Accessibility Coordinators: A model for embedded, sustainable change towards inclusive higher education

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Abstract

Higher education has seen a dramatic change over the last three decades. In this time, it has become open to groups of students that had not historically participated, leading to its democratisation, increased social inclusion and the breakdown of barriers to a previously elitist system. With these changes have come the moral and legislative requirements to ensure that all students, regardless of their circumstances or characteristics, have equitable study experiences. In the UK, higher education institutions have increasingly sought to develop and deliver curricula that are inclusive, particularly for students with disabilities, but changes to funding regimes have placed financial burdens on universities and exposed insecurities and gaps in academic staff skills and knowledge. These issues manifest as attainment gaps and the alienation of students the universities were making efforts to attract.

Many universities seek to promote accessibility of teaching and learning but it can be challenging to operationalise accessibility systematically in institutions. In our UK university, this has been operationalised through a network of Accessibility Coordinators, operating in faculties throughout the university since 2010. These roles have become embedded to enact large-scale, consistent institutional change and have created substantial, sustainable improvements in accessibility and inclusive practice. In 2018, an evaluation of the Accessibility Coordinator role was conducted to assess how the role of Accessibility Coordinator has changed since its inception and investigate how these agents perceive the role needs to further adapt to respond to a changing higher education environment.

In this paper, we present a model of how accessibility advocate roles can become embedded into an institutional structure, how the role may evolve over time and the factors involved in these changes. We review the role, beliefs and perceptions of these advocates by exploring their lived experiences, analysed in the context of change management theories. Finally, we explore how they adopt and adapt to the role, shaping it according to their context, skillset, interests and environment, and forming a change community with other advocates. In sharing this, we seek to posit a model that can be adapted into a framework for other educational institutions to create, embed, support and evaluate accessibility (or other inclusion) advocates in their own contexts.

Keywords: Accessibility, inclusion, higher education, change, advocate.

1 Introduction

This paper presents a model for how accessibility advocate roles can be embedded and sustained to enact large-scale, consistent institutional change within higher education for students with disabilities. This paper also presents a review of the role, beliefs and perceptions of these advocates by exploring their 'lived experiences' [1].

1.1 Sector-wide context

UK higher education has seen a dramatic change over the last three decades, with increased social inclusion and widening participation [2]. At the same time, changing regulatory frameworks and quality assurance processes have increased the accountability of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to their students. This has led to legislation requiring universities to support students with protected characteristics, including disability, to succeed and to provide reasonable adjustments to the curriculum, assessment, support, and other provisions that impact on student success. As traditional barriers to entry are reduced and higher education becomes more open to disabled students, HEIs have needed to make both structural and cultural changes to their working practices to ensure curricula and services are accessible. It is in this context that we present an evaluation of the way that our HEI, The Open University, embedded accessibility to support student success.

1.2 Institutional-level context

The Open University (OU) is a distance learning institution in which courses (modules) are delivered in a variety of ways including via websites, printed books, online or face to face classrooms. Students engage with academics, associate lecturers and student support teams, and most study part-time. It is popular with students with less traditional educational backgrounds, and the number and proportion of disabled students is typically high (24,894, or 19.4% in 2018-19). Disabled students are supported by a central disability support team that arrange any additional support or adjustments that the student may need. Today, this unit and the academic faculties work together to provide disabled students with consistent, joined up support throughout their learning journey. However, this has not always been the case.

In 2010, it was recognised that there was a disconnect between the student support teams, who spoke to students on a regular basis and were aware of their needs, and the academic staff who were responsible for creating teaching materials. Responsibility for supporting disabled students was also at that time dispersed across a number of units. This led to inconsistent practices, inadequate information and guidance about students' requirements, and varied student experience. This was particularly problematic given the OU's flagship Open Degree, in which students can gain degree credits from across the OU's curricula, means students encounter different practices from faculty to faculty. Further, feedback about students' needs was not reaching the faculties, and so costly and retrofitted reasonable adjustments were being made by student support units that could have been avoided through inclusive design by academics. Despite this, there were pockets of good practice, including curriculum that taught inclusive approaches to education, but this was not systematized and the practice of embedding accessibility was 'decoupled' [3, 4] from institutional strategy and policy.

