

Inclusive education: a tertiary experience and transferable model?

Lessons learned from the Certificate in Contemporary Living Programme

*Report prepared for the National Disability Authority by the
National Institute for Intellectual Disability, Trinity College
Dublin*

Patricia O'Brien, Michael Shevlin, Molly O'Keeffe, Mairin Kenny, Stephanie Fitzgerald,
Stephen Curtis, Sonia Edwards, Amy O'Shea

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Disclaimer:

The views and opinions contained in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the National Disability Authority (NDA). Responsibility for the research (including any errors or omissions) remains with the authors.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Inclusive education: a tertiary experience and transferable model? Lessons learned from the Certificate in Contemporary Living Programme.

Patricia O'Brien, Michael Shevlin, Molly O'Keeffe, Mairin Kenny, Stephanie Fitzgerald; Stephen Curtis, Sonia Edwards, Amy O'Shea

Background and aims:

In 2004 the National Institute for Intellectual Disability, Trinity College Dublin, opened its doors with a mission of inclusion through education, research and advocacy. One of its first initiatives was the development of a two year full time course for students with intellectual disabilities, entitled, Certificate in Contemporary Living. Twenty one students enrolled in the course in 2005 with 19 completing the programme in 2007 and graduating from Trinity College in 2008. As this was the first full time Certificate for students with intellectual disability to be offered within a third level setting in Ireland it was important that its implementation be documented which led to the NIID successfully applying to the NDA for a research award to

- ◆ explore what students with intellectual disabilities saw as the benefits and challenges of attending a programme within a third level setting;
- ◆ explore what family members saw as the benefits and challenges of their sons and daughters with intellectual disabilities attending a programme within a third level setting as well as for themselves;
- ◆ explore the course tutors' reflections on implementing the project;
- ◆ identify what lessons can be learned for the future development of supporting students with intellectual disability to gain access to third level education.

Methodology

A multi method approach was taken and set within a qualitative framework where students, family members and tutors were invited to participate in a temporal series of focus groups across the two year duration of the course. Students were also asked to keep diaries, use digital cameras to record a day in their life as a student, and be interviewed using their work portfolios to discuss the academic content and delivery of the course. Tutors were similarly interviewed about course content and delivery as it related to the specific modules that they facilitated.

All focus groups and interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Between 15 and 19 students participated in their three focus groups; between five and ten family members participated in theirs; and seven tutors (four or five at each session) participated in theirs. The transcripts were then thematically analysed and the different data sets were triangulated to identify common themes across all three participant groups.

Findings

The three groups of participants -- students, tutors and family members -- saw that the course had perceived advantages for the students associated with growing independence, increased confidence as well as social networking. The course was a means to an end in opening up a whole new way of being for all three groups of participants arising from the students' feelings of increased confidence, independence and expectations for their future. The implications of how the course was experienced by the students in turn led family members and tutors to review their own supporting roles. Both family members and tutors experienced the need *to let go*. For families this meant acknowledging their *sons* and *daughters* needs and abilities to lead more independent lives. For tutors this meant finding more effective ways to facilitate different learning styles and interests. Overall all three groups of participants had entered a new world, but were fearful that unless there was strong transition planning with post course support the students experience within a third level setting would fail to be built upon in a manner that would meet their expectations.

Six major lessons were learned that covered the need to:

- ◆ Be open to and foster the unexpected associated with the growth and development of students
- ◆ Promote generalisation of skills and expectations acquired within the two year course
- ◆ Share resources and experience with other third level institutions across Ireland within the context of a transferable model
- ◆ Provide differentiation in terms of delivery of teaching activities to enable students who have different learning styles to meet the same learning objectives
- ◆ Recognise that a third level setting provides a rich tapestry of social capital upon which all students regardless of their abilities can gain from learning from one another

- ◆ Safeguard any programme for people with intellectual disabilities from by default becoming a segregated programme within a third level mainstream setting.

The overall reaction to the programme within Trinity College Dublin has been positive. It has opened up a whole new world for all who were involved - students, family members and tutors. The time is now right to share and transfer the model with and to other third level settings so that the needs of students with intellectual disabilities to have opportunities for life long learning can be met throughout Ireland.

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Acronyms used in this study

CCL	Certificate in Contemporary Living
DES	Department of Education & Science
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
NIID	National Institute for Intellectual Disabilities
NISLD	National Institute for the Study of Intellectual Disabilities
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
NDA	National Disability Authority
NFQ	National Framework for Qualifications
NCVA	National Council for Vocational Awards
PATH	Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope
UCD	University College Dublin

Codes used in data analysis:

S (1-19)	Student (individuals allocated numbers 1-19)
T (1-7)	Tutor (numbers 1-7)
F (1-10)	Family members (numbers 1-10)
FG (1-3)	Focus group (three sessions per sector, sector identified by speaker code above)
PV (1-2)	Photo Voice discussions (students only, two sessions)
I	Interview(students and tutors only), one session for a selected number of respective members of each group).

Names of modules referred to:

IA	International awareness
RJ	Reflective journal
ICT	Information Technology
A& D	Art and design
CD	Career Development

CHAPTER 1: Setting the context for the study

1.1. Introduction

The National Institute for Intellectual Disability (NIID¹) at Trinity College is committed to promoting the full inclusion for people with intellectual disability² through:

- ◆ Influencing policy development in all aspects of their lives;
- ◆ Developing education programmes focused in on the lifelong learning needs of people with learning difficulties;
- ◆ High quality multi-disciplinary research and creating a network of researchers.

With regard to education the abilities of people with intellectual disabilities have been underestimated and as a result their potential has often remained dormant. It is internationally recognised that lifelong learning is an essential requirement if full participation and inclusion of people with learning difficulties is to be achieved.

To date, this group of people has largely been excluded from access to lifelong learning in Ireland. Generally, students with intellectual disabilities leave school without qualifications and lack the strategic skills to enable them to become independent, self-reliant adults. As a result their potential to contribute to society is diminished.

People with intellectual disabilities are a diverse group of learners and require an age-appropriate, balanced curriculum that prepares them for participation in the adult world. The NIID, Trinity College Dublin aims to develop teaching methodologies that take into account the implications of findings about lifelong learning and its relevance for people with learning difficulties (NISLD, 2003a).

1.1.1. Specific Education Priorities of the NIID

A main educational goal of the NIID is to produce innovative curricular initiatives aimed at improving educational provision at all levels, with a particular emphasis on lifelong learning that:

¹ Until 2005 the Institute title was 'National Institute for the Study of Learning Disabilities' (NISLD).

² Within this report the preferred term is intellectual disabilities, however the term learning disabilities is used where the literature under review uses it.

- ◆ Provides a resource for education, social development and employment of people with intellectual disabilities;
- ◆ Promotes transferable models of lifelong and continuing education for third level institutes and service agencies;
- ◆ Develops good practice models that can inform and influence educational provision at all levels for people with intellectual disabilities;
- ◆ Provides best practice models of lifelong learning through the development of education programmes for adults with intellectual disabilities for further education and third level institutions and service agencies.

In order to facilitate the provision of these priorities the NIID has taken into consideration international and European perspectives to inclusive education, the current provision of lifelong learning in Ireland for those with intellectual disabilities and examples of such within the tertiary sectors in Canada, the USA, Australia and the European Union.

1.2. The International Framework: Education for ALL

The right to education is a fundamental human right set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Human Right Covenants, which have the force of international law (UN, 1948; Peters, 2003; The World Bank, 2002). Education, therefore, occupies a central place in human rights and is essential and indispensable for the exercise of all other human rights and for development of the individual.

Within many societies the right to education is not open to all. The Dakar Framework for Action addressed this widely recognised need for change through the adoption of a World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in 2000, which affirmed the notion of education as a fundamental right (UNESCO, 2000).

EFA clearly identified Inclusive Education as one of the key strategies to address issues of marginalisation and exclusion. The third, of six, Dakar goals is to ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes (UNESCO, 2000).

Inclusive Education is a developmental approach which seeks to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion. The principle of Inclusive Education was first adopted at the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and

Equality, Salamanca 1994 (UNESCO, 1994) and was restated at the World Education Forum, Dakar 2000. The ideal of inclusion is further supported by the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (Peters, 2003).

The focus of EFA internationally has been on universal primary education by 2015 and the elimination of gender disparities. This limited the consideration of the rights of people with disabilities to receive an education within the mainstream environment. In response UNESCO have undertaken a flagship 'The Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion' (UNESCO, 2003). The key purpose of this flagship is to provide a catalyst to ensure that the right to education and the Dakar goals are realised for individuals with disabilities. It also aims to ensure the right to education for persons with disabilities is incorporated in national education plans. It must be noted, however, that Inclusive Education is a complex issue and no coherent approach to provision is evident.

More recently, the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has the Right to Education as a major Article and Article 24 identifies that *'effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion'* (United Nations, 2006). Ireland was a signatory to this Convention, signed at the United Nations on the 30th March, 2007, however the Irish government is yet to ratify it. Unlike other EU Declarations and Treaties countries that sign up and ratify it will be held accountable to its Articles.

1.2.1. Canada

Educational planning within Canada is at a province based level through the legislative process. In general the legislative provision for special needs education is up to Grade 12, but in two provinces, Alberta and Newfoundland, inclusive programmes at tertiary level have been identified.

Alberta

Within mainstream pre-tertiary level education Alberta operates an inclusive education system (Alberta, 1997, 2004) based upon the Schools Act 1988. This legislative provision for inclusive education does not extend into post-secondary education, which is governed by the Post-Secondary Learning Act 2003. The University of Alberta, through the J. P. Das Developmental Disabilities Centre, has developed an On Campus programme which provides an inclusive education alternative at tertiary level for

young adults with developmental disabilities (Bowman & Skinner, 1994, On Campus, 2001).

University of Alberta, J. P. Das Developmental Disabilities Centre On Campus Programme was established in 1987 to provide individuals with learning difficulties, 20 years of age or older, with the opportunity to participate in an inclusive post-secondary programme within a higher education institution. It is structured as an independent society, started by parents who wanted post-secondary education as an option for their children. It is run in association with the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta.

In 1997 (On Campus, 2001) the programme served 11 students with the average attendance being for four years, in line with the programme's desire to model the University of Alberta system. Each student's programme is modelled to their individual needs, but there are common elements for all the students:

1. Inclusion process starts with the student planning their programme with a facilitator;
2. After selection of courses an On Campus programme facilitator approaches the Professor or lecturer to request 'permission to attend';
3. Once 'permission to attend' is granted the facilitator speaks to the class of students to get one or more volunteers to support the J. P. Das student in class;
4. The facilitator meets with the volunteers and lectures on a regular basis to assist with the curriculum adaptation and to ensure the J. P. Das student has meaningful educational goals.

This model is also used to facilitate the J. P. Das student's inclusion in all aspects of university life, including club and associational membership, socials and recreational opportunities (Bowman & Skinner, 1994).

This inclusion of students with developmental disabilities would not be possible without the commitment of the Professors and student volunteers. These are the people who say 'yes' to the students' participation in their classes and who agree to making it work. (Bowman & Skinner, 1994, p. 2)

The J. P. Das students' schedule is similar to that of their peers at the University of Alberta. They attend classes and club meetings, spend time in the library and take breaks. The time taking breaks is used for forming friendships and connections with university peers, a very important outcome for the J. P. Das students.

Outcomes of the J. P. Das Model

1. Through attending the University of Alberta the J. P. Das students developed a stronger sense of self;
2. The J. P. Das students aspired to and achieved better employment;
3. The J. P. Das students' self-esteem and confidence increased, along with their expectations. They became comfortable with making their own decisions and being responsible for them;
4. The Professors who teach J. P. Das students find it makes them consider what the fundamental goals of a course are;
5. The student volunteers learn to support and accommodate others, a valuable skill for their lives beyond university.

Although far from being without difficulty, we believe the benefits of inclusive post-secondary education are well worth continuing the effort.
(Bowman & Skinner, 1994, p. 3)

An evaluation of the On Campus programme (McDonald, MacPherson-Court, Frank, Uditsky & Symons, 1997) reported several positive findings. According to the students and their parents, the programme had positive effects on the lives of its participants, both socially and academically. Almost all the students developed friendships and reported improved self-perception and self-esteem. In addition it was found that the J. P. Das students, their families, their student peers and faculty staff strongly supported the On Campus programme (McDonald et al., 1997) and by 2000 the programme had been replicated in Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Charlottetown and Adelaide, Australia (Saloviita, 2000).

Newfoundland and Labrador

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to the provision of supports and services to children with special needs up to Grade 12 through the Individual Support Services Plan (ISSP) process. This process is initiated when a child is identified as being at risk of having a special need and aims to provide a seamless educational transition from Kindergarten to Grade 12 (Student Support Services Division, 2004). This provision is governed by Section 15, Equality Rights section, of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which protects all citizens from discrimination and ensures that they cannot be denied education or a job because of a disabling condition. Provision for inclusive education, therefore, extends into post-secondary education.

College of the North Atlantic Model

The College of the North Atlantic was founded under the Colleges Act 1996 and was created through the amalgamation of five colleges in the Newfoundland/Labrador areas. It is governed by a Board of Governors which is responsible for directing the affairs of the College and ensuring that the legislative requirements laid down by the Colleges Act are implemented. With regard to those with disabilities, including learning disabilities, this relates to section 15d of the Colleges Act, which states: *'The board shall identify the educational needs of persons in the province and provide courses or programmes to meet those needs'* (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1996, p. 6).

Within the College of the North Atlantic this has led to the development of a model of provision for those with special educational requirements following a review of the special needs services in 1998 (Mercer, 1999). The key aim of this model is to ensure that students with special needs, including learning disabilities, are appropriately placed on a continuum of skills and abilities and, hence, undertake career-related training which is the focus of the College's educational system for all students (Mercer, 1999).

1. Pre-Entry

- ◆ Before they enrol at the College the students undertake
 - pre-entry orientation
 - career exploration and tracking
 - team meetings
 - ISSP development
- ◆ Before the students enrol the College undertakes
 - enquiry response
 - to ensure accommodations are in place
 - to provide staff/student in-service regarding each applicant's special needs.

2. Point of Entry

- ◆ The College ensures that the students undertake orientation

3. Enrolled

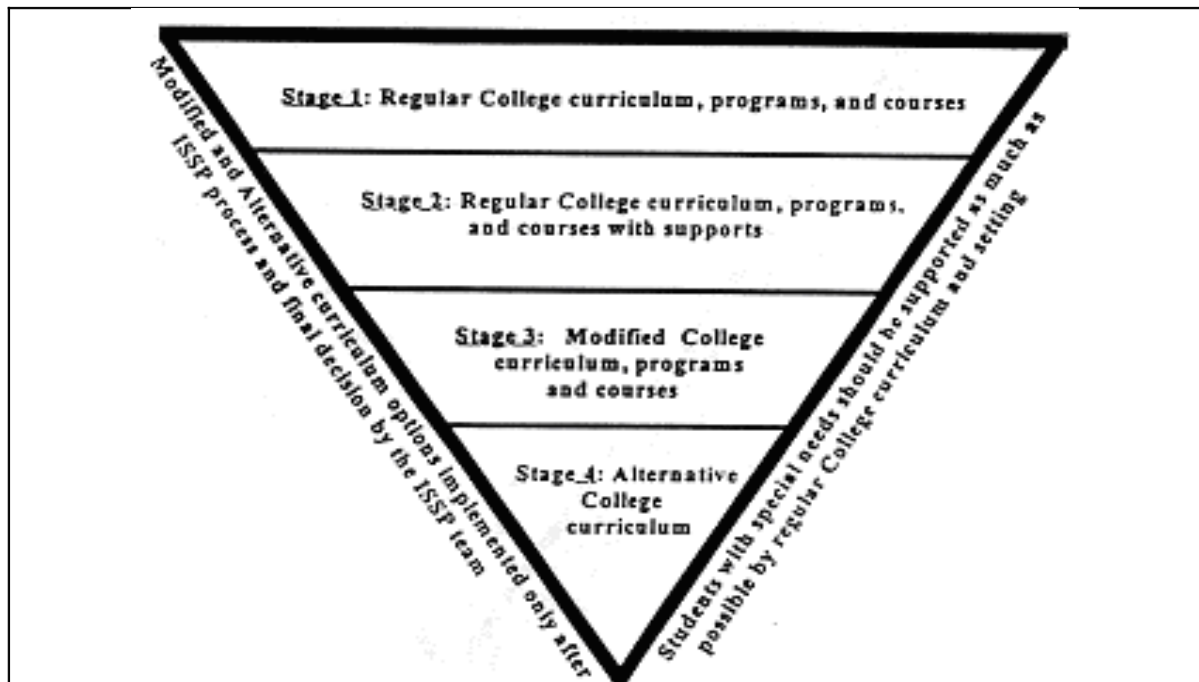
- ◆ The College's Special Needs Service
 - supports, advises and counsels students
 - monitors progress

- advocates on behalf of students
- ensures that each students' programme of academic instruction is valid, based on the model outlined in Figure 1.1 below.

4. Graduation

- ◆ The College ensures access to career and employment services.

Figure 1.1: The College of the North Atlantic Provision Model



All students at the College are placed at some point on the model.

Notes on Stages 3 and 4:

Stage 3: Actual changing of course objectives. Add, delete, reduce or extend the objectives so as to access individualised curriculum. Students who complete receive a Record of Achievement.

To enrol they require appropriate documentation e.g. ISSP and follow admissions process that ensures a modified curriculum.

Stage 4: Provision is additional to, or different from, educational provision in Stages 1 to 3. Does not include regular courses, but rather areas that need to be developed based on student's needs. Appropriate option for students delayed in all areas of development.

(Mercer, 1999 p. 33)

5. The Outcome of the College of the North Atlantic Provision Model

In 2001 an evaluation of provision by the special needs service at the College of North Atlantic was undertaken (Mercer, 2001). In this evaluation it was indicated that development of the provision model was ongoing across the College, but that there was a requirement for further staff awareness training and a need for developing the service delivery to Stage 4 students. On the positive side the provision model was found to have raised levels of general positive attitudes in the College community towards the special needs population and the special needs service.

