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Survey of Life Science degree students' perception of how disability influences scientific skills

13-17% of students studying for a Life Science degree at university have a disability. Of these students, about 30% have a learning disability (AdvanceHE 2020). Inclusion across education contexts is critical to acknowledge and inspire the full potential of people with learning disabilities (Gilson, 2020). These group of students are given extra support by the University. However, how effective is this support? To explore this question, a preliminary study was carried out to compare the perception of students on how learning disability influences scientific skills. A survey of university students studying Life Science degrees in the UK was carried out. Analysis of the result was carried out using SPSS with a chi square test comparing the responses of students with a disability to those without a disability.

Of the 32 responses, 34.4% (n=11) acknowledged having a learning disability. The results showed that whether a student has a learning disability significantly contributes to their perception of their competence in scientific skills ($p=0.007$). However, the perception about the skills that students with a disability will be able to execute was not dependent on whether the respondent has a disability ($p>0.05$).

Summary: the outcome of this study brings to question the efficacy of the support for students with learning disability, provided by the University.

Key words

learning disability support, inclusion, student perception, scientific skills

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