The instigation of change was brought about by two researchers who collaborated to lobby for a project that would operationalise accessibility in a systematic, consistent and sustainable way. To ensure its effectiveness, they involved a variety of stakeholders [5, 6] and took 'a whole-institution and whole product and service life-cycle' approach, bringing together colleagues from a variety of units to launch the Securing Greater Accessibility (SeGA) project. Several areas were identified

where change was necessary (Figure 1) and a number of objectives were developed to realise that change:

- Clarification of responsibility and accountably for leading on and delivering accessibility
- Improved access to the curriculum for disabled students
- Improved understanding of staff roles and responsibilities regarding accessibility
- Improved documentation of how the reasonable adjustments offered to students have been arrived at
- Reduced overall cost for providing adjustments to disabled students
- Improved organisational knowledge of enabling accessibility best practice
- Improved visibility of the levels of accessibility afforded to students

Figure 1: The 'whole-institution and whole-product and service life-cycle' approach taken by SeGA.

Underpinning the work of SeGA was the vision that accessibility would become embedded in the way the institution designed, produced and delivered its curriculum. To do this required faculty staff to change their practices, but influencing faculties was a major challenge for a project outside the faculty structure. The solution to this was clear: the SeGA project documentation explicitly stated that 'In an ideal world we'd have people in Faculties'. These people would raise awareness of the need for accessibility and would advocate for and model good practice from within the faculties. There was a two-pronged approach to this: the incorporation of accessibility into the portfolio of existing Associate Deans with responsibility for teaching and learning, to provide leadership and ensure strategic fit, and the appointment of on-the-ground 'Faculty Accessibility Coordinators' (originally called 'Faculty Accessibility Specialists'). This paper focuses on this latter role.

1.3 Faculty Accessibility Coordinators

The Faculty Accessibility Coordinator (FAC) role was devised so that there would be one or more individuals within faculties that could raise the profile of accessibility in the curriculum within the academic community, encouraging their peers to think about the inclusivity of their teaching and learning as they designed it, and to support them to plan anticipatory or responsive adjustments. The duties of the FACs were defined by SeGA, with a view to meeting SeGA's broad objectives, but also to initiate or contribute to change within the OU, at faculty level.

FACs were initially recruited from existing members of staff (a mix of academics and curriculum support staff) that had some experience of curriculum production or delivery, or that already had experience of teaching disabled students. Knowledge of enabling accessibility or developing inclusive curricula was not a pre-requisite for appointment but FACs needed to be subject-specialists with a good knowledge of teaching, learning and support processes. FACs were identified and approached by Associate Deans, who then put them in contact with SeGA for a briefing on the role and to identify their individual training needs (described below).

The FACs were expected to report regularly to the relevant Associate Dean to ensure they were made aware of accessibility issues that may require higher-level intervention and, by doing so, influence faculty activities and strategies. However, the AD did not assume line management of the FACs, given FACs had other substantive posts, so some negotiation with line managers was necessary with respect to individual tasks and workload allocation. Workload was nominally defined by each faculty to reflect the size of the curriculum the FAC would be supporting, or in comparison to equivalent faculty positions, such as those responsible for postgraduate students, or embedding employability, and then negotiated to accommodate individual FAC's other duties. The workload allocation therefore varied between faculties and between individuals, but was formally allocated to individuals.

Given the varied experiences and backgrounds of those appointed as FACs, SeGA implemented a (continuing) training programme of monthly workshops covering different topics in accessibility, e.g., assistive technology, individual disabilities, or new university processes. These workshops gave FACs the opportunity to meet one another and those engaged in accessibility or disabled student support, and offered a platform in which they could raise concerns or successes. In addition, all FACs undertook a skills audit on appointment, using a framework developed by SeGA. This enabled SeGA to plan the workshops to meet the needs of the FACs, and highlight to FACs which areas they needed to focus on to be effective in their new role.

