



Open Research Online

Citation

Price, Philip (2023). A critical theory analysis of exams within higher education and the support provided for students with dyslexia. Student dissertation for The Open University module E822 Masters multi-disciplinary dissertation: education, childhood and youth.

URL

<https://oro.open.ac.uk/95671/>

License

(CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0) Creative Commons: Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Policy

This document has been downloaded from Open Research Online, The Open University's repository of research publications. This version is being made available in accordance with Open Research Online policies available from [Open Research Online \(ORO\) Policies](#)

Versions

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding

Philip Price

E822: Masters multi-disciplinary
dissertation: education, childhood and
youth

‘A critical theory analysis of exams
within higher education and the support
provided for students with dyslexia.’

Tutor: Dr Anita Pilgrim

(Word Count:12,194)

Contents:

Abstract	3
Chapter 1 - Introduction	4
Chapter 2 – Literature review	7
Chapter 3 – Conceptual framework	18
Chapter 4 – Research proposal	26
Chapter 5 – Research design	29
Chapter 6 - Reflection	38
References	40

Appendices

Appendix A – Ethical appraisal form	56
Appendix B – Gatekeeper letter	59
Appendix C – Interview letter	60
Appendix D – Interview questions	63
Appendix E – EMA reflection grid	64

Abstract:

While improvements have been made to support students with dyslexia studying at higher education level issues of equity, disadvantage, and equality exist. The main aims of this study were to investigate the implications of exams on students with dyslexia studying at higher education level, the support that they receive and the power relations that exist between students and higher education institutions. While the literature review revealed several implications for students with dyslexia when faced with an exam it also revealed a complex and intertwined network of power relations between students with dyslexia, the institutions they study at, and the exam as a dominant assessment practice.

Chapter 1

Introduction

It is estimated that ten percent of the population of the United Kingdom has dyslexia (British Dyslexia Association, 2019). Despite over six million people estimated to have the condition contestations continue to dominate the discussion amongst medical professionals and educational practitioners as to what dyslexia is, what causes it, and what preventions and support should be provided to help people with dyslexia (Cambell 2011, Soler 2010 and Elliot 2020).

Kirby (2020, p473), notes that on one side of the contestation are those that believe dyslexia is an individual medical condition, that can be identified through a diagnosis and that preventions based on this diagnosis can then be put in place to support those with dyslexia. Ramus (2014 in Kirby, p473), for example, advocates diagnostic testing as a way of distinguishing dyslexia from other reading difficulties as unlike dyslexia, other reading issues are not linked to phonological deficits. On the other side are those such as Elliot and Grigorenko (2014 in Elliot 2020, p562) who argue that although dyslexia may exist, the one-size-fits-all approach to diagnostic testing is inadequate to distinguish dyslexia from general reading difficulties, labels people as having a medical condition unnecessarily and ignores the social, equality and equity issues that lead to differences in reading ability.

Cambell (2011) notes that the modern-day understanding of dyslexia can be traced back to the 19th century when the condition first became of interest to medical practitioners. The rise in prominence of dyslexia as a medical condition came about at the same time as what Foucault (1979 in Cambell, p451) identified as a period of great change in the way that government exercised power over individuals. This new form of power, what Foucault referred to as 'bio-power,' (Foucault, 1979 in Cambell, 2011, p451) saw power imposed on the population by the government through medical practitioners and educational institutions. It was through the power of medical practitioners that those who were deemed previously to be 'feeble-minded' (Cambell

2011, p456) and of no value to society, could now be given a diagnosis of what was termed 'congenital word-blindness,' (Cambell, 2011, p460) and therefore deemed to have some value that could contribute to society. Further to this, power was exercised on the population through educational institutions that were instrumental in creating systems that tested individuals through examinations that created normative thinking on how populations should be educated (Deleuze, 1999 in Cambell, 2011, p452). The examination, it could be argued, continues to be a preferred method of assessment in education as a result of its historical significance as a way of imposing power and that it can be used to assess, categorise and control students in education (Davis, 1995 in Cambell, 2011, p451).

While the above only gives a brief introduction to the historical nature of dyslexia and the differing views about what dyslexia is it does highlight the important links between dyslexia, power, and normative thinking that have shaped the way that society views disabilities and testing in educational institutions. It also provides part of the underpinning rationale for this proposed research in that issues of social justice, equality, and disadvantage continue to pervade both the contestations about what dyslexia is and how educational institutions operate within society protecting those in power through their everyday practices.

The second part of the rationale for this research proposal is based on my practice within an information, advice, and guidance setting at a large university in the United Kingdom, supporting students with dyslexia with their study. Students with dyslexia are confined to an examination and while support is given through reasonable adjustments students have to apply and negotiate application forms and provide medical evidence. Adjustments are determined by rules regarding medical evidence and there are limits to what adjustments can be provided. Students are not offered an alternative assessment and although the institution follows the social model of disability as opposed to the medical model of disability, disability support is limited. This raises issues of power, equality, equity, and disadvantage and raises implications for students with dyslexia who have to complete an exam as part of their study and the impact that this has on their study.

It is through a critical theory approach that this research proposal would look to investigate these issues and answer the following questions -

- 1). What are the implications of exams on students with dyslexia?
- 2). Who holds the power to determine exams as the main form of assessment that students do as part of their degree study?

These questions have developed through the literature review and the conceptual framework that follows. It is through the literature review that implications for students with dyslexia have been identified with studies highlighting the issues that students with dyslexia face when it comes to exams and reasonable adjustments. The question regarding power has developed through the conceptual framework that is framed through the Foucauldian concepts of disciplinary power, governmentality, and surveillance. The conceptual framework revealed the power relations that exist between students and those in power within higher education institutions and that power exists in different forms.

In line with a critical theory approach and the conceptual framework, a qualitative research design has been proposed that looks to collect and analyse data from students with dyslexia who study at an undergraduate level at a large higher education provider in the United Kingdom.

Beck (2022), underlines the importance of including students with a specific learning disability such as dyslexia in research as often these students do not get the opportunity to have their voices heard. It is therefore an aim of the study to give students with dyslexia a voice and find out about their experiences of studying with dyslexia and taking an exam and this will inform of improvements and recommendations to my practice and that of my colleagues who support students with dyslexia in the future.

Chapter 2

The literature review

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a broad understanding and develop a greater knowledge of the key themes related to the use of exams as an assessment method in higher education and the implications for students who have dyslexia who are confined to an exam as an assessment practice by the institution.

In line with the area of the study, the literature review has identified some key themes that relate to the implications of exams for students with dyslexia and the power relations that exist between students and higher education institutions.

Erckican & Roth (2006, p21), draw attention to the importance of research questions in that they should be the beating heart of educational research and the engine that powers the development and direction of research and knowledge creation. With this in mind, two research questions have been developed for the study. These are -

- 1). What are the implications of exams on students with dyslexia?
- 2). Who holds the power to determine exams as the main form of assessment that students do as part of their degree study?

The literature search has been carried out using the Open University Library and Google Scholar. Searches were initially carried out using the terms; dyslexia, higher education, traditional assessment, examinations, disadvantage, reasonable adjustments, SPLD, and inclusivity. To ensure that searches were robust and specific to the topic of my research the following Boolean searches have been carried out; dyslexia AND examinations AND higher education, dyslexia AND reasonable adjustments AND higher education, and dyslexia AND inclusive assessment NOT exams. To ensure articles are relevant and reflect the current debates around key topic areas searches have been done between 2013 and 2023. However, some key literature that is dated before 2013 has been selected as part of this literature review.

It is also important to note that although my practice is based within a higher education institution in the United Kingdom, studies from authors outside of the United Kingdom

have been selected where appropriate. This reflects the diverse nature of higher education and the broad range of research already carried out throughout the world into the key themes of this study such as disability, dyslexia, exams, and power relations.

The literature review revealed that while exams do cause some disadvantages for students with dyslexia, this was not confined to just exams. Also, issues with exams are not confined to students with dyslexia. Issues with inclusivity and reasonable adjustments were highlighted in several studies. The literature review also revealed there was a clear link between assessment and power relations within the higher education institution and society.

2.1 Exams and the implications for students with dyslexia

There is no doubt that assessment has an important role within higher education for both students and institutions. Lynam & Cachia (2018) & Forde-Leaves et al. (2013), both note that assessment is a tool by which learning and achievement can be measured with assessment determining grades and degree classifications. From a student's perspective, it can be argued that there would be little incentive to complete a course without an assessment. However, Medland (2016, p82), attributes great importance to assessment as aside from the reward of a grade or degree classification, assessment is also a way of surveilling a student's progress and learning with their study and reflects the connection between existing knowledge and the learning and acquiring of new knowledge by a student.

Macfarlane (2015, pp338-339) notes how in the neoliberal education system, assessment is a measure of accountability for the courses that institutions provide. Successful assessment outcomes, Macfarlane suggests, equate to good teaching and learning and good value for the tuition fee that an individual pays to attend university. As an individual consumer of education, it is within the neoliberal, market-driven higher education system that students encounter exams that are designed to measure the academic value of an individual.

Serrano et al. (2018, p10), note the reluctance of institutions to change assessment practices that have been imbedded over time as normative practices within a higher

education institution. The focus of exams as an established assessment practice that measures individual performance raises implications for students with dyslexia within higher education, especially when no alternative assessment is offered.

The literature identified several implications for students with dyslexia when faced with an exam. Williams et al.(2014, p616) highlight that for those students with dyslexia, slower reading and writing speed and difficulty in retaining and processing information can be problematic and add undue stress and anxiety for the individual student. Similarly, Pino & Mortari (2014) identified exams as being a cause of stress and anxiety for students with dyslexia with markers being able to read handwriting and decipher spellings identified as some main causes of stress and anxiety. It could be argued that with advancements in technology and some institutions developing remote exams that can be done through online portals, handwriting, and spelling may not be an issue anymore. However, from my experience within my practice, this is a common theme raised by students with dyslexia, especially with students who may not be computer literate.

Concerns from students that their work may not be understood or that answers in an exam may be misinterpreted by a marker are justified especially when assessments and exams are central to academic outcomes for students. For many students, exams, and assignments are opportunities to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. While students with dyslexia are capable of doing this, there is an argument that an exam prevents them from doing this to the extent that their peers without dyslexia can. Pino & Mortari (2014, p361) note that this can lead to some students with dyslexia viewing exams as being discriminatory especially where no alternative assessment is offered.

For students with dyslexia who have an exam, measures can be taken to make exams fair to those who have dyslexia. Nieminen (2022a, p614), notes that reasonable adjustments can be made to an exam to provide an opportunity for students with dyslexia a fair chance of competing in the grading system and having their academic ability assessed. While reasonable adjustments provide students with adjustments such as extra working time, they do place an emphasis on the individual and their dyslexia

being the problem that prevents them from completing the exam as successfully as their peers who do not have dyslexia, rather than the exam and the way it is designed.