1.2.2. United States of America

Within the USA inclusive education is driven by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) from kindergarten to grade 12. The message of IDEA is that students with disabilities should be working within the general education curriculum framework towards the same high standards as those established for students within the general education programme (Yell, 1998).

Typically, students within the disabled population attend high school until they are 21 years old, before transition into a variety of adult services. However, as they become included in their local school communities, through the provisions of IDEA, some of the students question the possibility of joining their classmates at college/university. The provisions of IDEA do not extend into post-secondary education, but slowly this '*rite of passage*' is being opened up to those with disabilities (Doyle, 2003, p. 308).

The number of examples of truly inclusive post-secondary education in the USA is very few, but they do exist. Trinity College Vermont provides one such example.

Trinity College, Vermont

Between 1989 and 2000 students with moderate and severe disabilities attended Trinity College, Vermont through a programme called ENHANCE. Initially, this programme was a separate post-secondary programme hosted on the College campus, but over time it evolved into a completely inclusive programme (Doyle, 2003). The process of programme development started in the early 1980s when a key administrator in the College recognised that young adults with significant disabilities were not given the option to participate in the post-secondary experience. Upon consideration of Trinity College's core values it was determined that the inclusion of students with significant disabilities would be in alignment with these values and led to

the administration deciding that it would be appropriate, as well as beneficial for the entire College community, to create an inclusive campus.

The students involved in the ENHANCE programme had received Individual Education Programme (IEP) Diplomas or Certificates of attendance from their high schools, but had not earned a High School Diploma. None of the students had high school literacy levels, and many could not read or write at all (Doyle, 2003). Indeed, up until attendance at Trinity College, Vermont, many had spent 20 percent or more of their time in self-contained special education classes.

Initially, the ENHANCE programme continued this provision of education through self-contained classes and delivered a functional curriculum that included content about maintaining a budget, filling out job applications and interpersonal skills. Students without disabilities assisted in these classes, but rarely were friendships developed that extended beyond the classroom. In 1996, however, the programme became fully inclusive in response to a comment made by one of the ENHANCE students:

When you're retarded you always have to take these courses in banking and shopping, I've been taking the same class since I was a kid. I'm still not very good at it, so I keep taking classes. It doesn't matter anyway because I don't have much money to worry about. (Doyle, 2003, p. 309).

In September 1996 all the students with significant difficulties were:

1. Enrolled in typical college classes;
2. Taught and advised by college faculty; and
3. Received support from their non disabled classmates.

The special education classes run through the ENHANCE programme were closed and the programme was not referred to as a separate programme, instead the students with significant disabilities were fully integrated into campus life and education through enrolling as non-matriculating students through the College's audit option. This option allows any member of the community the opportunity to participate in college level classes without enrolling as a degree seeking student (Doyle, 2003) and hence does not place a requirement upon the audit student to meet the full learning outcomes of the class. Instead, the students with significant learning difficulties were given individualised coursework which allowed for assessment, but this meant that at the end of the course the students graduated without a transcript of grades or credits.

Educational provision through the fully integrated programme was offered through multilevel curriculum and instruction and two key tools were developed and used to assist professors in understanding the application of this pedagogical framework. The Syllabi Adaptation and Negotiation Plan and the Contract of Participation were the two key tools. The former provided the teaching staff with the necessary practical bridge between a theoretical understanding of inclusion and actual delivery of a curriculum, while the latter allowed the student to self-advocate how they would participate in classes (Doyle, 2003). This led to a change in learning provision for all the students at Trinity College due to the need to accommodate a wide range of learning styles. Lectures, notes, essays and examinations were no longer adequate, instead the content became more activity based and cooperative learning became a norm, uncommon practice in Higher Education teaching.

In addition to integration in classes, the students with significant difficulties became socially integrated into the life of the College. This was not, however, undertaken through a planned programme; instead it evolved as a natural development of full integration. Every member of the College community assisted others, be it faculty staff, students with disabilities or other students, to develop an awareness of appropriate behaviour or simply how to 'hang out' (Doyle, 2003). Through this process Trinity College was able to support students with significant disabilities in a similar way to the students without disabilities and, hence, create a learning environment that was open to all.

1.2.3. Australia

Flinders University, South Australia

The '*Up the Hill*' Project, is a new innovative post-school option, which facilitates the participation of people with intellectual disabilities in the social and educational life of the Flinders University of South Australia. The project provides opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to increase their range of experiences, exercise their rights for continuing education, enhance their vocational opportunities and develop their social networks.

The project is based on the pilot study of inclusive university education for a selected group of people with an intellectual disability by Gibson (1997, unpublished thesis). This pilot study involved the inclusion of four young adults with intellectual disabilities (18-26 years of age) in the Flinders University, who audited a topic lasting one semester. Data were collected primarily by participant observation and supplemented

by surveys, interviews and field journals. The research indicated a number of findings. These are outlined below:

The students with intellectual disabilities were observed to;

- ◆ Develop the norms of the university class members (e.g. wearing casual dress and bringing coffee into the lecture);
- ◆ Demonstrate a personal commitment (e.g. reflected in their high levels of attendance); and
- ◆ Form relationships with the university students in the class (e.g. comments such as "I made friends" and "I had someone to hang out with").

The lecturer's teaching adaptations and inclusive strategies were observed as follows:

- ◆ Careful clarification of class handouts;
- ◆ Directing questions to auditing students;
- ◆ Encouraging auditing students to contribute to class discussion;
- ◆ Praising contributions made by auditing students;
- ◆ Precise instructions related to activity requirements;
- ◆ Patience; and
- ◆ Allocation of extra time to complete tasks. (Gibson, 1997, pp.68-69)

The lecturer's teaching adaptations and inclusive strategies were considered as positive aspects by 80% of the student group who stated that the inclusion of auditing students did not hinder their learning capacity. One student commented: *"...it increased my learning, slowing down lectures aided students and more detail helped everyone"* (Gibson, 1997, p.69).

In summary Gibson (1997) recommended that for individuals with an intellectual disability to be successful in a university setting, firstly, they need an individualised program in which their right to choose the areas of study is exercised and the goals clearly stated. Secondly, that a mentor system be developed to support the auditing students and facilitate their inclusion throughout the university campus. Thirdly, that academic lecturing staff be well informed, sensitised to the specific needs of the auditing student, and assisted to adapt the teaching process where possible.

From 1999-2000 the 'Up the Hill' project supported ten participants (seven females and three males), aged between 17 and 26 years, with a disability range between moderate to mild intellectual disability. Seven participants lived at home with family members, two lived independently in supported accommodation and one lived in a

group home. The variety of courses audited by participants included the following topics:

- ◆ Human growth and development
- ◆ Management of groups and organisations
- ◆ Drawing and design fundamentals
- ◆ Perspectives in disability studies
- ◆ Family professional partnerships
- ◆ Augmentative communication systems
- ◆ Rediscovering science
- ◆ Play and recreation in disability studies
- ◆ Earth sciences
- ◆ Art

The outcomes and benefits gained by the participants in the Up the Hill project which were observed and reported by the Mentors in the project are as follows:

- ◆ An observed increase in self-esteem and self-confidence;
- ◆ An expansion of social networks and contacts and the acquisition of social skills;
- ◆ The development of work associated skills and competencies;
- ◆ The opportunity to participate in work experience;
- ◆ The inclusion in a range of social activities on and off the university campus; and
- ◆ The participation in leisure and recreation activities.

In conclusion Grantley (2000) states that if societies believe in community inclusion for people with an intellectual disability so that they can have the opportunity to enjoy the best quality of life then this should include access to and inclusion in a University setting.

1.2.4. The European Union Framework

The European Year of People with Disabilities 2003 has placed disability high on the agenda within Europe. The European Commission now wishes to build upon the momentum and achievements resulting from the year and preceding programmes (Goelen, 2004, Commission of the European Communities, 2003)

The European Commission has three operational objectives that are central to its proposed approach of further inclusion for people with disabilities:

- ◆ Achieving full application of the Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation Directive (2000/78/EC);
- ◆ Reinforcing mainstreaming of disability issues in relevant Community policies; and
- ◆ Improving accessibility for all.

To facilitate these objectives the Commission has introduced a rolling multi-annual Action Plan (Commission of the European Communities, 2003), with the time horizon of 2010. The goal of the Action Plan is to mainstream disability issues into relevant Community policies and develop concrete actions in crucial areas to enhance integration. The first phase of the Action Plan, in relation to the centrality of employment as the most critical factor for social inclusion, concentrates on four employment related priority actions:

1. Access to, and retention in, employment including the fight against discrimination;
2. Lifelong learning to support and increase employability, adaptability, personal development and active citizenship³;
3. New technologies to empower people with disabilities and, therefore, facilitate access to employment; and
4. Accessibility to the public built environment to improve participation in the workplace.

The European Commission's framework of lifelong learning provides a new approach to education and training that aims to assist with economic and social change, the creation of a knowledge based society and the demographic pressures of an ageing population.

The NIID provides a programme that aims to develop lifelong learning, and hence employability for people with intellectual disabilities. It provides a vehicle that creates human capital through facilitating access for people with intellectual disabilities to: enter the market place and provide their input to the Irish/European/Global economy; assist in allowing the students to escape the benefits trap; assist in increasing the tax base and fill the skills gap that is being created by an ageing population. In addition

³ Lifelong Learning builds upon the European Commission's Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000) and the Commission Communication Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality (2001). These provided a framework on making lifelong learning a reality for all Europeans, including those with 'learning difficulties'. The European Commission defines lifelong learning as 'all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment related perspective' (European Commission, 2001, p. 9).

the NIID undertakes to fulfil the European Commission's aim of full equality of opportunity.

Finland

When students with disabilities complete their compulsory education at the age of 17 their educational alternatives are very limited in comparison to their peers. In 1989, the relative number of students with learning disabilities who attended secondary level education was 2.3%, but this dropped to 0.7% in post-secondary vocational schools and universities (Saloviita, 2000, p. 3). In addition, the percentage with intellectual disabilities that entered into vocational schools generally attended special schools or special classes; they did not integrate into the mainstream post-secondary education system. These environments represented an extension of the segregated classrooms in secondary schools, which had not facilitated inclusion.

However, on a political level within Finland there is acceptance of the concept of integrated education following Salamanca, 1994 (UNESCO, 1994), which means that within the country at the present time there is a gap between stated policy and actual educational practice (Saloviita, 2000). In Finland a student has the right to enter any vocational programme that they are interested in, with provision being made through special education where necessary adaptations are guaranteed. According to the legislation, a student who receives special education has a right to all necessary support (Act 630/1998), but a loophole means that post-secondary vocational education is not obliged to make the required special education adjustments unless specifically ordered to do so by the Ministry of Education. Therefore, the vocational schools are free to reject students on the basis of disability and do so (Saloviita, 2000).

The possibility of inclusive post-secondary education remains, however, even when a student is not formally entitled to student status. Access can be obtained through an outside organisation seeking permission for students to attend and follow programmes of study at a host institution. Such a programme, Kampus, was followed for a five year period (1995 to 2000) at Kuhankoski School, one of Finland's oldest vocational schools.

The Kampus programme catered for six students in each year, with two facilitators, who were placed on educational programmes of their choice. Access to appropriate provision was then offered on the basis of the University of Alberta On Campus Model.

During this time outcome data on the Kampus programme was systematically collected by the programme facilitators for each student.

The outcome data indicated a positive evaluation of the Kampus programme by the students themselves, their families and facilitators. The teachers and students at Kuhankoski School had more mixed opinions about the programme, leading to the students with severe disabilities meeting a lot of obstacles to their inclusion. Often these students were seen as outsiders or were only tolerated and superficially accepted. A factor caused, in part, by the integration of students with disabilities in mainstream education being very rare at any level in Finland, which led to the inclusion of such students creating a 'new and confusing situation' (Saloviita, 2000 p. 7). Such feedback led to the Kampus programme discontinuing ended in 2000 due to insufficient support from both disability and mainstream education professionals. A factor that may be linked to the lack of demand for inclusive education by the families of those with disabilities within Finland created by a belief that a segregated system of education and employment is the best (Saloviita, 2000).

1.3. Ireland

People with disabilities are the neglected citizens of Ireland. On the eve of the 21st century, many of them suffer intolerable conditions because of outdated social and economic policies and unthinking public attitudes. Whether their status is looked at in terms of economics, information, education, mobility or housing they are seen to be treated as second class citizens. (Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities, 1996 as cited in NISLD, 2003a, p. 3)

Since the early 1990s, successive Irish governments have declared their commitment to providing adequately for the needs of those with learning difficulties (NISLD, 2003a). Issues regarding educational provision have been addressed in the following legal and policy texts:

- ◆ The 1992 Green Paper, Education for a Changing World;
- ◆ the 1995 White Paper, Charting our Education Future;
- ◆ the 1996 Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities;
- ◆ the 1997 Universities Act;
- ◆ the 1998 Education Act;
- ◆ the 1998 Employment Equality Act;
- ◆ the 2000 White Paper on Adult Education, Learning for Life;

- ◆ the 2000 Equal Status Act;
- ◆ the 2001 Report of the Action Group on Access to Third Level Education;
- ◆ the 2001 Report of the Taskforce on Autism;
- ◆ the 2002 Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning;
- ◆ the 2004 Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act,
- ◆ the 2004 National Disability Authority (NDA) Policy Paper: Towards Best Practice – Further Education, Training and Employment; and
- ◆ the 2004 Disability Bill.

1.3.1. Lifelong Learning

In 2002 the Report of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2002) stated that *'there are a number of social concerns which are driving the Lifelong Learning agenda (in Ireland). Foremost amongst these is the interrelationship between employability and social inclusion and the view that access to more and better is a fundamental underpinning of an inclusive society'* (p. 5) and it *'supports the individual's right to grow and develop intellectually and holistically'* (p. 5). Thus the Report identifies the need for accessibility to lifelong learning by all, including those with learning disabilities.

A particular emphasis within recent Department of Education and Science (DES) literature has been upon the provision of lifelong learning for those with learning disabilities through innovative approaches, which includes access to tertiary learning environments. The Report of the Action Group on Access to Third Level Education (DES, 2001a) strongly recommended targeted funding to assist all third level institutions to initiate and support services and policies to assist adults with learning difficulties. The *Report of the Task Force on Autism* (2001b) proposed that the NISLD should have particular responsibility for developing appropriate curricula and continuing education programmes for people with autism and other learning difficulties.

Current Provision for Lifelong Learning

Opportunities for continuing education and vocational training are severely limited across the spectrum. ... Participation rates for students with disabilities in Ireland are substantially lower than in many other EU countries. (DES, 2001b, pp. 205, 207)

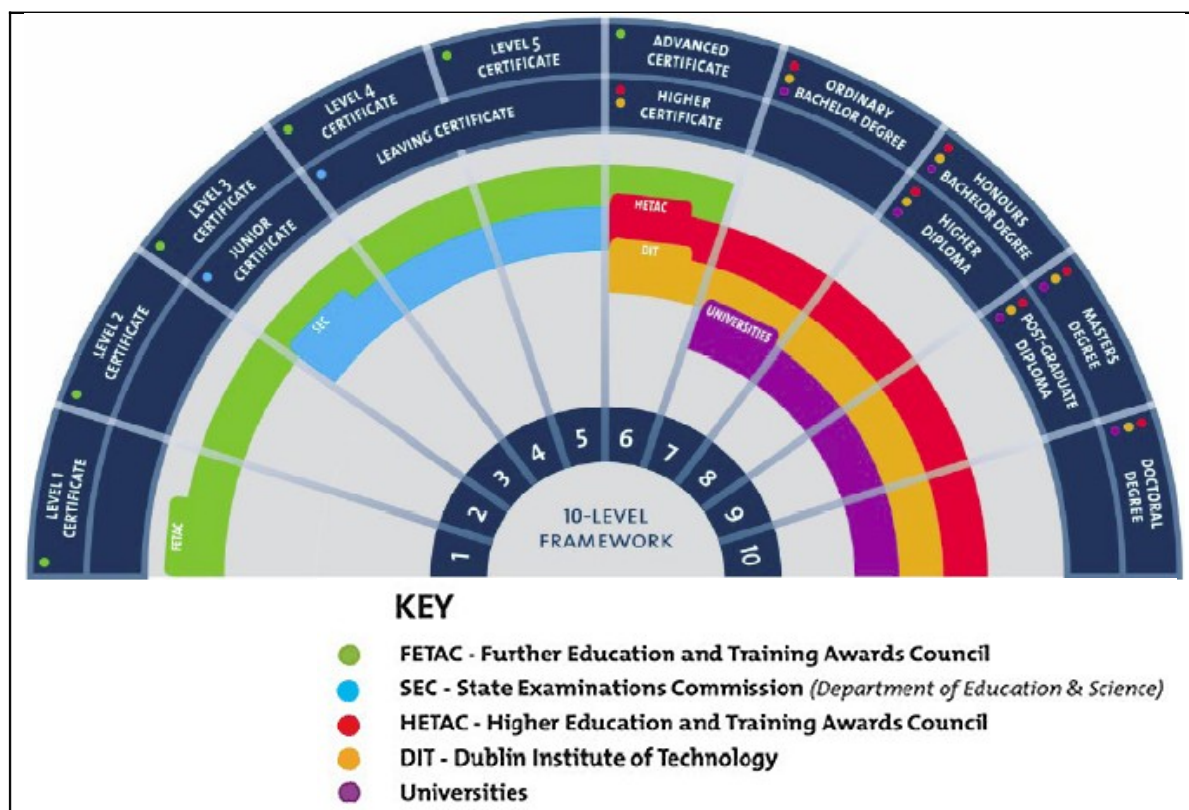
For students with intellectual disabilities, educational provision at post-secondary level is, in general, offered through Further Education courses. This is an area that has

grown considerably since the 2000 White Paper on Education and provides a firm basis of provision for those with learning difficulties through its range of courses, local provision and flexibility. However, the number of adults with learning difficulties undertaking such Further Education opportunities is severely limited. With regard to Higher Education, in the 1990s there was an increase in the number of students with disabilities attending Higher Education rather than Further Education, but those with learning difficulties remain severely under represented in this area (DES, 2001b). Through developing an educational programme the NIID set within the context of Trinity College has an opportunity to change this, providing a basis for tertiary access into a range of courses and developing a transferable model of best practice for other Higher Education institutions.