Given it is nearly a decade since the instigation of the FACs, it is timely to evaluate their role in enabling change within the faculties. An evaluation of the SeGA project itself was undertaken in 2015, which led to its transition from a time-bound project to permanent business-as-usual within the institution. However this did not focus on the impact of the FACs, and such an evaluation is long overdue.

1.4 Change framework

In this paper we evaluate the role the FAC plays in institutional change using a framework of characteristics commonly associated with staff involved in a change initiative: champions, agents, sponsors and targets (CAST). There is known permeability between these roles, allowing for the complexity of change and the political and personal contexts involved. This provides a model by which we structure the discussion around the FACs' impact.

Change champions: There are varying definitions of change champions. On the one hand they have been defined as anyone in the organisation with the enthusiasm for change [7], who 'believe in change and attempt to obtain commitment and resources, but may not have the authority to make the change' [8]. However, change champions have also been defined as those at director or senior executive level [9] who can integrate change using their authority, while sidestepping bureaucratic processes that might impede transformation [10]. This definition overlaps with that of sponsors, defined below.

Change agents: Change agents 'are assigned responsibility to implement change and are evaluated on their ability to get the project implemented'. They 'are responsible for tactical change including strategy, design, deployment and evaluation of the change' [8]. Ford et al., (2008) adds to this by indicating their responsibility for 'creating a vision and specifying a desired outcome, then making it happen' [11], and Tatlõ & Özbilgin (2009) described them as 'autonomous individuals' [12]. Buchanan (2003) has critiqued the phrase 'change agent' and described it as 'generic and ambiguous', preferring the term 'change driver' instead [1]. Whilst we recognise the relevance of this critique, we have retained the phrase within our methodological framework and discuss its fluidity within the analysis presented.

Change Sponsors: Sponsors support and authorise change. Alsher (2017) defined two types of sponsor: the authorising sponsor that can 'authorize, legitimise and demonstrate ownership for the change' and the reinforcing sponsor that can 'reinforce their personal commitment through their own visible, active behaviour' [8]. Given that authorising sponsors may also be power brokers within the organisation, they may also be champions [13].

Change Targets: Targets are the objects or focus of change. They are typically defined as being people who are required to 'change behaviour, emotions, knowledge, perceptions etc.' [8] although in our context they can also be systems, processes and policy. In this paper we do not focus on the targets, however, a previous paper outlines the changes made within this context [14] and targets will be referred to within the analysis and discussion.

We investigate both the consensus and individual experiences of the the FACs, which might determine, broadly, the change role they are most aligned to and whether this has impacted on their achievements to date. This will also allow an analysis of their impact and influence.

2 Methodology

Using participatory evaluation research [15, 16] as the underlying theoretical framework, we carried out a two-stage, qualitative evaluation to explore how the 'lived experience' [1] of FACs compared to the roles and objectives that were visualised for the role when it was created.

Participatory evaluation research aims to assess or monitor a project, action or initiative, while actively involving its stakeholders in the evaluation [15]. Using a participatory approach to evaluation often provides rich qualitative data that reflects the experience and knowledge of the participants as stakeholders. It is also said to give participants a sense of ownership over the evaluation outcomes, while their active participation in the evaluation can also develop their professional skills [16]. Common critiques of participatory evaluation research focus on the balance of power between evaluators and participants [17] arguing that negotiating the power dynamic can be complex as there are many potential barriers to participation. In our evaluation, we mitigated these risks in the following ways:

- We set the expectations of the evaluation by co-creating the expected outcomes at an early stage (mitigating the risk of outcome disappointment)

