Fair Employment of Autistic Researchers: Identifying and Addressing Barriers

https://employmentautism.org.uk/news/conference-2023/  
CADS conference

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JvQfc1BSXFQ  
Inaugural lecture by Professor Nicola Martin

https://www.lsbu.ac.uk/about-us/people/people finder/dr-nicola-martin
The Critical Autism and Disability Studies (CADS) research group at LSBU (amongst other things) seeks to understand and address barriers faced by autistic people in relation to gaining, keeping and progressing in employment in academic roles in our universities.
Influences
## National strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026

**Autistic involvement in this agenda?**

Moving beyond tokenism...

### Priorities:

- **health**
- **education**
- **employment**
- **social care**
- **criminal justice**
- **community**

- Equality Act 2010
The Buckland Review

Announced 2nd April 2023

Autism Employment Review
Emancipatory Research

The thorny issue of allyship

Milton (2017)
Participatory Research

• ‘At the lowest end ... forms of non-participation are used by powerful actors to impose their agendas... tokenism... participants hear about interventions... may say something about them, which power holders denote as ‘input’... voices of participants will not have any effect on the intervention;... does not lead to change.

• At the higher end... participation is about citizens having more power to negotiate and change the status quo. Their voices are heard and responded to’.

• Levels of Participation | Participatory Methods; Institute of Development Studies Accessed 08-09-22
Arnstein’s 1969 ladder of citizen participation

Levels of Participation | Participatory Methods
Institute of Development Studies
Accessed 08-03-21

1. Manipulation
2. Therapy
3. Informing
4. Consultation
5. Placation
6. Partnership
7. Delegated Power
8. Citizen Control

Citizen Power

Tokenism

Nonparticipation
Interdisciplinary Collaborative Research

Themes

Inclusive:
- Education
- Employment
- Health and Social Care
- Older age
- Mentoring
- Research

Social Model thinking
Oliver (2013)
• Monotropism (Murray 2018) - In-depth interests
• Application /productivity
• Reliability /integrity
• Community building /mutual support /Empathy
• Energy /enthusiasm

‘Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world’.

bell hooks

Autistic strengths
• Access to diagnostic / post-diagnostic services / services which are behind a wall
• Educational exclusion / unemployment / underemployment / poverty
• Stereotyping / threats to autonomy / agency
• A treacle of bureaucracy / navigating chaos

Autistic challenges
Reasonable adjustments are often cheap and easy and benefit everyone.

- Embedding Universal Design (UD) reduces the requirement for reasonable adjustment.

- UD is about planning for diversity rather than being surprised that there is no such person as ‘Mythical Norm’.

- Autistic people know what they need.

- Nobody thrives in chaos.
People and systems need to reliably do what they say they are going to do.

Planning needs to be built on empathically, looking at situations from various perspectives and enacting the anticipatory duties of the 2010 Equality Act by planning for diverse participation.

Logical workable systems communicated clearly make life easier and more productive for everyone.
Universities do not always have support in place for autistic students at the start of their course and services are not necessarily appropriate for doctoral candidates.

Employment services such as Access to Work do not easily translate into useful support.
Diagnosis /post diagnostic support

Falling between learning disability & mental health services

Autistic people who do not use words and older family carers are often not heard

GP Health checks are not uniformly available & do not cover dentistry or mental health. Medical practitioners are not well informed about autism
A way forward

• Joined-up autism research would be useful as various funders fund similar projects

• Real participation of autistic people in research which is informed by the priorities of autistic people (Pellicano, et al 2014)

• Autistic researchers would benefit from stable employment contracts

• Support for organisations such as PARC
Sample Publications (co-authored with autistic researchers and-or focussing on employment in academia)

- **Human Rights: The Right to Work in Academia**

- **Healthcare Barriers, Health Outcomes, and Annual Health Checks for Autistic Adults: A Cross-Sectional Study of General Practitioners’ Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices**

- **General Practitioner Autism Training and Mandatory Medical Training: A Cross-Sectional Study of GPs’ Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices**
A Practical Response to Ableism in Leadership in UK Higher Education

University through the eyes of autistic students and staff

Perspectives on UK university employment from autistic researchers and lecturers

Practical Scholarship: Optimising Beneficial Research Collaborations Between Autistic Scholars, Professional Services Staff and ‘Typical Academics’ in UK Universities
• A critical reflection on the development of the Participatory Autism Research Collective (PARC)

• Identifying and Addressing Barriers to Employment of Autistic Adults

• Does 'mentoring' offer effective support to autistic adults?: a mixed methods pilot study

• Autism in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities: A Report on The First Autism Voice UK Symposium

• Encouraging disabled leaders in higher education: recognising hidden talents

• Examining intellectual prowess, not social difference: Removing barriers from the doctoral viva for autistic candidates
Useful References


