

WHAT DOES RESEARCH ON DISABILITY INCLUSION AT UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN REVEAL REGARDING STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE INCLUSION?

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ABSTRACT

Universities have historically had ableist leanings that exclude people with disabilities. Yet, people with disabilities have a right to attend institutions of higher education, as does everyone else. What is called for is that institutions transform towards disability inclusion. The purpose of this article is to use the case study of research conducted at University of Cape Town (UCT) to suggest strategies for disability inclusion in institutions of higher education. The research question was: What does research carried out at UCT on disability inclusion related to staff, students, and curriculum tell us about strategies that have been used to achieve inclusion, the effectiveness of these strategies and what recommendations can be made for increasing the level of disability inclusion and equity at UCT? A scoping review of the literature on disability inclusion at UCT was conducted. Selected literature was thematically analysed based on the research question and aligned to the strategic goals of UCT. Four emergent themes are presented: including disability in the decolonial discourse, collaborating to enhance disability inclusion, enhancing disability inclusive social responsiveness, and other strategies to enhance systemic change towards disability inclusion. UCT has made significant strides to include students with disabilities, yet there is much still to be achieved. Disability inclusion in institutions of higher learning is not only about

ensuring accessibility, but is also about addressing how disability is understood and how it is included in the curriculum.

Keywords: higher education, disability, inclusion, transformation, South Africa, Africa

INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

People with disabilities, in general, continue to experience a disadvantaged social status when compared to those without disabilities. They occupy an inferior position in various social aspects, including education, employment and full participation in society. Viewing disability as an individual, medical problem of the person propagates this marginalisation by diminishing the focus on stigmatising social interactions, environmental barriers as well as other social phenomena that define the experience of disability (Oliver 1990). Consequently, this article aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) to view disability as “long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder ... full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (United Nations General Assembly 2006, 4). The definition supports the social model of disability, where disability is viewed not in terms of the individuals’ impairments, but in reference to environmental, structural and attitudinal barriers that affect the lives of people with disabilities and which can inhibit their inclusion and progress in employment, education, leisure, and other areas of life, unless they are addressed (Oliver 1990).

People with disabilities experience social inequities, such as the denial of equal access to education, healthcare and employment, among other rights, features that make disability a human rights issue. The human rights approach to disability asserts that individuals with impairments possess legal entitlements and should engage in all facets of society on an equitable footing with those without disabilities (Degener 2017). The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations General Assembly 2006) commits countries to facilitate the full and effective participation of people with disabilities in society, including in education.

Social and educational benefits abound for the inclusion of students with disabilities in universities (O’Rourke 2011). Students with disabilities appreciate the opportunity to be physically situated on the university campus, and this has been viewed as a valuable initial stride in the inclusion process (Rickson and Warren 2018). According to Moriña (2017), being at the university offers students with disabilities a context of belonging, making them feel like members of a community. Students with disabilities see their enrollment at the university as a special opportunity to be included in society and to rebuild an identity that may have suffered

in previous educational stages. Moreover, access to university education, in general, can significantly increase the chances of a person being gainfully employed (Tholen 2014; Unger 1994).

Nevertheless, inclusion of students with disabilities into the various spheres of university life is not without its challenges. Sánchez-Díaz and Morgado (2021) identified several obstacles to the integration of students with disabilities in higher education, including inaccessible spaces and study programmes, unfavourable attitudes among faculty members towards individuals with disabilities and their accommodation needs, as well as the lack of truly inclusive policies. Besides, inclusion of students with disabilities into higher education environments can be a time and resource-hungry undertaking (O'Rourke 2011). Considerations of time and resource costs may be required to achieve formal programmes that holistically include students with disabilities in university environments.

When undertaking such initiatives, it is important to strike a careful balance in providing support and resources that enable informed decision-making (Rickson and Warren 2018). Additionally, during the academic journey, students with disabilities often have to navigate a process of integrating their identities both as people with disabilities and as students; they have to choose the time and place to perform each identity as well as to determine the implications of each choice along with its associated costs and benefits (Almog 2018).

Lecturers encounter difficulties stemming from both internal and external issues. Internally, they may lack the knowledge and skills necessary to cater to the requirements of students with disabilities. Externally, there may be a lack of disability policies for higher education at both the national and institution levels (Mutanga and Walker 2017). Martins, Borges, and Gonçalves (2018) note that meeting the needs of students with disabilities in the higher education context should not be based exclusively on the goodwill of individual institutions but should be a legal requirement contained in specific national legislation. Such legislation should focus on the adequacy of a wide range of aspects, for instance, institutional services and resources, the infrastructure and its accessibility as well as academic and social inclusion. Mutanga and Walker (2017) advocate for a more inclusive and all-encompassing strategy in developing a national disability policy for higher education, which should involve various stakeholders. Without a comprehensive comprehension of disability, it will prove challenging to actively participate in the intricate mechanisms through which injustices arise and persist.

