset. This is the thematic crux of this volume on *Inclusive Excellence: Advancing Disability and Neurodiversity-Centred Higher Education*, a theme that touches curriculum design and classroom andragogy, assessment and accommodation policies, faculty development and student support services, campus infrastructure and institutional culture. July being the Disability Pride month, our editors deemed it fitting to discuss 'inclusivity' from this perspective in this issue of the Journal.

The seven contributions gathered here approach this theme from distinct disciplinary vantage points and return to a shared conviction that inclusion is a condition for genuine academic excellence. They write from research, from administrative experience, and in several cases from lived proximity to the questions they raise, offering not a single blueprint for an inclusive university but a set of honest, situated accounts of what inclusive practice demands, where it succeeds, and where our institutions still fall short.

Opening the issue, "Many Minds, One Classroom: Why Neurodiversity Must Shape the Future of Higher Education" argues that higher education continues to assume uniform learning styles despite the natural variability of human cognition. Examining how lecture-based delivery, text-heavy curricula, and standardised assessment privilege particular cognitive profiles, it situates this critique within the Indian context, suggesting that perceived elitism may partly reflect unaddressed cognitive diversity among students from rural and underserved backgrounds. The article draws on neuroscience, psychology and education research. The authors

call for Universal Design for Learning and psychologically informed policy, framing neurodiversity as a matter of equity and of preserving intellectual diversity itself.

"Applying Universal Design for Learning in a Social Work Course on Adult Development and Aging" offers a practical case study of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in a Master's-level social work course, describing three strategies: a flipped classroom model, service-learning with older adults and experiential simulation, aligned with UDL's principles of multiple means of engagement, representation and action, and expression. The strategies- broadened participation, accommodated diverse learning preferences and deepened understanding of complex developmental concepts, demonstrating how UDL can move a course beyond individual accommodation toward genuinely inclusive pedagogy.

Reporting on an initiative from the Centre for Neurodiversity Research and Innovation (July 2025-March 2026), "Diverse Voices, Shared Strength: Reflections on Student-Led Support Groups" evaluates the feasibility of a student-led support group for neurodiverse students and students with disability. Drawing on qualitative reflections across twelve sessions and faculty-mentored student moderators, the authors find the model created a respectful, validating space for shared experience and community-building, while surfacing training needs for future moderators, pointing to student-led support groups as a viable model for strengthening social inclusion and student mental health.

Focusing on students with speech, language or communication disorders, "Beyond Compliance: Reimagining Communication Accessibility as a Foundation for Inclusive Excellence in Higher Education" examines the gap between what universities formally promise through accommodation and what they deliver in practice. Drawing on evidence around Universal Design for Learning, faculty preparedness and assistive technology, the author argues that meeting legal compliance thresholds is insufficient, calling instead for a deeper institutional commitment that treats communication diversity

as a dimension of human variation rather than a problem to be managed, and closing with recommendations for embedding communication accessibility into universities' broader missions of equity.

Written as a reflective piece grounded in psychology's own professional commitment to inclusivity, "Neurodiversity in Psychology Education: Using Reflexivity to Move Beyond Accommodation", considers the experiences of neurodivergent Psychology students and the barriers they may face entering and remaining in the profession. Rather than treating inclusion as a matter of accommodation alone, the authors offer reflexive prompts inviting educators to examine the neuro-normative assumptions embedded in teaching, learning, research and professional practice. This extends the issue's broader argument that genuine inclusion requires institutions to interrogate their own unexamined norms.

"Attitudes to Access: The Necessity of Maintaining a Culture of Belonging and Equity in Higher Education" argues that despite decades of progress in policy and legislative frameworks, it is attitudes, and not just policy that shape the inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education and warns of a recent resurgence of ableism and segregated learning. Situating higher education within the wider continuum of schooling, the author contends that equitable access must begin in students' early years if they are to enter and progress through higher education on the same footing as their non-disabled peers.

Closing the issue, "Technology-Facilitated Violence Among Disabled and Neurodivergent Students in Higher Education" turns to an underexamined dimension of digital life on campus: technology-facilitated violence (TFV) against disabled and neurodivergent students. As universities increasingly depend on digital learning environments, the author argues that these spaces are not inherently safe, and can be weaponised to harass, surveil and exploit vulnerable users. While TFV is increasingly recognised in discussions of gender-based violence, the experiences of disabled students remain largely absent from that conversation, and the article maps this gap and considers how institutions can support safer digital participation.

Read together, these contributions point toward implications that extend well beyond any single classroom or campus. First, inclusive excellence cannot be achieved through policy alone. Accommodation frameworks, however well intentioned, tend to place the burden of adaptation on the disabled or neurodivergent individual, requiring them to disclose, request, and justify. The more durable alternative is a shift toward universal design in teaching and assessment, approaches that anticipate variation in how students process information and demonstrate learning, rather than retrofitting accommodations after the fact. Faculty development is as important a site of intervention as student support services: inclusive practice is learned, not intuitive, and depends on institutions investing in staff capacity to recognise and design for physical, cognitive, sensory and psychosocial differences.

Several contributions also flag the importance of institutional culture and language, the everyday assumptions embedded in how universities talk about ability, achievement and normalcy, and to attitude, not policy alone, as the more decisive determinant of genuine inclusion. Structural change of the kind called for in this issue is thoughtful and depends as much on shifting these underlying assumptions as on any single reform. Finally, this issue asks us to consider disability and neurodivergence as challenges the university must accommodate and also as sources of insight into how learning itself could be made inclusive for all students. An institution that inclusively accommodates neurodivergent and differently-abled learners is an institution that has thought more rigorously about andragogies of the future.

The ideas discussed in this issue are not a finished argument. It is part of an ongoing and collective conversation that we hope will continue among our readers, in their own institutions and classrooms, long after these pages are closed.

The Editorial Board

Holistic Higher Ed





Message from the Vice Chancellor

Towards Inclusive Excellence: A Note for the Future of Education

Every institution of higher learning eventually faces a question it must answer: whom does the University keep in focus when designing its classrooms, assessments, and everyday teaching and learning practices? For a long time, higher education has either ignored this question or answered it narrowly, building its structures around an unstated “typical” learner. This issue of *Holistic Higher Ed* is an invitation to answer that question differently.

The theme for this issue, Inclusive Excellence: Advancing Disability and Neurodiversity-Centred Higher Education, is not a peripheral concern and should not be addressed through occasional accommodation. It is, I believe, central to what it means for a university to be holistic in the fullest sense of that word. Holistic education, as we understand it in the CMI tradition, is concerned with the integral formation of the person, intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually and morally. A university that speaks of integral formation cannot, in good conscience, build that formation around a single template of ability. Inclusion, in this light, is not an adjustment made at the margins of our mission. It is a fuller realisation of it.

The CMI congregation’s founding commitment to education has always carried within it a preferential regard for those whom the wider system is inclined to overlook. Disability and neurodiversity-centred pedagogy extends that same commitment into the contemporary university, asking us to notice who are present in our classrooms and who are genuinely able to flourish within them. Excellence, within this context, is not measured solely by the achievements of those for whom the system was built. It is scaffolded by the range of minds and bodies for whom the system works.

This issue brings together scholars, practitioners and administrators whose work, read together, resists any single or simple account of what inclusive excellence requires and means. Their contributions cover policy, pedagogy, curriculum design, and institutional culture from the particular to the structural. In these articulations, we encounter a shared refusal to treat disability and neurodivergence as deficits to be managed. These are differences to be understood, designed for, and, where the university does its work well, sources of insight.

I am conscious that a journal issue is a modest instrument against the scale of the challenge it addresses. Structural change in higher education is necessary, and the barriers that neurodivergent and disabled students and colleagues encounter are part of systems too old and too taken-for-granted to be easily seen or even dismantled. Reflection is a necessary precondition for this change, as advocated in these pages. To redesign, we have to first examine structures, systems and practices honestly to bring about deep change.

My hope is that readers, whether researchers, administrators, teachers or students, will find in these pages not only analysis but encouragement and evidence that our universities can be reimaged, and that the work of reimagining them is already underway.

Joseph C C, CMI, PhD

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Many Minds, One Classroom: Why Neurodiversity Must Shape the Future of Higher Education

Sharon Sucharitha Gold N, Sneha Vinay Haritsa and Yogesh Kanna Sathyamoorthy



Introduction

Higher education is universally understood as the route to opportunity, social mobility and intellectual advancement. Institutions are made to identify and nurture talent and it is presumed that merit can be objectively measured through standardised systems of teaching and evaluation. However, this assumption rests on a drastic oversimplification that generally students learn in very similar ways. Recent research in neuroscience and psychology challenges this very premise. Human cognition is essentially diverse, with people possessing differences in attention span, memory, executive functioning and information processing (Diamond, 2013). Neurodiversity encompasses these differences and is framed as a natural and essential feature of humans not understood as a deviation from normalcy (Khalique et al., 2024).

Regardless, higher education systems have remained generally standardised. This causes a fundamental mismatch between how students learn and how institutions teach, resulting in the systematic marginalisation of neurodivergent learners. While higher education institutions differ from school

systems in their emphasis on learner autonomy, self-directed learning, and disciplinary specialisation, many current andragogy and assessments continue to cater to specific cognitive styles. The concern addressed in this paper is therefore not the absence of autonomy in higher education, but the persistence of structural barriers that may disadvantage neurodivergent learners despite increased academic freedom.

Understanding Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is vastly different from variations in learning styles. It refers to a variation in neurological functioning encompassing a wide variety of cognitive profiles, ranging from attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum conditions to dyslexia. Neurodiversity reflects inherent differences in the processing of information rather than deficiencies. In contrast learning styles differ from person to person with respect to acquiring and processing of information without any major differences in terms of the neural structures. Neurodiversity, however, is related to variations in neurodevelopment affecting attention, sensory control processing and language systems (Kidwell 2025). Neurodivergence is not solely characterised

The speed of change in research also carries a high risk: research practices overtaken by IT/AI can cause a far-reaching hysteresis effect among researchers and in research itself.

by deficits, but with abilities like domain-specific focus, enhanced pattern recognition and creativity. Nonetheless, educational systems mostly identify or characterise these individuals primarily through their difficulties, particularly when evaluated using standardised academic metrics. This goes on to show how narrow the quantifiable indicators of intelligence are - one that favours speed, memory and linguistic processing over other cognitive faculties.

The Silent Mismatch Between Brains and Curriculum

The human brain is structured so that learning happens through engagement, understanding the context and social interaction. This is in stark contrast to the traditional teaching methods that have been followed in educational institutions since ages where learning is expected to happen through rigid and standardised frameworks. Natural learning is a self-directed process which is intrinsically motivated, driven by curiosity and real-world necessity. Learning is deeply emotional, requiring a sense of safety and relevance for full engagement. Without active interaction and exploration, there is neither relevance nor engagement and hence no lasting learning.

