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References

5. INCLUSIVE POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN CANADA: STUDENT VOICES

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Some public educational programmes for students with disabilities today continue to contribute to an enduring regime of discitizenship, preventing fully realised human rights (Devlin and Pothier, 2006). Alternatively, Inclusive PostSecondary Education (IPSE) programmes at universities that are actualised within a Disability Studies in Education (DSE) framework can create campuses that enable equitable spaces of belonging (Aylward and Bruce, 2014). DSE draws from scholarship in the social sciences and humanities to view disability from personal, cultural, historical, political, social and literary perspectives (Linton, 1998).

Inclusive postsecondary education programmes strive to be relevant to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities who wish to pursue further education with their peers in typical college and university settings, but do not meet the standardised entrance criteria. Viewed as adult learners, potential students are not assessed for admission to IPSE programmes based on previous academic performance or diagnostic criteria, but rather motivation for continued learning and curiosity are the principal considerations for admission (Hughson, Moodie, and Uditsky, 2006).

Successful IPSE programme initiatives tend to be small and personalised with student numbers in natural proportions to the general population, offer reciprocal learning opportunities and avoid relationships, such as researcher and researched or pre-service professional and practicum subject (Bowman and Weinkauf, 2004). Another vital principle of IPSE is the affirmation of participating students’ autonomy through their involvement in all programme decisions (Weinkauf, 2002).

To enter the IPSE programme of Axcess Acadia, in Canada students apply to Acadia University to audit course work in their area of interest and participate with the consent of the professor. IPSE programme students pay half the course tuition, often submit assignments, engage in classroom activities and discussions and receive feedback from their professors. Some students in the Axcess Acadia programme live in residence and all IPSE students are encour-
aged to join clubs and involve themselves in as much of the campus social life and learning as possible.

The five Axcess Acadia participants were interviewed about the programme by the co-ordinator in 2013. The details shared about the learning gleaned from their participation were commonplace for most university students; however, embedded within the responses were beliefs about what makes a meaningful independent life: choices, freedom, friends, responsibility, respect and motivation. The students talked about positive living and learning environments, responsive professors and community members. IPSE programmes with a foundation of DSE privilege student’s say and facilitate moves towards self-determination with respect to the student’s articulated interests to establish learning and employment goals. The Axcess students’ comments stand as valued and legitimate sources for IPSE curriculum and programme planning.

Genuine inclusion will never be achieved as long as the terms are provisional and dictated by practices of qualification. The Axcess Acadia programme at Acadia University in Nova Scotia Canada has had tremendous impact on efforts to diversify campus life through social innovation.

Conflicts of Interest
The author reports no conflict of interest.

References


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