



Design thinking: episode four

Podcast transcript

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Key

+ **Bo:** Dr Bo Kelestyn (host)

+ **Dave:** Dave Thomas

Transcript

Bo: Hello and welcome. My name is Dr Bo Kelestyn and you are listening to a limited podcast series on design thinking created in partnership with Advance HE. Today's guest, Dave Thomas, is a senior advisor at Advance HE, focusing on EDI and leadership. Dave is an occupational scientist and public health specialist with a remit in social justice. His doctoral research focuses on investigating the impact of westernized ontologies, epistemologies and pedagogy on racially minoritized students' interaction with teaching staff, and the effect of these have on shaping their educational trajectories and experiences. Dave has several publications in the areas of race, racial justice, inequality, educational psychology, occupational justice and social justice.

I really wanted to learn more about Dave's work and explore the connection between design thinking, leadership and inclusivity, and the ways in which we need to go about building truly inclusive cultures and learning communities.

Thank you so much for finding the time, really excited to be talking to you, but let's start from the beginning. Tell us more about your current role. What are you doing? What are you researching? And of course, the amazing work that you're doing for Advance HE.

Dave: Thank you so much Bo, and thanks for having me. I think it's very interesting, you know? So when, when you asked me about the work that I'm doing, you know, it often takes me into many, many different directions, but at the heart of it right at the heart of it, I think about what motivates me to get out of bed in the mornings and what prevents me from getting into bed at night.

And that is, that is, social justice. Right? So, advocating for, especially the people who are marginalized and oppressed, you know, so if I was an environmentalist, I would say to you, the ones that are evangelizing to are not the ones who are converted, not the ones who have been, quote on quote, saved.

I'm interested in the ones who have been written off and thrown in the gutters and left for dead. Right. That is the one. Or, specifically the ones with the divergent views, the ones who just don't believe in it, right? So let's say diversity and inclusion, the ones who believe in

privilege and advantage, and that meritocracy is a real thing and everyone can achieve as much as they want by their own industry and their own accord.

So those are the people I'm interested in having conversations with to actually to learn about their, you know, their philosophy. And understand why is it that they're sort of static in their views. And I think it is in this divergence that we find convergence. Right? So, yeah. So what am I doing? The things that I'm doing, I'm investigating students' perceptions of the cultural sensitivity of their curriculum and its implications or impact on their engagement in higher education.

So that keeps me. At night, that's been keeping me awake for the past four years by way of a doctoral degree. And the offshoots of that, uh, are again, things around social justice, particularly for marginalized groups. So I'm specifically talking about diversity and inclusion. What is it? You know, what does it mean and who does it matter to?

Right. Uh, and then for Advance HE just by by some sort of serendipitous luck, I am also doing that right. Investigating inclusive leadership. What does that look like? and I'm also investigating all things, diversity and inclusion. So it sounds like a lot, but really, I it's, it's all hand in glove, right.

Everything is interlinked in some way.

Bo: Sounds amazing. It's a lot. And I'm sure there was a lot more involved than luck by being a senior advisor. let's talk a bit about this connection between inclusivity work and student engagement, because to me, they go hand in hand, right? We can't create an inclusive curriculum, inclusive institution without engaging students in what that means and co-creating with students.

Dave: So, you know, when you talk about student engagement, I remember, I remember 2010, about 2010. When I used to hear conversations relating to student engagement, conceptualizing this activity as something that students do, the students are not engaged. And then the questions are, so if they're not engaged, what are they? And that used to bother me because I used to think, well, do students actually know that this is something that they need to do by themselves? Or do students think it's something that they do along with their teachers, you know, with their faculty, with their professional services staff.

And so that really helped me to sort of hone some key questions to ask colleagues because I thought, okay, so students' perspectives of student engagement is, you know, they're, they're myriad, right? So that's one aspect of the puzzle and staff's perspective is another aspect. And somewhere between those two perspectives must lie the truth. So I started to ask people about it and I started to investigate the literature. And, you know, I started to look at key pieces of literature, like Vincent Tinto talks about student engagement. And, you

know, I'm thinking about Tinto speak about assimilation. I'm like, nah, it doesn't feel good to me.