Educational institutions however encourage passive learning focusing more on assessment and scores obtained rather than the understanding of the student. Excessive content in the curriculum forces teachers as well to focus more on finishing portions which in turn leads to pressure, superficial learning and cognitive overload in the students. Generally, the subjects are taught in isolation, whereas the brain retains information better when learning is meaningful and connected to lived experiences. Abstract, disconnected content often reduces engagement and long-term retention. Although several higher education institutions have adopted novel methods and cutting-edge curricula, project-based learning and continuous assessment mechanisms, implementation remains uneven across institutions and disciplines. Consequently, many neurodivergent learners continue to encounter barriers related to assessment design, workload management and expectations of academic performance.

The Cost of Misalignment: Dropout, Disengagement and Lost Potential

A uniform curriculum is intended to encourage equality and a common platform for students to study to ease transfer between schools and to evaluate the students' learning on a common baseline. Despite having the said rationale, disadvantages of having a uniform or common curriculum are significant in terms of not providing room for individual expression and increased monotony in learning. The academic scores obtained might not reflect the actual learning of the individual because the student might not be able to showcase their learning in the process of the examination conducted. Each student may have different abilities through which they can express their learning. A uniform curriculum is designed for the average student, excluding those who do not fit the mold rendering them disengaged (Carvalho, 2018). This results in increased stress and hindering of personal interest development, both of which were found to be replaced with increased academic performance, increased happiness and well-being when curriculum reform incorporating flexibility and elective courses was implemented in China (Yu & Mocan, 2019). The performance gap is observed when there is a common curriculum enabling the students who are well prepared to be benefited from a challenging test as opposed to students who are not able to prepare well (Andrietti & Su, 2019).

Rethinking Elitism: Beyond Economic Access

Economic access has been the only way to understand inclusion in education, as "neurodivergence" was not even considered until the RPwD Act (2016); there was no mention of the right to education in mainstream schools. Additionally, it is only in 2020 that NEP mentioned an inclusive framework, curriculum, inclusion of special educators and early identification. However, despite all of this, many aspects need to be reconsidered when we look at neurodiversity. For instance, individuals who suffer from executive functioning also suffer from time management, which is extremely crucial to meet deadlines in our existing educational systems (Syharat et al, 2023). While all of this is said, researched and accessed only by a set number of academicians and special educators, it

is high time that access to education goes one step beyond to include diverse brains. Neurodivergence is an umbrella term that includes movement, reading and language in which neurodivergent individuals differ from neurotypicals. However, they do not differ in cognitive reflection or analytical skills from neurotypicals (Mahak et al, 2025). Having said this, it is high time that educational institutions relook at their “inclusion policies”. For it is not just economic sections that need to be made space for, but also neurodiverse individuals who need to be given fair access. Furthermore, educational institutions should also consider that “this access” also means having special educators on board who can relook at teaching methodologies, curriculum, ergonomics, deadline policies and mode of assignment submission to really give “fair access”.

The Hidden Layer: Neurodivergence in Rural and Underserved Contexts

Neurodivergence seems to be an urban/ elitist concept. Academicians, clinicians and special educators are the ones that discuss, debate, diagnose and make policies that are simply applied to elite schools in urban societies. However, there is a larger need for the government to train school teachers in rural areas to recognise aspects that could be related to neurodivergence. A study found that deliberate effort to understand neurodivergence and the continuum of care, including increased awareness of the caregiver, could bring better outcomes for neurodivergent individuals (Joshi & Sharma, 2026). While recognising that deliberate effort is important, there is an additional barrier that needs to be addressed, and that is considering neurodiversity as

an “urban concept”. There has been documentation of significant differences in prevalence and service from urban to rural settings. Additionally, the study also documented that resources, funding, staff and support are acting as barriers for providers, teachers and researchers to facilitate in rural settings (Zhang et al, 2026). When all of these facilities are not provided, neurodiversity could be misinterpreted as either disinterest in academia or simply being poor in studies. To combat this, rural sections need to be equally considered for funding by research agencies and the government to train school faculty to recognise and provide clinical services for recognition of neurodivergence and providing support for the same.

Sex Differences and Learning Patterns

Developmental patterns show sexually dimorphic differences, which in turn affect cognition. Most differences are mild and overlapping, research says that females exhibit early development in verbal abilities, and on the contrary, males may demonstrate relative strengths in certain spatial abilities (Johnson & Meade, 1987). Neurodevelopmental conditions such as ADHD and autism are often found in males, owing to the genetic predisposition. On the other hand, mood and affective conditions like anxiety and depression are more prevalent among females, particularly in higher education contexts. These trends underlie the significance of understanding that learning is guided by biological, developmental and environmental factors. However, higher education systems seldom incorporate such variability into heutagogical design, rather relying on uniform teaching and assessment methods.



Why Psychology Must Inform Educational Policy?

Psychology is essential in informing educational policy because students today think, act and behave differently from the previous generation as a result of technological advancement, changing family and social structures, increased academic competition and growing mental health concerns. Modern education systems can no longer focus solely on academic achievement but they must also address students' cognitive, emotional, social and behavioural development. Insights from Educational Psychology and Neuroscience demonstrate that learning is not

therefore help create educational environments that are academically effective, emotionally supportive and responsive to the evolving needs of students and society.

Toward a Truly Inclusive University

Often, when the word “inclusion” is used in the context of higher educational institutions, it simply means “gender, sex, economic, social and persons with disabilities” (Filippou, Acquah, & Bengs, 2025; McArthur, 2021; Torrejón, & Álvarez, 2026). Specifically, when looking at disability, it has not only been looked at as blindness, deafness or other physical aspects such as walking and climbing, but cognitive

Overall outcomes improve when the multiple means of UDL's engagement and expression are implemented. It further reduces barriers and includes diverse assessment methods beyond high-stakes exams. Department-level screening, counselling and academic support are crucial for early identification and accommodation, especially in limited resource settings. These reforms should be implemented considering the new national education policy's emphasis on flexibility and inclusivity. Effective implementation requires sustained institutional commitment.

merely a cognitive activity but is deeply influenced by emotional experiences, relationships and well-being (Immordino-Yang, 2011). Psychology as a discipline is focused on the human brain and behaviour, hence contributes to identifying individual differences among learners, learning difficulties, behavioural concerns and effective teaching strategies that can support inclusive and learner-centred education. Research on social and emotional learning shows that psychologically informed educational practices improve academic performance, emotional regulation, student engagement and classroom behaviour (Durlak et al., 2011; Jones et al., 2019). In the current context, students are increasingly exposed to digital distractions, social comparison, anxiety, stress and reduced attention spans, making it essential for educational policy to integrate psychological principles related to mental health, motivation, resilience, emotional intelligence and developmental appropriateness. Policies grounded in psychology can



capabilities such as concentrating, remembering and decision-making are also considered. Most importantly, emotional incapacity is also considered a very important aspect (Krahn, Walker, & Correa-De-Araujo, 2015). While it is absolutely true that it is an aspect of diversity and not necessarily a “disability”, it is important to cater to this diversity. Catering to this includes centres that provide university-wide training on neurodiversity, neurodivergent leadership initiatives, ergonomics and architectural aspects that address neurodiverse conditions, facilities to address mental health concerns; inclusion of a caretaker in education systems, option to choose a modality of learning and communication that they are comfortable with, creating compassionate andragogy, and being more considerate with deadlines (Dwyer et al., 2023). Having said all of this, we as authors do not deny that there are multiple challenges that the HEI administrators will face in catering to all of these. Despite those challenges, true inclusion will be achieved when any individual with any background and any genetic make-up can simply walk in and feel comfortable in every way to pursue their higher education and does not feel that there is a barrier to learning.

Neurodiversity and Artificial Intelligence-enabled Learning Environments

As we enter the digital era, Artificial Intelligence (AI) begins to emerge as a transforming force in higher education. It presents with significant ramifications, especially for the neurodivergent as AI can provide personalised learning pathways, adaptive content delivery, assistive technologies and real-time language support. Alternate forms of assessments tailor-made for each neurodivergent student are a very critical feature that AI can provide. However, we cannot ignore the drawbacks of becoming too dependent on AI as there are concerns regarding algorithmic bias, data privacy, inequitable access and the potential reinforcement of existing educational barriers when systems are designed around neurotypical norms. As the higher education institutions look to incorporate AI in teaching learning and assessments, it is essential to keep track of whether inclusive design, transparency and neurodivergent-informed guidelines are followed when creating the tools. AI used in higher education should be one that promotes rather than one that undermines equity.

A Call to Action: Integrating Neurodiversity into Higher Education Reform

It is vital to recognise that many higher education institutions these present times have not been insistent solely on memory-based models through



Outcome-Based Education (OBE), constructive alignment, Continuous Internal Assessment (CIA) and learner-centred andragogy approaches. The continued academic, social and executive-function challenges posed to neurodivergent students do not help in any way; further, frameworks like this do not guarantee equitable learning experiences. Higher education institutions shall address neurodiversity through fundamental reform, moving beyond ritualistic inclusion. Current institutional practices are grossly deficient in psychological and neuroscientific research, and entirely dependent on standardised methods that are not adequate to reflect cognitive variability. Major or crucial reforms include: Systematically integrating psychological science into policy. Policy makers shall consult experts to factor in the practices with research on aspects like attention and executive function, ensuring equity for neurodivergent learners (Diamond, 2013); adopting flexible heutagogy like Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

Overall outcomes improve when the multiple means of UDL's engagement and expression are implemented. It further reduces barriers and includes diverse assessment methods beyond high-stakes exams. Department-level screening, counselling and academic support are crucial for early identification and accommodation, especially in limited resource



settings. These reforms should be implemented considering the new national education policy's emphasis on flexibility and inclusivity. Effective implementation requires sustained institutional commitment. Finally, educators when trained in inclusive techniques, identifying learning differences and adapting assessments would create amenable classrooms. Embracing neurodiversity is a crucial and ethical necessity. Systems not accommodating cognitive diversity will become incomplete. A shift toward inclusive, psychologically informed education is essential for equity and relevance.

Conclusion

Neurodiversity does not agree with the foundational assumptions of standardised education and educational methodologies. Understanding cognitive diversity should not be merely an academic exercise but a step taken with a lot of conviction towards achieving equity in higher education. Institutions should leave behind uniform models of teaching and evaluation to accommodate all ways of learning. Such a paradigm shift requires the communal effort of educators, psychologists, neuroscientists and policy makers. Ultimately, the purpose of higher education should not be the mass production of uniform thinkers, but rather to cultivate a melange of human potential

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Applying Universal Design for Learning in a Social Work Course on Adult Development and Aging

Aesha John



Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education

Higher education is increasingly challenged to create learning environments that support students with diverse abilities, learning preferences, cultural backgrounds and lived experiences. Within social work education, inclusive teaching is particularly important because the profession emphasises social justice, equity, dignity and the worth of all individuals (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021). Yet traditional instructional approaches often privilege a narrow range of learning styles and may unintentionally create barriers for students with disabilities and neurodivergent students (Durgungoz & Durgungoz, 2025; Friedman & Nash Luckenbach, 2024).

