

Effective Practices for Helping Students Transition to Work

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Summary and Keywords

People with disabilities have been among the most marginalized groups within society, with consequent limitations imposed on their access to many goods within society, including education, employment, and economic independence. Some progress is evident in the establishment of more inclusive learning environments, yet it is also clear that upon leaving compulsory education or further/higher education, young people with disabilities encounter significant barriers to accessing meaningful employment. Facilitating transitions to employment for people with disabilities should be informed by ambition and a belief in the capacity of these individuals to make a meaningful contribution to society and achieve a level of economic independence. The issues that are pertinent to young people who have a special educational need or a disability and an aspiration to transition to further/higher education require attention. Research and applied practice has demonstrated the utility of an innovative educational and work readiness program for people with an intellectual disability. Such work highlights the facilitating factors that may encourage a more ambitious reimagining of what may be possible for individuals who have been marginalized.

Keywords: employment, disability, intellectual disability, Ireland, special educational needs, transitions

From Educational and Societal Exclusion Toward Inclusion

Establishing a more inclusive society has been a protracted journey that originated in sustained campaigns to achieve civil rights around the world (Richardson & Powell, 2011). People with disabilities were among the most marginalized groups within society and were subjected to many forms of societal exclusion, including segregated schooling, institutionalization, and consequent invisibility within their communities. This article examines traditional forms of exclusion with a view to identifying the impact of these activities on the opportunities afforded to children and young people who have a special educa-

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tional need or a disability (SEN/D). In particular, the article focuses on how these young people can be enabled to engage with opportunities for further educational or employment opportunities. In addition, we emphasize how young people who have an intellectual disability (ID), commonly accepted as being among the most marginalized within the disability cohort, fare in making the transition into the employment arena.

It is generally acknowledged that people with disabilities have been significantly disadvantaged in all the critical areas of social life including education, employment, political and community participation, and aspects of family life (Barnes & Mercer, 2010). People with disabilities have also been subject to many forms of discrimination that have limited their access to public goods such as transport, housing, and relevant information that impacts their lives (Shah & Priestley, 2011). People with disabilities still face significant barriers to meaningful societal participation, but there have been considerable advances in how disability is perceived within society and the types of societal responses developed to address the inequalities faced by people with disabilities in their daily lives (Rimmerman, 2013). Public attitudes toward people with disabilities have become more positive; and there has been a discernible shift from welfare-based to rights-based social policies, although implementing these policies has often proved difficult in practice (Shah & Priestley, 2011). Increasingly, disability is perceived as a public issue rather than as traditionally formulated in terms of a personal trouble (Davis, 2013). Movements advocating for people with disabilities have played a prominent role in reshaping traditional deficit-based models that have emphasized incapacity rather than capacity (Shah, 2008).

International agreements and declarations have strengthened the movement toward greater equality for people with disabilities, affirming their right to be full participants in society (Griffin & Shevlin, 2011). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2006), for example, has placed obligations on state signatories to guarantee and endorse those rights through a series of policy initiatives that will be monitored through the aegis of the United Nations.

Implementing international and national policies designed to ensure meaningful societal participation for people with disabilities remains a challenge. This is particularly true in relation to ensuring that people with disabilities have equitable access to employment opportunities alongside their nondisabled peers (Shah & Priestley, 2011). Employment is critically important for people with disabilities if they are to become socially included and economically independent. People with disabilities are more likely than the general population to be at greater risk of poverty through their dependence on social welfare benefits (Watson, Lawless, & Maitre, 2017). Recent research within a European context illustrates the stark reality of poverty for people with disabilities (Watson, Maitre, Grotti, & Whelan, 2017). Families affected by working age disability, along with lone parent families, experience persistent material deprivation (at least two years duration) and income poverty at a much higher rate than any other “at risk” group within European countries.

Pettincchio and Maroto (2017) report that within the U.S. labor force, participation by people with disabilities has declined, and there are substantial differences in employment

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levels according to disability status. People who have an ID and those who have mental health difficulties have much lower rates of employment compared to people who have physical disabilities, regardless of profession (Watson, Maitre et al., 2017). As a result, people who have an ID or those who have mental health difficulties experience a large disparity in income compared to other people with disabilities. People with disabilities tend to face difficulties in accessing and retaining employment, including stereotypical views among employers and inadequacy of antidiscrimination legislation that places an unfair burden on the victim of discrimination (despite affirmative action initiatives, quota systems, etc.). People with disabilities can be perceived by employers as capable of only limited productivity compared to their nondisabled peers. Consequently, people with disabilities often obtain employment in lower skilled occupations with limited earning capacity (Pettincchio & Maroto, 2017).