1.3.2. National Framework of Qualifications

By 2006 it was proposed that all qualifications offered in Ireland be in line with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) (Figure 1.2 below), which aims to produce a single, coherent, more easily understood qualifications system for all levels. It accords with international and European initiatives for a lifelong learning path and will allow learner mobility within Ireland and beyond (National Qualifications Authority of Ireland [NQAI], 2003).

Figure 1.2: The National Framework of Qualifications.



(NQAI, 2003, p. 23)

The NFQ is a transparent and readily understandable system which relates all education and training awards in Ireland to one another. It establishes clearly defined standards and determines what a learner can be expected to achieve for each of the ten levels through clearly stated learning outcomes which represent specified standards of knowledge, skill and competence.

1.3.3. Further Education Provision

Within Ireland there is a wide range of mainstream post-secondary education/vocational training options for adults with learning disabilities. These courses and qualifications offer vocational objectives, but could also be used by adults with intellectual disabilities as a stepping stone toward a place in Higher Education, an area that does not make widespread provision at the present time. Many of the adults with intellectual disabilities in Ireland who have access to vocational/educational courses at post-secondary level undertake programmes offered by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), established in June 2001 following the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, through day services, residential services, supported employment and community employment schemes.

FETAC

FETAC awards National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA) Certificates and Records of Achievement. The Certificates are currently awarded at four levels: Foundation, Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3, while a Record of Achievement is awarded to a candidate who achieves the required standard in a module for each of the levels (FETAC, 2003). A module is the statement of the standard to be achieved to gain an award, expressed as specific learning outcomes.

In addition to FETAC (NCVA) Awards, the Council certifies FÁS courses (Specific Skills Certificates and Introductory Vocational Skills Certificates), Fáilte Ireland courses (National Craft Certificate, Advanced National Certificate and National Skills Certificate) and Teagasc courses. The awards made by FETAC equate to Levels 1 to 6 on the National Qualifications Framework.

1.3.4. Higher Education Provision

Trinity College Dublin

In October 1995 the School of Occupational Therapy and St John of God Carmona Services launched a European funded pilot project, Project Interact, for students with intellectual disabilities to study on the Trinity campus through participating in inclusive classes with Occupational Therapy students.

The students with intellectual disabilities and the Occupational Therapy students participated in vocational certification from the National Council for Vocational Awards (now FETAC Awards) through shared practical classroom activities in courses such as Communication, Art and Design and Life Management. Third year Occupational Therapy students supported the learning of first year Occupational Therapy students and the students with intellectual disabilities by developing programmes that achieved the required learning outcomes, for the practical elements of the Awards, through innovative activities, group work, team work and skill building approaches (School of Occupational Therapy, 1998).

Project Interact was a two-year pilot project and involved 20 students with intellectual disabilities. Following its success, Project Interact became Project Interaction and students with learning difficulties from five further service agencies attended Trinity. By November 1998, 54 students with intellectual disabilities had participated with students from the Occupational Therapy Department in an integrated learning programme. During this time the students with intellectual disabilities attended Trinity for three half days a week to undertake practical work with the Occupational Therapy students, spent three half days with their service providers undertaking the written element of their courses and, in addition, undertook one day of work experience. This programme culminated in a graduation ceremony for the students who had attended and completed their NCVA courses (Keane, G., Personal Communication, November 5, 2004 and MacCobb, S., Personal Communication November 5, 2004). It was upon the success of this Project that the NIID could build an education programme that develops integration and education for students with intellectual disabilities in a tertiary environment.

University College Dublin

The Centre for Disability Studies was established at University College Dublin (UCD) in 2002 with the appointment of the NDA Chair in Disability Studies. The Centre, as well as undertaking research and post graduate teaching, offers a Certificate in Citizenship

and Advocacy for students with learning difficulties. The course is aimed at students who wish to learn more about advocacy and their rights as Irish citizens; it offers students the opportunity to enrol at UCD and to experience student life. At present it is not on offer reducing the already limited Higher Education Options for students with intellectual disabilities.

When offered, the students undertake six modules on a one day a week basis for one academic year. Assessment is undertaken on the basis of projects and presentations (Centre for Disability Studies, 2003). The 2003--2004 programme comprised the following modules:

- ◆ *Rights and Responsibilities*: Provides accurate and accessible information regarding rights as Irish and EU citizens;
- ◆ *Communication Skills*: Introductory course to the area of communications in which students examine the processes of effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills;
- ◆ *Active Citizenship*: The development of workings of self-advocacy groups is explored;
- ◆ *Information Technology*: This section looks at computers and the world wide web. It aims to provide students with the skills to access information which will help them get their voices heard;
- ◆ *Horticulture and Environment*: This module allows the student to work outside and become more confident in what they can achieve. It also develops team working skills; and
- ◆ *Reflective Learning*: This module allows the students to review what they have learned during the day and reflect on ways they can improve.

1.4. The Trinity College Initiative

1.4.1 Background

It is with the above context of equal educational opportunity for people with intellectual disability that the National Institute for Intellectual Disability (NIID), Trinity College Dublin, developed a two-year Certificate programme for students with intellectual disability, entitled the Certificate in Contemporary Living. The Certificate programme has been approved by the Trinity Council in 2006 making it the first full-time course for people with intellectual disability to be offered within a third level environment within Ireland.

1.4.2 Outline of Certificate in Contemporary Living

The Certificate in Contemporary Living is a two-year, full-time programme. The students on the Certificate have class contact on three and a half days per week (14 hours) and have one and a half days for study and personal development.

The **core values** of the certificate programme include:

- ◆ A belief in the capacity of individuals with intellectual disabilities;
- ◆ A respect for the contributions of individuals with intellectual disabilities; and
- ◆ A belief in equality of opportunity for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

The aim throughout the certificate programme is to promote the full inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities and facilitate their lifelong learning, providing them with the strategic skills to become independent self-reliant adults and giving them the potential to contribute fully in society. The Specific Objectives for the Certificate in Contemporary Living for students with intellectual disabilities are to:

- ◆ Promote lifelong learning;
- ◆ Promote inclusion in the third level environment;
- ◆ Fulfil personal educational goals and interests;
- ◆ Promote an understanding of modern society from historical, political and social viewpoints;
- ◆ Develop social skills through peer mentoring and interaction;
- ◆ Broaden world views; and
- ◆ Enhance individual employability.

The two-year certificate programme is made up of ten modules, eight mandatory and two optional, which will allow the students to participate in liberal arts, expressive arts, and career planning and employment opportunities. Each module consists of 72 hours class contact and 28 hours outside of class which covers tutorial assistance as well as self directed learning. Overall the Certificate in Contemporary Living is comprised of 1000 hours.

Mandatory Courses:

- ◆ English and Spoken Communication
- ◆ Mathematics and Financial Management
- ◆ Information and Communication Technology
- ◆ Personal Effectiveness
- ◆ Inclusive Studies and Research
- ◆ Career Development
- ◆ International Awareness
- ◆ Social Science

Optional Courses:

- ◆ Drama and Dance
- ◆ Art and Design
- ◆ Special Topic
- ◆ Creative arts appreciation and performance
- ◆ Music Appreciation

The Certificate course is run on the basis of two years, divided into six terms that follow the Trinity calendar.

1.4.3 Assessment

Assessment is undertaken through presentations (oral and poster), personal portfolios and written work for each of the ten modules studied. This assessment is formative as well as summative, in order to assist each student with their personal learning style and development.

To fulfil requirements for award of the Certificate in Contemporary Living each student undertakes designated assessments for final award purposes, which are outlined within the Module Descriptor for each course.

1.5 Documenting stakeholders' experience

As the Certificate programme was the first of its kind to be offered in Ireland it was decided to document the benefits and challenges experienced by its major stakeholders. Specifically the purpose of the project was to:

- ◆ Explore what students with intellectual disabilities saw as the benefits and challenges of attending a programme within a third level setting;
- ◆ Explore what family members saw as the benefits and challenges of their sons and daughters with intellectual disabilities attending a programme within a third level setting as well as for themselves;
- ◆ Explore the course tutors' reflections on implementing the project; and
- ◆ Identify what lessons can be learned for the future development of supporting students with intellectual disability to gain access to third level education.

1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter a range of options that have been made available for students with intellectual disabilities within third level settings both within Ireland and in other parts of the world have been described, as well as changes in Ireland associated with a growing emphasis on the development of life long learning opportunities for all citizens.

In the next chapter the methodology used to document the development of the Certificate in Contemporary Living at Trinity College Dublin is outlined.

CHAPTER 2: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the design and methodology of the project will be outlined. A description will be given of the three groups of participants and how the different sets of data were collected and analysed.

2.2 Design

2.2.1 An interpretative approach

The study was qualitative in design and used multiple methods as a means of interpreting and making sense of what the students, family members and tutors said about the students being included and undertaking a Certificate within a third level setting. The research team aimed to understand the phenomenon of inclusion by collecting multiple sources of peoples' understanding of what was happening for students with intellectual disabilities within third level settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). These methods were inclusive of focus groups, questionnaires, use of photo voice as well as analysis of curriculum portfolios and that of the outcomes of PATH, a transition planning tool (Forest & Pearpoint, 1998).

2.2.2 Use of Triangulation

Also as means of ensuring that the phenomenon of inclusion was not interpreted from only one angle, triangulation (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) of the multiple sources of understanding was used. The employment of the range of data collection sources compensated for what can be the weaknesses in an individual type of data collection method (Delamont, 1992; Denzin, 1997). Each method provided the researchers with an opportunity to enhance the validity of the data through comparison, contrast, and corroboration. The voice of those who participated in the study is also used throughout the report enabling the reader to check if their interpretation is the same as the researchers.

Apart from different kinds of data being compared, similar data within the study was also compared from different points in the temporal cycle of the study (Hamersley & Atkinson, 1983, p.198). The present study included collection of data across different times (for example, focus groups occurred at three intervals across a two year period

and photographs were collected annually as part of a *day in the life* photovoice exercise).

2.3 Participants

Three groups of participants participated in the study:

- ◆ Students undertaking the Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL);
- ◆ Family members of the CCL students; and
- ◆ Tutors (NIID and agency staff) who delivered the course modules.

2.3.1 Students with intellectual disability

Nineteen students with intellectual disability were invited and were accepted to participate in the project. Their age ranged at the start of the project from 19 through to 48 years. In terms of gender, there were six male and 13 female students. In terms of accommodation, 11 lived at home with their families, six lived in group home settings within services. One person was flatting, and another boarding independently. With regards to educational level prior to coming to Trinity, all had attended special schools for students with intellectual disability. All were referred from a service agency for people with intellectual disability with the exception of one student who was referred by family. The students attended the Certificate programme three and a half days per week. The other one and a half days they returned to their service agency where they were supported to complete homework and assignments. All students were invited to participate in the focus groups and the number present on the day ranged between 15 to 19.

2.3.2 Tutors and key worker staff

The term 'tutors' is used collectively to denote both NIID staff who taught the modules as well as those key staff from referring agencies who acted as support staff. This group comprised six females and one male (seven in all) with an average number of five years experience working with people with intellectual disabilities. Five of the six key worker staff were involved in the delivery of selected sections of modules in which they had relevant background training and experience. They and the NIID teaching staff formed a close team. All tutors were invited to participate in the focus groups; seven attended at least one group session, and four or five were present at each.

2.3.3 Family members

Family members including mothers, fathers, and an aunt participated in three focus groups. The number participating in any one focus group ranged from five through to ten participants.

2.4 Type of data collection

2.4.1 Focus groups

According to Kitzinger (1994) '*focus groups are group discussions organised to explore people's views and experiences on a specific set of issues*' (p. 103). It has been argued that similar information can be derived from individual semi-structured interviews (Taylor & Armour, 2000) although the group approach benefits from interactions between participants and a less formal environment (Kaplowitz & Hoehn, 2001). Hebbler and Gerlach-Downie (2002) argue that focus groups can be used to gain clarity on the way people experience a programme. Group interaction can simulate participant ideas that might not have been available on an individual basis.

Implementation

A letter inviting the three groups of participants to attend the focus groups was posted to the family members and hand-delivered to the students and tutors within the NIID. All participants were given an information sheet and asked to sign a consent form (See Appendices A,B,C,D for the respective information sheets and consent forms).

Three separate focus group sessions were facilitated for each sector: students undertaking the Certificate in Contemporary Living, their family members, and tutors (see Appendices E, F,G for focus group interview questions with probes). Focus groups were spread throughout the two years of the course. The first round was held as the first academic year came to a close at the end of Trinity term 2006; the second at the end of Michaelmas term 2006, the third at the end of Trinity term 2007. In effect the focus groups were organised at the end of the third term in the first year, followed by the end of the first and third terms in the second year.

The focus groups were conducted by facilitators independent of the NIID; the family and student groups were respectively co-facilitated by a family member and a person with an intellectual disability. All groups were conducted within the meetings rooms at the NIID. All focus groups sessions were tape recorded and transcribed. Numbers varied across the groups. The student and tutor focus groups were less varied than

that of the family member focus groups. This related to the fact that for students and tutors the focus groups were built into their daily timetables whereas for family members getting a date where the critical mass could attend took some planning and was more successful on some occasions than others. Table 2.1 gives the details of dates and participant numbers:

Table 2.1: Focus groups: dates and numbers participating

Focus Group	Students		Tutors		Family members	
	Date	Number present	Date	Number present	Date	Number present
1	17.7.2006	15	20.6.2006	5	14.9.2006	7
2	22.11.2006	16	02.2.2007	4	26.4.2007	5
3	10.7.2007	19	20.6.2007	5	11.7.2007	10

On average each focus group took up to one and a half hours and the procedure saw the same questions being asked on each occasion with each group, starting with a revision of the themes from their previous focus group.

2.4.2 Photo voice

Photo voice is a research technique that enables people to record and reflect upon either their own activity or that of others through the discussion in small or large groups of sets of photographs (Booth & Booth, 2003; Wang & Burris, 1997). There are three major stages that direct the process: selecting the photographs; contextualizing which means telling stories about the photographs; and codifying by identifying the issues, themes and/or theories that emerge.

Implementation

Students were asked to participate on two occasions in what was referred to as 'A Day in the Life of a Student'. Here they were given a digital camera to take home with them and start filming a day in their life over that evening and up until the time that they left the college next day. After the development of their photographs, they were asked to select and display them in a time sequence and to choose up to six that made a pictorial story of their day. Under each photo they were asked to contextualise the activity by writing a caption. The lead researcher then facilitated a group discussion which started with a round of each student telling the others about their day through the sequence of photographs. At the conclusion of the sharing, the facilitator then asked the group to display their photographs so that others could look at them. Then a discussion began to codify what were the common themes in the

photographs that made up a story about *what life was like* as a student at Trinity College. A small group of students presented on the outcomes of the *Day in their Life* activity at the Nordic Disability Network Conference in Sweden in 2006 (O'Brien, O'Keeffe et al, 2006, www.tcd./niid/education).

2.4.3 Portfolio examination

Student examination of portfolios

Nine of the student group were interviewed at the conclusion of the course. Tutors who taught the course modules were asked to give a broad assessment of the level of assistance that the individual student required to complete the course work (no assistance; verbal assistance within group; verbal and/or gestured assistance within group; one to one assistance (verbal or verbal and/or gestured); or experience of the activity without completion of assessment task). From this, an aggregate score was compiled for each student and they were then ranked as a group. Of the nine students, the three who required least assistance, the three who required most assistance and the three who were placed in the centre of the distribution were chosen.

Each of the selected students was asked to identify three portfolios, one each according to the following criteria:

- ◆ One in which they had achieved the most;
- ◆ One in which they had achieved the least; and
- ◆ One that was somewhere in between.

The students brought the modules to the interview. The interview lasted approximately one hour. The structure of the interview was similar for each student.

The student was asked to 'walk the interviewer' through the folio in which they felt they had achieved the most. This allowed the student to revisit the course content and reflect upon the range of activities they had undertaken. The student was prompted to describe the activities undertaken and encouraged to remember their reactions at the time. Speaking about a portfolio that was regarded positively was something all students were pleased to do and established a high degree of connectivity with the interviewer. This stage lasted approximately 30 minutes.

The students were then asked questions from a set outlined below:

- ◆ Why did you choose this module?
- ◆ Why do you think you achieved the most on this particular module?
- ◆ Which parts of the module did you like the most, least?
- ◆ What activities did the tutor use to teach the course? (nine prompts plus free responses)
- ◆ What activities did you like the best, least?
- ◆ How do you think you learn best?
- ◆ What did you learn from this module in terms of knowledge, skills, personal development, organisation and 'other'?
- ◆ What advice would you give to other students following this module?

Students finally spent ten to 15 minutes talking about the other two modules chosen and the same set of structured questions were used.

Tutors examination of portfolios

The tutors were given a self completion questionnaire which, in part, mirrored the interview questions for the students. It also prompted them to look at changes in both themselves and the students and identify useful professional development as well as successful teaching strategies employed.

2.4.4 PATH: Transition tool

PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) is a unique form of person centred planning, a process that enables an individual to plan their future covering all aspects of their lives (Forest & Pearpoint, 1998). Eighteen students on the Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL) undertook a PATH as part of their transition from the College. The PATH workshops were carried out in the final months of the CCL course. Each person who undertakes the PATH is called the PATH finder.

