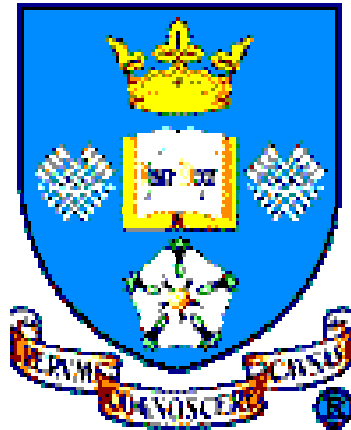


Disability Studies: Putting Theory into Practice

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Inclusive Education and Equality Research Centre

Employment Experiences of the Six Adults

With the label of 'Learning Difficulties'

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This paper discusses the findings of the life histories of work of the six adults with the label of 'learning difficulties' in Vollbury in England. The stories indicate several aspects of the current and previous employment experiences of the six adults with learning difficulties including:

Job title

Work hours

Type of work

Weekly and hourly wages

The length of service with employers

Type of workplace

Job satisfaction

Ways of finding job

Reasons for leaving job

Employment barriers

Sheila Davies

Sheila is 46 years old, the first child of her family and lives with her mother and disabled sister. She has been doing voluntary work in several placements for 22 years. She works four days a week as a kitchen assistant. After many years experience she has never been paid.

Employment experiences

1) The first job was a **cleaning assistant** in a Café for six months. It was **part-time** and they paid me bus fares which was **70 per a day**. I found that job through my friend who had learning difficulties. I did voluntary and I left that job because I did not like the workplace



2) The second job was paper work in the office for three months. I packed envelopes and I liked it. It was an easy job. I did voluntary part-time job. My wage was 70p per a day. I left that job because the workplace was cold and my hip has some problems and I can not work in cold areas



3) The third job was a **packing assistant** at Far House. I packed blades, suit and glass. **I did voluntary work**, five days a week and they gave me **£3 a day**. I worked Far House **for 2 years** and **I left there because I had no freedom to do what I wanted to do**.



4) The fourth job was **collecting rubbish** in a recycling factory. I did **voluntary work**; two days a week, and **seven months** later I worked five days a week. My **wage was £3 a day**. I worked in the sorting line where the line came up and brought all the stuff like plastic bottles, glass and paper. I used to collect and sort the plastic out. I did that job for two years but I **did not like that job** because it was not nice. I had to touch dirty bottles and glasses everyday. I changed my job after two years.



5) The fifth job was a **kitchen assistant**. When I changed my job, I went to the kitchen. I did different duties like making tea, coffee, serving biscuits, cleaning and washing up. I did **voluntary work** and my **wage was £3 a day** but I **liked my job**. I worked **7 years** in the **Brick Lane Factory** which caught fire and everything burned so it was **closed down**.



6) The sixth job was **office work for six months** and then **kitchen assistant**. At the moment, I work in the canteen in the café as a kitchen assistant. I work in Rambert Street Café for 4 years and I do **voluntary work; four days a week** and my **wage is £3 a day**. I start my work everyday at 8.30am and finish it at 2.15pm. I like to have a paid job. **I don't get a wage because people don't like to give me a paid job. I also can't earn more because I receive DLA and other benefits.**



Lisa Watkins

Lisa is 25 years old, lives with her parents and has been doing voluntary work for many years in different placements. Currently, she has no paid job, works full-time as a kitchen assistant.

Employment experiences

I have been doing work experience in different placements through the Far House for many years. **My first placement** was a charity shop. I was **doing retail**, part-time for a few months. I didn't get wages and I got only bus fares, which was 70p. **Then**, I started my part-time work in a supermarket for three months. I was a **cleaning assistant**, and tidying, cleaning rubbish, and helping customers were my duties.

The next placement was another Supermarket where I worked part-time, three days a week for 12 months. I was a **cleaning assistant** and my duties were the same as at the other. Then, I worked part-time as a **cleaning assistant** for three months at Rose Hotel where I got only bus fares. After one year, I got a job at a care home to look after elderly people. I was **doing laundry work** for about three months and I left that job because I really didn't like it. It wasn't a very nice job and I didn't like the smells of the working environment with elderly people. So I went back to Far House and they referred me to work in catering.

I have been working in catering for 4 years. I work full-time (37.5 hours a week) as a **kitchen assistant** in the restaurant where I work from 8.30 in the morning and I finish it at 3.45 in the afternoon. I go to work by bus 82. I travel independently and I don't have any problem catching the bus.

Toasting bread, making salad, serving the customers at the counter and emptying the dishwasher are my duties. I like my placement and colleagues more than previous placements where there were 30 staff and they didn't support me. They were busy doing their jobs and had no contact with each other. But here only six staff are working with me. My manager and colleagues are non-disabled, good, kind and give me lots of support at work. I work with them in a small group and have no problem with them. If I need some help, they will do it.