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provides a valuable framework for addressing these challenges. Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST) defines UDL as an evidence-based educational framework that seeks to reduce barriers to learning by designing flexible learning environments from the outset rather than retrofitting accommodations after barriers emerge (CAST, 2024). The framework emphasises three core principles: multiple means of engagement,

multiple means of representation, and multiple means of action and expression (CAST, 2024). Together, these principles acknowledge learner variability and encourage educators to create multiple pathways for students to access, engage with and demonstrate learning.

This article describes how the UDL framework was applied in a Master's-level social work course focused on adult development and aging. Specifically, three instructional approaches are discussed: a flipped classroom model, service-learning experiences with older adults and experiential simulations related to aging and dementia. These examples illustrate how UDL principles can be integrated into social work education and, more broadly, higher education, to create more inclusive and accessible learning experiences, while simultaneously supporting student learning in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

Applying UDL Through a Flipped Classroom Model

A foundational component of the course was the use of a flipped classroom model (Giannakos et al., 2018; O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015). Traditional lecture-based instruction often assumes that all students can

process information at the same pace and in the same format, an assumption that may create barriers for many learners, including neurodivergent students and students with disabilities (Durgungoz & Durgungoz, 2025). In contrast, the flipped classroom shifts content delivery outside of class and reserves class time for active learning, discussion and application of concepts.

In line with this approach, course lectures were recorded using Panopto and made available to students prior to class. Students were encouraged to watch the lectures, take notes and come to class prepared to engage in application-oriented learning activities. Providing recorded lectures aligned closely with the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principle of multiple means of representation by offering content in a flexible format that could be paused, rewind, replayed or viewed in smaller segments according to individual learning needs. Research suggests that recorded lectures can serve as an important accessibility tool by reducing barriers related to information processing, note-taking, fatigue and attendance challenges, thereby supporting more equitable participation in higher education (Horlin et al., 2024).

The flipped classroom also supported the UDL principle of multiple means of engagement. Because

students entered class with foundational knowledge, class time could be devoted to active learning activities that encouraged interaction, collaboration and deeper engagement with course material. Activities included case-study analyses, small-group discussions, Kahoot! review games and application exercises focused on adult development and aging. These activities engaged students across multiple levels of Bloom's taxonomy, moving beyond simple recall toward comprehension, application, analysis and synthesis (Bloom et al., 1956; Gilboy et al., 2015).

Student feedback supported the effectiveness of the flipped classroom model and its alignment with UDL principles. One student shared, "I liked how our lectures were posted on Panopto, and we would come to class with our notes. This allowed the opportunity for us to focus on supplemental information and ask any questions". Another student commented, "I liked watching the Panoptos outside of class and then discussing the material during class time. It allowed me to take notes, go back over the lecture, and make sure I got all the info, without wasting a class period by rushing to take notes. I feel like I got to really listen and take in the information". These comments suggest that students valued the flexibility, preparation and opportunities for active learning afforded by the flipped classroom approach.

Universal Design for Learning in Action

Three Evidence-Informed Strategies. One Inclusive Learning Experience.

1 ENGAGING THROUGH SIMULATION (DEMENTIA SIMULATOR & MORE)





Multiple Means of Engagement

Simulations immerse students in real-world scenarios, sparking curiosity and connecting emotional experience to course content.

Experience. Empathize. Engage.

2 EXPRESSING LEARNING THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS (BROOKDALE COLLABORATION)



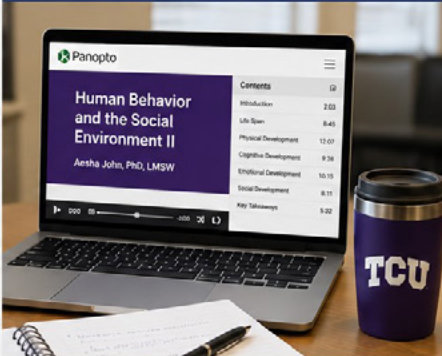


Multiple Means of Action & Expression

Students express understanding through interviews, reflections, and projects that connect theory to authentic community voices and experiences.

Connect. Collaborate. Communicate.

3 REPRESENTING CONTENT WITH PANOPTO (FLIPPED LEARNING)





Multiple Means of Representation

Panopto lectures provide accessible, self-paced content with captions, visuals, and embedded quizzes to support diverse learning needs.

Accessible. Flexible. Understandable.

UDL in Practice: Removing Barriers. Expanding Opportunities. Enhancing Learning for All.



Applying UDL Through Service Learning

A second instructional strategy involved service learning with older adults residing in an assisted living facility. Prior to the visit, students learned about reminiscence interventions and developmental theories relevant to late adulthood. Concepts included Erikson's conflict of ego integrity versus despair, Tornstam's concept of gerotranscendence and different forms of reminiscence used in practice with older adults (Berk, 2022). Students then participated in one-on-one conversations with residents, applying these concepts in authentic interactions. Listening to life stories and connecting them to developmental concepts learned in class promoted student learning across various affective categories embedded in Krathwohl's taxonomy, including valuing and internalizing values (Krathwohl et al., 1964). For example, concepts such as ego integrity became more concrete when students observed them within the stories shared by residents.

Moreover, this activity exemplified the UDL principle of multiple means of engagement. Many students find developmental theories abstract and difficult to connect to real-world experiences, but service-learning transformed abstract theoretical concepts into meaningful human interactions. The activity also reflected multiple means of representation. Students encountered developmental concepts through lived narratives rather than solely through textbooks or lectures. Finally, service-learning supported multiple means of action and expression. Students who struggled with abstract academic language often demonstrated sophisticated conceptual understanding when discussing real-life examples from their conversations with residents. Indeed, they acquired various psychomotor skills across Dave's

taxonomy (Dave, 1970). Students grasped and gave examples of various developmental concepts, and they also conducted and mastered interviewing skills.

In course evaluations, students consistently identified service-learning and community-engaged activities as among the most valuable aspects of the course. One student noted, "I loved getting to interview people from the community and thought it was really creative to have this experience." Students also emphasized the importance of applying classroom concepts in authentic contexts, describing the assignments as providing "real-world practice" and "real-life interactions to benefit our class material and overall understanding".

Applying UDL Through Aging and Dementia Simulations

The third instructional strategy involved experiential simulations focused on aging and dementia. Students participated in an aging simulation designed to mimic common age-related sensory and physical changes including visual impairments associated with cataracts, reduced dexterity related to arthritis and mobility limitations. Students also participated in a dementia simulation that replicated challenges associated with cognitive impairment, including altered sensory processing, limited visual fields, impaired depth perception and distracting auditory stimuli. During these simulations, students attempted to complete everyday tasks (e.g., folding clothes, texting, feeding a pet) while experiencing temporary sensory and cognitive barriers. As delineated in Krathwohl's affective taxonomy, the activities encouraged students to reflect on how environmental factors can create challenges for older adults and individuals living with dementia (Krathwohl et al., 1964).



These simulations aligned with the UDL principle of multiple means of engagement by providing a highly interactive and immersive learning experience. Experiential activities often increase motivation because learners become active participants rather than passive recipients of information (Lashari et al., 2026). As one student mentioned in their course evaluation, “I really liked the simulations. I feel like this sort of hands-on learning was really helpful for me.” Students frequently reported strong emotional reactions and heightened empathy following the simulations. Second, simulations offered multiple means of representation. Rather than learning about sensory changes through text or lecture alone, students experienced approximations of these challenges firsthand.

Conclusion

The CAST UDL framework provides a powerful approach for creating inclusive learning environments

within higher education settings. In a Master’s-level social work course focused on adult development and aging, a flipped classroom model, service-learning experiences, and experiential simulations supported the UDL principles of engagement, representation and action and expression. The approaches also scaffolded learning in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

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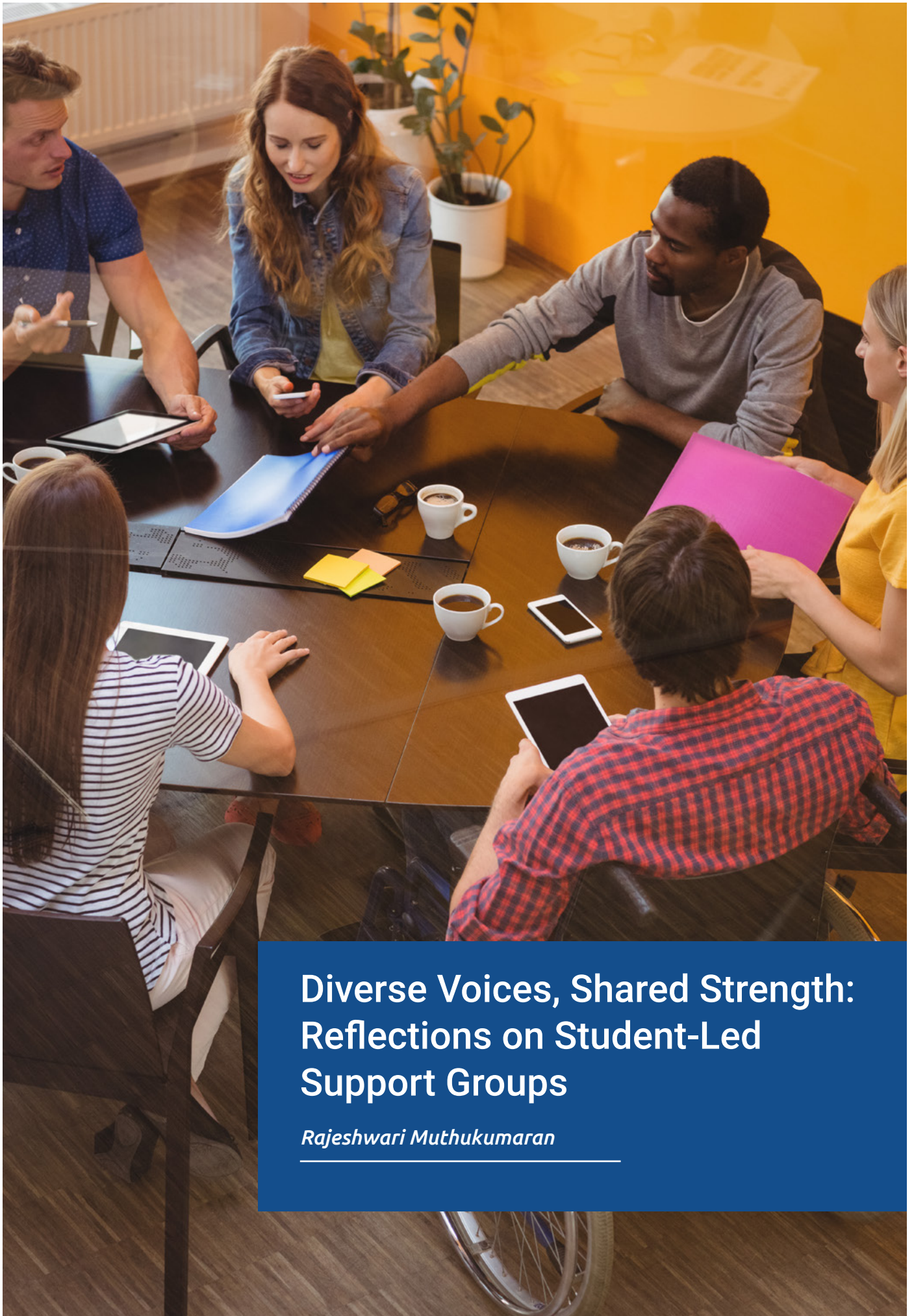
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Diverse Voices, Shared Strength: Reflections on Student-Led Support Groups