The student invited members of his/her family, service agency and friends to take part in their PATH process. On average each PATH took two hours and required two facilitators, one an independent researcher and the other a staff member of the NIID. One guided the PATH finder through the various sections of the PATH process while the other facilitator graphed what the PATH finder has said. The PATH process is divided up in sub sections that enabled the student to plan short and long term goals that built upon their values and what they saw happening in their lives at present.

2.4.5 Student diaries

At the start of the course students were issued with a 'Dublin Learner's Diary' (2006-07) and time was built into their class schedule for them to enter reflections on their learning experiences. Entries varied from listings of timetabled elements, to social commentary and personal reflections (e.g. '*feeling nervous*'; '*enjoyed it hugely*').

2.5 Analysis of data

All sets of oral data (from interviews, focus groups and photo voice discussions) were audio tape recorded and transcribed. These transcriptions were coded using open, axial and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The same methods were used to code the sets of written data (questionnaire responses, diary entries, and textual elements within the portfolios). Each set of data was analysed independently for its emerging themes which in turn were compared and contrasted with one another as a form of triangulation.

To preserve anonymity, transcript text was coded for quotation in the presentation of findings in Chapter 3 of this Report.

Three focus groups [FG] were conducted with each sector. In each sector transcript, each speaker was allocated a number; speakers are identified by their sector initial followed by their number: students [S1–19], tutors [T1–7], family members [F1–10]. Sector initial and speaker number followed by FG 1, 2 or 3 identifies sector, speaker and session (e.g. S1, FG1 = Student 1, Focus Group 1).

Two Photo Voice consultations (PV1 and 2] were conducted with the students, and each student participated in an interview [I] on their portfolios. Coding for these follows the same pattern: e.g., S1, PV1=Student 1, Photo Voice 1; S1, I = Student 1, Interview; Tutors also participated in a questionnaire and comments that relate to different modules are identified by module acronym outlined in the text rather than by a specific tutor identity: e.g., IA = International awareness; A = Art.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the interpretative design that has been implemented within the project has been described as has the use of triangulation to compare and contrast the three data sets. In Chapter 3 the themes that have arisen from the analysis of the data are reported with respective voice illustrations.

CHAPTER 3: Findings

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the journey of the students, tutors and family members are described outlining the themes that have arisen from an analysis of the different data sets. The voice of the participant groups is illustrated through selected quotes that exemplify the themes that characterise each participant group's journey as a stakeholder of the Certificate in Contemporary Living.

3.2 Journey of students

The course has made a big difference in my life ... it's made me grow up and mature and open more doors. (S11, FG3)

Being a student over the two years was a journey that moved along several different pathways which are described below as the student as a learner; student as a class member; student as a friend; student as a worker; student as a different person. Within the journey the student saw themselves as learning new things, gaining new friendships, as well as raising hopes for a different future.

3.2.1 Student as learner

Initially students talked about learning new things, which covered both academic learning, as well as becoming more independent. Learning was new and different.

What I like about the course is where we learn different things, like we get to sit in on mainstream lecturers ...I like everything... talking about different issues ... also I like International Awareness and now the course is running I like the lot and learning new things. (S3, FG1)

In all the students participated in ten modules across the two years of the course. The curriculum, as outlined in section 1.4.2, was divided into three areas that covered liberal arts, expressive arts and career planning and work experience. Students had strong opinions on why they either liked or disliked particular subjects.

Favourite subjects were aligned with

Gaining of new knowledge:

Get to know my own country ...[And] I liked finding out about [Budapest] (S19, I)

Very interested because I learned to look for things – something I wanted (S4, I)

International awareness is about your country and then we talk about another European country. And the capital city and we learn about that, identify the culture and so on. (S12, FG1)

Being like other learners:

The research is very interesting to me because I have a cousin of mine in America and he's doing research and my Mum's friend does research; they all do the same thing. And my cousin knows that I do it and he's doing the same thing that I am. (S15, FG1)

Supportive tutors:

She really takes the time out to help us and like if you have a problem she'll come over and sit with us and help us. And I really like that. (S8, FG1)

Less favourite subjects were aligned with

Literacy difficulties:

Some of us can't read and some people find it hard to ask for help (S2 FG1)

We have to learn words and I still don't know what they mean like all these long words (S3, FG1)

Found it too hard trying to find words (S4, I).

Numeracy Difficulties:

Some of the numbers a bit too hard (S7, I)

Some of the sheets very hard and not time to finish them. (S5, I)

Homework:

What I found hard was the homework that we got, it's very hard and I found the tests that we had to do the first time were very hard, like knowing pictures and going through the book at the time. Some easy pictures and then some hard ones and then there were some questions;

some hard questions and some easy questions. So I found the tests quite hard and kind of the work started off very hard (S15, FG1)

Initially too much homework. (S18, I)

Apart from the formal learning associated with academic content of the course students also indicated that the course was an avenue for informal learning particularly as it related to communication. This was initially described as both learning how to take turns and learning how to speak up for yourself.

Over the length of the course what students discussed as learning changed from the concrete experience of the course content to the development of personal characteristics such as gaining increased confidence, perseverance, and becoming more independent. These insights were described as follows

More confidence with my friends and be there for them and stuff like that (S1, FG2)

I found it a great experience I learned how to travel independently on my own a couple of times and I got very independent and the course has been kind of good in a way (S11, I)

I liked the module because ... I learned to speak up for myself... doing PowerPoint and talking in front of people (S5, I) [Special Topic]

... I got to do my own work [Poetry] ... something I hadn't done before [Numeracy]. Learned how to teach other people (S16, I)

I was pleased with all the hard work I'd done. (S4, I)

Communication also deepened from learning how to communicate better with other students to giving presentations as well as decision-making that goes with the organisation of events:

I liked giving presentations when I got confidence and we organised to go to countries like Iceland and Belgium ... I worked as part of a team ... I learned to communicate with my peers better (S18, I)

I enjoyed the ball...we put hard work into it and we organised tickets and a hotel and had to book rooms. (S7, FG3)

As a learner students spoke of class work and the different ways in which they were assisted and supported to learn. Class work took several forms ranging from being

taught as a group by the tutors; being taught by students from other faculties under the supervision of lecturers; and being taught by specialists contracted by the NIID.

The students spoke positively about the NIID staff and the support they were given to do their work. Put succinctly support from the staff was described as, '*tutors come in and they give you work and they'd help you and all*' (S13, FG1). Students similarly identified the individual support that they gained from the key staff that accompanied them from their agencies on a daily basis to attend the course. This in turn was combined with that given by families. The following quote exemplifies the three way partnership that was in place for the students to participate in the course, '*I've had support from my family, support from the staff here and support from (name of agency)*'. (S7, FG3).

When discussing the positive aspects about class work, the students indicated that it was different from school, they learned together with other Trinity students, classes were bigger than what they had been used to at special school, they went on field trips to other countries. The quotes below paint a picture of student satisfaction with the differences as they saw them between school and college:

Before when I was going to school in small classes but now when we come to Trinity...it shows that I can work in a large group. If I don't want to sit I can go outside. (S7, PV1)

We learn more here. (S4, I)

A retrospective view of the modules by the students

The students interviewed had no difficulty talking about the work they had undertaken over the previous two years. Turning the pages of the portfolios elicited comments such as:

- ◆ *... I liked doing the work ... enjoyed writing and reading (S19, I)*
- ◆ *... brought back lots of memories (S5, I)*
- ◆ *... I like writing poetry (S16, I)*
- ◆ *... I like doing the writing (S13, I)*

All were able to recall activities and feelings associated with work completed, in some cases, undertaken many months previously. The activities they liked the most were associated with 'doing things', often with an inherent degree of risk taking. This included visiting unfamiliar places.

- ◆ ... going on a plane ... going to Budapest (S13, I)
- ◆ ... the trip to Budapest – saw a lot of scenery (S4, I)
- ◆ ... doing all sorts of activities (S18, I)
- ◆ ... work experience at the airport (S19, I)
- ◆ ... taking photographs. (S8, I)

Students also reported being introduced to a research component in their studies.

- ◆ ... finding out about the city (S19, I)
- ◆ ... Third World – comparing our world to poorer countries ... researching – I liked using the internet (S18, I)
- ◆ ... the chance to do a special topic. (S 16, I)

Preparing and delivering presentations (using newly acquired ICT skills, particularly PowerPoint) characterised a new way of learning coupled with personal risk-taking when talking to the class group or, in several instances, wider audiences at both national and international conferences.

- ◆ ... learn how to speak up for myself ... doing PowerPoint and talking in front of people (S5, I)
- ◆ ... went to Iceland – giving PowerPoint presentation – enjoyed it (S18, I)
- ◆ ... video of myself – used it to see if I am improving (S4, I)

Students were also able to articulate the activities they liked the least – and why that was so. The responses often indicated activities they found hard gave them the least enjoyment.

- ◆ ...maps and countries – found it hard (S13, I)
- ◆ ...research – found it too hard to find words (S4, I)
- ◆ ...reading and questions – found that area hard (S8, I)
- ◆ ...using the computer – it was hard to get on the computer (S18, I)
- ◆ ...some (numeracy) sheets very hard and not time to finish them (S5, I)

Some indicated that they didn't enjoy returning to work previously covered (either at NIID or in school) and that the level of work 'was for average in class – didn't take account of individual knowledge and skill' (S16, I).

Students reported that the tutors employed a wide range of different activities in their classes but also commented that they generally enjoyed worksheets the least of all

the activities offered (See Appendix H for detailed breakdown of the students' reported activities).

Discussion on what the students had gained from studying the modules tended to focus on specific items of knowledge, for example, *(things about Africa (S19, I), Hungary and different countries (S18, I), new words (S5, I), about Dublin city (S4, I), things about the Vikings (S18, I), family life in Spain (S6, I), the 24 hour clock, number squares (S5, I).*

Students acknowledged the emergence of new and improved existing skills - *(reading maps (S19, I), better writing skills (S3, I), how to research (S,5 I), how to draw characters; how to recite a book (S8, I), how to do a PowerPoint presentation (S18,I).*

Students also reported: *getting fitter (S8, I), working as part of a team (S18, I), being pleased with the hard work done (S, I4), learning to speak more slowly (S5, I), liking new food (S7, I), learning to speak in front of a crowd (SI6, I), communicating with my peers better (S1, I), learning how to teach other people (S16, I), gaining new interests – fashion (S5, I).*

Finally, the students were given the opportunity to think about what advice they might offer a new student starting the course. Responses, such as, *look on the internet for information (S5, I), tell the tutor if the work is too easy or too hard (S16, I), everybody finds it hard in the beginning (SI8, I), ask for help if you can't do it yourself (S5 I,)* reflect a greater personal confidence and an increased ownership of their learning.

3.2.2 Student as friend

At the start of the course students spoke of making new friends and by the time the course was coming to a close these friends were spoken of as best friends. The journey from making new friends to having best friends and the loss that was beginning to be felt as the course came to an end is evidenced in the two quotes below:

Learning how to speak up for yourself and meeting new friends (S5, FG1)

I have friends and best friends ..and I have to say I'm going to miss you all and I'll miss everyone in here (S17, FG3)

In talking about friendship the students were aware that coming to College had widened their circle. They were now mixing with:

Students with intellectual disability from other agencies

Before it was just me and X. and now we are still together and we still talk to each other but to others too. (S8, PV1)

College helped me to make new friends from other centres. This is a friendship, myself and X., best friends and best buddies...and we go out to the butterfly for our lunch and we talk and we have a chat and we get on really well (S1, PV1)

It's shown me how to get on with all the people and the buzz of coming in here. I know people I didn't know before...X and I are really good friends (S17, PV1)

Students who were intellectually disabled but were not attached to agencies

M. introduced us to new member joining our art group and a bond started straight away...we go out after class and we go to the cinema, out for a meal and a chat. (S12, PV2)

Friendships were also considered to have developed between the students and their mentors. The mentors were students at Trinity undertaking undergraduate degree courses. This was a programme co-ordinated by two student volunteers, one from the Law Faculty and the other from the Department of Occupational Therapy. The students would meet weekly with their mentors for friendship, sharing of how their respective courses were going and in some mentor relationships the students went out for dinner or were invited home by the mentor. In the main the relationships were developed in the lunch time on the Trinity campus. At the end of the first year students were concerned that some of their mentors would be completing their courses. Where this happened the student was introduced to a new mentor. The CCL students ran a stall in Fresher's week at the beginning of the second year of the course and advertised the mentor programme with students completing expression of interest forms to become a mentor.

The role of the mentor is described in the quotes below:

When you meet our mentors they come down sit beside us have a nice chat. They talk about everything, how is the class going and all this. They ask you what are your doing and what are you doing at night, very nice they are. (S14, FG1)

I have the opportunity with my friend O. who is in college and hopefully we'll be able to keep in touch and meet for lunch because O. and I have become good friends. (S12, FG3)

I meet my mentor every Monday for lunch and we share things together ... show her photographs of the Trinity Ball and what I have done for the weekend.. she came to my ball and we share things together. (S11, PV1)

In the first year my mentor was A. and I thought she was messing but she asked me to teach her how to draw. I thought she was messing but she said she can't draw. So when I was drawing A. would be copying me. (S10, PV I)

Loss of friendship that would arise for the students when the course was completed was in evidence from the start of the course, but grew in intensity as the end of the course advanced. Mixed hopes accompanied the loss of knowing people on the course as illustrated in the following quotations:

When I leave college I would love to go back but I can't I will miss the girls and the laughs. I love it but I will go back to my old job again in craft therapy. (S1, FG2)

Feel that I am a lot happier ... I have friends even all of you and best friends for ever. And I have to say I'm going to miss you all and I'll miss everyone in here. (S17, FG2)

The same concern of losing the mentor relationship was also expressed and a suggested solution was that the CCL students be matched with two mentors who could back one another in relating to the CCL student.

The need for friendship on leaving the college was strongly expressed by students as they participated in the PATH process. Sustaining friendships made on the course was seen as a major goal both on the long and short term. On leaving the course students planned to meet one another for dinner, go to the pictures together as well as travelling overseas. They also had a desire to extend their social network but raised how lack of transport and money and support could limit keeping in contact with and the making of new friends. Several students also raised their hopes of having an intimate relationship (see Appendix I for a summary of the transition plans of the students).

3.2.3 Student as worker

From the beginning of the course students were looking forward to having work experience. This experience of two placements over the time of the course then led their discourse to change to having a real job. Anticipation of what the course held for them in relation to work is expressed below:

It's very good and you learn a load of stuff...and what we'll be doing next year like work experience. (S13. FG1)

I hope later in life I will have the skills for a job. (S15. FG1)

I'd like work experience before getting a job. (S5.FG1)

As the course progressed and work placements were made following a module on career planning the students were asked for preferences as to the type of job they would like and placements were made accordingly. For example where the student had expressed, 'I'd like to be flying aeroplanes like my friends' (S15, FG1) he was found a placement at the airport doing trolleys.

A good example of how the students participated in work experience follows. C had two interests, the first was to strengthen her role as a researcher and the second was to work in an office. She talked about both of these placements below:

My first work experience was working for [X, a college researcher] when I first started I used make a picture of the lives of people... do meetings and photocopying and stapling, answering the phone and taking messages for X. My second was with Y in the Occupational Health Office and it was basically office work like putting leaflets into one bundle to the next bundle and then tying them up and giving them to the boss (S11, PV1)

Other work dreams that the students had that were followed up in their work experience resulted to working in fashion, with young children, as a motor mechanic, in the food and hotel industry.

Following the students gaining work experience their commentary indicated their enthusiasm for getting a job on leaving the course. For several students the work placement did lead to being employed within the same organisation. This is illustrated below, while seven other students gained other part time work on leaving the course.

What's been good is where I did a work experience and when I asked them for a reference I got the job. (S12, FG3)

I enjoyed the two years of being here and I am happy I got a new job. A new job off Trinity College. Now I am working at(S7, FG3)

The student image of themselves as a worker was reinforced within the PATH process. In looking to their futures the major short and long term goals identified by the students was that of getting jobs (see Appendix I for summary of PATH outcomes). A major fear expressed by students within the PATH planning process was that there would not be openings for them in the jobs that they would like. This in turn created another fear that lack of money usually made through work would interfere with their hopes and dreams.

3.2.4 Student as a different person

From first enrolling in the course and attending Trinity the students talked of being happier, having a better life which was interconnected with hopes for a job on leaving the course. The enhanced sense of well being that came from being on the course is well described below:

At home I was bored there was nothing happening. Then Mam told me I'm going to Trinity. .I'm the first one. It was a dream come true, the only one person in my family. (S13, FG1)

When I come home from College now I'm happier and I tell my parents about my day. I talk about College to my family and cousins. They are glad for me that I'm studying. (S15, FG1)

As the course progressed students also began to see the implications of their being on the Trinity campus for the wider issues of inclusion. They saw themselves as actually getting included. The historic significance of this is captured in the quote below:

People our ages, for ages there was no college, there was nothing there just...there was just your home and then your training centre .. but now we are all getting job. (S1, FG2)

It made me a good proper student and making all my friends here. (S4, PV2)

Aligned with the realisation that the course was enabling people with intellectual disabilities to go to college was that this experience was changing the perception of others towards them:

We have had great opportunities doing work experience...even though we have disabilities they are treating us like normal people. (S12, FG3)

Our mentors are not treating us like we have disability. They are treating us more like ordinary peoplethey have not got a disability and we have got disabilities and like they don't treat you like a kid. (S1, FG3)

Coming to this course has made me realise that there are lots of people out there with disabilities and that we can all do. Made me realise that I not the only one and I'm not going to be that I can do it. (S8, PV1)

A further realisation that came with being on the course for students was that they were growing in independence. This was particularly expressed in relation to their ability to travel independently. Initially students were accompanied by key staff from the agencies to travel in and from college. Initial support from staff is depicted below:

[The key staff] showed me how to come here several times and so far I've been able to go myself and if I hadn't had them I wouldn't have known how to get here in the first place. (S15, FG1)

I learned how to travel independently on my own a couple of times and I got very independent. And the course has been kind of good in a way. (S11, FG3)

Independence in travel was identified early in the course. Throughout the course student comment reinforced that they saw themselves as having the potential to become independent in other areas of their lives, such as, how and where they worked, lived and entertained and travelled with friends.

