

A social model approach to student wellbeing and inclusion

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About me

- Senior Lecturer in Creative Education at University of the Arts London (UAL).
- Worked in UAL's Disability Service for 10 years.
- PhD student researching disability equity in higher arts education.



What is the social model of disability?

- The social model argues that people are disabled by societal barriers they encounter, rather than by their condition or impairment.
- Barriers can be environmental attitudinal, communication, procedural, or structural.
- It is these barriers that disable people.

The social model and wellbeing

- **Disabled students may encounter environmental, attitudinal, communication, procedural and structural barriers which impact their wellbeing.**
- **Encountering barriers may have an adverse impact on student wellbeing – even for non-disabled students.**
- **Removing barriers promotes inclusion and fosters wellbeing.**

Keiko's story

- Keiko is running late for a lecture.
- Keiko gets to the door, and decides not to go in.
- She tries to catch up via the VLE.
- When she finds the slide deck, they only contain a fraction of the information needed.
- At a later date, students are asked to present on a topic linked to the lecture she missed.
- Keiko doesn't attend on the day of the presentation.
- She starts to fall further behind, which impacts on her wellbeing.

Keiko's story: the barriers

- Strict lateness policies.
- A VLE which is hard to navigate.
- Only partial information available to catch up.
- No clear mechanism for following up on missed sessions – for tutor or student.

Keiko's story: possible solutions

- Foster a culture where students that it is better for them to arrive late than not at all.
- Test VLE for navigability and digital accessibility.
- Provide more detailed information on VLE – ideally a lecture recording, but the more detail the better.
- Recognise that students may find it difficult to reach out when they miss things – make it as easy as possible.



Stairs



Stares

Medical Model vs Social Model

Focus on individuals	Focus on environments, attitudes, systems
"What's your diagnosis? What problems do you have?"	"What are the barriers? How can we make this work?"
Personal	Practical and solutions-focused

**Funded
support
(e.g. DSAs)**

**Reasonable
Adjustments**

**Inclusive Learning
Environments**

**Barriers
removed by
design**

**Anticipatory
duties
(Equality Act
2010)**

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Or in other words....

“

When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower.

”

- Alexander Den Heijer



Call to action

- What barriers exist in your educational context?
- Remember: barriers can be environmental, attitudinal, communication, procedural or structural.
- What action(s) might you take to reduce or remove these barriers?

Thank you for listening!

My details

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