Personal Transitions Through Education: Learning From Research for Policy and Practice

Life is full of transitions that must be negotiated. Adolescence and early adulthood is a time during which important life changes occur, attitudes are formed, and decisions with far-reaching consequences can be made (Steinberg, 2001). For Erikson (1963), these “normative crises” and their successful resolution are central to well-being. The transition process and “normative crisis” for a young person is important to identity development—a sense of who they are as well as who they are not. This is a difficult psychological task for any young person. Whereas some may foreclose and make decisions about career and life trajectory too quickly, others may take a moratorium from making the “big decisions” (e.g., time away from education for traveling). These choices are more complicated for young people with SEN/D than they are for their peers. Whereas these personal transitions have always been of interest to lifespan psychologists, the concept of “transition” has only recently become a major concern to educationalists.

From even a casual perusal of results via internet search engines, it is easy to see the importance of “transitions” as a concept in the educational journey of individuals with SEN/D. A quick search using Google found 31,400 results (for *transition*, *special educational need*, *SEN*, and *disability*). When refined to Google Scholar, the same search criteria yields 767 results. While not all of these results will be of benefit to the professional with a vested interest in this area, it does serve to highlight the increasing attention being paid to these issues.

Transitions From School to Further/Higher Education

This section presents the perspectives of educational and allied professionals from a nationally funded research study conducted in Ireland (Mc Guckin, Shevlin, Bell, & Devicchi, 2013). This study presents a unique national perspective on the transition issues affecting young people with SEN/D. While specific to Ireland, we feel that the issues raised may be reasonably extrapolated to other countries.

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The study investigated the latter stage of postprimary school, during which young people have the “aspiration” to transition to further or higher education (FE/HE). This research followed young people to the end of formal examinations to determine whether this aspiration became a reality, with a view to identifying practices and policies to ensure improved access and smooth progression to FE/HE. A wealth of knowledge and good practice that was happening “on the ground” but was not always “joined-up” for seamless transition experiences and success. Also evident was the important role of the professional in understanding the policy and practice issues inherent in transition planning, within both the immediate educational sector and the sector to which the transition would occur. For professionals who often work across the educational spectrum, these should not be difficult tasks to coordinate, and many issues are easily resolvable by early interventions and planning regarding the transition process—notably the sharing of information and supports related to the individual.

Semistructured interviews were conducted with 13 key personnel and experts from statutory and nonstatutory bodies involved in the development and direction of policy at the national level. To further this understanding of the “professional voice,” focus groups were conducted with relevant personnel from the FE and HE sectors (e.g., admissions personnel, examination office personnel, disability support officers, access officers, student union officers, deans of students, lecturers, guidance counselors). Issues relating to access, transfer, and progression were explored in thematic areas (e.g., outreach activities, admissions systems and procedures, teaching, learning, and assessment). Key themes that emerged were related to access and progression pathways, resources and supports available in schools/FE/HE, and the experiences of learners with SEN/D in the access and progression pathways to FE and HE.

Professional Guidance Counselors

In general, there was considerable evidence that the support provided by guidance counselors (teachers with a specific postgraduate qualification in an integrated approach to career and course planning and counseling skills) was highly valued by the learners and regarded as pivotal in facilitating them to make informed choices about postschool options. Learners who participated in the research (interviews) reported that they particularly valued individualized sessions with their guidance counselor, especially the support offered in completion of application forms for entry to FE/HE and disability supports.

Need for Further Structured Support at the School Level

While guidance counselors provided individualized support, there was little evidence that schools were proactive in developing transition planning at an early stage in the learners’ school careers. Guidance counselors and school professionals were conscious that learners with SEN/D were moving from a highly supported and structured school environment to more challenging situations that demanded a higher degree of self-reliance. They were concerned about achieving the balance between delivering appropriate support for academic attainment while encouraging the development of greater autonomy and the practical life skills required for active engagement in FE/HE.

Links Between School and FE/HE

There was evidence of the usefulness of structured links between schools and FE/HE institutions, though these types of processes were not mandatory features of the transition process. Precourse contact with FE/HE institutions, in particular direct personal contact with learners with SEN/D, was regarded by learners as highly significant in influencing their course choices. However, guidance counselors were concerned that they were not fully aware of supports available in FE/HE. They identified the need for continuing professional development (CPD) in this area and the establishment of a central resource to facilitate access to relevant and regularly updated information regarding support provision in FE/HE.