O'Rourke (2011) notes the need for university staff to develop realistic, less rigid considerations of what inclusion can be like and what relationships with students with disabilities feel like within the higher education environments. This might call for lecturers'

personal responsibility to expand the opportunities of all students, including the development of a self-reflective curriculum that results in student-centred approaches that enhance learning (Mutanga and Walker 2017). Aust (2018) observes that the medical model of disability is sometimes the dominant reference used by lecturers when addressing disability. In the medical model of disability, persons are disabled by their impairments or differences, and the focus is on what is “wrong” with the person, rather than what the person needs (Fisher and Goodley 2007). It is important to make room for the social model of disability and to create an environment for applying teaching approaches that enable the inclusion of all students, including those with disabilities. A useful approach that resonates with the emphasis on enabling environments in the social model, is universal design for learning (UDL), an educational framework that can guide developing flexible learning environments and spaces that accommodate individual learning differences (Burgstahler 2021; Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) 2018).

Furthermore, research has shown the need for all stakeholders at the university (academic and support staff, administration and students) to make collaborative efforts towards the creation of a supportive education system that makes including learners with disabilities a reality (Mutanga and Walker 2017; Sánchez-Díaz and Morgado 2021). A cultural or organisational overhaul is deemed necessary to challenge the ableist orientation that, according to Almog (2018), pervades higher education. This is especially important because students with disabilities may encounter significant identity challenges within higher education institutions, where able-bodiedness and normalcy are often seen as essential for social and academic participation (Almog 2018, 225). In this regard, it is evident that the higher education system may need to increase awareness on disability inclusion and to develop targeted training to enable staff and faculty to engage meaningfully with students with disabilities (Almog 2018; Martins et al. 2018; Mutanga and Walker 2017). Accordingly, “simply opening the doors may not be enough”; much planning is needed in organising for participation of students with disabilities and sustaining their place within the classroom in higher education institutions (O’Rourke 2011, 30). The purpose of this article is to use the case study of research conducted at the University of Cape Town (UCT) to suggest strategies for disability inclusion in institutions of higher education.

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

UCT is the oldest university in South Africa and has consistently been ranked the highest among African universities (see QS World University Rankings, the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, and the Academic Ranking of World Universities). With such a high

ranking comes expectations to be a pacesetter and an exemplifier of best practice in the African context, such as in matters of equal access to university education by all learners, including those with disabilities. The UCT Vice Chancellor's Vision 2030 aims at transforming UCT into a future oriented institution and looks to address "Afrika's" challenges and contribute to global knowledge. Vision 2030 has strong decolonial and social responsiveness leanings, and strives to unleash human potential to create a just and fair society through research that is both relevant and excellent (University of Cape Town 2020).

The Office for Inclusivity and Change (OIC) at UCT aims to create an environment that promotes inclusivity and embraces change. Their objective is to establish a sense of belonging for everyone and to support and celebrate positive transformations. The objective of the OIC is to offer efficient assistance and promote cooperative leadership at UCT through evidence-based inclusiveness initiatives. Inclusivity is fostered through a comprehensive strategy that prioritizes curriculum development, disability services, institutional cultural transformation, policies to prevent sexual and gender-based violence, and research efforts (OIC 2022, para. 3). As per the OIC, UCT is dedicated to examining its advancement towards becoming a genuine African university that has eliminated racism, harassment, hetero-patriarchy, trans/homophobia, xenophobia, and other types of inequities. It is crucial to review tactics and processes that consistently assess and analyze progress towards creating an inclusive university that is accessible to everyone and is considered a preferred choice. The aspiration for achieving social equity for individuals with disabilities in higher education is a crucial component of this envisioned change, acknowledging that the ability to obtain education is an essential prerequisite for complete engagement in society and personal empowerment.

Towards this envisaged transformation, UCT sought to develop benchmarks and indicators for disability inclusion at the institution. The OIC commissioned a literature review of research conducted on disability inclusion at UCT, with a view to identifying and addressing barriers to inclusion at the university and determining indicators that might be utilised to monitor progress toward meaningful disability inclusion. The research question for this literature review was:

- What does research carried out at UCT on disability inclusion related to staff, students, and curriculum tell us about strategies that have been used to achieve inclusion, the effectiveness of these strategies and what recommendations can be made for increasing the level of disability inclusion and equity at UCT?

