



Centre for Research in
Education Inclusion
and Diversity



Access to Higher Education by Disabled People: A Policy Success Story?

Sheila Riddell,

**Centre for Research in Education Inclusion
and Diversity,**

University of Edinburgh



Centre for Research in
Education Inclusion
and Diversity

Central questions



- What progress has been made by disabled people in accessing higher education over the past decade?
- Do disabled people enjoy equal access to higher education compared with their non-disabled peers?
- What are the main factors affecting their chances of entering higher education?
- What are the additional barriers faced by disabled people once they are in higher education?
- What are the prospects for the future?



Centre for Research in
Education Inclusion
and Diversity

Proportion of disabled students in higher education doubled over a decade



Number and % of disabled students in higher education

Year	Number of students (in brackets FT)	Number of disabled students	Percentage
1994 - 95	323011 (273586)	11162 (9719)	3.5%
2004-05	379150 (320865)	26085 (22890)	7%



Centre for Research in
Education Inclusion
and Diversity



Policy drivers

- Campaigns by individual disabled people & Skill
- Funding Mechanisms - Disabled Students Allowance & Premium Funding
- Extension of DDA to education in 2001
- Public sector duty to promote disability equality
- Quality agenda



Centre for Research in
Education Inclusion
and Diversity



But major inequalities remain: Access and impairment

Full-time first degree disabled students by type of impairment, percentage based on all those who declared a disability over the period 1994 to 2009

Impairment	1994-95	2000-01	2005-06	2008-09
Specific Learning Difficulties ¹	16%	44%	54%	56%
Visual impairment	4%	3%	2%	2%
Hearing impairment	6%	5%	4%	3%
Mobility/wheelchair user	3%	3%	3%	3%
Personal care support	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
Mental health difficulties	1%	3%	4%	6%
Autistic spectrum disorder	-	-	1%	2%
An unseen disability ²	57%	27%	16%	14%
Multiple disabilities	3%	3%	5%	6%
Other disability	9%	12%	11%	10%

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), accessed 27.08.10

1. includes dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia; prior to 2007 the term used was dyslexia
2. includes diabetes, epilepsy or asthma

– fall in proportion with physical/sensory impairments & increase in dyslexia



Centre for Research in
Education Inclusion
and Diversity

Middle class disabled people much more likely to access higher education - 80% of students at pre-92 universities from middle class backgrounds; 19% from working class backgrounds – similar pattern for disabled and non-disabled students