Micro-Meso System Connection

From a bioecological systems perspective (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989; Seligman & Darling, 2017; Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, Soodak, & Shogren, 2011), learners with SEN/D reported that their parents and families were very involved in supporting their decisions regarding postschool options, although there was limited evidence of formal engagement by parents with school professionals in this process. This was an interesting finding considering the general increase in contact between actors in the microsystem (e.g., parents) and mesosystem (e.g., teachers) at the time.

Support of FE/HE Institutions

There was evidence that FE/HE institutions had a wide range of supports available for learners with SEN/D. For example, the use of a needs assessment on entry, in particular in HE, facilitated the establishment of individualized supports. However, there were reports of significant delays in the processing and delivery of essential supports, particularly within FE. Professionals in both school and in FE/HE institutions recognized the need for institutional readiness to facilitate access, transfer, and progression for learners with SEN/D and to develop an inclusive ethos through establishing effective outreach strategies and ongoing professional development (e.g., modes of accessible assessment), adapting terminology in institutional literature, and providing comprehensive information on, and realistic views of, course content and requirements. The multiple modes of assessment were viewed favorably by the learners, who particularly welcomed the opportunity to establish working relationships with staff who were approachable and who treated them like adults.

In concluding, Mc Guckin et al. (2013) noted that, despite recognition and progress at a legislative and policy level, challenges remained in the translation of this recognition to practice, including:

- ensuring that individualized transition planning is in place early in the pupil's post-primary school career;
- enabling informed decision making with the support of knowledgeable professionals;
- developing collaborative relationships among schools, health professionals, and FE/HE institutions;

- establishing a more cohesive support infrastructure within FE; and
- enhancing and refining existing support structures in schools and FE/HE institutions to provide flexible and individualized responses to meeting the academic and social needs of learners with SEN/D.

Nationally funded research can have direct and meaningful implications for the personal and educational transitions of individuals with SEN/D. Policy and practice planning supports a more beneficial transition process for young people with SEN/D who have the aspiration to pursue further study. However, there are a cohort of learners within schools who may require a different transition structure to those with SEN/D. Learners with ID face different and more nuanced challenges in their transition journey. The remainder of this article explores an innovative and pioneering educational and work readiness program for individuals with ID.

Educational and Work Readiness Transitions for People With Intellectual Disabilities

It can be reasonably argued that higher education is by its very nature elitist; the yearly avalanche of applications to the most prestigious private universities attests to the widespread belief that where one attends college matters academically, and later, professionally (Lewis & Kingston, 1989). Those who make it through the highly competitive admissions process of the most esteemed universities are considered “the brightest and the best,” and are perhaps even destined to have the most prized careers. Indeed, the elite stature of institutions— such as the U.S. Ivy League, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge in the United Kingdom., and the Paris Institute of Political Sciences in France—reflect their connection to moneyed families and the intellectual capacities of their students. These universities pride themselves not only in offering superb educational opportunities but also in educating those who will go on to hold influential positions.

Consequently, concern about the undemocratic nature of elite institutions has led to intense public scrutiny of their admission practices and the disproportionate amount of power they hold. In an ideal world, a democratic society should make sure that the interests of all sectors of society are represented, including communities that are historically marginalized. Widening societal participation for people from marginalized groups has, however, become an established feature of policy frameworks internationally (Council of Europe, 2006; United Nations, 1993). The international community promotes the social and economic benefits that lifelong learning offers to people with disabilities as a pathway to employment and full participation in society (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [UNCRPD], 2006). Many countries have acted on the recommendations of the UNCRPD and have endeavored to make access to education and tertiary education a reality for people with disabilities (e.g., the United States [Americans with Disabilities Act (1991); the Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008)]; Australia [Disability Discrimination Act (1992); Disability Standards for Education, 2005]; the United Kingdom [Dis-

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ability Discrimination Act, 2005; Equality Act, 2010]; and the Republic of Ireland [Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities, 1996; Education Act, 1998; Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004; Equal Status Act, 2000]).

It has been argued that access to education and training throughout the lifespan for people with disabilities is gradually becoming more widely accessible (Mongkolsripattana, Wald, & Wills, 2016); national codes of practice for learners with disabilities in higher education have typically adopted more inclusive policies and practices to support the enrollment, progression, and subsequent employment of people with disabilities (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012). For people with disabilities, becoming an active member of society requires embedding them within normative pathways of inclusion, that is, life avenues ordinarily pursued by individuals without disabilities (Uditsky, 1993, Uditsky & Hughson, 2012). For example, in the context of education, nondisabled people's identity begins in primary school and is developed further in secondary school; this journey invariably leads to a range of options from FE/HE, vocational training, adult education, and lifelong learning.

