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A DISSERTATION BY

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TOWARDS THE FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Exploring a framework for decolonised disability-inclusive Student Walk support practices in an open and distance learning institution.

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February 2021

DECLARATION

1. I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and pretend that it is one's own.
2. I have used the Harvard convention for citation and referencing. Each contribution to, and quotation in, this assignment from the work of others has been attributed and has been cited and referenced.
3. This assignment is my own work.
4. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

Signature

Signed by candidate

_____

O. Sipuka

Date 15 February 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My gratitude goes to Prof. Theresa Lorenzo. She remains among the most progressive academic with a deep-rooted appreciation of how to transform academia and society by training disability activists and turning them into progressive scholars. Not only do I thank her for walking with me on this journey, but for the work she has done for the entire disability sector.

I thank Associate Professors Sindile Ngubane and Kasturi Behari-Leak for serving as co-supervisors.

My mother, Nompucuko Sipuka, and father, Thembile Sipuka, may not have reached this level of studying, but they were my biggest supporters. Their belief that education is the greatest inheritance you can give to your children is the same I have adopted for my children, Khayalethu Sipuka and Lunge Sipuka.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the many people with disabilities who are systematically forced into the social, economic and political margins owing to education systems that have not adequately catered for them. This work is aimed at awakening student leaders, progressive academics, and University leadership to the realities of students with disabilities in higher education.

I trust that they make use of it.

ABSTRACT

This research examined underpinning aspects of decolonised support service needs and preferences of open distance learning for students with disabilities. In order to fulfil this purpose, views and perceptions of students with disabilities on the importance, availability and accessibility of student support services were investigated. A literature review confirmed the extent to which the decolonisation of higher education has received prominence; however, that prominence is not given to the decolonisation of support services for students with disabilities. The capabilities approach was used as the theoretical framework for this study. It was coupled with the social model of disability which channels the focus on the person's abilities rather than the impairments.

Positioned as a qualitative illustrative case study, it sought to examine the factors that positively and negatively affect increased decolonisation of the higher education experiences of students with disabilities in a South African university. As the foremost open and distance learning institution in South Africa, the University of South Africa (UNISA) is the primary site for the study. Interviews with students with disabilities, members of the Student Representative Council and staff members responsible for student support revealed the current experiences and perceptions of both students and staff regarding the topic.

The study findings revealed key aspects of a decolonised Student Walk as being internationally relevant as well as students' playing a pivotal role as stakeholders, controlling worldviews replicating inequalities, curricula and power plays and a clear strategy as a cardinal aspect of the process. It also found that decolonisation was not well understood by either staff or students, pointing to more barriers than opportunities. There were disjointed institutional support initiatives that need to be decolonised and the alignment of inclusive teaching and student support. The major implications are linked to institutional level strategic support, staff training and awareness, policy reflection and strategy, inclusive initiatives and student involvement. Above all, a decolonised Student Walk framework has been proposed.

Keywords: Disability inclusion, Decolonisation, Transformation, Inclusivity, Student support, Student Walk

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARCSWiD - Advocacy and Resource Centre for Students with Disabilities

CAL - Computer-assisted learning

CBT - Computer-based learning or teaching

CMC -Computer-Mediated Communication

CRPD - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

CSCL - Cooperative or Collaborative Learning

HE - Higher education

ICDE - International Distance Education Council)

ODeLE - Open distance e-learning environment

ODeL - Open distance e-learning

ODL - Open and distance learning

SACP - South African Communist Party

SRC - Student Representative Council

UNISA - University of South Africa

UNCRPD - United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

WBT -Web-Based Training

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION

1.1. Introduction

Discussions within the South African higher education (HE) sector, as well as students' and instructors' call for the decolonisation of education, have turned out to be progressively more earnest recently. In particular are two key policy documents which although do not make explicit reference to decolonizing education; have sought to transform the country's education sector post-apartheid. These are: White Paper for Post School Education and Training (2014) and the Education White Paper N0. 6 on Special Needs Education Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (2001). However, one issue that has not generated enough discussion is how to decolonise higher education to promote inclusivity especially for people disabilities. Because South Africa legislation criminalizes all manner of discrimination, one would expect that instructors and support staff at institutions of higher learning be knowledgeable about diversity and inclusion so that they are better positioned to effectively teach and support students and staff with disability. HE decolonisation and inclusion have become emerging fields in South Africa, depending heavily on policies and to some extent on nations where inclusive education is more firmly established. This study is inspired by current issues around the decolonisation of HE as well the researcher's close association with inclusion emanating from student support programmes within Open Distance e-Learning (ODeL).

1.2 Background to the study

The history of the University of South Africa (UNISA) dates to 1946 with the establishment in South Africa of the world's first sole distance educating college (Le Grange, 2016). UNISA is in the nation's administrative capital, namely Pretoria. UNISA has always had the biggest share of student enrolment in South Africa and during the politically sanctioned period of racial segregation, remained a college, remarkably not classified according to any ethnic or racial grouping. According to Seedat (2018), it was set up to address difficulties in social equity as understood by the Afrikaners .. The Afrikaners felt significantly rejected by the British from the initial

HE system in South Africa, not only by language. UNISA offered university education to the Afrikaners at their farms all over the country as most of the Afrikaners were ranchers and farmers. Unfortunately, that experience of mistreatment did little to teach the Afrikaner group about the abuse of others. Paradoxically, and incomprehensibly, UNISA offered learning opportunities to many black and coloured students, most whom had been excluded from educational opportunities, just as they had from political rights alongside whites for whom UNISA was initially planned (Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit & Van Deventer, 2016).

Significant flaws found in the UNISA programme since apartheid include:

- Poor completion and output quality;
- Lack of communication between programmes and well-functioning distance learning;
- Lack of cohesion in the Learning Center Network exacerbating the shortage of sufficient student assistance (SAIDE, 2008).

While it is difficult to isolate the variables in an educational system and identify a simple causal relationship of student support with student success, the UNISA example before reform provides the clearest case for acknowledging the importance of student support in a distance education institution. For many students, especially from most of the population who were excluded from the best universities in South Africa, the opportunity offered by distance education was a real one. UNISA provides us with the best-documented case hitherto of the aspect of decolonisation and inclusivity within the ODeL education without adequate student support. As a step along the way, the study posits that the different approaches to diversity, decoloniality and student support may have similarities and reflect not only technology and pedagogy but also the social and moral values in which these systems for teaching and learning are embedded.

UNISA has 10 active Colleges, (Sciences, Engineering and Technology, Education, Economic and Management Sciences, Accounting Studies, Human Sciences, School of Business Leadership, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Law and Graduate Studies). However, the data were collected from the department and staff that deal with disability (inclusive issues) as well as the Student Walk (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011) which is the Registration and Admissions office.

UNISA today is regarded as a comprehensive, open distance learning institution that produces “excellent scholarship and research, quality tuition and fosters active community engagement” (UNISA, 2017).

UNISA’s Mission Statement (UNISA, 2017) reads as follows:

> “We are guided by the principles of lifelong learning, student-centeredness, innovation and creativity. Our efforts contribute to the knowledge and information society, advance development, nurtures a critical citizenry and ensures global sustainability”

The total number of formally registered students with a disability in 2016 was 2146, amounting to 0.8% of the total population of 274,661 students. Given that the number of students with a disability between 2012 and 2016 ranges between 3208 and 2146, the percentage rate averaged almost the same, i.e., 0.8%. It is important to juxtapose this number against the Census 2014 report by Statistics South Africa indicating the prevalence of disability in South Africa at 7.5% (StatsSA, 2014). The following table shows the number of UNISA students with a disability between 2012 and 2016:

Table 1.1: UNISA Students with a disability between 2012 and 2016

Description	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Students with disability	2762 0.8%	3208 0.8%	2649 0.8%	2655 0.7%	2146 0.8%
Student without disability	354021	384207	348129	352186	272515

Source: Tladi (2016:1)

1.2.1 The Unisa Student Walk model: a comprehensive path from student pre-registration to alumni relations

Supporting students with disabilities is guaranteed in the University policy to ensure an inclusive learning environment that promotes a culture of learning and beneficial social activities and provides for the diverse needs of all students (UNISA, 2008). However, the current model does not appear to be inclusive enough. From the onset, UNISA has stuck to four levels in its admission to graduation and lifelong learning.

The first stage in the Student Walk is level one where potential students 'Choose and apply' and get to learn more about how UNISA works. Student can access this information in *My Choice at UNISA* via the institution's web platform or face-to-face at main campus. *My Choice at UNISA* gives a student the tools to understand what is involved in an open distance learning university and how it differs from a contact university. To assist prospective students during this stage, it provides information on UNISA, open distance learning and how to choose a career and a qualification. This level gives students the information they need to make those important decisions. Students must apply if they would like to study through UNISA and have never registered for a formal UNISA qualification. This level also takes the student through the various steps that students must complete to apply after they have submitted a student application and the University has approved it. All students receive a registration pack and a student number to proceed to level 2.

The second stage is meant for 'Registration'. At this stage, all students must register for their modules for each academic year to continue with their studies. The students will need a student number and the product set called *My Registration at UNISA* which UNISA sends the students to register. Registration can be done online or at a self-help terminal at one of the regional centres. On this level, students confirm a qualification, choose modules, register for these modules and pay fees. Once student registration is successful, UNISA sends all students a study pack. Students can also register on *My UNISA*, the student website, and download their study material.

The third stage is 'Teach and learn'. This stage is where student studies begin, as this level provides the student with all the information necessary to plan studies and connect with the many support services at UNISA. The information in the *My Studies at UNISA* brochure, tutorial letters and study guides help students with their studies in creating their UNISA support network and ultimately achieving their qualifications.

The last stage is the level for 'Graduate and lifelong learning'. This level is for those students who have completed their qualifications and are now UNISA alumni. The University stays connected with graduates and produces a brochure and website called *My Link at UNISA.* Students are urged to maintain contact once they put their qualifications to use. In this way, students can choose how to stay involved in the cycle of learning. This Student Walk model is summarised in Figure 1.1 below:

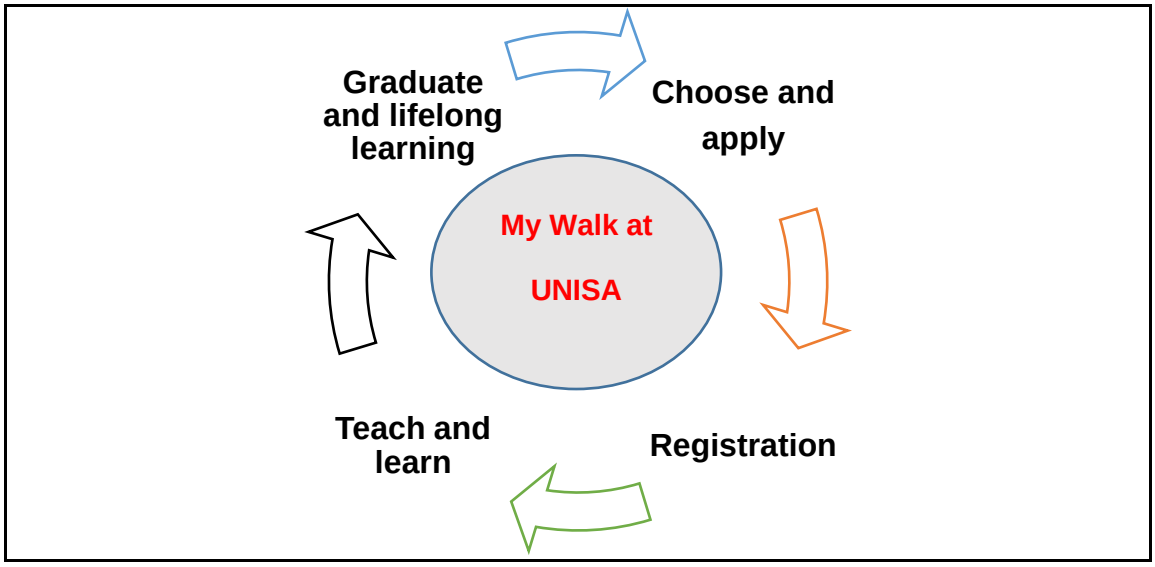


Figure 1.1: My Student Walk at UNISA

Source (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011)

This Student Walk model has generated a great deal of rhetoric and debate about the intention to be more inclusive. In consideration of the commitment of UNISA to students with disabilities, a directorate called the Advocacy and Resource Centre for Students with Disabilities (ARCSWiD) was established in February 2003. The Directorate profiles students with disabilities, as well as providing targeted support for them. The ARCSWiD uses the necessary intelligence to deliver its core functions, specifically the production of study material in alternative formats and the facilitation of needs-based support regarding teaching, learning, assignments and assessment. Two functional areas are managed by nine officers with supervisory roles, working under a Deputy Director (see figure 1.2).

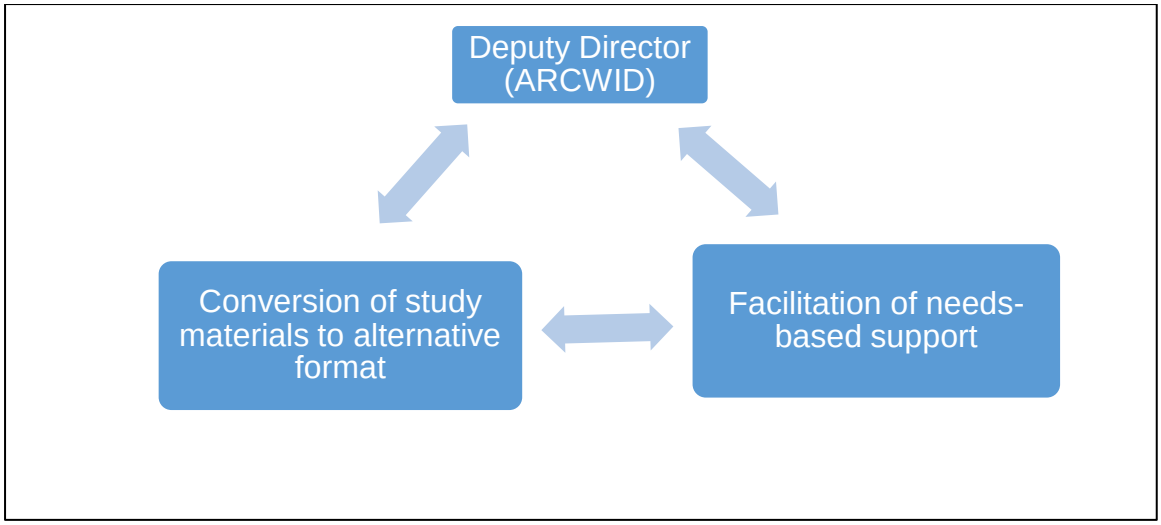


Figure 1.2: Organogram of ARCSWiD

There are two semesters in which UNISA admits and graduates students in addition to the yearly short learning programmes. Given the high volume of students and student turnover; both 'in the pipeline' and the prospective ones, students are bound to make mistakes as they are confused and frustrated in finding their way around and getting things done. This confusion is because of the series of activities and distinct steps of processes that are involved right from application for admission to graduation.

1.3. The Student Walk Model

To increase access and ameliorate the suffering of students in this regard, the Office of the Registrar deemed it appropriate to draw up a user-friendly framework which would assist students in finding help within the respective student-related units and sections. The framework is called the Student Walk (Student Walk, 2016/17). It is a unique seven-step journey, involving the following steps:

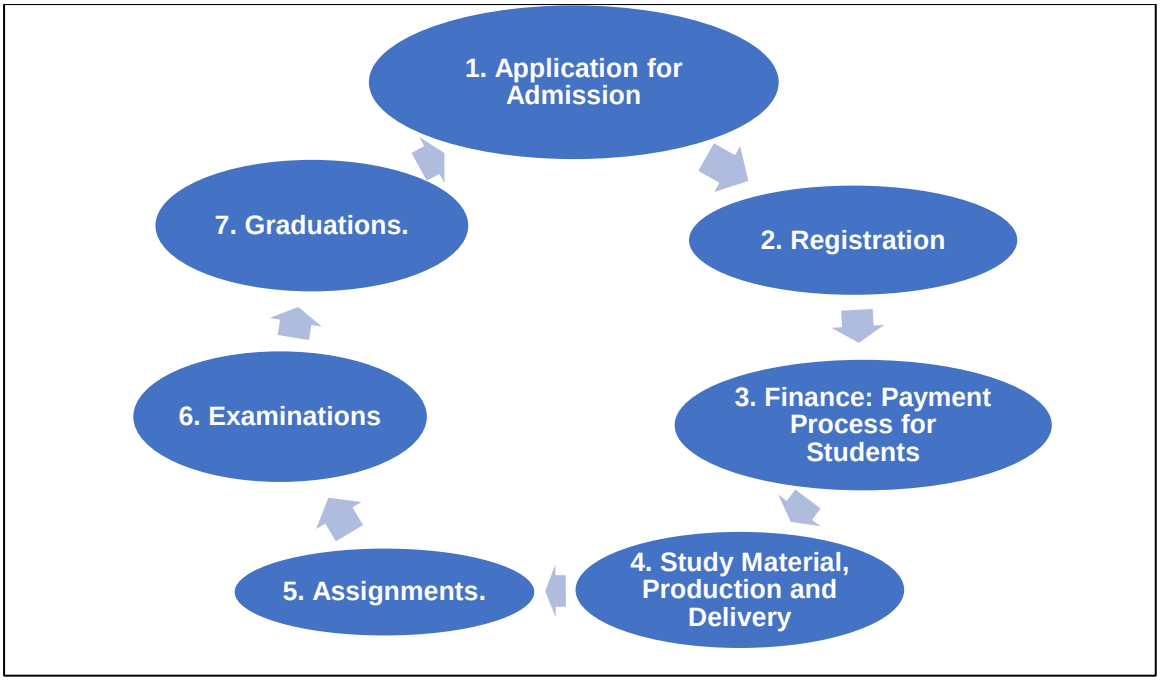


Figure 1. 3: The seven steps of the Student Walk

At each step, the core question is how UNISA assists students with disabilities to navigate through the various Schools or Colleges from step one to seven with minimum constraints. Unlike *My Walk at UNISA* which largely focuses on four aspects, the Student Walk was intended to focus on an additional three areas, namely Finance – Payment Process for Students, Study Material, Production and Delivery, and Assessments. These additional steps are meant to adopt a differentiated approach to improve access for students with disabilities.

The Student Walk helps every student regarding the steps to take to comply with requirements, maximise their UNISA experience and ultimately succeed at UNISA. The model accommodates students with disabilities as well in each of the seven-step journeys in the sense that the ARCSWiD caters specifically for the needs of students with disabilities. For example, special computers for students with visual impairments have been procured by the ARCSWiD and are available for the students. Students that require their study material to be converted to alternative formats, namely Braille, audio or soft copy, are also aided by the ARCSWiD (see figure 1.4).

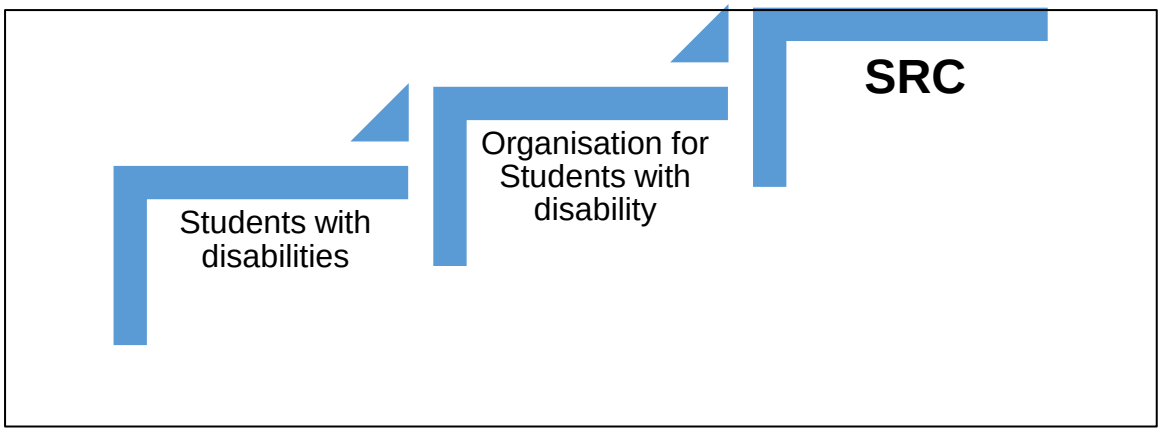


Figure 1.4: Hierarchy of students' leadership

There are two students' bodies saddled with the responsibility of addressing the cause of UNISA students with disabilities: the Student Representative Council (SRC) and the Organisation for Students with Disabilities. The latter is under the umbrella of the former. They take up the concerns of students with disabilities with ARCSWiD and the University Management. The challenges the two bodies face within the course of delivering their duties are of concern to their subjects. It has been observed that students with disabilities have no direct representation in the SRC but work with it via their organisation.