I am more independent I am not reliant on my parents. I have great support I am really getting independent and it is greatand I meet people and at 31 I am ready to move on and get a life of my own. (S1, FG2)

It's a little bed sit. It's great 'cos I can have friends up and I can go out when I want to and I can lock the flat and I just need to let them know when I go off to College and I feel being here and meeting all these people-it's opened up my opportunities and hopefully it will have open end up some opportunities for other people. (S5, FG3)

We can just go to places like everyone else. (S 10, PV1)

3.2.5 Student as advisor

As the foundation students their advice was sought on what could be done differently on the course. In the early stages of the course their advice centred around the need for additional support, such as, one to one tutorial support, having learning tasks analysed into smaller objectives, slowing the pace down of the teaching presentation. As the course progressed they reflected upon the need to overcome any interruptions to their learning recommending that cell phones always be turned off, that people take turns in discussion and not cut across one another. Some students wished for more homework and others for less. Work books developed for different learning abilities and styles were also recommended.

As a group of students they were also good advocates for the advocacy principle of 'nothing about us without us', which extended to lobbying the student union when there was a delay in getting their student cards that gave them access to all Trinity amenities. The student card was seen as a symbol that they were equal to all other Trinity students giving them the right to belong to Trinity societies, to use the gym, the library and to go for a drink. Also they reminded the staff that if letters were to be sent home to their parents they should be the initial recipient and that the letters should be written in plain information.

Their long term and short term goals also saw the students acting as advisors in their desire to continue adult education. Several students wished to access other adult learning opportunities which in turn would be used to advise on transition planning for students in future years of the course.

3.2.6 Student as a dreamer

Students came into the course with dreams for their future and these were reinforced throughout their time at Trinity. At the beginning of the course a major dream was that the course would lead to a job. On leaving the course their horizons had been extended as can be seen by their many voices below. When asked what were their hopes for the future they responded:

- ◆ *Travelling...I want to go to Japan (S15, FG3)*
- ◆ *Part time job and an apartment (S4, FG3)*
- ◆ *Open the door to more jobs (S11, FG3)*
- ◆ *Freedom...I'll drink to that (S1, FG3)*

- ◆ *And I hope to meet some people and maybe looking to get a house or something...because I want for my dad to come and spend weekends (S5, FG3)*
- ◆ *Contacting friends (S14. FG3)*
- ◆ *A job and hopefully get married...and have my own car as well (S17, FG3)*
- ◆ *A job and hopefully next year I'll move to a residential house...and then... an apartment onwards from that (S9, FG3)*

Student hopes and dreams were summed up by one student who captured the mood as follows:

As H's poem says that one door opens and another closes, a door closes and a door opens, and I hope the door opens for the other students as well.

3.3 Journey of tutors and key workers

3.3.1 Introduction

As already noted, key workers played a dual role in the operation of this course: they continued their role as key worker, and in line with their additional qualifications and talents they acted as tutors involved in delivery of course content as well as learning support. In this capacity they worked closely with the NIID teaching staff, and here the term 'tutor' is used to denote members of this team. The tutors spoke from their experience of teaching on the course and their comments were 'driven' from this involvement. However, as will be clear from the quoted comments, in their focus group discussions they also specifically reflected on the impact of the CCL experience on key workers' roles.

The tutors responded positively to the Certificate programme and cited many examples of learning opportunities for both themselves and the students. In particular, they welcomed the ongoing focus group occasions to share their insights and concerns with the independent facilitator. From this discussion a number of key themes emerged. For both students and tutors there were increased opportunities for participation in a new learning environment, and in the development of confidence through improved independence skills. There was also strong focus on the major implications arising from involvement - for students, family, tutors, agencies and Trinity College/third level in general. In this section the tutors' perceptions of the experience of each of these groups will be outlined; this begins with the CCL students,

and there follows a review of comments on issues for their families, their tutors, Trinity College organisation, mainstream students, and the service agencies. Their discussion of 'what happens next' for these students concludes the section.

3.3.2 Opening up a whole new world

The first focus group with tutors took place at the end of the first year of the CCL programme. One of the group commented that participation in the programme '*opens up a whole new world to the students*' (T5, FG1). The tutors saw this change as having begun years ago, with changes in policy and practice in the agencies:

*The organisations ... **years ago** [it] was very much group everyone together, bringing them out. I mean, for years people had the same kind of haircuts, or clothes. ... you'd herd really into [e.g. McDonalds], telling everyone to line up, to sit down, and then get them out again. It gave society a very bad image of everyone being treated like that. **That's all been changing over the last few years** and now the clients are allowed pick and choose their clothes, go to a hairdresser, go out in the community on their own, they're not linked to everyone. **So with this course**, and seeing the students out like everyday people, just doing their own thing, getting their buses, they are really getting into society. And not having someone there all the time, or being told all the time what to do. (T5, FG1; emphasis is that of the authors)*

As will be seen from their comments below, the tutors saw the Trinity course as a further step which was at least as dramatic in its impact on all involved, as well as on public perceptions. Early in the first focus group, a tutor named the experience of third level status as key to the students' growth and sense of opportunity:

I think the big thing for the students was they were accepted as third-level students, not seen as somebody who has a disability so we're feeling sorry for them ...[they met] acceptance and social inclusion. ... [their mainstream student] mentors would introduce them to their friends. (T6, FG1)

A tutor suggested that as the students' status changed, so did their visibility and identity in the local community:

In [X town], which is very kind of local community, I think some of the students from [Agency] would have told all the guys on the [public transport] that they are going to Trinity. And ... the [transport] person will

say 'So much is going on in their head' or 'So and so was here'. And in one way I suppose that's disability awareness training in the wider population. (T7, FG3)

It is evident that a new world replete with anticipated and unanticipated challenges had a profound effect. The tutors' discussion of the impact on the students and on themselves was intertwined; the impact on the less directly involved partners – parents/family members, agencies, Trinity mainstream students and institution - also received significant comment. One tutor's comment - that *'they are just gaining all the time. That will have a ripple effect'* (T3, FG2) – highlights how the experience of the students is impacting on everyone involved.

3.3.3 Tutors' perceptions of students' experience

Learning how to learn, and the confidence it brings

Tutors characterised the student experience of the programme as involving them in a process of 'learning how to learn':

[X] has not been in a training or education kind of formal scenario since [leaving school]. And now I can just see him just learning how to be in the classroom, learning how to, when to speak, when not to speak. So he is learning how to learn all over again, and that is pretty challenging stuff. (T7, FG1)

There was considerable evidence that the students were acquiring a number of academic and technical skills including processing information, computer competence and peer tutoring. Students had also demonstrated the capacity to take responsibility in a number of situations, in particular, travelling independently though this often required extensive consultations with families and service agencies. The tutors believed that the students had benefited substantially from their participation in the programme and pointed out that there was considerable evidence to support this viewpoint. Gains in personal and social development were most evident. Increased self-confidence was very apparent:

... coming from a practical point of view, they are so self-confident standing up and giving a presentation, talking about their views which is a skill that is absolutely huge, and they've really developed it. (T4, FG3)

One tutor demonstrated how this increased self-confidence had enabled greater student participation in the programme:

... in a classroom environment... at the beginning they wouldn't have answered, or have liked to come up to the board to write things, now they all will. ... They have more self-confidence and education is all about self-confidence, it's not about what you necessarily learn. (T4, FG1)

There was nobody forcing it upon them. They just take it upon themselves: such-and-such person can do this and they discuss it or whatever. It just worked well, without anybody feeling left out. (T3, FG3)

They became very mature and there was peer learning and peer teaching in helping each other out and recognising that 'you're good at art, but I'm good at reading and writing' and 'you're good at this' etc. and that was very good. (T7, FG3)

Some of the students can just get on with it, whereas a year ago they would have waited for the instruction to go on to the next question. ... (T4, FG3)

In ordinary interactions the tutors noted that the students were prepared to take responsibility themselves and be far less dependent on tutor input:

... they try to solve their own maybe little issues. And they can come then for advice which is what we had been hoping for. Whereas before that they might have just come to us, 'what will I do', 'tell me what to do'. (T5, FG2)

(Students) are organising conferences or looking for things, the next step themselves and that's great to see because it's not us pushing them all the time, it's them saying now 'well I would like to take responsibility'. ... they're not saying all the time that 'I have a right...' ... they are taking some responsibilities as in 'I made this choice and I have to deal with this'. That's interesting to see. (T5, FG3)

There was additional evidence that the students were more capable of articulating their needs:

They're definitely more independent and more choices, and more assertiveness and as they're coming out more with their needs and their wants. (T5, FG3)

They're very clear on what they want; what they've got out of it, you know. On the positive they can list off X Y and Z and this is what we really enjoyed. (T3, FG3)

Tutors' end-of-course written reviews of modules

The following comments, from the tutors' written reviews of the course, give more concrete and specific insights into how student learning was achieved (subject area in brackets after each quote):

The students learned best by 'doing'. (Research [R])

Student participation was greater in role plays, debates, discussions, field trips and individual projects. (International Awareness [IA])

Field Trips – the tutor supplying worksheets and background information on events and following up with a workshop – students giving informal feedback to the main group. (Reflective Journal [RJ])

This showed a high degree of congruence with their perception of what students liked best (see Appendix H for details).

Tutors showed a critical awareness of the appropriateness of teaching methods and course content. They noted that students with poor literacy skills did not like nor cope well with worksheets. In addition, they observed that there was insufficient time for students to adequately reflect on their work, so that the process of completing their personal journals was often rushed. The course structure did not allow pre-existing knowledge to be acknowledged:

The first module on the course was inappropriate as the students had knowledge in this area and the students needed something more challenging. (Information Technology, ICT)

[Teaching this course] reinforced my belief that the students have a lot of knowledge that they are not given credit for or academic recognition. (IA)

Teaching strategies that were perceived as less successful were those that involved working with the whole group of students. Tutor comments included:

- ◆ *... too many people and needs too varied ... (IA)*
- ◆ *... students with low literacy skills found the reflective process difficult ...
... mixed ability in the class ... (ICT)*

- ◆ ... not having one to one support for the students ...(ICT)
- ◆ ... projects that involved a lot of research on the internet ...(ICT)
- ◆ ...where students had to do tasks individually they needed lots of help...
(Art & Design [AD])
- ◆ ... if we researched more into the exhibitions we visited we would have gotten more out of it ... (AD)

Tutors' responses also highlighted their strategies to develop course delivery, to meet the needs they identified. Tutors were asked to describe how they coped with the different ability levels within the group. One approach was to reduce the student-tutor ratio by using support workers and volunteers in the classroom. Another was to adapt current materials such as worksheets. Other tutors addressed the issue through restructuring the teaching environment:

Once I knew what students needed a lot of help I was able to structure the class so I could engage with these more and let the more able students get on with their work with a smaller amount of input from me. (RJ)

I adapted the lessons to suit the individuals and in art I feel everyone can have strong and weak points. (AD)

Encouraging the students to work as a team through supporting them to identify their own strengths and weakness to problem solve together. (Drama [D])

(Using) group work and individual work. Building on skills and interests. Working as a group allowed people to support each other. (R)

Tutors offered the following suggestions for future change.

- ◆ ... smaller groups ...(IA)
- ◆ ...courses optional (for students) ... (IA)
- ◆ ... less reliance on worksheets ... (IA)
- ◆ ...allow more time for material to be digested ... (CD)
- ◆ ... less work with the whole group ... (R)
- ◆ ... start practical activities earlier .. (R)
- ◆ ... include more visual and video information to stimulate students' ideas and understanding of art ... (A&D)
- ◆ ... involve other (Trinity) students in the class/involve Drama Dept ... (D)

Tutors noticed changes in both the students and themselves during the duration of the course. Of the students, they spoke of enhanced confidence and personal development of the individual. The range of inputs from the tutors are effectively summarised in one tutor's listing of the '*many changes in students on many levels*' – confidence in self-expression, self-awareness, social skills, team working, ability to manage independent travel, confidence with money, interest in world affairs, capacity for future planning, and for proactively seeking necessary support.

Delivering the course also brought about changes for the tutors. They were reaffirmed in their belief in the students' capacity and in the need to work with students' interests. Tutors' own self-confidence also grew, as did their desire to develop insights and skills as educators:

By watching/observing more experienced people in their interactions with students, I learned a lot about how I should interact with students. It has opened my mind into new ways of dealing with students in a calm, respectful and helpful manner. (RJ)

Tutors were also asked to identify areas of professional development which would enhance their delivery of the curriculum.

- ◆ *Use more interactive technology especially with students with literacy problems (IA)*
- ◆ *Find out more about teaching mixed abilities (IA)*
- ◆ *Maybe some course in developing my (lack of) IT skills. Sometime in the future I would like to start a D Ed. (RJ)*
- ◆ *More knowledge of using AV equipment (cameras, video cameras) (RJ)*
- ◆ *I would like support to develop the course descriptors [and] facilitation skills (ICT)*

The above questionnaire responses complement and resonate with the learning-related reflections in the tutors' focus groups. In the focus groups, reflections also included social learning and other wider dimensions of personal development. Within the tutor questionnaire they also reported that the most suitable teaching strategies involved practical activities. Specifically mentioned were:

- ◆ Role plays
- ◆ Practical tasks
- ◆ Conducting interviews

- ◆ Using digital cameras
- ◆ Internet use
- ◆ PowerPoint
- ◆ Improvisations.

Social learning

Students had increased opportunities to develop their social skills through a wide variety of social interactions:

Definitely the social side has been hugely advantageous to them, they have more friends and they're more lively ... there has been an awful lot of great feedback about them and just being more confident and independent, which is great. (T5, FG1)

A huge part of it... would be friendships they've made... this is a total exposure for [the students I work with] ... though in theory they are living in community houses and all that they really don't have friends outside the organisation. So that within the course they are meeting their mentors and other students and all that. (T6, FG2)

They'd normally meet people who'd go to school with them, go to the training centre with them gone to a shelter workshop with them and they would have not had much interaction with others. (T7, FG3)

The tutors observed that Trinity College, in particular, the student mentors had benefited from involvement in the programme, even as the CCL students did. This will be taken up later in this commentary on tutors' perceptions.

3.3.4 Tutors' perceptions of parents' experience

Letting go, seeing students in a new light

Tutors perceived that, for parents in particular, these new opportunities also contained risks and presented a whole new set of challenges. There was evidence that for some parents 'letting go', allowing their child greater independence, was a considerable challenge:

It is that fear inside them as well, they've had this for so long. ... [some students'] parents were reluctant to let them travel, and slowly, very, very slowly they allowed them to take small steps, and now they're travelling

every day and the parents are delighted. ... So it was all tiny steps that had to be done with the parents, the parents have to be involved in the first step, and that's really important to let the parents know everything that is happening. (T5, FG1)

However, the tutors observed that, in general, participation in the course had enabled parents to appreciate the potential of their children to become active citizens:

Opening doors that the family mightn't have seen that the students will be able to access before, like college, work now and see them progress. A lot of the parents have said that to me that they're delighted they are looking at their futures, ..., that they're not being left out in the open. (T5, FG3)

There's a sense of appreciation too. Most families are learning, especially with the PATHS now the last few weeks, they really appreciate the opportunity that's been opened to them. (T3, FG3)

So, participation in the course had opened new doors, a range of possibilities for the students that their parents had not envisaged. Tutors reported that as the students developed more confidence and autonomy some families found this extremely challenging:

I think that some of the guys ...have become very, have become more assertive. And ... with the PATHS, I've noticed that it's challenging for a lot of the families. (T7, FG3)

A student wishing to put themselves forward and pick their point in the future and the steps they need to do it, may not be what the family wants to address. So there might be conflict arising You know that can be a little bit dodgy. (T3, FG3)

Families are 'seeing students in a new light' (T7, FG2). However, student confidence and enthusiastic embracing of the radically altered educational environment could encounter an ambivalent reaction from parents and the agencies. Some parents may be concerned that they will no longer be able to meet the expectations of the students. For others the assertion of independence by the student may be in stark contrast to the passive acquiescence exhibited before the programme and families may be forced to review their perceptions:

... parents notice increased independence and that the students are being more assertive ...one mentioned going on holidays that their son was being

more reluctant to go with the family group. ... like he is going through a late adolescence ... (T5, FG2)

The self confidence it is a good thing and the families probably are reluctant to accept this change in their son or daughter. And that can be a difficult thing, they just expect them to go along at their pace whereas we are upping the pace at bit more here because they are in a big group, they have to hold their own, they are just gaining all the time. That will have a ripple effect. (T3, FG2)

3.3.5 Tutors' own journeys

The tutors recognised that involvement in the programme had enabled them to see: 'the wider picture'

T3: *Just seeing the wider picture here because you can get great narrow blinkered vision working in your own service in a small --*

T7: *You become institutionalised [laughing].*

T3: *That was what I was just about to say. (FG2)*

Learning about learning

The opportunity to go to some very good conferences ... [and] to work with some really, really good people who have so much experience. Just talking to them for five minutes you learn so much. The opportunity to work with the people here. I also found that I was really revived because I was becoming institutionalised as well, myself.... (T7, FG1)

I was really lucky to get the opportunity to teach [my subject] as part of the course. And other subjects we sit in on, or help out we are in on most of the classes. So you are learning so much, ... To be just given the chance to see how it develops and thankfully it's gone well, it was brilliant. (T5, FG1)

I like the attitudes here and the environment, I think it's very positive ... I think I learned a lot. And the way courses are delivered, watching that. (T2, FG1)

The key staff sit in on a lot of the classes and we're seeing how the students are taught and we're learning with them and we're working with them to help them. So we're using a lot of our skills you wouldn't use in an organisation where you're just with one group all the time ... since I've been

here I've been teaching everything from art, computers, research; literacy, job support and applying it. (T5, FG3).

