Twenty Years of Disability Research: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Almost one in five Australians (18%) and nearing one in 10 of our student population (9%) are disabled, so it is unsurprising that disability is a priority area for the Universities Accord process in Australia, and similar processes around the world. We sought to explore how contributors to the Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice have advanced the knowledge surrounding disability inclusion in universities through their publications in the journal. We identified only three articles that were primarily or explicitly about aspects of teaching and learning for higher education students with disability, alongside 48 that tangentially mentioned higher education students with disability. Other articles included the search terms (such as disab*) but made only passing reference to disability or were not about disabled students in higher education. We provide recommendations for authors, reviewers and editors to consider as they reflect on how they can contribute to the conversation, and to the improvement of educational opportunities and outcomes for disabled students.

Language Note

All authors of this paper are disabled academics and researchers and generally prefer to use identity-first language. People with disabilities will be referred to as disabled students, autistic staff, etc. For more information on inclusive language, see this guide.

Citation

Introduction

Higher education serves as a transformative force in our world, empowering graduates with outcomes such as improved career prospects, increased earning potential, and networking opportunities. Traditionally exclusive, universities have undergone significant changes through societal shifts and policy interventions which have made them more inclusive spaces for a diverse student body (Productivity Commission, 2019). Of particular interest to this article are disabled students, constituting 9% of the current Australian university population (O'Kane, 2023b).

The rise in disabled student enrolment in Australian higher education, catalysed by the Bradley Review and the Demand-driven university system, marked a departure from the past when disabled students were largely excluded from university study. Despite increased initiatives like Student Access Plans, Universal Design for Learning, and enhanced accessibility software, the success rates and graduation outcomes for disabled students have not seen proportional improvement (Australian Government Department of Education, 2023; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2022, O'Kane, 2023a). This reflects a broader challenge in our universities and teaching practices that have yet to fully accommodate a diverse student cohort.

In light of the Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice's (JUTLP) focus on teaching and learning in universities and the imperative of aligning with best practices for educating disabled students, this anniversary edition presents an opportune moment to scrutinise the breadth, depth, and extent of research published in JUTLP pertaining to university teaching and learning for disabled students.

To address this inquiry, our study embarks on a comprehensive review of articles within JUTLP related to disability and Universal Design for Learning. Following the introduction, we provide further background on the status of disabled students and their rights to education. Then a presentation of our review methodology, findings, and subsequent discussion of the implications and recommendations derived from our investigation.

Literature

Defining Disability

For the purposes of this paper, individuals are considered to have a disability if they experience a limitation, restriction, or impairment lasting or likely to last at least six months, impeding everyday activities. This encompasses various categories such as sensory, intellectual, physical, psychosocial, and conditions like head injury or stroke, an understanding that aligns with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (Australian Government Department of Education, 2023 ; Australian Human Rights Commission, n.d.a, n.d.b.). While mental illnesses are explicitly included in this definition under the psychosocial category, this review will exclude mental illness due to the fact this journal has a large number of articles focusing on mental health (especially anxiety and depression) in the context of student well-being rather than a disabling condition (Australian Human Rights Commission, n.d.a), with the exception of those articles that include mental health as a disability.

Legal Frameworks

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises that all people with disabilities are entitled to equal rights in the realms of work and education (Australian Human Rights Commission, n.d.b). These rights are partially protected by the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) and the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (the Standards) (Australian Government Department of Education, 2023). The primary objectives of these legislative measures, as outlined by the Department of Education (2022) and the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), are to facilitate the active participation of individuals with disabilities in society and to eradicate certain discriminatory practices. In the context of the rights of university students, this regulatory framework advances disabled students' rights to accessible and inclusive education and work in universities. Universities are obligated to provide reasonable adjustments and accommodations, ensuring that students can fully engage in academic activities without facing discrimination. This commitment extends to various aspects of university life such as basic physical accessibility, awareness and training for staff to support disabled students, and Individualized Support Plans (Australian Government Department of Education, 2023).