This article is an offshoot of the report of the findings submitted to the OIC Lekgotla for

Monitoring and Evaluation of Transformation and Inclusion in Higher Education in South Africa. The methodology used in conducting the research is presented below.

METHODOLOGY

A scoping review of the literature was conducted, which aims “to map *rapidly* the key concepts underpinning a research area and the main sources and types of evidence available ...” (Mays, Roberts, and Popay 2001, 194). The search for literature was conducted between 15th and 30th August 2021. The following key terms were used, with relevant Boolean logic: Disabilit*, Disabl*, Handicapped, Disability Inclusion, University of Cape Town, UCT, Student*, Staff, Curriculum*, Environment*. Databases searched were: EBSCOHost (including ERIC, CINAHL, Africa-Wide Information, Academic Search Premier and MEDLINE), Web of Science, and SciELO citation index, but yielded few relevant results (15). We used the same key terms and searched on UCT’s “Primo” engine with the following active filters: articles, book chapters, journals, dissertations, reports, reviews, books, and conference proceedings with the year range of 2010 to 2021. We identified 20 publications that seemed relevant. We consulted disability studies scholars at UCT for literature referrals based on our research question, and identified five more resources. After reading the abstracts of all the resources gathered and removing duplicates, 17 publications seemed relevant based on our inclusion criteria:

1. Studies were about disability inclusion.
2. Studies were about staff, students, and/or curriculum.
3. Studies were about UCT.

We read in full 16 resources (one article could not be accessed) and selected 12 publications “that appeared to represent a ‘best fit’ with the research question” (Arksey and O’Malley 2005, 26). These were five theses, four articles, one book, one book chapter and one student paper, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Selected Resources

Author/Date/Title	Category	Summary
McKinney (2016) An exploratory case study on the preparation of undergraduate civil engineering students at the University of Cape Town to contribute to an inclusive society for people with disabilities	Thesis	Revealed that individuals with disabilities continue to face numerous obstacles in the physical infrastructure. It acknowledged chances to integrate the notion of Universal Design (UD) into the exit level outcomes of the undergraduate civil engineering program. The study emphasized the necessity of establishing a formal platform that unites the primary participants in the training of civil engineering students to actively contribute to the advancement of an all-encompassing society that caters to those with disabilities.

Author/Date/Title	Category	Summary
Nwanze (2016) How can we include Disability Issues in Undergraduate Curricula at the University of Cape Town?	Thesis	Explored the integration of disability-related topics into the undergraduate curriculum at UCT. The primary objective was to determine the specific subject areas that should incorporate disability-related topics, the most effective instructional and evaluation techniques to employ, and the necessary support systems that are likely to be required.
Watermeyer (2000) Psychoanalysis and Disability: An exploration of the utility of psychoanalytic methods and analyses in the interrogation of social responses to impairment	Thesis	Explored the effectiveness of employing a critical psychoanalytic approach to examine how society reacts to disability, using experiential narratives from visually impaired university students collected through group analytic techniques. The incorporation of psychoanalytic thought and methodologies into disability studies is situated within an examination of many approaches to disability, such as the “medical” and “social” models, poststructuralist and discourse-oriented explanations, and phenomenological research. It is suggested that using a psychoanalytic approach to disability issues has great potential in examining how structural and societal reactions to impairment are influenced by internal psychological and deep-rooted emotional factors.
Pieterse (2020) Who benefits from online education? How the implementation of technology in higher education can result in increasing inequalities in higher education institutions	Thesis	This study aimed to ascertain if the integration of technology in higher education would result in enhanced accessibility to higher education through online learning and improved academic performance of students. Furthermore, the research sought to demonstrate the potential for technology integration in higher education to exacerbate disparities among students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. It was shown that students who originate from privileged backgrounds, in terms of both race and income, gain more advantages from online and blended learning compared to students from underprivileged homes. Tertiary institutions must exercise prudence while implementing blended learning and online education programs to prevent exacerbating educational disparities.
Ohajunwa (2012) A study to determine the extent and nature of disability inclusion within the curriculum of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Cape Town	Thesis	Investigated the integration of disability inclusion into the curriculum of the Faculty of Humanities. Despite the negative emotions of frustration, rage, and feelings of lack of power associated with the experience of inclusion, the Faculty of Humanities had initiated the implementation of a curriculum that incorporates the valuable perspectives and insights that come with disability.
Lorenzo and Cramm (2012) Access to livelihood assets among youth with and without disabilities in South Africa: Implications for health professional education	Article	Examined the disparity in access to five essential resources for young people with and without disabilities. The goal was to provide health professionals with information on the inequalities faced by disabled individuals and to track progress towards creating a society that is inclusive for all.
Howell, Lorenzo, and Sompeta-Gcaza (2019) Reimagining personal and collective experiences of disability in Africa	Article	Investigated the comprehension of disability in Africa by examining the individual and shared encounters of a cohort of postgraduate students at UCT in South Africa. The students, who either had disabilities themselves or worked as professionals in the sector, were tasked with creating a poster to demonstrate their comprehension of disability in Africa. This assignment served as a final assessment task. Factors such as social, political, and economic conditions were highlighted as influential and formative aspects of the disability experience in Africa. The authors contended that these discoveries hold significance for current conceptual frameworks about disability and its relevance to discussions on Africa and its progress.
Ohajunwa et al. (2014) Inclusion of disability issues in teaching and research in higher education	Article	It is suggested that the omission of disability concerns from the curricula of higher education institutions could lead to the continuation of discriminatory actions against disabled individuals in society at large. The study uncovered a dearth of disability inclusion, indicating that disability is not regarded as a matter of social justice and transformation. The study suggested establishing an institutional system that would enhance the abilities of lecturers to include disability into their teaching and research activities across different faculties, in accordance with UCT’s goal for transformation.
Ohajunwa, McKenzie, and Lorenzo (2015) Enabling disability	Article	This study examined the integration of disability inclusion into the curricula of higher education institutions and its impact on producing socially aware graduates who are equipped to confront the multifaceted