Right. Because there's something missing. and I realize. Student engagement is a myriad of interpretations of this nebulous concept but at the heart of it, it's actually an activity that should be done by students, along with their educators and everyone in the learning environment. So I've come to that conclusion. I think that's where we are now.

Bo: Yeah. What do you think are some of the biggest changes or shifts in student engagement that you've seen over the last few years?

Dave: Certainly I believe educators are now understanding that, uh, student engagement involves hearing from the actors themselves. So in some quarters, there are many, many initiatives whereby students can be involved and avenues where students can voice their perspectives and their opinions on the subject. And that's important that these, these opinions are, uh, shaping and informing institutional activities and initiatives. So that has been, I would say that the largest shift that I personally have seen over the past couple of years?

And then there's another shift that I'm seeing that there is now a consensus that student engagement is not a single aspect. It is not the extent to which students are engaged in curricular activities. You know, it is a lot broader than that. So a lot of colleagues also appreciate the fact that student engagement encompasses co-curricular activities as well. And they encompass academic and pastoral activities, which is important.

And then I would say the largest, shift I've seen more so, is the understanding that culture is infused in this idea of engagement, which is, which is very interesting. So when I say culture, I'm speaking broadly about, ways of doing, ways of being, so I'm not necessarily speaking about, race, nationality, that sort of stuff.

That's not, that's not what I'm relating to here. So it's ways of doing ways of being, so there is a culture that students either assimilate into or not, and there are subcultures, you know? and I think, yeah, those understandings for me have, have been the key understandings that have been, voiced and are emerging over the past few years.

Bo: and do you feel that. You know, obviously students are moving and evolving and changing and are very active. Do you feel like the institutions are responding to some of these shifts as fast as the students are perhaps willing to engage or engaging in their education?

Dave: I don't think so. I believe institutions are often playing catch up, which is quite ironic, really, because we are also as a sector playing catch up with other things, you know, so

we've seen the repercussions of the pandemic and how we, we quickly shifted to a different form of provision.

And so it, you know, it begs the question as to whether we can actually utilize the same impetus to shift our understandings and our actions to align them with the needs of students. And so when you think about students who are in spaces, or educational spaces are becoming more diverse, increasingly diverse, and the actions are not, aligned with that, that increase.

So we're playing catch up. We're playing catch up. We have an idea of who is in the space, but we don't understand fully the needs of the people who are in the spaces.

Bo: That empathy bit is missing. I think.

Dave: Exactly. And so, like you think about the types of cultures that exists in, higher education and the extent to which these cultures can facilitate greater student engagement or cause barriers to student engagement. So the open culture, you know, the three types of culture, right? The open culture, the backstage culture and the beneath the stage culture, right. Or the counter cultures. And I think it's the counter cultures that are posing barriers to student engagement.

So the open culture. Yes. Okay. Most, most people understand that there are some standard things that you do. And the backstage culture, the one where, you know, you don't see this right through the front door, but when you get in you, you know, students often think, oh, I never knew it was like this, but still there's the beneath the stage culture, the subcultures that, you know, these cultures are so transfixed and they are just immovable and that's where the challenges lie really.

Bo: Yeah. Do you feel there were any positive things that came out of the pandemic in relation to student engagement? Have you seen maybe good examples of that in the sector?

Dave: I genuinely believe that there were positives, because you know, one of the things that adversity does, it forces us as human beings to be more innovative in the way we operate. So there has been shifts in, in certainly in the ways we operate. So let's, let's think about hybrid learning. I remember pre pandemic that was a thing that it was a no-go area in some disciplines. But now we can see, we have harnessed that in a way and harvested the potential whereby we can reach greater numbers of students in different geographical areas in real time. So that that's a real victory for this sector, I think? we still have the challenges that comes with that, particularly for, neurodiverse students who would face barriers to engagement in that particular way. But I think broadly speaking, we are still learning, uh, and we have harvested that somewhat.