Disability in HE

Despite the above legal frameworks that aim to create equal access and outcomes for disabled people, the number of disabled students participating in higher education is less than their percentage of the general population at 9% to 18% respectively (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2022; O'Kane, 2023b). Among the student population reporting a disability, graduation and success rates are still below parity (Pitman et al., 2019; O'Kane, 2023a). The Australian Government Department of Education (2021) reports the success ratios for students with disabilities consistently fall below parity nationwide, indicating a lower level of academic achievement compared to students without disabilities. Although there is some variation observed across states, the success rates of students with disabilities generally range between 5 to 10 percent lower than those without any reported disabilities. These success rates and ratios gauge academic performance by calculating the ratio of passed units to all attempted units. Disabled students also reported lower satisfaction with their overall university student experience compared to their peers with no disability, with lower scores for all of their surveyed experiences: skills development, learner engagement, teaching quality, student support, and learning resources (QILT, 2023).

Moreover, only 17% of adults with disabilities hold a bachelor's degree, contrasting starkly with the 35% of their peers without disabilities (Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing, 2022). Consequences of this can also be seen in the employment statistics. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2020 report, in 2018, approximately 53.4% of people with disabilities were part of the labour force, whereas the percentage was significantly higher at 84.1% for individuals without disabilities. However, for those with a disability who hold a bachelor's degree, this gap lessens to only a 6% lower employment rate than those without disabilities (Include Ability, 2021). This is a significantly improved number from the general population and evidences the importance of supporting disabled students through higher education. To address the considerable disparity in employment and educational attainment, there exists a substantial opportunity for universities to implement changes aimed at supporting individuals with disabilities via their mission of teaching and learning.

Trends in Inclusive Education

These lower outcomes are a symptom of the way that our teaching and learning systems are designed. As disabled students often exhibit diverse needs, distinct from both their

classmates without disabilities and even those sharing the same disability, the imperative of inclusive education has been twofold. Efforts have primarily concentrated on establishing accommodations and special considerations tailored to individual requirements, fostering equal participation via methods such as Student Access Plans. Additionally, there is a concerted push towards enhancing flexibility and adjustability in assessment methods and classroom access, acknowledging the unique challenges and strengths of each student within the broader framework of inclusive education and Universal Design for Learning.

Amidst the evolving landscape of inclusive education, where the imperative is to address diverse needs and ensure equal participation, various initiatives have been instrumental in translating these principles into actionable measures. One such pivotal strategy is embodied in Student Access Plans, which play a crucial role in tailoring education to the unique requirements of students with disabilities and are included in the laws surrounding disability and education (Australian Government Department of Education, 2023). Student Access Plans play a crucial role in translating inclusive principles into practical measures (Grimes et al., 2018; Kent et al., 2018). These plans are frequently tailored to provide students with personalized access to their classes, practices, and coursework. Specific allowances within these plans may encompass granting additional time during exams for students facing motor or processing challenges. Similarly, accommodations might involve permitting written essays in lieu of oral presentations for students experiencing difficulties with public speaking, exemplifying the commitment to accommodating diverse learning needs. Such plans are explicitly included in the Disability Standards for Education as a basic requirement to support disabled student success (Australian Government Department of Education, 2023).

While the approach of Student Access Plans focuses on making adjustments for the individual to engage in the set assessment and learning activities, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles focus on creating a flexible learning environment that is accessible to a diverse cohort. Specifically, UDL promotes inclusive education through thoughtful planning in learning design, development, delivery, and assessment (Meyer et al., 2014). It acknowledges the diversity among learners, understanding that there is no 'typical learner,' and emphasizes that designing a subject with a broad range of learners in consideration improves the learning experience for all students. For example, a course that takes UDL principles into account may provide alternatives for how students can demonstrate their knowledge, such as written essays, presentations, or multimedia projects as a standard offering (Meyer et al., 2014; Waisman et al., 2023). This may also include flexible environments, such as adjustable room lighting which can improve access for people with sensory sensitivities associated with conditions such as Autism and ADHD, as well as those prone to migraines or with low-vision (Artemenko et al., 2022; Brunnström et al., 2004; Parmar et al., 2021). Another topical example is online access to classes, which can support student participation for those with conditions that cause in-person attendance to be difficult or impossible and/or to provide more accessible formats for those who are blind (e.g., the circulation of Word Documents rather than relying on PowerPoint) (ADCET, 2024; O'Kane, 2023)