It is also important to note that the Student Walk model, regardless of its earmarked benefits, has not managed to translate into a policy that UNISA's Colleges or Schools could adopt. Treated as a pilot or feasibility project, it initially foregrounded the challenges of inclusivity, especially access to education as one starting point within the University. Disappointingly, all the best practices and lessons highlighted during this phase may have been lost. For instance, it emphasised that decolonisation will always be a fallacy if there is no easy access and support to students with disabilities (UCT #RhodesMustFall, 2015:8). It also asserted that all institutions should know that disabled students require differentiated approaches all through the seven steps of the model. In the end this process justifies this study that suggests the best ways of integrating inclusion from a decolonial perspective.

However, most importantly, is the assumption that supporting students with disabilities is guaranteed in the University policy to ensure an inclusive learning environment that promotes a culture of learning and beneficial social activities and providing for the

diverse needs of all students. It should be borne in mind, that the major drive towards the decolonisation of HE that has been at the forefront of the "Fees Must Fall movement" is the assertion that is the long-term goals of treating African discourses as the point of departure. This can be achieved through addressing not only content but languages and methodologies of education and learning as well as inclusion and diversity. Western traditions should only be probed as far as they apply to our own experience. (UCT #RhodesMustFall, 2015:8). To relay these aspects better, the following section tries to extrapolate the notion of decolonisation and learning within an ODeL environment.

This study holds the view that the liberation of Africa and its peoples from centuries of racially discriminatory colonial rule and domination has some implications for academic notion and practice. The revolution of academic discourse in South Africa requires a philosophical framework that respects range and recognizes lived and demanding situations like the accepted hegemony of Western discourse. Such a framework should be as inclusive as possible yet remain grounded in the norms and aspirations of the masses, which is the core focus of this study. To reach that stage, it connects the aspect of decolonisation to disability inclusion within HE as discussed in the subsequent sections. Before unpacking aspects of decolonising disability, the next section demystifies disability.

1.3 Demystifying disability

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (UN, 2006) defines persons with disabilities as including those "who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (UN, 2006:1).

The South African Constitution (1996) highlights the equality of all citizens and persons with disabilities are included: "in principle, the right to equality gives disabled people the same rights as all the other countries' citizens" (Heap, Lorenzo and Thomas, 2009:858). Similarly, on the global level, the CRPD "promotes, protects and ensures the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and promotes respect for their inherent dignity "(UN, 2006:1). Locally, the University of South Africa (UNISA 2017:1) concurs that "persons with

disabilities in education, workplace, social environment, the political sphere and sports arenas should not be discriminated against".

There is a difference between disability and impairment. Disability refers to how society disables the individual whilst impairment refers to bodily functioning that may be impaired (DPSA, 2001). As mentioned by Lorenzo (2011), disability is a common label that can stigmatize and perpetuate false stereotypes, especially where students with disabilities are regarded as being not as capable as their peers or the impairment as a 'disgrace'. Lorenzo (2011) further asserts that often students must combat negative stereotypes about how their impairment is observed by others and even themselves.

Impairment disclosure by students with disabilities is confidential and is always voluntary. Sometimes students with disabilities may feel nervous to disclose sensitive medical information about themselves to the authorities (Burgstahler, 2008). This hesitancy often follows students due to the stigmatizing of students with disabilities; for instance, a student who has an epileptic fit may not be comfortable in school as he/she may lose friends because of the stigma.

Students with less apparent impairments may have a problem in disclosing these. Picard (2017:1) opines that disclosing an impairment such as epilepsy or a chronic pain disorder may be considered unnecessary by students unless in the case of a crisis or an attack. The so-called ‘hidden’ impairments can be hard for students to disclose because many may assume, they are healthy if ‘they look fine’. In some cases, a student may make a seemingly strange request or carry out an action that is disability-related (Walters 2010:428).

In their argument, Scorgie, Kildal, and Wilgosh (2010) posit that students with physical impairments tend to face damaging and inaccurate stereotyping. They consider the example of those who use a wheelchair; saying they could be deemed to also have an intellectual impairment. In addition, those students with 'hidden disabilities' frequently face awkward situations in the sense that fellow students may downplay their disability with phrases such as ‘Well, you look fine’ (Scorgie et al 2010:134).

May and Stone (2010:485) argue that an average undergraduate, whether with or without learning disabilities, tends to rate persons with learning disabilities as being

less able to learn. They further stress that some students think that their contemporaries with learning disabilities have lower levels of abilities than students without those disabilities. On the other hand, students with learning disabilities are not inferior in learning to any other students; the issue is “they receive, process, store, and/or respond to information differently” (Picard, 2017:1).

There are many gifted persons among disabled students, as in any other segment of society. Bley and Thornton (2011:1) opine that disability should not be a barrier limiting the potential of gifted persons with disabilities. In the philosophy of education of students with disabilities, nurturing and embracing the gift in the student is much more important than putting the student down in the area where the student is weak, since giftedness is often overlooked in students with disabilities. Acknowledging their special abilities and enhancing their strengths and enabling participation through interventions may be necessary to reduce the effect of a disability.

Higher education (HE) should be considering individual abilities and impairments by understanding that each student has individual needs for which an education programme has to cater. In other words, the learning environment should be responsive and provide stimulating learning experiences.

1.4 Decolonisation and globalised learning within an ODeL

Decolonisation is a term for the most part connected with the ‘fixing’ of colonisation. Maldonado-Torres (2011:246) positions decolonisation as an insensitive aspect since it raises doubt about the colonial circumstance. In this utilization, a decolonisation approach looks to alter the colonial situation. In HE, it is even more relevant today that an Afrocentric, yet globalised knowledge is required so that institutions of learning remain the cornerstone of transformation and change.

The scrutiny of decolonisation helps to deconstruct the effects of colonisation and its forced predominant frameworks. Moreover, it grasps the ability to explore indigenous information and knowledge systems (Alfred, 2008). The more extensive ramifications are that those who apply a decolonisation analysis turn out to be intrinsically open to other learning frameworks and speculations. A decolonisation analysis investigates the effects of imperialism on the indigenous population. Smith (1999:20) characterizes

decolonisation as "a procedure which draws in imperialism and colonialism at numerous levels". Further, she declares that expansionism and dominion frame the indigenous experience. In this regard, Smith (1999) underscores the intertwined setting between indigenous practices and the effects of colonialism and its dominant systems. A decolonial examination offers an opportunity to address and examine the impacts of colonialism closely.

Global citizenship and related dialogues on globalisation are frequently conflicted with an ethical liberal reaction to the new broad-based view of race, class, sexual orientation, transient and ethnic disparity (Ormrod, 2008:169). This regularly imported liberalism lives awkwardly and specifically close to expanding politically and ideologically invested social and religious polarization, diligent and malicious levels of destitution, worldwide brutality and conditions of war, widespread struggles of the populace and mass relocation, among others. It is additionally connected to an attendant ascent in cosmopolitanism and world traditionalism alongside new discontinuities and reconciliations as the political territory moves as per the economic distresses, where innovation and global private enterprise are alternatives. With these come a resurgence of humanism and philanthropy, despite these being fractional.

Reflecting on this aspect from the international education viewpoint, in recent decades global citizenship discourses have been taken up with some intensity in policy documents and reports, vision articulations, HE and tutoring, and schooling curricula documents within Western-based systems. They have also progressively infested and pervaded developing educational contexts (Yusuf, Shareen & Nimi, 2017). Universities, in this case, have not been spared which exerts more pressure on comprehensive ODeL institutions.

At first glance, these discussions appear to proclaim a world of humanism that mirrors awareness of global interdependence and mutualism. Under globalisation and monetary progressivism, the world that these talks proclaim seems incontestable and exists in the judgment toxic and soiled order of things that render choices improbable and irrational (Bourdieu, 2002). It is, however, vital to mention that in globalized information and knowledge economy, there are inquiries regarding who takes an interest, where, what they concentrate on and how bringing enrolment rates up in HE can contribute to societies' economic and social development and improvement and

subsequently lessen destitution (Olukoshi & Zeleza, 2004). The 2009 UNESCO World Conference on HE in Paris addressed the requirement for the revitalization of HE in Africa – a vital instrument for the development of the continent (UNESCO, 2009).

There is still work to be done to guarantee that broadening interest is not only an issue of "a flow of students into progressively broken organisations" (Yusuf et al., 2009:110). Equality and inclusion are not just about quantitative representation; they go beyond admitting more disabled students and decolonizing curricula to supporting our understanding of social citizenship for disabled persons (Barnes, 2007:140).

1.5 Decolonisation and inclusion in an ODeL context

Decolonisation ensures and advocates an inclusive approach to education and training for disabled students as the way towards recognizing and expelling boundaries and removing barriers in accessing HE (Heap, Lorenzo & Thomas, 2009). Similarly, as with unique structures of imbalance, selecting more disabled students in HE does not consequently prompt full support in college life or correspondence. While quantitative increments are imperative, access needs to be accompanied by help to achieve and remain in the sector (Ormrod, 2008:169). There is a need for standard activity to address disability inclusion into services, planning and resource allocation (Picard, 2017:12). In the global HE inscription, a general subject is a manner using which incapacitated students confront both physical and attitudinal hindrances within the college condition (Ritskes, 2012). Constrained research in sub-Saharan Africa to date raises comparable issues (Scorgie, Kildal & Wilgosh, 2010). Usually, an absence of intention to make structures and educational programmes more accessible, and an absence of scholarly and non-academic support create barriers for disabled students' retention and achievement (Scorgie et al., 2010).

Inclusion in HE of late was restricted to the acknowledgement of cultural diversity. Only a few years ago, new educational approaches stressed the capacity of accessing HE for students with disabilities (May & Stone, 2010:485). More people with disabilities, including those severely disabled individuals, are entering HE organisations around the world/globally, where increasingly and better-prepared administrations are accessible for students with disabilities. In addition, new teaching and instructing methodologies centre around extra and focused or targeted support, taking into consideration the nature of every specific shortcoming and incapacity. However, these

support initiatives contradict the certainty of supply (Neale-Shutte & Fourie, 2006). As the world becomes more globalized, so does the need for more relevant HE institutions and subjects of inclusive approaches are rapidly on the rise. As soon as HE institutions mention inclusion, the major fields of current thinking such as race, gender and curriculum emerge (Neale-Shutte & Fourie, 2006:9).

The democratization of the learning environment and the learning content (mainstream curricula) includes:

i. Adult education relates to lifelong learning and adult education;
ii. Technological developments that emphasize the introduction of new technologies in every sector of education are radically and constructively changing the entire landscape; and
iii. The dynamics of heterogeneity that relate to human society, the sharing and exchange of information leading to knowledge are the building blocks for its development and prosperity.

Advancements and developments in these aspects of inclusion, combined with the specific qualities of individuals with disabilities, could offer new impetus to instruction provisions in HE. It could make it conceivable to incorporate this category of students in a non-offending manner; that is, an educational environment that must be created within which diversity is visible.

This study proposes that the decolonisation of support services and systems in HE is showed in research, teaching methods and perspectives. Many HE institutions today are pushing for a system that fundamentally examines postcolonial settings and the organizing of rights for previously marginalised people. The study envisages current and past thinking that accentuates the significance of basic analysis of the concepts and indigenous perspectives related to support for students with disabilities. The study explores challenges emanating from the exclusive structures of higher education student support services because of colonialism.

To incorporate these paradigms, the Student Walk model was conceived in 2008 and has been in use since then. Although it is updated every year, its effectiveness or otherwise, and the challenges it poses to both the ARCSWiD and other UNISA staff involved have not been studied, especially, its investigation of the support services

offered to UNISA students with disabilities. A gap this study identified is the need to investigate the support services offered to UNISA undergraduate students with disabilities in the context of the UNISA Student Walk model for decolonizing the University.

1.6 Problem statement

The decolonisation of the University's discourse has received resounding support in various universities across South Africa (Rhodes University and the University of Cape Town), in Africa (Makerere University – Uganda, Kenyatta University -- Kenya) and the world (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016). Decoloniality and decolonisation scholars agree that the uptake of decolonisation in relation to disability remains almost non-existent. The nuances covered under the subject are rarely extended to the decolonisation of the University from the perspective of support for students with disabilities (Anderson & Dron, 2011).

In as much as the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996) guarantees that persons with disabilities in education, workplace, social environment, the political sphere and sports arenas should not be discriminated against, disability is a label that can stigmatize. It can expose citizens to damaging and perpetuate false stereotypes, especially where students with disabilities are not as capable as their peers or the disability is perceived as disgraceful. Students with disabilities who are less visible may have a problem disclosing these or feel nervous to disclose sensitive medical information about themselves to the authorities (Gqola, 2008).

For UNISA, even though it is the largest ODeL (open and distance learning) university on the continent, there is scant evidence of serious reflection for practical decolonisation of a structured student support policy (disability in teaching and learning process), or, later, inclusive approaches and student learning experiences (Goode, 2007:37), particularly for students with disabilities. It is believed that such an approach is because of the systematic difficulties in curriculum research, design and development and the complex factors of disabilities. Decolonisation and inclusive student support have not been central issues for many South African HE institutions either and considering the far-reaching consequences of decolonisation in a developing country such as South Africa, the need to examine the factors that lead to

the increased relevance of decolonisation, inclusion and support in South African universities is apparent, particularly concerning curriculum and student support.

Students with disabilities have individual needs to which UNISA's ARCSWiD is responsive. Focusing on the ODeL nature of UNISA in the context of the Student Walk model, this means a systemic approach to providing stimulating learning experiences and decolonised academic programmes that cater for and meet the disabled students' needs.

1.7 The purpose of this research

The purpose of the study is to expand understandings of 'decolonisation' of the Student Walk model in institutions by engaging students with disabilities. The research aims to examine underpinning aspects of the Student Walk model and how it could be decolonised to identify support service needs and preferences of open distance education students. To achieve this aim, the views and perceptions of disabled students on the importance, availability, and accessibility of student support services are investigated.

The study advances considerations about the ramifications for research and inclusion in HE. It hopes to stimulate debate and conversations on the vital subject of diversity and support services in HE from a decolonial viewpoint.

1.8 The rationale and positionality for this research

A review of the literature reveals the paucity of research that seeks to establish how to support services for students with disabilities can be decolonised to make teaching and learning environments more inclusive. This gap is more visible in research relating to student support in ODeL contexts. Anderson and Dron (2011) argue that there is a need for distance educators to explore and document their students' experiences. This study will fill that gap and contribute towards the development of knowledge on how students with disabilities can best be supported in ODeL contexts.

The personal rationale is based on my experience as a disability rights activist in South Africa. I have served as the Spokesperson of Disabled People South Africa, and a member of the Presidential Working Group on Disabilities. At the time of conceptualizing this study, I was serving as the Acting Dean of Students at UNISA. In

this capacity, I was responsible for taking all students through the Student Walk and was acutely alerted to the disparities in the servicing of able-bodied students and those who are disabled. I have also had opportunities to share and listen to disabled students' first-hand experiences regarding how and what they are taught and that it may not reflect the nature and condition of work, as well as lifelong learning, particularly for the disabled.

Second, my contextual reason is based on the unchanging status of students with disabilities in higher education. Though most universities have disability service units, the student support provided still does not afford the students' positive learning experience. The National Plan of HE (2001) prescribes that the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) should develop human resources, train and produce high-level skills, and acquire and apply new knowledge. This role is motivated by the need to explore the reason students with disabilities tend not to receive maximum or informed learning support which leads to fewer of them completing their degrees (Goode, 2007:37).

Third, my scholarly reasons for conducting this study is to fill the wide gap that exists in studies on HE institutions' management and systemic responses to student support challenges faced by students with disabilities. The current studies conducted in South Africa tend to focus on student experiences (Mutanga, 2015; Lourens, 2015; Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2013; Bell, 2013).

Fourth, this study will help administrators gain information about the student support needs and preferences of their distance students and identify possible areas of improvement in existing student support services. In addition to its immediate relevance to UNISA, the findings of this study might have implications for similar distance education institutions in developing and implementing quality inclusive student support services.

Finally, as shown in the problem statement, research on distance students' support needs from their perspective is limited, particularly from the inclusive and decolonisation viewpoints. Subsequently, the findings of this study construct a major paradigm for comparative future research considering distance student support. Even more significantly, a larger part of the current investigations was conducted in Western

distance education and settings with a Western philosophical point of view. Given that this study is proposed in an organisation that mirrors the fundamental attributes of a globalised training setting (UNISA), this study may offer suggestions to decolonised instructional practice and instructive research from an alternate psycho-social point of view.

1.9 Research question

In considering these conversations, the problem emerges that there is little systematic conceptual engagement with inclusion and decoloniality in the scholarly literature.

What are the nature and implications of an inclusive Student Walk model in the context of decolonisation to enhance student support for students with disabilities in open distance learning in higher education?

More specifically, the following research questions underpin the study:

i. What are the policies guiding inclusive support of students with disabilities in ODeL?
ii. What are the perceptions of students about the importance and accessibility of student support services that they receive?
iii. How will support initiatives of the Student Walk enhance inclusivity and social change?
iv. To what extent do the developed inclusive support programmes within a mainstream institution address barriers and provide opportunities for students with disabilities?
v. What are the distinctive features of decolonised student support services concerning their inclusion and success?

1.10. Study Outline

This thesis is consists of 8 chapters. Chapter One constitutes a background and context of the study. It situates decoloniality within the context of open distance education in South Africa. In addition, it provides conceptual understanding of terms like decoloniality and decolonization and disability. The chapter describes the research problem, study objectives and lays out the theoretical framework. Research design and methodology and study limitations are also explained in the same chapter.

Chapter Two explores student support within the context of open distance learning by drawing examples from UNISA and also other open distance institutions across the world. Chapter Three provides a discussion on decolonization in higher education institutions in South Africa more specifically and the global south more broadly. It engages concepts like transformation, decoloniality, and coloniality.

Chapter Four discusses theoretical constructs by engaging capabilities approach and the transactional distance learning theory. Both these frameworks form the foundation upon which this study firmly grounded. The motivation to use these two analytical frames (the conceptual and theoretical framework) is driven by the need to produce findings that are progressively substantial, satisfactory and appropriate to the theoretical constructs. Using two frameworks stimulates the research while guaranteeing thick and rich interpretation of findings and thoroughness of study.

Chapter Five constitutes the research design and methodology. Here sampling techniques, data collection and analysis methods are discussed. Chapter also offers a reflection of the research process and how these impacted on the overall study. Ethical considerations and issues of quality control in action research are also discussed.

Chapter Six presents data presentation and provides an incisive analysis of the data. Chapter Seven shares cardinal conclusions and implications based on the theoretical and conceptual framework that explored various aspects of learning within an ODeL environment and that these aspects are pertinent to inclusivity. Study conclusions as extracted from the findings in the previous chapter are linked to the theoretical and conceptual frameworks which are summarized according to the broad themes. This chapter sums up the theoretical implications and lays the foundation for a framework toward inclusivity from a decolonisation perspective.

Chapter Eight provides a summary of the study, offers recommendations and areas for further research.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXTUALIZING STUDENT SUPPORT IN ODeL

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a conceptualization of what makes up student support within HE and particularly an ODeL. It views student support activities as tutoring and teaching; counselling and advising about services such as orientation, learning and study skills assistance; academic advising; career and personal counselling; administrative activities such as admission and registration; library and information systems, and infrastructure support for activities such as peer tutoring and alumni organisation. It justifies a critical contextualisation of student support activities which are all those interactive processes that should support and facilitate the learning process from an inclusive perspective.