- We invited all stakeholders (FACs) to be involved and we conducted the focus groups within regular training and development sessions, which were already allocated time in FAC workplans (mitigating the risk of work of non-participation due to workload)
- Participation was entirely voluntary (mitigating the risk of forced participation)
- We invited FACs to participate in the planning, data analysis and other, less participatory areas of the evaluation (mitigating the risk of an unequal power relationship in the project)
- We facilitated focus groups in a very collaborative way; we asked participants to choose how they wanted to engage (individually, small groups or plenary) and encouraged questions and comments throughout (mitigating the risk of unequal power relationship in the focus groups)
- One of the authors (Pearson) is a FAC (ensuring the needs, interests and lived experience of the group is represented in the evaluators)

As with many evaluations of this nature [16], this study had a two-fold purpose: firstly, to identify and reflect on the successes and challenges to date and how this translates into the role the FACs have played in an institutional change initiative, and secondly, to map out a trajectory for the natural development of the role. The active participation of the FACs was seen as essential; Buchanan (2003) argues for the importance of understanding the lived experience of change agents as part of any evaluation of driving change [1]. Reasons for this include informing effective selection criteria for future agent recruitment; understanding training and development needs of individual agents; exploring agents' career aspirations, and identifying gaps in dispersed responsibility [1].

We adopted a two-stage methodology for the evaluation. In the first stage, we held a focus group with practitioners in which we asked them to, both individually and collaboratively, reflect on their objectives, their roles and their support networks in the role. We also asked them to align their objectives to the objectives that SeGA had originally envisioned for the FAC role in their original briefing document, and to comment on what they found and implications for practice. We analysed the data using Thematic Analysis [18] and extracted a set of themes in which the current FAC objectives both supported and differed from the original SeGA objectives. In the second stage, we held another workshop in which we presented the data and themes extracted from stage one to the FACs and facilitated a discussion about how the FAC role should evolve.

The focus groups were structured around three key areas that were identified in literature around change management. First, we defined the change the FACs had been tasked with driving by examining, collectively and individually, both FAC's perceptions of the institutional need for their role and their objectives in the context of SeGA's broader, institutional aims. Secondly, we examined aspects of the FAC role, their specific duties both collectively and individually, to explore how the role was operationalised. Finally, we investigated the networks the FACs inhabit in order to ascertain accountability, hierarchy, communication, and support contexts.

We then investigated the FACs' perceived objectives for the FAC role (generally) and mapped these to the broad SeGA objectives to determine how well they align with driving the changes the original SeGA project aimed to implement. We asked FACs, first individually, to list the five key objectives for the FAC role and then asked them to reach a consensus within a group on the top 5 objectives. We then presented them with the SeGA objectives and asked them to map these to the FAC role objectives they had agreed on. Finally, we asked them to rate how well they felt they were meeting the objectives on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being 'meeting very well' and 1 being 'not meeting at all.'

3 Findings

3.1 Why are there FACs?

In the first instance we investigated the reasons FACs believed the FAC role was needed in the institution by asking them to answer the question 'Why are there FACs?'. They chose to reach a consensus answer in small table groups.

On analyzing the free-test responses, the primary codes we identified were:

- Consistency (e.g. "bring[ing] together pockets of knowledge")
- Mindset (e.g. "initially: get accessibility part of everyone's mindset")
- Information, advice and guidance (IAG) (e.g. "provide advice and guidance for production")
- Legal (e.g. "legal implications – avoid discrimination")
- Network (e.g. "link to remainder of OU – dealing with accessibility issues")
- Ownership (e.g. "localised responsibility for responsibility")
- Point of contact (e.g. "so we have a named source on accessibility issues")

The original briefing document for SeGA outlined the need to have someone within faculties that could support staff and act as a 'point of contact', so it is not unexpected that this was the code with the most responses, including, for example, several that referred to the FAC being the 'human face' for accessibility.

Looking at the responses in more detail, the codes could be categorised into the following themes:

- Process (i.e. relating to university systems and procedures) – associated with information and guidance, consistency and some of the point of contact responses.
- Culture (i.e. relating to the way people work together and understand each other in the university) – associated with network, mindset, ownership and some point of contact responses.
- Polices (i.e. relating to external legislation and internal policies) – associated with legal.