Online learning has been a particular area of interest for disabled students' success, with mixed results during the pandemic a cause of contention (Trimble, 2023). There are calls to allow greater access for students whose accessibility needs create barriers to in-person access. For example, the O'Kane (2023a) report shows that online access has driven up disabled student enrolment. However, the impact of online learning on disabled students is

still not well understood, and accessibility of online resources is unclear (Kent et al., 2018). Conversely, the poor teaching and learning outcomes for the general student cohort during the pandemic and other online learning experiences have led universities to harden their stance against allowing remote learning and have also led to resistance to further improve online learning outcomes (Mojica & Upmacis, 2022; Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, 2020; Trimble, 2023). This could have long-reaching repercussions for the participations of disabled students (O'Kane, 2023a). However, the pandemic did lead to a major shift in digitisation of resources and learning content, which was in itself a major step forward in accessibility for those who may require alternative formats, such as those who are blind or dyslexic (Cummings, 2023; Glushenkova & Zagato, 2023).

This section has covered disability definitions, legal frameworks, and trends in inclusive education such as Student Access Plans and Universal Design for Learning. Now, we turn our focus to how the Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice has contributed to the knowledge surrounding disability inclusion in universities through their article repertoire.

Method

The aim of this review was to examine articles on the teaching and learning of disabled students published in JULTP in the twenty years since its first issue, and to reflect on JULTP's contributions to disability scholarship over this period. Thus, we utilised the JULTP's database to search for relevant articles. Using the search term disab* (truncated to ensure the inclusion of the word disabled, disability, disabilities and other variations) we conducted three searches: search by title, search by abstract, and search all fields. We had intended to search by keyword but this is not currently an option on the journal's webpage.

We then repeated the title, abstract and all fields searches using a series of other words to capture specific disabilities that are commonly represented in tertiary student populations. This is of course not an exhaustive list and influenced by our own perspectives. The terms search were: deaf OR hearing impair*, autis* or neurodiver*, ADHD, dyslexi*, and blind OR vision impair*. We also searched for the terms UDL and Universal design. All searches were conducted in October 2023.

All articles identified as including one of the search terms were downloaded for review and independently coded by two of the authors (BAS and SJ) into one of four categories:

A. explicitly/primarily about teaching/learning for higher education students with disability OR discusses a substantive aspect of teaching/learning for higher education students with disability

B. explicitly/primarily about disability but NOT higher education students with disability (e.g., preparing students to teach primary/secondary students with a disability, or engaging students in an activity or lesson topic related to supporting people with a disability) [not included in the review, but discussed separately]

C. only tangentially mentions teaching/learning for higher education students with disability (i.e., with no or limited context and/or recommendations)

D. No reference to teaching/learning for higher education students with disability, but have appeared in the search terms for technical issues (e.g., use of the word 'disability' appears in the citations list, but not in the body text).This fourth category

was added after our initial scan of the retrieved articles identified that some of the database hits included articles with no direct reference to the topic.

The two coders met to review the results of the independent coding and discuss and resolve differences. The initial intention had been to undertake a detailed analysis of articles published in the journal that were explicitly/primarily about teaching/learning for higher education students with disability (category A); looking at trends over time in the issues addressed, study designs used, recommendations made, and other aspects that demonstrated progress made over time as reflected in articles published in JUTLP. However, due to the paucity of articles that primarily, or even substantively, addressed aspects related to the teaching and learning of disabled higher education students, we instead reviewed the representation and positioning of disability in each of the above categories.

Results

Our search of the JUTLP database located only one paper with the word disability in the title (Wright et al., 2021); and only five with the word disability in the abstract (Wright et al., 2021; Nieminen & Pesonen, 2022; Lee et al. 2023; Drescher 2017; Dinmore, 2019). The all fields search identified a total of 87 articles, including these five, published in the journal that included the word disab* and a further nine that included one of the other search terms.

The initial inter-rater agreement on the coding categories was 72% (69/96). Discussion between the two coders identified two key areas of discrepancy. First, the interpretation of 'tangential mention' with one coder interpreting this as a tangential mention of disabled students and the other as a tangential mention of disability; it was agreed that the former was the intent. Second, whether the interpretation of disability in higher education included teaching non-disabled students about disability in other contexts; it was agreed that despite being in a higher education setting, these belonged in Category B. Following these two clarifications, there was 100% inter-rater agreement on the categorisation of the 96 articles.

