Princewill Ahante

Profile:
Princewill Ahante is a London-based researcher and disability inclusion advocate with a background in Communications and lived experience of disability.

Through his recent MA project at the University of West London, ‘Who Says You Can’t Cycle?’ he explored how adaptive e-bikes can improve mobility for adults with lower limb disabilities. Combining surveys, stakeholder interviews, and academic research to gather insights and propose a behavioural change campaign.

Princewill’s commitment to inclusive research stems from his belief in amplifying underrepresented voices to drive systemic change. As a disability inclusion advocate, he seeks to influence policies and practices that ensure equal access for all.

Transcript:

[00:00:00] Hi, I'm Prince Ahante. I am hard of hearing. I also have mobility impairments and I am dyslexic as well.

(Voiceover) Why is it important to have diverse inputs in research?

[00:00:14] Yes, um, it's very important because, um, it's never, it's never the right thing to have an assumption and stick with your assumption when going into research. It's always good to hear first hand from. diverse people with diverse disabilities to be able to gather original opinion from them and, um, from their lived experience as it will help to ensure that they can give informed opinions to you that would enrich the research.

[00:00:44] Um, on, on a personal level, I've found myself in the past going to research on a set. So in my master's study, I limited the scope of my research. In trying to identify why adults with lower limb disabilities like myself, um, barely cycled in a city like London where cycling is an option and we have so many adaptive cycling options.

[00:01:11] And so, one of the mistakes I made was I, because I limited the scope when I put out a survey in trying to get some insights from adults with lower limb disabilities. It, it affected the richness what, what I was trying to gather out there in terms of the feedback I got. And if I had expanded it a bit more to be able to hear from others with other lived experience of not just with lower limb disabilities, but other impairments, those who are, who care for those with lower limb disabilities as well it would have enriched it a bit more.

[00:01:49] So, um, yes. So, in my view, it's always good to, um, gather as much as you can from every, everyone, um, not just one, uh, cluster of disability, but every cluster as much as possible.

(Voiceover) Have you been involved in contributing to co design or as a research participant?

[00:02:08] Um, in the past I've been involved as, um, both a research participant and lead researcher. And, prior to moving to the U.K. about 15 months ago, back in Nigeria, I worked with the Kaduna State Government. And in that position, I tried to make recommendations to improve accessibility for residents of the state with disability. And so, using my own lived experience and speaking to the different clusters, different communities of so back in Nigeria, we have associations of the blind, association of the deaf.

[00:02:50] Leper association, which is those with physical impairments. And so I was able to gather these groups, and I did not look at it from the angle of a lead researcher. So I came under my cluster, and then got members to all come together. So we all, we all try to come up with what the barriers we were facing were as regards to assessing services the state government was providing to the residents of the state and how they were excluding those with disabilities in different formats.
[00:03:16] And so, in that, in that respect, there were a lot of things that we were able to find. And, um, one of the findings, for example, was how those with, those who were deaf those who were deaf were not having to, they were having the communication barrier.

[00:03:38] So, as much as the government says you can come report you can come to this ministry to come and report, um, a situation, whether it's harassment or whether it's not being able to access a service like the health insurance scheme, there was the communication barrier. So that was just one of the many findings we got out of it as a fellow, um, participant. Um, but looking at it from the perspective of it, being a lead researcher as well, just like I said in my MA project recently, which was this year, yeah, I've also been, of course, I talked about the, the errors I made in terms of limiting the scope, but yeah, I guess those are the two examples. Thank you.

(Voiceover) In terms of your lived experience, what have you seen done well, or what has worked well for you in the past?

[00:04:15] Yeah, um, yeah, what works well. So from my experience, two things. The first thing is so checking in, making adjustments, trying to find out what, before you try to embark on the research or gather your participants or stakeholders, or like I like to say, your experts, first find out what they will need to ensure that you can get the very, as much information as possible from them.