Bo: Yeah, which is really positive. So, so it's good to have the positives, right. As well as the challenges.

Dave: I think so. I think it's important because we have to acknowledge that, you know, there there's never a perfect time and there's never a perfect setting, but what people generally want is to see the incremental changes and to understand that the wheels are actually moving in the right direction. So it's important to celebrate these marginal gains.

Bo: Yeah, absolutely. So linking this to you know, this concept of design thinking a little bit, you know, and given all of the shifts that you've seen over the last few years, particularly brought about by the pandemic. Why do you think is design thinking relevant and timely?

Dave: Well, if we think about the idea that, okay, let, let, let me put you in a different environment. Let's let's think about healthcare, for a moment, just for a moment. And if you're designing, services for, let's say the healthcare sector, you probably wouldn't want to design any service without consulting with the service users, the people who are going to be using the service.

Right. So I think that's really, really important. You can't design it for us without us. And,

Bo: Yes, absolutely.

Dave: and so if you bring it back to, design thinking and, you know, education, it's really important that we acknowledge diversity of thought, diversity of needs and diversity of approaches. And so the in design thinking that is probably the key.

And we have, we have those assets as I'll call them, in HE. You know, we know that through agendas like internationalization agenda, we are, uh, importing diversity en masse. We know that our data, our HESA data tells us that, uh, students from marginalized groups are entering higher education proportionally at a higher rate than any of the students, particularly grad students.

And so to what extent can we actually harness that and utilize that for good, right. For the good in our design thinking. So cognitive diversity I'm speaking here specifically is good. Also demographic diversity and thinking about, or design thinking in an intersectional way. So broader than accessibility, much broader than accessibility, I would say.

Bo: Yeah. Well, one of the things that, I started thinking about as you were talking, and a great example of healthcare, I think that will hopefully help people and our listeners to kind of connect the dots here. But, I'm thinking some of the barriers to engagement with design thinking in HE, or one of the barriers has been the language.

Things user service design. I think sometimes it can sort of, make our colleagues feel like we are too close to the whole marketization of education thing. What's your take on that? and particularly, you know, as a culture expert, language I guess makes such a difference. What's your take on this whole, you know, tool that's making its way out of the industry and the language that still hasn't quite caught up with the language of higher education?

Dave: I think what we have to appreciate is that language is ever-changing right. It never stands still. So if we are really interested in being truly inclusive, we have to, adjust our thoughts and appreciate that we have to change, we are changing language. So we have to get up to speed with it.

Right. how can you then get up to speed? You are designing services or systems, processes for people in your environment. Who are also changing by the way, right? If you take student admissions, you know, as people would normally say, every three years, you get a cohort and you never know if you're going to get the same cohort next year. So it's, it's changing along with the language. What you want to do is to, ensure that your, design thinking is representative of those changes. So it's a continuous process of incremental improvement, right? It's a cyclical process. There is no end to it. So I think it's important to think about, you know, that design and marketization.

Yes. That is important, but this is the world that we live in. And, and it's very unfortunate, but that is the world that we live in, you know? So I, I believe that when we think about design thinking, we think about who's it for and who is represented, but most importantly, in our designs who is not represented.

Bo: Yeah. What are the silences? Absolutely.

Dave: I think that is important, who is not represented, but starting with the question, who is it for? Who is it for? Why are we doing this? Who's at the table? Who is represented in the design, who can see themselves represented? So I will borrow, some of the concepts that I use in my own research. When I talk about culturally sensitive curriculum and I speak about four aspects.

So I speak about positive portrayals, right? So let's say in our design thinking, are we, demonstrating positive portrayals of diversity and inclusion in those designs. And then, okay. Let's say we are enacting that. It goes beyond body count, right? So are we enacting diversity positively?