Only three articles were coded as being primarily or explicitly about aspects of teaching and learning for higher education students with disability (Crews & Allison, 2022; Koppi & Pearson, 2005; Niemenen & Pesonen, 2022). In comparison 48 were coded as only tangentially mentioning teaching/learning for higher education students with disability, and 40 as not actually being relevant to the teaching and learning of disabled higher education students. Five articles were identified that were explicitly or primarily about disability but not about disabled students in higher education, and these will be discussed separately.

Articles Primarily or Explicitly Focused on Teaching and Learning for Disabled Students in Higher Education

We identified only three articles that were primarily or explicitly focused on teaching and learning for disabled students, the intended focus of this review. One was published in 2005 and two in 2022. The six authors of the three papers were from the UK (three), Australia, Hong Kong and Norway.

The earliest paper in this category (Koppi & Pearson, 2005) was actually focused on a model for more effective conference presentations, targeting academics (rather than students). However, given that two of the three examples given related to conference presentations on teaching disabled students – and the paucity of identified papers – this was

included. One of the conference presentations was a professional development opportunity for academics involved in developing and delivering online courses and aimed to increase awareness of and responsiveness to accessibility issues. The other was a workshop that addressed barriers and supports to online learning for disabled students. While the focus, and conclusions, of the paper related to the information delivery model, the body of the paper contained information that could potentially prompt thought and discussion of issues relating to the teaching and learning of disabled students in the online environment.

One paper (Nieminen & Pesonen, 2022) specifically focused on anti-ableist pedagogies, which go beyond the provision of accommodations and adjustments to genuinely promoting the inclusion, belonging and valuing of disabled students. They discuss the varying levels of the system, from the microsystem (interpersonal relationships between disabled students and their teachers and peers) through to the chronosystem (socio-historical and socio-political changes over time). For example, at the microsystem level they emphasise the importance of ensuring that disability is embedded in curriculum across disciplines and ensuring that the voices and perspectives of disabled students are heard and valued as part of the knowledge creation process. They recommend a fundamental shift from seeing disability as a challenge that can be 'accepted' and compensated for with adjustments, to a diversity in humanity that should be valued and celebrated.

One paper (Crews & Allinson, 2022) focused on connection, co-construction and creating a sense of belonging in the context of drama and performance studies. In the section 'neurodivergent or crip practices…' the authors provide explicit guidance on aspects of performative pedagogy that are disempowering, such as assumed abilities. They also provide specific detailed examples of strategies that Allinson implemented to make her teaching more inclusive of neurodivergent and other disabled students:

> *For example, when teaching improvisation in the past I have often started an exercise by giving a stimulus (for example a word or an image) and then inviting a creative response in a specific mode….This requires all participants to respond using the same form, which limits diversity to a narrow field….. Another example is how I have re-evaluated specific performance practices I previously learnt and taught which place value on participant's being still and quiet when observing others presenting work…However, stillness and quiet is not always possible for every participant, and for some moving and making sound is essential to processing information.*

This paper provides a useful model for educating others about disability issues by clearly articulating the differences in learning processes between disabled and non-disabled students (in this instance, with a particular focus on neurodivergent students), and then providing explicit suggestions on how to modify teaching and assessment practices to be more inclusive.

Articles that Tangentially Mention Disabled Students in Higher Education

Forty-eight articles were identified in this category. Of the 120 authors, 54.2% were affiliated with an Australian institution, 20% were from the UK, and 8% from the USA. Ten of the 38 co-authored papers included authors from more than one country. Coverage of disability in these articles ranged from brief or single mentions of the relevance of a teaching strategy or context to (specific groups of) disabled students, to including data on disabled students, to 'laundry' lists where the term disability was placed alongside multiple other EDI attributes.

These will be discussed below in groups, in order of the extent to which they provided information relevant to teaching and learning for disabled students.

In Zhang's (2012) article, it was asserted that multimedia teaching materials, specifically animations and cartoons, played a pivotal role in engaging first-year and international students in economic studies. The research, based on surveys and qualitative interviews, indicated that these resources effectively addressed misconceptions, enhanced learning efficiency, and generated strong positive feedback from various stakeholders, thereby contributing valuable insights for the improvement of economics education, with a passing mention of students with dyslexia.