[00:04:45] So if that is, for example, by having an interpreter, a sign language interpreter, or that is by having, like what happened where Sophie sent me questions in advance, having questions provided in advance, or however, whatever the adjustment might be, make it, provide it as much as possible to every disabled participant, um, so as to get as much information as possible from them.

[00:05:10] And then the second thing would also be to try to, again, code to co-creates the solution if you are trying to work on the solution. So as much as you might have your preconceived ideas, like this is what I think the solution is. Maybe before you have started embarking on the research or even during the process of engaging the stakeholders, the participants through however format, whether it's an online survey, an interview, a focus group.

[00:05:37] But it's also important that you try to listen with an open mind and let them bring the solutions as well. So it's something you can co-create together, whether in that engagement or in a future engagement. So it's very important. So those are the two things I would say.

(Voiceover) Can you share any common mistakes that researchers should avoid?

[00:05:56] First things first, beginning with the researcher, it's very important to leave your biases in the window or out the door. Just come with an open mind, whatever you might have seen during your desk research. Yes, you found all of that out, but come with as much, secondly, come with as much clarifying questions in however format it might be.

[00:06:18] Very important as well, because it allows you to get to hear new insights that you probably would not have gotten from already published materials or what you assumed the solution might be. And then another mistake not to make is, again, to be able to listen to every voice. So, there are certain people who might not be comfortable if for, if for example, you set up a focus group, some people might not be comfortable sharing that group.

[00:06:44] So if there's a way to reach out after, through an email, through however other, platform, you can try to do that because you want to ensure that no, no information or there's no gap that you've not filled. So you want to ensure you reach out as much as possible. Um, yes. And then the other thing is just to see every disabled participant as an expert.

[00:07:08] Very important because nobody knows about anyone's condition better than that person themselves, so and most of the time that can help inform that disability cluster in terms of what you're trying to get through in terms of your research, so those are the four things I would say.

(Voiceover) Is there anything else researchers should be mindful of when working with the disabled community?

[00:07:28] I would say, um, sometimes, especially in the in the day you have to have, or again, depending on the format of what you're trying to, how you're trying to get this information in your research, you have to always leave room for unforeseen circumstances as well. What I found both in Nigeria and here in the UK is you can plan, for instance, I don't know if this is part of the recording, but I showed up later than I should have, you know, there's some room for, there should be room for, okay, that some things could go wrong or some things might not, so try and make backup plans or try and reach out and try and find out like Sophie did to reach out to me to find out where I was and how I was.

[00:08:05] So that's one. Secondly, again, It's very important to be as transparent as possible with the disabled participants and let them know what you are trying to do, what you are hoping to solve, what problems you want to solve. Um, yeah, let them know because then it will allow them to really open up and share as much as they can. And yeah, I guess that's how it is, I would say.

(Voiceover) Do you have any final tips or recommendations you would like to share? Yeah

[00:08:32] Yeah, again, it goes back to transparency. So, the more transparent you are, and the more, the open line of communication you have to those who participated, those you tend to get to participate, the better, because, for instance, you could have, if you had a focus group, and there was something else that was not, you know said, or maybe the person forgot, because that's another, another disability in itself, they could also reach out, like, hey, And this happened to me, by the way, when I engaged one expert in September.

[00:09:06] You know, he did come back to me and reach out to me about somebody else to speak to, and what he omitted. I spoke with so what happened was I tried to work on cycling and I spoke with someone at Brompton, who then referred me to someone at BikeWorks, who then referred me to someone at Wheels for Wellbeing.

[00:09:22] So it was just these connections that I kept, that kept forming, not necessarily from the angle of forgetting, but from the angle of they knew what I was trying to do, and the help I would need to get it done, because they had not, I've been transparent with them, and they were able to provide resources.

[00:09:35] So I guess being transparent, open communication, and yeah, it helps because ultimately it's a large community. You want to be able to get as much to enrich your research from every disability cluster, every expert, every stakeholder. So yeah.