Inclusive education, at its heart, is an ethical project that encompasses all levels of education, including higher education. Traditionally, higher education has been viewed as catering to the most able in our society, though more recently this emphasis has shifted toward increasing access for marginalized groups within society. Developing a more equitable society requires higher education institutions to adapt their policies and procedures to include a more diverse student population. Given the lack of postschool educational options generally available for young people with IDs (Pallisera et al., 2018), higher education institutions have the requisite knowledge and capacity to create meaningful educational opportunities for this student cohort and lead the way in reducing their marginalization within society.

Such normative practices are echoed in Article 24 of the UNCRPD (2006), which states that "persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others." Internationally, there is substantial evidence of increased numbers of people with disabilities participating in higher education (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2003; Wagner et al., 2006), and this pattern has been repeated in Ireland. Irish policies in this area have developed rapidly since the end of the 20th century, and the initial focus on people from socioeconomically disadvantaged groups has been extended to include people with disabilities (Government of Ireland, 2000). Shevlin, Kenny, and McNeela (2004) outlined how Irish higher education institutions, in common with their European counterparts, have facilitated the wider participation of marginalized groups within society. Individuals representing groups traditionally excluded on the grounds of gender, socioeconomic status, age, disability, race, and ethnicity have been recruited, and support has been offered to facilitate their inclusion within higher education provision.

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However, it is evident that policy initiatives supporting greater access for people with disabilities, with a few exceptions, have not been extended to include people with ID. Newman, Wagner, Cameto, and Knokey (2009) found that learners with ID are least likely to be enrolled “steadily” in college. Indeed, Grigal, Hart, and Paiewonsky (2010) report that people with ID are rarely mentioned or differentiated from those with other types of disabilities in U.S. studies on postsecondary education. Because most people with ID have been considered unable to gain the academic requirements for university admission, it is often assumed by parents (Hafner, Moffatt, & Kisa, 2011) and faculty (Eisenman & Mancini, 2010; Hart, Grigal, & Weir, 2010A) that they are unlikely to succeed or belong in such a setting. Kleinert, Jones, Sheppard-Jones, Harp, and Harrison (2012) have argued that belittling attitudes and low expectations of faculty members are among the greatest barriers to creating inclusive university environments (Coriale, Larson, & Robertson, 2012; Hong & Himmel, 2009). Such assumptions generally carry negative attitudes and stigmatizing beliefs (Myers, Ager, Kerr, & Myles, 1998); and consequently, attempts at increased community integration can be met with resistance or opposition. For instance, bullying and disability hate crime have been recognized as a matter of serious concern (Mencap, 2000). Furthermore, there is some contention as to whether a university education can ever be inclusive, and arguments have been made that a wider and more diverse learner body that includes those with ID contributes to the “dumbing down” of education (Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003).

Such attitudes have resulted in limited capacity and opportunities for these people to participate in mainstream education and training programs and to make the normative transitions through the lifespan that are experienced by their peers (Kubiak, Spassiani, Shevlin, & O’Keeffe, 2019). However, despite these embedded assumptions and the dearth of policy initiatives targeting the inclusion of learners with ID in higher education, in Ireland, the numbers of people with ID accessing inclusive tertiary/postsecondary education courses have gradually increased (see Kubiak et al., 2019). Similarly, there has been a marked expansion in higher education participation across Europe, with a growing emphasis on the inclusion of previously underrepresented groups, including learners with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds (European Commission, 2010; United Nations, 2006). Consequently, a number of international tertiary level educational programs have been introduced that include learners with ID (e.g., Flinders University, 2011; Hart, Grigal, & Weir, 2010B; Stefánsdóttir, 2008; Uditsky, Frank, Hart, & Jeffreys, 1987; Uditsky & Hughson, 2012; University of Alberta, 2006). Research has demonstrated that learners with ID who participated in or graduated from inclusive educational programs experience increased competence in domains such as self-esteem, self-respect, interpersonal relationships, self-determination, and social inclusion (Hughson, Moodie, & Uditsky, 2006; Kleinert et al., 2012; Uditsky & Hughson, 2012). Furthermore, such graduates have also been reported to have improved their employment opportunities (Hughson et al., 2006; Kleinert et al., 2012; Yamamoto, Stodden, & Folk, 2014). Hart et al. (2010A) noted that as inclusive educational opportunities emerge in U.S. colleges, people with ID have been enabled to continue their academic, social, and vocational learning in an academic setting. They report “promising practices” that underpin such

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programs; instruction in natural environments, person-centered planning, cross-agency coordination, adoption of universal curriculum design, mentoring and coaching, securing competitive employment, development of social pragmatics and communication skills, self-determination and self-advocacy, and program evaluation.