> *The animated cartoons developed in this research received strong positive feedbacks* [sic] *from peer colleagues in Economics, teachers from other faculties, tutors in Economics, first year students, international students and RA [residential assistance] students with dyslexic problems*. (Zhang, 2012).

Dinmore (2019) reported on a project which involved the creation of a very large quantity of digital content for courses targeting mature-age students. One component of the project, which was described in detail, was the inclusion of same language subtitles in all of the videos produced to increase accessibility for deaf or hearing-impaired students, as well as other disabled and non-disabled students. They found that 75% of the students had used the subtitles, and 57% felt this had increased their understanding of the material; however, it was not possible to ascertain what proportion of the respondents were disabled students, or whether their outcomes differed from non-disabled students.

Three articles featured participant quotes that highlighted disability. However, these quotes were the whole representation of disability in these papers and the authors did not further engage with the disability part of the quotes, despite choosing to include them:

> *One respondent confided: "As a disabled student this has been an absolute boon to me."* (Syska & Pritchard, 2023).

> *I met up with someone up in the student centre, a lovely lady there in the disability area and they just set a plan in place for me....* (Larkin et al., 2016).

> *No, but I do think virtual mobility plays an important part in education for long-distance requirements… but also for students with disabilities which may render them unable to access the education they have a right to and deserve.* (Keshishi et al., 2023)

Four articles included disability in the demographic statistics reported on student cohorts, and provided further information on this inclusion (see Table 1).

Table 1

Data reported on disabled students

	Study design	Data/measure	Finding reported
Crawford et al., 2022	Survey of 1,879 mature age students	Disability yes/no	"…and having a disability were not associated with inclusion/connection/belonging"

Tham et al., 2023	Systematic Literature Review and meta-thematic analysis	Reference to 'student with disability' in identified themes	Tabulated data shows theme identified once across papers reviewed
Wallbank & Le Hen, 2023	Evaluation of a Foundation Year program (average marks and progression)	Data from student records (specific measure not stated)	"progression for students with a declared disability was greater than for those without"*
Zhang, 2012	Interviews (n=17)	One interview with 'student with dyslexia'	"I strongly believe that these cartoons would help, as I learn more from visual examples than reading big words that mean nothing to me"

* NOTE: Table states that data reported is students with Specific Learning Difficulties (which is unlikely to be the same as 'all students with a declared disability')

An additional nineteen of the 48 articles included disabl* and/or our other search terms in lists of inclusion areas of importance, in their institution or in higher education in general, as part of introduction or overview material but made no other mention of disability, such as "Student bodies in higher-education institutions are becoming increasingly diverse, including students from culturally and linguistically diverse and low socio-economic status backgrounds, students with disabilities and students who are the first in their family to attend university" (Harvey et al., 2016). This serves as an example of a 'laundry list', where they were added for illustrative purposes, but no further mention or inclusion of disabled students exists within the text.

Vague mentions of the concept of students with a disability or teaching students with a disability, with no substantial context or deconstruction of its inclusion in the article were located in the remaining 21 of these 48 articles. Of these, many reasonably could have had a stronger focus on disability. For example, articles that focused on the digitalisation of writing for student learning (Mospan, 2023) (Shcherbakova, 2023) and did mention some of the search terms but provided no further context. This was surprising, when digitalisation is of particular importance to those whose disabilities interfere with their reading abilities, such as blindness and dyslexia, and has long been campaigned for by disability advocates (Harpur & Suzor, 2014). This same sentiment extends to multiple modes of delivery (Smith et al., 2006), which again is particularly pertinent to students with disabilities who may require remote options, learn more effectively from flipped classrooms, and other accessibility improvements offered by diverse modes of delivery.

Articles that are Not about Disabled Students in Higher Education

The 40 articles in this category were picked up in the 'all fields' search for a combination of mechanical and content reasons. Fifteen had a citation in their reference list that included one of the search terms, but no other reference to disability in the article. In nine instances the search terms retrieved uses of the truncated 'disab*' that were unrelated to human

disability, such as ""how the teaching technologies enable or disable specific behaviours" (Cummings, 2023) and ""…disabling access to the internet…" (Munoz & Mackay, 2019).