2.2 The context of student support

The teacher's role is to reflect the teaching, learning and other facets that apply to student service and, thus, represent the principles of both the teacher and educational philosophy and other unique environmental considerations (Lagardien, 2014). For certain distance education settings, there are some commonalities about the position student assistance can play. Instruction and teaching provide a wide variety of training and coaching practices, which guide students to navigate a course. Student assistance is also commonly used as a concept for any connections (prospective and registered) involving academic personnel and students to assist them in achieving their objectives from their first engagement to the graduation process and beyond (Bernath, Kleinschmidt, Walti and Zawacki, 2013). Teaching and learning are acknowledged as helping students but are typically discussed separately as the secret to communicating with students is the teaching function.

The concept 'student service' is used to characterize this relationship in distance education literature (Keet, Munene & Sattarzadeh, 2017). To facilitate its use, the author states that the word 'student' is understood to be the 'learner' equivalent. However, as it suggests a more involved position in learning than the word ' student,'

it should be noted that the word 'learner' is frequently used in literature. As McLaren (2013) points out, the word 'learner' is common and may be used for a broad range of learning contexts (e.g., public and private schools and post-secondary institutions, and corporate and public employee training settings).

While distance learning has developed from a teacher-centered paradigm to a far more learner-centred one, the functions and practices of teachers and other providers of student assistance became increasingly more constructive than reactive (Heleta, 2016). Recent studies highlight the nuances of the learning cycle, student actions, engagement while influences affecting survival and retention (Holmberg, 2013) shaped the essence of student support in distance education. Conclusions should educate and strengthen practice. The choice of a student to withdraw from a course or programme, which may be affected by unique sources of support, preparation and teaching, is often known to be based on several factors. Such factors are important to remember as the depth and scope of learning at distance continue to develop so that skills gained, and progress achieved in one setting are easily extended to another. The same focus on and improvement in inclusion has not been noticed in this growth.

The philosophy and implementation of student support were both affected by emerging technology. Students may reach other students and personnel (their instructor, librarian, clerk and instructional advisor) assisting students directly over the Internet (Keet, 2014). Traditionally, student support in distance learning would be a whole unique set of practices from those linked to classes. Nonetheless, this difference does not apply when integrating online learning and the contrast between the two types of practices is more positive (Thorpe, 2003). An online course may comprise no more than a syllabus and a reading list, with the content being created through the interaction between students and course facilitator. This mode of learning presents new challenges as well as opportunities for practitioners (Bernath et al., 2013).

Distance education has expanded quickly across various domains outside conventional educational environments, leading to competition for exposure to training and the incentives provided by technology and the Internet (Brindley, 2014). Informal training initiatives are manifestations of this. Online learning in developed countries includes home-schooling, corporate and military instruction, utilizing online or computer technology, and individual learning initiatives.

New opportunities for distance learning, higher training incentives and expanded contact between students demand new requirements of student service practitioners (Letseka, 2013). Practitioners have to respond to new circumstances and evolve practices which embody current views of teaching and learning, and address the problems raised by specific contexts, while remaining dedicated to social justice principles and traditions focused on student support at ODeL. In a multinational culture in which distance learning practitioners operate, it is imperative that we explicitly communicate. Conditions such as e-learning, online learning, and flexible and interactive learning, although not regular or reliable, are common. Here follow descriptions used with this report for this study.

2.3 Student Support in Open and Distance e-Learning (ODeL).

As noted above, student support involves all such inclusive instructional programmes and resources tailored to enhance the learning process and promote it. In this situation, student support applies to the procedures such as the teaching and instruction of students, enrolment and registration, consultation and counselling and all related programmes and administrative tasks throughout the programme. Student assistance is especially relevant in distance learning as it distinguishes the user from the provider of education. The student support system of the Open University in Great Britain, founded in 1969, serves as a model for many distance teaching institutions across the world although admittedly technological advancement and related developments have necessitated changes in the model pioneered by the Open University. Scholars have written extensively on student support. For example, Tait (1995) offers the following definition:

> The term ‘student support’ means the range of activities which complement the mass-produced materials which make up the most well-known elements in open distance e-learning (ODeL).
>
> Printed course units, television and radio programmes, computer programmes which replace the lecture as a means of delivery and offer so much both in terms of social and geographical access and in terms of cost-effectiveness, support students in central ways. However, the elements of ODeL, which are commonly referred to as student support, comprise tutoring, whether face-to-face, by correspondence, telephone or electronically; counselling; the

> organisation of study centres; interactive teaching through TV and radio, and other activities.
>
> These activities have as key conceptual components the notion of supporting the individual learning of the student, whether alone or in groups, while in contrast, the mass-produced elements are identical for all students (p. 232).

Tait's concept (1995) does not apply directly to assistance for students in on-line instruction, as it was intended for the use of programmes that were primarily distance education structures utilising print-based, pre-prepared research materials (mass-produced material) (see Garrison, 1985; Nipper, 1989), and are still widespread. Simpson (2002) also defines student assistance in the broadest context as that behaviour that goes beyond the development of the learner-friendly study content. He distinguishes between academic (or tutorial) and non-academic (i.e., administrative and institutional) assistance.

Academic support, according to Simpson (2002), involves defining the area of study; explaining concepts; investigating the course; giving feedback and remarking – both formal and informal assessment and evaluation; trying to develop learning skills such as digital technology, literary and mathematical skills; guiding significant research and development; following progress through the course; enabling enrichment by extending the limitations of the course and facilitating the sharing of learning positivity (p. 7).

Simpson (2002) further notes that the first aspects (defining the course area and the course explanation) are more focused on research content design than the duties of the instructor. Like Tait, Simpson's explanation (2002) appears to apply more to distance education of the second or third generation by pre-prepared resources, rather than to other online learning focused more on engagement through the interpretation of contents and principles.

For non-academic support tasks, Simpson (2002) uses the word 'guideline', which he describes as follows:

> Non-academic help is composed of advice: information, analysis of issues and guidance; assessment; retroactive input on people's capacity and abilities to work; realistic help in fostering studies; advocacy:

> financing, referral; discontent: encouragement improvements within a school for student benefit; administration and organisation of studies (p. 8).

These definitions of systems help describe actual student support activities. To better clarify the purpose of these tasks, the following student support interface offered by Tait (2000) is useful:

> • Cognitive: to promote and improve learning by the implementation of regular and standardized materials for the students, as well as learning tools.
>
> • Emotional: to ensure a student-friendly atmosphere, commitment and self-esteem.
>
> • Systemic: to facilitate the development of reliable, consistent and usually student-friendly administrative processes and knowledge management systems (p. 289).

Thorpe (2003) highlights the desire for a redefinition of online resources for graduates. Like Tait (2000), she applies a pragmatic method which describes student help as "all those components that can react before, during and after the learning phase to a familiar student or community of students." With this definition, she recognizes both the dynamic nature of support for students and the fluctuations between support for students and the production of courses in online study.

She notes that students need support in two contexts instead of trying to define types of support according to staff roles. The first relates to "institutional systems (for example, knowing what is offered, how to apply, how to claim a refund, payment, select a course) before, during and after study" (p. 203). The second is in the context of “the course they are learning, like how best to carry out a specific task, how to stay in touch and to collaborate with other students in this course, how to make sense, whether their approach to the lesson is important, well thought about or not, etc. " (p. 203). She further states that it is especially in the latter sense that "Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and the web are challenging our concept of student support" (p. 203). In this study, the researcher structures the research according to these two important contexts.

As far as this is feasible through learning centres, regional networks, the telephone and other technologies, student help has also involved supporting the education communities. The Web has both stressed and positively encouraged the value of this practice. Learning groups add to the sense of identity of the students by offering a network of social help to study and promote the development of skills and information through student communication (cognitive sphere).

Throughout the cognitive and affective areas, the support team (for example, teachers, counsellors or advisers) become engaged throughout tasks similar to other pedagogic approaches such as counselling, endorsing, asking for, assisting, motivating, fostering, directing and up-skilling (cf. scaffolding of online learning) mentioned by McLoughlin (2002). In comparison to other forms of communication such as commonly requested guidance which can be automated, such tasks are usually carried out by anyone (although they may be assisted by the effective design and reduction of certain non-packaging materials). There have also been some significant pedagogical-didactical elements of managerial and operational support areas. To promote education and learning, it is important to make substantial investments in macrostructural aspects to incorporate, establish and enforce online learning (Zawacki-Richter 2013).

For this study, student support can be described as all educational practices and elements that respond to a student or a community of students and which relate to the cognitive, affective and structural fields of research. Teaching and tutoring, guidance and encouragement as well as knowledge and management are important administrative structures of student service.

2.4 Four Basic Forms of media-based Learning and Teaching

The method used to describe electronic, online learning, e-learning, and distance learning is to regard them as a hierarchy of four fundamental types of media-based learning. Computer-based learning is an electronic learning type, as is each e-learning type. The term media-based education and teaching in distance learning refers to integrating multiple technological tools to present knowledge expressed in multiple formats through multiple sensory modalities (Shah & Khan, 2015). For Zawacki-Richter (2004) it is based on the following elements in the figure below.

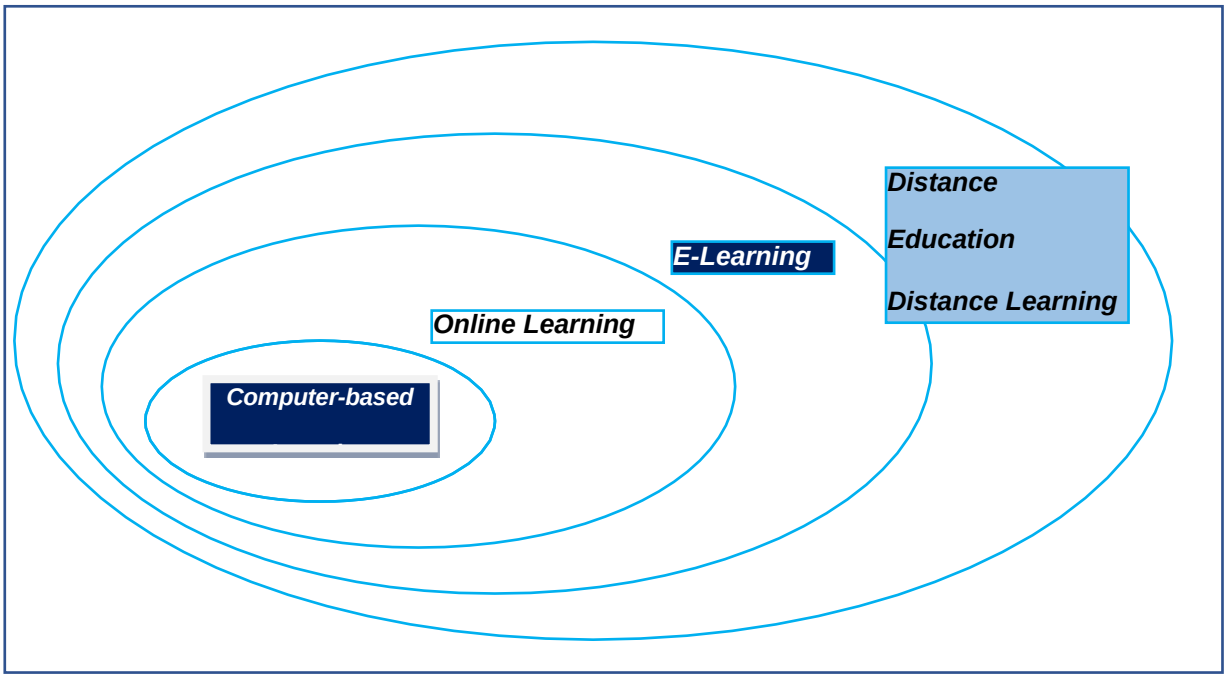


Figure. 2.1: Subsets of media-based learning and teaching

Source: Zawacki-Richter (2004, p. 32)

2.4.1 Distance Education, Distance Learning, Open Learning

Distance education is characterized by the geographical separation between teachers and students. Therefore, instruction and learning are encouraged and facilitated by mainstream media. The central focus of distance learning pedagogy is how to best bridge distance. Besides, given the remoteness of the students, the first pedagogical approach specific to distance learning aims immediately to find ways to bridge, reduce or even eliminate the spatial distance (Peters, 2001).

Peters' theory of online learning as a part of the former methods, perspectives, techniques and roles established and validated by remote educational entities is focused on eliminating the spatial distance. This illustrates how support networks can be built and how online learning is encouraged in general. The basic elements of distance learning warrant an in-depth discussion.

The roots of distance teaching can be traced back to correspondence courses. The word communication analysis was being too limited with introducing digital technologies, which were often used for teaching distances (e.g., email, fax, internet, video, screen). Therefore, academic and home studies were opposing designations in

North America before distance learning eventually became widespread. In 1982, these developments were formalised by changing the name of the International Council for Correspondence Education (ICCE) to the International Distance Education Council (ICDE) (Holmberg, 2015).

Open and distance learning are also used as synonyms. Mobile learning, therefore, differs from remote learning:

> …the concept of open learning is a concept which differs from distance learning since it takes up the idea that students can take courses or programs without preconditions and choose any subjects they wish to study in. Most "open colleges" have been founded on this basic principle. Although certain distance learning programs may include open learning, the majority do not (Moore & Kearsley, 1997, p. 2).

Therefore, open learning allows study access to university education without restrictions. The distance learning systems should adopt an accessible learning strategy that allows for greater flexibility and self-determination.

Besides indirect and facilitated teaching, Keegan (2016] distinguishes direct instruction from 'ordinary face-to-face study.' Distance learning is distinct from many types of indirect instruction which involves one-way conversation, automated instruction of computerised learning. Distance learning utilises two-way contact, which enables students to communicate with the tutor or instructor and the teachers. It is the channel of communication that is different.

Distance education was characterised by many scholars during the founding period of open universities (Dohmen, 1967; Holmberg, 1977; Moore, 1973; Peters, 1973; 1994). Keegan (1980) introduced an agreed description; however, he revised his description frequently and eventually pointed to five distance learning features which affect each other:

- The nearly constant gap of teachers and students in the learning cycle differentiates them from traditional one-on-one education;
- The separate roles of an educational institution from private school programmes, both to organize and schedule the instructional content and delivering supporting student assistance services;

- Use is made of digital media (print, audio, video or computer) for the integration and dissemination of teaching and student content;
- Two-way contact allows or engages the student in a dialogue to differentiate between other technical uses in education; and
- The interactive exclusion of a student community over the entire duration of the learning cycle typically allows students to be trained as persons and not in classes of incentives for both instructional and social activities (Keegan, 1986, p. 49).

A vigorous discussion on the concept of distance education took place in the second half of the 1980s. An outline of the dispute was provided by Rumble (1989) and a five-part definition:

> There must be an instructor in the distance training phase, one or more pupils, a teachable curriculum or program and that the student wants to learn, and a relationship between the student and the teacher or the teaching college that recognizes the respective teaching/learning positions (Rumble, 1989).

The teaching/learning contract involves allowing the participant to be taught, tested, directed and, where applicable, prepared for assessments which the organization may or may not carry out. Two-way communication may facilitate this progression. Learning can happen, either individually or in groups. In every case, that takes place in the absence of a teacher. Once students are provided with distance education content, this is also organized in ways that promote distance learning.

On the first subject of Keegan (1986), provisions about some form of teaching and learning will not be required and there are no signs of the scale of the school environment. Self-learning systems are omitted through interaction with an instructor or mentor. It also ensures that one-way conversation (one-way communication) does not require remote instruction through an instructor CD-ROM with little assistance from a mentor. Test structures that do not interact as an individual or a community (two-way communication) of students/teachers are omitted from the fourth point.

The second argument relates to the prospect of online learning in tandem with face-to-face instruction (see the mixed curriculum in 2.5 below). Students are therefore generally physically isolated from their school (thirdly). In his fourth argument Rumble (1989) explicitly points to this possibility when studying in a school was not a central factor for Keegan's distance education ("absence of the student community") (2016). Computer conferences have been developed to contribute to collaborative learning using computer networks.

The terminology alluded to in point five does not include the use of customized research materials specially designed for remote learning. These can include courses focussing on communicative and collaborative processes in online learning environments and the study materials consist of standard textbooks or academic papers. Therefore, distance-learning or distance learning may be described as a method of thinking and studying that uses digital media to bridge the gap between the participant parties. In this phase, the capacity of the media to facilitate bi-directional contact between students and teachers and between them is important.

2.4.2. E-Learning, Online Learning, Computer-Based Learning

This learning usually includes television and radio, videocassette, CD-ROM and film studying via online media (i.e., through the Internet or Extranet). Therefore, e-learning is more precisely described than distance learning, where paper-based analysis and collaboration through email are still used. E-learning may, therefore, be known as remote learning but not vice versa (Rosenberg, 2011). Therefore, printed materials widely distributed in distance learning are also understood as a form of technology. Educational technologies are linked to teaching and learning technology.

The concentration is not on the technologies; the works by Bates (1995), Collis (1996), Haddad and Draxler (2002) and Heinich, Molenda, Russell and Smaldino (1998) deal with technologies in detail.

Isolated instruction without a network link, e.g., analysis with an interactive CD-ROM (internal interactivity), is defined as computer-based learning or teaching (CBT). CBT is often focused on the guided instruction strategy. There is no personal support or communication between teachers and students working together on problem-based tasks. Although students may decide the duration, venue and speed of the learning,

the quality of the programmes and the learning measures are restricted to those offered.

An answer to the crisis of CBT and computer-assisted learning (CAL) provides online learning that facilitates electronic communication and collaboration through Web-based training (WBT). The cooperative or collaborative learning (CSCL) advocates argue that by involving instructors, specialists, tutors and other students, the drawbacks of computerized self-learning systems may be resolved (O'Malley, 2014). Digital learning is the all-inclusive concept for studying or teaching through the Internet and the World Wide Web, for example, via a computer network.

2.4.3. Distributed Learning, Flexible Learning, Blended Learning

Extended connectivity and engagement tools through digital technologies contribute to a fusion between pedagogical systems of distance learning and face-to-face college learning in terms of students support, and teaching and learning activities (Mills & Tait, 1999; Collis & Moonen, 2001). According to Naidu (2010), "there is a shifting traditional boundary between distance learning and face-to-facing education practice on campus through the proliferation of information and communications technology (ICT)" (p.350).

A growing number of universities offer courses that combine phases of face-to-face learning with directed online study. Terms such as "blended learning" (Sauter & Sauter, 2002), "flexible learning" (Collis & Moonen, 2001) or "distributed learning" (Lea & Nicoll, 2002) are more popular in this sense. A continuum of campus-based and distance learning is constantly being created.

Lea and Nicoll (2002) note that the following aspects affect online learning:

- The deterioration of the boundaries between traditional and remote learning contexts and the division of formal and informal learning sites;
- The potential, as well as limitations, of new learning ICTs, particularly for social, communication and collaborative learn and teaching activities;
- The focus on globalisation, education commercialisation, lifelong learning and the diffusion in internationally offered courses of English as an international language and main media;

- The requirements for new literacy and students and teachers, especially because of the changing technologies in "the knowledge society," and their opportunities; and
- Transmitting knowledge through "workgroups" and interactive learning.

Many campus-based universities have designated e-learning support competence centres, for example, known as 'flexible learning centres. For instance, the University of Pretoria, the largest residential university in South Africa, has successfully introduced online learning on campuses (Zawacki, 2002).

International trends are linked to the creation of flexible learning environments based on students. These provide flexibility concerning educational success and efficiency as follows:

- Connection to various learning systems and departure from them;
- Accreditation of qualifications and their portability;
- Methods for the conduct of teaching;
- Modes of contact and interaction;
- Selection of software for use;
- Materials for study;
- Techniques of evaluation and assessment;
- Study time and place; and
- The speed at which the study is carried out.

Therefore, Panda (2003) summed up flexible learning as a mixed or multimodal education which covers all modes and all combinations of contact and distance learning (p. 1).

Specific online and offline channels were integrated into blended learning, face-to-face and online learning phases (Panda, 2003). Distributed education, flexibility and blended learning all describe a new continuum between traditional distance learning and contact training in which pedagogical approaches, methods and technologies are used to enable more autonomous learning opportunities which are individualised and self-directed.