Dolmage (2017) and Hanafin et al (2007) argue that as exams are designed to be completed by the majority of students without disabilities and students with specific learning difficulties like dyslexia are not considered and this leads to them being labelled as 'the others.' (Nieminen, 2022a, p615). As 'others' students with dyslexia can apply for reasonable adjustments for an exam they may take. For students with dyslexia, a standard adjustment would see them receive an extra 25% of exam time in which to complete their exam. For many students, the extra time provided is vital to ensure they can complete an exam successfully. However, it is debatable as to whether an adjustment such as extra time for an exam would make any difference to the outcome for a student with dyslexia.

MacCullagh et al. (2016) found in their study several students expressed the opinion that the extra time they had received for their exam was of limited use due to the environment in which they sat the exam or if they experienced issues related to their dyslexia such as fatigue. Interestingly, there was a consensus from all students that exams caused stress and anxiety and that this was not just an issue experienced by those students with dyslexia.

It is not so much the adjustment that is the issue but rather the barriers that students find they have to negotiate when applying for reasonable adjustments. While reasonable adjustments are a statutory requirement, ensuring a smooth application process is not. Many students with dyslexia find that the institution isn't as helpful as they thought it would be during the process of applying. Riddell & Weedon (2006, p70) suggest an institution's helpfulness seems to be influenced by how easy an adjustment is to put in place. This could be a consequence of what Dobson (2019, p1189) highlighted as inconsistency in the way adjustments are provided across higher education, the differing ease with which information and advice about adjustments can be accessed, and confusion among support staff within higher education regarding, what is and what is not, support specifically for students with dyslexia.

How exam adjustments are viewed by the institution could also be an important factor in the way the support is provided and this in turn can have a positive or negative impact on the experiences of students with dyslexia. If reasonable adjustments are a prominent part of student support and are not seen as being separate from other support that is offered to students generally, then students may not feel isolated or singled out as having a disability (Williams, Wray, et al., 2013, p618). It could be argued that this is an issue across all support within higher education and that support should be provided seamlessly without the need for singling out those with dyslexia as being different from other students.

While there is an emphasis on traditional assessment in this study, the literature does highlight that stress and anxiety experienced by students with dyslexia are not solely related to the act of taking and completing an exam. Cameron & Billington (2015, p1359), suggest that by placing an individual emphasis on learning and viewing dyslexia as an individual deficit, institutions are creating a stigma that prevents learners from seeking support generally. Similarly, Clouder et, al. (2020, p768), found that this same stigmatisation led to students with dyslexia feeling isolated from their peers during the whole of their study, not just when it came to exams and assessment. Further to this Jones, Priestley et al. (2020) discern that assessment practices such as exams have negative consequences for all students regardless of disability and those problems related to exams such as anxiety, exam worries, and issues related to health and well-being are not solely owned by students with dyslexia or other disabilities.

It is from the literature in this section that the research question, 'What are the implications of exams on students with dyslexia?', has emerged and developed. At the start of the literature review, the focus was on the problems that existed for students with dyslexia and the problems that exams caused for students with dyslexia. This focus stemmed from my experiences within the practice and indicated a level of bias and presumption that there were only problems. However, the literature has shown that rather than problems that indicate a wholly negative experience for students, there are implications for students with dyslexia that aren't necessarily bad. The next section explores implications for students with dyslexia and exams further and builds on some

of the ideas discussed in this section that relate to the implications for students with dyslexia.

2.2 Reasonable adjustments, exams, and inclusivity

Under the Equality Act (2010), higher education institutions have a statutory requirement to provide reasonable adjustments. Bunbury (2020), Nieminen (2022a), and Beck (2022) note that reasonable adjustments are there to ensure a level playing field for students with disabilities and provide the same opportunity as students without a disability to demonstrate their academic ability. Morina (2016), notes that reasonable adjustments are part of providing an inclusive learning environment as institutions are removing the barriers to participation that exist and ensuring that those with a disability can take an active part in learning at a higher education level.

Mortimore (2013, p38) adds a note of caution to the idea of adjustments providing inclusivity in that it is important for institutions not to presume that they are being inclusive, as this can lead to the institution providing support in the wrong places and overlook the concerns and the needs of students. Dobson (2019, p1189) suggests that institutions that presume they are providing inclusivity can lead to criticism that adjustments do not meet the individual needs of students. Dobson, Waters & Torgerson (2020, p247) argue that blanket approaches to reasonable adjustments do not take into account the individual needs of students with dyslexia, especially as dyslexia impacts individuals in varying ways. Reflecting on my practice, students with dyslexia are restricted to a standard amount of extra time as an adjustment in line with their dyslexia diagnosis. It could therefore be argued that issues of inclusivity arise when students request a greater amount of time or an adjustment that cannot be accommodated by the institution.

This raises questions about the effectiveness of reasonable adjustments for students with dyslexia and whether institutions should look to make assessment practices inclusive rather than using an adjustment system that singles out individual students as being different from other students and 'framed as the problem to be fixed,' Nieminen (2022a, p623).

It is argued that framing students as the problem creates 'ableism' (Nieminen, 2022b, p9) and that the only way to truly challenge this is to provide assessments that meet the needs of the individual. Similarly, Williams, Wray, et al. (2013, p616), argue that individualising assessment and providing alternative assessment would be far more inclusive than providing reasonable adjustments for an exam. Dobson (2019, p1189), supports this stance and views the lack of willingness of higher education institutions to change assessment practices as a major barrier to inclusivity for students with dyslexia.

Tai et al. (2022a, p2), suggest that putting adjustments in place can be time-consuming and resource-intensive for both the institution and the student and that some students may not want to apply for adjustments or be able to get the necessary medical evidence, meaning that in some cases adjustments cannot be provided. Riddell & Weedon (2014, p39), note that without providing evidence, a student cannot prove that they have a disability and are therefore not eligible for adjustments.

Concerning students who don't want to apply for adjustments or disclose their disability Couzens et al. (2015) and Grimes et al. (2019) suggest that this may be due to the student's negative experience of having dyslexia to date and that they do not want to be seen to be different in a negative way by their peers and the community they inhabit. Tops et al. (2022, p14) suggest that negative experiences of applying for adjustments may be related to an element of shame in applying, especially when information about adjustments and how to apply is difficult to find or support staff are unable to convey clearly to students who are anxious about their exam the type of support that is available. Making students aware and promoting the support that is available to them may be a way of taking away some of the anxiety around applying for adjustments for students with an invisible disability such as dyslexia (Mullins & Preyde, 2013).

Information about adjustments that is easy to access and support staff having the right skills and knowledge to be able to provide support should be the basic requirement for any institution to help students with dyslexia access the support they require. Nieminen (2022b, p9), argues that higher education institutions could go beyond the basic support that they should provide and that making disability a topic that is enshrined in every aspect of university life would help to normalise disability and reasonable adjustments

and take away the stigma and remove some of the barriers that stop students with dyslexia accessing the support they require.

Grimes et al (2019, p652), recognise however the importance of agency and self-advocacy and that having been provided with adequate information and their options, some students decide that they can progress quite comfortably with their study without being labelled and the associated stigma that can be attached to those with a disability such as dyslexia.

The invisible nature of dyslexia and the contestations about what causes dyslexia have created skepticism among society that perpetuates stigma about dyslexia, and this creates conflict and dilemmas about disclosing an invisible disability and applying for adjustments (Mullins & Preyde, 2013, p157). If institutions made assessments inclusive and offered an alternative assessment that was not an exam to students with dyslexia, rather than trying to fix the problem through reasonable adjustments, then this would go some way to providing greater inclusivity for these students.

2.3 Exams and power

To complete an exam requires the application of literacy skills. Smith et al (2013), highlight the importance of literacy skills as not only does a student need to be able to read and write but they need to be able to understand and decipher what an exam is asking them to do and how to complete the exam task successfully. As noted by Deeley & Bovill (2017), having a good level of assessment literacy is therefore essential if students are to complete an exam successfully and improve their performance through feedback.

If students don't have the necessary skills required to be able to decipher what a question is asking them to do and complete it successfully then they open themselves up to failure. Hipwell & Klenowski (2011), argue that this is particularly true when it is presumed that students within higher education have the necessary literacy skills to be able to complete an assessment successfully. This presumption leads to the neglect of assessment literacy within courses and as such, it could be argued that tutors hold the power and the keys to assessment success (Hipwell & Klenowski, 2011, p134).

Assessment success is important for the individual learner as it allows them to progress with their study and eventually could lead to the awarding of a degree classification. A student may want a particular degree classification to move into a particular career. Lingard, Sellar & Savage (2014), imply that testing can ultimately shape the career direction of a learner particularly as those who achieve a particular grade or degree classification are seen to have the skills and knowledge by those in power, society, and employers to contribute to a strong and stable economy. Power therefore lies with the institution that sets the assessment practices that determine the outcomes for individual students both academically and potentially economically after their qualification has concluded.

Students have no involvement in the decision-making of the assessment practices that institutions use or the policies and procedures that are put in place by the institution that students need to adhere to (McArthur, 2015). If students are subject to assessment practices that they have had no involvement in deciding, then it could be argued that this is a form of oppression and that students are subject to the power of the institution. McArthur (2015, p970) notes that there can also be some contradiction between the institution that proclaims it is inclusive and socially just, yet invests more money into policies and procedures that strengthen the power of the institution, rather than practices that are inclusive and tackle issues of social justice.

Assessment, it is argued by Tai et al, (2022b, p403), cannot be inclusive if there is a blanket approach to providing assessment where all assessment is the same for students regardless of the student and their disability status and social and economic background. This would mean that to be inclusive, assessment would need to be individual and cater to the individual needs of a student. Furthermore, students would need to be involved in the decision-making process about assessment. This would though take away the power from the institution and decision-makers, not only weakening the dominant position of traditional assessment but also the traditional decision-makers within higher education.

Leathwood (2005) suggests that these decision-makers are traditionally white males and that institutions through assessment practices and the policy and procedures that

govern them, work hand in hand with those in society who hold powerful positions to uphold the prevailing capitalist practices. Mahone & Weiner (2017, p561) note the relationship between neoliberal practices and the rise in managerialism and those in power that have strengthened their position within the institution. Mahone & Weiner argue that this is through the use of business practices by providing accountability to those in power in wider society, through the use of performance targets, achievement rates, league tables, and productivity targets.

Olssen (2015), suggests that it is only since the rise of neoliberalism that institutions have moved away from practices that serve the greater good to practices that serve the capitalist system. However, institutional power is historical, and exams have historically been a way of determining who has achieved a certain academic level and who hasn't. Exams have and continue to be used as a 'technology of exclusion' (Torrance, 2017, p84) rewarding those who can achieve a certain standard of academic attainment, while often punishing those who haven't. Torrance (2017, p90-92) argues that this strengthens normative thinking that an exam is more valuable than other forms of assessment and that the only way one can demonstrate they have learned something properly and acquired new knowledge is through an exam.

This leads to the idea of 'governmentality' (Foucault, 1977 in Torrance 2017) with students partaking in their oppression by hinging all their hopes on an assessment that is put in place by those in power to ensure that they achieve and uphold an academic standard. It is through traditional assessment practices that it could be argued higher education institutions can exert their power on individual students who have no option to take an exam or complete a written assignment to complete their degree qualification and be awarded their degree.