Despite this positive movement toward inclusion, students with ID are underrepresented in colleges and universities compared to students with other impairments (Yamamoto et al., 2014). However, in recent years, inclusive educational initiatives have been developed in a number of countries including the United States (Hart, Grigal, Sax, Martinez, & Will, 2006), Canada (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012; University of Alberta, 2006), Iceland (Stefánsdóttir & Björnsdóttir, 2016), Finland (Saloviita, 2000), and Spain (Pallisera et al., 2018). According to Hart et al. (2006), there are three models of inclusive education programs currently available to students with IDs in higher education settings: fully inclusive, mixed/hybrid, and segregated.

In the fully inclusive model there is no specific program base on campus. Students receive individualized services in college courses, certificate programs and/or degree programs for audit or credit. In the mixed/hybrid model, students participate in academic classes, experience employment opportunities, and engage in social activities with students without disabilities and participate in classes with other students with disabilities. In the segregated model, students only participate in classes with other students with IDs.

This typology should be used cautiously because such rigid descriptions do not always accurately describe the level or complexity of authentic inclusion within an institution. O'Connor, Kubiak, Espiner, and O'Brien (2012) found that within a mixed/hybrid program, students with IDs added value to life in the classroom by sharing in group work with their nondisabled peers and positively contributed when they asked unexpected questions or made observations publicly that other students may have been too reserved to offer. In addition, participating lecturers of this study reflected on the social and ethical benefits that arose for students, such as nondisabled peers coming to grips with self-identity and difference, as well as being welcoming and supportive.

Universal Design for Transition and Learners With Intellectual Disabilities

U.S. research has documented that postschool outcomes for students with IDs have shown very little improvement over time (Hart et al., 2006) with high levels of unemployment and underdevelopment frequently reported (Newman et al., 2009).

In addressing some of these concerns, Grigal, Hart, and Weir (2012) argue for the need for high-quality transition services for all students with IDs, which include:

1. High expectations (Kramer & Blacher, 2001; Thoma, 1999; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Levine, & Marder, 2007);

2. Person-centered or learner-directed goals that support postschool employment or education outcomes (Agran & Hughes, 2008; Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovonoff, 2000; Thoma & Wehman, 2010; Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 2000);
3. Practices that reflect collaboration with external partners, community agencies, and organizations that might be involved in supporting learners in their postschool environments (Noonan, Morningstar, & Gaumer Erickson, 2008; Repetto, Webb, Garvan, & Washington, 2002; Wehman, 2010).

Other researchers (e.g., Thoma, Bartholomew, & Scott, 2009) have also argued for the clearer articulation of a framework of transition for learners with disabilities. In their study of transition preparation for learners with disabilities, Best, Scott, and Thoma (2015) described the emerging concept of Universal Design for Transition (UDT), which is designed to “provide a framework for special education teachers, transition specialists, and administrators who want to revise instructional design and delivery so that they (can) . . . prepare learners with disabilities, including with IDs, for a successful transition to adult life” (p. 45). UDT builds on the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL: Center for Applied Special Technology, 1998), which is an instructional framework designed to meet the academic needs of all learners through flexibility in the ways information is presented and the provision of appropriate accommodations and supports. UDL is perceived as an appropriate framework for designing lesson plans for increasingly diverse general education classrooms, serves as the vehicle to bring about inclusive education (Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, 2005), and improves the learning process for all students (Katz & Sokal, 2016). However, for Capp (2017), the processes that can be assessed and tested exclusively based on implementation of UDL principles often lack empirical evidence. Furthermore, debate exists within the literature about whether the underlying principles, guidelines, and checkpoints of UDL successfully improve the learning process or lead to improved educational outcomes (King-Sears, Janney, & Snell, 2015). Consequently, for Capp (2017), further research is needed outside North America and Europe to examine the effectiveness of UDL on the learning process for all students, as well as the primary and secondary educational outcomes that result from its implementation.

However, according to Love, Baker, and Devine (2017), UDL has profound implications for the way that educators help learners meet transition goals. UDT incorporates the principles of UDL to the transition of learners from school to adult life (i.e., college, work, independent living) while adding four additional transition-based principles by including the key, namely: elements of (a) multiple life domains, (b) multiple means of assessment, (c) individual student self-determination, and (e) multiple resources/and perspectives (Scott & Bruno, 2018; Thoma et al., 2009; see Figure 1). For these authors, the connection of academics and transition can be used to provide individuals with barrier-free opportunities after school and focus on creating a person-centered approach to meet the needs of all student needs. The following sections briefly describe the four UDT principles.