2.5 Inclusive student support in ODeL in Higher Education

Inclusive education, teaching and learning in HE refers to ways in which management, pedagogy, curricula and evaluation are developed and delivered to involve students in meaningful learning. This promotes an appreciation of the person and the community that could enhance people's lives and learning (Quinn & Vorster, 2014).

2.5.1 Inclusive Student Support in ODeL

Tait (2003) postulates that student support drives a positive learning experience which leads to both student and institutional success. He argues that student support should focus on three spheres, namely cognitive, affective and systematic support (Tait, 2000; Tait, 2003). Cognitive support is aimed at developing supportive learning, while affective support is targeted at providing students' motivation to learn and helping them through their emotional challenges. Systematic support assists the students with understanding and complying with institutional rules, and knowing how to use learning systems in a way that ensures that they achieve autonomy. Tait (2003) contends that providing students with support can lead to institutional success. He also states that the provision of ongoing student support reduces the rate of dropouts. Quinn and Vorster (2014) opine that making student support services an add-on to the teaching and learning process could result in its being omitted from curriculum and assessment design processes.

The UNISA policy (2008) promises students with disabilities an enabling learning environment that has no barriers which could convenience them. UNISA inclusion policy sought to build on a framework policy document called White Paper 6: Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System issued by the Department of Education in 2001. The document was a response to the post-apartheid state of special needs and support services in education and training. Two main findings were that only a small percentage of learners with disabilities were receiving specialised education and support, usually on a racial basis, and that the education system had generally failed to provide services appropriate to the diverse needs of learners. For most learners with disabilities, this meant they were ‘mainstreamed by default’ or that they did not attend school at all. More recently, a White Paper for Post School Education and Training (2014) implores DHET to develop strategies to improve

access to and success in post school education and training for people with disabilities (White Paper for Post School Education and Training 2014:15). The framework implores post-school institutions to develop targeted institutional plans to address disability based on the norms and standards for the integration of students and staff with disability in all forms of university and college life including teaching and learning, sport, accommodation and culture (White Paper 2014: 15).

Concerning the learning environment in HE, students with disabilities have barriers that have significant effects on their learning. The WHO (2001:214) notes that barriers are "actors in a person's environment that, through their absence or presence, limit functioning and create disability". The WHO (2001) classified five categories of environmental factors that influence participation. These factors are presented in table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Learning environment factors in higher education

	Participation factors	Description
1.	Natural environment	An inaccessible physical environment which comprises structural obstacles in nature that could also be man made, which prevent or inhibit mobility.
2.	Products and technology	Absence or insufficient technology such as assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices for communication and learning.
3.	Attitudes	Negative attitudinal problem towards students with a disability

4. Systems, services and policies	"that are non-existent or hinder the involvement of all people with a health condition in all areas of life" (214); or Products and technology: • Communication barriers that affect hearing, speaking, reading, writing, or understanding. Students with a disability use various ways to communicate. • Transportation barriers are due to an inadequate means of mobility that interferes with a student's ability to be independent and function in a learning environment.
5. Support and relationships	Social differences are related to the circumstances of birth and development of children, living, studying and working. Social health determinants are factors that can limit the way students with disabilities function in a learning environment

Source: WHO (2001)

The CDC (2017:1) states that certain challenges will render the functioning of individuals with disabilities very challenging. Students with disabilities ought to compete along with their competent peers on a fair playing field. In certain countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, students with disabilities have been driven by financial assistance depending on their education levels, but not based on academic achievements. These means of financial assistance may lead to disabled university students' reaching their full potential.

The research on student support services suggests that various factors contribute to the decision about a broad variety of student support services for an institution (Potter 2013). There is no all-inclusive blueprint for the improvement of student support programmes within HE (Tait, 2000). Considering the ethos and belief structure, researchers argue that all organisations should provide support facilities. Such assessments will also take into consideration a continuing evaluation of students' needs, social progress, economic circumstances, technological advancements and

findings from the work carried out by universities. The study offers a way to reveal and improve the needs of students with disabilities, especially within the ODeL setting, regarding the educational ethos of UNISA.

2.5.2 Explanatory context

Historically, terms such as 'inclusive' and 'inclusion' have been used to refer to a discourse of students marginalized within mainstream education and excluded from official education (Kaylanpur, 2016) because their livelihoods are 'different' (Engelbrecht & Artiles, 2016).

In the Education Reform Act of 1981, the concept of inclusion required schools to consider how the higher levels of support aimed at the students that needed it most would supplement their standard provision. After the legislation was adopted, various teachers and scholars, especially in the light of the "crude classification system," "segregations" and "inequality " associated with its introduction, have shifted away from this specific definition of inclusion as just people with special needs (Dyson, 2005: 123).

Alternative explanations, such as those given by Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006), indicate that "inclusive curriculum can transcend the obstacles of students" (p. 218). It is described as 'a process to increase the involvement of students in the cultural, curriculum and college communities and to reduce their exclusion from them.' Inclusion lays the framework, he argues, for a strategy which would change the structure (p. 219). While the research focuses on higher education. There is also a systemic connection in elementary schools between under-serviced persons with disabilities. This idea is supported by Dyson (2003) who argues that "many college students with inclusive education difficulties share important characteristics and are trained in similar environments" (p. 125). These developments make it easier for practitioners and policy makers to take systematic, rather than individual interventions. This means that the learning environment should change rather than the individual.

The definition of social justice and freedom for all classes of people are popular in the literature on multicultural discourse. Through the 1960s civil rights' revolution in the US, inclusive pedagogy emerged to cultivate support and justice for several cultural groups. This definition of holistic pedagogy encompasses a spectrum of variation and

investigates the impact on human learning rather than focusing on classes characterized by an attribute, such as class, race or impairment. More broadly, students from different social classes and ethnic backgrounds are currently being more widely included within the HE sectors in the UK. This inclusion covers disadvantaged people, people with varying faiths, and those of diverse ethnic backgrounds and sexual orientations. It applies to full-time and part-time students who come join HE with various initial skills and working and living backgrounds.

This holistic concept of inclusion does not mean that the individual's interests and privileges are met through representation in a community or party. This does not mean either that the combination lacks human identities. However, it does mean that we need to be attentive to the individual rights and needs of students in HE today's 'diversity'. Jones (2008) addressed the word 'diversity' for specific involvement in new to widening participation. However, it is a key concept that supports inclusive education and learning and as such, needs clarification.

This review addresses the vast spectrum of disparities mentioned above in the definition of student diversity. Many may use 'diversity' primarily to involve groups of students who have historically been under-represented in HE, the so-called 'non-traditional' or 'widening participation' students. They involve middle class, mature students and some students from an ethnic group, sometimes without HE backgrounds in their communities and sometimes with specific backgrounds of education and training. The 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' groups, though, are controversial. First, whereas there is disparity among non-traditional communities, it does not inherently imply that all these communities are marginalized, even though there is proof that many could be. Second, a person can identify with both traditional and non-traditional groups. For example, a 22-year-old black working-class female student with a qualification, A levels, and secondary qualification in the family going to university would not 'fit' into either a non-traditional category or classical category. This interpretation also rejects the idea of diversity as analogous to conventional and non-traditional as it over-simplifies student diversity (Bamber, 2008) without taking into consideration individual distinctions.

The idea of the non-traditional student is often excluded since it is sometimes connected to the student's deficiency point of view. To those who hold to this opinion,

there is a shortage of the university's students in terms of ‘non-traditional’ or ‘widening participation’. They are also thought to need extra resources and to be more challenging than their ‘traditional’ peers. To others, their association in HE has contributed to the curriculum being 'lowered' and the learning expectations decreased. Other publications, such as those by Bamber and Tett (2001), Haggis (2006), Leathwood and O'Connell (2003), have debunked this perception of a shortfall for 'non-traditional' graduates.

The disabled student type is often regarded in the literature as 'problematic.' Who is perceived to be impaired? Who appears to be at the root of this question and for what specific purpose? In certain cases, the word ‘disabled’ may be strong and definitive, however pessimistic in others it may be "administratively helpful" (Jackline, Robinson, O'Meara & Harris, 2007). In one of the studies on disabled higher education students, for instance, by Mahlangu (2018) it is suggested that "the care of disabled students is unlikely to be a different class, but rather entails a spectrum of student disparities and the same difficulties and hardship as other higher education students encounter" (p 4).

However, Jacklin et al. (2007) noted that the definition of 'special' was 'aimed at decision leaders and implemented regulatory reforms that opened up opportunities in HE and made 'reasonable adjustments' which would be possible in their study on the enhancement of environments for disabled higher education students (p.6). It was also helpful for tutors to identify students with impairments.

However, they noted that “the label's influence was not necessarily positive: It was one of stigmatisation. Moreover, some students were not aware of whether those with their condition/impairment were part of the group” (p.7) or not. Postmodernists claim that several factors form personality. Of these, illness or a condition may only add to the student's personality and may not be the key influence (Ferrier & Heagney, 2001; Holloway, 2001).

Equality and justice principles shape the foundation of the idea of balanced citizenship and education. This definition assumes that the variations in the traditional programme, pedagogy, and assessment are considered and analysed. The concept of 'universal design' is also one of the key principles that are commonly applied in literature on disabilities. Universal design's original goal, taken from the architectural

field, was to provide 'the design of products and environments for all people without adaptation or specialized design" to the greatest extent possible (The Center for Universal Design, 1997:1).

This purpose and the concepts behind it were adapted to educational environments. Johnson and Fox (2003:14) suggest that "because steps become more affordable to provide and functionality in the construction of a new structure, the versatility of learning resources when designing a course becomes more cost-effective and time-consumed than the attempt to find individual accommodation during the case." This strategy permits a proactive approach to curricula design and integrates the view of disability as an element of distinction which improves everyone's lives. Johnson and Fox's study (2003) explores how this concept has been applied in practice and discussed in the main section of the research. The findings show areas of improvement that are necessary for full inclusion.

Some ideas behind inclusive education have been discussed from this perspective. In addition, some concerns and debates have been illustrated about gender, distinction and vocabulary in inclusive learning and teaching. Inclusion support for students with disabilities and staff to support it in an ODeL are increasingly important. ODeL is a new phenomenon and is currently developing its pedagogical, organisational and technical structure. The underlying scientific, technical, economic and social circumstances establish a new area of pedagogical intervention.

There is hardly a single educational institution, whether, in the private or public spheres, that considers the introduction of e-learning. The research focuses on the HE climate. Online learning and teaching are being developed in three areas:

i. Distance or open universities, always involved in media-based learning;
ii. Mainstream universities, where social technologies are used to make teaching more informal, to expand accessibility, and to deliver online degree courses in specific graduate education programmes and opportunities in order to attract more students; and
iii. Throughout the area of business training, e-learning is often used as a cost-effective platform for mobile 'just-in-time' learning.

The last-mentioned aspect will provide useful techniques, strategies, solutions and realistic perspectives in the design and management of this modern method of learning because of the connection between distance training and online learning. Distance schools have over 150 years of media-based teaching and learning experience: "At present virtual education is based on correspondence education" (Gladieux & Swail, 1999, p. 9). Universities offering distance teaching are thus clearly at an advantage in developing online degree courses and becoming virtual universities (cf. Peters, 2003; Schulmeister, 2001; Zawacki, 2001).

The distance learning experience shows that support for students is crucial to the success of distance learning. In traditional distance education, student support systems have existed for decades. There are also 'helping groups' accessible to colleges from abroad (Baldini, Grimaldi, and Sobrero, 2006). Information and communication technologies are opening up new pathways for student support. What is unique and significant is that the faculty itself needs specific assistance in improving online education by incorporating advanced technology and providing innovative pedagogical opportunities (Brindley, 2014).

Although the importance of support is emphasised in many ways, the literature on distance education research does not adequately recognise aspects of support. The following four reasons were given by Robinson (1995):

> Student support can be viewed as less glamorous than those in open and distance training (support staff often have less control, prestige and salaries); also marginal to the 'real business' of materials production, is a component particularly sensitive to financial cutbacks or is a realistic and experiential lesson (p. 221).

It is noteworthy that Robinson (1995)’s views on distance learning do not include the word ‘support’. This omission is especially crucial because funding in online education is much more important relative to conventional distance education.

2.5.3. Two Dimensions of Support

It is important to emphasise that an extension of knowledge and understanding of support, which goes beyond pedagogic intervention at the microstructural level, are

required in the complicated pedagogical, organizational, technical and economic conditions of online education.

Pedagogy traditionally always combines measures of support with education and learning (support, welfare and advice). In this microstructural sense, for example, pedagogical activities incorporate:

- Defining, corroborating and rendering the learning priorities clearly,
- Considering prior experience and linking it with learning objectives;
- Considering instructional strategies focused on the student group's specific needs;
- Stimulating the focus and enthusiasm of students, addressing and developing instructional material to promote comprehension effectively and sequential order;
- Explaining dynamic problems simply;
- Providing flexible questions and suggesting answers;
- Motivating by positive feedback and constructive criticism to offer guidance to students about the study;
- Helping and guiding the development of self-reliant learning (scaffolding) processes;
- Providing tutoring support;
- Helping the implementation and translation of what has been taught;
- Considering student reviews;
- Tracking the progress of learning with the following corrections and vision;
- Providing learning help and overcoming learning difficulties through counselling; and
- Consulting on interpersonal issues, for example, guidance on graduation for newcomers and specific classes (for example, graduates from overseas, persons with disabilities) (Brindley, Wälti & Zawacki-Richter, 2014).

Further pedagogical activities could be added to this list, and therefore it cannot be exhaustive. However, while such interventions have been adopted in relative isolation in conventional educational systems, the digitalisation of learning and teaching produces a modern pedagogical-didactic environment in which all such practices are connected and different modes of assistance are related.

What seems new in the field of universities and other educational institutions, for example, the core values of the division of labour and specialization (instruction design process) as they have been practised for many years in distance education systems, is to develop systematic strategies for online learning and teaching. Support systems are initially made possible by work-splitting processes because staff can be explicitly specialized in supporting students and faculty professionally (the distinction between 'academic' and 'academic support' personnel).

A desirable administrative-institutional environment (e.g., by opportunities to members of the faculty to engage in online training), and the provision of a technology network with sufficient academic resources to encourage and improve online distance learning are important. The organisational, administrative and infrastructural aspects are not mere requirements but are supporting elements. Support for the staff is a significant factor.

Although measures are typically related to a person in traditional pedagogical and didactic practices, the educational institution (macrostructural level of activity) is also characterized by and provided for in this wider understanding of support. Tait's (2000) concept of student service roles offers a comprehensive taxonomy of support for students from pre-graduate to the post-graduate stage at the macrostructural level of the system. Tait (2000; cf. Rumble, 2000) provides three principal student support functions as illustrated below:

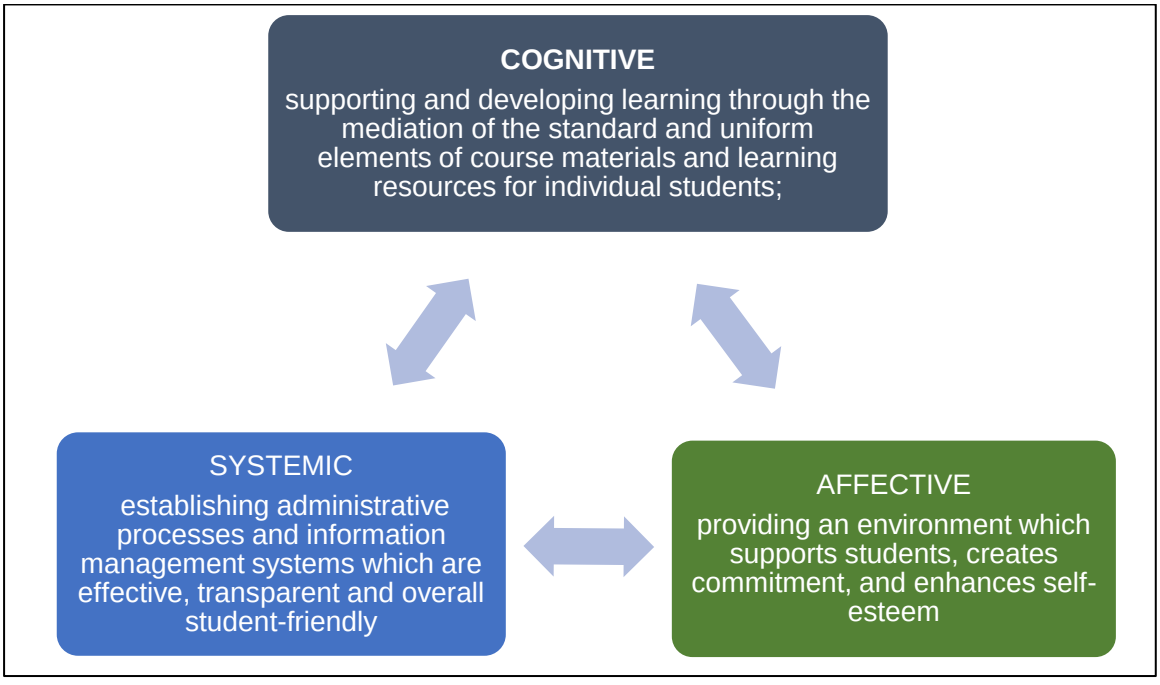


Figure 2.2: The three primary functions of student support
Source: Tait (2000: 289)

Tait's programmes include pre-studies consultation services, the studies archive, ICT services, consulting services, research counselling, as well as other post-study career support services.

The emphasis on cognitive, affective and structural factors which impact ODeL highlights areas or paradoxes that may be contradictory (such as the university requires a sustainable administrative structure and the high degree of versatility required by ODeL to succeed). This includes areas of support that tutors otherwise expect without specific consideration, which contribute to the demanding nature of their job.

The paradigm of online interactive learning focused on a powerful constructivist method is given by Thorpe (2003), whereby the instruction is a collaboration between the instructor and the students (cf. also Ludwig-Hardman & Dunlap, 2003). Thorpe claims:

> Student support is generally regarded as the one facilitating the course content. This usually determines its purpose by encouraging students to effectively research and to build their field understanding...Furthermore, such limitations can no longer be enjoyed in online classes where collaborative learning is necessary.

Student support is 'no longer an extension of a predefined course in the negotiated curriculum but defines what it is (p. 199). The Thorpe (2003) learning support model focuses on reaction and sensitivity in terms of identification, length and engagement, rather than addressing structural problems. The focus on identity is to acknowledge the role of a learner as an individual and as a member of a group in an online environment. It also considers the cultural context of students that affect their interaction. In terms of duration and time, the support is a 'live' and dynamic process.

There has also been an established range of pedagogic and functional benefits and drawbacks of distance education, both synchronous and asynchronous (see, for example Moore's study, 2007). In order to "tackle students' interests in ways in which such students want to articulate themselves," human contact requires teaching

support (p. 203). This paradigm casts doubt on the usefulness of conventional, and in a sense, positive approaches. The emphasis must also be on delivering tailor-made patient support, which must be matched with administrative services.

The ODeL work has addressed both the demands for tools for learning support and incorporating the curriculum into the provision of subjects (e.g., Rossiter & Watters, 2000; Ryan, 2001). However, some instances of standardised approaches (e.g., Johnson & Barrett, 2003) will only partly resolve apprenticeship needs. When it comes to individuals with disabilities, the requirements discussed are not comprehensive. The following section focuses on academic literacy approaches and new academic learning perspectives.

2.5.4. Empirically Verifiable Effects of Support in Distance Learning

Care and support in distance education are more relevant than in formal education in conventional terms: the distance education culture is more motivated than mainstream universities by a desire for organising student service and assistance (Rumble, 2000: 218). The need for support has also been more critical than in modern universities.

Three factors which must be established in favour of the programme, which offers added significance to supporting students and faculty in online education, are illustrated in the following sections:

- Distance education usually puts greater responsibility on pupils for handling their learning compared to face-to-face teaching;
- Online education needs must be built with more expertise (e.g., digital literacy) and abilities from students;
- To encourage, grow and incorporate online distance learning and teaching, it is increasingly important to provide faculty assistance systems.

Though students have more freedom and opportunity to manage their education, they need to be responsible when they study, how much they want to learn and how much they want to find information and resources. Many students may not assume this responsibility or may not be sufficiently educated to change their study habits (Lee, 2017).