If there was an alternative assessment practice available or if institutions were to involve students more in the assessment process, then while one could argue that an institution will always be in charge, some power would be distributed to students giving them greater autonomy and agency over their assessment and learning. Nieminen (2022c) advocates the use of summative assessment and self-grading as a way of redistributing power within higher education institutions. While this has its limitations and concerns

concerning academic validity, fairness, and ensuring that students don't award themselves a mark that is too high, it would in many ways disrupt the dominant power structures that exist. However, even with students being more involved in the assessment process, power relations would still exist between the tutor who is seen as holding a higher level of knowledge than the student and may not want to give up their position of power, and the student who may not want to take part in shared assessment practices (Jonsson, 2023).

This section of the literature review has helped to refine and develop the second research question, 'Who holds the power to determine exams as the main form of assessment that students do as part of their degree study?' The emergence of literature related to governmentality has also taken the study into a new direction and has helped to develop a question that rather than suggesting power is present asks specifically who holds that power and how that power relates to disability and exams. In the next section, the concept of power relations is explored further through the work of Foucault and the development of the conceptual framework.

Chapter 3 – Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

In chapter two the literature review identified the key themes and topics related to exams, students with dyslexia, and the power relations that exists between students with dyslexia and higher education institutions. Chapter three expands on the literature review by focusing on the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework draws on the work of Foucault and the concepts of governmentality and technologies of power to help develop an understanding of the key themes of the research problem. It will also be used to help provide an answer to the research questions and provide the necessary theoretical knowledge for the methodology that will be used for the research.

From an ontological perspective, I view exams as a dominating assessment practice that results in issues of equality, equity, and disadvantage for students with dyslexia studying at a higher education level especially when an alternative assessment is not offered. Support is provided but often students have to apply for reasonable adjustments, providing relevant medical evidence and there is therefore a contradiction between the institution that supports the social module of disability but follows a medical model in practice. Cook (2013, pp966-968) notes that Foucault viewed that the present reality we live in and observe is shaped historically and that power and knowledge can be used to shape how people act, think, and behave in social situations and therefore impose social control on individuals. Drawing on the work of Foucault will allow the researcher to frame the problem and research questions from a critical perspective that recognises the relation between power and knowledge and the historical nature of the problem.

From an epistemological perspective, I view issues of equity, equality, and disadvantage to be unseen and therefore subconsciously imposed on students by hierarchical systems within the higher education institution. Falzon et al. (2013), note from Foucault's perspective that there is a relationship between power and knowledge and that for power to exist knowledge also has to be present and vice versa. From an epistemological perspective drawing on the work of Foucault will allow the problem and research questions to be investigated, interrogated, and answered from a critical theory

perspective that recognises a relation between power and knowledge (McArthur, 2021, p8). McKernan (2013, p430), links a critical theory approach with power and knowledge and that power is exercised by institutions and those in power as a form of social control. As a practitioner within a higher education institution, this is important as it helps to understand the complexity of the higher education institution, the power relations that exist, and how these can have an impact on students who have specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

3.1 Foucault and the examination

One of the main areas for exploration during this research is the role of the examination as part of higher education courses and why it continues to be a favoured assessment practice. The literature review suggests that exams serve important purposes for both students and higher education institutions. It also highlights the historical relationship of the examination and the power that is exerted on students both from within and outside of the higher education institution. To understand the place of the exam in the complex networks of historical power influences within and outside of higher education, we can look to the work of Michel Foucault and the theory of 'disciplinary power,' (Foucault 1975 in Gutting & Oksala, 2018, p10).

The concept of disciplinary power can be traced to how Foucault viewed power. Behrent, (2013, pp80-84), notes that Foucault did not necessarily view power as being a form of control that led to the violent oppression of individuals. For Foucault power was evident in all aspects of human life and therefore as all aspects of human life are not bad, power was something that could be good as well as bad. Power was not always apparent to the individual who was subject to power being exerted on them by other individuals or systems within society. It is through disciplinary power that Foucault determined individuals are subject to subtle and often invisible power exerted on them by others. This power, as noted by Ramhurry (2022) and Foucault (1975 in Raaper 2018, p9), is exerted on people through observation without an individual being aware they are being observed, through judgement based on dominant thinking within the society that an individual is in and examinations.

For many students, an exam is a way of having their knowledge and learning assessed and provides them with a grade based on how well they have done. For an institution, the exam is a way of assessing students learning and knowledge and providing outcomes for students. For Foucault, the exam was much more than just a process of academic accountability that leads to an academic outcome. Gutting & Oksala (2018, pp10-11), note that for Foucault, the exam is a tool that controls others, dictates what is and what is not an acceptable standard of achievement, and produces and perpetuates judgmental views about others. The exam essentially allows institutions to classify students and be judged on their performance based on a pre-determined grading system that is decided on by those in control within the institution.

Crucial to the concept of the exam as a tool that can be used to impose disciplinary power is that those subjected to disciplinary power are unaware that they are subjects of power and control. MacMillan (2009, p165), notes that students are not conscious of how they are subjects of power that is prevalent throughout the hierarchical structures of the higher education institution and imposed on them by those in power through the exam. Not only does the exam support these power structures but it allows students to be observed, assessed, and given an outcome and labels them as a success or a failure.

Beattie (2019, p102) suggests that students can be grouped based on academic ability and their outcomes. Institutions are able to compare groups of students with other students both internally against other students and externally against other institutions both locally, nationally, and globally. This generates and upholds dominating views within society about what is deemed to be an acceptable level of academic ability and therefore who is deemed academically worthy.

While it can be argued that students do have a choice of what courses they study, if as Hope (2015, p888) suggests, students are not aware that power is being imposed on them through the exam, then they may not be able to make an informed decision about whether they wish to partake in their oppression by sitting an exam the institution wants them to do.

Cohen (2008, p16) notes that disciplinary power is central to creating and upholding normative views that protect established academic systems and ways of educating individuals. Disciplinary power protects the exam and the role the exam has in assessing students and the idea of disciplinary power goes some way to explaining why institutions use the exam as a way of assessing students and the dominant place the exam has as a form of assessment. It also explains why institutions may not offer an alternative form of assessment for those students with dyslexia and why in some cases students accept without challenge the exam and subject themselves to the invisible form of oppression that protects the status quo of academic practices.

On the surface, the implications for students with dyslexia who have an exam are those that we already know about from their diagnostic report. Slow reading and processing speed can for example result in anxiety for a student who may run out of time during an exam or be unable to answer all the questions (Bazen et al. 2022, p217). The concept of disciplinary power helps to understand some of the more complex and deeper implications for students with dyslexia. The exam is a tool by which students with dyslexia can be compared, judged, and have outcomes determined for them based on an exam performance that does not take into account their disability. The exam as a tool of disciplinary power, ensures that students with dyslexia have to adhere to the power of the institution that implements an exam as an assessment system. The lack of an alternative assessment practice upholds the exam as the dominating and normative way of assessing students with dyslexia at the end of their study protects the exam, and shows that disciplinary power does not differentiate between students with dyslexia and students without.

3.2 Foucault and Surveillance

As societies change and develop and therefore become modern, so does how power is implemented on subjects. Foucault (1979, in Haugaard 2012, p36), saw that power was no longer imposed on others through hegemony by ruling Kings and Queens but was now located in democracy and institutions. This change in power dynamics led to a change in the way power was distributed throughout society. It was through the concept of disciplinary power that power was imposed on others in modern society and as

discussed in section 3.1 the exam was a tool of disciplinary power through which people could be controlled.

Foucault, (1991 in Lilja & Vinthagen 2014, p109), argued that the way people act, think, and live their life could be manipulated and controlled through disciplinary techniques such as observing what one was doing, normalising judgement, and the exam. The exam as noted by Foucault (1979 in Lilja & Vinthagen 2014, p109) was a tool that combined the two notions of surveillance and normalisation to make people willingly subjects of power without them challenging those imposing power on others.

Foucault viewed surveillance as being key to disciplinary power, in particular the way this could be done through systems and institutions that dominate society. Behrent (2013) recognises that Foucault was particularly influenced by Jeremy Bentham and the idea of the 'Panopticon,' (Behrent, 2013, p85). The Panopticon as noted by Gutting & Oksala (2018) was a prison with a central guard tower. The intended purpose of the guard tower was to observe prisoners at all times with those being observed being able to see they were being observed. However, this was not the case as 'guards do not in fact always see each inmate; the point is that they could at any time,' (Gutting & Oksala, 2018, p18). As noted by Foucault (1977 in Stoychef et al., 2019, p604), power was therefore allowed to be imposed on people by making them believe they were under constant surveillance.

Manokha (2018, p222) suggests that surveillance was therefore an invisible form of power that imposed itself onto others and pulled them into a constant state of paranoia that they were always being watched. Gane (2012) highlights the power of such a system in that the invisible nature of surveillance can assimilate how people behave and act. Freshwater et al. (2013, p7) similarly recognise the subversive nature of surveillance as people change their actions and thoughts to conform to those of the social environment they inhabit.

Engebretson, Heggen, and Eilertsen (2012) argue that this invisibility instills fear into individuals in that the constant surveillance they perceive they are under is not as prevalent as an individual perceives. However, while power lies with those who are doing the surveillance, Foucault suggested that power also lies with those under

surveillance through self-discipline or what Foucault termed 'Technologies of the self' (Behrent, 2013, p56). Doerr (2021) notes that whereas disciplinary power looks to control individual behaviour, actions, and outcomes, self-discipline allows individuals to self-regulate their behaviour and actions and individuals become responsible for their outcomes. In a prison, an individual believing they were under constant surveillance would exert self-control and alter their behaviour to reflect the behaviour expected of them by those doing the surveillance. It could therefore be argued that self-discipline sees power lying with both the oppressor and the oppressed, with power relations intertwining throughout the complex systems of an institution.

Looking at the research question regarding where power lies within the higher education institution, the concepts of surveillance and the panopticon indicate that power lies within the institution and the exam. However, through the idea of self-discipline students also hold some power as they normalise their behaviour in line with the conditions of the examination and the perceived surveillance they are under. The exam though is a powerful tool that allows for the surveillance of students. This surveillance, it could be argued, is controlled by the institution who can monitor students, impose policy and procedures on students and normalise what is and is not acceptable academic achievement. With the exam giving such power to institutions over the student population it could be argued that this is a strong reason as to why institutions would favour an exam over alternative assessment practices. If alternative assessment practices were offered by institutions, then there may be a shift in power from the institution to the student with students determining assessment policy, practices, and outcomes.

3.3 Foucault and Governmentality

In the previous sections, the focus was on disciplinary power and how the exam is a tool by which power is exerted on individuals who are studying in higher education. This next section follows on from disciplinary power and focuses on the concept of governmentality and how that influences the modes of power that operate both inside and outside of the higher education institution.

Behrent (2013) notes that whereas disciplinary power explained how individuals could be subjects of power, for Foucault governmentality was a way of explaining how groups of people could be subjects of power and governed accordingly by institutions and those in power. How people are governed to control their actions, behaviour, and how they live is central to the concept of governmentality. Gutting & Oksala (2018, pp28-31) suggest however that the key to governmentality was understanding the reasons why power was exerted by those in institutions in a specific way. Within the higher education institution, this could constitute understanding the underpinning rationale for an exam being used as a way of assessing students as opposed to an alternative form of assessment. Only then do we have a full understanding of the power that is exerted on students by the assessment policy of the institution and only then can we hope to challenge policy and procedures and ultimately those in power.