Whereby people can see themselves, their cultures, their histories, their traditions, they can see it represented. And then is this represented in a way that enables them to develop the agencies to challenge power, to challenge hegemony, to challenge status quo. And it sounds simple, but really are we developing that sort of environment whereby people can challenge for good.

And then the fourth aspect I would say is inclusive interaction. So does our curricula promote inclusive interactions? So, if we are thinking about design thinking, you know, we, we transfer that to design thinking, does it promote inclusive interactions? And I think those questions are some, some key questions that, you know, we could be asking ourselves. So in terms of thinking about inclusivity and culture and design thinking, I think we start from questions, you know, asking ourselves some key questions.

Bo: Absolutely. But so lots of universities now, and I'm sure you're seeing this a lot more than I am, from your expert point of view, you know, lots of universities, lots of institutions are working on developing inclusive education and developing strategies that are using inclusive education as the focal point. What role do you think design thinking could play in some of these efforts right now?

Dave: I think it's a really, really key area. If we get it right in design. So let's think about this as a piece of research. If you don't get it right from the design, once you've done the research, it's very, very difficult at that stage to make the corrections.

And so I think I see design thinking as the bedrock of, of inclusion, right? Thinking about the foundations that we will construct, thinking about the golden thread that runs through the entire process, through the design. And so following that, inclusion then will necessarily follow because you have designed your structures, processes, practices on an inclusive foundation.

So I think, yeah, I think design thinking is key in that, in that aspect.

Bo: That's great. Just thinking particularly about some of the stages of design thinking, empathy being the first one. And in a context of inclusive education, one of the challenges, a listener or someone who's new to design thinking that might be having at this point, or the questions they might be asking themselves is how can a senior white member of staff empathize with a student of color? It's a very sensitive question, I realize, but I'm wondering is there anything we can do or say to people like that to lower the barriers to design thinking?

Dave: Yeah, that's a really interesting question, but you know, the question I'll ask in answering that question is let's take empathy. Empathy is a, is a human trait. So if we, because we often in academia, we often intellectualize some of these key concepts, we over intellectualise. And at a basic level, if we de intellectualize that the concept of empathy, then we might understand that in terms of design thinking.

Yes, I'm not from that background, I don't share that characteristic, but in terms of empathy, there's nothing preventing me from actually actively seeking out diversity. And as I mentioned from the opening, divergent views are actually very, very important in any

process of design. So I would say to anyone who is interested in authentically exploring design thinking, empathy is key, but actively seeking out difference will help to inform the approaches to empathy. So you can understand and being humble, you know, being humble in this seeking out and listen to the lived experiences as their truths. Right. Really important. Their truths.

And it's about being user centric. Right? So, as, as I mentioned before you, the fundamental aspect of it is designing it for the user, for the person who will use the services and not for yourselves. You spoke about the marketization, right? There's a fine balance between, you know, designing in a user centered manner, as opposed to, in a manner whereby you can yield the most profit or the most benefit financially. You know, we have to balance those scales. So we focus on the human aspect first because humans are, are our users. and think about the human traits that we need to ensure that we are designing the system to accommodate those traits.

Bo: Yeah. And you know, I also feel that students really sense the difference when the intention is there versus where it isn't.

Dave: Yes. And then, you know, when you think about design, when we think about design thinking, I often wonder about the extent to which, like, so socially constructed concepts, you know, to what extent are we de constructing them socially and reconstructing them? You know, reconstructing more inclusive concepts in terms of our designs. So dare I say it, but it all almost aligns with an idea of, decolonization, almost, almost dare I say it, right? But not metaphorically, but actually authentically, uh, decolonization whereby you're, you know, you're accounting for historical injustices, historical harm, and fragmenting that and redesigning more inclusive systems.

Bo: Yeah, absolutely. But starting from the point of view of acknowledging that the systems don't work.

