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# Teach me to Fish Please

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# Teach me to fish please:

# What's Reasonable about Reasonable  Adjustments -

# doing *with* rather than doing *for*

Sometimes with the best of intentions, we make assumptions about what other people are capable of, and we inadvertently project and impose limitations on their possibilities. This influences and shapes the stories that script their lives and resultant actions and outcomes.

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# We do this in three ways:

- Under the banner of the Disability Standards for Education, we can foster a paternalistic culture of service, of doing *for* rather than doing *with;*

- We make decisions on students' behalf as to what they need to be successful; and thus,

- We can inadvertently project our own limiting expectations and beliefs upon students.

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# Research

☐ Lack of consultation with students – listening to 'student voices'

☐ "The young people believed that educational staff frequently, though perhaps inadvertently, left them with diminished access to classroom pedagogy, instruction, and resources. Consequently, they regularly had an awkward position of dependence imposed upon them."

Whitburn, B. (2013) The Dissection of Paraprofessional Support in Inclusive Education: 'You're in Mainstream With a Chaperone". *Australasian Journal of Special Education,* 37,147-161.

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# Heavy vs light approach:

"the actions of support personnel that were both facilitative (light) and inhibitive (heavy) to the young people's inclusion in the school" (Whitburn, B. 2013)

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- Other researchers stress the importance of listening to 'student voices'

- "It is important that disability services shift from a focus of

  care and concern to one focused on empowerment and human

  rights" (Fossey, E. et al., 2017)

Ellie Fossey, Lisa Chaffey, Annie Venville, Priscilla Ennals, Jacinta Douglas & Christine Bigby (2017) Navigating the complexity of disability support in tertiary education: perspectives of students and disability service staff, International Journal of Inclusive Education, 21:8, 822-832, DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2017.1278798

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# Note takers

Often recommended for students who have difficulty writing, seeing, hearing etc.

PROS:

- Seen to enable equal participation

- Frees student up to listen & participate

- Notes usually available immediately after class

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CONS:

- Depends on availability of notetaker

- Notetaker needs to be trained

- Notetaker style may not be good 'fit' for student

- Student may miss essential information because its not captured by notetaker

- Student less 'engaged' in class

- Student may not want others to know they are being supported

- Academics may have issues

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# Assisting students to adopt Assistive Technology

During 2020, AccessAbility Advisors have worked with students to transition them to the use of technology rather than note takers.

What do you think was the greatest challenge?:

- Convincing Students

- Convincing AccessAbility Advisors

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# Objections to withdrawing notetakers

- A student is entitled to a set of accessible notes covering the lecture content

- The technology won't work for the student

- It will be harder for students to participate, and they are already disadvantaged enough

- It will negatively affect their grades

# Yet more objections to withdrawing notetakers

- ☐ If the principles of Universal Design were truly implemented this would be unnecessary

- ☐ It's contrary to the principles enshrined in the Disability Standards for Education

- ☐ It's a move that is driven by budget constraints, rather than being in the best interests of students

- ☐ Talk of independent learning and empowerment is just 'bs' spin to cover a financial problem

- ☐ We will be offering an inferior service and our students will FAIL

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# But....
# what are the potential benefits?

- Students can operate independently, and are not reliant on others

- Students are more engaged in the act of learning and therefore likely to learn better and retain more information

- After graduation, students are better able to apply for and retain employment because they have been equipped with the skills that make them more able to participate in the workplace on an equal basis

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# Case Study 1

- 2nd year Education student

- Profound bilateral hearing loss with 2 cochlear implants.

- * Had been assigned notetakers because the student needed to focus on visual input, e.g. lip reading

- * Software that required student to look away from people would not work

- 27 July – explained Sonocent, Glean & otter.ai & sent details

- 27 August - student using & loving otter.ai therefore no longer requires note takers


- * Assumptions made by AccessAbility Advisor

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# Case Study 2

- 2nd year B Health Science (Medical Classification)

- Cerebral palsy affecting fine & gross motor skills

- Assigned notetakers because student took too long to type notes during classes

- Tried Sonocent in first year but found it too complicated

- Sept 1– advised about Glean ; offered training; discussed potential to use in workplace

- Sept 15 – trialing use of Glean & Otter after having some training

- Oct 6 – note takers no longer required

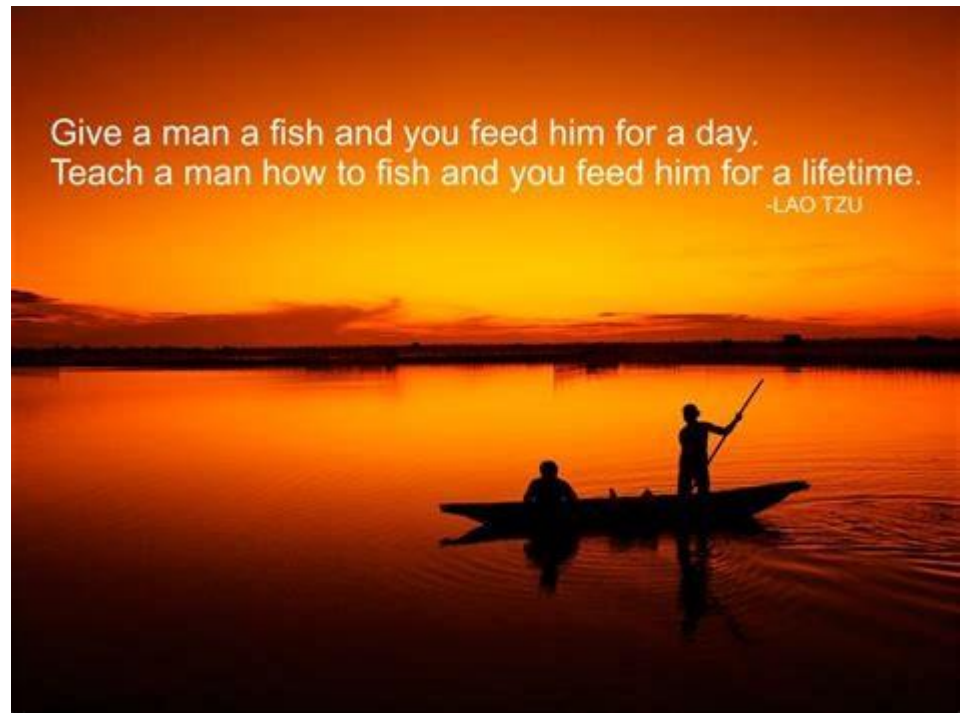LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

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# What did we learn

- Students are capable of and usually happy to embrace technology

- AccessAbility Advisor needs to be confident in the software

- Timing must be right for student e.g. circumstances, skills

- Software needs to match student's capabilities & needs

- Need to continue to explore options – skills and available software likely to change

- Provision of training highly recommended

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Now: we foster a sense of dependency and perhaps entitlement

Future: our goal as a sector should be to teach our students the skills to support themselves now and into the future, enabling their inclusion and equal participation.



Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day.
Teach a man how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.
-LAO TZU

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**Thank you**

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