Rajeshwari Muthukumaran

Introduction

The Centre for Neurodiversity Research and Innovation (CNRI; referred to as 'the Centre' in this article) designed and hosted a student-led support group for students with diagnosed neurodivergence and students with disability. The cohort comprised a diverse group of learners, including individuals with specific learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, as well as sensory and motor impairments. This article will outline the need for such support group models and their impact on inclusion in higher education institutions, while sharing our experience hosting support group sessions during the academic year 2025-26.

Note on Terminology: The terms “disability” and “neurodiversity” are used throughout this article as per the preferred and agreed-upon usage by the cohort and the statutory frameworks outlined below.

Disability has been broadly defined as “capacity limitations which hinder the ability to execute needed activities, thereby participation in a given environment” (Linden, 2017). It is crucial to note that the definition of disability has evolved in response to its social, political and economic significance. A shift from medical models to social models where the importance is now given to ‘functioning’ in a given environment and positive self-identity rather than the individual, biological, mental or health condition (Patel & Brown, 2017; Olkin, 2002). In support, the disability associated with mental health disorders is evidenced when the functioning of an individual is affected (Linden, 2017; Chaudhury, et al., 2006). For example, a student with major depressive disorder might experience fatigue, social withdrawal and be unable to concentrate during classes. Consequently, a clinical condition might impair a student’s academic functioning. In India, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwD Act, 2016), covering twenty-one disabilities alongside motor and sensory disabilities, considers specific learning disability, autism spectrum disorders, intellectual disability and other mental illnesses. Under this act, access to financial benefits, accessibility mandates and accommodations in terms of reservations in public employment is a fundamental right. This urges us towards inclusion, with a focus on individual support needs and on creating inclusive spaces.

In the case of disability, there have long been two main frameworks for inclusion, one that advocates students with disability joining mainstream classrooms and the other which advocates students associating with others with similar characteristics and interests to especially aid in developing a positive self-identity (Stainback et al., 1994). The former framework can be observed in some of the policies and guidelines aimed at creating inclusive academic spaces and enhancing campus life. The National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) envisions social and economic mobility and inclusion in higher education. The policy also encourages curriculum changes, focus on skill-based courses and technological intervention to promote inclusion, ensure quality education and ease the transition to employment. Specific to persons with disabilities, the policy also champions barrier-free infrastructure, technology and artificial intelligence-driven support and learning resources and flexible assessment-related accommodation, to name a few. Translating the RPwD Act (2016) and NEP (2020), the University Grants Commission’s (UGC, 2022) published accessibility guidelines and standards for Higher Educational Institutions and Universities (2022) outline a holistic approach with institutional sociomorphic inclusion through student support practices in addition to physical/ environmental support measures and academic inclusion. These policies and guidelines underline that inclusion and accessibility are a multi-layered ecosystem.

Inclusion in Our Campus

CHRIST (Deemed to be University)’s mission is to provide a nurturing ground for our diverse student cohort. The multi-layered ecosystem involving all stakeholders of the institution plays a role in true inclusion. The University, adopting a holistic framework for education, provides an inclusive environment and paves the path for excellence. Outside the physical and environmental support, offices, centres and staff play a crucial role in ensuring



inclusion and improving campus life for students with support needs. For example, the Office of Examinations has tailored exam accommodation guidelines. Disability Support and Services ensure equal opportunity and academic accommodations. The Centre for Counselling and Health Services (CCHS) works with students and supports their individual support and academic needs. The Teaching Learning Enhancement Cell works on strengthening curriculum, pedagogy and assessment for inclusion. The non-teaching staff and security aid in mobility and other support. We at the Centre wanted to further understand how we can support our students who need additional support inside and outside the classroom. As a result, the Centre designed and hosted a student-led support group for students with diagnosed neurodivergence and students with disabilities.

Support groups, adjunct to mental health interventions, have been effective in empowering, providing a sense of support and belongingness to individuals with mental health issues (Worrall et al., 2018). Studies have shown that students with disabilities also show a higher prevalence of mental health issues than their non-disabled peers, whether in individual mental health therapy or not (Coduti et al., 2016; Solís García et al., 2024). Safe and inclusive spaces like a support group bring a sense of belongingness and enhance positive self-identity, self-esteem and academic self-efficacy (Crompton et al., 2024; Fotheringham et al., 2023; Verlenden, 2024; Worrall et al., 2018). This implies that support groups can be another social support system that can act as a protective factor for student mental health.

Student-led Support Groups: A CNRI Initiative

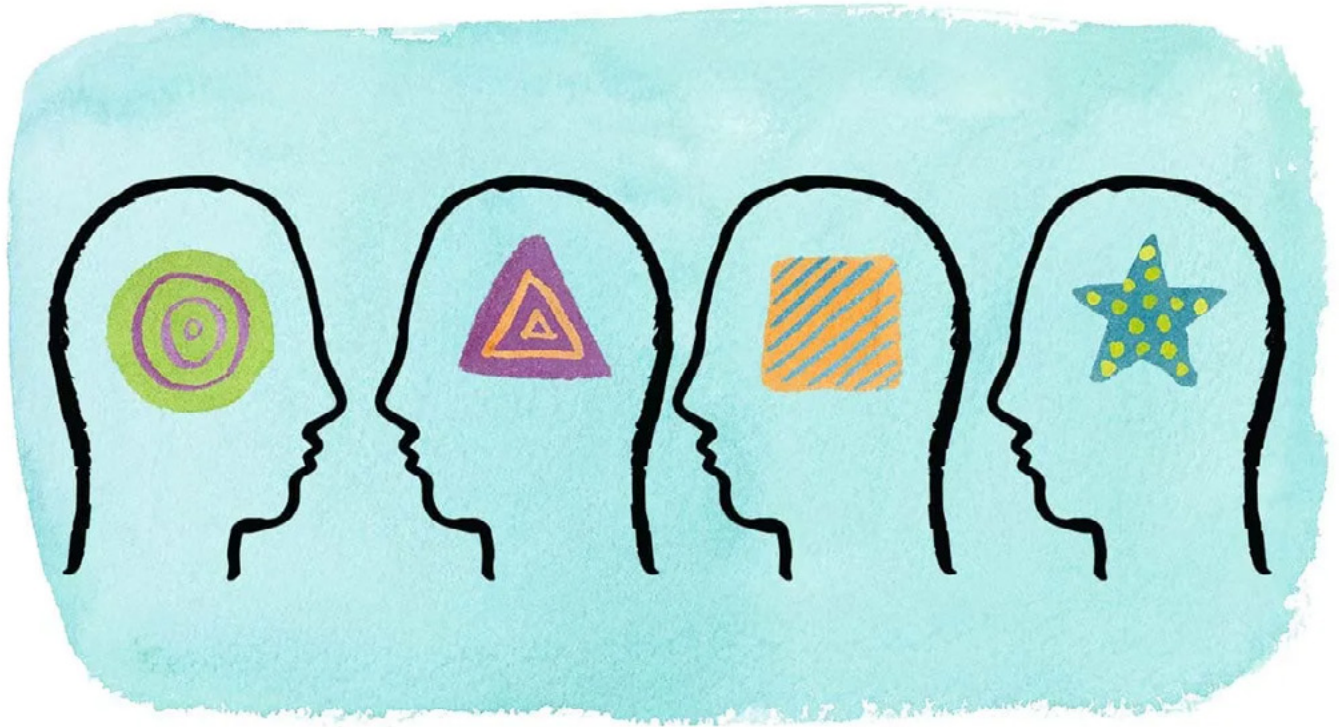
We at the Centre wanted to focus on creating a safe and inclusive space where students can discuss and share their unique experiences in the form of support groups for students. The participants were students with various support needs, including neurodiverse students and students with (physical and sensory) disability. Neurotypical students from a psychology background were moderating the sessions. A faculty mentor with a psychology background (the author) trained and mentored the student moderators. Our student-led model integrates student moderators who (a) do not have a formal diagnosis but serve as skilled neurotypical allies; and (b) share student identity with participants. The faculty was present to mentor the student moderators and facilitate the session (Worrall et al., 2018).

The primary objective of social inclusion was to create a respectful and inclusive environment where students can share experiences, explore challenges and strategies and build a sense of community. Along with the faculty mentor, the sessions were conceived with the help of moderators and participant feedback.

Procedure and Recruitment for the Support Group

The Centre had sent an open call to all faculty and students to join an orientation session on support groups, which introduced participants to the concepts of neurodiversity, disability and campus inclusion. The





student support group plan of the Centre was introduced during the orientation, and recruitment forms were circulated to the student attendees. Twelve students volunteered to participate in the support group initiative. Student moderators were recruited by circulating a form via email to all graduate students pursuing psychology. Final selection was determined through individual interviews and group discussions. They were evaluated on their domain, personal inclusive philosophies, interpersonal skills and overall academic performance. Five student moderators were recruited and underwent three hours of training across two sessions, observed at least two sessions moderated by the faculty mentor and were provided with resources for reading and mock practice. We completed twelve sessions. During the course of the support group sessions, regular feedback was taken from the support group participants and student moderators. Regular reflections and mentoring sessions between the faculty mentor and the student moderators were also held. Sessions were planned around university events and assessments alongside the participants. The initial four sessions, moderated by the faculty mentor, were spent building rapport, and various participants attended to see whether this was a space they would like to join and explore. As the sessions progressed, five to seven students regularly attended most of the sessions. The sessions covered topics from the identity of disability/diagnosis, social experience in peer groups and classroom engagements.