Dave: Exactly, exactly. But how do we acknowledge that the systems don't work? I think the designer themselves, it's very difficult for the designer themselves to acknowledge it. That's where you have to interact with, with the humans, you know, with the people who are actually using the services and the system.

Bo: Yeah, absolutely. But you know from my experience, and having done some of the design thinking work at Warwick, it really does have an impact on the sense of learning community. I've said in some of the previous episodes, the solution isn't always the end, right?

I think actually isn't always the intended outcome. Sometimes it's actually just these conversations, as just this kind of questioning, as you said, asking those powerful questions and meeting each other in the middle. That's I think what sometimes is more important than what shifts the culture. You know, students really see the intention through that rather than

necessarily the solution. I think sometimes it's also the intention and what we actually do rather than what happens in the end of that process. And I think institutions are sometimes a little bit too focused on what is the outcome? What is the end goal, rather than seeing the value in the conversation itself.

Dave: Yeah. I agree. I agree. Because you know, again, the first port of call is to get to know the people who are going to be using the system. You know, and as I said, students are transient in most cases, on a four-year cycle or a three-year cycle. So to what extent are we actually connecting with students and understanding their needs?

You know, are there mechanisms whereby we can hear their voices and they can communicate with us, but more so we can communicate with students. And then, okay, so the problem to the problem stage. Once we've had that communication, who defines the problem, right? Who is defining the problem.

Bo: Yeah.

Dave: And then who is thinking through the processes of developing the solution. So the creativity will never happen in one dimension. And that's where you need the cognitive diversity. So you need myriad voices, myriad approaches, myriad lenses, to see and decide on the solutions. And then it's about, you know, Okay, let's test drive the idea, right? So we've, we've designed this solution collaboratively as a community of practice and let's let's test drive an idea and see if it works right.

Very importantly, test it with the community who we think will utilize the services. And that's again, that's where diversity comes in. So visible diversity, invisible diversity, demographic diversity, diversity cognitively.

Bo: Yeah, it needs to be across all of those stages. Doesn't it?

Dave: It has to be, and intersectionally as well, because if you just do, you know, if you just accommodate for one indices of diversity, you will miss others. So we have to appreciate that people enter spaces with different identities that are embodied in one body. So at any given time, no person is entering any space with just one identity. And these identities are changeable as well.

Bo: That's an interesting point to make. Absolutely. I'm wondering, have you seen really interesting examples of different thinking or new ways of doing things when it comes to student engagement that perhaps could inspire people or get them to think about what they are doing in a different way?

Dave: I can think really off the top of my head, of an example of curricular changes that has happened at the University of Kent. And this is through Professor Kathleen Quinlan and her work in the Center for the Study of Higher Education. So, Professor Quinlan worked with her researchers in auditing curricula, right.

Um, thinking about reading lists, thinking about the composition of these reading lists and, how diverse these reading lists are or work in that case. But what she found was that when we think about the sources that are on the reading list, people often discredit the images that are used in teaching. And that is quite innovative. So are these images portraying diversity in myriad formats. And in her research, along with Dr. Barbara Adewumi, they found that the images were not.

Bo: Interesting.

Dave: So really just a snapshot, just one brief example. And actually I might add that students were integral in this process. So, students were the ones who were analyzing these images. Students were consulted throughout the process. And students were involved in the reporting of these data. So at the heart of that was the user, the students.

Bo: Yeah. Co-creating across every stage.

Dave: Exactly. Exactly.

Bo: Yeah. So thinking about our listeners or people who might be engaging with this resource at different stages of knowing, understanding design thinking, but also perhaps at different stages of the inclusive education work in their institutions and their local contexts. What advice would you give people when it comes to, you know, design thinking or any other alternative approaches to student engagement and inclusive education?

Dave: I think fundamentally if we're thinking about inclusion, we're thinking about including who? You know, who is it for? Really important, right? Who is represented and most importantly, who is not, and how are they represented? So diversity in itself is not, you know, we have to think about it broader than an end some game, right?