The 'processes' theme accounted for 56% of the coded references, with FACs perceiving that the role was related predominantly to processes. This is not surprising. The initial SeGA documentation called for accessibility to be 'embedded into the normal processes of module design, development and production', implying a focus on processes and that the FAC would be working at a procedural level to change ways of working. The second largest theme was culture, with 26% of the coded references; specifically, the 'network' code was the most frequent within this theme. 'Culture', as a secondary theme, implies that activity to embed accessibility has required more than changes to process and procedure but some activity to change 'people' within their faculties.

To investigate these differences between process and culture change further, we also investigated the responses in relation to:

- The drivers for the FAC role (intrinsic vs extrinsic)
- The change target (human vs systemic)
- The sphere of influence of the FAC role (module team, faculty or university)

The perceived drivers for the FAC role were overwhelmingly intrinsic and focused on areas such as the need for ensuring consistency in practice and changing staff mindset. Similarly, the change target was predominantly systems and processes with people a less frequent response. The extrinsic drivers focused on legislation and the position of the university within a legal framework, and there were fewer coded responses for external drivers compared to internal. However, although FACs

were appointed to drive change at faculty-level, their perceived sphere of influence extended beyond their faculties to the wider university. Networks are explored further, below.

It is interesting to review the responses in the context of barriers that might have prevented change. For example, assuming the FAC role was to achieve consistency, this would imply a perception that previously there was inconsistency. Similarly, there was an indication of there being: many varied stakeholders, barriers preventing access to expertise in other units, and a lack of readily accessible information and guidance. All these issues were cited by SeGA as reasons for instigating the FAC role initially.

It is also clear that the responses indicated the FACs perceived their purpose was to support change, and that the change was mainly to systems and processes, in line with the original intent of the FAC role. However, for change to be truly embedded would require that those people the FACs were working with to enact change understood and were willing to make changes to their working practices. Thus, it is appropriate to see that FACs perceived that changing 'mindset' was one of the key codes identified from their responses. Importantly, one response indicated that a mindset change was needed 'initially', implying this was no longer the case and such cultural changes became less important for the role. The strong alignment between the FACs' perception of their role and SeGA's intent would support realization of the institutional change needed. This is explored further when reviewing the FACs' perceived objectives.

3.2 FAC objectives

Inductive thematic analysis was undertaken on the perceived objectives that the FACs identified and agreed on, and these broadly mapped to the same codes and themes as the perceived reasons for the FAC role. We therefore adopted the following coding system:

- Process (i.e. relating to university systems and procedures)
- Culture (i.e. relating to the way people work together and understand each other)
- Attitudes (i.e. relating to the way staff feel about accessibility)
- Polices (i.e. relating to strategy and university policy)
- Sphere of influence (module team, faculty or university)

The perceived objectives were predominantly (65%) coded under the 'processes' theme, with 'culture' again being the second most prevalent theme (18%). Although this is a similar trend to the reasons for having FACs, the greater proportion of process objectives suggests that FACs believe their work is largely operational. In terms of sphere of influence of their perceived objectives, the FACs felt their work was targeted at module-level and university-level; faculty-level objectives were in the minority. This disaggregation was not seen in their perceived reasons behind there being FACs, but combining the faculty-level and module team-level objectives gave a similar proportion of responses. Hence, the targets of their perceived objectives and their perceived reason for FACs appear to align.

To investigate this further, we analysed the results of the exercise the FACs had done to map their perceived objectives to the SeGA objectives (detailed above). First, the SeGA objectives were coded using the same thematic framework and this showed that the SeGA objectives were predominantly coded as 'process' (four objectives) with one objective for each of other other themes. When the aligned FACs objectives were analysed, it indicated that most objectives also fell within the 'processes' theme, with 'culture' in second place. It can be inferred from this that the FACs are process-driven, supporting the FAC purpose findings and aligning with the SeGA objectives.