In seven instances the reference to disability was in the context of a description of the profession students were studying, topics covered in the course, research topics students could select from, or learnings from projects they had undertaken:

> *Exercise scientists have expertise in ...improve health, fitness, wellbeing or performance, and/or the prevention of chronic disease and disability across the lifespan* (Clanchy et al., 2021)

> *8) Communicating with clients who have a disability* (Dune et al., 2018)

> *Sometimes, lack of specific knowledge made good execution of the assignment difficult. For example, a Facility Management student who completed an assignment in the field of care for mentally disabled people mentioned that he did not know how to address certain issues in his work.* (Kamphorst, 2018)

In the remainder, the mentions of disability were incidental, and unrelated to the focus of the article, such as noting previous work experience of a student participant, student's family situations, or philosophical quotes that included one of the search terms.

Articles that are Explicitly/Primarily about Disability but NOT about Higher Education Students

Whilst these five articles are outside the scope of the review, we have elected to include brief details of them here. Given the paucity of articles on the actual topic, these stood out to us as disabled scholars as at least a small step in the right direction, as they report on courses, activities and projects that are designed to increase awareness and disability-inclusive attitudes among non-disabled university students.

One article reported on a collaborative game creation project that engaged undergraduate students in developing a gamified resource to educate people about learning disabilities (Lee, 2023). Another reported on a cross-disciplinary, cross-country project that involved students learning about disability issues and creating an accessible website for a business (Koris et al., 2021). Two articles focused on the education and preparation of future teachers of disabled students, addressing issues such as positive and negative attitudes towards inclusion among in-service teachers, pre-service teachers and college students (Shauli, 2023) ; and modelling positive attitudes towards disability and inclusion (Drescher, 2017).

The fifth (Wright, 2021) , which we commend to readers of the journal, fell slightly outside the scope of the review question in that the focus was on teaching (non-disabled) higher education students a new module in their final year of an education degree, which aimed to "address the growing concern among future educators and in-service teachers that they feel ill-equipped to teach disabled, autistic and neurodivergent children and children with SEND [Special Education Needs and Disability]". This article stood out to us a model for inclusive course development, with the research team consisting of two teaching staff and three students with "lived experience of disability, autism, neurodivergence, and/or SEND", and input on the module development being sought from disabled students, parents of disabled students, and other stakeholders.

What about Universal Design for Learning?

Our search of the JUTLP database using the term "UDL" located no papers and using the term "universal design for learning" located 11. Of these 11 articles, only two were different from the articles that were included in the previous categories (both of which were classed as not being about UDL at all).

None were specifically related to exploring UDL. Four did not center on UDL explicitly, however, they did utilise UDL as a conceptual framework to explore broader themes and topics within the content such as the student experience and student transitions. Two made a tangential or incidental reference to UDL, and five had nothing to do with UDL.

Of the articles that were found under the search for disability mentions, there was not necessarily a correlation between their categorisation in the previous search and categorization in the UDL search. For example, one article classed as *Articles primarily or explicitly focused on teaching and learning for disabled students in higher education* was found to only have tangential mentions of UDL (Nieminen & Pesonen, 2022). Meanwhile, one article classed as *Articles that tangentially mention disabled students in higher education* and two categorised as *Articles that are not about disabled students in higher education* included mentions of UDL as a conceptual framework to explore broader themes and topics (Harvey et al., 2016; Kinash, 2021; Thies, 2016).

UDL was expected to be a more important part of this review, but the small sample has only allowed it to be a secondary comment that we are including for illustrative purposes.

Discussion

As disabled scholars, we took on this review with great enthusiasm, expecting to find a wide range of research and scholarship focused on the teaching and learning of disabled students. We anticipated some gaps. For example, SJ suspected that there was likely to be a lack of papers that address academics with a disability, a lack of inclusion of disabled researchers, and other imbalances in what has been published. We did not expect that across more than 70 issues, spanning 20 years, we would identify only three articles that specifically focused on aspects of teaching and learning for disabled students. BAS expected to find discussions on UDL and instructive pieces on implementing Student Access Plans, as these have been prevalent topics in recent years, even outside of disability. To find no articles that focused on these topics, and so few that mentioned disability at all was confronting, when the previous literature section shows that this is a relevant and prevalent topic to teaching and learning in universities (Artemenko et al., 2022; Brunnström et al., 2004; Meyer et al., 2014; Parmar et al., 2021; Waisman et al., 2023).