Because you can have diversity present, but it is negatively portrayed and that has deep implications. Right. So we want what we're after is positive portrayals. And why are we after positive portrayals? You know, we can't divorce the human aspect of it. So again, when we think about empathy, what matters to people from different communities?

So every single stage, it involves a connection on a human level with the people who we are designing these systems for, and involves us actively seeking their opinions, seeking their perspectives. Creating spaces where we can speak, where we can co-create, where we can collaborate in these communities of practice.

I think that is very, very important. And students, we have to remember, you know, are the experts at being students. So we don't speak for people. We speak with people. We don't silence and eliminate voices. We amplify voices. And that's what students have been

lobbying for. You know, we see, we hear all these conversations going right back to the Rhodes Must Fall the decolonised curricular, why is my professor? We were hearing these conversations, students now are being empowered and they are telling their version of the truth.

Dave: So I think we need to be listening. We need to find spaces where students can have the psychological safety to express their opinions and we need to develop trusting collaborative relationships whereby we can act upon these, these requests from students, and share practice with students.

So feedback is important, right? Feedback is really important in this, but once we design our systems, students need to see themselves represented. So representation become key as well.

Bo: Yeah. And I agree with you. I think all of these things will also open up access to leadership, student leadership for more different types of students. Because I think that's, to me, that's one of the issues that some of the existing student engagement, student voice structures attract a certain kind of student.

And my hope that through not necessarily pure design thinking, but at least through alternative approaches, students are involved at every stage and it's done with this intention of actually having authentic dialogue with the students.

I also hope that that will change culture and invite student leadership in, like you said, in a myriad of ways, rather than just one way such as the, you know, the Sabbatical Officer, or maybe the SSLC rep. I think to me, that's also crucial.

Dave: Yeah.

I think that's important. And I've seen in many institutions where students are actually, creating spaces, you know, carving out these niches for themselves, whereby they can develop their leadership skills. And we see that through student societies. We see that through student governors, you know, some student governors actually getting nominated to sit on boards.

But for me, the, the most important aspect of that is the spaces that students are carving for themselves. So it tells me that there is a need for students to identify with a community, that, that looked like them. Right. And, And so how do we engage those students in the conversations in the various student groups?

I remember conducted my own research and I had tremendous support from students groups. And if I should name names, which I probably won't, but there are some student groups that are heavily staffed. Their membership is huge. And as, as institutions, we need to be recognizing that, you know, because there is a need there, that's not being satisfied.

And there are structures that have been created by these students that actually work,

Bo: Yeah.

Dave: So how do we invite these students who have created those successful structures to the table to inform our thinking processes?

Bo: Absolutely. Dave, I'm wondering, to anyone listening, what would be a way to connect with your work, with you, and your research? How can people learn more about what you do and meaningfully engage with it?

Dave: well, people can find me on LinkedIn. That's one of the key ways people can communicate with me. Also Twitter. So I have a Twitter handle @DaveThomasOT. and those are the only, probably the only two social media presence, but you can always find me at Advance HE my, my email is there, you can get me there.

Bo: Amazing. And you've got lots of stuff happening with. sort of disseminating work, publishing work. What's the latest thing that people can expect to look forward to?

Dave: So, there is a book that I've co-edited along with Professor Abby Day, Dr Lois Lee, and Professor Jim Spickard from California. And that book is going to be launched in May this year. So, the previous book was with Professor Jason Arday, which is now out on the shelves and for consumption, Doing Equity and Diversity for Success in Higher Education.

And that one speaks about redressing structural inequalities in the academy. Well, most notably I can't speak about that book without speaking about one of the persons that inspired me, which is the late great Dame Jocelyn Barrow. So the book was dedicated to her and her work. certainly in these islands of the Great Britain, in developing what was called multicultural education at the time.

So she was a pioneer, one of the pioneers along with people like Stuart Hall, in developing multicultural education. So the book that book specifically was dedicated to her and her work.