Governmentality is closely linked to neoliberal economic systems and business models that have been accepted within higher education institutions as the favoured and normal way of operating. Jankowski & Provezis (2014, pp476-477) highlight how higher education has taken on an economic business model in which accountability is measured through performance, productivity, and economic viability. Through governmentality, new ways of working have become normalised with the rationale for accountability targets being that one has to justify their position economically to be valued.

Morrisey (2013 p799) suggests that within higher education institutions, governmentality is the way people are managed, the targets that are set for individuals that indicate how well they are performing, and how policy and procedure shape the way institutions operate in the neoliberal economic marketplace. This places academic staff, non-academic staff, courses, and policy and procedures under a gaze of layers of management and hierarchy that justify and make decisions based on the industrial concepts of efficiency, productivity, value for money, and economic viability.

Raaper (2015, p176) notes how this shift to a neoliberal system has also had an impact on the way that courses are delivered and assessment practices. How courses are delivered is influenced by the overall strategy of the institution and monitored through

performance targets by academic managers. Assessment is a crucial measure of surveillance that determines not only how courses are delivered but how well they are delivered, and judgement is not only cast on students depending on their outcomes but also on whether a course is performing in line with the expected accountability measures the institution expects a course and academics to achieve. Thinking about the exam, it is easy to see why an institution may choose an exam over alternative assessment practices as it allows surveillance of both students and learners to take place, upholds the historical idea of academic judgement and normalisation and is a measure of performance that can be tied into a neoliberal economic business model.

This preference for a system based on neoliberal economic values and the implementation of governmentality through higher education institutions certainly raises questions about the purpose of higher education institutions and who they serve. Naidoo & Williams (2014) note that the role that higher education plays in society has changed from one that serves the interests of society and education to one that now serves the economic values higher education has succumbed to. This view is shared by Martinez-Rodriguez et al. (2018) who note that what was once a service to serve people and society has become something that people buy as individual consumers. Meeting targets, performing well, being measured and rated positively by individuals, and ultimately making lots of money have, they argue, become the focus of institutions that equate meeting neoliberal performance measures with providing good education.

Students are no longer seen as students who are participating in higher education courses to learn but as consumers. As consumers, students do get the chance to feedback both internally and externally about the institution they are studying at and the courses they study. However, Thiel (2019) argues that feedback mechanisms such as the national student survey promote a culture of governmentality through observation, judgement, normalisation, and the neoliberal practices of competitiveness both inside and outside of the institution. As such students become the focus of the institution as they look to influence the student experience to ensure positive feedback that in the neoliberal higher education marketplace results in future students choosing one institution over another.

Chapter 4 The Research Proposal

4.1 The title

The title of this proposal is, 'A critical theory analysis of exams within higher education and the support provided for students with dyslexia.'

This title reflects the critical theory lens through which I have identified and researched the problem. It also reflects the narrow focus for a small-scale investigation on exams as an assessment practice within higher education and students with dyslexia. Cronin, Ryan, and Coughlan (2008), suggest that the scope of research should be feasible for a small-scale investigation and avoid generating an unmanageable amount of literature to review and data to analyse. A decision has therefore been made to limit the research to students with dyslexia rather than the student population as a whole.

4.2 Reasons for the research

Cohen, Mannion & Morrison (2018), argue that one of the reasons for research is the everyday experiences of the researcher and that areas for research are often developed from an initial interest in a problem encountered during practice and that this leads to research that looks to find answers to fix the problem. Taking this into account the research proposal is based on my practice and experiences supporting students with dyslexia who have an exam and putting in place their reasonable adjustment requests. Supporting students with dyslexia has helped me to understand the complex nature of dyslexia and the issues that students with dyslexia experience when faced with sitting an exam. I have also been able to develop an initial understanding of the contradictory nature of the reasonable adjustments process that is based on the social model of disability but places the student as having an individual deficit and a problem to be fixed rather than the exam being the problem.

4.3 The development of key ideas

Through the literature review, I was able to identify and gain an understanding of the key themes of the research topic. Several studies including Williams (2014), Pino & Mortari (2014), and Clouder et, al. (2020) found that students with dyslexia experienced

several issues with exams that included being unable to complete the exam in the time given, deciphering the questions and formulating answers and experiencing anxiety and other health-related issues related to sitting an examination. Nieminen (2020), Dobson (2019), and Riddell & Weedon (2014) highlight the ineffectiveness of reasonable adjustments and that applying for reasonable adjustments can be a negative experience for students. Issues of hierarchical power, surveillance, and governance were a recurring theme throughout the literature review with Torrance (2017) particularly referencing the work of Foucault (1977) and the idea of governmentality. It is from this study that I have been able to develop further a suitable conceptual framework that resonates with my ontological and epistemological beliefs.

4.4 The research questions

Throughout the literature review and in line with the research topic I have developed two main questions.

- 1). Who holds the power to determine exams as the main form of assessment that students do as part of their degree study?
- 2). What are the implications of exams on students with dyslexia?

Originally, I was going to use the term 'traditional assessment' instead of 'exams' in both questions. However, on reflection, I recognised that traditional assessment reflected a variety of assessment types and that this would have been too broad for a small-scale research project. Using the word 'exams' makes it clear to me as the researcher and the reader that this is the assessment method the research focuses on.

Further to this the decision was made to replace the word 'disadvantages' with the word 'implications.' Using the word 'disadvantages' suggests a bias towards negative experiences and a presumption that disadvantage occurs. The use of the word 'implications' provides a neutral stance and suggests that not all experiences of exams for students with dyslexia are negative.

The final research question reflects how I have become more knowledgeable and developed a greater understanding of the research topic through the literature review

and developing the conceptual framework. The question regarding power is influenced by the study on the work of Foucault and reflects the critical theory approach taken.

4.5 Positionality

Stone & Priestley (1996), recognise that for disability research to be emancipatory there needs to be a recognition that those with the disability are the ones who know what it is like to have a disability such as dyslexia. More recently, Barton (2005, p320) suggests that researchers need to be aware of their beliefs and values towards disability and how these may unwittingly dominate the research process and thus proceed to impose further disempowerment on people whose voices aren't heard in society. As a person without dyslexia, I am aware that I don't have the same lived experience as a person with dyslexia and therefore cannot understand fully the disadvantage and social stigma that students with dyslexia experience. However, the literature review has helped me to develop an understanding of dyslexia from being something I was initially interested in to developing a deeper knowledge about the historical and social context of dyslexia and exams and the barriers that students with dyslexia experience.

Chapter 5

Research design, research methods, and methods of analysis

The following chapter presents the research design and how the research design has been influenced by the conceptual framework. The chapter will then provide an overview of the research methods, the proposed research participants, and how data will be gathered and analysed. The final section of the chapter will focus on the ethical issues that will need to be considered as part of the research.

5.1 Research design

The research design has been developed in line with the conceptual framework that draws on the ideas of Foucault and the critical theory approach taken. The research questions aim to identify how exams impact students with dyslexia and uncover the power relations that exist between students with dyslexia and higher education institutions.

Schubert (2021 pp 635-642), notes that Foucault located power both within and outside of an individual and that power was not separate from an individual or confined to one individual or institution. Power was ultimately an action between two people that aimed to determine and influence how each other thought, lived, and viewed the social world. This dialectical approach to power and power relations is evident through the work of other scholars and critical theorists.

McLaren (2007) suggests that for a problem to be viewed from a critical theory perspective, there needs to be an understanding that issues of equality, equity, and social justice are a manifestation of the interactions and intertwining power relations between individuals, institutions, and the society in which they inhabit. There also needs to be a recognition that problems are historical and that over time normative thinking that creates imbalances of power is cemented throughout society. Similarly, Freire (1972 in Blackburn, 2000, p6), suggests problems are not found in nor solved by the individual alone but are dialectical and that to start to understand an issue of oppression, inequality or social justice requires an awareness of the power relations that exist between the individual and the society they inhabit.

Taking into account the critical theory approach that views power as being dialectical, a case study design has been chosen as a suitable research design through which to investigate the problem. Costley, Elliot & Gibbs (2010, p89), suggest that a case study is a suitable approach to investigate problems within work-based practice. It also opens up the opportunity to share the study beyond the scope of the researcher to those who may be interested throughout the institution. As the research project is based on my practice and other practitioners have a similar role, it may be that the research project can help to improve or inform practice when providing exam support for students with dyslexia.

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018, p77), identify case studies as being a method through which the lived experiences of those taking part in the research can be documented. This is particularly important from a critical theory position as the researcher can observe first-hand what is happening from those being researched and this will help the researcher to build an understanding of the implications of exams for those students with dyslexia and the power relations that are in operation. Further to this Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018) suggest a case study research design lends itself to an interpretive approach that allows for multiple meanings to be drawn from research and recognises the importance of the voices of those being researched.

In thinking about the case study design, Ebneyamini & Moghadam (2018, pp2-3) provide a timeline of the development of the case study that highlights the flexible nature of the case study and that there are many ideas among researchers as to what a case study is, what the purpose is and what elements should be included in the design. Yin (2009 in Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2018, p384), identifies four main different types of case study; 'single-case design, the embedded single-case design, the multiple-case design & the embedded multiple-case design.' Fiss (2009 in Ridder, 2016, p282) suggests that a single case design allows the researcher to get beneath the surface of a problem and develop a holistic understanding of a problem and what causes it. Reflecting on the topic of the study, the research questions, and the problem discussed in earlier chapters and taking into consideration the research proposal a single-case design would be the most suitable.

In thinking about the key areas of case study design Yin (2009 in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018, p385) provides a list of what a case study should include and address. Using this list as a basis, it is important to consider the questions that I am hoping to answer by carrying out the case study, the reasons for the case study, who the participants of the case study will be, how the data gathered will be analysed and how validity will be given to the data and the findings. In the following parts of this chapter greater detail will be provided about research methods, research participants, and how research will be analysed.

5.2 Research method

As already discussed, a case study offers the researcher some flexibility when it comes to the design. Ponelis (2015, p540), highlights that this flexibility extends to research methods and that a variety of research methods can be used to collect data. Having taken into account the small-scale nature of the study an interview has been identified as a suitable research method.

Costley, Elliot & Gibbs (2010, p93-94), suggest that an interview allows the interviewer to ask questions that probe deeper into an interviewee's situation and experiences and to clear up any areas of ambiguity in the answers given by an interviewee. Similarly, Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018, p506) highlight how interviews allow those being researched to take part in the knowledge production process, tell their story, and make sense of how a particular situation or event has impacted them.

Case study research in which an interview has been used highlights how an interview allows the researcher to gain real-life insight into how a particular problem impacts individuals and groups of people. Shawar (2010, p337), highlights how in their case study interviews allowed for the collection of qualitative data, allowed the interviewer to clarify meaning, and provided opportunities for those being interviewed to take part in the research process. Similarly, Siraj-Blackford (2010, p467), notes that the semi-structured interview in their study aimed to allow people to tell their story in a way that helped them to process their experiences and make sense of them within the social world they inhabit. Finally, Morris, Milton & Goldstone (2019, p438), suggest that an interview has benefits for both the researcher and the researched, with the interview

allowing the researcher to be open to new ideas and providing the researched with the agency concerning the questions they answer and the information they provide.