Other missed opportunities were found in articles that the authors expected to include a deeper analysis and connection to disability. Articles about topics such as online learning, sense of belonging, student experience, and blended learning all missed opportunities to delve more deeply into how these topics intersect with disability. Such articles included quotes from disabled students about their experience with disability, and then failed to explore what this meant in the context of their article. This was disappointing, and certainly something that editors and authors can be conscious of in the future.

Tags and Terminology

It is possible that we missed some articles that would have met the inclusion criteria. We only used a limited number of search terms, and there are others that could have been relevant. However, the tiny number of relevant articles we did find suggests that additional

keywords would not have added substantially to the number of identified articles. The keyword disab* is fairly fundamental and it would be unlikely that many articles that focused directly on teaching and learning of disabled students would not use this (truncated) term at least once. Although we recognise that some authors may have made a deliberate choice avoid that terminology, this itself would require an explanation of the language used (i.e., we won't use the word 'disability' because…), or itself could be an issue (i.e., 'special needs' is widely considered to be offensive by the community).

The high number of false positives was in part a function of the searchability of the website, with the options to search by title, abstract or all fields. It is likely that the addition of a 'search keywords' and/or 'search keywords and abstract' option would reduce the unintended inclusion of many irrelevant papers. In the current review, that was 40 of the 96 identified articles, from those that included the word disabled in the reference list to those that included the word in a non-human context (such as referring to 'disabling' features on software or websites). However, in order for this to not concurrently result in relevant papers being missed in the search, it would be important for the term 'disability' (and other key terms) to be available as keyword choices.

In order to minimise the likelihood of authors not selecting relevant keywords due to misunderstandings of appropriate and respectful terminology, a guide to disability language could be produced and made available with the other information for authors. This would also enhance the searchability of abstracts and articles, as well as reduce the likelihood of authors inadvertently including content or terminology that is offensive or harmful.

Tangents, Teasers and Tokens

More than half of the identified articles made a brief or passing reference to disabled students, often in contexts where this cohort should clearly have been a substantive focus. In some cases, the references to disability were tangential. Articles commenced with discussions of teaching strategies, philosophies, or technologies that had been posited (or proven) to improve the learning experiences of disabled students. However, authors then discussed their development, implementation and/or evaluation with no further reference to the impact on this cohort.

In some articles, the references to disability were teasers, hinting at information that was not shared with the reader. For example, data was provided on student cohorts – either specific study samples or broader university populations – that included disability statistics, but the authors did not report any analysis of outcomes for disabled students and whether these differed from non-disabled students. Similarly, there were instances where minimal data was provided, such as a single statistic or participant quote, but not followed up on in any meaningful way.

In many cases, the references to disability read as tokenistic, limited to a single statement about government or institutional policy, in which disability was one of a set of priority areas. The consistent recognition of disability as a priority in higher education, but the absence of reflection on how our teaching and learning strategies could best support disabled students, was perhaps the most consistent message of this review. There is an important lesson here for authors, reviewers and editors.

Many of the articles in this category represent lost opportunities to explore the experiences of disabled students, and to further readers' understanding of how to support their learning and teaching. For example, articles written in the context of the impact of the pandemic

lockdowns on student learning; articles on online learning more generally; articles on novel teaching approaches and technologies; and articles on the implementation of teaching strategies that are posited to increase inclusion. These and other topics that are of particular interest and importance to disabled students and scholars are the key to addressing the entrenched disparities in educational outcomes. These topics are generally of interest to the disability community and are found in the wider literature on teaching disabled students outside of this journal, so disabled students should be a key consideration when these topics are discussed.

Beyond individual articles, there are equally evident gaps in special issues. The paucity of papers on Universal Design for Learning was a surprise to us; and within that small body of work, the absence of specific reference to disability was concerning. However, we also note Special Issues of the journal where the topic lends itself to reflection on issues related to teaching and learning for disabled people, but were still notably absent. For example, the very recent 'Higher education and digital writing in a post-pandemic world' (Vol 20, Issue 2) discussed a topic incredibly important to the disability community, especially those who have reading and writing related disabilities such as blindness.