The tutors perceived that they had gained valuable insights into the learning processes and the curriculum content in the programme. For one tutor there was an increased awareness of the need to differentiate the curriculum in order to respond to the variety of individual student learning needs:

I think the lesson we have learnt is a very positive one you know, just particularly around the course is to be more aware of different levels; individual needs and levels. That would be one of the priorities. (T7, FG3)

Another commented on the need to recognise different learning styles:

[One of the] students doesn't have great literacy skills but if you asked for verbally - said 'this is the question, I'm going to ask you a question, tell me the answer' he'd tell you the answer. So, he understood the concept of what the answer of a question was all about, but just because he hadn't, or couldn't write it down...it shouldn't be a priority. (T3, FG3)

Literacy issues provoked considerable debate among the tutors as they attempted to enable the students to come to terms with literacy difficulties:

There is a thing that we are imposing a literate culture on people who we really should be giving the strategies to deal with being non-literate. I think that all needs to be sat down and really worked out. (T7, FG3)

[But] you don't necessarily need to learn to read or write because you can actually say it, or draw it... So when it comes to the writing I wouldn't worry too much, you know, if they have got the actual gift to speak it, if they understand what they're doing I think that's the biggest... (T1, FG3)

Student autonomy and the duty of care

As the students' capacity for autonomy grew, this challenged tutors' expectations. In the following extracts, the thinking informing the 'duty of care' is challenged by the experience of seeing the students' developing ability to manage their own lives:

Some of my students have kind of, low stamina... I thought 'four days [in college] gosh that's going to really tax them' because we have to commute and I thought they would be exhausted ... But I was absolutely wrong. I

don't think they have missed a single day except when absolutely necessary. (T7, FG1)

I've been able to let go an awful lot ... they are crossing three of the main roads in Dublin every day even going to the Buttery for lunch. ... going independently on the buses. There were meetings with families and the agencies to make sure that they were up to it But there is fear in pushing it because you are worried is it the right thing, and you have to be very confident in yourself and in the students, but it has turned out great so far touch wood, so it's been worth it. (T5, FG1)

The [clients] I was working with had been [in the service] for years They had finished their program and there didn't seem to be anything to do. And they didn't seem to be happy at all. And then they came in here, and everyone is so happy, and I'm just really impressed. (T2, FG1)

This development also generated considerable changes in the tutors' interactions with the students:

It's been a real growing process for me, and learning ... my students have said to me: 'you never tell us what to do you listen to us and help us get the answer'. ... that one thing was huge to them. (T5, FG1)

In reflecting on their experiences during the programme the tutors asserted that this had represented a real learning opportunity for themselves alongside their students. This has led them to reflect on their own and their agencies' roles.

3.3.6 Implications for the tutors' roles in their agencies

A 'ripple effect' is occurring; arising from their experience of supporting students on the CCL programme, these tutors began rethinking not only their role in that context, but also their understanding of their role as key workers in the agencies. Elements in this changing understanding included a desire for a broader role, for more self-direction in decision-making:

I do think that a different model of being a support worker is necessary in the agencies. People are confused: Do I mind this person? Do I control this person? ... And a lot of controlling these people goes on, we all know it, they are over controlled, totally controlled and they never get the chance to make decisions, anything that concerns their life. (T7, FG1)

I want it to be a more holistic role that you are with the people and you can just do whatever needs to be done to make their life more independent and easier for them. (T5, FG1)

For this tutor, the agency's understanding of her key worker role had begun to expand prior to her involvement in the CCL course:

And the freedom ... I think that's huge to be able ... to make some decisions, and as the years have gone on I have been allowed to do that where I would have possibly been asked 'what are you doing now' or 'what's happening'; once it runs smoothly they're happy to let it go ... (T5, FG3)

Trinity College

The evolving acceptance of and support for the NIID and the CCL programme has also had 'ripple effects' for Trinity College as an institution and a community. Tutors reported these effects at three levels: student interactions in structured programmes and in social settings, and institutional attitudes.

Structured contact between the CCL students with students from Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and Social Work had a positive impact:

The [undergraduate] students have always said it's been hugely worthwhile work, especially the speech and occupational therapy students ... Our guys have gone over and talked to the social work students and said on issues like confidentiality what it means to be in receipt of some, you know of social work service and all that. So I think Trinity has benefited an enormous amount. (T7, FG3)

The NIID, with support from the Student Union, clubs and societies, developed a mentoring programme linking interested undergraduate students with CCL students on a one-to-one basis. The mentoring process developed with positive effect for both undergraduate and CCL students. The stages of this development is captured below:

[The mentors] gained experience of working with people with learning difficulties. And new friendships with people they mightn't have had the chance to meet socially. And just to see a different side of life.

The interactions, when we started [the mentors] would come into the Buttery for lunches. We [CCL students and tutors] would very much sit in

our own groups I suppose for duty of care, safety and everything. But then we definitely saw as time went on ...

- *they will just go and sit with their mentors,*
- *they will go out with their mentors,*
- *they won't always be with us.*

And to look around the Buttery and to see them

- *sitting with their mentors and having a laugh,*
- *really getting in and being part of college life,*

it's just amazing. (T5, FG1, bullet-pointed by the authors to highlight the stages)

The tutors had a high regard for the mentoring process. However, they felt that more general acceptance within the overall undergraduate student community was not as evident though there was an expectation that this could grow:

There are not many casual, easy interactions, just being part of the group. We certainly don't want to make our students into some sort of show but it would be nice if there was some way. And maybe it will come with the fact that the students are now College students and in Freshers week, can join societies. (T4, FG1)

Changes at programme and interpersonal level may be more observable than changes in institutional infrastructure and culture, but these inclusive developments owe their success to policy commitment at institutional level. However, popular perceptions of who 'should' be in third level still persist:

I suppose people have this idea that universities are for the elites and the very intellectual and academic and there are not really places for people with learning disabilities. (T7, FG2)

The evidence registered by CCL students and tutors however indicates that the NIID programme, supported by TCD, is providing a model that promotes inclusion within third level provision.

3.3.7 What happens next?

This question became the focus for intense discussion among the tutors as they examined individual student opportunities and outcomes while reflecting on the purpose of the Certificate programme.

Opened up their eyes to a great big world out there

Discussion of post-course options led to an examination of the fundamental purpose of the programme. There was a view that if a student did not acquire a job then the purpose of the course was compromised:

I could see if something doesn't happen when the course is over, it's like you've opened up their eyes to a great big world out there and then forcing them back to where they were. ... that would just be devastating. (T4, FG1)

The true benefits of the course will be seen when they finish ... but if they don't have a job at the end of it all, then how do you know how good a course it was? (T6, FG1)

The course, it's like a spotlight on them, they went from being more anonymous in an organisation to being one of maybe five in that organisation in Trinity. And everyone is like, well this is great and they are the centre of attention.... And I think a huge fear amongst the students is what will they do [when they finish in June], you know from being the centre of attention do I go back to being anonymous. (T5, FG2)

Tutors noted that their anxieties about the future were shared by the students and parents:

I have a few students who are panicking at the moment; as in it's more than just being 'oh we're finishing college'. It's like for me, you know you have to get a good job and if you don't, you end up back where you were. It might just be a bit of a thing, but their 'parents are so proud, now what?' and that anxiety of getting somewhere. (T5, FG3).

A parent observed to one tutor that her daughter had attended separate provision all her life and: *'she is only now realising the deficits in her life and what she is missing out on and what she probably never will be able to achieve'* (T7, FG1).

This was impacting on the agencies:

We're having to arrange for post-Trinity programmes ... it's had an impact on ourselves as [agency] key staff, and on some employment units within the agencies as well. (T7, FG3)

Despite attempts to draw parallels between the experiences and expectations of the CCL students and their undergraduate counterparts, some tutors believed that there were fundamental differences:

For anyone that finishes college, there are always big uncertainties about what you are going to do next, but there are different paths that you know that can follow. You can go get a job, or you can go do a different course, or you can go abroad for a year to work out what you want to do. There are defined things that you can do, but these students don't even have that, that they can fall back on. (T4, FG1)

Other tutors believed that the purpose of the course could not be narrowly conceived of as acquiring a job and the course needed to be assessed within a broader educational framework:

To me the purpose of education is the experience of education; exposure to different ideas and different ways of learning and different ways of interacting with people, working in big groups, small groups, being exposed to different tutors. It's not necessarily about getting a job, because if I do arts course or something in Trinity I won't walk into a job. It's the experience of being in Trinity;...certainly if you want to go for a job that should be in there for you, providing the opportunity, but not necessarily to be the be all and end all of the course. (T3, FG3)

Throughout the three focus groups discussions there was a tension between education for its own sake and education for employment. The above quote is illustrative of the closing position within the focus group that education is for the whole person.

Learned to dream

The following interaction illustrates the complex interactions of expectations and situations of students, family members and agency clients or providers:

T7: *I don't think the families you know have an expectation that they will get jobs out of this at all. Some of the students themselves do though... The families don't have the expectations but the students do.*

T5: *Three definitely want to get work (as do)the families, two don't mind going back to their previous job placements ... They're not looking at 'what's next?', they're happy to have experienced [the course].*

T6: *I think it's different maybe for the group I work with because they'd have been in jobs before they came here. So, I think maybe families would like them to go back to where they came from and the students themselves just want to get jobs they actually want as opposed to jobs they are just put into. So, they have kind of learned to dream.*

T7: *And have aspirations?*

T6: *Yes, and all that. I don't know if they'd have had that before and I don't even know if they would've dreamed of actually anything like wanting to drive, looking at specific jobs, all that sort of thing you know.*

T7: *And to move house [to independent accommodation] as well. (FG2)*

Another tutor observed that the students had received a broad education and were now enabled to make choices about their lives:

They've had all this broad experience and now that they're on stage they're focusing in on 'what I'd really like in life'. You know, which is 'I might want to do computers', 'I might want to explore music', 'I might explore art', it's just kind of narrowing it down gradually what they're really about, and this is where they're at now and let's go with that. So that's the focus I see. It may be a job or it may be in furthering their education, but it's their choice and they're just ready to begin. (T3, FG3)

3.3.8 Concluding Comments

In sum, the tutors' perceived the prospect of widening options for the students arising from being on the CCL course which had opened up a whole new world for them. It is apparent that the learning environment played a key role in enabling both the students and their tutors to gain new insights into learning. The implications of involvement in the Certificate course are far reaching initially for the participants and their families but it could be argued very convincingly that this course has the potential to inform educators at all levels and the service organisations about how learning opportunities can be structured to support lifelong learning for people with an intellectual disability:

The whole course was so worthwhile and worth doing for everybody. It's given empowerment to lots of people.... hopefully it will give:

- *[the **students**] empowerment to give back to society and help in so many ways...*

- *the **families** to know that there is somewhere for the child to go next and have another step which maybe was deprived of them in years gone by...*
- *the **service agencies** to take responsibility to change their approach, to keep them coming back to somewhere for them to go to follow on with that. And I think they will, it's just going to be in small steps.*
- *With **third level education providers** - to make more access for people with disabilities and, like with the literacy, to make things more visual and to find ways that everyone can learn. So... it's you know learning for the individual in a group way...*
- *and then the **policy makers** to make sure they know specifically what the course wants to achieve ... to show people exactly what we're here for. (T5, FG3. Emphasis and bullet points, the authors)*

3.4 Journey of family members

3.4.1 Introduction

The results discussed here produced a number of emergent themes that reflect a variety of journeys that the family members experienced. The following section aims to present and subsequently discuss a portion of these themes under two broad organising categories namely: the impact of the course and moving into the future. The purpose of this section is to present some of the views the family members who participated in the focus groups held as part of this research project.

3.4.2 Family members' perceptions of the value of the course for their relatives

The family members that took part in the focus groups highlighted a number of benefits arising from their son or daughter being part of the Certificate programme. Such benefits were both from their own perspectives and what they perceived to be the advantages for their son or daughter. A number of new challenges related to the course were also highlighted within the focus groups. Their perceptions subdivided into four sub-themes namely; broadening social circles; gaining confidence and independence; new challenges and positive feedback.

Broadening Social Circles

An analysis of the data indicated an emerging sense of integration and expansion of social circles for the students and integration with a variety of people associated with life at Third Level:

It helps too that they are integrating the students. The mentors, the ordinary students. She and I, we see someone and she waves and I say 'Who's that?' and she says 'That's so and so from Trinity. (F1, FG1)

Mixing with the other students. And even the mentors and the tutors, that's been a big plus. She likes that, and likes the visits to wherever they go for a cup of tea – Starbucks, Caesars or whatever it is. (F2, FG1)

[Name] loves the social aspect of the course, I think one of his favourite things is to go to the buttry for lunch and meeting and socialising. (F3, FG1)

I think being a 'Trinity' person... confidence that has given them, the central mixing with groups or students from different background and cultures and different abilities. (F1, FG2)

The family members also report changes in expectations on the part of the students and themselves in terms of their level of integration with the other students studying at Trinity College:

I think he thought he was going to be more involved with the rest of the students, possibly sitting in more lectures and things like that... They've got the kind of room for this in Trinity, just that simple little thing. (F5, FG2)

...should be attending more other lectures... there are courses like that which the lecturers probably willing to give them and the time could be made available ... especially if it goes to another year. That would be very good, where they could be mentored by this course... (F2, FG2)

There was a sense of stronger relationships developing over the course of the programme. One family member stated:

What my daughter likes about the course, well all the friends that she has made there. And she's very happy with the interaction she has with the mentors, there's a mentor from Trinity.. they are taking an interest in her, which gives her confidence that somebody who she never met outside the

family who are interested in her and want to know how she's doing and how she's getting on and she likes this very much. (F4, FG2)

He's making new friends and I see him ringing them up, when the course finishing I see him crying a lot – he will miss the friends he made. (F1, FG3)

The family members recognised the challenges and opportunities the development of wider social circles presented as part of the course:

I am saying that she does like everything about the course, the only problem she has had is that she has come home from time to time where there has been friction among the students and she has carried it home and has been upset when she has come home and we've had to deal with that situation....So that's the only thing. I'm not saying she doesn't like the course, just something that occurs at times when she comes home. (F3, FG2)

There was a challenge there and an opportunity to socialise and a big plus too was the opportunity to go to Trinity and travel to places she hadn't been, even on the way to Trinity and to meet a lot of new people and make some new friends. I think she got a hell of a lot out of that and it's really a tremendous force as far as I can see. (F2, FG3)

Gaining Confidence and Independence

A second sub-theme that emerged related to students' gains in confidence and independence from the perspective of the family members. They identified new opportunities for travel as a significant factor in the development of independence and confidence.

She likes the independence of travelling on her own, the ability to do it, travelling further than she's travelled before and coming into town is a big plus, you know. As it was said, she is much more independent. She goes into [local area] on a Saturday night, rings her taxi herself or will come home on the bus if necessary and she will do all that. While she may have done all that before, she is more independent and confident. (F2, FG1)

..he can come into town on his own. It's a big thing, he'd never come into town on his own before. He would come into town, I would take him there and take him back, now he will come into town and say to me 'I can go on my own, I can get the bus – ring me ma'. It's a big step for him that he can

*do it on his own. And it's lovely for him that he's met new people as well.
(F1, FG3)*

The final focus group paid particular attention to the Budapest trip that was incorporated into the Certificate programme. This trip was deemed to present both opportunities and challenges for the students and family members alike.

The Budapest experience, that was an added bonus in the sense of more independence required. There's more managing yourself in airports and this was one of the goals which he had, to travel independently. That was a big trust, that's really what's different, I could go on and say all the things I said before but I won't, that's the real change since we met. (F2, FG3)

She could have been under pressure in any place because she's not fully independent and I suppose challenging her to look after her own hygiene. She can dress and that but I'd say she could have been a little bit under pressure. What she said when she came home was that it was very hot. When she says something like that you have to kind of work around another sense like maybe she's trying to say things like 'I didn't have time to wash everyday but I changed my clothes everyday'. So I sensed that showering would have been a problem but I think that overall she enjoyed it, maybe a little too much! (F4, FG3)

The overall impact of the course in developing the confidence of some students was highlighted by the comments their family members made during the focus groups:

...[name]'s self-esteem has improved. That she will interact more adult-like than child-like. (F4, FG1)

I was going to say there, he is just delighted with everything. He's more confident in himself and he just loves being part of the whole thing and he doesn't think of himself as different, different to anybody else because he has always been kind of independent and, you know, he may believe that he's the same as anybody else. This has just given him an extra, you know, bit of confidence. (F3, FG2)

[name], she just comes on more and more each week. It's really great. Her confidence is really developing and it's really boosted her confidence and she's more outgoing. The other day she spoke about an argument they had here last week; I nearly died thinking [name] would ever chip in conversations like that. It really shows her independence. (F3, FG3)

That's the goal. After all, we're not going to be around into their late years, you know, and their going to have to be able to do that and I think that the two years that they've spent here has kind of been equivalent to the previous ten to 15 years in improvements in confidence, improvements in independence. The goals they now want. Following this course has given them this incentive that they can go and be part of society. (F2, FG3)

New Challenges

It was evident that the programme presented other challenges to the family members as the course progressed. The journey appeared to be one of learning to let go and to find a new role as a family member, leaving behind the sense of needing to protect their son or daughter or relative from the outside world so they would feel confident to explore it even further:

I just feel that she is at that vulnerable age when everything is out there and I am being a protective mother and I would really like her to be cocooned as to where she is and I'm afraid to let go but yet I can't let her see me being afraid, you know? (F1, FG1)

..it's actually giving her more learning and interaction too, so I think it's learning for life for all of them. To be able to cope with these situations in their lives. You can protect them inside, but when they are outside they have to learn to protect themselves. (F4, FG1)

I have seen definitely a marked improvement in her confidence and her independence...the fact that she was never put in that situation either, I would always go with her wherever she would go, she'd never been to do anything on her own. (F2, FG1)

I find that he will go to town on his own now. I wouldn't let him before this. But he went into Argos one day. And I said: 'you won't be able to read the writing. You'll have to write it on a card' and he said 'I'll manage' and he comes back home and I said: 'how did you manage' and he says: 'I asked a man'. (F5, FG1)

A progression in the family members' recognition of challenges they, and the organisation were presented with during this course were noted in a later focus group:

We were breaking ground, a new product, a new area which Trinity had never had to cope with before so really, in fact, it was a learning, two years for Trinity, as for us here. (F2, FG2)

The challenges that the course presented to some of the family members, and the impact these had on home life had been somewhat unanticipated by the them. These included reluctance on the part of some of the students to return to the services they were engaged with prior to taking part in the course:

My son will not go back to services, it's really dependent now on him getting some sort of part-time job that will take up a certain amount of time in the week. It's a little bit of a political situation. We're a little bit concerned we might have him back in the house again and getting into this, it's a lot of pressure. (F2, FG3)

Positive Feedback

Overall the feedback throughout the family members' journeys on the course, was particularly positive:

She absolutely adores the course and can't wait to get more and more and more time here and I mean [her] concentration, it would have been almost impossible to get her to stick at one thing but she's very committed to the course. (F4, FG1)

She had no complaints of any kind, no negative experiences whatsoever. (F3, FG2)

One family member, in particular, highlighted the significant impact the course had on his daughter and family:

I think what it is is that my daughter is a bit of a non-person, she's not looked at as somebody who's going to be asked here or there. She's just somebody that's a bit nobody and even amongst my own family, she's just there and this is where this course changed that slightly for her.... She may feel she can go out and see relations, if you like... She can do it herself, she became like this overnight... She never gets to be mixing with people and that's why I say she's just a non-person, you know and that's what's made a big difference here, thank you very much for that. (F3, FG3)

3.4.3 Moving the course into the future

The second major recurrent theme that emerged through the analysis of the data highlighted a number of learning points that could be considered in developing the course into the future. The family members highlighted the significance of the student cards for their son or daughter, issues around the limited timeframe of the course and their perceptions of what they feel the future now holds. This theme was divided into three sub-themes namely: the student cards; areas for further development; and the future – what next?