For this study, an interview would help to develop an understanding of how exams have impacted students with dyslexia. It would also help to draw out the experiences of students and their lived experiences of dyslexia, taking an exam, and the support they have received. An interview would also help to elicit the qualitative data required to answer the research questions. Having reviewed the different types of interviews as outlined by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018, p511), a semi-structured interview (Appendix D) would be used to allow for more open questioning and to avoid a structured approach which leaves little room for the interviewer to explore further new lines of inquiry that arise during the interview process.

5.3 Research participants

Leach (2013, p268) recognises how the perception and nature of universities have changed. Studying for a degree is no longer viewed as being for those viewed as being academically worthy or for the privileged few. Government policy, Leach suggests, has resulted in increasing participation, especially amongst disadvantaged groups and those traditionally underrepresented such as people with a disability.

Recent data recorded by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2023) shows that the number of students studying in higher education continues to increase. As students participating in higher education increases so has the number of students with a disability. In the 2021/22 academic year, just over 2.8 million students were studying within higher education in the United Kingdom. This was an increase of 4% on the previous year. For the same academic year, 451,580 students were registered as having a disability. Of these 144,230 students were registered as having a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia. This equates to 32% of the total number of students registered with a disability studying within higher education in the United Kingdom.

While the data implies that an increase in the number of students with a disability studying at higher education institutions is a sign that barriers to education for students with disabilities are being removed, concerns about the impact of massification on

higher education, inclusion, and the support and provision provided for students with and without a disability remain.

Giannakis & Bullivant (2016), Burgess et al. (2018), and Tomlinson (2017) depict a higher education system that may have increased numbers of students and answered the calls from governments and employers to provide a trained and educated workforce but has suffered in terms of the quality of provision and support and increased student dissatisfaction.

Raaper et al. (2023, p133) and Osborne (2019, p229) highlight that despite the rising number of students with a disability, as higher education has become more and more influenced by neoliberal practices and a competitive marketplace in which institutions compete for students, support for students with a disability has been sidelined. This has profound implications for students with a specific learning disability, the support they receive, and their inclusion within the higher education arena. For example, Griffin & Pollock (2009 in O'Byrne et al., 2019, p1032) note that despite efforts to improve inclusion, students with dyslexia find support inadequate. Similarly, Jacobs et, al (2022, p664), argue that students with dyslexia find a big discrepancy between the support they had at school compared to the support at university and that support is very generalised, often failing to meet the needs of the student. How support is provided and whether it achieves inclusivity for students with dyslexia is debatable. Part of the problem as argued by Koutsouris et al (2021) is that there is no consensus within higher education as to what inclusion is and that inclusion has been swallowed up within the neoliberal higher education system as something to document in policy rather than something that is there to make a difference for students.

As students with a disability such as dyslexia make up a large percentage of the student population and with literature suggesting that they continue to face challenges when it comes to support with their study and inclusion a sample of students with dyslexia who are studying for a degree would be selected. This would look to provide those students with the opportunity to participate in the research and provide them with the opportunity to tell their stories and detail their experiences of exams and support with their study. As this is a small-scale research proposal the research will have a sample of fifteen

students in total, with five from each year of study. This will provide a range of student experiences throughout each stage of the study journey. To ensure this number of students a larger cohort of students will be contacted and if the number of interested participants is greater than fifteen some students will be put on a reserve list in case of withdrawals.

A letter (Appendix C) explaining the aims and objectives of the research, the data that will be collected and outlining how data and privacy will be protected will be sent to all prospective participants. This will also include a section that prospective participants will need to complete that gives their consent to take part in the research.

5.4 Method of analysis

Qualitative data analysis will be used as a method of analysis to analyse the data generated by the semi-structured interview and questionnaire. A thematic approach will be taken that will allow for the data to be interpreted and analysed, providing opportunities for the researcher to reflect on the meaning of the data gathered and link the data to answering the research questions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2018, pp643-645).

A thematic analysis is a suitable method in which to sort data generated through semi-structured interviews into themes and meanings considering the diverse and unstructured data generated by students (Ayre & McCaffery, 2021, p78). For example, the analysis will look to identify themes relating to exams, dyslexia, disadvantage, and student support linking these themes to the research questions.

Augusto et al. (2023, p193) highlight the importance of reflection during the process and that a thematic analysis should be a dialectical process between the researcher and other people who are connected to the research. This, they argue, not only helps to validate the researchers' interpretations of the data but can also help to generate new themes, connections, and ideas. Within the researcher's context, close colleagues will be identified with whom the researcher can converse during the process.

Staller (2022, p231), suggests that for a thematic analysis to be successful a researcher should 'ask a question of their data.' This, Staller argues, ensures that an analytical

approach is taken and that the researcher doesn't end up with coded data and no answer to the research questions. For this research proposal, this is a useful starting point from which to analyse the data and will help to provide a basis from which to build the analysis and work towards answering the research questions.

Further to the above, it is important to acknowledge that the analytical process does not start at the point of the data analysis. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018, pp467-468) note that one of the advantages of qualitative data analysis is that researchers are involved in the analytical process throughout each stage of the research. Reflection and being open to new ideas and beliefs that may not resonate with those of the researcher is an important part of the research process.

Taking a qualitative analysis approach that is reflective and reflexive will ensure that the views of those being researched will be heard. Although the researcher has the authority over what data to include and how it is interpreted, the approach will look to eradicate bias and avoid 'awarding privilege to one analysis over another,' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p643).

5.5 Ethical consideration

Stuchbury & Fox (2009, p489), remind us that ethical issues permeate and evolve throughout the research process and that without acting ethically this leads to research that lacks integrity and respect towards those involved in the process. For this research proposal, the following ethical considerations will apply.

1). A local gatekeeper will be consulted to discuss the research. De Laine (2000 in Clark, 2010, p487), attributes gatekeepers with being able to give access to the resources that researchers need and provide validation for the research. Further to this, although the researcher has insider access to the institution, initial discussions with a local gatekeeper related to the researcher's context such as a senior manager would ensure professional courtesy and transparency in that local leaders would know about the plans to conduct research.

- 2). As the research is proposed to be conducted within the researcher's context of a higher education institution and involves learners with dyslexia studying at degree level the approval for the research will be sought from the institution's ethics committee.
- 3). Further to seeking approval from the ethics committee, the researcher must ensure they follow the institution's ethical codes of practice. To ensure the privacy, confidentiality, and protection of the data gathered, the researcher will abide by data protection laws and regulations and adhere to policies on equality and inclusion.
- 4). Valid consent will be sought from participants taking part in the research. The BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2021, pp12-20) advises that participants should give consent freely to taking part in research and that they should be given full disclosure of the aims and objectives of the research so that they can decide whether taking part is something they want to do.

A letter seeking student consent explaining the aims and objectives of the research, and how data will be used and will be sent to research participants. This will also inform students that they have the right to withdraw from the research at any point (See Appendix C).

- 5). Respect will be shown to all participants throughout the research process. Participants can expect fair treatment and recognition of their individuality and differences and sensitivity towards those who are from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who may find the topic of the research difficult emotionally (BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, 2018, p6).
- 6). Being aware of the virtues of research ethics throughout the process will provide the researcher with the opportunity to be reflexive throughout the research, making sound and logical judgments about the direction of the research and being honest about the outcomes of the research (Open University, 2023)
- 7). All stakeholders and participants will be provided with access to the findings of the research. A space in which to debrief participants will be provided to ensure the well-being of participants and provide gratitude to those who have taken part (BPS Code of Human Research Ethics, 2021, p26).

The above list provides an outline of the ethical considerations for the research proposal. The researcher is mindful that this is not a definitive list, and that ethics is a continuous reflective process throughout the research process, and as such ethics will be reviewed at various points throughout the process.

Chapter 6

Reflection:

The topic of the research proposal stems from my practice in supporting students with dyslexia who have an exam as part of their undergraduate study. Reflecting on the study undertaken on previous modules as part of the post-graduate degree in education, the idea has developed from being a very broad and descriptive idea to an idea that has become more focused through the literature review and conceptual framework. Through the literature review and the conceptual framework, I have developed a greater understanding of how theory relates to my practice and how theorists such as Foucault can inform and underpin practice in a modern university setting.

While the conceptual framework developed has increased my knowledge and awareness of Foucault, looking back on the study in the post-graduate degree I can see that a deeper awareness of social justice, equality, and equity has developed. For example, before I undertook the study for the post-graduate degree, I had a basic awareness of these areas. Also, I had limited knowledge of theorists such as Freire, Bourdieu, and Foucault and only a limited understanding of social justice.

The second module of the degree, EE815 Understanding literacy: social justice and inclusive practice, was particularly illuminating as the connections between literacy, social justice, and dyslexia were revealed through the study, and links to my practice became apparent. It was from this study that I first proposed a research proposal that focused on the disadvantages of exams for students with dyslexia, based on my experience of supporting students with dyslexia with their exams and putting in place reasonable adjustments.

This idea has developed through the research proposal development in this module, and it has become more refined and focused through developing an understanding of and being able to explain my ontological and epistemological beliefs and how they relate to my practice and the research I have undertaken. Further to this by taking one

step at a time and following the different stages of research through the study on the module I have developed a greater awareness of the technical and analytical nature of educational research and the importance of both reflection and reflexivity throughout the process.

Critically reflecting on writing, linking ideas, and developing ideas through referencing, has been an area I have struggled with throughout the study of the degree and this module (Appendix D). Acting on feedback from the assignments and draft chapters and seeking further guidance through university resources, helped me to develop my writing and become more critical and analytical (Appendix D). However, I am aware that this is an area I will need to work on further and plan to do further self-study to help develop my writing style, analytical skills, and critical thinking skills further.

Finally, there may be an opportunity in the future to use this research proposal and the study I have conducted to inform practice in my context. This may be at a local level, to begin with, and may be incorporated into continuing this learning journey at a higher level of study. This is something I will certainly consider for the future. When I first started with the study I did so to see how it went and if I was able to study at a post-graduate level. As I have developed my knowledge and understanding of key concepts and academic skills over the past three years, I have become more confident both as a student and within my practice and I have become a better practitioner when it comes to being aware of issues of social justice, equality, equity, power relations and disadvantage and how these concepts impact both students, colleagues, higher education and society.