Reflections and Experiences

Student participants shared meaningful positive experiences such as faculty members' empathy and support during classes and assessment and having a friend to support them in class/campus, noting that they felt heard in these experiences. Through the sessions, we identified support systems on campus, as well as challenges and barriers to classroom and on-campus inclusion. These experiences can help shape future initiatives toward inclusion. The current article focuses on exploring the feasibility of running student-led support groups sustainably. We found that participants identified the support group as a safe and fun space. Students shared strategies and resources that have helped them in classrooms and campus life. Interestingly, a few students have indicated a positive sense of self surrounding disability. Few have even taken up initiatives on campus to enhance inclusion, demonstrating self-advocacy. They have indicated interest in continuing the support group sessions in the upcoming academic year as well. These experiences are similar to those evidenced by neurodiverse students and students with disability (Crompton et al., 2024; Fotheringham et al., 2023; Worrall et al., 2018). In later sessions, participants were interested in understanding the experience of their neurotypical student moderators, and the sessions soon turned into smooth conversations. The moderators and students noted that this flow can be affected by the presence of the faculty mentor, although they valued the



skill set the mentor brings to the sessions. The student moderators shared during their reflections that they see themselves as more of “peers/ friends” than moderators. Student moderators identified further training needs: observation of faculty mentor and other moderators helped them learn vicariously, and mock group scenario-based training. The faculty mentor and moderators also agreed that postgraduate students are better equipped to moderate the support groups with brief training and regular mentoring. The students overall indicated that they would like to meet more frequently (once every two weeks at least); however, they acknowledge that amidst academic work, assessments and other activities, it might be difficult during college hours.

Implications and Future Direction

The preliminary findings from the pilot run of the support group show the importance of a holistic approach to ensure social inclusion and consequently a better quality of campus life and academic success. Although the RPwD Act includes mental illness, our support group did not include students with mental illness at this stage. This was mainly due to ethical concerns regarding the competency and readiness of student moderators to facilitate peers with mental illness. However, to foster inclusion, future research can explore this integration. The efficacy of support groups and other group peer support interventions for mental health is less explored and requires further validation (Crompton et al., 2024; Fotheringham et al., 2023; Worrall et al., 2018). Most research on student support groups comes from school-based models. At the university level, we can extend these models from schools to co-design support groups and also explore the feasibility of having a peer (a student who shares a similar experience/ shares similar characteristics to the group) (Crompton et al., 2024;

Fotheringham et al., 2023). Further research in this area could focus on making such student- led models sustainable by developing a robust training protocol for the student moderators, and institutions focusing on inclusion, advocacy and driving change can explore a social constructivist solution-focused approach to facilitate social inclusion on topics such as bullying (Kvarme et al., 2013).

Conclusion

Overall, student support groups on campus as a space to foster inclusion and build community have shown promise. The Centre will further take these preliminary findings into consideration and explore a robust and sustainable model of student-led support groups for inclusion in higher education institutions/universities.

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Beyond Compliance: Reimagining Communication Accessibility as a Foundation for Inclusive Excellence in Higher Education

Santhosh Simon

Introduction

After working for almost 16 years, as both an academician and a clinician, I observed a common trend regarding speech and language accommodations in higher education. Unintentionally, students with communication disorders fell through the cracks of the accommodation system already set in place. It is unlikely that those with physical or learning disabilities will be affected, since they have increased the support over the years. However, responses of accommodation systems to students with fluency disorders (stuttering or cluttering), voice disorders, misarticulations, and pragmatic language issues, to name a few, remain largely uncertain.

The trajectory in the United States from the public school system to higher education is worth noting. In primary and secondary school, children with communication disabilities can receive an Individualised Education Programme, or IEP, a legally binding plan that spells out what the school must do to provide necessary accommodations (Individuals with Disabilities Education

Act [IDEA], 2004). The IEP is an evolving document throughout the child's school years, from the early years through graduation. It is an evolving document as it is regularly scrutinised and undergoes extensive reviews. However, this rigorous process is not replicated to the same extent when the student reaches the university. A student with an IEP from school is encouraged to take it to the office of disability services on the university campus, to share information about the accommodations they received in high school. There is a difference in legal mandates regarding university accommodations for communication difficulties that students face during seminar discussions, presentations, group projects and the informal social negotiations of campus life. (Edwards et al., 2022).

According to the current data, roughly one in five higher education students reports having some form of disability (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2024). Among students with disabilities, first-year dropout rates are between 25 and 35 per cent (Aulck et al., 2016; Tinto, 1993). Students who do not feel a sense of connection within their first eight weeks on campus are at elevated

risk of leaving the university campuses (Shaewitz & Crandall, 2020; Strayhorn, 2018). The above numbers are not specific to communication disorders but also apply to the student population without accommodations. Students can experience anxiety about understanding and acceptance, which are integral parts of the social dimensions of campus life.

Moving Past a Compliance Mindset

Universities in the United States, view disability accommodations as a matter of legal compliance under Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 1990 and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and thus the institutions work to meet these legal obligations. Even though necessary, these legal compliances tend to create a system surrounded by exceptions. It is like adjustments allowed in the curriculum for those students who disclose a documented disability, where the curriculum itself is not specifically designed with the disabled student in mind.

Students with communication difficulties face real limitations when their accommodations are focused solely on legal compliance. Accommodations provided during test-taking or in the form of note-taking may not address the complexities of anxiety-provoking situations like answering in front of the class when called upon, working with peers during a group project or the fear of differential treatment once the disability is disclosed. Barrera Ciurana and Moliner García (2024) point to how students with autism spectrum disorder want to be heard as individuals rather than sorted into categories. Honest inclusion requires the prerequisite that we listen before we design. Thus, we need learning environments designed to accommodate varied ways of communicating.

What Universal Design for Learning Offers?

To create a proactive design to address this problem, we do have Universal Design for Learning, or UDL, which rests on three pillars of multiple means of representation, engagement and action or expression, and the evidence suggests that when all three are implemented together, learning outcomes improve substantially for everyone, not just students with disabilities (Dalton et al., 2019; Edwards et al., 2022). According to this idea, flexibility is built into the course from the beginning, rather than building a course for a student and then making modifications based on the student's accommodation needs.

In real terms, this might be offering lecture material in multiple formats or dropping timed assessments. Delaney and Hata (2020) found that UDL-based assessment approaches outperformed traditional accommodations for English language learners with

learning disabilities; a finding that might hold for communication disorders as well, since the barriers are often identical. Thus, universally designed courses reduce the need for individual accommodation in the first place.

The Role of Faculty

None of this works without faculty buy-in, and faculty buy-in depends on preparation. Most instructors genuinely want to support their students; the problem is that they have not been trained to do so, particularly regarding communication-related disabilities. Delaney and Hata (2020) note that many faculties working with diverse learners lack the strategies to respond effectively. Claxton and colleagues (2018) found that faculty supporting students with autism had no consistent standards to follow; some prioritised legal requirements, others focused on practical adjustments and still others were unsure where to begin.

Good faculty development, in my view, needs to be hands-on and discipline-specific. For example, a professor adapting a lab report assignment, or thinking through how to run a discussion section so that students who need more time can actually participate, is always better than a workshop that talks about inclusion in the abstract. Also, some combination of expert-led sessions, self-paced modules and ongoing peer conversation tends to produce more durable change than a single orientation-day presentation.

Technology and Its Limits

Assistive technology has successfully evolved over the years. Instruments to convert whispered speech to a natural-sounding voice, various virtual reality platforms to practice social interactions, real-time captioning and advanced augmentative and alternative communication





devices, to name a few. All of the above-mentioned assistive technology innovations are promising and exciting, and, according to current evidence, when matched to students' needs, they are associated with high satisfaction. Students with autism report that their motivation and comprehension were improved when the visual supports were built into their instructions (Barrera Ciurana & Moliner García, 2024), and captioning services have proven to be a meaningful classroom support for deaf and hard-of-hearing students (Alsalamah, 2020).

However, procuring the technology is not enough to use it effectively. I have seen institutions invest in expensive platforms but fail to make them functional when they leave it to the faculty to figure out how to integrate them on their own. Without training or technical support and a culture that treats assistive technology as a normal part of teaching rather than a special case, these tools go underused and fail to serve students. The investment needs to extend beyond purchasing to include ongoing evaluations to understand what is actually working and for whom.

Practical Recommendations

Evidence-based recommendations may be helpful for institutions seeking to strengthen their communication accessibility. Since it benefits all students and reduces the burden of the individual accommodation process, UDL should be treated as the starting point for course design. Additionally, faculty development

programmes need to address communication-related disabilities explicitly, along with other disabilities and accommodation services offered to the students. It should be embedded in the regular professional development calendar. Along with the implementation procedures, assistive technology usage should undergo periodic assessments. For example, tools such as the QUEST 2.0 satisfaction measure (Demers et al., 2000) or the SETT framework (Zabala, 2005) can be used for this purpose. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, students' lived experiences should be given genuine weightage, as they are the most reliable guide to what actually helps them succeed.

Concluding Thoughts

Hearing from students with communication difficulties, understanding the evidence that may challenge our assumptions and bridging the gap between what our institutions value and what they actually implement are the core of communication accessibility. It is not an easy task to design diverse and inclusive learning environments and to cater to the needs of every student who brings different lived experiences, varied abilities and aspirations. However, it is the work that higher education institutions exist to do.

For the faculty to teach more thoughtfully, classrooms to become more flexible and the campus as a whole to become a more human place, institutions should see communication accessibility as an expression of their

core educational mission, not just as legal compliance. Thus, its effects will extend well beyond the students most directly affected.

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Neurodiversity in Psychology Education: Using Reflexivity to Move Beyond Accommodation

Benjamin Weir, Teasha Poblet, Kaja Gregory and Rachel Dryer

The neurodiversity paradigm is a social justice movement that has been led by autistic people (den Houting, 2019). It emphasises that 'neurotypes' such as autism and ADHD are natural brain-based differences that result in differences in thinking and behaviour, which can be adaptive in some settings and pose challenges in others (Sonuga-Barke & Thapar, 2021). Though there is no commonly accepted definition of the term 'neurodiversity affirming practice', these are generally conceptualised as strength-based ways of working with neurodivergent people towards their own goals (den Houting, 2019), with a focus on changing the environments or the tasks, rather than trying to 'normalise' the person to fit the assumptions, needs and preferences of the neuronormative majority (den Houting, 2019; Wagland et al., 2025). Neurodivergence, such as autism, specific learning disability or ADHD can be associated with positive traits such as divergent thinking, enhanced empathy and enhanced cognitive abilities (Maw et al., 2024). The neurodiversity paradigm does not dismiss the reality of disability that people experience. It emphasises that the disability experienced by neurodivergent people is primarily due to an interaction or poor fit between individual characteristics and the physical, social or environmental demands of the contexts they live, work and learn in (den Houting, 2019). The neurodiversity paradigm focuses attention on the ways social systems, including education, have been developed to meet the needs of neurotypical people, inadvertently creating and perpetuating difficulties for people with neurodivergent cognitive development or ability (Pellicano & den Houting, 2022).

