

Students with Disabilities in Higher Education – How can Academic Staff Manage Teaching Process

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Abstract

The number of students with disabilities within higher education continues to increase year after year (Pumfrey, 2008; Liasidou, 2014; Seale et al., 2015). Among other things, this may be due to more and better opportunities for students with disabilities, support plans and services at higher education institutions, better financial support for inclusive processes (better infrastructural capacity, support staff, equipment etc.), and changes in legislation and policies on international, national and higher education institutional level. The latter was implemented by many countries to make higher education more accessible for students with disabilities and by doing so, becoming more committed to supporting and implementing the processes of Inclusion (Barnes, 2007; Jacklin et al., 2007). Some of how universities are doing so is establishing support offices for students with disabilities, incorporating the use of new technologies and implementing inclusive educational practices (Moriña A., 2016). Studying at a university can be empowering for students with disability and can represent an opportunity for their social and occupational inclusion. The opportunity to study at a university can increase students' opportunities later on in the labour market by getting and keeping a job, obtaining higher revenues to and achieving an independent life. For some students with disabilities, the experience of studying at a university and being successful at it is seen as an opportunity that strengthens them personally, enabling them to rise above the difficulties they face in their everyday life due to their disability (UNESCO, 1999).

In this article, we focus on how academic staff shall manage the teaching process that will support the inclusion of students with disabilities. The term “manage teaching process” includes: recognizing students with disabilities and their needs, planning the teaching

process, delivery of lectures, motivating students with disabilities, establishing a teaching-learning environment in classrooms, examinations and assessments of the knowledge. Academic staff shall receive appropriate support from a higher education institution, which will enable them to work effectively. Types of support can be: giving academic staff opportunity to attend training activities related to methods of work with the disabled; making them aware of their role in creating an environment in which students with disabilities can succeed and feel welcome; higher education institution shall support good cooperation between administration, management, teaching staff and students. This will be accompanied by a presentation of international practices in the area, which support the process of inclusion of the disabled in higher education.

Keywords: higher education, academic staff, teaching process, cooperation with disabled