References

Augusto, L., Vasconcellos, L. and Kavita Miadaira Hamza (2023) 'Editorial: A roadmap for data analysis in qualitative research', *RAUSP Management Journal*, 58(3), pp. 190–196. doi:10.1108/rausp-07-2023-274

Ayre, J. and McCaffery, K.J. (2021) 'Research Note: Thematic analysis in qualitative research', *Journal of Physiotherapy*, 68(1). Available at: doi:10.1016/j.jphys.2021.11.002

Barton, L. (2005) 'Emancipatory research and disabled people: some observations and questions', *Educational Review*, 57(3), pp. 317–327. doi:10.1080/00131910500149325

Bazen, L. *et al.* (2022) 'Perceived negative consequences of dyslexia: the influence of person and environmental factors', *Annals of Dyslexia* [Preprint]. Available at: doi:10.1007/s11881-022-00274-0

Beattie, L. (2019) 'Educational leadership: Producing docile bodies? A Foucauldian perspective on Higher Education', *Higher Education Quarterly* [Preprint]. doi:10.1111/hequ.12218

Beck, S. (2022) 'Evaluating the use of reasonable adjustment plans for students with a specific learning difficulty', *British Journal of Special Education*, 49(3). doi:10.1111/1467-8578.12412

Behrent, M.C. (2013) 'Foucault and Technology', *History and Technology*, 29(1), pp. 54–104. doi:10.1080/07341512.2013.780351

Blackburn, J. (2000) 'Understanding Paulo Freire: reflections on the origins, concepts, and possible pitfalls of his educational approach', *Community Development Journal*, 35(1), pp. 3–15. doi:10.1093/cdj/35.1.3

British Dyslexia Association (2019) *Dyslexia - British Dyslexia Association, British Dyslexia Association*. Available at: <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/dyslexia> (Accessed 20th August 2023)

British Educational Research Association (2018) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, Fourth Edition (2018)*, *Bera.ac.uk*. British Educational Research Association. Available at: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018-online> (Accessed 15th August 2023)

Bunbury, S. (2020) 'Disability in higher education – do reasonable adjustments contribute to an inclusive curriculum?', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(9), pp. 964-979. doi:10.1080/13603116.2018.1503347

Burgess, A., Senior, C. and Moores, E. (2018) 'A 10-year Case Study on the Changing Determinants of University Student Satisfaction in the UK', *PLOS ONE*. Edited by C.A. Ouzounis, 13(2), p. e0192976. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0192976

Campbell, T. (2011) 'From aphasia to dyslexia, a fragment of a genealogy: An analysis of the formation of a "medical diagnosis"', *Health Sociology Review*, 20(4), pp. 450–461. doi:10.5172/hesr.2011.20.4.450

Cameron, H. and Billington, T. (2015) “‘Just deal with it’: neoliberalism in dyslexic students’ talk about dyslexia and learning at university’, *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(8), pp. 1358–1372. doi:10.1080/03075079.2015.1092510

Clark, T. (2010) ‘Gaining and Maintaining Access’, *Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice*, 10(4), pp. 485–502. doi:10.1177/1473325009358228

Clouder, L. *et al.* (2020) ‘Neurodiversity in higher education: A narrative synthesis’, *Higher Education*, 80(4). doi:10.1007/s10734-020-00513-6

Cohen, L.E. (2008) ‘Foucault and the Early Childhood Classroom’, *Educational Studies*, 44(1), pp. 7–21. doi:10.1080/00131940802224948

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2018) *Research methods in education*. 8th edn. New York: Routledge.

Cook, D. (2013) ‘Adorno, Foucault and critique’, *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 39(10), pp. 965–981. doi:10.1177/0191453713507016

Costley, C., Elliott, G. and Gibbs, P. (2010) *Doing work based research : approaches to enquiry for insider-researchers*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Couzens, D. *et al.* (2015) ‘Support for Students with Hidden Disabilities in Universities: A Case Study’, *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 62(1), pp. 24–41. doi:10.1080/1034912x.2014.984592

Cronin, P., Ryan, F. and Coughlan, M. (2008) 'Undertaking a Literature review: a step-by-step Approach', *British Journal of Nursing*, 17(1), pp. 38–43.

doi:10.12968/bjon.2008.17.1.28059

Deeley, S.J. and Bovill, C. (2017) 'Staff student partnership in assessment: enhancing assessment literacy through democratic practices', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42(3), pp. 463–477. doi:10.1080/02602938.2015.1126551

Dobson, S. (2019) 'A documentary analysis of the support services offered to adult learners with dyslexia in higher education', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 43(9), pp. 1181-1195. doi:10.1080/0309877x.2018.1463359

Dobson Waters, S. and Torgerson, C.J. (2020) 'Dyslexia in higher education: a systematic review of interventions used to promote learning', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 45(2), pp. 226-256. doi:10.1080/0309877x.2020.1744545

Doerr, K. (2021) 'Testing and cheating: technologies of power and resistance', *Cultural Studies of Science Education* [Preprint]. doi:10.1007/s11422-021-10048-6

Dolmage, J. (2017) *Academic ableism : disability and higher education*. Ann Arbor: University Of Michigan Press.

Ebneyamini, S. and Sadeghi Moghadam, M.R. (2018) 'Toward Developing a Framework for Conducting Case Study Research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17(1), p. 160940691881795. Available at:

doi:10.1177/1609406918817954

Elliott, J.G. (2020) 'It's Time to Be Scientific About Dyslexia', *Reading Research Quarterly*, 55(S1). doi:10.1002/rrq.333

Engebretsen, E., Heggen, K. and Eilertsen, H.A. (2012) 'Accreditation and Power: A Discourse Analysis of a New Regime of Governance in Higher Education', *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 56(4), pp. 401–417.
doi:10.1080/00313831.2011.599419

Ercikan, K. and Roth, W.-M. (2006) 'What Good Is Polarizing Research Into Qualitative and Quantitative?', *Educational Researcher*, 35(5), pp. 14–23.
doi:10.3102/0013189x035005014

Falzon, C., O'leary, T. and Sawicki, J. (2013) *A companion to Foucault*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Forde-Leaves, N., Walton, J. and Tann, K. (2023) 'A framework for understanding assessment practice in higher education', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, pp. 1–16. doi:10.1080/02602938.2023.2169659

Francisco Gil Rodríguez, de, M. and Fernández-Herrería, A. (2018) 'Challenging the neoliberal view of education: the Center for Ecoliteracy as a transformative educational practice', 15(3), pp. 422–436. doi:10.1080/14747731.2018.1446601

Freshwater, D., Fisher, P. and Walsh, E. (2013) 'Revisiting the Panopticon: professional regulation, surveillance and sousveillance', *Nursing Inquiry*, 22(1), pp. 3–12.
doi:10.1111/nin.12038

Gane, N. (2012) 'The Governmentalities of Neoliberalism: Panopticism, Post-Panopticism and beyond', *The Sociological Review*, 60(4), pp. 611–634.
doi:10.1111/j.1467-954x.2012.02126.x

Grimes, S. et al. (2019) 'University student perspectives on institutional non-disclosure of disability and learning challenges: reasons for staying invisible', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(6), pp. 639–655. doi:10.1080/13603116.2018.1442507

Giannakis, M. and Bullivant, N. (2016) 'The massification of higher education in the UK: Aspects of service quality', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 40(5), pp. 630–648. doi:10.1080/0309877x.2014.1000280

Gutting, G. and Oksala, J. (2018) 'Introduction to Foucault', in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/foucault/#ArchGene> (Accessed 30th July 2023)

Hanafin, J. et al. (2007) 'Including young people with disabilities: Assessment challenges in higher education', *Higher Education*, 54(3), pp. 435–448. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-006-9005-9>.

Haugaard, M. (2012) 'Rethinking the four dimensions of power: domination and empowerment', *Journal of Political Power*, 5(1), pp. 33–54. doi:10.1080/2158379x.2012.660810

Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2021/22 - Student numbers and characteristics | HESA (no date) www.hesa.ac.uk. Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/19-01-2023/sb265-higher-education-student-statistics/numbers> (Accessed 15th August 2023)

Hipwell, P. and Klenowski, V. (2011) 'A case for addressing the literacy demands of student assessment', *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 127–46.

Hope, A. (2015) 'Biopower and school surveillance technologies 2.0', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 37(7), pp. 885–904. doi:10.1080/01425692.2014.1001060

Jacobs, L. et al. (2022) 'Learning at school through to university: the educational experiences of students with dyslexia at one UK higher education institution', *Disability & Society*, 37(4), pp. 662-683. doi:10.1080/09687599.2020.1829553

Jankowski, N. and Provezis, S. (2014) 'Neoliberal Ideologies, Governmentality and the Academy: An examination of accountability through assessment and transparency', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 46(5), pp. 475–487. doi:10.1080/00131857.2012.721736

Jones, E. et al. (2020) 'Student Wellbeing and Assessment in Higher education: the Balancing Act', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 46(3), pp. 438-450. doi:10.1080/02602938.2020.1782344

Jónsson, Í.R. (2023) 'Student involvement in assessment and power relations: teacher's perspective', *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, pp. 1–22. doi:10.1080/14681366.2023.2186930

Kirby, P. (2020) 'Dyslexia debated, then and now: a historical perspective on the dyslexia debate', *Oxford Review of Education*, 46(4), pp. 472–486.

doi: 10.1080/03054985.2020.1747418

Koutsouris, G., Stentiford, L. and Norwich, B. (2022) 'A Critical Exploration of Inclusion Policies of Elite UK Universities', *British Educational Research Journal*, 48(5).

doi:10.1002/berj.3799

Leach, L. (2013) 'Participation and equity in higher education: are we going back to the future?', *Oxford Review of Education*, 39(2), pp. 267–286. Available at:

doi:10.1080/03054985.2013.791618

Leathwood *, C. (2005) 'Assessment policy and practice in higher education: purpose, standards and equity', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 30(3), pp. 307–

324. doi:10.1080/02602930500063876

Lilja, M. and Vinthagen, S. (2014) 'Sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower: resisting what power with what resistance?', *Journal of Political Power*, 7(1), pp. 107–

126. doi:10.1080/2158379x.2014.889403

Lingard, B., Sellar, S. and Savage, G.C. (2014) 'Re-articulating social justice as equity in schooling policy: the effects of testing and data infrastructures', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 35(5), pp. 710–730. doi:10.1080/01425692.2014.919846

Lynam, S. and Cachia, M. (2017) 'Students' perceptions of the role of assessments at higher education', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43(2), pp. 223–234.

doi:10.1080/02602938.2017.1329928

MacCullagh, L., Bosanquet, A. and Badcock, N.A. (2016) 'University Students with Dyslexia: A Qualitative Exploratory Study of Learning Practices, Challenges and Strategies', *Dyslexia*, 23(1), pp. 3–23. doi:10.1002/dys.1544

Macfarlane, B. (2014) 'Student performativity in higher education: converting learning as a private space into a public performance', *Higher Education Research & Development*, 34(2), pp. 338–350. doi:10.1080/07294360.2014.956697

Mahony, P. and Weiner, G. (2017) 'Neo-liberalism and the state of higher education in the UK', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 43(4), pp. 560–572. Available at: doi:10.1080/0309877x.2017.1378314

Manokha, I. (2018) 'Surveillance, Panopticism, and Self-Discipline in the Digital Age', *Surveillance & Society*, 16(2), pp. 219–237. doi:10.24908/ss.v16i2.8346

McArthur, J. (2015) 'Assessment for social justice: the role of assessment in achieving social justice', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 41(7), pp. 967–981. doi:10.1080/02602938.2015.1053429

McArthur, J. (2021) 'The Inclusive University: A Critical Theory Perspective Using a Recognition-Based Approach', *Social Inclusion*, 9(3), pp. 6–15. doi:10.17645/si.v9i3.4122

McKernan, J.A. (2013) 'The Origins of Critical Theory in Education: Fabian Socialism as Social Reconstructionism in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 61(4), pp. 417–433. doi:10.1080/00071005.2013.824947

McLaren, P. 'Critical pedagogy' in Soler, J. Walsh, S.C. Craft, A. Rix, J. Simmons, K. (2013) *Transforming Practice: Critical issues in equity, diversity and education*, Staffordshire, Trentham Books Limited.