Experiences of Neurodivergent Students in Psychology Training

Tertiary education requires students to apply academic skills more independently than earlier stages of education. Neurodivergent people may experience difficulties that are not faced by their neurotypical peers. In their systematic review, Davis et al. (2021) found that autistic students in higher education had high levels of mental health difficulties and sensory challenges and experienced greater social, academic and communication difficulties. Students with ADHD may face greater cognitive load than their neurotypical peers because of the greater executive functioning demands required in many academic contexts, such as planning, organisation, time management, attentional control and working memory (Álvarez-Godos et al., 2023). However, universities may overlook the extent to which executive functioning is also required to manage the social and organisational demands of participating in higher education, beyond just the skills needed to master academic learning outcomes themselves.

These challenges are also echoed by neurodivergent

postgraduate psychology students. Neurodivergent clinical psychology students in the UK highlighted the neurotypical and ableist assumptions that were embedded in their course, such as evaluation of eye contact that rewarded neurotypical communication patterns and penalised neurodivergent ones (Ison, 2025). More broadly, students identified that psychology privileged neurotypical forms of expression believed to be essential to a micro-counselling skillset (Ison, 2025; Vieira, 2025). Students also noted that teaching styles did not cater to different processing speeds and needs, identifying barriers such as minimal breaks in class times, expectations to answer questions on the spot directly after learning or modelling a skill after seeing it performed once (Ison, 2025). Psychology training programmes were also described as rigid, expecting flexibility from students to fit into a 'one size fits all' approach. These experiences led to some students feeling a sense of exclusion from the profession (Ison, 2025; Vieira, 2025).

Implicit messages of what a psychologist should look like, sound like and behave like also prompted masking or camouflaging among neurodivergent students, adding to their cognitive load and contributing to higher rates of burnout (Ison, 2025; Vieira, 2025). Students with additional intersecting minority identities alongside their neurodivergence also highlighted additional barriers in their psychology training, as they sometimes felt obligated to mask their other identities (Vieira, 2025). Drawing on Bourdieu's *Theory of Capital*, intersectionally marginalised neurodivergent students often possess reduced access to social capital, thereby limiting their capacity to offset or absorb the social costs associated with non-conformity (Bourdieu, 2018; Vieira, 2025).

Supports or accommodations for neurodivergent students include university-based supports (such as tutoring, assessment or exam accommodations such as extra time, or course adjustments) or external supports that are sought out by students (such as cognitive behavioural therapy, coaching, or counselling) (Álvarez-Godos et al., 2023; Davis et al., 2021). The availability of these accommodations is necessary, and they can be successful (Jansen et al., 2017; Sarrett, 2018), though not all neurodivergent students will seek or require support for academic success. However, for those who seek them, accommodations may not be viewed positively, and there may be barriers and stigma associated with accessing or implementing them (Gibbs et al., 2025; Ison, 2025). Advocating for, acquiring, and organising all the required documentation to register with the university to receive accommodations also adds an additional burden to neurodiverse students that neurotypical and



able-bodied students do not need to carry (Gibbs et al., 2025; Ison, 2025).

Finally, it should be emphasised that a proportion of students in tertiary education will not yet be identified as neurodivergent and may discover their divergence concurrently with their learning. Within the diagnostic criteria for some neurodivergent conditions, there is a recognition that indicators (or ‘symptoms’) of the condition may not become apparent until the context becomes more complex. For example, *the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed., text rev; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2022) criteria for autism spectrum disorder notes that social differences may not become apparent until demands exceed ability. It is possible that students who may have appeared to cope well during earlier levels of education may experience greater needs for support in tertiary or postgraduate training, and for some, these difficulties may suggest neurodivergence.

Professional Placements: A Hidden Curriculum

Postgraduate training is required for registration as a psychologist in Australia. For psychology students to access postgraduate training implies that they have been able to succeed at undergraduate levels (whether they used formal accommodation or support or not). In many postgraduate psychology programmes, core professional practice skills are often taught explicitly through a combination of lectures, reading and classroom activities. These skills, such as ethical

decision-making, assessment, diagnosis, formulation and intervention skills, are often taught in ways students will be familiar with from their undergraduate training: didactic delivery, discussion, reading, classroom practice, role play, simulation and written assignments. However, in addition to classroom learning, postgraduate psychology training includes large amounts of learning in professional placement experiences.

Accommodations, which are often limited to classrooms and assessments, may not be transferred over to professional placements, meaning students only receive accommodations for part of their studies. Placement coordinators may not be informed of student academic needs or how that may influence placements, and students may not disclose their needs for fear that it will stop them from being able to access highly competitive placement allocations. There may be significant variation between placement providers in terms of their capacity to understand or apply neuroaffirming principles when supporting students on placements.

Professional placement demands extend far beyond the explicit curriculum. On placement, students are required to also draw on other skills, such as professional etiquette, connecting with colleagues and navigating workplace policies and politics. In busy workplaces, students need to attend to client related-, workplace related- and university related demands, often simultaneously. They need to engage in rapid task-switching, identifying and prioritising the unwritten rules of workplace learning. These skills may not be explicitly taught as part of the

curriculum: more commonly, it seems that these skills are either assumed to be skills students already bring, or skills that will be learnt implicitly through experience. An expectation that students will perceive, learn and apply these skills through exposure and practice disproportionately disadvantages neurodivergent students and represents a “hidden curriculum” (Berg et al., 2017; Byrne, 2022).

Neurodivergent students also have the additional burden of navigating stigma on placements. Postgraduate psychology students have reported experiencing stigma from supervisors, colleagues and peers on placement (Ison, 2025; Vieira 2025) and that disclosure of neurodiversity had to be a “careful decision”. This needs to consider if, when, how, and to whom to disclose their neurodivergent identity or inclusion needs adds an additional burden for neurodivergent psychology students.

Reflexivity: Moving Beyond Accommodating Individuals to Enacting System Change

Reflexivity refers to an active and ongoing process of examining how a practitioner’s experiences and biases shape their practices (Jamieson et al., 2023; Psychology Board of Australia [PsyBA], 2024b). Recent changes in the Code of Conduct for psychologists in Australia have emphasised the role of reflexivity in professional practice with an expectation that all registered psychologists consider “how their own culture, values, attitudes, assumptions and beliefs influence their interactions with people and families, the community, other practitioners and colleagues” (PsyBA, 2024a, p.7). Additionally, all psychologists practising in Australia are to “[understand] neurodiversity, strengths-based, trauma-informed and positive approaches to supporting people” (PsyBA, 2024a, p.12). Many of these changes are the result of contributions from neurodivergent psychologists within the profession. Continued meaningful participation of people with lived experience at every level of the profession is vital.

We write as educators and psychologists as educators and practitioners with an interest in reflexive practice and equity. Though we may believe that we are supporting students when we focus on accommodating individual differences as they are identified or disclosed. However, this approach emphasises the role of assisting a neurodivergent person to meet, and even comply with, neurotypical norms. This can perpetuate a deficit-based view of neurodivergence, positioning support as a way for neurodivergent people to adapt to existing systems, rather than prompting systems to become more inclusive. But are we modelling our own reflexivity? Are we willing to reflect on the neuronormative assumptions that may be perpetuated in higher education classrooms,



curriculum and assessment design, professional placement activities, research practices and supervisory relationships?

Informed by our experiences working with neurodivergent people in education and clinical contexts, as well as the research from neurodivergent colleagues, Table 1 offers some prompts inviting educators to consider how to move beyond an approach that seeks to accommodate or mask difference, towards one that allows systems and practices to be shaped by difference. We acknowledge the diverse strengths that neurodivergent people have brought to psychology, and recognise the additional labour that has been required. We do not presume to speak on behalf of neurodivergent people, but to turn our focus towards areas in which implicit assumptions may pose barriers to neurodivergent individuals seeking further training in psychology. These ideas are not exhaustive. We hope that readers will find these prompts useful to stimulate reflexive consideration in their own neurodiverse contexts, recognising that any plans for action in response to this reflexion should include the perspectives of neurodivergent people within that context.

Table 1.

Examples of accommodations and reflexive prompts that could be considered to facilitate diversity and inclusion in higher education

Setting/ Occasion	Accommodations	Examples of reflexive prompts to consider in addition to accommodating individuals needs and preferences
In the classroom setting	Asking students to disclose their disability and their need for support, then offering support consistent with academic policies (e.g., extra time, extensions, assistive technology, readers/writers).	To what extent are students safe to disclose their neurodivergence in their postgraduate training at an individual, peer, classroom and system level? Are stigma or other barriers preventing this type of disclosure?
	Modifying existing assessment activities (e.g., extensions, extra time, note takers, readers etc.)	What alternative ways can relevant learning outcomes be achieved? Is this task design based on an assumption of neurotypicality?
	Using group work or role plays as learning strategies.	Is there recognition in the design of the activity that neurodivergent people may experience greater cognitive demands in group work and may experience role plays as sources of stress due to their communication being misperceived by peers (or vice versa)? Have all students been given guidance on managing the feedback and interpersonal demands of role plays, in addition to being taught the core clinical skills? Have processing speed differences been considered in the design and implementation of the activities?
	Using role plays to evaluate students.	Are all learning outcomes that are being evaluated clearly stated, including those that are implicit or 'hidden' outcomes related to practice (e.g., eye contact, tone, expression, posture, speed of written/verbal response)? Are students being evaluated on neurotypical assumptions? Conversely, are neurotypical students assessed by neurodivergent educators on their capacity to match their communication style to neurodivergent people's preferences?
In research supervision of students	Enabling students to access accommodations through established university processes (e.g., extensions, formal review procedures).	Do supervisors recognise the students differ in their communication styles, support needs, and working practices, including how executive functioning demands influence time management, understanding of unwritten academic conventions, and responses to in-the-moment verbal feedback? Do supervisors have the training/understanding to know that difficulties may require mutual understanding and adaptation, rather than assuming that students alone must adjust to existing expectations?
When preparing for placement	Providing information to students about placements.	Have all skills required for placement success (not just clinical skills) been identified so all students can consider learning goals and self-identify possible solutions? Have disability or student services who collaborate with students on individual accommodations considered what accommodations may be required on placement? Does an education inclusion plan acknowledge placement and professional experience as sites of learning?