In many studies, distance education research has focused on supporting students in drop-out levels. Tallman (2014)'s research on the relation of help and student satisfaction came to the following conclusion: "Correspondence is a complicated issue". It might not be workable to separate specific variables which guarantee student satisfaction (p. 52).

Ryan (2011) links the quality of support with the number of drop-outs by compiling data from various authors who report on drop-outs in higher distance educational institutions. This varies from over 90% in the mega-universities of Asia (Daniel 2016) to 25-50%. The common level of service for students is showed by the variations. Ryan gives an average decline level of 17% for all British campus colleges compared to the above-quoted drop-out levels in distance learning universities. In the most recent drop-out study of the Information System of Universities (HIS), Heublein (2014) analysed a level of 27% for first-degree students at universities and 22% at universities of applied sciences in Germany.

Many scholars believe that drop-out rates are greater at distance colleges than those on campuses. Comparability is, however, limited and should be interpreted very carefully (Peters, 2012). The distance students must also consider different initial requirements and socio-economic characteristics. The students who have different professional and vocational experiences and diverse professional and family obligations are usually mature adults (cf. Peters, 2011; Thompson, 1998). Distance students frequently follow established career ambitions and their learning is often challenging and less focused towards a final assessment.

Nevertheless, younger bachelor's degree students keep choosing online learning which is independent of university times and spaces. This is especially true for disabled students who find traditional universities inaccessible.

UNISA is very special as an ODeL university student group. The key division is between 25 and 44 years old; nevertheless, the age group under 25 years is steadily increasing. Such students typically frequent residential campuses. However, these campuses are increasingly costly and many students have to work and study part-time. They come to UNISA in increasing numbers (Allen, 2004:274).

These younger students, however, require support, as they may have fewer independent learning skills than their older peers. Given the challenging circumstances for distance learning, these students are of the utmost importance. High-quality student assistance is the secret to success:

> Based on my many years of experience, I dare claim that the most favourable factor paving the way for motivated students' success and preventing dropout is empathy between the learning and teaching parties, availability of immediate support and advice when difficulties crop up, ease in consulting tutors and other subject specialists and general feelings of rapport. (Holmberg, 2001, p. 74).

The key goal of effective distance education (academic and non-academic) is to offer learning opportunities successfully to satisfy the target clientele (students). Institutions that do not address learner support challenges may retain fewer students than their counterparts. Therefore, problems of learner support in the university framework that require strengthening can be known as 'loose ends.' The norm for successfully helping learners in distance learning transition would be integrating views from the various actors (beyond the staff), in particular students who value decision-making and dedication to increase the consistency of service delivery. This aspect is largely linked to an overall competence for any ODeL environment to address such challenges faultlessly, particularly where diversity and inclusion remain a major concern.

2.5.5 Competencies for ODeL

Owing to the current "half-life" of knowledge, by the end of the study course or after graduation knowledge soon becomes outdated (Dohmen, 2016). This progression involves continuous development and practice of people's skills and abilities throughout their working lives (Schäfer, 2012). This phenomenon is demonstrated by factors such as adult learning or on-demand instruction:

> Lifelong learning is a purposeful activity, where a person takes part during a lifetime; it is an endeavour aimed at increasing the self-fulfilment of the adult and the developing community. To continue to work – let alone to grow, improve, and remain successful – practitioners must participate in lifelong learning (Dunlap, 2009, p. 41).

To meet the requirements of an information or knowledge society, teaching and learning culture centred upon a constructivist method is required:

> The University wants more than adequate technological equipment in the information society as a vision. This takes a modern philosophy of learning that draws on the concept of active learning and encourages learning behaviour and development, and self-control and collaboration (Mandl & Reinmann-Rothmeier, 2008, p. 197).

Lifelong learning, however, requires a great deal of self-control and cooperation to develop skills and skills that are necessary for the whole of one 's life. The benefits of online learning allow defined methods and supports, which make it easier for students to decide for themselves and become more autonomous. However, it also demands more of them.

In the future professional world, as knowledge workers, university graduates must have various qualifications or other than the industrial society with which we are familiar (Klauder, 2012). In the context of information and knowledge, competencies and smart strategies for the use of new technologies of information and communication are necessary. However, the competencies of media must go beyond simply handling tools and systems (digital literacy).

According to Reinmann-Rothmeier and Mandl (2007), many skills are derived from the context of such social transition, which is of great importance in the culture of knowledge. In a broader sense, online education has the following requirements:

- The fundamental credential (digital literacy) should be the technical skill in managing new material.
- Knowledge management abilities are a positive solution to the information processing and intelligence revolution, and a key foundational credential for the future (cf. Astleitner & Schinagl, 2000). To build individual knowledge from information, the information must be critically reflected upon (media literacy), reconfigured and integrated into a personal context.
- The nature of information, and the extent to which it is experienced in our culture need organizational skills and teamwork at all levels.

> People must be willing and able to work in a team and cooperate with others. In addition, communication and cooperation are essential during online education.

Such innovations allow the students to understand and prepare their learning autonomously and comprehend and coordinate it somewhat separately from the teachers. The emerging need for continuing instruction and individual learning objectives focuses on the demands of people's lives and jobs. The most important and difficult challenge is probably that of being able to look for, find, select and test information against the backdrop of the learning goals and the application context, given the flux of information and databases that are available through the Internet. A fundamental precondition here is the regular use of various tools in the online learning environment. Social skills of interactive learning systems, of which articulation and collaboration are the subjects of research groups, are of special significance.

The high degree of autonomy demanded by this kind of learning thus requires a high level of metacognitive skills and self-direction of students (Dunlap, 2009). According to Ridley, Schultz, Glanz and Weinstein (1992), these include the capacity of awareness of deficits to be identified, the goals to be established, the preparation and coordination of the learning phase, the use of the appropriate existing expertise to meet the learning goal, the assessment of success, the evaluation of the information and resources to be used which are necessary for lifelong learning. The following metacognitive competencies include making good use of time and resources, and finally, where necessary, modifying the learning strategy during the learning process. Knowles (1975) defined self-determined learning accordingly:

> 'Self-directed learning' in its broadest context defines the mechanism by which individuals, with or without the help of others, take steps to assess their learning needs, formulate learning objectives, define human and material capital for studying, pick and execute learning approaches and analyse outcomes. (p. 18). For conventional universities, the acquisition of the qualifications and skills mentioned here are essential but also critical to success for online learning. Throughout the electronic world, assistance from colleagues, teachers and other support workers is not readily accessible from face to face, unlike campus environments.

This means a change in the learning and teaching behaviour from expository and receptive to counselling and tutorial support of students, which is aimed at supporting students who are responsible for their learning processes.

Although not exclusively focused on students with disabilities, Smith (2000) studied the learning behaviour in flexible learning environments of 1252 students in the field of vocational education and training (VET). The findings indicate that autonomous learning skills must still be established, especially for online learning. Students are still not able to take care of their learning process:

> The current investigation has concluded that VET students are not typically well-equipped for flexible delivery. They exhibit a low preference for self-directed learning (p. 43).

Intensive support is also necessary for students in online learning. The term 'scaffolding' explains the purpose of student support: scaffolding is placed around students that help them in their growth into self-sufficient and autonomous learners. McLoughlin (2002) identifies nine types of scaffolding in different teaching settings: alignment (expectation communication), instruction, articulation eliciting, encouragement for assignments, professional change, logical scaffolding, metacognitive and method scaffolding, and strategic scaffolding.

2.5.6 Faculty Support

The educational resources provided by social networks will only be created and taken advantage of if inspired faculty members are well educated and encourage educational creativity. The responsibility lies primarily with them to create and introduce high-quality and creative online courses: "Presidents can dream of visions, vice presidents can draw up proposals and deans and department heads will seek and bring them into action but little is change without the help of faculty leaders." (Bates, 2000, p. 95).

It will become more important in online learning for faculty to provide advice and support in pedagogical and technical matters because developing and carrying out online courses or completing online graduations are complex tasks which are impossible for individual instructors or single departments to manage in a 'lone-ranger'

approach (Bates 2000). Limiting the growth of on-line instruction is insufficient funding and training of teachers and tutors:

> Any significant initiative aimed at changing teaching methods or the introduction of technology into teaching and learning should include effective e-moderator support and training, otherwise, its outcomes are likely to be meagre and unsuccessful (Salmon, 2000, p. 55).

It is also important to provide technical support. Hara and Kling's (1999) research indicate that dissatisfaction and dropout levels escalate when a professor is unwilling to actively address basic technical problems and has to refer students to the professional support programme. To deal with the media, instructors also need to be able to show certain levels of control and routine. Careless preparation, though, will not contribute to results. Against the backdrop of electronic learning pedagogy and instruction, the staff would have to make plenty of adjustments to their teaching behaviour and methods, right through to counselling and tutorial support. Pedagogical advice and training will be an even greater structural aspect in support for teaching, together with the technical questions of online support. To teachers, it is important at first to guard against dealing with specific information without Internet knowledge, so they can focus on teaching the online classes.

It is not uncontested that the support of faculty is necessary for online learning and teaching. Many universities find the establishing of structures and the incentives required for educational innovation difficult. Successful support and the development of electronic instruction call for organisational frameworks at the university, for example, e-learning knowledge centres, to assist teachers (who are accountable for the content) to collaborate with a team that can help them improve their teaching skills electronically and other educational issues.

There should be three key fields of staff support: content planning and instructional support; electronic information management; and professional help (Brindley et al., 2014). The support facilities of universities are the prerequisite for establishing an environment in which problems and obstacles to online learning and teaching can be resolved. Only a support strategy that takes a top-down approach will grow and encourage online instruction and learning (cf. Zawacki-Richter 2004).

Such a top-down approach to create the institutional framework includes:

- Strategic planning to implement electronic education and training and formal target commitments in all university departments;
- the development of the required technological services, always help, and ongoing maintenance;
- Support organisations and areas of public expertise in service network systems; and
- Introducing support programmes and, eventually, funding and resources to engage in online education.

Only a deliberate bottom-up approach will bring a gradual transition to the philosophy of general service and the values of the faculties. The following steps contribute to such a specific approach:

- to learn from good practical experience (peer-to-peer) examples of colleagues;
- to offer informal advice and the support of skilled on-line learning professionals, educational consultants, personal pedagogical and media technology;
- to encourage systematic professional growth and training; and
- to lend support to the principles of education and design through teamwork and professional project management.

2.6 Conclusion

From this section, it can be observed from both past and current thinking that all students need support. The type and nature of support depends on each student: their mode of study, previous experience, personal history, priorities and social duties.

The support includes both the instructional and on-line learning pedagogic dimensions (academic assistance in the narrower sense) and administrative-institutional preconditions (service in the broader sense) in an operational, economic and technological context. It can only be partly linked to conventional mechanisms of assistance; however, it can be more readily implemented in support networks such as those that have emerged in remote schools.

A support programme also needs to be adapted to the needs of students and staff, to the social, cultural and regional background and finally, to the specific aims of a course. For this reason, an optimal model of support structures cannot be universally accepted.

Researchers recommend a constructivist method to satisfy adult learning criteria. The transition in the pedagogic model calls for a change in culture, and students' and teachers' awareness. Furthermore, the media should not be used as one-way media but as knowledge discovery and communication instruments which are part of the constructivist context of research and learning. A new vision and perception of students and faculty are emerging from access to responsive learning by interaction and self-study facilitation to expose the unqualified link between individuality and encouragement for learning.

CHAPTER 3

DECOLONISATION AND TRANSFORMATION SUPPORT SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

3.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to unpack the concept of decolonisation as it relates to higher education in South Africa. It specifically highlights how decolonization could be used a tool for effecting transformation of an exclusivist system inherited from colonial and apartheid eras. The inability of the curriculum to respond to contextual dilemmas, to empower and support students with disabilities, while at the equal time continuing to be committed to giving them a plurality of voices has generated interesting discussions about decoloniality and decolonizing higher education in South Africa specifically and the African continent more broadly. McKenzie and Macleod (2012) argue that curriculum discourse should be marked through a multiplicity of voices, articulating theories to develop avenues for a simple and caring curriculum. This curriculum is most feasible in spaces which are open to the construction and reconstruction of responsive knowledge. To unpack this, this section explores key scholars whose work continues to influence decolonisation discourse with the view to create sustainable and inclusive ODeL learning spaces in which fair curriculum experiences can take place.

3.2. Demystifying the concept of Decolonisation

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2016) argues that we cannot talk about decolonisation without a discussion on decoloniality. He defines decoloniality as follows:

> a movement aimed at the liberation of colonized people from global coloniality and as a way of thinking, knowing, and doing. It is part of marginalized but persistent movements that merged from struggles against the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, neo-colonialism, and underdevelopment as constitutive negative elements of Euro-North American-centric modernity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016:1).

In this regard, decoloniality represents movements, both social and political aimed at advancing a decolonisation agenda by pushing back against dominant forms of coloniality that are resistant to change and transformation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016:1).

In South Africa, the #FeesMustFall movement in 2015 became the most visible attempt by university students at resisting the manifestation of coloniality within higher education. The protests themselves were much broader and nuanced than the simple demand for free education. Rather, the protests aimed at transforming institutions of higher learning into inclusive and democratic spaces. Ndlovu-Gatsheni in Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020) argues that the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall protests made very clear demands such as decommissioning of colonial/apartheid iconographies; the restoration of African indigenous languages in teaching, learning and research; and the changing of alienating institutional cultures that bred patriarchy, sexism, racism, elitism and other forms of exclusion and discrimination; and they also picked up the labour issue of casualisation of workers and demanded that they be given secure employment. In the context of this study, actors who should form part of the movement to ensure inclusive universities would include student activists, disability activists, progressive academics and University administrators.

As previously noted, decolonisation refers to the negation of colonialism. It is the formerly colonized search for a liberating perspective within which to see themselves clearly in relationship to themselves and others in the universe (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1998:384). Colonialism (the act of colonizing) involves the re-organisation of politico-administrative power to enable the matrices of power for exerting authority over colonized subjects (Zondi, 2018). Similarly, Ekeh (1988:5) defines colonialism as a movement of epochal dimensions whose enduring significance surpasses the lifespan of colonialism into the post-independence period.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2016:72) argues that the mixture of post-colonial processes and the ineptness of African leaders derailed the decolonisation agenda. In the context of this study, coloniality has persisted in higher education, in part by those who advance narrow ableist agendas that are resistant to alternative realities.

Building on this assertion, Ngugi argues the following:

> For colonialism, this involved two aspects of the same process: the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture, their art, dances, religions,

> history, geography, education, orature and literature, and the conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o,1998:390).

Coloniality within higher education has culminated in a deliberate 'destruction' and undervaluing of people with disabilities including their education, history and culture. Equally, the continued perpetual infantilizing of people with disabilities reduces their relationship with the world to that of the colonizer and the colonized (Sathorar & Geduld, 2018).

Because the decolonisation project is multi-faceted, it should move from society to society and from one social stratum to another. This movement finds expression in Kwame Nkrumah speech that "the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked-up with the total liberation of the African continent" (Nkrumah, 1968:12). It is for this reason that the independent African States regarded it important to provide financial, military, paramilitary and diplomatic support to liberation movements in Southern African (Mazrui, 2002:267). Those least affected by the axes of oppression facing those with disabilities in our universities and beyond need to provide the necessary support for their total inclusion.

In its document, *Path to Power*, the South African Communist Party (SACP) characterizes South Africa's post-1910 colonial outlook as "colonialism of a special type". They define colonialism of a special type as follows:

> a variant of capitalist rule in which the essential features of colonial domination in the imperialist epoch are maintained and even intensified. But there is one specific peculiarity: in South Africa, the colonial ruling class with its white support base on the one hand, and the oppressed colonial majority on the other are located within a single country.
>
> On the one hand, white South Africans enjoy political power, racial privileges and the lion's share of the country's wealth. Most of our country's black majority is subjected to extreme national oppression, poverty, super-exploitation, a complete denial of basic human rights, and political domination (SACP, 1989:1).

Unlike other colonial powers who do not physically reside in their colonies, among the peculiarities of the South African colonial context is that colonial powers reside in the same country as their colonial subjects.

South Africa is a good example of a colonial project. Various strands of colonialism were reproduced through education, religion and culture. Three key mechanisms such as universities, church and language were used for the preservation of coloniality. Up until 1994, universities found ways to exclude the black majority from certain disciplines, including engineering and information technology, among others. Van der Merwe & Van Reenen (2016) also concede that “all children schooled under the grossly unequal system of Bantu education were taught to see themselves only as unskilled labourers, with the 'lucky' few perhaps as teachers or nurses or factory workers”. People with disabilities were worst affected by this brutal form of exclusion through enrolments, curriculum, university physical infrastructure and support services. An inclusive environment constitutes a decolonised space for people with disabilities.

The intersectional analysis is defined as a tool of analysis that theoretically examines the social positioning of ‘actors’ through various axes of historical oppressions i.e., disability, sexuality and religion, among others (Zembylas, 2018). In this respect for those seeking to decolonise the University, there can be no successful decolonisation of the University until all barriers to participation by students with disabilities are eliminated.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that decolonisation and decoloniality is about inclusion, recognition and affirmation. It seeks to affirm African knowledge and cultural traditions in universities which remain dominated by western bureaucratic traditions, with its forms of knowledge production and dissemination.

3.3. Decolonising higher education and transformation

Within HE, decolonisation is emerging as a useful framework for critiquing transformation in higher education. Conceptually, decolonisation petitions for a radical transformational praxis to resist and push back against coloniality. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) makes an argument for appreciating decoloniality as a process of enabling and liberating thought and practices that invite possibilities of other knowledge and worlds. He states the following:

> At the epistemic level, decoloniality is about epistemological disobedience premised on three domains of power, knowledge, and being. At the political

> level, it is working in areas of new critical theory, new meaning and action. At the methodological level, it rebels against the knowledge of equilibrium and those methods that operate as part of colonial matrices of power that prevent transformation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017:15).

Calls for transformation in higher education emerged from a recognition that debates and discussions on decolonisation are expressions of enactments aimed at disrupting prevailing power structures and institutional cultures to shed light on democratised practices and spaces that bring to the fore previously marginalised voices and knowledge. As Keet, Sattarzadeh and Munene (2017:5) caution, for transformation and renewal practices to be impactful in the academy, "we should, with our students and through critique, contribute to the self-clarification of the struggles within our universities." Such introspection and dialogue might expose how, in epistemic terms, the "systemic anchoring of socio-economic inequalities and discriminations" in institutions (Keet et al., 2017:5) is, in part, constituted and reinforced by the everyday praxes of individual social agents.

The imperative is to encourage a rethinking of 'decolonisation' in higher education as social transformation. Scholars are challenged to be critical of theorising that has become rhetoric, for instance, by interrogating calls to decolonise education which themselves are steeped in power hegemonies, and thus to advance emancipatory praxes in educational contexts that advance the notions of inclusive epistemologies and social justice. Scholars included here each present a unique critical stance on interrogating efforts to 'decolonise' education which foreground a social justice orientation and practicality, thus making a valuable contribution to current discourses in the broader field of HE transformation, specifically in the context of decolonisation. The collection of 12 studies shifts the focus from theorising decolonisation as a product to a critical analysis of its implication for promoting HE pedagogy and praxis (Zembylas, 2018) as well as shaping curriculum development (Mahabeer, 2018; Mampane, Omidire & Aluko, 2018; Mheta, Lungu & Govender, 2018; Sathorar & Geduld, 2018). Several scholars foreground the decolonisation of education as a process of democratising knowledge and disrupting existing heterogeneous power structures inherent in higher education.

Two scholars offer perspectives on student voices, participation and agency in shaping education reform (Cherrington, 2018; Stuurman, 2018). While McAteer and Wood (2018) discuss the civic role of the university through meaningful community engagement, other scholars showcase how decolonisation-in-praxis can open possibilities for fostering inclusive classrooms and schools (Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018) in South Africa. They conclude the issue with a reflection on practices that might disrupt institutional spaces and democratise knowledge in academia (Walters, 2018).