Macmillan, A. (2009). Foucault and the examination: a reading of 'Truth and Judicial Forms', *Journal of Power*, 2(1), pp.155–172. doi:10.1080/17540290902760923

Medland, E. (2014) 'Assessment in higher education: drivers, barriers and directions for change in the UK', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 41(1), pp. 81–96. doi:10.1080/02602938.2014.982072

Moriña, A. (2016) 'Inclusive education in higher education: challenges and opportunities', *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 32(1), pp. 3–17. doi:10.1080/08856257.2016.1254964

Morris, C., Milton, E. and Goldstone, R. (2019) 'Case study: suggesting choice: inclusive assessment processes', *Higher Education Pedagogies*, 4(1), pp. 435–447. doi:10.1080/23752696.2019.1669479

Morrissey, J. (2013) 'Governing the academic subject: Foucault, governmentality and the performing university', *Oxford Review of Education*, 39(6), pp. 797–810. doi:10.1080/03054985.2013.860891

Mortimore, T. (2012) 'Dyslexia in higher education: creating a fully inclusive institution', *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 13(1), pp. 38–47. Available at: doi:10.1111/j.1471-3802.2012.01231.x

Mullins, L. and Preyde, M. (2013) 'The lived experience of students with an invisible disability at a Canadian university', *Disability & Society*, 28(2), pp. 147–160. doi:10.1080/09687599.2012.752127

Naidoo, R. and Williams, J. (2014) 'The neoliberal regime in English higher education: charters, consumers and the erosion of the public good', *Critical Studies in Education*, 56(2), pp. 208–223. doi:10.1080/17508487.2014.939098

The National Archives (2010) *Equality act 2010*, *Legislation.gov.uk*. Gov.uk. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents> (Accessed 30th June 2023)

Nieminen, J.H. (2022a) 'Unveiling ableism and disablism in assessment: a critical analysis of disabled students' experiences of assessment and assessment accommodations', *Higher Education* [Preprint]. doi:10.1007/s10734-022-00857-1

Nieminen, J.H. (2022b) 'Assessment for Inclusion: rethinking inclusive assessment in higher education', *Teaching in Higher Education*, pp. 1–19. doi:10.1080/13562517.2021.2021395

Nieminen, J.H. (2020c) 'Disrupting the power relations of grading in higher education through summative self-assessment', *Teaching in Higher Education*, pp. 892-907. doi:10.1080/13562517.2020.1753687

O'Byrne, C., Jagoe, C. and Lawler, M. (2019) 'Experiences of dyslexia and the transition to university: a case study of five students at different stages of study', *Higher Education Research & Development*, 38(5), pp. 1031–1045. doi:10.1080/07294360.2019.1602595

Olssen, M. (2015) 'Neoliberal competition in higher education today: research, accountability and impact', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 37(1), pp. 129–148. doi:10.1080/01425692.2015.1100530

The Open University (2023) '8.3 The 'Virtuous' Researcher,' *E822 Unit 8 EP Engaging in ethical research*. Available at:

<https://learn2.open.ac.uk/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=1946356§ion=3.1> (Accessed 31st July 2023)

Osborne, T. (2019) 'Not lazy, not faking: teaching and learning experiences of university students with disabilities', *Disability & Society*, 34(2), pp. 228–252. doi:10.1080/09687599.2018.1515724

Pino, M. and Mortari, L. (2014) 'The Inclusion of Students with Dyslexia in Higher Education: A Systematic Review Using Narrative Synthesis', *Dyslexia*, 20(4), pp. 346–369. doi:10.1002/dys.1484

R. Ponelis, S. (2015) 'Using Interpretive Qualitative Case Studies for Exploratory Research in Doctoral Studies: A Case of Information Systems Research in Small and Medium Enterprises', *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 10, pp. 535–550. doi:10.28945/2339

Raaper, R. (2015) 'Academic perceptions of higher education assessment processes in neoliberal academia', *Critical Studies in Education*, 57(2), pp. 175–190.

doi:10.1080/17508487.2015.1019901

Raaper, R. (2018) 'Students as consumers? A counter perspective from student assessment as a disciplinary technology', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 24(1), pp. 1–16. doi:10.1080/13562517.2018.1456421

Raaper, R., Peruzzo, F. and Westander, M. (2023) 'Disabled students doing activism: Borrowing from and trespassing neoliberal reason in English higher education', *Power and Education*, p. 175774382211177. doi.org/10.1177/17577438221117772

Ramhurry, C. (2022) 'Applying Foucault to Participatory Assessment in Higher Education: A Case Study in South Africa', *Education as Change*, 26.

doi:10.25159/1947-9417/9453

Riddell, S. and Weedon, E. (2006) 'What counts as a reasonable adjustment? Dyslexic students and the concept of fair assessment', *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 16(1), pp. 57–73. doi:10.1080/19620210600804301

Riddell, S. and Weedon, E. (2014) 'Disabled students in higher education: Discourses of disability and the negotiation of identity', *International Journal of Educational Research*, 63, pp. 38–46. doi:10.1016/j.ijer.2013.02.008

Ridder, H.-G. (2017) 'The theory contribution of case study research designs', *Business Research*, 10(2), pp. 281–305. doi:10.1007/s40685-017-0045-z

Schubert, K. (2021) 'Freedom as critique: Foucault beyond anarchism', *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 47(5), p. 019145372091773. doi:10.1177/0191453720917733

Serrano, M.M. et al. (2017) 'Critical Pedagogy and assessment in higher education: The ideal of "authenticity" in learning', *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 19(1), pp. 9–21. doi:10.1177/1469787417723244

Shawer, S. (2010) 'Communicative-based curriculum innovations between theory and practice: implications for EFL curriculum development and student cognitive and affective change', *The Curriculum Journal*, 21(3), pp. 333–359. Available at: doi:10.1080/09585176.2010.506802

Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2010) 'Learning in the home and at school: how working class children "succeed against the odds"', *British Educational Research Journal*, 36(3), pp. 463–482. doi:10.1080/01411920902989201

Smith, C.D. et al. (2013) 'Assessment literacy and student learning: the case for explicitly developing students "assessment literacy"', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 38(1), pp. 44–60. doi:10.1080/02602938.2011.598636

Staller, K.M. (2022) 'Confusing questions in qualitative inquiry: Research, interview, and analysis', *Qualitative Social Work*, 21(2), p. 147332502210805. Available at: doi:10.1177/14733250221080533

Stone, E. and Priestley, M. (1996) 'Parasites, Pawns and Partners: Disability Research and the Role of Non-Disabled Researchers', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 47(4), p. 699. doi:10.2307/591081

Stoycheff, E. et al. (2018) 'Privacy and the Panopticon: Online mass surveillance's deterrence and chilling effects', *New Media & Society*, 21(3), pp. 602–619. doi:10.1177/1461444818801317

Soler, J. (2010) 'Dyslexia lessons: the politics of dyslexia and reading problems', in Hall, K., Goswami, U., Harrison, C., Ellis, S. and Soler, J. (eds) *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Learning to Read*, Abingdon, Routledge, pp. 179–92.

Stutchbury, K. and Fox, A. (2009) 'Ethics in educational research: introducing a methodological tool for effective ethical analysis', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 39(4), pp. 489–504. doi:10.1080/03057640903354396

Tai, J. et al. (2022a) 'How are examinations inclusive for students with disabilities in higher education? A sociomaterial analysis', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, pp. 1–13. doi:10.1080/02602938.2022.2077910

Tai, J.H.-M. et al. (2022b) 'Designing assessment for inclusion: an exploration of diverse students' assessment experiences', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, pp. 403-417. doi:10.1080/02602938.2022.2082373

The British Psychological Society (2021) *BPS Code of Human Research Ethics*, BPS. Available at: <https://www.bps.org.uk/guideline/bps-code-human-research-ethics> (Accessed 15th August 2023)

Thiel, J. (2019) 'The UK National Student Survey: An amalgam of discipline and neo-liberal governmentality', *British Educational Research Journal*, 45(3), pp. 538–553. doi:10.1002/berj.3512

Tomlinson, M. (2017) 'Student perceptions of themselves as “consumers” of higher education', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 38(4), pp. 450–467. doi:10.1080/01425692.2015.1113856

Tops, W. et al. (2022) 'Participation problems and effective accommodations in students with dyslexia in higher education', *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, pp. 317-333. doi:10.1080/08856257.2022.2089507

Torrance, H. (2017) 'Blaming the victim: assessment, examinations, and the responsabilisation of students and teachers in neo-liberal governance', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 38(1), pp. 83–96. doi:10.1080/01596306.2015.1104854

Williams, P. et al. (2013) 'Fit for purpose: traditional assessment is failing undergraduates with learning difficulties. Might eAssessment help?', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 18(6), pp. 614–625. doi:10.1080/13603116.2013.802029

Appendix A:



E822 Ethical Appraisal Form

Masters: Education, Childhood and Youth

Because ethical appraisal should precede data collection, a completed version of this form should be included with TMA02 for those developing a Small-Scale Investigation (SSI) and as part of the EMA submission for those completing an Extended Literature Review and Research Proposal (EP) form of the Dissertation.

NB: it should be noted that The Open University is unable to offer liability insurance to cover any negative consequences students might encounter when undertaking 'in-person' data collection. It is therefore very important that you follow appropriate research protocols which should include seeking Gatekeeper permissions to undertake any data collection within your setting and adhering to ethical principles for the safety of yourself and your participants.

Fill in section 1 of this document with your personal details and brief information about your research. For section 2, please assess your research using the following questions and click yes or no as appropriate. If there is any possibility of significant risk please tick yes. Even if your list contains all "no" you should still return your completed checklist so your tutor/supervisor can assess the proposed research.