We also asked FACs to identify the extent to which they felt they were meeting the objectives. We used a scale of one to five, with five defined as 'meeting very well'. Interestingly, when grouped according to theme, the objectives the FACs felt they were meeting most successfully were coded as 'policy' and 'culture', followed by 'attitudes'. They felt they were less effective at meeting the objectives coded as 'processes'; the two objectives rated the lowest (with a conflated score of 2/5) both fell within the 'process' theme. Given the process-driven focus to their objectives, it is unsurprising that they may be more critically aware when it comes to objectives in this area, even if this is not the reality. The only objective that FACs rated as a 5/5 (i.e. 'meeting very well') was coded as 'networking', which sat within the 'culture' theme: 'working with others to meet student needs'. This aligns with the findings from the perceived purpose of the FACs; networking (within the 'culture' theme) was the second most frequent code.

3.3 FAC duties
As distinct from their objectives, FACs were asked to define, as a group, what they believed were the five main duties (tasks) they undertake in their role. These did not easily fit with the themes that had previously been used so new codes were applied:

- Network (e.g., 'act as rep on committees)
- Information, advice and guidance (IAG) (e.g., 'cascading recommendations')
- Policy (e.g., 'contributing to papers')
- Personal development (e.g., 'keep informed personally')

The responses predominantly (46%) were associated with IAG, with the examples quoted covering 'specific cases' (presumably individual student cases), advising on 'alt(ernative) formats', and 'documentation oversight'. None of these responses were indicative of implementing process changes, as was suggested by the FAC purpose and objectives responses. However, when these duties were mapped onto the SeGA objectives, to determine whether the FACs' activity would support their realization, there was good alignment, with only one exception (reduced overall costs to providing adjustments to students). It is unlikely that this objective would be met by the FACs because they do not have budgetary control or knowledge of exact costs of provision and thus would have no duties in this area. The presence of personal development in the responses was reassuring, particularly demonstrating the significance of the ongoing SeGA training programme.

3.4 FAC network
To investigate network and sphere of influence further, the FACs were asked to list the five main people, roles or units they felt they interacted with most in their FAC role. These were mapped to different parts and levels of the institution and then compared with the duties, to indicate the scope of where their interactions predominantly lay.

Analysis revealed that the scale of the network was wide, spanning seventeen different areas of the university, with more contacts outside faculties than within, although the volume or quality of interaction cannot be assessed. It can be inferred from this that, although the FAC purpose was to work within faculties, FACs are utilising a network far wider than this in their role. Some duties involved communication with up to eight different people or areas of the university, and the average number of people or units associated with a duty was 3.7. This finding is important because it demonstrates the importance of cross-institutional working in order to realise change.

4 Discussion
The original SeGA briefing document outlined the need to have faculty members with responsibility for accessibility 'embedded into the normal processes', implying the role needed to become

business-asusual rather than a short-term solution. Nearly ten years after implementation, this role is core within every faculty, with some faculties appointing more than one FAC to develop accessibility expertise in varied subject disciplines. The briefing document also implied that the FAC would be working at a procedural level to change ways of working. This is borne out in the results of this evaluation, with the perceived purpose of the FACs, their objectives and duties indicating an emphasis on process change rather than culture change. However, this does not imply that they have not supported culture change, with one respondent indicating 'initially' their objective was to help to change people's mindset regarding accessibility; their self-evaluation of how well they have met their objectives also supported their achievement of culture change within their respective areas.

When reviewing this in the context of the CAST characters, working at a procedural level would be indicative of the role of a 'change agent'. This categorization of the FACs could also be made on the basis that their perceived (and the SeGA defined) purpose was to focus on tactical change (such as 'provide advice and guidance for production'), including systems and procedures at a local level (such as 'to assist in reasonable adjustment requests'), rather than taking a pan-institutional, strategic or emotional approach to change. However, contrary to the definition of 'change agents', they are not autonomous [11, 1, 19] – indeed their networks are extensive – and they are not responsible for determining the change direction [10].