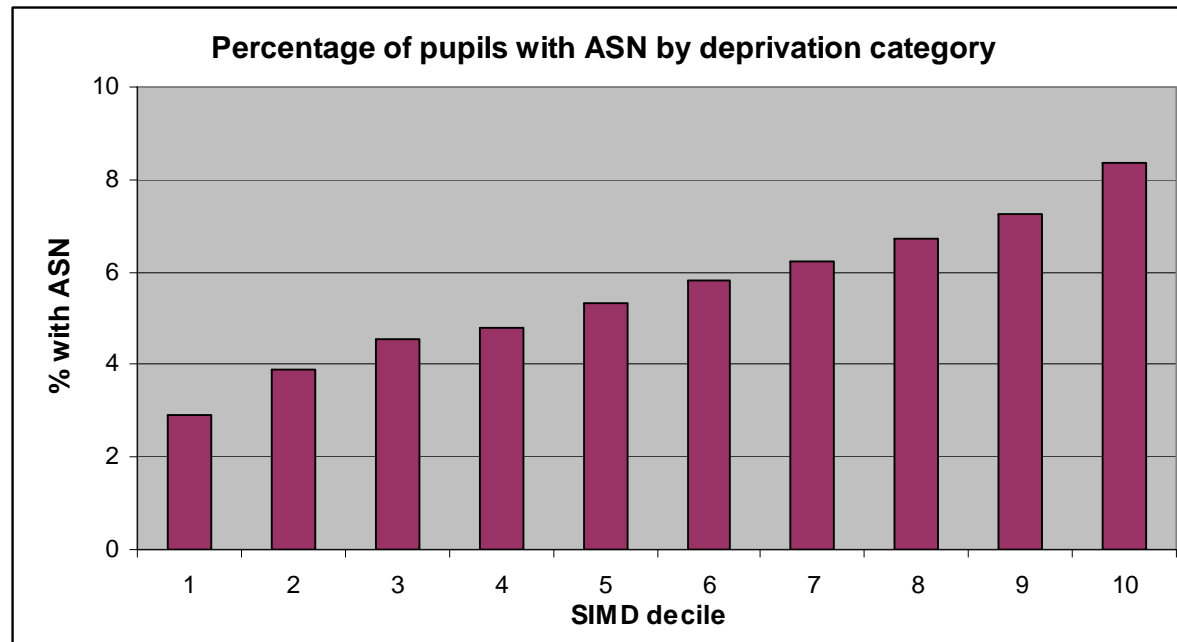
	Pre92			Post92			Non-university HEIs		
	No known disability <i>67713</i>	Known disability <i>2816</i>	All <i>70529</i>	No known disability <i>40691</i>	Known disability <i>2273</i>	All <i>42964</i>	No known disability <i>15850</i>	Known disability <i>1046</i>	All <i>16896</i>
<i>N</i>									
Professional	21	22	21	11	13	11	10	13	11
Managerial, Technical	47	48	47	41	41	41	43	47	43
Skilled-non manual	12	12	12	15	15	15	15	15	15
Skilled-manual	12	12	12	20	17	19	19	15	19
Partly skilled	6	6	6	11	11	11	10	9	10
Unskilled	1	1	1	3	3	3	2	2	2



Centre for Research in
Education Inclusion
and Diversity



But pupils with additional support needs much more likely to live in areas of social deprivation