Section 1: Project details		
a.	Student name	Philip Price
b.	PI	
c.	Project title	'A critical theory analysis of exams within higher education and the support provided for students with dyslexia.'
d.	Supervisor/tutor	Dr Anita Pilgrim

e.	Qualification	Masters in Education	
		Masters in Childhood and Youth	
f.	MA pathway (where applicable)	Inclusive Practice	
g.	Intended start date for fieldwork		
h.	Intended end date for fieldwork		
i.	Country fieldwork will be conducted in <i>If you are resident in the UK and will be conducting your research abroad please check www.fco.gov.uk for advice on travel.</i>		

Section 2: Ethics Assessment		Yes	No
1	Does your proposed research need initial clearance from a 'gatekeeper' (e.g. Local Authority, head teacher, college head, nursery/playgroup manager)? I would need to discuss the research with a local gatekeeper and seek approval at a local level (Appendix B). While the request would need to be formally approved by the institutions ethical committee using a local gatekeeper would the first steps in seeking approval.	✓	
2	Have you checked whether the organisation requires you to undertake a 'police check' or appropriate level of 'disclosure' before carrying out your research? ¹ This is something I would need to clarify and look into further as part of seeking approval for the research. I do hold a live DBS certificate with the DBS service if required.		✓
3	Have you indicated how informed consent will be obtained from your participants (including children less than 16 years old, school pupils and immediate family members)? Your consent letters/forms must inform participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. ² A letter seeking approval will be sent to all potential participants. This will details the aims and objectives of the research and provide full details regarding privacy and other ethical considerations (Appendix C)	✓	

4	Will your proposed research design mean that it will be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people in nonpublic places)? If so have you specified appropriate debriefing procedures? ³ At no point will participants be unaware they are taking part in the research.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5	Does your proposed design involve repetitive observation of participants, (i.e. more than twice over a period of more than 2-3 weeks)? Is this necessary? If it is, have you made appropriate provision for participants to renew consent or withdraw from the study half-way through? ⁴ Participants will only be interviewed once.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6	Are you proposing to collect video and/or audio data? If so have you indicated how you will protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality and how you will store the data? Audio recordings of interviews will be made. Details about anonymity and the process will be provided to participants (Appendix C).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
7	Does your proposal indicate how you will give your participants the opportunity to access the outcomes of your research (including audio/visual materials) after they have provided data? The letter seeking participant approval advises they will get access to the outcomes and be invited to a de-brief session to discuss the outcomes (Appendix C)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
8	Have you built in time for a pilot study to make sure that any task materials you propose to use are age appropriate and that they are unlikely to cause offence to any of your participants? This is something I may need to consider and will discuss with the local gate keeper/colleagues. I would consult colleagues and the universities policies on equality and diversity to ensure that the research adhered to these policies.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9	Is your research likely to involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. adult/child relationships, peer relationships, discussions about personal teaching styles, ability levels of individual children and/or adults)? What safeguards have you put in place to protect participants' confidentiality? All participant contributions will be anonymised. If a participant wishes to stop taking part in the research or change their mind they are free to do so at any point. All data collected will be destroyed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
10	Does your proposed research raise any issues of personal safety for yourself or other persons involved in the project? Do you need to carry out a 'risk analysis' and/or discuss this with teachers, parents and other adults involved in the research? As interviews are planned to be done remotely by telephone or through skype/teams there shouldn't be a risk to the safety of the researcher or participants. Participants who have agreed to take part will be contacted beforehand with a brief and be asked to provide a convenient day/time for them to be contacted. This will prepare them in advance and ensure they are aware of when they will be contacted for interview. Participants will also be offered the chance to take part in a debrief.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
11	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? No. This should not be an issue as interviews are planned to be done either by telephone or through skype/teams.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12	Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data? No.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If you answered 'yes' to questions 12, you will also have to submit an application to an appropriate National Research Ethics Service ethics committee (<http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/>).

Appendix B:**Letter/email to local gatekeeper**

Dear (GATEKEEPER NAME)

I am writing to you this afternoon in relation to carrying out a small-scale research project within the faculty of (NAME OF FACULTY). The small-scale research project has been designed as part of my study at the Open University on the E822 The Multidisciplinary Masters Dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth module.

The research project will involve interviewing students who are registered with us as having dyslexia who are studying for a degree at undergraduate level at the (NAME OF INSTITUTION), have sat an exam as part of their study, and have had exam adjustments arranged for them. The interview aims to gather the experiences of students with dyslexia when it comes to their study, examinations, and the support that they have received. This data will then form the basis for an analysis of the implications of exams for students with dyslexia and the way support is provided and accessed.

A full research project plan that includes the ethical considerations of the planned research project has been produced. I would be grateful to have the opportunity to discuss the plan further with you and provide you with a copy of the full research proposal. This would also allow you to ask any questions that you have. I would be seeking your approval as the (TITLE/ROLE OF GATEKEEPER) for the research project to take place within the faculty of (NAME OF FACULTY) in the first instance.

I am aware that any research proposal would need to go through the university ethics committee before it can take place.

Please let me know when you will be available for an initial discussion about the research project either by replying to this email or by telephone. Tel: (TEL NUMBER).

Best wishes

Philip Price

(POSITION)

Appendix C:**Interview letter/email to participants**

(INSTITUTION NAME & ADDRESS)

(DATE)

Dear _____

My name is Philip and I am contacting you today from the (NAME OF INSTITUTION) in relation to a research project that I am currently conducting that focuses on students with dyslexia and their experience of taking an examination as part of their undergraduate study with the (NAME OF INSTITUTION).

As part of the research, I am looking to interview students with dyslexia about their experiences of taking an exam and the support that is provided. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information about the reasons for the research and to seek your consent and permission for you to take part in the research project.

You have been selected to take part in this research project as you are registered as having a disability and have taken an exam within the past two years. You have also had exam arrangements put in place for you as part of the reasonable adjustment support provided by the university.

The research project aims to investigate the experiences of students with dyslexia when it comes to sitting an exam and the support that they receive as part of their undergraduate study. The interview will provide a space for you to tell us about your experiences and thoughts concerning exams and the support you have received.

Interviews will take place either by telephone or through Skype/Teams whichever you feel comfortable with. There is no requirement to use cameras if the interview is conducted through Skype or Teams. The interview will be conducted by me and will be recorded. The recording will then be transcribed for analysis. I envisage that the duration of the interview will be no more than thirty minutes.

The data from your interview will be used to evaluate how students with dyslexia find the exam as a form of assessment and to assess whether the support that is provided is adequate. In the long term, it is hoped the findings of the research can be used to inform improvements in the support that students with dyslexia receive and potentially inform decisions about future assessment practices.

Finally, it is my ethical duty as a researcher to advise you that your participation in this research will be kept private. Confidentiality and your right to privacy will be protected under the university data protection policy. Any data used from your interview will be anonymised. You will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time before, during, or after the interview. If you decide to withdraw after the interview all data gathered that relates to you will be destroyed.

At the end of the process, you will be invited to an optional debrief. This will give you the opportunity to ask any questions you may have or discuss any concerns or queries regarding the research that you may have. It will also allow you to understand more about the research and the research findings.

If you are interested in this research and would like to take part, then please complete and return the consent slip below and return it to me by replying to the email address below no later than (INSERT DATE).

If you would like to discuss this opportunity further or have any questions about the research, then please contact me directly using the contact details below.

Thank you

Philip Price

(POSITION)

(NAME OF INSTITUTION)

(Tel: NUMBER)

(EMAIL ADDRESS)

Permission Slip:

This is to confirm that I (_____) am giving my consent to taking part in the research project as outlined in the invite letter I have received.

By signing this consent slip I am giving my consent to be interviewed and for the interview to be recorded.

I am also giving my consent for the interview to be used for the purposes of data collection and analysis for the purpose of the research.

I have been provided with all the relevant information regarding the research project and have a good understanding of what taking part in the research project will involve.

I give my consent to being contacted by telephone and email.

I understand a date and time will be arranged for the interview.

I have had the opportunity to contact the researcher and discuss any concerns or ask any questions that I have.

I understand that I can leave the process at any time and that data gathered by the researcher and any recording will be destroyed.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please return this consent form to the following email address -
(RESEARCHERS EMAIL ADDRESS)

Appendix D:**Proposed Interview Questions:**

Ten questions have been developed as prompts for the interviewer. The interviewer may not need to ask all these questions. The interviewer may adapt the questions and ask alternative questions/follow up questions to probe deeper into the interviewee's initial answers.

- 1). Can you tell me about your experiences of studying with a specific learning disability like dyslexia?

- 2). What aspects of your study do you find challenging?

- 3). How does your dyslexia impact your study?

- 4). Can you tell me about your experiences of taking an exam?

- 5). What adjustments did you have for your exam?

- 6). How did you find the overall process of preparing for your exam and getting exam adjustments in place?

- 7). What are your general feelings about exams compared to other forms of assessment?

- 8). Is there any support you feel you may have needed that wasn't offered for your exam?

- 9). If you could choose what would be your ideal form of assessment? Why would that be?

10). Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Appendix E:

EMA Reflection Grid

Category	Feedback received, targets achieved and areas of development worked on	How did this shape my dissertation
<p>Knowledge and understanding: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to knowledge of current debate and issues in your specific area of focus; drawing out concepts and themes; choosing a focus area for your dissertation; identifying and overcoming ethical issues.</p>	<p>a). TMA01 feedback – Try to be more explicit and build a deeper line of inquiry. Consider also the age of articles.</p> <p>b). TMA02 Feedback – ensure referencing is correct.</p> <p>c). TMA02 – a greater depth of ethical considerations and reference to material required.</p>	<p>a). Completed the recommended short course on writing explicitly. For the literature review for the EP set a date search range from 2013-2023.</p> <p>b). Refreshed my knowledge on Harvard cite them right referencing through the university library and the cite them right website.</p> <p>c). Acted as a reminder for the dissertation of the importance of ethical considerations. An adequate section on this was included as part of the research design linking to relevant theory from BERA and BPS.</p>
<p>Critical analysis and evaluation: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to justifying or challenging your personal perspective; interpreting and critically analysing evidence and methodologies from your own and others' research; analysing and</p>	<p>a). TMA01 feedback – Develop referencing to build ideas.</p> <p>b). TMA02 feedback – reconsider title of study to make it more neutral rather than a title that suggests</p>	<p>a). Researched more thoroughly for TMA02 and the EP and used referencing and citing to create and link ideas.</p> <p>b). I reworked the title and made it neutral. I also have reviewed research questions as part of the EP dissertation.</p>

<p>evaluating themes and issues; sourcing and critically reviewing a wide range of publications; creating an academic argument using synthesis; comparing and connecting practice and theory.</p>	<p>what the answers to the EP are going to be already.</p>	
<p>Links to professional practice: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to: designing and/or applying research methods; developing ideas from previous research and frameworks; reflecting and making adaptations during the research and writing process; addressing problems in research design; identifying implications for practice and professional debate; challenging your own assumptions; managing workload and personal motivation.</p>	<p>a). Feedback from TMA02 indicated that I needed to link the ideas discussed to practice and consider the feasibility of proposals.</p>	<p>a). Helped to consider how my EP would link to practice and how the literature review and conceptual framework underpins the study and relates to practice.</p>
<p>Structure, communication and presentation: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to using academic style and referencing; presenting, managing and sharing information in different modes; communicating concepts, findings and</p>	<p>a). TMA01 Feedback – work on being more thematic rather than descriptive.</p> <p>b). TMA02 Feedback – develop writing to be critical rather than descriptive.</p>	<p>a). Helped to develop writing style and link ideas and be more creative.</p> <p>b). My tutor suggested to complete one of the short-courses on critical writing from the TGF. This has helped to develop my understanding of writing critically. Aware that this is</p>

ideas for different audiences.	c). Feedback from draft chapters – on final version don't forget to ensure presentation is perfect e.g., page numbers, referencing, don't use contractions and include personal details in header.	an ongoing process and further development may be required. c). Reminder set in the form of a check list in dissertation journal to ensure all this is done before submitting.
---------------------------------------	--	---