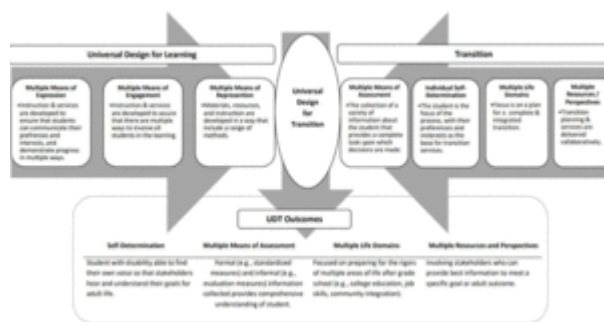


Figure 1. Universal Design for Transition Conceptual Framework.

UDT Key Element 1: Multiple Life Domains

The UDT understanding of transition shifts the focus away from preparing learners with disabilities for the shift from school to work

(Scott & Bruno, 2018). Instead, a UDT approach takes into account other factors of adult life, such as transportation, community living and activity, leisure and recreation, and postsecondary education. As outlined by Kubiak et al. (2019), the number of learners with ID attending college is steadily increasing. Consequently, for these learners, a UDT approach to transition (either “in to” or “out of” higher education) involves the learner in the decision-making process and stresses the centrality of self-knowledge and self-advocacy. Thomas et al. (2009, pp. 130–131) suggest several ways for educators to offer support to learners in their transition planning to postsecondary education:

- Arrange for learners to meet with representatives from receiving institutions who are experts on topics such as academic supports and services;
- Encourage learners to research requirements for their desired institution and ensure that their documentation is in order;
- Prepare learners for various kinds of assessments;
- Encourage learners and their families to take college tours.

In addition to preparing learners for postsecondary education, UDT can be used within these programs to teach valuable skills for transitions into community life, including functional math skills such as budgeting and bill paying, community resource mapping, and the use of technology. Such real-world examples and activities can prepare learners for the requirements of life after formal education while reinforcing key academic skills such as authentic writing tasks (e.g., job applications) or problem-solving skills for math or science. Teaching transition skills alongside academic content serves to connect learning to learner interests, which increases the potential to “help make the information stick” (Schwartz, 2013).

UDT Key Element 2: Multiple Means of Assessment

According to Scott and Bruno (2018), multiple means of assessment involves the use of a variety of materials and assessments that are based on an individual’s strengths and needs and presents a holistic snapshot of the individual. For Thoma et al. (2009, p. 13), transition assessment includes “identifying students’ interests and preferences; identifying the skills needed to accomplish their transition goals; identifying discrepancies be-

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tween student abilities and skills identified; and using information to identify supports, services, and instruction for individual students.” Transition assessments could include formative and summative assessments, observations, interviews, checklists, portfolios, and a variety of completed projects that reflect the student’s mastery of skills.

UDT Key Element 3: Multiple Means of Promoting Self-Determination

UDT offers a student [who is “an expert in his/her own transition journey” (Smith & Karger, 2012, p. 36)] the opportunities to express, explore, and demonstrate preferences, needs, strengths, capabilities and goals (Smith, Leconte, & Vitelle, 2012). The individual self-determination component of the UDT framework places the student at the center of the planning during the discussion of transition process. According to Wehmeyer (1992, p. 13), self-determination is defined as “acting as the primary causal agent in one’s life, free to make choices about one’s life, and decisions about one’s quality of life.” It has been shown that self-determination promotes transition outcomes for individuals with disabilities, specifically when they are involved in their transition into employment (Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003), quality of life (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998), and postsecondary education (Getzel & Thoma, 2008).

UDT Key Element 4: Multiple Resources/Perspectives

The final component of UDT involves collaborating with individuals from the school, community, and home to ensure all perspectives are considered when determining the types of support a person needs for transition. These multiple perspectives can bring new ideas to the table and ensure that the transitioning student is connected with the proper resources in the community to meet their needs (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1996).

In conclusion, there is still much to be learned about how to prepare learners with ID for a successful transition from formal education to FE/HE, vocational training, employment, and independent living skills for their adult life. The UDT model provides a theoretical framework for instructional planning and implementation that addresses academic content as well as functional goal attainment. Scott and Bruno (2018) suggest that teachers and other stakeholders should select the principles based on the current strengths and needs of the student rather than utilizing all of the principles in every lesson plan. While Scott et al. (2011) claim that this approach can have a positive impact on learner engagement and goal attainment, it is also apparent that creativity is the key skill needed for practitioners to face the challenges of transition and the UDL approach.