Whilst on professional placements / in clinical or workplace supervision	Having the student's placement supervisor acknowledge and affirm neurodiversity in supervision.	Has an individual's strengths and values arising from their identity been acknowledged and explored as a resource for success? How can we have more neurodivergent supervisors to build the capacity of neurodivergent and neurotypical students? If there is a lack of neurodivergent professionals to provide supervision, what systemic barriers need to change to enable more neurodivergent people to reach this stage?
	Planning accommodations and remedial support when difficulties emerge on placement.	How can the student co-design their placement experience to support their specific learning goals? What proactive planning or understanding at the student, placement and university levels may prevent or reduce the likelihood of difficulties? E.g., If a person's processing speed or social communication differences may make spontaneously critical feedback difficult to act on, what alternatives exist?
	Evaluating whether the student is performing a clinical skill competently.	Is this competency evaluation based on neurotypical ways of demonstrating the skill? Has remediation of a relevant skill been framed flexibly, emphasising the development of a range of skills and styles to meet the diverse needs and preferences of clients, or has it assumed a single "correct" way of demonstrating competence based on neuronormative expectations?
	Emphasising self-care strategies when a neurodivergent student appears with or reports high levels of stress on placement	What are the student's strengths, values and interests, and how can these be harnessed in the service of their goals and self-care? Is a student's stress related to masking their neurodivergence? To what extent is the placement requiring students to mask? Are they experiencing stigma? Are there implicit or assumed skills or activities that have not been explained or taught that are contributing to stress?





Conclusion

For a truly inclusive and diverse profession, psychology as a discipline must explore the barriers that make it disproportionately more challenging for some people to become psychologists, educators, researchers and leaders within the profession. Recent changes to professional practice guidelines emphasise the importance of critically analysing the assumptions that shape professional practice. It is important for psychology educators to consider how curriculum, classroom and professional placement experiences may perpetuate neurotypical values and preferences so that more diverse pathways to the profession can be developed. A reflexive, critical evaluation of neuronormative beliefs or assumptions implicit in psychology education may help reduce barriers so that neurodivergent people can continue to make their important contributions to the discipline in teaching, research and clinical practice. These contributions are vital in leading us towards genuinely inclusive and responsive practice for our neurodiverse communities.

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Attitudes to Access: The Necessity of Maintaining a Culture of Belonging and Equity in Higher Education

Melissa Cain

Introduction

The journey from exclusion to inclusion for students who experience disability has been largely due to significant changes in attitudes, assumptions and biases. Much larger numbers of students with disability, particularly those with developmental conditions and those who live with neurodivergence, attend higher education than at any other time (Yim, 2026). Over the past 40 years there has been a sequential move from exclusion to inclusion, however, there are indications we are experiencing a swing in the opposite direction. Recent rejection of diversity and inclusion efforts as part of the current political climate should be of concern to all stakeholders who support students with disability. For many nations, the rationale for inclusive education is based on human rights and principles of social justice, but these are not universally applied, and the notion of 'rights' is increasingly contentious. To understand the possible impact of this phenomenon on the higher education sector, it is essential that we situate higher education

as part of the continuum of educational contexts and sociocultural understandings of disability.

What Is Inclusion in Education and How Did We Get Here?

With reference to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (UN, 2006) and the biopsychosocial model of disability (WHO, 2023), I define inclusion as equitable access to, and participation in education. I take this to mean students studying the same curriculum at the same time with the same teachers as their nondisabled peers with individualised adjustments. Central to this approach is the development of a curriculum, learning processes and educational environments that eliminate barriers to learning proactively through frameworks such as Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2024), and not reactively when problems arise.

The journey to inclusion has been a hard-fought moral exercise. Leading up to the twentieth century, structural, psychological and cultural biases based on ableist attitudes and low expectations, saw people with disability excluded from education. In some instances, people with physical or cognitive differences were kept at home for fear of cultural shaming (Cain, 2024), killed (for example, in World War II), or deemed inhuman and thus not recipients of human rights (for example, as part of the Eugenics movement) (Jarrett, 2025). Varieties of these concerns still exist today. Segregated institutions were introduced in the form of special schools. Initially places of learning for young people with intellectual impairments, these institutions have diversified to include learners with developmental conditions

such as autism spectrum disorder, as well as mental health considerations, sensory processing disorder or behavioural disorders. Early forms of inclusion were the result of protests against segregation, which frequently featured the voices of people with disability, their parents and family members (c.f., UNESCO, 1994). Part of reform measures included the introduction of integrated models where students with disability studied on the same campus as their peers but in separate buildings, or in the same classroom but without appropriate adjustments to overcome barriers to learning (Carrington, 2025). In the 2000s, inclusive education was championed on the global stage as a human right. Currently, segregated and inclusive educational options exist in most countries. In the last 15 years, with influence from the Disability Standards for Education (Australian Government, 2005) in my home country of Australia, preservice teachers study units dedicated to the knowledge, skills and dispositions required to deliver authentic inclusion in mainstream settings. They are well educated for inclusion, but perhaps not for the change in direction we are now experiencing.

Rhetoric into Practice

Despite physical, intellectual, emotional and sensory impairment being a feature of every culture, and the notion of 'disability' as a common social phenomenon, the implementation of inclusive education is still underscored by disparity in rhetoric, approach and outcome. Most higher education institutions have disability services that support students by developing educational inclusion plans and advising academic staff; yet, a range of barriers are still common. These include physical barriers, such as a lack of accessible buildings



and tactile maps; social barriers, such as marginalisation through inaccessible work-integrated learning programmes, cultural bias and unfounded assumptions; digital barriers, such as inaccessible online platforms and untimely preparation of alternative formats; and andragogical barriers, such as a lack of knowledge about how to differentiate the content, process, product and learning environments for adults with a range of conditions (Cain & Fanshawe, 2021). These barriers contribute to students with disability continuing to be underrepresented in higher education and with significantly lower retention and completion rates than students who do not experience disability.

Feeding Inclusion Through the Educational Continuum

Access to higher education is not recognised as a universal human right (Lid, 2026) and continues to be an arena for both inclusion and exclusion. The success of students with disability in higher education relies on them having attended school and succeeded in attaining the necessary knowledge and skills to be admitted to higher education. I argue that the reason we have an increase in the number of students with disabilities attending higher education today is because of the progress of the inclusive education agenda. In this way, inclusive schools are the precursor to inclusive higher education. Support for desegregation and deinstitutionalised thinking are prerequisites for inclusive schools. Strength-based attitudes and support for young people with disability are essential for their entry into educational systems and community life in general.

A decline in support for inclusion appears to be creeping into the education continuum, and this will eventually make its impact on higher education. For example, in the United States of America, a country that has not ratified the CRPD, inclusion, equity and diversity policies are currently under threat, with belief systems and

practical implementation of these policies targeted, amongst a trend of ableist rhetoric (King Thorius et al. 2025). In Nordic countries, growing concerns about the effectiveness of inclusive education and its effect on the general population attract negative publicity (Lid, 2026). This has been evidenced by changes in “political discourse and debate, governmental policy and even financing” (Magnússon and Paulsrud, 2025, p. 1), underpinned by a common political slogan, “inclusion has gone too far”. In my own backyard, the Australian state of Queensland, the government has recently announced the building of nine new special schools (Queensland Cabinet and Ministerial Directory, 2026), contradicting recommendations of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023).

It is my observation that the pendulum has begun to swing away from inclusion. If we do not protect the inclusive education reforms that have been so hard won, we risk not only the inclusion of students with disability in higher education but ultimately risk reversing opportunities for these students to gain meaningful and motivating employment and opportunities to lead fulfilling lives as valued community members (Punch et al., 2026). The inclusion of students with disabilities in schools and their success in education relies on the enactment of disability and inclusion policies and legislative directives but mostly relies on the attitudes of those who can influence outcomes.

A Personal Note

I am a teacher of teachers. In my university’s inclusive education units, we provide rich opportunities for preservice teachers to engage in and debate the complexities of inclusive education in practice. In most cases, policy, legislation and mandates fall into the background. What is left at the end of these (sometimes exhausting) conversations are moral and ethical

ACCESSIBILITY



COGNITIVE



VISUAL



AUDITORY



MOTOR



SPEECH



imperatives to treat our fellow humans with respect and dignity.

I write this as I watch my teenage son walk out the door to take the bus to his internship with a large accounting firm in the city. Travelling independently, succeeding at university and preparing for employment in a competitive industry were not part of the agenda when he was born without sight. “He will be lucky to ...” “Don’t expect him to....” and similar phrases were uttered by the first specialists we engaged with. With hindsight as a researcher, academic and mother I am certain that my son’s journey has been possible because of attitudes to access. It has been the collective effort of his primary school teachers who overcame their reluctance to allow my son to use a computer when all his peers were writing by hand, and the specialist teachers who introduced him to the exhilarating sport of goalball and taught him orientation skills to navigate public transport. The high school teachers who, having never taught a student with blindness or low vision, worked methodically in the background to provide him the same opportunities as his peers in the subjects that are traditionally least accessible. They all saw my son as an intelligent, funny and creative person who should benefit from education.

While my son still encounters barriers at his university, he has had a positive experience and made lots of friends.

If the pendulum of inclusion is beginning to swing back towards segregation and ableism, I ask, on behalf of all the students who experience disability and who wish to experience higher education academically, physically and socially that we collectively push back, and push back hard. We must reject institutionalised (segregated) thinking and assert that every individual is worthy of an education that recognises their strengths, pushes them beyond their current capabilities and provides a sense of belonging in all spheres of life.