Author/Date/Title	Category	Summary
inclusive practices within the University of Cape Town curriculum: A case study		issue of disability in development. The authors emphasized that academic staff employed many strategies to incorporate disability, such as engaging in class discussions, practical applications, and service learning, mostly as a component of disciplinary obligations. The researchers determined that disability should be recognized and incorporated into the curriculum in a systematic way, as a unique perspective on diversity that challenges our views about ourselves and society.
Ohajunwa, McKenzie, and Lorenzo (2013) Beyond "if" to "how": Disability inclusion in higher education	Book	This study aimed to assess the level and characteristics of disability integration in the teaching and research curricula at UCT. The study conducted case studies in six faculties at UCT to examine the experiences of disability inclusion in teaching and research at UCT.
Lorenzo, ka Toni, and Priestley (2006) Developing a Disability Studies programme: Engaging activism and academia	Book chapter	The development of the Disability Studies programme at UCT was achieved by a collaborative effort between academia and the disability rights movement in South Africa. The program's main characteristics and consequences are described.
Abrahams (2018) Life as a student with a disability	Student paper	This text discusses the experiences of a student with a handicap at UCT, focusing on how the student dealt with issues such as stigma, communication and information systems, physical accessibility, study resources, and post-university plans.

Analysis strategy

Thematic analysis of the included literature was conducted by aid of the NVivo software. This involved uploading the articles into NVivo software, reading each one, and coding the information, guided by the research question and aligned with the strategic goals, vision, and mission of the OIC (OIC 2022) and of Vision 2030 of UCT (UCT 2020). Moreover, efforts were made to let the data speak for itself, which enabled a level of flexibility in the development of the themes. Four themes are presented, including: disability in the decolonial discourse, collaborating to enhance disability inclusion, enhancing disability inclusive social responsiveness, and strategies and resources for systemic change towards disability inclusion at UCT.

INCLUDING DISABILITY IN THE DECOLONIAL DISCOURSE AT UCT

The need for UCT to engage with disability and disablement in careful, nuanced as well as contextually relevant ways is evident. However, efforts towards transformation and appreciating diversity at UCT focus primarily on race and gender, and disability issues are minimally discussed (Ohajunwa et al. 2014; Ohajunwa et al. 2013). Furthermore, the major understandings of disability at the university are the individual model of disability and the social model of disability, both of which have a global North origin. Exploring other frameworks such as *Ubuntu* and the ethics of care would enrich the curriculum and, by extension, the conceptualisation of disability at the university, and lead to developing African specific literature that is currently minimal (Ohajunwa 2012).

Howell, Lorenzo, and Sompeta-Gcaza (2019) conducted a study with UCT students with and without disability from various countries in Africa who worked as disability practitioners. The views of the students challenged dominant thinking about disability in Africa, which is informed by a global North lens and does not address the contextual realities of the global South. Students highlighted how social, economic and political dynamics, in the specific cultural context of Africa, shaped the experience of disability. For example, using African proverbs like “Together we can lift an elephant”, students highlighted the importance of a communitarian approach to addressing disability-related challenges, instead of only using the human rights-based model that emphasises individuality. This rethinking was found to be useful to the decolonisation project, as it resisted the perpetuation of a coloniality of knowledge and the patterns of inequality that still frame the global world order. Howell et al. (2019, 1731) observed that relying on perspectives from the global North “also distorts the personal and collective experiences of the majority of disabled people across the world”.