Case Example: The Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities

Disability is a mask that conceals a rich, surprising and fertile ability. The function of the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities is to remove the mask and reveal the beauty and promise of a hitherto hidden talent now brought into the light of day and the light of appreciative minds.

Brendan Kennelly (Irish poet)

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The Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities (TCPID) is situated within the School of Education at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. TCPID promotes the inclusion of individuals with ID in education and society. The center's mission is to enable learners with an ID to develop their potential to fully participate in society as independent adults through participation in a higher education program that focuses on both educational attainment and work readiness. TCPID promotes a combination of high quality research, dissemination of new knowledge, lifelong learning, and professional training.

The story of TCPID is itself a story of transition. It acts as an educational and societal reference to the continued development of the inclusion agenda for individuals with ID. The center was initially established in 2004 as the National Institute for Intellectual Disability to provide learners with access to the two-year full-time Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL) course. The aim of the CCL was to introduce learners with ID to college life and to enable them to develop life-wide skills. Across its lifecourse, the CCL had more than 120 graduates. However, the repositioning of the center within a School of Education (2014) and a refocusing of its objectives led to a timely reimagining of the course. The CCL course had not aligned to the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), and learners who successfully completed the course did not receive a formally recognized qualification. The course was substantially reconceptualized with the curriculum aligned to Level 5 of the Irish NFQ. The new course in Arts, Science and Inclusive Applied Practice (ASIAP) had its first intake of learners in 2016 (graduated in January 2019). Within a research-intensive university, the ASIAP course is unique in two ways: it is the only Level 5 course in the university, and it is the only course in the university where learners are educated in topics ranging from the arts to humanities, and from business and entrepreneurship to science.

With the support of philanthropic and competitive funding, key members of the TCPID team include academic lecturers, a senior occupational therapist, a pathways coordinator, and a national and schools coordinator. At present, the viability of the center and the nonacademic positions requires such supports (academic positions are supported by the university). The center's future will require some form of development that will reduce reliance upon philanthropic and competitive funding, either through full financial support from the university or some form of policy amendment that will allow the center to attract governmental funding for each of the students.

The ASIAP Program

Over two academic years, learners participate in the highly innovative ASIAP course, which is aimed at transforming possibilities open to people with ID as they make transitions toward adult life and the workforce. Ultimately, the goal of TCPID is to achieve a replication of this model of provision across other interested third-level institutions in Ireland and elsewhere.

The curriculum offers learners a high academic standard of learning, and maximizes opportunities to enable learners to realize their full potential. It helps to develop a broad range of skills across a comprehensive curriculum, including preparing graduates to work

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in diverse employment settings. The course is rooted in evidence-based research (Kubiak, 2018; Kubiak, Spassiani, Shevlin, & O’Keeffe, 2019) and seeks to provide learners with the independent living skills needed to become full participants in society.

The program-level outcomes of the ASIAP course are to:

- help learners develop the ability to think critically about disability, express viewpoints, engage in logical discussions and problem-solve effectively within a higher education learning environment;
- equip learners with the interdisciplinary knowledge to navigate the community and employment sectors;
- develop in learners the learning skills required for developing their own person-centered plan when engaged in the wider community;
- provide learners with the learning skills and knowledge needed to confidently advocate for change in their own lives and the wider disability community;
- encourage collaborative learning through project-based tasks incorporating academic content and applied skills to reinforce overall academic, professional, and personal development; and
- introduce learners to academic scholarship, evidence-based interdisciplinary research, and university life.

Learners study modules across six interdisciplinary themes:

1. Advanced Learning Theories and Self-Development (learn about different learning skills and how they can use these; occupational therapy groups and individual meetings).
2. Applied Research Theories and Practice (learn about research methods and conduct their own research project).
3. Applied Science, Technology, and Math (learn about science, math, and health, with a focus on how this knowledge can be used in life outside college).
4. Business and Marketing (learn about marketing strategies and how to create a business plan; complete a work placement).
5. Advocacy, Rights, and Culture (learn about human rights and learn the skills needed to advocate for their rights and the rights of others).
6. Fine Arts and Languages (learn about languages, art, and poetry, and develop skills to express themselves).

Pathways to Employment

TCPID has established a strong network of business partners who provide learner work placements, mentoring, paid internships, and in some cases permanent employment for the graduates. Business partners (i.e., financial institutions, law firms, pharmaceutical and health care companies, aircraft leasing companies) allow the learners to gain insight

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into potential career paths. The center's pathways coordinator works with the business partners to offer supported career pathways, with the ability to look at specific industries that might suit their particular interests and skills. Business partners offer support in a variety of ways, including financial support, work placements, mentoring, training workshops, and guest lectures.