Michalinos (2018) examines transformative possibilities by weaving the theoretical concepts underpinning decolonial theories with the notion of a 'humanising pedagogy.' His analysis is driven by the question of the possible links between humanisation and the decolonisation of higher education, and the implication this holds for pedagogical praxis. He argues that there is a political and pragmatic need for HE institutions in South Africa to reflect critically on what it means to decolonise pedagogies that can reclaim humanity in knowing and knowledge-making. This analysis offers valuable insight into how a humanising pedagogy can be reconceptualised within a decolonial and social transformative framework to challenge existing colonial powers within the academy. The current study challenges instructors in HE to interrogate the pedagogical practices emerging from Eurocentric knowledge approaches by drawing on and twisting these very practices.

The next grouping of works shifts the focus of decolonisation in higher education from theoretical discussions to case studies that show the importance of understanding the personal views, motivations and perceptions of students and academics on how to transform education at the curriculum level. However, this is largely done with less regard to inclusivity, which this study intends to address to some extent. These range from student perceptions of decolonisation of higher education to the importance of student motivations and notions of the goals of socio-economic transformation in the design of new national qualifications in the Adult and Community Education and Training Sector (ACET). Mampane, Omidire and Aluko (2018) focus on issues of indigenous knowledge, culture, language, technology, and discourse in their study on decolonising HE in Africa. Their research explores the paradigm of the decolonisation of education through the lens of students from diverse nationalities across the African continent. The study found that students regarded decolonising higher education as a

way of addressing past injustices and marginalisation by esteeming and leveraging indigenous languages and culture, while simultaneously integrating relevant and cost-effective technology; in a sense the best of both worlds, the past and present in service of a better future.

The Adult and Community Education and Training Sector (ACET) for HE in South Africa is the focus of Ismail's project, together with academics from 10 universities, who have developed new national qualifications for ACET to respond to the needs of the adult education community. In their design of the qualification, they endeavoured to include new policy requirements, critical transformative educational practices, input from community educators and student viewpoints on a decolonised curriculum. Ismail (2018:1) observes that these "frameworks contradict one another particularly in a neoliberal context in which education has a strong focus on the workplace."

Mahabeer (2018) investigates ways in which higher education has transformed in South Africa over the past two decades of democracy. The author critically notes that even though there appears to be a commitment to change, South Africa continues to implement international requirements and standardisations in the quest for first-world rankings. The author proposes a rethinking of the curriculum and uses Pinar's method to demonstrate what curriculum decision-makers think about the curriculum. She highlights the dichotomy of Western ways of thinking versus a shift towards a 're-humanising' approach to the curriculum.

Mahabeer's (2018) study upholds that "curriculum decision-makers are catalytic agents of change and are neither complacent nor at the mercy of Western knowledge and ideologies" (Mahabeer, 2018:1). The decolonisation of the curriculum is explored through a case study at the UNISA. Mheta, Nyangu and Govender (2018) argue that the UNISA is still largely Eurocentric and in their paper discuss the benefits and importance of decolonisation at this institution. They propose a way forward by discussing different options and ways of (re)thinking university curricula and open the dialogue for further discussion on this seminal topic, not only for UNISA but for all HE institutions.

Similarly, Cherrington (2017) sought to stimulate student-led agency through mobilising a practice of hope in a teacher education programme. Based on a critical transformative study that made use of multiple visual participatory methods, she

demonstrates how bringing hope explicitly into conversations with student teachers about education and being agents of change had a positive transformative value for the participants and thus implications for HE decolonising initiatives. Cherrington asserts that understanding student-teachers' experiences of hope have value as a catalyst for mobilising agency. Therefore, it is a valuable first step towards opening a wider dialogue about decolonising education. She urges that critical reflection is needed to question how the universities' decolonisation efforts might serve communities by enabling students to be critical thinkers and social change agents.

The pragmatics of coloniality is intricately tied to the purpose and character of the University (Keet et al., 2017) and how it seeks to engage with its internal and external communities. McAteer and Lesley (2018) call on the University to enact its civic role through meaningful community-based projects. They advocate that creating partnerships with communities should be core to the University's purposeful vision of transformation and social justice. In the context of a participatory action research project exploring school-community co-operation, the authors suggest that when University researchers move away from seeing themselves as 'experts' to being 'facilitators', the engagement can be more effective and thus the process and products of knowledge democratised. The authors offer unique insight into the possibility of reimagining the relationship between a University and its community as a position of epistemic democracy, thus meaningfully contributing towards shared understandings of decoloniality and social justice.

It is also imperative to take discussions on decolonising education beyond the realm of the South African context. This study extends the theme of decolonising education transformation into the HE system to inclusivity. Scholars reflect on the challenges of implementing the policy of inclusion in schools and protest that the ideology of inclusive education stems from the Global North and has been poorly transposed to the South. They call for a re-thinking of how quality education can be delivered to students with special needs in under-resourced South African schools. These aspects, more especially gaps in an inclusive pedagogical element in ODeL, are some that this study intends to fill through a practical Student Walk framework. Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht (2018) draw on the reflexive engagement with inclusive education policy formulation and implementation over five years in various Southern African contexts. Against the backdrop of these struggles and complexities, they argue for a critical

inclusive education that has a social justice anti-oppression orientation. They call for the need for equipping teachers with the skills to identify, analyse, and evaluate the ethical and social implications of the ideologies that guide their inclusive education practice.

According to Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht (2018), this implication would require a rigorous framework for critiquing ideology that plays out in the context of quality education. Mfuthwana and Dreyer (2018) tackle the poor implementation of inclusive education policy from a different perspective. Through conversations with a cohort of teachers in the Western Cape, they sought to explore the challenges experienced in implementing inclusive education in schools. While the teachers mostly aligned the policy's poor implementation with the shortage of appropriate training and support they receive, the authors critique that by not taking into account local contextual factors brought on in the first place by colonialism and apartheid legislation, any attempt to further impose inclusion in the ODeL environment will be ineffectual and will instead perpetuate inequalities.

While some authors advocate for universities to be more assertive in internalising and mandating transformative pedagogical and organisational spaces for driving the decolonisation project from within hierarchical systems of power, Walters (2018) believes that 'mainstreaming' such initiatives can bring about regulation rather than turbulence. Walters (2018) furthermore presents a case study of working the 'in-between' spaces for transformation within the academy. Her study presents two activities by the University of the Western Cape over a decade as forms of challenging dominant institutional culture and hegemonic power relations towards a 'de-colonised' University. Walters' (2018) critical reflection on these events supports the argument that creating alternative institutional practices for enacting 'knowledge democracies' plays a crucial role in decolonising education. Unfortunately, to streamline the University's transformative process, the unit driving these initiates was assimilated into the teaching and learning portfolio. Consequently, Walters cautions that much can be lost in the decolonising agenda when transformative initiatives are internalised rather than given their own 'in-between' spaces to succeed.

Collectively, these aspects bring into focus several issues that are key to advancing transformation in education that is linked to disrupting colonised institutional structures

and promoting a social justice orientation. The studies offer possibilities of democratising knowledge, reshaping institutional cultures and diversity and power structures, and re-imagining education transformation as a process of humanisation.

3.4 Curriculum Transformation

Within high education, academics build curricula (learning and teaching circles) and adapt frameworks to specific learning scenarios. Ideally, they change their teaching patterns continuously to match the emerging educational conditions and learners. With this continuous change, academics and students participate in a symbiotic and creative adaptation relationship. Suggestions are mostly about what is experienced, which is a true reflection of curriculum transformation (Bunoti, 2010). Over time, many external and internal influences and events have affected curriculum decisions and behaviour and ways of thinking.

The persistent ambivalence, confusion and the seeking of the key moments integrate around all the concerns posed at different stages in the design of the curriculum and the dynamics that are ever-present and which establish a challenge for ongoing system evaluations. The key points of the programme concentrate on elements of the curriculum of order to accomplish the broad course goals of native self-determination and social progress. That is why some scholars have viewed the decolonisation of HE to be about equity that attends to the epistemic viciousness of frontier information and provincial ideas (Pillay, 2015).

South Africa requires an open, inclusive education system to produce students and persons who are willing to cope with the epistemic viciousness of decolonisation for a long time to revamp 'accounts' and 'humanities,' both of Southern Africa and Africa (Zeleza 2009:116) over the centuries. Where, indeed, will leaders, politicians and academics who contribute to profound epistemic violence be exposed. Where will scholars discover knowledge and passion for the continent of Africa? The overwhelming percentage of white scholars in South Africa are intellectually and academically disconnected concerning knowledge about Africa. (Mkhize, 2015).

Many consider the western sense of awareness to be the primary explanation for higher judgment forms (Education Department, 2008). This 'needs self-reflection' in the decolonisation phase, for instance, awareness of the gain, human reform and

growth as well as unlearning of old knowledge to enslave and exploit 'the other' (Langdon, 2013:385). However, the epistemological improvements depend on the tremendous increase in black, coloured and Indian academics (HESA, 2014:8). If black scientists and heads substitute whites, that still does not mean a substantial improvement. Ramoupi (2014:271) claims that at various schools – from white to Hispanic, coloured or Asian chancellors, delegates or senior officials – the system has not changed substantially to accomplish substantial decolonisation of the curriculum programme or content. Moreover, as Maserumule (2015) points out:

> The continents' professionals are educated to a great extent in the white custom. This engraved the way of life of whiteness in its creation, which isn't astounding. Western training in Africa as we probably are aware was intended to convert blacks. African scholars might be hesitant to renounce their composition (p.12).

Maserumule (2015) embraces the fact that crucial change requires scholars and overseers with a decoloniality attitude. Throughout South Africa, the indication is that scholars and managers with a white background are a minority in colleges and universities. Some came from the old system that aimed to maintain the racial discrimination and white dominance which was politically protected; others received white privileges though professing to condemn politically sponsored racial segregation or were educated during the ethnic divide of government restrictions, leading to the emergence of many black intellectuals and the appointment of many black heads. Thus, the battle to decolonize higher education will be a long one, which will involve academics and administrators with a more modern outlook – who were not part of the old framework and who are illustrative of the nation's socio-economics – to achieve senior positions at colleges.

We need to interrogate and understand the notion of the ‘transformation’ of the curriculum in the social imaginary of HE and its function as a communal “great raft of beliefs” (Appiah, 2006, p. 41). In the social imaginary, the transformation of the curriculum conjures up different contesting beliefs and knowledge claims such as whose knowledge is valued, who determines the curriculum, who are the gatekeepers of the curriculum and so forth. There is, however, also a danger that in talking about the notion and praxis of transforming the curriculum, we use the word ‘transformation’

as buzz word as we two-step to the beat of the next catch-phrase, whether it is ‘disruption’, ‘innovation’, or ‘excellence’. There is a real danger that the notion, potential but also the challenges in transforming the curriculum get caught up and hijacked in the broader rhetoric in HE amidst other “hopeful fictions” (Taylor, 2015, quoting Ron Barnett) and drowned in “superlatives and meaningless aspiration” in our strategy documents and operational plans.

While the need for the transformation of the curriculum is relatively uncontested, there is, however, no consensus of what a transformed curriculum should look like and what this transformation should achieve. There are not only different ways to transform the curriculum – from soft-reform, to radically reform the curriculum and the possibility that the curriculum is beyond-reform, but each of these reform spaces will be informed by the intention of the reform process. Some of the current discourses, internationally, and in the South African HE context, include tensions between internationalisation and localisation, a return to moral education and family values as presented, citizenship education, neoliberalism, employability and postcolonialism.

Not only are the discourses surrounding curriculum transformation "a great raft of beliefs" (Appiah, 2006, p. 41), but there are also various claims on the curriculum and any effort to redefine or transform the curriculum has to take cognisance of these different elements of the curriculum as contested space (see Figure 2.1). Seeing the curriculum through the lens of the different claims to the curriculum also allows us to see how the curriculum can become a contesting space – a space for formulating counter-narratives in naming oppressions and imaging alternative knowledge and ways of being-in-the-world.

As Figure 3.1 (below) illustrates, the different elements of contestation are multidimensional, overlapping, interacting and often mutually constitutive. It is very hard (if not impossible) to consider, for example, the 'who' of curriculum transformation, without considering the 'what', the identity and role of the 'gatekeepers', the impact, potential and perils of technology, and so forth. These seven elements do not represent the complete dimensions of curriculum transformation but are a selection to illustrate the notion of the curriculum as contested and contesting space. At the centre of the illustration in figure 3.1, the pursuit and preservation of these values at the level of overlapping philosophies that govern debate and

democratic improvements at the structural and legislative level remain a deeply nuanced task. Such issues affect the method of curriculum development and continually push system personnel to take note of the constraints and opportunities for change of our essential processes and priorities.

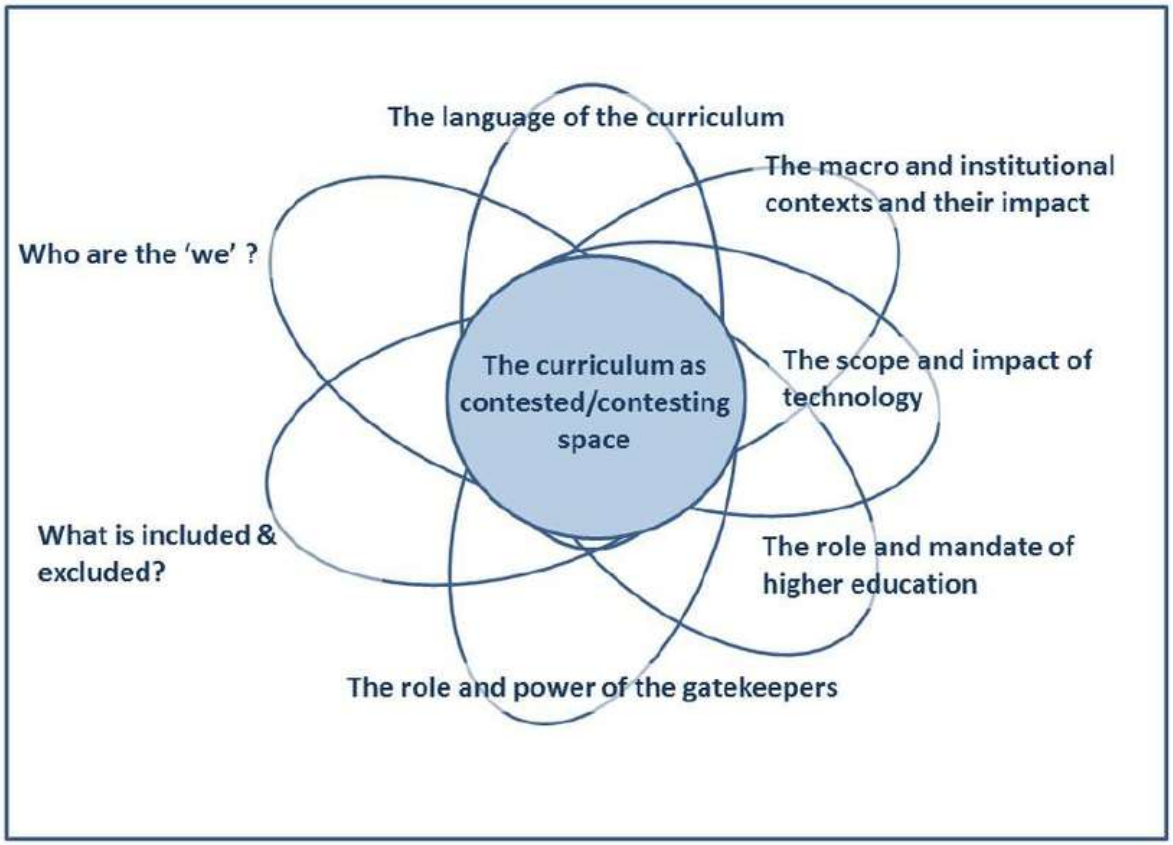


Figure 3.1: The different elements of curriculum transformation
Source: Taylor (2015)

The first consideration is who is responsible for drawing up and developing curricula or who is also interested in trying to transform curricula. Who is the 'us', who is in charge, who maps and endorses maps? Who are the cartographers? What is their technical expertise? Who is not in the office of the cartographers? Which knowledge and talents are required to engage in the effective development of the curriculum?

Barnett (2000) states that HE is no longer the primary or even the main driver of information output in culture, and the number of players in the development of information has grown. It is worth remembering the function performed in the creation of important and useful information by publishers including Pearson, Wiley-Blackwell,

Springer, and the like (Larivière, Haustein & Mongeon 2015) The position of prominent teachers or professors (who are also white and male) also needs to be considered in a large number of free online classes (MOOCs) that Ivy League and other North Atlantic alliances deliver (Smith, Burd & Reisman, 2014; Czerniewicz, Deacon, Small & Walji, 2014; Fournier, Kop & Durand, 2014)

These elements of curriculum transformation often give rise to questions about the use of institutional financial schemes and accreditation frameworks which drive inclusive curriculum transition in one direction. A further concern is what the function of administration, supervision and quality control institutions will be. An additional issue is whether EH and faculty management will mould programme growth and programme transition by offering adequate opportunities for inclusion'.

Whereas these preceding descriptions relate to those who transform curriculum; however, the scope indicates that these issues are far more complex. Moreover, the individuals concerned are more deeply involved in multiple power dynamics and channels of curriculum transformation than we think when we consider the transformation of the curricular system. All these key actors are interested in is maintaining or improving the existing curriculum.

In South Africa, HE would have to seriously consider the who's – and acknowledge the desires, punitive legacies and more, if the past and existing momentum that accompanies the demonstrations of students are to be a motivator in reforming the curricula.

HE is positioned and mandated as a driver of the curriculum transformation. The change in the role of HE in the 21st century occurs often and is often contradictory (Barnett 2000; 2009; Blackmore & Kandiko, 2012; Giroux, 2003). These authors – and others – vary considerably in how they consider that HE reacts to the influence of the neoliberal capitalism (Giroux, 2003), HE's management and commercialisation (Diefenbach & Klarner, 2008) and HE's change of role in the era of internationalisation of HE (Barnett, 2000; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007).

Giroux (2003) further argues that HE has become a "maiden" for enterprises in an "age of maximizing profit when scholarship becomes almost exclusively a result of their market share, and students now eagerly receive courses that give them a

repository to sell to the higher potential buyer" (p. 182). Blackmore and Kandiko (2012) address "university exploitation," which entails university students' "selling their skills to the winning price, working together and teaching on and off, both locally and abroad" (p. 353).

In terms of performativity, "swinging vocalization and subjection in information to consumer demands has been transparent and describing the curriculum concept across all stages of schooling" (Giroux, 2003, p.185). Whether these writers disagree that this represents a "crisis" or is a component of HE's "natural" development (Blackmore & Kandiko, 2012), the quest for a higher education role is crucially informed. Giroux (2003) indicates that the primary function of higher education in readiness for jobs is to 'educate a student for successful and vital citizenship,' even though training students is still not removed from the overarching mission of higher learning.

Redefining HE as "cultural and political action", (Giroux, 2003) implies that market-driven juggernaut that proceeds mobilizing preferences to build business identities and public connections that eventually break the bond between education and social progress while reducing the entity to consumerism obligations. The appeal of "Lotto, gambling capitalism, and the Dow Jones National Average" has substituted the radical, egalitarian jargon of social justice "(Giroux, 2003, p. 180).

Staley (2015) explores the University's different future and says that our ideas about the university are "hopelessly poor" (par. 2, citing Barnett) and that most of the ideologies about disturbance and transformation centre on the technological potential. "What comes between Luddism and modern interference is our potential view of HE". Throughout his address on the prospects of higher schools he formulates five theoretical concepts:

- Three main degrees from the trades, sciences and social sciences, and arts and humanities are chosen by the University.
- The University has no geographical position and classes on common issues, finding and formulating answers.
- Purpose of a University is a place where knowledge is like an intelligence symbiosis, and where machines serve as 'intellectual robotic prosthetic'.

- A University that provides students with extensive and transferable know-how.
- A University is an Institution which does not have a definite curriculum, but several approved classes. Students pursue their interest by investigating the topics required to satisfy the need for this enthusiasm (p.3).

Because of the mandate and role of higher education, the curriculum will be applied by different stakeholders. They should not only see the curriculum as a contested place; they should also concentrate on the curriculum as a contesting area – where the curriculum should be a venue for contesting prevailing statements and theories in epistemology and proposing alternatives and contradictions.