Nwanze (2016) takes note of how a capitalist mind-set influences the curriculum to favor acquisition of technical skills to serve a neoliberal economy and neglects soft-skills: generic skills that are associated with non-academic abilities. The author argues that including disability in more meaningful ways calls for acquisition of soft skills focusing on values, teamwork, beliefs, attitude, ethics and moral skills, among others. Additionally, Nwanze (2016) notes that university education tends to benefit the rich elite who can afford it, while putting students with disabilities and others who are poor at a disadvantage. With such, the focus of the university is narrowed to internal market considerations, including the generation of revenue. It puts the emphasis on quantifiable results, compromising the quality of students’ experiences, their sense of self, and the promotion of inclusivity and diversity. This stems from the capitalist orientation of the university, which, although able to lead to improvement in teaching facilities and accessibility of the learning environment, increases the expense of education and restricts access to just those who have the financial means (Nwanze 2016). Addressing the cost of education benefits a broader group of students and, in this case, disability leads us to consider other bigger issues of social justice.

COLLABORATING TO ENHANCE DISABILITY INCLUSION AT UCT

Writing about how to include disability in the curriculum at UCT, Nwanze (2016) envisages a dialogue and an interdisciplinary collaboration to appreciate identities, soft skills as well as differences that students bring. This is because, for example, challenges in accessing study materials at the university are still reported. Abrahams (2018, n.p.) observes that, “in spite of requests for electronic material I still received hard copies and waited long for accessible study

material”. According to Abrahams (2018), lecturers do not know how to accommodate their blind students and such students often have to do self-advocacy. The students with disabilities have to make compromises, such as taking fewer modules per semester, and, consequently, taking longer to complete their study curriculum. Lectures also tend to refer most disability-related matters to Disability Services Office, even if the matters are curriculum related (Abrahams 2018).

It is emphasised that disability is “trans-disciplinary and does not relate in totality to any one discipline” (Ohajunwa et al. 2013, 21). According to Nwanze (2016), a community of practice could be built to lend support by sharing exemplary approaches that can be replicated, enhanced, and contextualised in the different disciplines. Additionally, collaborative partnerships between disciplines are necessary to help assess soft skills because expertise in this regard might be lacking. Ohajunwa (2012) highlights the need for seminars and training for interdisciplinary collaborations at the university. McKinney (2016) specifically reports the need for stakeholders at the university to collaborate in order to enable a multidisciplinary approach in the preparation of civil engineering students for disability inclusive practice. Then again, McKinney (2016) extends the discussion to stakeholders outside the university, noting the lack of collaboration between the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA), UCT and the industry. ECSA was regarded as being over-reliant on the South African Institution of Civil Engineering for its functioning, and was not involving other partners, such as UCT. Thus, UCT and these external stakeholders missed an important opportunity to learn from each other and enhance disability inclusion in engineering spaces.

Lorenzo, ka Toni, and Priestley (2006), reflecting on the process of developing a Disability Studies programme at UCT, highlight challenges posed by partnerships when establishing inclusive governance structures. Such partnerships with organisations for people with disabilities may become an emotive issue because of extant histories and hierarchies of power. Lorenzo et al. (2006) exemplify how academics faced initial suspicion and scepticism when they tried to initiate a partnership with the disability sector. The motives and philosophy, in addition to the existing political dynamics within the disability sector, have a history of suspicion, leading to strained relationships. The suspicions link with South Africa’s history of apartheid and the fact that rehabilitation services are composed mostly of professionals who, historically, have enjoyed a position of power over people with disabilities. Lorenzo et al. (2006) observe how the leaders from the disability sector looked at critical ways of engaging with the academics, while supporting opportunities for people with disabilities to pursue academic studies so as to assume authority in the disability sector.

ENHANCING DISABILITY INCLUSIVE SOCIAL RESPONSIVENESS AT UCT

Social responsiveness, in this context, refers to the methods adopted by UCT in response to current social needs. According to Lorenzo and Cramm (2012), some disability inclusion initiatives at UCT infuse social responsiveness to their structure. The Disability Studies academic programme at the university, for instance, encourages its academic staff and students to involve themselves in socially responsive projects with a view to promoting in-service as well as collaborative research. Engagements with members from the public service and non-governmental organisations, including organisations for people with disabilities, are aimed at contributing to disability inclusive development at a broad level of government (Lorenzo and Cramm 2012).

