

Creating Inclusive Learning Environments In the Higher Education Sector? Valuing Difference – Labels?

# CREATING SPACE



# CREATING SPACE...

FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES  
IN TERTIARY EDUCATION –  
BRISBANE – ATEND  
CONFERENCE – SHARON  
BOYCE



Creating Inclusive Learning Environments In the Higher Education Sector? Valuing Difference – Labels?



# Exploring Disability & Diversity - Understanding the Ability of All.

- Education is the key to creating inclusive environments across all ages – we do this by allowing participants to try various experiences and simulations of difference
- Exploring educational opportunities - especially in tertiary education
- How is it possible to live inclusion? – Education awareness and actual pedagogical and policy change built into the curriculum.




# Sharon Boyce



- Educator/ academic/ consultant
- Discovering Disability & Diversity
- University Student – PHD- Inclusion at UQ
- University Lecturer- Tertiary disability adviser (volunteer & mentor)
- Chair of the Regional Disability Council
- Member of the Disability Council of Queensland
- Early Childhood Educator
- Primary/secondary Educator
- Workplace/Carer Inclusion Trainer
- Teacher Professional Development





# My Background & the Development of a Dream...

- Background – when my neck broke I decided to take a new direction
- How Discovering DisAbility & Diversity started – [www.discoveringdisability.com.au](http://www.discoveringdisability.com.au)
- I believe all things happen for a purpose – work in Tertiary Education –support of ATSI students - pathways it has led to – awareness for pharmacy, medical, educational students
- Choices and Chances to help create an Inclusive World

# Discovering Dis Ability & Diversity

- Exploring Issues of Diversity through experiential learning.
- Relating this experience to real life contexts – care, education, early years, medicine & health...
- Understanding & Valuing Difference.
- Importance of Family, Friendship & Faith



**Discovering  
Dis Ability &  
Diversity**

# Discovering Dis Ability & Diversity

- How 'hands-on' Disability and Diversity Awareness Creates Real Change Across all Communities.
- Breaks down barriers – Starting young - supporting early childhood interventions... Real direction with ministerial roundtable discussions
- [Building bright futures: an action plan for children with a disability from birth to eight years](#)
- Importance of fun & sharing of stories...


# Labels – a dilemma

- Abilities and experiences need to be shared. We do not need labels. They create limits on the individual.
  - In personal exchange
  - in our local community
  - within the wider community
- Also often need labels to define a disability and/or to fit into a policy framework or receive funding





# Avoid labels if at all possible

- labels create barriers which cause problems both for the person now and for their later life
  - society recognizes that everyone has individual differences that make each person unique. These differences do not need labels.
  - We aim to be inclusive, our language should reflect this
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# Discovering DisAbility & Diversity




- Invited to over 1000 different schools, universities, organisations and centres across Australia
- Worked with over 120 000 adults and children

# How does the process work?

- Sharing of Stories and situations
- Experiencing key disability areas – both physical and hidden disabilities
- Exploring reactions to these experiences and critically reflecting on the impact and what they felt
- Change in practice or support processes with real knowledge and understanding
- Practical solutions explored and enacted
- Real relationships established



# Inclusion Issues

- Dilemma of labelling –funding etc.
  - Acceptance and celebration of difference by all
  - New way of looking at disability - as a gift not a deficiency
  - Exploring the widening participation agenda,
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# Inclusion Issues – con't

- Examining policy, curriculum development, pedagogy, and overall practice
- Looking at the professions and employment overall –issues?
- We want to ensure that people with disabilities are included as partnerships and pathways are created to develop aspirations and increase participation in senior schooling, vocational education and training, higher education and employment

# Physical Disability

- Not always highly visible
- Can effect the person's participation greatly
- May need careful monitoring in certain situations eg. Sport
- Need to be understood so correct procedures are adhered to


'A Day in the Life of Sharon Boyce  
A Person with a Physical Disability  
–Educational Resource Kit' -

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALAV\\_QpjZYU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALAV_QpjZYU)






# Hidden Disabilities

- A lot harder to deal with
  - Autism Asperger's Syndrome,
  - Mental health issues
  - Many others...
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# Emotional Barriers are the hardest to overcome

WHY-

- they need to be identified before they can be dealt with
  - many people do not want to vocalize emotional barriers, therefore they are often kept hidden
  - Perceptions and biases can cause barriers
  - Sometimes people do not even realize they have these biases
- 



# Different not Deficient

- Giftedness - Blind Autistic Girl/ Classical Singer – Look for Gifts not Deficiencies!!
- Raising the Bar - expect the best!!
- Pastoral Attitude
- Equity - disabled learners capable of being treated as exceptional and excellent
- Building capability, changing perceptions




# Challenge our Perceptions

- What do we see when we look at the outside of somebody?
- Get to know someone before you make assumptions about them.
- Talk with them
- Create a two way conversation
- Find out more about them
- Don't be scared to ask a question of them – Be like children... Make it real...