The things that inspire my publications are often, conversations that I have with, with students. I've been lucky over the past couple of years, I've spoken to thousands of students and this is face-to-face pre pandemic, easily I could speak to at least a thousand students face-to-face and what's contained in all of my, my writings are issues that concern students. So that motivates me, or issues that concern my colleagues, my fellow academics. I write in a problem solving way about these issues because I realized that we often get caught in problem posing sort of philosophies, right? We write about problems, write about problems and there is no solution focused to it.

So I try to be more transformational in the work that I do in the way I conceptualize these problems. and I present my work in that particular way.

Bo: Which is so important. Making it more accessible just by doing that as well.

Dave: Yes. Yes. Yes. And, and the other key thing I, I really make a concerted effort to do is to collaborate with colleagues. because I think if we, you know, we have more, more cognitive diversity, I think our scholarship might be more powerful. So I like to write collaborative. And, that's the way our, you know, moving forward for me.

Bo: Absolutely. So was there anything that you think we should ever could have discussed that we haven't touched on?

Dave: I also appreciate that there is an aspect of, neurodiversity, because in the design thinking, I think, that is a very, very important aspect of, you know, our designs that we need to be considering. And the numbers of students who are disclosing neurodiverse needs is on the increase.

Dave: And that can only happen if we create psychologically safe spaces, whereby students can, you know, can feel that safety to disclose. And not mask or assimilate, as they call it. So that's something that really, that concerns me and something that I want to explore in greater detail. You know, how, how well do we empathize with those students? Are those voices represented? does our design really accommodate the needs of those students. And actually, if we're thinking about ramps and lifts, if we would design our provision in that particular way, and thinking about neurodiverse needs, would it not be a better thing for everyone in the end?

Bo: Absolutely. And I guess that also goes back to what you were saying about carving out spaces. It's also creating those opportunities and mediums through which neurodiverse students can engage in the activity of design thinking itself in some of these alternative approaches. Right. Because I guess we need to think about the themes, the challenges, but also how we actually engage them in the activities themselves, given neurodiversity.

Dave: Exactly, and I remember previously when we designed the learning materials, we would design these materials for neuro-typical people. Right. Uh, And so once our learning technology started to, to really clamp down on inclusive designs, it has now become, so and I use the word 'normal' deliberately, so normal for us to consider neurodiverse needs even at the design phase, you know, you're putting together a slide. Do you put a yellow background with a white writing? Obviously you don't, you know, so. So when we're thinking design thinking, if we start infusing those, those ways of being within our practices, could it not be a good thing for everyone?

I remember sitting in a massive lecture theater once. Professor Huxley-Binns was delivering a sensational keynote. And there, there was someone doing British Sign Language, and there was also captions on the slide, so everyone could participate, you know, and I thought myself, for some reason I was reading from the captions, right.

So everyone was able to participate. And that, that for me is a good design. I might not have a hearing impairment, but I can still access the same or use the resources in a similar way to which people who have an impairment would access the resources. I can still access it in a way that, you know, someone who has a neurodiverse need could access it.

So everyone wins.

Bo: So much to think about and so much to reflect, I'm certainly walking away from this conversation, thinking my goodness, I have not even scratched the surface. So I hope that listeners will also at least pause to reflect on the kinds of intentions and the kinds of actions they're taking in creating positive experience for all in their learning communities.

Dave: Yeah, it's been a pleasure speaking with you and sharing my initial thoughts here.

Bo: Amazing, thanks so much again for your time.

Dave: No, thank you.

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Our strategic goals to enhance confidence and trust in HE, address systemic inequalities and advance education to meet the evolving needs of students and society, support the work of our members and the HE sector. We deliver our support through professional development programmes and events, Fellowships, awards, student surveys and research, providing strategic change and consultancy services and through membership (including accreditation of teaching and learning, equality charters, knowledge and resources).

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