It should be noted that the pursuit of social responsiveness might be curtailed by the university capitalist orientation, where societal needs are prioritised based on the probability of profitable returns. In such a case, engaging in social responsive initiatives to support disability inclusion might be deemed less marketable than other ventures. Nwanze (2016), focusing on the curriculum, calls for a mind shift that is driven by the need for equality, inclusion, and transformation, to challenge neoliberal capitalist practices at the university. Even with that, considering the capitalist nature of society, it is not certain that developing pupils without a capitalist mindset will result in a selfless society, since they may struggle to adapt and integrate. Nevertheless, as the current capitalist framework fails to prioritize disability inclusion, the expectation is that incorporating disability concerns into the curriculum will challenge and transform the conventional educational practices. Nwanze (2016) reasons that disability is distinct from other marginalised identities in such a way that when attitudes of students change positively towards persons with disabilities, it might greatly influence attitudinal change towards other people in general.

According to Ohajunwa et al. (2013), incorporating disability into the curriculum would enhance the knowledge of UCT graduates beyond their specialized areas. This is important because disability is a worldwide concern that is connected to social justice. By studying disability, graduates would develop valuable insights into a global issue that has an impact on the workplace. Such graduates would have the ability to make a beneficial impact to the country's developmental challenges as people with disabilities are among the most marginalized demographics. On the same note, Abrahams (2018) observes the "reality" that faces students with disabilities upon leaving UCT. They often face challenges getting jobs because of the recruiters' negative attitudes towards disability and remain excluded from the economy. This challenge might be addressed by UCT engaging with potential employers, like the corporate world, to change perceptions towards disability and enhance disability inclusion.

Another important consideration remains South Africa's history of apartheid. As already presented under the point on suspicions in partnerships, the struggle against apartheid not only gave birth to an "activist" legacy, but also to significant community suspicions of the role and investments of academic institutions in development and transformation (Lorenzo et al. 2006), which is a facet of social responsiveness. Nevertheless, ongoing engagements and partnerships with communities are necessary to respond to the social needs and to contribute to the welfare of the community, including people with disabilities.

STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE TOWARDS DISABILITY INCLUSION AT UCT

McKinney (2016), using the example of engineering, observes that legislation pertaining to disability is an important tool for training civil engineering students to help build a society that is inclusive of people with disabilities. The strong transformation policy and agenda at UCT, supported by a committed leadership, has led to the institution making significant strides regarding its transformation goals and disability policy. McKinney (2016) notes that UCT has significantly increased the number of personnel and enrolment of students with disabilities, and has improved accessibility for individuals with disabilities on campus.

According to Ohajunwa et al. (2015), academic staff at UCT have a growing interest in incorporating disability-related topics into their teaching and research. However, the overcrowded curriculum is a significant obstacle to the successful implementation of this envisioned inclusion. Nevertheless, some academic staff at UCT have established means of including disability in the curriculum, such as discussions in class, in practice as well as service learning. However, this often happens as part of a requirement of the specific academic department, and including disability in the curriculum as a matter of social justice comes from a particular staff member's personal interest in an ad hoc style. According to Ohajunwa et al. (2014), there is a continued lack of disability inclusion at UCT, and disability is not recognized as a broader concern related to social justice and transformation. For example, within the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, disability is addressed in terms of legislation, space, and environment. The Faculty of Humanities, on the other hand, examines the sociocultural and socio-economic consequences of disability. In the Faculty of Health Sciences, disability is approached by considering individual impairment, environmental influences, community-based rehabilitation, inclusive development, as well as the prevention and management of disability.

UCT's Disability Services Office is cited as a valuable resource aiding disability inclusion at the university (Ohajunwa 2012). This resource focuses on availing services to enhance the

accommodation of students with disabilities and staff at UCT. Additionally, Ohajunwa (2012) sees an opportunity for the Disability Studies division (which is located in the Department of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences) to be a resource for enabling curriculum transformation by assisting different disciplines at UCT to include disability issues in their curriculum.

According to Ohajunwa (2012), forums for the dissemination of disability related research conducted by postgraduate students could be useful to stir debate about the inclusion of disability at the university. Moreover, Watermeyer (2000) has established that psychoanalytical approaches to disability issues are helpful to interrogate structural as well as cultural reactions to disability at the university. This is because oppressive reactions to disability can arise from and be influenced by intra-psychic factors and archaic emotional experiences.

WAY FORWARD

We now further synthesise the findings of the literature review and suggest strategies that might be utilised to achieve disability inclusion at the university. To attempt to convert words to action, we phrase our discussion points in question form.

How can disability be included in the decolonial discourse at the University?

