Learning and Participation Experiences of Deaf Students within New Zealand Tertiary Institutions

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"Probably no area in the life of deaf people has changed as radically as education"

(Ozlins & Bridge 1999, p.51)

Some Basic Observations

- **In NZ 95% D/deaf students are mainstreamed for their compulsory education**

- **Students expect to access tertiary education in the same way as their hearing peers**

Research Questions

- **What are the current experiences of D/deaf students in New Zealand?**

- **What do these students perceive as barriers?**

- **What possible solutions are there to those barriers?**

Mixed methods study

- **Phase One: Written survey with a sample of D/deaf students**

- **64 students completed the written survey**

- **Phase Two: Interviews with eight questionnaire respondents**

The Students

- **84% were university students**

- **20% had not initially identified as having hearing loss when they enrolled.**

- **Cochlear implants – 3 students had them but only one used as part of their studies**

- **64% had severe or profound loss**

58% had hearing loss at birth or by three years of age.

- **92% educated in regular classes during their primary schooling.**

- **60% of respondents, did not receive any itinerant teacher support at all during their secondary schooling.**

Language and Identity

- 27% of respondents reported now using NZSL exclusively, or NZSL/signed English in combination with spoken English in their everyday lives

- 30% of respondents identified themselves as having a bilingual/bicultural affiliation, or as identifying mainly with the Deaf community.

Supports accessed

Manual/peer note-taking

Electronic note-taking such as C-print or Stereotype

Interpreters

25% had used sign language interpreters as part of accessing their studies.

"Finally, getting full-time interpreters and proper paid note takers for the last two years of study made such a big difference and I was amazed at how much info I had missed out on previously".

Students' Perceived Barriers to Learning

- **Lectures 69%**

- **Receiving instructions or supervision 61%**

- **Tutorials 60%**

I struggle with group discussion, I always have. I just make sure that I know who is speaking. It is more of a challenge when it's not well controlled and people are dancing all over the place.

Barriers directly related to courses

- the amount of group work involved,

- the delivery style (for example, lecture, lab work, web-based),

- lecturers with significant facial hair or 'accents' or a chaotic teaching style, and

- insufficient classroom lighting, noisy or faulty equipment and poor acoustics.

Students' Perceived Social Barriers

- Social functions 75%
- Casual interactions with other students 58%

"I didn't really have any friends at university. I'd simply go to classes, the library and go home. You'd see heaps of other students get together and just hang out – and I didn't have that".

Students' Solutions

- Being able to self-identify support needs confidently and knowledgably

- Knowing how to utilise the services of notetakers, interpreters, and other support staff successfully

- Good self-advocacy skills

- The capacity to believe in their own abilities.

"We need more people like us in university to increase the awareness of deaf issues, but also to increase our skill base. Always use the resources that are available. Don't be put off by negative attitudes. Stand up for your rights. Use your support groups to help you, as university is not easy".

# Electronic note taking – a potentially valuable solution?

Preferred method of access for majority of students in this study who had previously used this service.

Important Factors Identified for Success

- Establishing and maintaining positive educational experiences,

- Having access to support services and assistive technology, and knowing how to use them effectively.

- The quality of communication and social interactions with others.

- Better access to appropriate supports for both academic and social interactions in order to address social isolation and limited communication access.

This is the final year of my degree at AUT
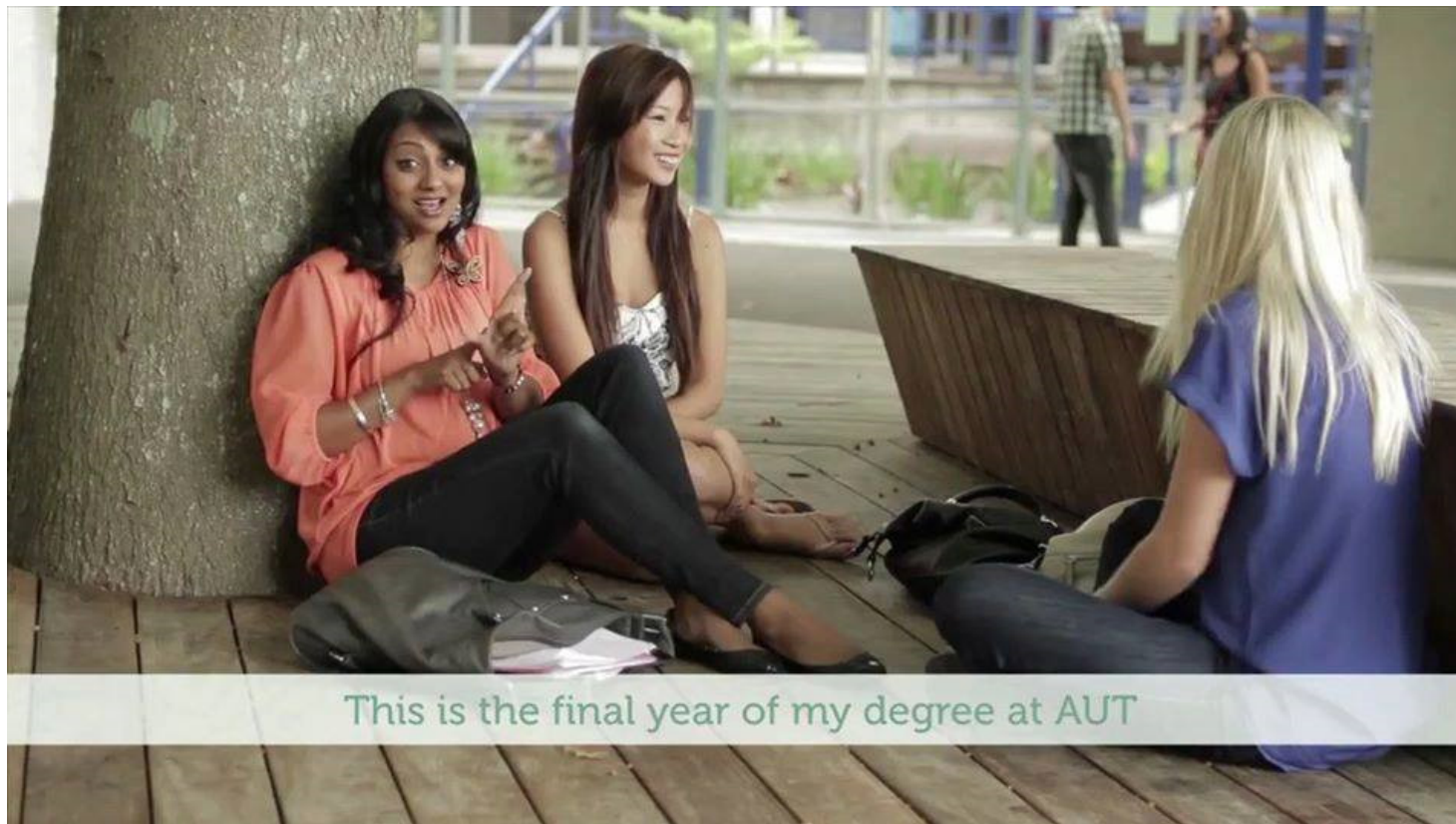
Conclusion

Inclusion is a philosophical concept based on community membership, and is a value system, not a place, or a particular set of learning circumstances (Powers, 2002)

Thanks

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Over to you……

Feedback

Questions?

Comments?

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