

Hello! This is an introduction number one to inclusive learning and universal design of e-learning.

My name is Elinor Olaussen and I work at Universell in Norway, which is a national centre for inclusive learning environments and universal design in higher education.

In this short video we will focus on who we are planning our teaching for, what is diversity and what do we mean when we talk about disabilities.

Let's start by looking at some statistics.

23% of the students in Norway report to have a disability. The number is retrieved from the Eurostudent survey which was conducted in 2018.

Among 30 European countries participated and the result from your country can also be retrieved online.

However in Norway 15% of the students report to have a disability that affect their possibility to complete their studies. That is a great number.

This diagram shows how 23% are divided in different categories. Be aware that multiple answers were possible.

As you can see, the most common types of impairments are chronic diseases with 7.5% and mental health difficulties with 6.7%.

What is also interesting with these numbers is that only 3% have a physical disability and only 3.3% have sensory problems, either hearing or vision impairments. Which indicates that only a minority of disabilities are visible, rest of them are often invisible.

4.4% report to be severely affected by their disability. But it's also interesting to see all the students who experience no limitations or only minor limitations in their studies.

Why don't they experience more limitations?

Perhaps it's because of universal design in reasonable adjustments.

Disabilities can be defined in different ways.

We see it as a contextual matter here exemplified through the gap model.

On the right side you have demands from the environment such as the way you have to study, the way you have access to study literature or the e-learning material and methods used in

assessment. These are all the demands from the environment.

And as a teacher you have a responsibility to think about the way you create this environment so that disabilities and all other factors of individuals are taken into account.

At the left side you have individual capabilities to the student and they also have to be strengthened through training or perhaps students can use some technical aids for support, such as a spellchecker.

We see disability as the gap between the environmental factors and the individual factors. Both sides need to be strengthened in order to close the gap.

This is a picture from a lecture. Two hundred students are sitting in an auditorium. Some are discussing in couples or groups, others are reflecting on their own.

And if you were to pick out students with disabilities that will be a difficult task.

From the outside they all look the same.

We plan our teaching based on our assumptions.

And a lot of teachers don't believe or think that they are students with disabilities in their classes because no one is in a wheelchair or have similar difficulties.

So do we actually know our students and are we aware of our own assumptions when we plan our classes?

It's not just different kinds of disabilities who affect students' learning.

Starting up in higher education students bring along a suitcase full of experiences, strengths, perspectives, learning styles, different cultures, a greater age span than ever before.

All these aspects affect the way they learn, the way they best demonstrate knowledge and the way they get motivated to learn.

These characteristics are more or less visible, here illustrated with iceberg.

The only aspects we can see is what the students tell us or show us in behaviours and in the way they act.

Their disability can also be invisible and it's important to remember this when designing teaching and learning.