That said, the perceived FAC objectives and duties overlap with characteristics expected of change champions. For example, their sphere of influence extended beyond the faculties (such as 'link to remainder' of the university) and they recognized broader issues across the institution (such as 'bringing together pockets of knowledge'). However, there is no evidence to indicate that they work to gain buy-in or resources from management [20] although it is possible that they might do this, but do not see it as an objective or duty) that would support them displaying traits as change champions. Similarly, there was no evidence to indicate that they show characteristics of change sponsors.

To apply a more rigorous evaluation of these roles, the FACs' perceived objectives were analysed against the types of tasks that change agents, champions and sponsors might undertake. As expected, none of them related to them acting as change sponsors. However, there was an even distribution of objectives that related to champions and agents. Three objectives fell into both categories and seven fell cleanly into either the agent or champion role. This is interesting when compared to the perceived purpose of the FAC role, which has a clear emphasis on them being required to work as change agents, and implies that current (2019) perception of the FAC objectives covers a broader reach, with more pan-institutional objectives (e.g., 'keep communication clear and consistent throughout' the institution) and emotional engagement (e.g., 'engaging staff and embedding personal responsibility for accessibility'). In this sense, there is evidence to suggest that there is some fluidity between the change agent and change champion role, which allows them to achieve change within their faculty context.

However, it is important to note that the findings illustrated that the FACs themselves had organically developed their role and leadership capabilities and in many cases were acting as the primary point of contact for accessibility related issues within their faculties. This, in many cases, involved greater leadership and management than their substantive roles might otherwise allow. This supports, to some extent, the definition of FACs as change champions and their strong belief and enthusiasm in the change in order to go beyond their role, taking ownership for the change [20], but there may be a continuum between change agent and champion along which an individual FAC may slide depending on their individual circumstances at any time. Buchannan (2003), however,

identified 'double agents' that needed to be flexible to circumstance depending on who they were acting 'for', which may more adequately describe those individuals in the FAC role, rather than suggesting they display fluidity between the agent and champion role [1].

It is important to note the findings regarding the FACs' network, because this is significant in achieving the SeGA objectives more broadly. SeGA was instigated to ensure consistent approaches across all faculties. FACs clearly interact with one another - the 'Cross Faculty Accessibility Working Group', [14] and other units were cited – and this could support achieving greater consistency and enable critical mass of like-minded individuals to form [21]. Significantly, they cited SeGA as the most common unit with which they interacted, demonstrating that SeGA still have an essential function as a central steering force. This structure of dispersed but connected activity may have made the network of FACs less vulnerable to large-scale institutional restructuring, particularly within the faculties over the last decade, allowed them to find novel ways to overcome barriers, and may have also enabled new networks to form [22].

5 Conclusion

In this paper we have presented the model CAST characters, and how accessibility advocate roles can align with this in order to become embedded into an institutional structure. We have reviewed the role, beliefs and perceptions of these advocates by exploring their lived experiences, analysed in the context of the CAST change management characters.

We have discussed how the role of an accessibility advocate may evolve over time, with increasing permeability between agent and champion roles as the belief and enthusiasm demonstrated by staff encourage them to take greater ownership of the change. We have addressed how staff shaped the role according to their context, skillset, interests and environment; sometimes involving greater leadership opportunities than their substantive roles would typically afford, and potentially evolving their role to accommodate circumstances.

Finally, we explored how agents formed a change community with other advocates that was both dispersed but connected, with SeGA forming a central hub. The concept of networking change agents is often overlooked in change management literature, and yet is felt to be an important part of the productivity, consistency and sustainability of the change. This model of dispersed yet networked accessibility agents, who believe in and take ownership for change and adapt their roles organically, can be a useful model for other educational institutions, and may support them to create, embed, support and evaluate accessibility (or other) advocates in their own contexts.

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