The Student Cards

The initial focus groups highlighted a number of issues around the delays in their son or daughter receiving their student cards and the impact it had on their experience of college life. This delay appeared to cause frustrations among the students, and their family members, and reportedly limited their ability to fully engage with student activities such as the clubs and societies:

the only negative side of it, and it isn't really about the course itself, is that it is a new course, and there have been frustrations around the student card and getting it up and running while she's here. They are teething problems. (F4, FG1)

It's really a bone of contention that 'here I am, half way through the course Mum and I'm still not accessing the facilities that the other students are and I'm going to be finished next year'. She says 'I want to be involved, I want to be mixing with the normal people'. Her not having the card has had to make her stand back and accept that she is different. (F4, FG1)

I think the only issue was the student card one and it obviously came to a good ending with [name] saying 'Guess what I'm holding in my hands!' so it did make a big difference to him, to his self-confidence and everything. (F6, FG2)

The final focus group did not report any issues around the student cards suggesting that this issue had been fully resolved for the students.

Further Learning Points

The family members also highlighted additional learning points that could potentially facilitate the future development of the course. These were particularly noted in the

second and final focus groups. The second focus group highlighted that there was a wide variety of ability within the group which was challenging for some of the students and suggested how this might be addressed:

I find that she is too good for the course and I think it's very hard to get through to her... When she comes home she doesn't want to be here, it's not challenging enough. (F1, FG2)

I find that there are limitations to each individual. I know that my daughter has limitations. She is brilliant on some things, and on other things she is just gone. And any pressure put on her in that situation, she's stressed. So it's a question of recognising what she's capable of, what her limitations are and understanding.. (F3, FG1)

However, some benefits from the variety of abilities within a group were also noted:

I just find there are some of them who are on the course who are streets ahead, or the other extreme, you know what I mean? Which is good for her 'cos she has to learn you know?... But no that's what I find, it's a good challenge for her in that way. (F1, FG1)

Other family members reported that they felt it would be beneficial to have additional work experience factored into the course content:

So that they could get a bit more work experience during the course so the transition then would be easier when they finished. So just the course could be incredibly worthwhile if it's a stepping stone for more 'normal' positions in society, so that was the only thing. (F2, FG2)

Sometimes some of them [modules] are not getting enough attention, like the work experience one, because I think most people will have expected to go on and pick up another job. That's the big plus, that's the big plus when it happens. (F2, FG3)

The student's future - what next?

A sense of uncertainty was evident among the family members throughout the CCL programme. From the early stages they were asking what the future may now hold:

He loves the attention, he loves people. I would like to know about the end, what happens now? (F5, FG1)

Is there going to be any further development of these people, any future course? It's just that if you hold this thing, this course and then what do you do? (F2, FG1)

For some family members, the future seemed to be more certain. The second focus group highlighted that one of the students had managed to secure a job in Starbucks. Other family members appeared to have become more hopeful around the possibility that their son or daughter may secure a job.

She's working down in Starbucks. (F4, FG2)

The possibility that it can lead to a job, its opened that door that didn't exist before. It's so difficult to prepare her to get a job of some sort, however modest, that would be a tremendous step up for this course. (F2, FG2)

Overall, there was a consensus among the family members that further progression to a third year of the course would be beneficial for the students:

It would be nice if it goes on for another year maybe but if it channels into something specific, not just Contemporary Living but maybe developing a programme of skill, or something they might be interested in. (F3, FG1)

She's really enjoyed it, as I said before. We'd like her to go on and do a third year but that's not possible. (F1, FG3)

For future, I think a three year course would be more suitable. (F3, FG3)

3.5 Common themes

The three participant groups -- students, tutors and family members -- saw that the course had perceived advantages for the students associated with growing independence, increased confidence as well as social networking. The course was a means to an end in opening up a whole new way of being for all three groups of participants, arising from the students' increased confidence, independence and expectations for their future. The implications of how the course was experienced by the students in turn led family members and tutors to review their own supporting roles. Both sectors experienced the need to let go. For tutors this meant finding more effective ways to facilitate different learning styles and interests. Overall, all participants had entered a new world, but were fearful that unless there was transition

planning and implementation the students' experience would not be built upon in a manner that would meet their expectations.

CHAPTER 4: Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this project was to investigate the experiences of students with intellectual disabilities of gaining access to a post school certificate programme. This programme, entitled the Certificate in Contemporary Living, was offered within the National Institute for Intellectual Disability, Trinity College. The aims set out included an exploration of the experiences of the students, tutors and family members who were part of this programme. The project also aimed to identify the lessons that could be learned for the future development of supporting students with intellectual disability to gain access to third level education.

4.2 Learning from Experience

An analysis of the results indicated that there were a number of perceived benefits related to the participation on the Certificate programme. One of these benefits included increases in confidence and independence that the students experienced as a result of their participation in the programme. It emerged that the opportunity to travel independently contributed significantly to their development in these areas and these gains were also highlighted by the family members and tutors. Other factors, including the opportunity to deliver presentations and to engage in class discussions were also highlighted as contributing factors to the development of confidence and independence for the students.

The benefits in terms of gains in confidence and independence for the students link to their opportunity to engage in experiential learning. This type of learning addresses the needs and wants of the learner. It is achieved through complete participation, problem solving and self-evaluation by the learner (Open Learning Technology Corporation, 1996). The significance of experience is related to the individual who experiences a situation and receives the values and meanings of the specific situation in a personal dimension. The experience is both cognitive and affective (Van Aardweg, 1993). The opportunity to travel, in particular, demonstrated the benefits experiential learning had for the students.

A personal journey that emerged for the students on the course related to their progression from academic learning to personal learning. The data indicated a clear movement from learning at an academic level towards more reflective learning where

a self-initiation and ownership of learning was apparent with regard to the students. This was again substantiated by the reports of the family members and tutors. This finding links further to the concept of experiential learning. In his book 'Freedom to Learn', Carl Rogers (1969), distinguished two types of learning: cognitive and experiential. Cognitive is seen as academic knowledge while the experiential equates to the learning by doing. Rogers saw the qualities of experiential learning as personal involvement, self-initiated, evaluated by the learner and having pervasive effects on the learner. To Rogers, experiential learning is equivalent to personal change and growth. Rogers suggests that all human beings have a natural propensity to learn; the role of the teacher or facilitator is to facilitate such learning. The results of the data suggests that the CCL tutors were successful in the facilitation of learning that led to changes in personal development and personal growth.

4.3 Learning from Others

Another beneficial impact the course appeared to have on the participants was an expanding social network that included others students on the course, tutors, mentors and other students in Trinity. The development of these wider social circles appeared to facilitate their learning experiences by giving them an opportunity to discuss new ideas and to reflect on their learning experiences. The gaining of knowledge through the opportunity to engage in social interactions relates to Vygotsky's theory of social cognitive development. The major thematic thrust of this theory is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition (Kearsley, 1994). Another notable aspect of Vygotsky's theory is that it claims that instruction is most efficient when students engage in activities within a supportive learning environment and when they receive appropriate guidance that is mediated by tools (Vygotsky, 1978). These instructional tools can be defined as cognitive strategies, a mentor, peers, computers, printed materials, or any instrument that organises and provides information for the learner. The opportunity for the students to engage with a variety of social networks within Trinity could be considered one of the tools that contributed to the social cognitive development of the students on the course.

The role of the mentors proved to be a very positive experience for most of the students. This aspect of the course aligns with the principles of Social Learning Theory. The development of relationships with the mentors afforded the students the opportunity to engage with role-models who had, possibly, more experience of studying at third level. Bandura's Social Learning Theory emphasises the importance

of observing and modelling the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Bandura states:

Learning would be exceeding laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. (Bandura, 1977, p, 22)

The inclusion of work experience was highlighted as a particularly beneficial aspect of the course. For many students, this module led to them securing paid work positions in the community. The experiences on the course reportedly opened the students to a whole new world of possibilities where there was evidence of raised expectations and the discovery of new potential on the part of the family members, tutors and the students themselves. The work experience module is also consistent with social learning theories that consider mentoring, apprenticeships, on the job training and internships valuable aspects of the learning experience (Ross-Gordon, 1998). This theory purports that learning involves learning in a social situation whereby novice learners model more experienced teachers or co-workers.

4.4 Becoming Adult-Learners

The students' journeys throughout the course indicated that they had moved towards becoming adult-learners reporting a range of characteristics associated with adult learners including an ownership of their learning, self-direction, active engagement and reflection of their experiences of the course as indicated by the comments and advice offered by the students for the development of the course when asked to give a retrospective account of their experiences. One of the key benefits that appeared to emerge from the data was the sense that the students had now developed the ability 'to learn how to learn' leading to learning skills for life. The ability of adults to learn how to learn - to become skilled at learning in a range of different situations and through a range of different styles - has often been proposed as an overarching purpose for those educators who work with adults. Brookfield (1991), states that learning to learn is a skill that exists far beyond academic boundaries as evidenced from research conducted on practical intelligence and everyday cognition in settings and activities as diverse as grocery shopping and betting shops (Brookfield, 1991).

According to Knowles, a theorist in the area of adult learners, individual differences broaden and solidify with age. Therefore, adult teaching should strive to make allowances for differences in style, time, place, pace, focus, method, and so on. The reports for the students, their family members and the CCL tutors indicated that one of the challenges of the course was working towards meeting the needs of all the students in the class group where a wide variety of skills and abilities were evident. These reports highlighted the importance of understanding the learning needs of each student within the context of whole-class teaching.

4.5 Challenges and Opportunities

The benefits of the programme highlighted a number of challenges that were experienced by the family members and tutors as a result of the students expanding range of experiences. Both tutors and family members highlighted the challenges presented to some of the family members in supporting their son or daughters move towards independence. A resistance to 'let go' was noted, particularly in the early stages of the course which appeared to present the family members with both the opportunity and challenge to discover a new role regarding their relationship with their son or daughter. However, the data also indicated that there was a notable progression, from the reports of the family members in particular, where they appeared to recognise that their son or daughter was now an individual with their own goals and aspirations for life that were separate to their family members needs or wants. Some family members indicated a clear desire to encourage the further development of their son or daughter whether that emerged to be securing work in the community or continuing to further education.

A journey on the part of the tutoring staff also emerged through the analysis of the data whereby some staff reported changes in their perceived roles and considered their duties to lean towards the facilitation of learning by providing conditions and guidance as opposed to providing direct instruction or limiting their responsibilities to issues that related to duty-of-care. According to Rogers (1969), the roles of the educator is to facilitate the learning process with the aid of a positive learning climate, clear objective formulation, learning resources, balancing intellectual and emotional components and sharing the learning experience the learners. This role presented new and exciting challenges for the tutors within the evolving culture and educational climate of the NIID.

4.6 What Next?

The uncertainty of the future remained an issue for some of the students and their family members towards the end of the programme. While a number of the students had established further journeys by way of job or further courses a number were still unclear as to what the next step was for them. There was a clear suggestion that the students would like to have more concrete options made available to them including the possibility of securing a paid work position in society or engaging in further learning that incorporated the development of specific skills. Many of the students, as previously highlighted, had managed to secure a job, either through their work placements or in other areas within the community. One student was also progressing on to further courses. However, for some students the only option available following the completion of the Certificate programme was to return to life as it was before but now equipped with extra confidence, independence, skills and abilities and strong desire to move forward with their lives in a meaningful way.

4.7 Lessons for the future

4.7.1 Fostering vision

Several lessons have been learned from this study, the least of which is not to limit one's vision about what people with intellectual disabilities can achieve when supported to dream about their futures. The 19 students that are now the first graduates of the Certificate in Contemporary Living, are also the first graduates with intellectual disability to be awarded an approved qualification from Trinity College, Dublin. The lesson that the students have taught their tutors and families is not to underestimate their capacity to become active and reflective learners, capable of taking responsibility for their own learning as well as for their own citizenship. The world of the students while at College has been opened up through the support of their tutors, referring service agencies, family members, and not least of all the community of Trinity College, Dublin. The students have become pathfinders in finding new ways to ensure that learning for people with intellectual disabilities is life long.

The **First lesson** to be learned is: **Be open to and foster the unexpected associated with the growth and development of students** who have previously been denied access to education within a third level environment.

4.7.2 Strengthening the transition process

A major theme that has arisen throughout the study is that the experience of being in a third level environment has opened up a whole new world for the students with intellectual disabilities. A lesson that is being learned however is that unless there is also a plan to sustain this new world, students can return to daily routines that are not meeting their *new world expectations*. It would appear that having a transition plan also needs to be accompanied by the NIID continuing to find ways to ensure that what has been achieved within the course, inclusive of future expectations, is generalised into the students' life post the third level experience. A major way in which the staff of NIID are keeping in touch with the student is through the Trinity NIID Alumni Association. Here the students are made aware of ongoing work opportunities as well as inclusive recreational activities. The Alumni will also provide a forum of support for the students to keep in contact with one another as well as their mentors.

At the conclusion of the course over half of the students had part time positions. As a means of increasing opportunities for all students to hold positions at the end of the course the job placement module needs to begin earlier, in the first year of the course. Paralleling this development needs to be an increase in the number of job coaches attached to the NIID to support students whilst on placement. This in turn raises the need for training in job coaching, which could be a Certificate that the NIID could offer on a part time basis for its staff as well as other community members.

Second lesson to be learned is: identify, implement and research strategies that will **promote generalisation of the outcomes of the Certificate course for the student. The process of generalisation needs to begin prior to completion of the course.** Suggested strategies include:

- ◆ Promotion of the NIID Trinity Alumni Association
- ◆ Teach the vocational placement module in the first year of the course
- ◆ Increase the number of job coaches available to work with the students
- ◆ NIID to offer a part time job coaching course
- ◆ Set up a longitudinal study to follow through on what happens to the students over the next five years.

4.7.3 Sharing a successful journey

The journey of being a student within a third level environment has led the students to see themselves as different, but no longer because of being on the margins of society. but because of being included. Family members and tutors verified that students felt

more confident about taking their place with increased independence in the world. Success breeds success and Trinity College is now being called upon by other third level institutions to collaborate in the setting up of the CCL programme to ensure that its benefits are not geographically restricted.

Third lesson to be learned is that inclusion within a third level environment for people with intellectual disability is achievable. For those involved, who have had the privilege of being witness to the transformation of the 19 students into learners of growing independence and increased confidence, now have **a responsibility to share their resources and experience with** other third level institutions across Ireland within the context of a **transferable model**.

4.7.4 Differentiated delivery of course content

Throughout the programme tutors commented on their own learning associated with understanding the need for a pedagogical approach that meets the diverse needs and multiple intelligences of the learners (Gardner, 2006). This has implications for delivery of course content requiring that students have both group and individualised support and tutorials where needed.

Fourth lesson to be learned is that as learners the students have diverse learning needs and learning styles that require **differentiation in terms of delivery of teaching activities to meet the same learning objectives**.

4.7.5 On being mentored

Matching students undertaking the Certificate in Contemporary Living with students on a one to one basis from a wide range of undergraduate courses has been instrumental to the CCL students developing new friendships. Also mentors are a means of supporting students to participate in selected undergraduate lectures associated with areas of interest, such as, ancient Greece; human rights and disability policies within Ireland.

Similarly the CCL students often develop and share modules of learning with other groups of undergraduate students in areas of specific interest, such as, diet and physical fitness, music, drama and art.

Fifth lesson to be learned is that **a third level setting provides a rich tapestry of social capital** upon which all students regardless of their abilities can gain from learning from one another.