With the support of the business partners, TCPID has developed a successful graduate internship program (roles include office support, reception, data entry, facility management) that has evidenced paid graduate internships, two of which have been converted into permanent roles. Each TCPID graduate internship is carefully planned and monitored to maximize the success for both the graduate and the business. The process includes the following:

- Initial planning meeting with business partner.
- Role specification compiled by business partner.
- Meeting between TCPID pathways coordinator and TCPID senior occupational therapist to identify suitable candidates for the role.
- Suitable candidate CVs sent by TCPID to business partners.
- Meeting between TCPID and selected graduate to discuss internship opportunity.
- Orientation meeting with TCPID, business partner, and selected graduate.
- Contract provided to graduate (if applicable).
- Start of graduate internship.
- Graduate and business partner supported in full as required throughout the internship.
- Review meetings with business partner and graduate upon completion of the graduate internship.

The TCPID business partners are a core part of the program and provide important support. This partnership makes a real difference and enhances the ability of the program to evidence true inclusion within the workplace and within society.

National and Schools Coordinator

The national and schools coordinator's remit is dedicated to developing and improving transition pathways and planning for learners with ID by engaging with key stakeholders to focus on increasing awareness of inclusive postsecondary education opportunities, application processes, and entry requirements for particular programs. The national and schools coordinator allows TCPID to enrich and embed inclusive educational practices on a national level, providing national reach and impact.

Rather than a model of growth that seeks to scale upward, TCPID is dedicated to keeping the quality of support for their learners and providing support and leadership to other providers who seek to develop similar programs (e.g., Gugelev & Stern, 2015). To this extent, the coordinator has established a National Forum of Inclusive Higher Education

Providers, with a focus of supporting the sustainability of the existing and future inclusive educational initiatives in higher education institutions that are offering postsecondary opportunities for people with ID across Ireland. Through collaboration, the forum provides a space for best practice in the sector and acts as a support network for development and enhancement of inclusive education across Ireland.

Conclusion

The quest for a fully inclusive educational system and society may, at times, feel like a Sisyphean task. However, just as a medical model of disability has been surpassed by a more social model, current debates and initiatives point to a perspective whereby inclusion in both education and the workplace will become more evident. However, obstacles still remain in the transition process for learners with SEN/D who have the aspiration of moving from school to FE/HE. There are solutions to these barriers, many of which are relatively easy to implement. Good practice examples are abundant. What is still required is more imagination from those who develop policies that intersect within the education system, and where the education system encounters other aspects of an individual's experience of living a full and independent life. These issues are most acute for learners who have an ID. Traditionally more marginalized than their non-ID peers, further work is needed to ameliorate long-standing prejudicial perspectives regarding what these learners cannot do, with a renewed focus on what they can attain. If the role of education is to foster aspiration, inquisitiveness, and holistic personal development, then initiatives like the TCPID require structural supports to enable these learners to become educated and prepared for work as well as able to enjoy the personal and economic benefits of participation in the economic life of society.

Establishing inclusive learning environments has been a slow and at times contentious process. Over time, the factors leading to exclusion within our education system have been recognized and initiatives gradually developed to address these inequalities. These initiatives have been implemented with various levels of success across early years education through to higher education. Traditionally marginalized groups within society have been included, but it is far from certain that the underlying inequalities have been fully addressed. Children and young people who have IDs are among the last to benefit from increased attempts to develop inclusive learning environments. There are many reasons for this situation, some historical in how segregated education was established for this cohort and others closely aligned with the dominant deficit model that was applied to this population within society. Deficit models led to low expectations and often a lack of ambition for these young people as compared to their peers.

For all young people, higher education provides the opportunity to form their identity as young adults, develop skills and capacities, and establish social networks (O'Brien, 2019). Designing initiatives in higher education can offer similar opportunities for learners with IDs to grow into adulthood. Often the development of these initiatives is not straightforward and challenges the traditional boundaries of higher education. Notions about who

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belongs and who benefits in and from higher education require a rigorous critique. Active participation in the higher education environment by young people who have IDs demonstrates how a social space can be created that welcomes them to try out new roles, foster relationships, and develop their capacities beyond the expected societal norms (O'Brien, 2019). However, while successful higher education initiatives in this area provide a compelling case for expansion and embedding within the ordinary structures governing higher education, this cannot be taken for granted. Exclusion and segregation have dominated societal provision for so long that there is always the risk that these forces will reappear under another guise purporting to address any shortfalls in mainstream provision through "expert" advice and guidance. Positive societal change can emerge from higher education initiatives designed to disrupt the dominant narratives of exclusion and segregation that have shaped the lives of people with disabilities.

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