Other models of understanding disability need to be considered, for instance, ethics of care (Kittay 2011) and *Ubuntu* (Berghs 2017; Gwaravanda 2021), in addition to the prevalent medical model of disability and social model of disability. The emancipatory nature of decolonial thinking also calls for considering disability in the transformation agenda on an equal basis with other issues such as race, gender, sexuality, and so forth. An increased enrolment of students and recruitment of staff with disabilities would go along way to challenge the hegemonic understanding of the space of disability as being outside the university. Likewise, including disability in the curriculum across disciplines, either as a topic or an integrated thread, would bring disability inclusion to the foreground and create points of reference for students who might need assistance in including disability in their practice and research. There is also need to resist the capitalist orientation of the university, and create room for more sensitive narratives that cherish the humanity of all beings beyond profit making. For example, UCT experienced pivotal student protests dubbed #Rhodes Must Fall and #Fees Must Fall, which necessitated paradigmatic shifts in terms of educational equity and the adoption of a decolonial department. These shifts have reverberated across the university and catalysed the holistic transformation that is now expressed in UCT's strategic goals, including the move towards disability inclusion. Similarly, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning has stimulated rethinking of the traditional in-person pedagogy and led to adopting distance and

other digital educational technologies (Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) 2021). Online content delivery modes have been widely used in this regard, and UCT has had to think of ways of including students who cannot afford, for instance, laptops and internet costs (laptops and internet data were issued to them). Coupled with that, the university has had to consider those who need additional adaptations to access the content delivered online, such as students with disabilities. In this case, efforts to include these students in teaching and learning, for example using UDL, will not only benefit those who identify as students with disabilities, but also those who are yet to reveal their disability identities. Consequently, efforts towards disability inclusion at the university can benefit even those who do not identify as people with disabilities.

How can we collaborate to enhance disability inclusion at the University?

The teaching of disability inclusion requires an interdisciplinary approach and a structure to nurture collaboration across faculties. This is because there are pockets of valuable experience within and across various departments that could establish a specialized teaching and research niche for UCT, attracting international interest (Ohajunwa et al. 2014, 115). To exemplify, some Heads of Department have rich experience supporting disability inclusion, and they could act as reference points of good practice. Platforms that enable key stakeholders to jointly reflect on how to prepare students to contribute to a disability inclusive society have also been found to be helpful (McKinney 2016). Lorenzo et al. (2006) underline the effectiveness of the action learning approach when academic staff collaborate with members from the disability sector. Debating and sharing of frustrations and difficulties fosters open communication and understanding, which leads to increased levels of trust when working with students with disabilities and members from organisations for people with disabilities. Additionally, as students without disabilities might feel uneasy about interacting with people with disabilities (Alzyoudi, Opoku, and Moustafa 2021; Symons et al. 2014), research may be conducted regarding interaction between students with and without disabilities (McKinney 2016). We observe that opportunities for students without disabilities to interact with people with disabilities could be rolled out in all academic programmes at the university to aid changing perceptions about disability.

How do we enhance disability inclusive social responsiveness at the University?

Promoting disability inclusion in social responsiveness initiatives and projects involving students and staff is essential. Students and staff across faculties should be facilitated to

undertake disability inclusive social responsiveness initiatives and projects. University faculties could work with the corporate world and government agencies to support disability inclusion in society. One opportunity is through the Knowledge Co-op, a UCT collaboration, which offers a channel for external groups to access the university's knowledge, skills, resources, and professional expertise. Simultaneously, it offers academics and students a chance to engage with society and address community needs (UCT Knowledge Co-op 2022).

What other strategies and resources can be used to enhance systemic change towards disability inclusion at the University?

The curriculum is an excellent starting point for examining the complexities of disability inclusion. This approach can help address the lack of discourse on disability as an issue of transformation and diversity at the university (Nwanze 2016; Ohajunwa et al. 2014). An institutional system should be established to enhance lecturers' capacity to incorporate disability into both teaching and research across various faculties (Ohajunwa et al. 2014). Including disability in teaching and research will enhance the achievement of strategic goals targeted at the creation of an inclusive institutional structure that enhances diversity. It would give institutional support for staff with an interest in including disability, as well as making available resources needed to assist with inclusion, in order for staff not to struggle on their own when pursuing disability inclusion (Ohajunwa 2012).

Awareness creation on workable ways of including disability in the curriculum could influence disability policy at the university. It is necessary for funds to be availed for disability awareness programmes such as seminars and trainings. On the same note, introducing a mandatory course about disability as a diversity across faculties would create a much needed awareness about disability inclusion.

The Disability Studies academic programme could assist the university in addressing disability as a diversity and a transformation issue. Similarly, McKinney (2016) recommends collaborating and capacitating the Disability Services Office to give lecturers information on disability inclusion across the various disciplines and faculties of UCT. In this regard, the Disability Services Office could outsource guest and regular lecturers with disabilities to create disability awareness in undergraduate and postgraduate training programmes.