I like my job because I do different duties in different days. On Monday I do washing in the pot wash. On Tuesday I prepare sandwiches. On Wednesday, I help the staff to check stock. Thursday and Friday are cleaning days and I help the staff to clean the tables, and floor in the restaurant.

At all placements that I have been working I don't get wages. I get only bus fares, which is 70p per day. I get DLA and JSA as well. For JSA I have to go to the Jobcentre every two weeks to sign the paper. My benefits aren't too much. In total, I get £68 a week.

A proper and permanent job is an important aspiration for my future life. A job is important to me because it would give me a wage, let me have more friends at work, no more signing on and I would belong to a group. I need some help to get a proper and paid job. I think Far House will help me to get it. If they don't, I can't get a paid job, because most employers don't like to give us a proper job. They don't understand us. They think we can't work very well. But we do, we do work the same as everybody. But they prefer to employ people with no learning disabilities.

Findings

Previous Jobs (25 jobs)	Current Jobs (9 jobs)
<p style="text-align: center; color: purple;">Working in low-status occupations</p> <p><u>Kitchen assistant and cleaning assistant had the highest frequency (24% each), followed by office work (12%), packaging assistant and shop assistant (8% each).</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center; color: purple;">Working in low-status occupations</p> <p><u>Kitchen assistant (44%) , packaging assistant, nursery assistant, counter assistant, office work and pricing clothes</u></p>
<p style="text-align: center; color: magenta;">Unpaid Job</p> <p><u>All had unpaid job</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center; color: magenta;">Unpaid Job</p> <p><u>One had paid job and five had unpaid job</u></p>
<p style="text-align: center; color: green;">Full/part-time division</p> <p>Based on the <u>jobcentre definition</u>, all informants worked full-time, but <u>according to the employers</u>, two informants had full-time jobs and others were part-time.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; color: green;">Full/part-time division</p> <p>Based on the <u>jobcentre definition</u>, all people worked full-time, but <u>according to the employers</u>, one had a full-time job and the other four informants who had taken eight jobs, were part-time.</p>
<p style="text-align: center; color: red;">No wages</p> <p><u>All informants</u> had received bus fares which was 70p per day)</p>	<p style="text-align: center; color: red;">No wages</p> <p><u>One person</u> had received the minimum wage, but he had lost his job. <u>Three people</u> had received £12 and less a week <u>Two people</u> received bus fares (70p per day)</p>
<p style="text-align: center; color: brown;">Unsatisfactory jobs</p> <p><u>Most informants were not satisfied</u> with their jobs because they were unpaid job, and some of them did not like their job and workplaces.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; color: brown;">Unsatisfactory jobs</p> <p><u>Roy Watson was satisfied</u> with his job, because it was paid and he had been able to go shopping with his own money. <u>The other five informants were not satisfied with their jobs</u> because they were unpaid job and their workplaces were not stable. But despite their exclusion from paid job in the community, all informants were happy about their current work environments</p>
<p style="text-align: center; color: green;">Segregated placements</p> <p>Out of 25 placements, <u>28% was segregated</u> and 72% was mainstream placements.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; color: green;">Segregated placements</p> <p>Out of nine placements, <u>33% was segregated</u> and 67% was mainstream</p>

Ways of finding job	Ways of finding job
Most of them (56%) had been found <u>through the local authority sector agency</u>	Roy Watson had found his job <u>through the voluntary sector agency</u>
16% had been <u>offered by the voluntary sector agency</u>	Paul Savage had found two jobs <u>by an informant himself and his parents</u>
12% had been found <u>through the independent sector agency</u>	Sheila Davies found her job <u>through the independent sector agency.</u>
12% had been found <u>by an informant himself and his parents</u>	The other three informants had found their jobs <u>through the local authority sector agency</u>
4% had been found <u>by friend</u>	



I had a paid job for 13 years. I lost my job four months ago because my placement closed down. I don't know why. I applied for a job somewhere but I didn't hear from them. It is bad that they did not answer my application even if they say sorry 'we have not got any jobs at the moment' it's nice to know that they have looked at my application. I think I am not important for them. All my colleagues got jobs in...there is no difference; I have enough experience in a greengrocery shop and I can work in many placements like that, but they do not give me a job because they don't like people with learning disabilities. Yes, they don't like us because we've got learning difficulties...I got an appointment to have a group interview in a supermarket. My mum said to the manager, 'Roy wouldn't be any good with a group interview and could he have a one to one interview'. They said that they would let us know but they never have... I left my name and I didn't hear from them.

Roy Watson