Curriculum transformation, therefore, implies that there are many different levels of inclusiveness. Relevant individuals such as students, academics and parents may be motivated, while education institutions and politicians at the highest level may have tremendous implications in terms of corporate growth.

3.5 Eurocentrism and epistemic violence in 'new' South Africa

Critical scholars note that educational systems in Africa remain modelled alongside that of the continent's colonizers. In South Africa in particular, our type of education remains steeped in conditions that existed under apartheid. Pillay (2015) describes a Eurocentric educational model as follows:

> Europe's chance to demonstrate educational reforms to turn everyone into minor players or passers-by without a roadmap for the world's history process is just too lenient for everyone. However, it is too late to dream of something else we might do to speed up western innovation (Pillay, 2015).

The epistemological transition since 1994 was supposed to have involved a reorientation of the curriculum away from the colonial, political ethnic discrimination thinking context in which an education strategy was a prohibition system (Department of Education 2008:89). Nevertheless, universities have failed to do much to shift the educational policy following the collapse of racial apartheid. Despite apartheid's eventual collapse, no major changes were made to the structure and substance of the educational plan (DoE, 2008:90). DoE uncharacteristically concludes that the

education system "is inseparably associated with social culture and because the latter stays white and Eurocentric with a very white foundation, it doesn't help to reform educational programmes' (DoE, 2008:91).

In this regard, the Eurocentric systematic disenfranchisement that minimizes Africa and is often riddled with appalling perspectives and presumptions about the continent is common in many fields of studies (and especially in the fields of civilization and sociology). "European and white values are still regarded as the gauges on which the nation's educational system is built and developed" (Ramoupi 2011:5). The Eurocentrism that controls the educational programme “tries to universalize the West and provincialize the rest” (Zeleza, 2009:133). Such instruction does not fundamentally investigate the “results of a past filled with male-centric society, subjugation, dominion, imperialism, racial domination and free enterprise” (Molefe, 2016:32).

In contrast, the prevalence of epistemological visual impairment which mitigates different familiarities and forms of understanding is now an incomplete, ambiguous epistemological fact of those who seek to preserve this current state (Motta, 2013:97). Pillay (2015) insists that this teaching means that the graduates end up ‘forgetful of much about the planet [and in particular of Africa] and arrogant towards our oblivion’ (unique emphasis). This includes the 'epistemic savagery' that the South African teaching style imposed on its students

Spivak (1994) explains epistemic violent forms in which [former] provincials have a Eurocentric and Western dominance and have misjudged their knowledge and perceptions of the universe. This is a product of the “wildness of epistemic, social and disciplinary imperialistic opinions” (Spivak, 1994:80). Epistemic violence wipes away the subalterns’ (Spivak, 1994:83) social background and persuades them that their only recourse is indiscriminately pursuing the 'enlightened' colonists to learn from them, to accept their experiences and to blend into the edges of their existence as peons.

In South Africa, the epistemic violence had persisted in post-politically-sanctioned racial segregation, where high education, founded in the oppression and the racism of racial segregation at the frontiers and political levels, has almost fully eroded all ties that black students have with the approved literature. They are the 'other' in their

country of origin, not known nor respected even when they are accommodated in the old western models.

By training, they need to figure out how to ' speak well' and how to incorporate expertise and Eurocentric knowledge that helps them to excel in business and life in general. However, it does not enable them to improve conditions in society and the economy at a very simple level. This loss is also visible even as disadvantaged students have to take classes that they may not like or choose to pursue otherwise regardless of their circumstances.

The next section shares current thinking and debates on the curriculum in Africa.

3.6 Africa in the current curriculum

While there may have been some benefits that came with Western education, for example advancing ad modernizing the fields of science, medicine, engineering etc, decolonial and critical scholars argue that colonial and apartheid curricula in South Africa continue to promote white supremacy and dominance, as well as the stereotyping of Africa. The current HE curricula still largely reflect the colonial and apartheid worldviews (Ramoupi, 2014:271) and are disconnected from African realities, including the lived experiences of the majority of black South Africans. Most institutions are already adopting the hegemonic Eurocentric tradition of epistemology, which only applies reality to the Western form of generating information (Mbembe, 2016:32). Such a programme does not allow students to recognize and progress on the continent of Africa with practical and analytical skills. Gqola (2008) argues that South African institutions have not been doing anything since 1994 to open the horizons of their students in Africa. This weakness has led to ignorance of the continent in which we belong and has enabled the African man and woman unintentionally to stay disconnected from curriculum realities (Gqola, 2008:222). The colonial and politically sanctioned racial segregation education in South Africa advanced racial oppression and predominance, just as it did with the stereotyping of Africa.

The current HE education curriculum still largely reflects the colonial and politically endorsed perspectives of racial segregation (Ramoupi, 2014:271), separate from the African truths, including the lived experiences of most black people of South Africa.

The definitive Eurocentric epistemological ordinance is now used to "offer legitimacy to the facts about the Western system for generation of learning" (Mbembe, 2016:32). Such a curriculum does not build up the simple and systemic ability of students to recognize and progress on the African continent.

History demonstrates that the inability to increase the number of Black academics and to decolonize an educational system had lost the point of influence, the kind of knowledge (and therefore a specialist) that was passed on as a definite fact and uncertain interest to African students. The education initiatives tend to affirm the partiality that we can learn nothing from Africa, that we can develop nations and the third world and that the big knowledge resides in the West (Pillay, 2015). At a point where Africa appears in the education curriculum, it is nothing more than the Bantu-form of education ... students are shown a curriculum that assumes that Africa starts at the Limpopo and this Africa does not have an intellectual elite worth reading about (Mamdani, 1998:74). Likewise, most South African scientists who teach about Africa fundamentally rely on western continental elucidation. African academics usually neglect writing about Africa.

Western views of Africa are out-dated and unacceptable as described by Mamdani (1998):

> the possibility that locals must be sources, and not intelligent people, is a piece of a magnificent old custom. It is a piece of the royal conviction that locals cannot have an independent mind; they need tutelage. (p. 71)

Such past thinking has gradually changed, especially in terms of the Western information about the African continent and its kin. Mbembe (2001) takes note of the following:

> Decreased to anxiety and obliviousness, diverted by verbal confusion, mottos, and phonetic insufficiency – with certain agents, just reading French, others just English, and few talking neighbouring languages – the writing slips into reiteration and literary theft; unyielding attestations, carefree understandings, and shallow repeats become the order of the day (pp. 8–9).

The work of Western scholars and scientists, who frequently consider that Africa is all poverty, fraud, "blackness" and irrationality, is used as a reference guide as much as

possible for South African colleges to teach about Africa (Mbembe 2001: 6). (Ngozi Adiche, 2009, 11). For the moment this kind of research has been used to educate people about the world: nothing other than the division, disconnection and confusion of the causes for past and present issues and the lack of hope for the future can be predicted.

3.7 Fundamental change and transformation

Expounding on decolonisation of HE in Kenya, Garuba (2016) discusses the idea that the key views and guidelines should have been focused in the creation of any conceptual revisions in education curricula towards the end of the 1960s, and the importance of Kenya, East Africa and Africa should have been given significance as a topic of teaching, education and study in Kenyan colleges. Exploring this point of view. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1998) is a simple account of the path to reform the educational system in Kenya's post-colonial education.

Ngugi acknowledges that progress holds relevance to our conditions and dedication to our being, a gander in the educational programme. The overall goal of the educational system was to reinforce the "centrality of Africa" (Ngugi 1981:94). In many African countries after independence, colleges experienced "fiery efforts, to decolonize controls and to strip them of their Eurocentric psychological and civilisational pride" (Zeleza, 2009:112) and comparable decolonisation procedures took place.

Nearby scholars used reflection and basic study to create themselves and their social groups as "the objects' of their predetermination to replenish their past and envision their future" (Mudimbe, 1985:206).

Garuba (2016) referred to two methods when speaking of and taking part in the reconceptualization and decolonisation of the South African education system. The key approach is to apply additional knowledge to an established curriculum program. The accompanying approach is to check the interpretation of the intent of the research itself and to update it and introduce substantive improvements after that (Garuba, 2016).

This approach takes into consideration the ticking of the boxes and suggests that we have to adjust and strengthen the localised curriculum. Pillay (2015) notes that this approach should immediately compromise "for an additional contextual insight, in which African research on the new education system with the possibility of ghettoizing it from the other traditional monitors" is now used (p.13).

To re-conceptualise and decolonise curricula, the concept of inclusive curriculum is related to pedagogical contexts through which students should demonstrate their academic freedom in conjunction with academics in university classrooms. This is to suggest they will talk through holistic pedagogical sessions. Through examples of digital technologies, ODeL illustrates the broader scope of pedagogical environments in which teaching and learning are potentially decolonised through videos, clickers or social networking platforms. Even though it sounds like fighting to reform the educational structures of the institutions as the argument for decoloniality, this study equates what would be claimed to be a decolonial pedagogical commitment that stresses the importance of addressing undemocratic concerns regarding the cultivation of an equal academic culture among academics and students, especially students with disabilities.

The central change can happen if colleges set out on the subsequent methodology depicted by Garuba (2016) above. For Césaire (2000:89), “decolonisation is about the awareness and dismissal of qualities, standards, traditions and perspectives forced by the [former] colonizers”. Ngugi (1998:87) contends that the decolonisation of the educational plan is about Africans seeing themselves “obviously in association with ourselves and different selves known to mankind”. He calls this “a mission for importance”. The change at colleges must involve “decolonising, deracialising, demasculinising and engendering” the establishments, as well as their multifaceted suggestions for research, technology, grants and educational curriculum plans, the teaching method and inclusivity of which are devoted to ontological and epistemological issues as a whole (HESA, 2014:7).

Kaya and Seleti (2013:33) contend that the decolonized intellectual culture will oppose "the core framework for information generated from the prevailing Western viewpoint." Note that decolonisation does not allow white people to be removed from the education system, whether outside and within. However, they cannot be treated as the

all-powerful rule under which human knowledge persists and under which white and Western dominance is preserved. Mbembe (2016:35) asserts that decolonisation “isn't tied in with closing the door to European or different customs. It is tied in with characterizing obviously what the middle is”. Ngugi (1998:93) contends that Europe cannot remain at the focal point of the universe at African colleges; Africa must be on the inside.

The South African HE framework needs what Zeleza (2009:127) calls the “deconstructionist” development to “disassemble the Eurocentric epistemic authorities that have overwhelmed the investigation of Africa”. The educational programme must be changed “concerning post-politically-sanctioned racial segregation South Africa and its area in Africa and the world “(Department of Education, 2008:21). Jansen (1998:110) further underscores the following:

> Substance matters, and it makes a difference when a European-focused educational plan keeps on overwhelming and characterizes what considers beneficial learning and real specialist in South African messages and instructing; it makes a difference especially concerning the acquired educational programme, educated by politically-sanctioned racial segregation and imperialism, in which just the more promptly noticeable, hostile prejudice has been skimmed off the top. This becomes an opportunity for HE to identify and exploit the differentiated pedagogies out there so that inclusive teaching and learning can be enhanced.

Decolonisation of the educational programme additionally involves “connecting provincial and biased heritages to the present time and place” (Langdon, 2013:394), which in South Africa is an ever-present agonizing reality for some. Wiping out past and current shameful acts ought not to be constrained to ‘‘material disparity, deprivation and the more natural tropes of brutality. We ought to likewise intend to decrease shameful acts in the creation of information” (McKaiser, 2016).

College and organisations should rethink, reframe and recreate dynamic and equitable instructional programmes and concentrate on training, learning and studying for South Africa, Southern Africa and Africa. This means that decolonisation can easily even Africanise the programme. In an ethnocentric way, Africa is not going to be the primary subject of the educational programme. The decolonised curriculum

programme should not neglect certain academic structures or the global environment (Department of Education, 2008:92). Colleges and universities also need to develop professional students who are willing to function in the diverse and connected environment. South Africa expects to play a major role in Africa, within BRICS and globally in the future – in terms of financial aspects, advancement, global relations, governance and interventions towards peace building and security.

To do this effectively, HE should produce graduates who know the world and all its diversity. In addition, schooling must be free from the epistemological influence of the West, eurocentrism, epistemic falsification and world views which have been built in the African and numerous sections of this formerly colonized world to destroy individuals through slavery. Moreover, the South African scholarly community must be disparaging of international learning and not acknowledge anything from the worldwide North as the standard. At long last, the call for decolonisation of the educational curriculum "is neither a campaign of hostility to the West, nor is it debilitating to gain from the West" and the rest of the world. It is a call to make HE "significant to the factual, chronicled and social substances of the networks in which colleges work" (Letseka, 2013:14).

The large-scale framework of a multifaceted nature speaks to the social and moral structures that decide choices and activities in a specific situation (Lorenzo, 2011). For Lorenzo (2011), in HE organisations where the standards of comprehensive training are applied and embraced as culture, students with disabilities are preferably included over those in situations where diversity and inclusion have not been embraced. This relates to a collection of both learning and non-learning community where the success of such training, teaching and learning standards is based on inclusive policies and programmes.

From this review of current and previous debates around decolonisation and transformation, it is vital to connect that making curriculum relevant to the environment within which it operates requires comprehensive inclusion. Such inclusion would be reflective all students of all types and backgrounds, Moreover, society should be viewed as a dynamic and not a bundle where a 'one-size-fits-all' approach would prevail,

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter reflected a varied comprehension of the topics of decolonisation, curriculum transformation and inclusivity. It shows that decolonised pedagogy is incredibly nuanced and flexible, just as curricula. In this way, it appears to be a long-term method to introduce a decolonised pedagogy at university. Within ODeL institutions, a policy will be articulated when they want the teachers to accomplish a decolonised teaching role.

About decolonisation, curriculum transformation and inclusivity, most of the sources believed that there is little potential to educate in a decolonial manner and, within the minority of institutions that did so, regarded this potential as very special. If a decolonial pedagogy is necessary to decolonise and transform the curriculum, the research shows that most university lecturers could not meet this obligation. As for the analytical structure, this analysis considers that decolonisation and curriculum transformation would be ideal and beneficial in ensuring inclusivity; however, it must be expanded as several questions remain unanswered.

The next chapter explores the theoretical framework so that the study positions itself in both theories and later in practice.

CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the study adopts capabilities approach and the transactional distance learning theory. Both these frameworks form the foundation upon which this study firmly grounded. The motivation to use these two analytical frames (the conceptual and theoretical framework) is driven by the need to produce findings that are progressively substantial, satisfactory and appropriate to the theoretical constructs. Using two frameworks stimulates the research while guaranteeing thick and rich interpretation of findings and thoroughness of study. Evan (2007) argues that regardless of whether in understanding or contradiction, a study without a theoretical or conceptual framework makes it difficult for readers to make sense of the scholarly and academic positions and the researcher's underlying assumptions.

4.2 Theoretical framework: The Capabilities Approach

The capabilities approach was selected because it espouses the pedagogical aspects of inclusiveness within an ODeL as demonstrated in this study. The capabilities approach originates from welfare economics. It has been used as a nuanced tool to understand personal well-being, poverty and inequality. For example, Sen (1999: 01) states that "the capability approach to a person's advantage is concerned with evaluating it in terms of his or her actual ability to achieve various valuable functioning as a part of living".

Anaafo (2014:10) opines "that Sen's approach is not just a counter philosophical work to welfarism and utilitarianism, but also a valid alternative for the analysis of varying degrees of socio-economic problems, ranging from markets to gender, democracy to poverty". Sen (1993:33) claims that "the capacity of a person depends on a variety of factors including personal characteristics and social arrangements". Walker concedes

that “unequal social and political circumstances lead to unequal chances and unequal capacities to choose” (Walker & Unterhalter, (2007:172).

The capacity approach merges with this notion of disabled people being able to play a role in their personal development and general societal, political and economic development of the communities and societies they live in.

Concerning education, Sen (1993) is of the view that the availability of education alone is not a measure to gauge people’s interaction with it. He comments that analysis must go deeper into the actual quality of that education (Sen, 1999:1). Within the context of disability in higher education, the capabilities approach looks at the broad environment and quality of that education for people with disabilities. “Capability is thus defined as the space of functioning” and not just arms and limbs (Sen, 1999:38). Nussbaum (2013:31) argues about the importance of observing capacity to not only include the immediate circumstances of a person but the external environment as well. Similarly, within HE, the environment must be leveled such that students with disabilities are included and are actively participating in all activities within institutions of higher learning.

In light of this, discussion has been tabled to link decolonisation and the inclusive nature of higher learning institutions that could provide a model for society. Hence, capturing disabled students' lived experiences and views in the context of decolonised teaching and learning, as well as understanding the policies informing inclusive support for students with disabilities in the ODeL context is paramount.

Linking the capability approach to inclusion and training requires that we draw on Sen's analysis of customary traditional welfare economics. To correlate prosperity with assets (salary) or utility (satisfaction), Sen’s approach recognises elements, functioning, capabilities, and utility. He shows that utility is certifiably not an immediate outcome of pay or income, yet it is a consequence of a progressively unpredictable connection between the products that are gained with such income, and the capacities and functioning that lie in the middle. Along these lines, income is a method towards accomplishing functioning: "riches are not great and not what we are looking for; for it is only helpful and for something else" (Sen, 1999:1). Sen clarifies how individuals contrast in their capacity to change salary and goods into accomplishments they esteem. Hence, assessing prosperity through the limited focal point of items an

individual can command does not give enough information to appreciate completely how well individuals can work with the salary they have, regardless of their disability status.

Secondly, the utility is not, according to Sen, the end-all of human existence. There is a whole other world to life than accomplishing utility (education). While indicating that utility is significant, Sen underlines that there are numerous elements of importance and incentive to individuals that are not considered in customary welfare economics.

His reaction is to present the ideas of functioning and capacities, contending that ability has inborn worth and ought to be viewed as the "essential educational base" (Howell et al., 2006). Functioning can be comprehended as an individual figures how to do or be. It alludes subsequently to how an individual uses the income or the products she can control and depends on the results that individual values or on the individual's motivation to value (Nussbaum, 2013). The concept idea, the thought of capabilities, consolidates the idea of functioning with circumstantial opportunity, alluding to an individual's capacity to accomplish this functioning. Abilities are the opportunity an individual needs to appreciate significant functioning. In this way, functioning is an accomplishment, while a capability is the capacity to accomplish. For instance, concerning higher education, functioning would incorporate having the option to study and having the option to partake in college/university life, notwithstanding having the option to pass the assessment or get a qualification.

Nevertheless, the importance of these inputs is not necessarily their nature, but the degree to which people may turn such systemic inputs into productive power. Therefore, "the appreciation of the variety of persons in the approach to competence emphasizes that specific citizens require different kinds and diverse resources to attain the same well-being" (Robyns, 2005:6). This is emphasized by stressing that there are factors in the terminology of the capability approach which influence the degree to which an individual may convert inputs into capabilities. (Robyns, 2005).

These are:

- Personal conversion factors' such as physical condition, literacy and competencies that influence how a person can convert the

characteristics, commodities, infrastructures, and arrangements into functioning.

- Socio-structural and cultural conversion factors' such as social or religious norms, gender roles, power relations and hierarchies, and discriminatory practices; and

- Institutional conversion factors' such as welfare and educational arrangements and collective provisions.

All these considerations affect whether an individual can translate the characteristics of economic, social and cultural resources into personal functions, in which way and to what degree (Robyns, 2005).