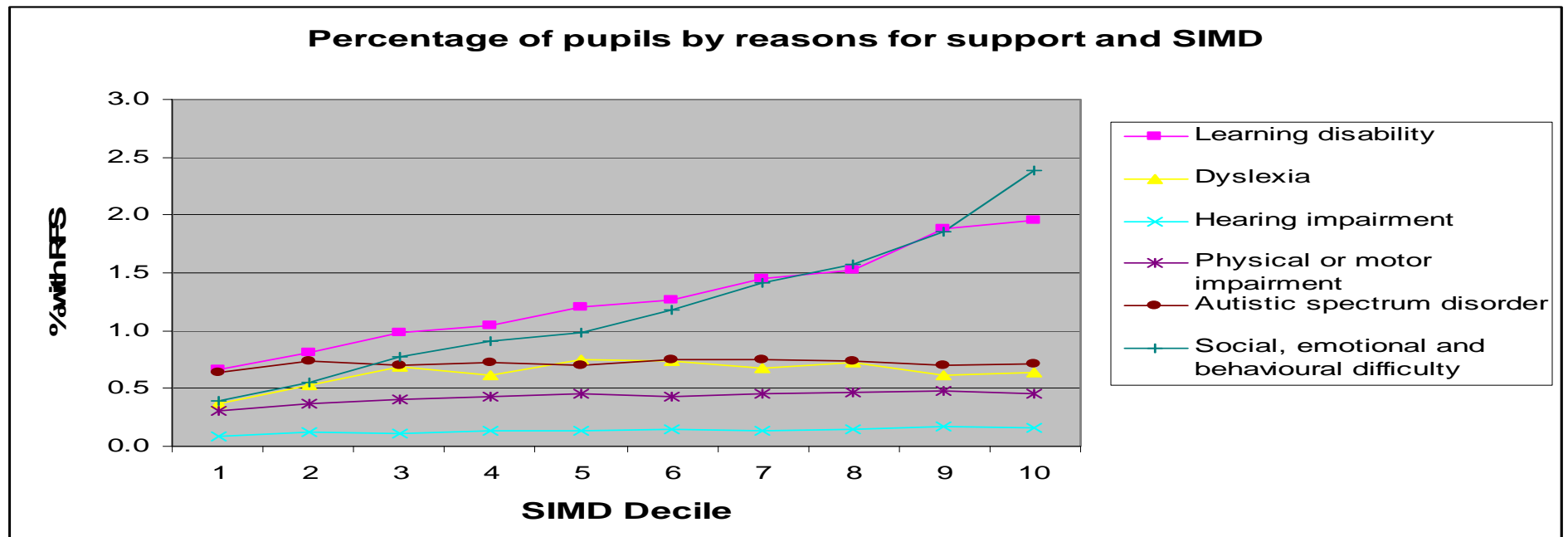


Figures include pupils recorded as having RoN, CSP and/or IEP in Scotland, 2008.
1= least deprived area, 10 = most deprived area



Centre for Research in
Education Inclusion
and Diversity

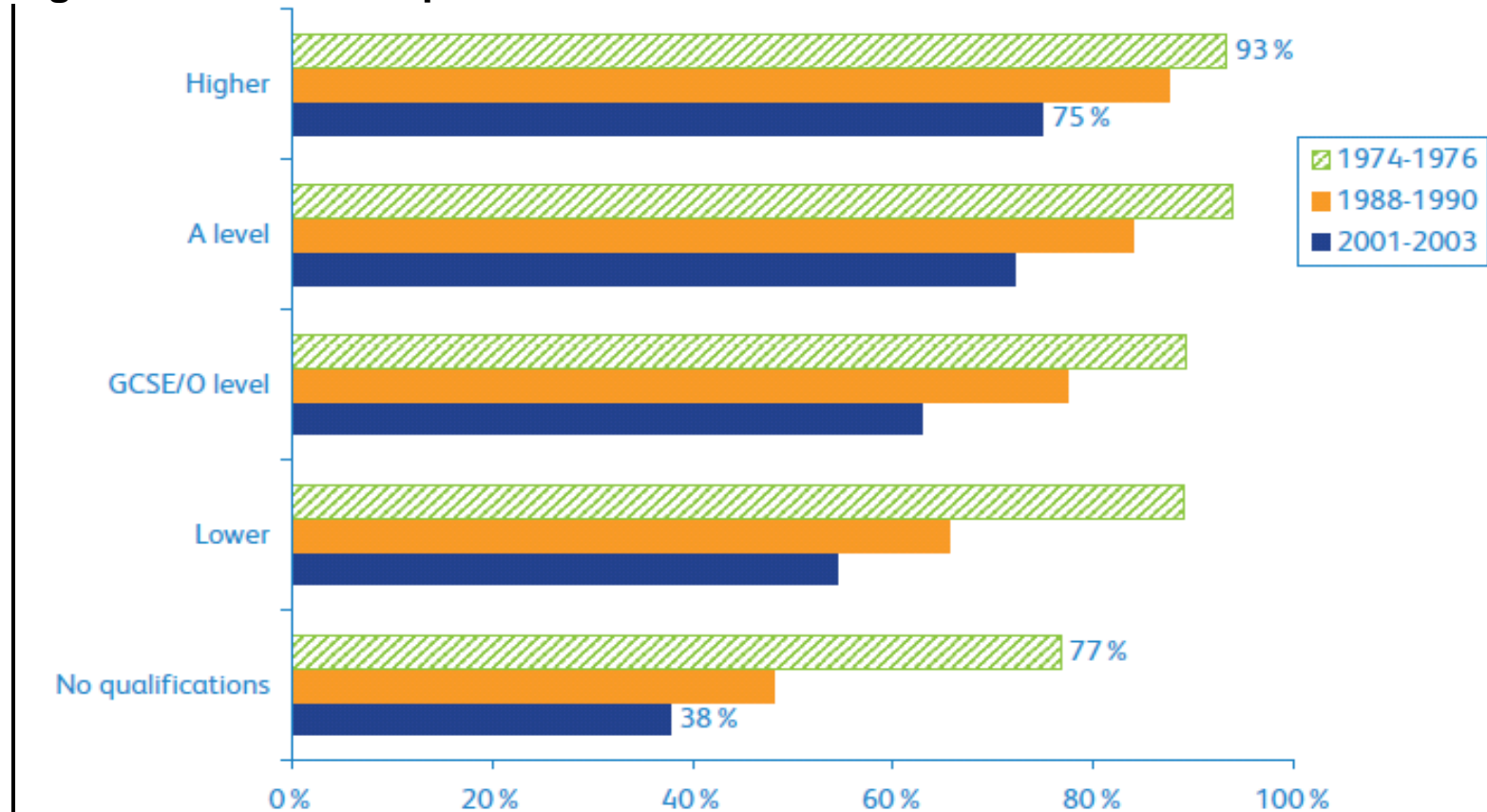
Social class most strongly associated with learning disability and social, emotional & behavioural difficulties – largely excluded from higher education