# Keys to Create Real Change

- Education starting in Early Childhood to whole of life
    - Tertiary education opening doorways for more inclusive attitudes and practices.
  - Flexibility with support –less res tape!!
  - Informal Support systems –my own experiences at university
  - Weaving together real life stories
  - Experiencing differences
  - Sharing - Linking the heart and the head.
  - Growing together
  - Don't take over when helping somebody –ask what they need or want
- 




# Active Experience to create change...

- Our hands-on experiential professional development workshop session allows all participants to explore this diversity and difference and then relate it to their own lives, work situations, family situations and overall attitudes and understanding of disability and difference.
- 



# DDD

- the positive stories of change and how the hands-on activities prompt people to change their attitudes about inclusion.
  - Blind girl with ASD – she was an amazing singer!!!
  - ASD little boy – his own description...
  - ‘Little hands’ – I had a new name!
  - Overly helpful and ‘the chase’!!
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# Discovering Disability & Diversity

- These sessions highlight how the program has resulted in real change towards inclusion of people with a disability or people who are from diverse backgrounds – Once understanding and knowledge is explored real change starts to take place – from the early years onwards...

# Transition & Disability - The Personal and The Professional -Directions??

- Real understanding and empathy the key – focus on experiential understanding and the real stories in our community.
- Listening to the person and their family.
- Using technology to break down the barriers
- Use of social networking for those with high level disability.

# Creating Awareness of disability in Tertiary Education

- Support for early intervention. Letting parents and educators know where they can network for help and support –needs to continue through whole of life
- Advancing the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Promoting –soon to be released -‘National Disability Standards’
- Celebrating Differences – multiple intelligences (Gardner) Real need – real support.






# Transition and Life Stage Change

- The Key times of change are usually: being born, commencing childcare, starting school; growing into adolescence; undertaking further education or employment; moving out of the family home; engaging as an adult in social life; retirement; and dying
- Need for extra support to manage these transitions...



# Belief's

- Every person has a gift - we are reminded of this everyday.
  - Life is about 'being real'
  - We need to celebrate difference and diversity
  - All people should have equal chances to participate in Life – starting in the early years
  - We should not look at disability as a 'deficit model'
  - Live life to the full and celebrate each day
- 

# My Own Life

- Continuing journey of change
- Many transitions – not only as a person with a disability
- Teenage years–difficult at times
- Some change is scary and some is exciting
- Expectations/ dreams/future?
- Education was the key to many of my dreams and still is



# My Own Life

- Very lucky to have been given the help and support at USQ in Toowoomba and also from my family
- Need to support parents/ siblings and friends – not just the person who is different
- About being real and not avoiding the 'hard stuff'
- Need to 'live life to the Full'.



# Looking Forward to the future in Australia and creating real support and educational opportunities for all...

- We need national and state support for disability and difference
- We need Learning and education and life to be fun & diverse and to start early...
- We need good community support
- We need People with a disability, their families and carers as well as service providers, government and corporate partners, disability advocates and interested members of the community to all work together for real change.

# Looking Forward to the future...


- We need to create real partnerships.
- We need practical help and support
- We need support agencies with a strong knowledge of policy and funding.
- We need innovative ideas
- We need enough funding
- We need to be creative with funding ideas
- We need autonomy
- We need good policy that helps shape & promote real inclusive communities & practice

# Looking Forward to the future...

- We need individuals who value people with a disability
- We need to support and utilise new ideas – using computers, technology, programming music and movement into every day
- We need to value cultural diversity
- We need to celebrate Difference
- We need to encourage sharing as adults...
- We need to support from the early years.




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- We need to support from the early years.



# Let's Share Together

- As Confucius 551-479 B.C said *Tell me I forget, show me I remember, involve me I understand"*



# A thought to leave with you...

- Abilities and Achievements of all individuals need to be the Focus. As fellow human beings it is our job to help each person reach their full potential, physically, emotionally, spiritually and developmentally in a changing industry and a changing world.

