



NTNU

Do we practice what we preach?

Ambivalence towards students with disabilities,
as they struggle to demonstrate their capabilities
in the academic and professional world

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Do we practice what we preach?

- Background
- Study design
- Findings
- What is going on: Complex interactional processes
- Implications for OT's

Students with disabilities in higher education

- HE most important link to work
- Increasing, particularly students with invisible impairments
- Barriers in academic and everyday life
- Reluctance to disclose disability and seek help

Professional educations

- Short courses:
 - frequent change of learning environment
- Conflicting roles:
 - facilitating students learning
 - assessing fitness for practice
- How to accommodate and what is reasonable?
- Professional competence standard

Aims of study

To explore different perspectives

- How students with disabilities experience to participate in their professional education
- How academic staff and practice educators experience their involvement with students with disabilities

Qualitative research design

Semi-structured interviews with 14 students

Focus groups with professional educators

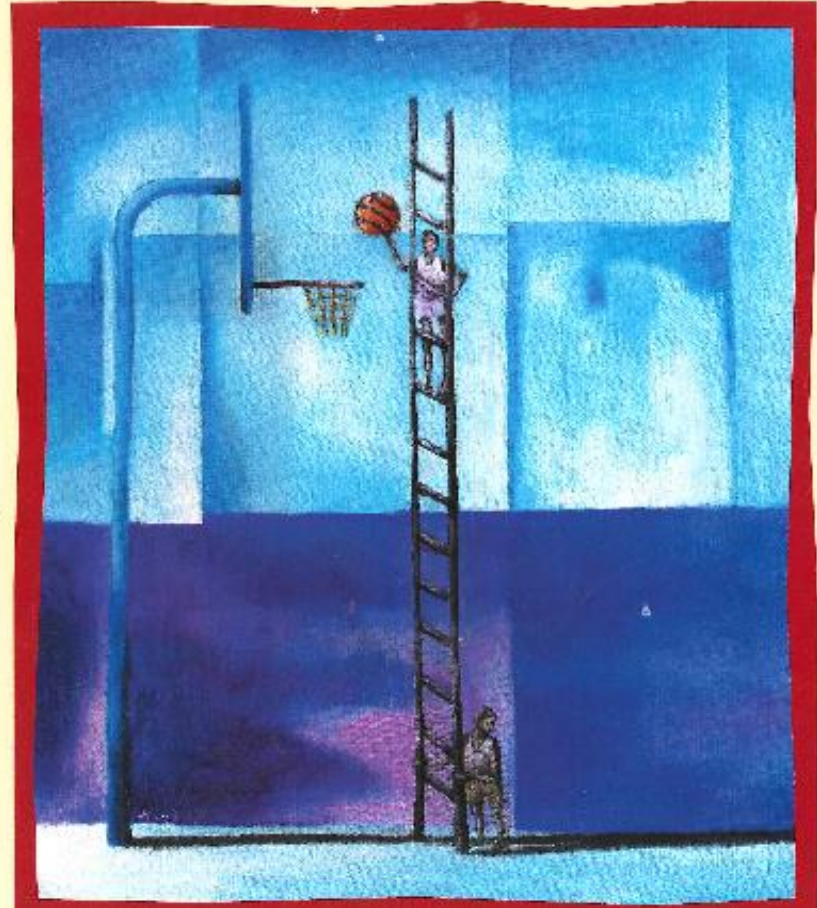
- 13 academic staff
- 8 placement supervisors

Participants from 12 professional programmes within health care, social work and teaching

The students

Struggle for recognition

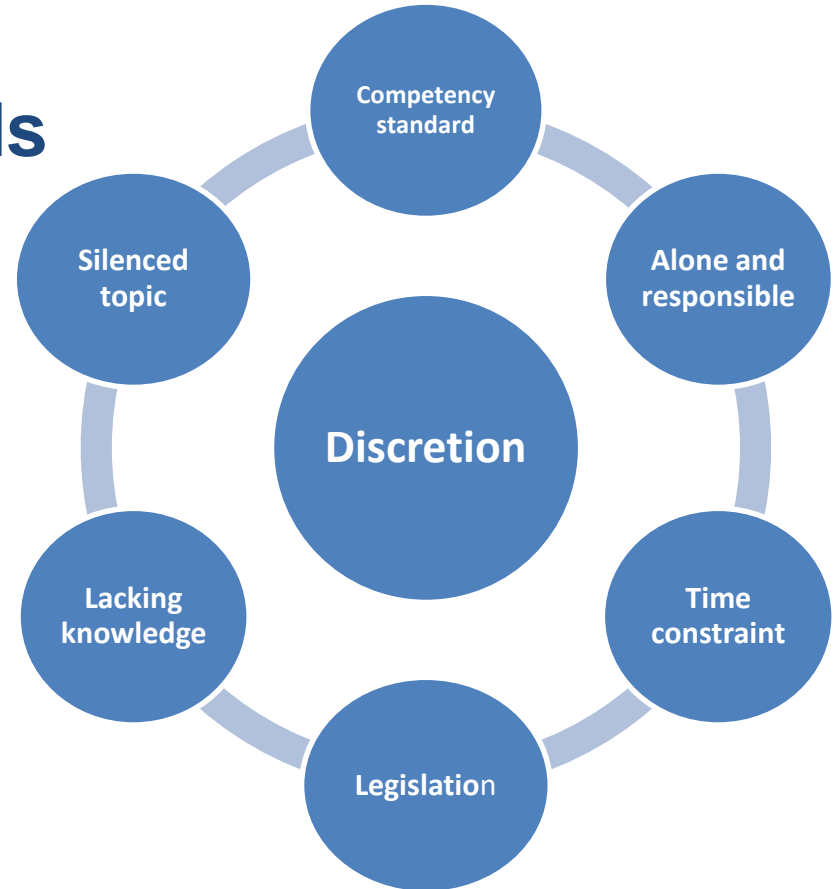
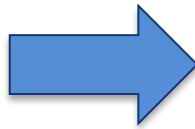
- Expect higher education to be challenging
- Work hard to fit in and demonstrate capabilities
- Bridging the gap 'in silence'



The educators

Ambivalence towards involvement

Students with disabilities must convince their gatekeepers by being good students?



What is going on?

Complex interactions

- Accommodation depend on students' request
- Students avoid drawing attention to their impairment
 - coping in silence
- Students seeking recognition
 - met by ambivalent educators
- Barriers to study participation remain invisible



hiding and
hoping not to
meet a student
in need of extra
attention...

Implications for practice

How do we create images around disability, ability and professional competency?

- How do we understand disability (theory vs practice)?
- What do we mean by professional standard?
- What does inclusion really mean – in our profession?