4.7.6 Safeguarding that third level education is not only locational mainstreaming.

Within the NIID staff are continually working to ensure that learning is not isolated both in terms of location and membership. Through the mentoring programme, shared learning experiences with other undergraduate students as well as participating in inclusive studies where the student can choose to partially participate in a series of lectures at the undergraduate level, inclusion is strengthened. These strategies are continually being monitored and redeveloped in order that being enrolled in a third level institution means more than having just a presence but also a rich participation in the life of the community.

Sixth lesson to be learned is that inclusion is more than being there. Inclusion means both presence and participation (O'Brien, 1987) which can be monitored through action based research. Safeguards will need to be built into any programmes for students with intellectual disabilities to ensure that they **do not become by default segregated programmes within third level mainstream settings.**

4.8 *Bringing the journey to an end.*

As a means of bringing this report to closure the essence of the Certificate in Contemporary Living which has been at the centre of this study is best captured in the words of one of its foundation graduates.

Journey

As one door closes after me
I open a door to the future
Full of challenges and experiences

The next door I open
Is a bumpy road ahead
And it becomes steeper
And harder to walk

Until I reach the top
Then I come down followed
By a smooth path along the way

By Helen Donnelly, 2006

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Invitation to participate, July 2006

We write to tell you about a research project that is about to begin, associated with the National Institute for Intellectual Disability (NIID) and funded by a research award from the National Disability Authority (NDA).

The purpose of the project is to study and document what is happening in the Certificate of Contemporary Living program. As part of the project we wish to talk to family members, students, teaching and agency staff.

We will be inviting the above stakeholders to attend focus groups, to discuss the benefits and challenges of this third level program set within the NIID.

Enclosed find an information sheet about the project, as well as a consent form. If you are interested in participating, please return the consent form and you will be contacted by Amy O'Shea who has recently joined the NIID staff as Research Assistant to the project.

Yours sincerely, Patricia O'Brien PhD, Director, NIID. Michael Shevlin PhD, School of Education, TCD. Molly O'Keeffe, Education Officer, NIID

Appendix B: General information sheet and consent form

The National Institute for Intellectual Disability (NIID) has been funded by the National Disability Authority to study the outcomes of its education program, the Certificate in Contemporary Living.

As a (INSERT CATEGORY) connected to the Certificate programme, we would like to invite you to participate in the study. This study will consist of separate focus groups for family members, students, teaching and agency staff. The study will also document the ongoing activities of the student group.

What this would mean for you as a [teaching staff member, parent] is:

- ◆ Attending 3 focus groups (in July 06, December 06 and April 07) to discuss what you think are the benefits and challenges for students attending the Certificate program. It is expected that each focus group would take up to 1.5 hours and would be held at the NIID. These focus groups will be facilitated by an independent researcher who has not been involved in the development or teaching of the program.
- ◆ That your consent will be sought to tape record the focus group discussion.
- ◆ Receiving a summary of the outcomes of each focus group for you to comment on as a true record of the focus group.
- ◆ That your name or that of individual students will not be mentioned with reference to any specific comment.
- ◆ That a summary of the report will be sent to you.
- ◆ That you are able to withdraw at any stage of the project.

If you would be prepared to participate in this project, please find enclosed a consent form for return to the Research Office, NIID. A stamped addressed envelope is included. If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact: Dr Patricia O'Brien, Director, NIID, obrienp3@tcd.ie, 01 608 3879

On receipt of your consent form you will be contacted by Research Assistant Amy O'Shea, about time and date for the first focus group.

Appendix C: Consent form

I consent to participate in the above research project, conducted by the Research Office in NIID. I have read the information sheet on the project and have been able to ask questions.

In accepting to participate I agree to:

- Attend 3 focus groups;
- Have the focus groups tape recorded;
- Respect the anonymity of the members of the group.
- I also understand that I can withdraw from the focus groups at any time and that my identity or that of my service organisation and any service users will not be mentioned in any research reports.

Signed, Signature _____ Name _____ Date _____

The best way to contact me during business hours is: _____



Appendix D: General information sheet and consent form for students



Information Sheet

24February, 2005

Dear NAME

NISLD is doing some research  into the Certificate course.

This is to find out more about the Certificate, what is good,  and what we can change  to keep making it better.

We will be having 3 focus groups  where all students are invited to talk about  the Certificate.

There will also be different groups for family, agency staff and teachers.

You can read more about this on the information sheet.



If you would like to join in the focus group, please fill out the consent form.

Then Amy O'Shea will contact you to talk about the first focus group.

Thank you,

Patricia O'Brien PhD

Director, NISLD

Researchers: Patricia O'Brien, Michael Shevlin, Máirín Kenny

Consent form for students

I have had this research explained to me.

I have been able to ask questions and have them answered.

I understand what is expected of me.

I can stop being involved at any stage of this project.

I will not talk about what goes on in the meeting to other people.

I agree to take part in this project.

Signed: _____ Name _____ Date _____

Appendix E: Tutors Focus Group schedule

1. What do you think has been the impact on students of attending the Certificate programme in Trinity College?

2. What have been the benefits ?

Probes

- for the students?
- for you as tutors?
- for families?
- for service agencies?
- any other category?

3. What have been the difficulties?

Probes

- for the students?
- for you as tutors?
- for families?
- for service agencies?
- any other category?

4. What lessons can be learned from the Certificate programme for

- the NIID?
- Trinity College?
- Families?
- Students?
- Service agencies?
- Third level education providers?
- Third level policy makers?

Appendix F : Family members Focus Group schedule

1. What is your [son /daughter/relative] liking about the course? *Tell us about his or her favourite aspects of the course – what has he or she enjoyed doing?*

2. What hasn't your [relative] liked about the course? *Tell us about the least favourite thing he or she has reported about the course.*

3. What, in your opinion, should be changed about the course?

4. What support that you are aware of has your [relative] had to do the course:

Probes

- a. From Trinity?: Staff, Key Staff, Mentors?
- b. From home?
- c. From your [relative's] agency?
- d. From the community?

5. What difference has the course made for your [relative]:

Probes

- a. At home?
- b. From your [relative's] agency?
- c. In the community?

6. What do you hope the course will lead to for your [relative]?

7. Any other comments?

Appendix G: Students Focus Group schedule

1. What are you liking about the course? *Tell us about your favourite things that you've done on the course.*
2. What haven't you liked about the course? *Tell us about the least favourite thing you've done on the course.*
3. What would you change about the course?
4. What support have you had to do the course
 - a. from Trinity?: Staff, Key Staff, Mentors
 - b. from home?
 - c. from your agency?
 - d. from the community?
5. What difference has the course made for you
 - a. at home?
 - b. at your agency?
 - c. in the community?
- 5 What do you hope the course will lead to for you? *Job, other courses.*

Appendix H: Student reports learning activities

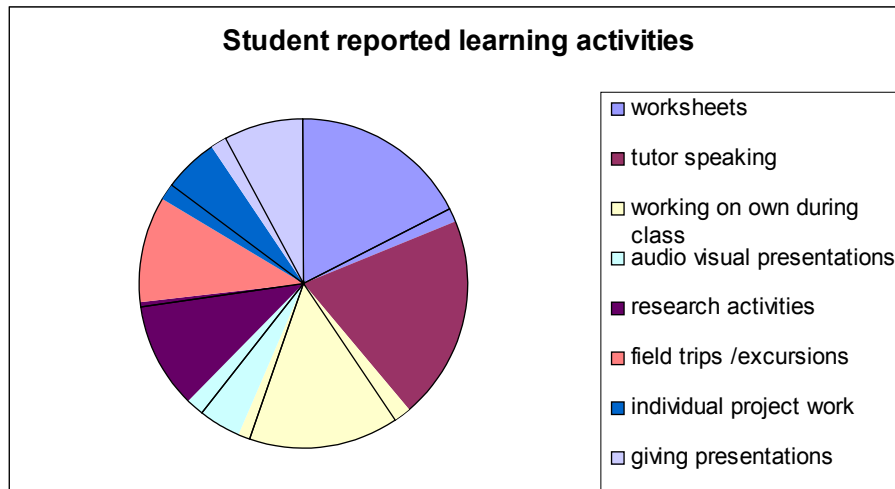


Figure 1: Overall categories of learning activities

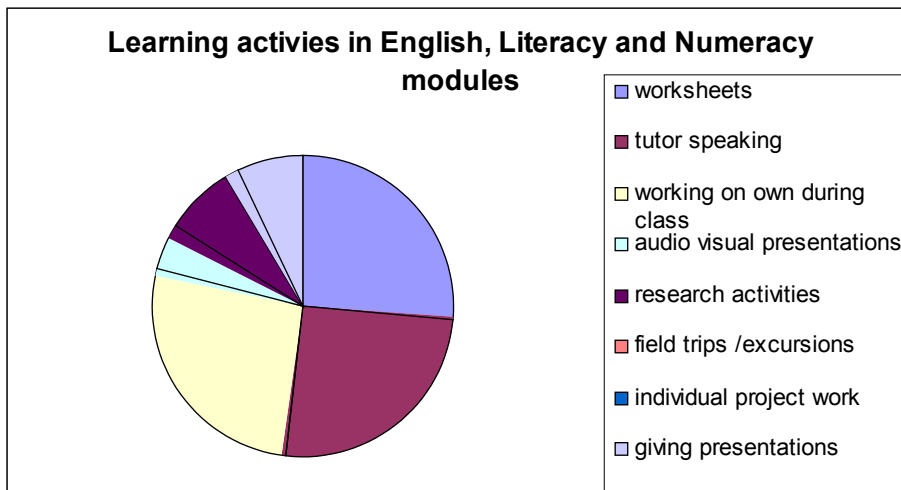


Figure 1: Categories of learning activities within specific modules

Specific reported activities

- Performance
- Games
- Quizzes
- Internet research
- Painting
- Craft
- Being videoed
- PowerPoint presentations
- Reading books

Appendix I: The PATH Journey

PATH stands for Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope. It is a unique form of person centre planning. A process that enables an individual to plan their future covering all aspect of their lives. Eighteen students on the Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL) undertook a PATH as part of their transition from College. The PATH workshops were carried out in the final months of the CCL course.

A PATH Overview:

The individual who undertakes the PATH is called the PATH finder. This person can invite members of their family, community or their friends to take part in their PATH process. These individuals can throughout the PATH add to the discussion with suggestions or ideas, however it is highlighted at the beginning that this is not their PATH and that they must respect the goals and wishes of the PATH finder. On average a PATH takes two hours or more, each PATH is facilitated by two external individuals. The facilitator guides the PATH finder through the various sections of the PATH process with gentle questions and respectful listening, while the other facilitator graphs on a large piece of paper what the PATH finder has said, the grapher also re-caps what has been discussed at the end of each section. The PATH Workshop is divided up in sub sections:

1. Values
2. Long Term Goals
3. Now
4. Enrol
5. Blocks
6. Keeping Strong
7. Short Term Goals
8. First Steps

The process begins with the PATH finder identifying their values, who and what are important to them? Once these have been established the PATH finder then decides how long a period he/she wishes to plan for, thus setting the first of two dates, this date is then entered in the Long Term Goals section. Once the date, month and year have been set, the PATH finder discusses what he/she wants to achieve by this date. It is now time for the Path finder to examine how life is like for them at the present, this is done in the Now section, this leads onto the Enrol section, which asks the PATH

finder to think about the people in their life and from this group to identify who they think would be a good candidate to support them in reaching their goals identified in section Long Term Goals. The PATH finder is then asked to reflect on possible factors that may hinder or prevent them from achieving these goals in the next section, Blocks. To counteract issues raised in the Blocks section the PATH finder now investigates ways around these in the Keeping Strong section. As a PATH finder may have identified a number of goals over a number of years in the Long Term Goals, the individual is now requested to choose some of their goals and identify a shorter period of time and this the second date is entered in the section Short Term Goals. The student then reflects on these goals and set out the first steps and who will support them in doing them. This information is placed in the First Step section.

The CCL Students and PATH: Long Term Goals

Through the 18 PATHs, 17 goals were identified overall by the CCL Students. The table below lists the goals and the number of students who chose each particular goal as part of planning for the future.

Identified Goal for Long Term Goals	Number of Students
Employment	13
Meeting friends socially – social network	13
Graduating from Trinity College	11
Travelling overseas	11
Involved in an intimate relationship	9
Further Education	8
Driving Licence	6
Independent travel for social life	4
Hobbies	4
Setting up own business after college	3
Family relationships – strengthening	3
Own home	2
Holidays with Friends	2
First steps to moving out	2
Owning pets	2
Singing in church choir	1
Holiday in Ireland	1

The table above outlines a varied set of long term goals, these goals impact on all aspects of the student's life, from employment to relationships, future education to travel and independence. The majority of students identified goals for the future in the areas of employment and friendship, followed by graduating from the certificate course at Trinity to travelling overseas.

Now

Again in this section the CCL students identified 17 goals between them. The table below lists the goals and the number of students who chose each particular goal as part of planning for the future.

What is life like NOW	Number of Students
College	16
Having friends	11
Social life – social network	8
Happy	8
Employment	6
Living at home	5
Family	4
Learning new skills	3
Travelling independently	3
Attending a training centre	3
Involved in sports	3
Travelling abroad	2
Family rows	2
Involved in Art	1
NIID staff	1
Involved in a relationship	1
Heading on holiday	1

In this area, 16 spoke about their life at college, followed by friendship in their lives. Eight students identified themselves as happy and eight also discussed their social life. Thus the top four areas the students concentrated on were college, having friends, social life and being happy. At this stage six students discussed employment while three mentioned learning new skills. Five students spoke about living at home while four discussed their family life.

Enrol

In this section the students identified groups of individuals in their life. The table below lists the goals and the number of students who chose each particular goal as part of planning for the future.

Who did I need to Enrol	Number of Students
Myself	18
NIID staff	18
Family	17
Friends	16
Agency Staff	16
Key Worker	10
Mentors (Fellow Trinity students)	3
Social Worker	3
Girlfriend	1

All 18 students understood the importance of themselves being at the centre of achieving their goals, the NIID staff involved in the CCL course were placed above family members, friends and agency staff, as one student did not identify their family as support network. Only three students identified their social worker as a person they would enrol to support them achieving their goals.

Blocks

Here the students identified 14 potential blocks which would prevent them from achieving their goals, The table below lists the goals and the number of students who chose each particular goal as part of planning for the future.

Things that may hinder achieving goals	Number of Students
Lack of employment opportunities	12
Fear	11
Lack of new courses	9
Lack of money	8
Lack of support	8
Lack of skills needed	7
Travel	5
Lack of opportunities	4
Friends	3
Family	2
Exams	2
Relationship	2
Health	2
Myself	2

Lack of employment opportunities ranked highest in this section by the students, this was followed by lack of new courses, support and skills required. Other areas of concern for these students were issues with travel, lack of opportunities and friends. Eleven students identified fear as a possible block in achieving their goals

Keeping Strong

The students identified 18 ways of keeping strong on staying focused on their journey to achieving their goals. The table below lists the goals and the number of students who chose each particular goal as part of planning for the future.

What keeps me strong on focused on my goals	Number of Students
Staying focused	14
Staying healthy	9
Keeping positive	9
Friends	7
Skills	7
Family	6

What keeps me strong on focused on my goals	Number of Students
Support	4
NIID staff	3
Saving	3
Relaxation	3
Work	2
Pets	2
Santa Claus	1
Church	1
Listening	1
Being proud of who I am	1
Confidence	1

The scoring here reflects the student's individual way of keeping strong and varies from health to pets to Santa Claus. Keeping focused ranked highest in this section with 14, while nine students identifying staying positive and healthy as ways to keeping strong. Other high scores in this section were from friends, skills and family.

Short Term Goals

The students identified 17 goals that they wanted to achieved in a short time frame, the table below lists the goals and the number of students who chose each particular goal as part of planning for the future.

Short Term Goals	Number of Students
Employment	18
Friendships – social network	16
Social life	13
Travel	10
New Course	9
Complete College – CCL	9
Family	5
Complete driving test	5
Hobbies	4
Money	3
Intimate relationship	2
Sports activities	1
Own flat	1
Health	1
Church	1
Redecorate bedroom	1
Independence	1

The short term goals came from the Long Term Goals, however as you can see were altered by the PATH finder through discussion. Employment ranked higher in this section than it did in the Long Term Goals identified by the students. This was followed by friendship and a social life. Ten students set travelling as a short term goal. Nine students wanted to complete the course as part of their goals and nine wanted to find

a new course while five wished to complete their driving test. Five students focused on their relationship with their family while two gave the establishment an intimate relationship as their short term goal.

First Steps

To begin the process of achieving each goal identified by the students, the first steps involves 16 areas. The table below lists the goals and the number of students who chose each particular goal as part of planning for the future.

First Steps	Number of Students
Employment	18
Further education – new course	12
Social life	9
Friends	9
Hobbies	7
Complete College – CCL	6
Independence	5
Relationship	4
Holiday	4
Family	3
Driving test	3
Saving	3
Health	2
Volunteering	2
Respite	1
Redecorating bedroom	1

Similar to the short-term goals, employment was identified as the most important first step. This was followed by friendship and a social life. Completion of the course and further education was followed by family and driving.

What ranked highest with the PATH finders?

Friendships

Social network and friendship was discussed in each section of the PATH. This tells the story of the friendships that students currently have and their desire for both social networking and the development of new friendships.

Employment

Employment ranked as one of the highest in the short term goals, all 18 students placed employment in their Short Term goals. Six out of the 18 students mentioned current employment in the Now section. Thirteen students identified employment

while three students placed setting up their own business as a goal in Long Term Goals. Again issues in the Blocks section include of lack of skills, opportunities and support.

Education

Sixteen students discussed being at college and three students identified learning new skills in the Now section. Eight students chose future education of as one of their Long Term Goals while nine students focused on the completion of the CCL course and nine on finding a new course in the Short Term Goals.

Five students identified driving as a priority throughout the PATH while two (a male and female student) focused on having an intimate relationship. Hobbies, sports and staying healthy and positive were also areas of importance to the PATH finders.