Students with disabilities themselves at the university could share their lived experiences of disabilities to enrich the processes of reforming the curriculum. This could include experiences on the accessibility of technology, particularly when most learning is conducted online due to physical restrictions brought by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the general ongoing technological advances. Importantly, including disability in the curriculum should be

carried out in nuanced ways, not in an ad hoc approach as that might impress students that disability is not an important issue to consider in their future careers (Ohajunwa et al. 2014, 115).

It is necessary to adopt disability specific policies at the university (Ohajunwa 2012), in addition to the mainstream policies of disability such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations General Assembly 2006). Each faculty at the university should establish a policy on disability inclusion. This relates to the need to create an impression in the university community that disability is more than an “add-on”; it needs to be given its proper space in curriculum and planning, as with the other mainstream policies.

The adoption of UDL could assist in ensuring curriculum access and address fragmented student support at the university (Ntombela 2021). For instance, lecturers could, from the planning stage, offer several learning ways to students, such as using a blend of written material, videos, audio, and graphics. Additionally, they can verbally convey all the information on slides during synchronous presentations and record them for future reference. Another example is to offer multiple avenues for students to demonstrate their acquired knowledge, such as employing various assessment formats, including different kinds of test items, presentations, and focused discussions on specific topics (Burgstahler 2021).

Infrastructure and materials need to be adapted for people with disabilities. McKinney (2016) calls for training civil engineering students in universal design (UD) principles that allow for disability inclusion. Such principles when applied in the general community could enhance transformation towards disability inclusion.

The issue of technology access at the university is crucial. Online education can support learners with disabilities to access the university in ways that they could not have before. Online materials could be developed to help lecturers prepare lessons and give them resources to use in their courses (Ohajunwa et al. 2014). Pieterse (2020) notes the need for a more holistic measure to be utilised to describe digital access. For instance, students with disabilities could approximate the average duration they can access a digital service without disturbance.

Watermeyer (2000) recommends the adoption of psychoanalytic tools to bring new and profound interpretations of disability structure and policies. An analysis of the philosophy, structure, and implementation of disability-related service installations through psychoanalytic methods allows comprehending how organizational defensive systems impact service provision, as well as the formation and solidification of disability concepts and the experiences of disabled individuals. Developing a critical understanding of how unconscious biases contribute to stereotypical views of disability helps recognize how processes like projection can unfairly label those with impairments as weak or defenceless (Watermeyer 2000, 113). This

draws attention to the need to create forums at the university where people with and without disabilities can engage with emotional and experiential aspects of disability. The use of standpoint “panel chats” (Watermeyer et al. 2021), where people with disabilities who are considered high achievers, conduct a non-hierarchical, candid, genuine, enjoyable panel discussion, can help break down silences and anxieties that may hinder inclusion.

Summary of recommendations

We summarise the key recommendations for disability inclusion in institutions of higher education thus:

1. Include disability in the decolonial discourse, exploring critical, context specific models of understanding disability, in addition to the medical and social models of disability.
2. Integrate disability in all talks, seminars, and the curricula of all faculties, for instance, gender and disability, queerness and disability, race and disability, law and disability, literature and disability, and so forth.
3. Offer a mandatory course on disability as a diversity in all faculties, for example, disability in law, disability in graphic designing, disability in engineering, and so forth.
4. Adopt UD principles in developing resources and infrastructure and UD for learning in curriculum design.
5. Budget for and conduct disability awareness campaigns and trainings.
6. Increase and create spaces (both virtually and physically) where students/staff with disabilities can interact meaningfully with those without disabilities.
7. Mainstream disability inclusion in the entire university and not just house it in disability services offices.
8. Establish structures to enhance cross-faculty collaborations for disability inclusion.
9. Engage with stakeholders outside the university to enhance disability inclusion at a society level.
10. Establish a policy in each faculty on enhancing disability inclusion.
11. Recruit more students with disabilities and hire more staff with disabilities.
12. Train students in all faculties on soft skills in addition to hard skills.

CONCLUSION

This article sought to use research conducted at UCT to suggest strategies to achieve disability inclusion in institutions of higher education. Disability inclusion is more than ensuring accessibility. It is also about how disability is understood – including in a decolonial perspective

– and how it is included in the curriculum. Consequently, accessibility (of products, devices, services, vehicles, or environments), the “thinking” of disability, and the way disability is included in the curriculum need consideration for disability inclusion and transformation to occur. Although this study focused on one university, we hope that the insights gained could be useful to other universities as they seek to meaningfully include students with disabilities.

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