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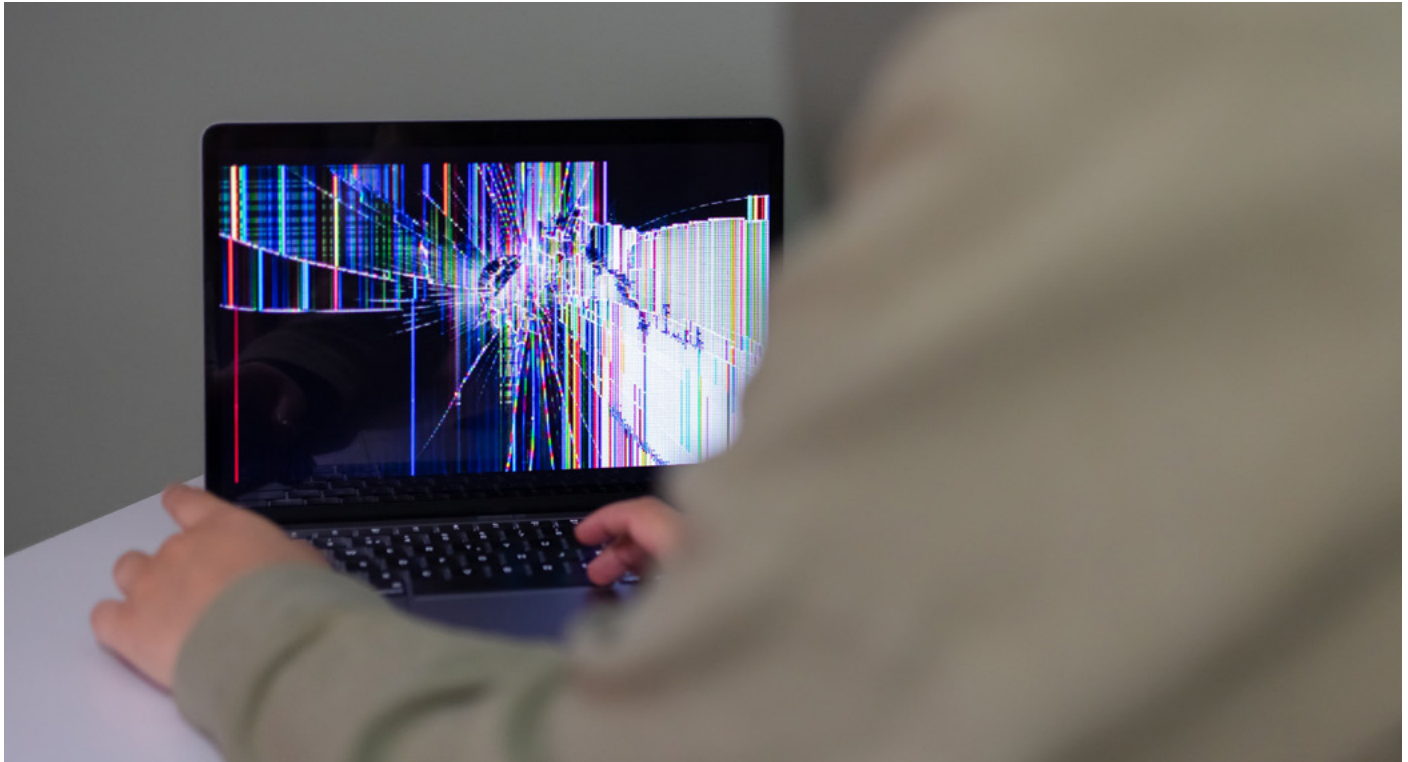


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Technology-Facilitated Violence Among Disabled and Neurodivergent Students in Higher Education

Sisko Piippo



Digital technologies have become deeply embedded in contemporary society. They have reshaped communication and social interaction in personal life, interpersonal relationships, the workplace and educational settings. Universities increasingly rely on digital learning environments, social media platforms and online communication systems, making educational participation inseparable from digital interaction. However, these environments are not inherently inclusive or safe. Technologies can be weaponised to harass, control, surveil, manipulate and exploit vulnerable users. While technology-facilitated violence (TFV) and digital harm are increasingly recognised in discussions of gender-based violence, the experiences of disabled people remain underexamined. This article seeks to foreground the TFV experienced by disabled and neurodivergent students¹ as an underexplored issue in higher education. It provides an overview of the phenomenon, examines its relationship with ableism and discusses how higher education institutions can support safe, meaningful digital participation.

Understanding Violence

Technology-Facilitated

Researchers have commonly used concepts such as cyberbullying and online harassment to describe harmful behaviours among students in digital environments (Choi et al., 2025). While these concepts capture important forms of online victimisation, they tend to focus on individual acts and interactions. This article adopts the broader concept of TFV, which conceptualises violence as embedded not only in interpersonal relationships but also in the technological, institutional and societal structures that mediate, enable and shape experiences of violence (Piippo et al., 2026; Woodlock et al., 2023). TFV refers to the use of digital technologies, communication platforms and networked devices as means of harassment, coercion, surveillance, control or exploitation (GREVIO, 2021). It may be perpetrated by intimate partners, peers, family members, strangers or online communities. It can take the form of threats, intimidation, stalking, humiliation and other abusive

¹ In this article, the term “disabled and neurodivergent students” is used to recognise the diversity of student experiences and the overlapping nature of disability and neurodivergence. Disabled and neurodivergent students do not constitute a homogeneous group. Their experiences of digital participation, vulnerability and TFV vary considerably depending on the nature of their impairments, intersecting identities, social relationships and access to support and resources (DiRienzo et al., 2025).



practices. It may also involve discriminatory and degrading expressions targeting individuals or social groups on the basis of disability, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or other social characteristics (Byrne & Hollingsworth, 2025; Piippo et al., 2026).

A distinctive feature of TFV is its pervasive and continuous nature. Because digital technologies transcend temporal and geographical boundaries, victims may experience violence and the threat of violence as an ongoing presence in their lives, even when perpetrators are not physically present in the same location, city or even country (Woodlock et al., 2023). Technology operates as a medium through which violence and discrimination - including intimate partner violence, stalking, gender-based violence, discrimination and hate speech - are enacted, extended and intensified (eSafety Commissioner, 2021; GREVIO, 2021). Consequently, TFV should be understood not merely as harmful online behaviour or as a matter of individual vulnerability. It is a multilayered phenomenon in which digital technologies intersect with existing social structures and inequalities that shape access to, participation in, and safety within digital environments (DiRienzo et al., 2025; Woodlock & Harris, 2024).

TFV Among Disabled and Neurodivergent Students

Emerging evidence suggests that disabled and neurodivergent students experience disproportionate levels of cybervictimisation (Bučar Ručman & Šulc, 2025; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2015, 2017; Kowalski et al., 2016). For example, DiRienzo et al. (2025) found that autistic students are more likely to experience both offline and online violence. They suggest that this heightened vulnerability may arise through multiple

pathways, including communication differences, mismatches between diverse interaction styles and prevailing social norms and the continuation of offline bullying in digital environments. The elevated risk they observed among non-first-year autistic students further suggests that the protective structures and support available during the transition to university may diminish over time. Qualitative research has similarly documented experiences of psychological, physical and cyber forms of bullying among students with disabilities, including humiliation, teasing, derogatory comments, discriminatory treatment and disability-related image-based abuse (Bučar Ručman & Šulc, 2025). Students with ADHD have reported higher rates of cybervictimisation, cyberperpetration, and witnessing cyberbullying than their non-ADHD peers despite similar levels of internet use and perceived digital competence (Heiman et al., 2015). Comparable patterns have also been observed among adolescents with low vision (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017).

The consequences of cybervictimisation are particularly significant for students with disabilities. Cyberbullying has been associated with reduced self-esteem and increased depressive symptoms, especially among students with visible disabilities, indicating that disability-related stigma extends into digital environments (Kowalski et al., 2016). For example, students with ADHD who experienced cybervictimisation reported greater emotional loneliness and lower self-efficacy than their non-ADHD peers (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2015). Young people with disabilities may therefore modify their online behaviour and conceal their disabilities to reduce the risk of harassment (Bučar Ručman & Šulc, 2025).



Ableism in Digital Environments

According to Bogart and Dana (2019), ableism refers to stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and social oppression directed at people with disabilities. More broadly, it is a social and ideological phenomenon grounded in the assumption that certain abilities and forms of functioning are inherently more valuable than others and that able-bodiedness and normative functioning constitute the standard against which individuals are measured (Bogart & Dana, 2019; Malknecht & Antonelli, 2024). Research suggests that ableism may itself become technologically mediated. Digital environments are often designed around assumptions regarding specific cognitive and functional abilities (Björnsdóttir et al., 2024; Malknecht & Antonelli, 2024). As Björnsdóttir et al. (2024) discussed, the concepts of technoableism (Shew, 2023) and data ableism (Charitsis & Lehtiniemi, 2022) draw attention to how digital technologies and data practices maintain and reproduce ableist assumptions and privilege nondisabled forms of participation. From this perspective, the discourse of students as digital natives (Haddad et al., 2022) may reinforce normative assumptions about young people's digital competencies and obscure differences in digital skills, access, support needs and vulnerability to online harms. Furthermore, responses to TFV may create tensions between protection and participation. Disabled people are often encouraged to withdraw from potentially risky digital spaces or modify their online behaviour, while less attention is paid to creating accessible, inclusive and safe digital environments that support autonomous participation

(Björnsdóttir et al., 2024; Bučar Ručman & Šulc, 2025; eSafety Commissioner, 2021). Consequently, responses to TFV may unintentionally reproduce exclusion and paternalism (Björnsdóttir et al., 2024).

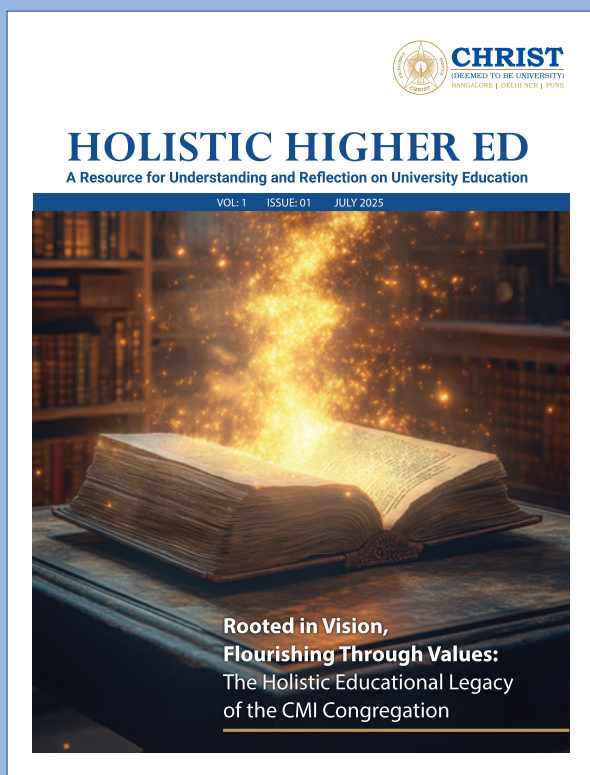
Implications for Higher Education

Higher education institutions should recognise digital safety as an integral dimension of accessibility and inclusion, and university antiharassment and equality policies should explicitly address TFV (DiRienzo et al., 2025; Kowalski et al., 2016). Rather than placing responsibility for online safety solely on disabled and neurodivergent learners or encouraging them to withdraw from potentially harmful digital spaces, universities should strive to ensure that learning and social environments, including digital ones, are inclusive, accessible and safe for all students. They should raise awareness of TFV and provide tailored interventions and on-campus support, as well as targeted training for students and educational staff on how to recognise, prevent and respond to such incidents (Byrne & Hollingsworth, 2025; Choi et al., 2025). These initiatives should also emphasise the importance of reporting abuse and accessing appropriate support services (DiRienzo et al., 2025; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2015). In addition, staff development should address how disability, neurodiversity and online victimisation intersect. Without adequate understanding of these issues, experiences of TFV among students with disabilities may remain unrecognized or be misinterpreted (Byrne & Hollingsworth, 2025; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017).

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