As disabled scholars, and advocates for disabled students in higher education, it would be remiss of us not to note the moments in this process that caused us distress due to the negative presentation of disabilities. While we are not suggesting any ill-intent on the part of the authors, it is important for authors and editors to be aware of the potential impact of context-free comments on a group of students and colleagues who are already marginalised and discriminated against. This includes noting that a review article makes a unique contribution by differing from a previous review that "... included children and included students with learning disabilities" (Biggers & Luo, 2020); perhaps suggesting that these two groups ('children' and 'students with learning disabilities') have more in common with each other than the latter group has with their higher education peers. Similarly, an article about engaging students in Art Theory (Messham-Muir, 2012) included, without any trigger warning, details of an extremely disturbing historical artifact concerning disabled people during the holocaust (surely a similar point could have been made without the very real risk of causing significant distress to disabled readers).

Conclusion

We encourage authors to reflect on this and to consider how they can contribute to the conversation with their research. If you are writing about a theory, strategy or technology that is posited to be of particular relevance or value to disabled students, take the time to reflect and expand on how and why, including practical steps for implementation. If you have data from disabled students, or the capacity to include data from disabled students, in your research then utilise this opportunity to further our understanding of whether these posited outcomes are realised in these cohorts.

We encourage reviewers to identify these gaps in articles and encourage authors to fill them prior to publication. If an author writes, for example, "this technology is of particular benefit to disabled students" or "this approach makes learning more accessible for disabled students", ask them to explain why this is the case, and how this could be practically implemented in a university setting. If they note that they have data on disability status of study participants, and it is relevant to the topic of the research, ask them to analyse and report on this data.

We encourage editors (and guest editors) to take steps to increase the coverage of disability issues in JUTLP. An obvious starting point would be a Special Issue on advances in teaching and learning for disabled students, or ideally a series of Special Issues focusing on different aspects or topics. However, we would be disappointed to see disability isolated solely in Special Issues. Given that 18% of Australians and 9% of our Australian student population are disabled, and that disability is a priority area for the Universities Accord process, the teaching and learning of disabled students should be a regular topic of discussion interwoven into the fabric of the journal (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2022; O'Kane, 2023b).

Recommendations

In summary, we recommend the following as a starting point to addressing this considerable gap in the literature.

1. Include a 'search keywords' and/or 'search keywords and abstract' option on the JUTLP webpage

2. Include 'disability' and other key terms in the keyword list

3. Provide a Disability Language Guide for authors

4. Publish a Special Issue on Teaching and Learning for Disabled Students as a matter of priority

5. Consider publishing a Special Issue on UDL

6. Include reference to disabled students in calls for papers for future Special Issues

7. Ensure that Editors and Reviewers identify tangential, teaser and token references to disability and require authors to expand meaningfully on these

While these recommendations have been written with reference to JUTLP specifically, they are relevant to any journal that focus primarily, or even partially, on higher education. Strategies such as consistent use of keywords, disability language guidelines, and encouraging submitting authors (and reviewers) to consider the implications of their findings for the teaching and learning of disabled students will help our sector provide a more inclusive and empowering education experience.

For academics who are readers of JUTLP, and teachers of disabled students, we encourage you to apply the same critical lens that we have applied when reading articles about the scholarship of teaching and learning.

When you see teasers – articles that report that they collected data on student cohorts that included disability statistics, but don't report the outcomes for disabled students – we encourage you to email the authors and ask them to share those findings with you.

When you see tangents – articles that commence with reference to a teaching strategy or technology that has been posited (or proven) to improve the learning experiences of disabled students but then only discuss its application for a non-disabled cohort – we encourage you to think about how you could take their findings and implement them in developing more inclusive approaches for your disabled students.

Conflict of Interest

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Appendix- Articles included in the Review

GROUP A
1. Crews, S. K., & Allinson, J. (2022). Connect, converse, collaborate: Encountering belonging and forging resilience through creative practice. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, *19*(4). https://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol19/iss4/13 UK
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