Figures include pupils recorded as having RoN, CSP and/or IEP in Scotland, 2008.
1= least deprived area, 10 = most deprived area

Disabled people with no qualifications experience growing employment disadvantage over time

Proportion of UK men *with* limiting long standing illness who are in work, by highest educational qualification



Source: Hills et al., 2010



Centre for Research in
Education Inclusion
and Diversity

Access for disabled people into higher education – overall success story – but reflects and intensifies wider social inequalities



- Disabled students now make up 7% of all undergraduates (3.7% in 1995) – represents policy success
- But infused by wider social inequalities – majority (50%+) are male students from middle class backgrounds with dyslexia. Decline in proportion with more significant impairments
- Disabled students **less** likely to come from minority ethnic backgrounds
- Disabled people with degrees have much better employment outcomes than those with no qualifications



Centre for Research in
Education Inclusion
and Diversity

Issues facing disabled students in HE



Access to premises, and teaching and learning, constant struggle.

Managing identity -

Being identified as disabled may be useful in terms of accessing support & resources, but may also be stigmatising

Particular issue for disabled students seeking to enter professions.

Low participation rates in vocational courses (e.g. medicine, dentistry, teaching, social work, nursing)

Fitness to practise standards still represent barrier



Centre for Research in
Education Inclusion
and Diversity

Access to teaching – disabled people make up 2% of Education courses, but around 1% of teaching profession



Table 2: Number and percentage of disabled and non-disabled teachers on the Teacher Induction Scheme in Scotland, 2002-2006

Year	Disabled teachers	Non-disabled teachers
2002	12 (0.59%)	2,009 (99.4%)
2003	6 (0.3%)	1,808 (99.7%)
2004	16 (1.2%)	2,018 (98.8%)
2005	24 (0.89%)	2,670 (99.1%)
2006	31 (1.1%)	3,509 (98.9%)

Source: General Teaching Council for Scotland



Centre for Research in
Education Inclusion
and Diversity

Dilemmas of disclosure – experiences of trainee teacher with dyslexia



I told my teacher at the end of my first week, beginning of my second, because I had got some major things done and I thought ‘Well, she knows that I am a hard worker ...’ and her expression was, I will never forget, her expression was ‘Really!’. And I just said to her ‘Yes, you know I cope’ and stuff and then the next day I went in and she was very close to another teacher in the school, and I felt like I had been discussed, and there was kind of looks being made and things, and then that teacher, from then onwards treated me like a child, and was very, very picky.



Centre for Research in
Education Inclusion
and Diversity



Conclusions

- Widening access for disabled people into higher education should be seen as success story.
- Reflects interaction between Government policy and campaigning by disabled people and voluntary organisations.
- Extension of disability equality legislation to higher education major influence
- But still barriers – mainly linked to strong associations between social class and disability
- Discrimination still major factor in labour market, including professions.



Centre for Research in
Education Inclusion
and Diversity



Future Challenges

- After-shocks of economic crisis
- Present centre-right Coalition government in the UK places great emphasis on the market – and less on social inclusion
- Recent announcement that government will not enact socio-economic public sector duty
- Browne Review of higher education – will make UK higher education fees most expensive in the world – implications for disabled students unknown