Higher education should be viewed not just as an opportunity to do so, but as an input of capability and an 'external consideration for conversion'. University education could increase capacity that helps one to convert assets into capability. That is because knowledge has fundamental and functional importance. As Madoka (2003:25) puts it: "In short, on the one hand, education matters in broadening human capabilities, which include human capacities". Human potential is a force that determines both intrinsic and instrumental principles. Education plays a part in shaping both fundamental and functional principles. This also explains the mechanisms that affect inherent and functional principles through education to enhance human capacities. These aspects as interlinked are summarized in figure 4.1 below:

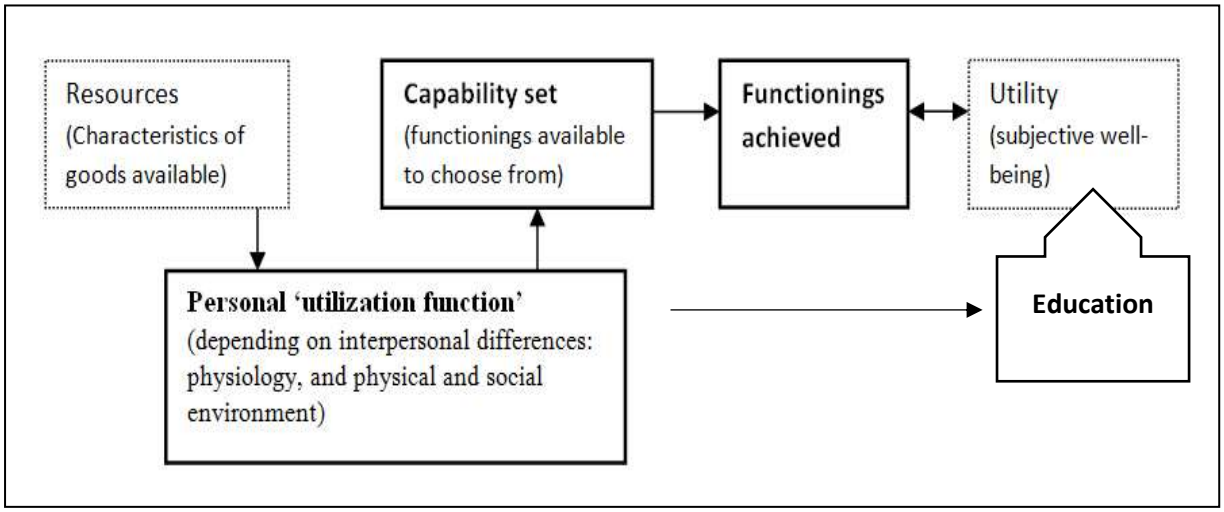


Figure 4.1: The core relationships in the capability approach
Source: Sen (1999:12)

The framework in figure 4.1 provides relationships within the capability approach and how they identify with the principle of elective methodologies concentrated on assets and utility. Assets (for example, a bike) are data, yet their worth relies on people's capacity to change them into important functioning (for example, cycling), which depends, for instance, on their physiology, (for example, well-being), social standards, and physical condition (for example, street quality). A person's capability is the arrangement of important functioning to which an individual has genuine access (Robeyns, 2005). Accomplished functionings are those they select. For instance, a person's capacity set may incorporate access to various functioning identifying with mobility, for example, strolling, cycling, and taking public transport. The occupation they select to get the chance to work might be public transport. The utility is viewed as both an output and work. The utility is the output since it is what individuals do and which normally affects their feeling of emotional prosperity (for instance, the delight of cycling to take a shot at a radiant day).

In summary, the capability approach through its assertions reinforces the ideal of liberal education in Sen's notion that advances the opportunity for learning and freedom at the same time. For the theory, education is both the means to accomplishing, just as it is the target of opportunity and freedom. Essentially, it is a method of creating and supporting scholarly progression. In addition, it is additionally inherently connected to what scholarly development is. In both these ways education assumes the role of removing considerable hindrances to freedom. Again, human diversity, which is an 'observational reality', is essential in surveying the need for education equity and equality.

The capability approach is used to analyse how different measures, including resources and items, relate to results and inert opportunities in explicit conditions for specific persons. The capability approach addresses more problems of governance and employment around equity and social justice. Through understanding the human potential, changing the way we assess various kinds of the humanity of education is important. This also looks at how education will impact and effect social justice, where

opportunity is considered to fulfil current and potential ability while giving incentives to all citizens.

4.2.3. Transactional distance learning theory

Transactional distance learning theory (TDLT) originated with Moore in 1972 and hypothetically intellectualizes distance learning. Moore adopted Dewey's term 'transaction,' which linked the term with the collaboration between people and their status and forms of interaction (Moore, 1973). Taking account of the reality that "each instructional experience has such transactional scope" (p. 209), Moore saw ODeL as being one kind of teaching and interaction which affected teaching and learning activities primarily due to its size, time and location (Moore, 1993:207).

As such, the physical divide between the instructor and the student establishes a transactional barrier, which Moore and Kearsley (2005) define as "a contact gap between teacher and student and a theoretical region with possible inconsistencies that need to be connected through special teaching methods" (Moore & Kearsley, 2005:224). Moore and Kearsley realized that the separation of instructors and students should be understood and pedagogically defined within and ODeL specifically due to physical separation. In several of his subsequent articles, Moore reiterated that, as opposed to regional distance (Moore, 1997; Moore & Kearsley, 2005), the transactional gap was scholarly and pedagogical.

Moore has clarified that in ODeL, due to physical separation, students and teachers often show an understanding of resources as well as a loss of commonality during the delivery process from their perception and approach. By contrast, the difference in a transaction that influenced the learning cycle is the distance defined by the internal and contact space and interaction between students and teachers. It is defined as the transactional distance (Moore, 1993:32).

All these components will together be supplemented by "uniquely unmistakable strategies in educational design and the facilitation of engagement" for effective learning, which can require a physical, analytical, or mental dimension (Moore, 1997: 209), as illustrated below:

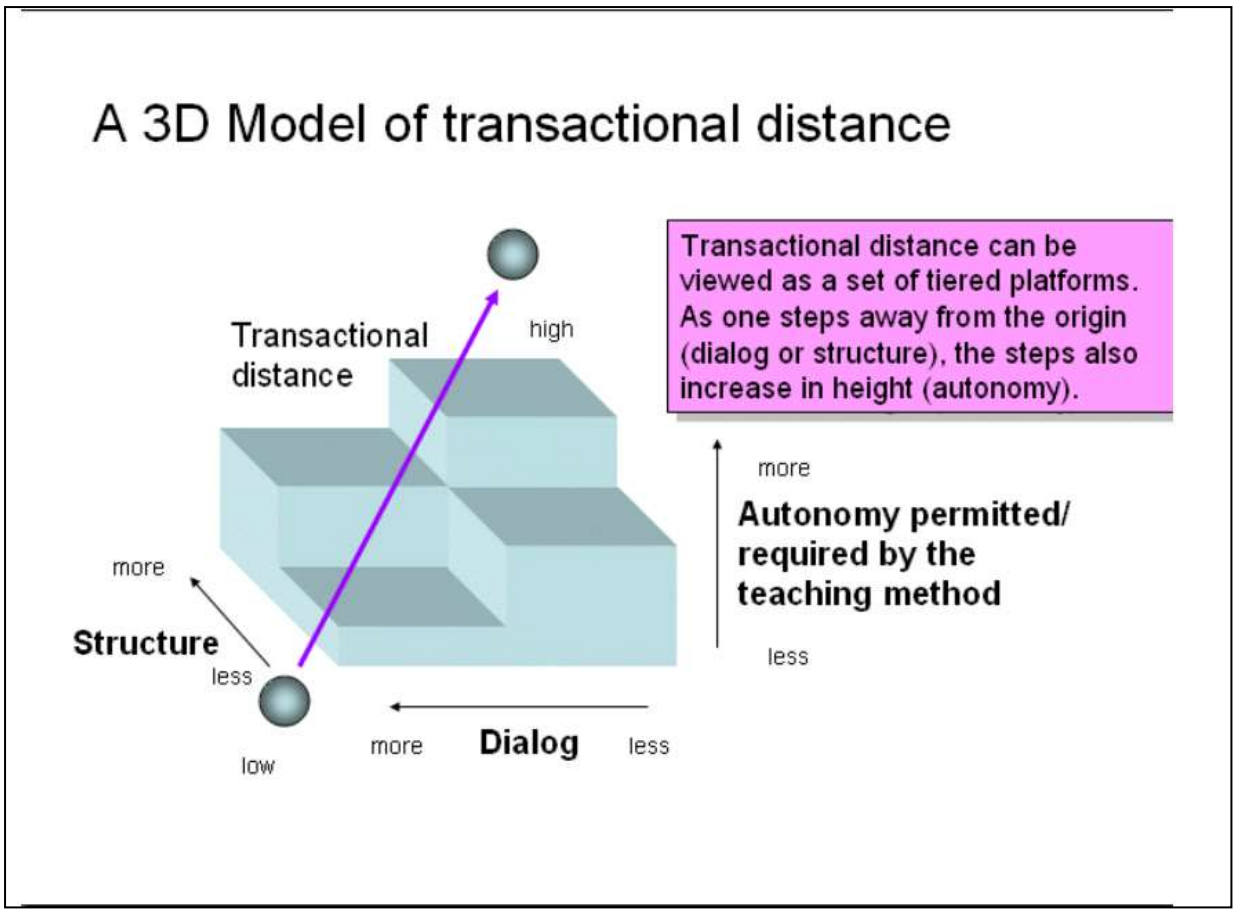


Figure 4.2: Transactional distance theory (TDT) summary
Source: Moore (1997)

This illustration reveals the lack of agreement between existing researchers on the TDT of Moore, on the concept of the epistemological system of reality. Giossos, Koutsouba, Lionarakis and Skavantzo (2009) state that the transactional distance is a result of instruction in the education system (p. 3). Based on John Dewey's philosophy on which Moore based his theory of "transaction," Giossos et al. reaffirm that TDT (from its fundamental precepts) adequately distinguishes between teacher and student regarding the difference in understanding that may occur in each learning context which fluctuates across societies and environments. The authors recognize the lack of consensus between the different interpretations of the transactional space.

Gokool-Ramdoo (2008), who led the research in examining ODL theories, found that "authoritative and transactional problems without ignoring student, college, and the region" are a significant prerequisite for transactional distance theory (p. 4). According to Gokool-Ramdool, different scholars have the feeling that their speculations are

being re-evaluated and are tending towards the transactional mode of thought of Moore. In conclusion, Gokool-Ramdoo strongly suggested that TDT be accepted as a specific ODL hypothesis.

As regards the process and evaluation of TDT-related structures within and beyond ODeL since their inception, Moore's hypothesis has been evaluated as the fundamental component of the theory by various scholars based on discourse, structure and autonomy. Significant work has been carried out by Saba and Shearer (1994), Flowers, Wang and Raynor (2012), Huang, Chandra, DePaolo and Simmons (2015), Bischoff, Bisconer, Kooker and Woods (1996), Chen and Willits (1998), Che (2001), Zhang & Haller (2013), and Force (2004).

Bischoff et al. (1996) studied 221 graduate students in distance learning on an interactive TV class, using a specialized rating scale to measure dialogue, structure, and transaction distance. The studies found that all distance learning courses have essentially higher discourse levels than general courses, while the structural and TD levels in both settings are equivalent.

In a course offered employing video conferencing, Saba and Shearer (1994) examined the connections between dialogue and structure and how they influenced TD. They agreed that the three had a mutual relationship and noticed that as the interaction and autonomy increased, the structure and the TD diminished in the course.

Chen and Willits (1998) examined a video-conference environment to confirm this. The outcomes of student findings were specifically helpful to this class-related scenario, although TD was contradictory to these outcomes. Chen (2001) carried out a factor study of the effects of multiple partnerships on the electronic learning world experienced by 71 DL students in the sample. It required measuring the degree to which the students had experienced TD and how their impression of TD was influenced by past online experience, support and cooperation. During the case study, Chen verified TD's involvement in student meetings in web-based classes. She argued that, unlike the other three experiences, "the student-interface relationship revealed a distinct and possibly important metric" (p. 469).

In a TD analysis, Zhang and Haller (2013) quantified four types of TD (student-trainer, student-student, student-substance, and student-interface) among 100 undergraduates using the 200-element scale. The findings from this review revealed that TD between students and their teachers had no impact on their level of commitment. Nevertheless, teachers and particularly students had an impact on the understanding of their participation in the course (Zhang & Haller, 2013)

A review by Flowers, White and Raynor (2012) reveals that TDT has taken part in a distance biology programme in a simulated learning laboratory. Virtual research facilities can have a decisive impact on learning through increased communication between students and content, as well as between students and interfaces. They noticed, however, an awkward effect on student teaching and student contact, which might have been the most important transaction gap in the course. Flowers et al. (2012) also illustrated the fact in their statement that the online student learning outcomes are comparable to those of students in face-to-face classes.

In particular, the TD variables in a mixed course and how TD affected their learning were to be recognized. Such analyzes showed that the plurality of students encountered TD within themselves and their peers and that their gap to their friends was essentially spatially restricted communication and correspondence. In light of this study, Kassandrinou et al. (2014) proposed that tools should be explored to extend collaboration activity and to create a DL student network, including teleconferences.

Shearer, Gregg, Joo, and Graham (2014) studied the exchange of these components in their Massive Open Online Learning (MOOC) in a critical analysis of dialogue, framework, and student autonomy to determine whether they facilitated or restricted the exchange of educational elements. The analysis contained 411 submissions from Coursera students in 125 classes. They observed that although there was minimal debate and a strong institutional framework provided by MOOCs, they did not seem to raise the TD because the students in that examination had a strong level of freedom.

Huang et al. (2015) described TDT in a later paper as a significant concept that required more work to support it. Following this recommendation, they analyzed TDT by analyzing the linkages among its main components that take ecological aspects and student socioeconomics into consideration. Their study was focused on an

analysis of 200 students online. The results of the study also demonstrated that significant quantities of structure and interaction do not go toward the declining degree of TD. This differs considerably from the well-known scenario, where high structure corresponds to high TD. Their decision in this manner was that in online courses, "high structure implied by high student substance and student interface connection was essential to decrease apparent TD" (p. 9). This agreed with Moore's attestation that TD is fundamentally diminished in class situations with rich instructional media (Moore, 1997).

In their study of the TDT Chen and Willits (2017) evaluated a training course provided through video-conferencing with 121 pupils. In particular, they aimed to determine the effects on learning outcomes of exchange, layout, student autonomy and transaction distance. However, the individuality of students has little major influence on outcomes (Chen & Willits, 2017). In addition, they noted that the positive effects on learning performance in class dialogues were strong and clear. They agreed that the relationship between TDT ideas, particularly those concerning discourse and transaction distance, was mainly confirmed by the after-effects of their study.

In short, for each study surveyed here, TDT and its functions as proposed by Moore (1991; 1993; 1997) have been attested or generally upheld, albeit with some minor variations in some. In general, all of them acknowledged the presence of discourse, structure, autonomy and the TD as an element of at least one of those components in different structures.

The element of discourse in TD was prevalent in the investigations, as several researchers (Bischoff, 1993; Bischoff et al., 1996; Chen & Willits, 1998) analyzed its impact on TD. These researchers found that discourse was contrarily identified with structure, that it diminished TD and improved student results; and that it could be expanded through synchronous learning settings and face-to-face classes. The special case was that Bischoff and Bischoff et al.'s contemplation about which reported larger amounts of discourse in a broadcast course than in an up-close and personal one. Huang et al. (2015), while not precluding the backward connection among exchange and structure, found that among very self-disciplined students, discourse and structure could both be high without increasing TD.

Secondly, a considerable amount of work in TD referred to the three forms of cooperation initiated by Moore (1997); in particular, the link between student education, the student association, and the material partnership of students. The user interface contact was also included in the research process (Huang, 2002). All the research shows that student instructor and student collaboration were the most lagging in TD (Chen, 2001; Flowers, 2012; Kassandrinou et al., 2014; Zhang & Haller 2013); that student interface association was a factor as the (regularly changing) content conveyance media (Falloon, 2011; Flowers, 2012); and that reduced student-instructor and student connection prompted poor relationships in open learning and MOOC situations among students with poor levels of self-discipline (Shearer et al., 2015).

Other important results from the study also indicate that, from a student-learning viewpoint, virtual testing centres are mainly inferior to face-to-face laboratories in terms of realistic science-based learning (Flowers et al., 2012; Hallyburton & Lunsford, 2013). In addition, DL students hate the TD of their instructor and geography colleagues.

Although each of them conducted further examination and arrived at different standpoints, the lack of TDT learning in modern DL environments, such as online conferences and interactive study rooms, was another core concern of this studyy. For instance, in online teaching, (Zhang & Haller 2013) and Falloon (2011) required an update of the TD theory to comment on existing learning arrangements and emphasised improving student relationships in online terms.

4.3 Conclusion

The research focuses more philosophically on the capacity approach by focusing, for example, on intellectual rigour, coherence and comprehensiveness as embodied by various authors. As reported by Sen (1999, 241-242): "We will maintain the way of life if society wants to do so and the expense of such a restoration is equalized with the importance society assigns to preserved objects and lifestyles." There is no ready framework for this cost/benefit study; however, the willingness of individuals to engage in public debates on the matter is vital to a fair appraisal of these decisions. There is

no obligation to maintain every way of life at great cost; yet people need to be able to take part in these social decisions, regardless of their disability status, in a real need — for social justice.

The transaction distance learning model, on the other hand, contributed to research by applying the transactional distance principle of Moore empirically utilizing a calculating instrument that calculated the complexity of the original theoretical paradigm in web-based learning environments characterized by more affluent and collaborative contact devices. This research was primarily aimed at addressing the linkages between the three systems, the dialogues, the systems, the autonomy of students and the collective consequences for student expectations of transactional distance in online learning environments with different kinds of teaching platforms and evolving demographic characteristics for students. To attempt to determine the interaction between such systems, several theories have been suggested. Moreover, a student-demographic relationship was examined between environmental influences and the transactional gap.

The next chapter is a presentation of the research methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is a description of the methods used to collect and analyse data. Broad dimensions relevant to a decolonised curriculum and inclusive student walk experience were considered, as well as a framework for the decolonisation of curriculum and potential strategies for the successful implementation of decolonization in HE. Also, the inclusive student walk model, which laid the foundation for data is presented. This chapter further outlines the research design, research approach, sample and sampling techniques, data collection and analysis methods, the limitations and the ethical considerations of the proposed study.

5.2 Research Question

The primary research question that foregrounds the research is:

What is the nature of an inclusive Student Walk model in the context of decolonisation to enhance student support for students with disabilities and its implications for open distance learning?

More specifically, the following research questions are suggested for the study:

i. What are the policies guiding inclusive support of students with disabilities in ODeL?
ii. What are the perceptions of students about the importance and accessibility of student support services that they receive?
iii. How will support initiatives of the Student Walk enhance inclusivity and social change?
iv. To what extent do the developed inclusive programmes within a mainstream institution provide opportunities for and barriers to the decolonised curriculum?
v. What are the distinctive features of decolonised programmes in relation to their content and pedagogy and inclusion?

Answering these questions required an explanatory approach in order to develop ideas about patterns and causal relationships among actions, outcomes, and concepts that might help to identify future actions for reviewing the decolonisation strategy for HE in South Africa. Regarding the research objectives, it is important to note that the decolonisation of HE practices among South African universities has changed owing to the decolonisation process discussed in 3.2 of this study.

Quantification of the extent of decolonisation in South African universities goes beyond the immediate scope of this study. Rather, emphasis is on descriptively exploring the components, dimensions, and/or factors that contribute to best practices in specifically inclusive support services for students with disabilities.

5.3 Research Orientation

The researcher opted for a qualitative research method to explore the experiences of students with disabilities within the Seven-Step Student Walk model, to highlight the core characteristics of the model (Yin, 2009). This approach rarely predicts theorised relationships between independent and dependent variables but describes a population because of variables. In qualitative research, the questions that need to be answered usually begin with what, when, where, or how.

Qualitative research allows us to explore phenomena holistically and understand social and human problems, usually in a natural setting as argued by Denzin & Lincoln, (2000). Central to qualitative research are social ways in which reality is constructed. Qualitative research enables us to get deeper insights into specific social processes and practices (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Essentially, situating the proposed study within a qualitative framework enables us to explore and understand how students with disabilities experience the seven steps of the Student Walk model. To make sense of these experiences, the study used a case study design grounded in a phenomenological perspective.

Phenomenologically, research is about "bringing to light and reflecting upon the lived meaning of the basic experience" (Goble & Yin, 2014). The experience here is not limited to the mental experience but also includes experiences from touch, the audible, and the visual including dreams, memories and fantasies (Stolorow, Brandchaft &

Atwood, 2000). Therefore, phenomenology focuses on the lived experiences of individuals as they interact with the social world. For this study, phenomenology allowed participants to narrate their experiences as they navigate and interact with the seven-stage Student Walk model. Carel (2011) used phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of 15 visually impaired students in the search for a meaningful account of their life-worlds. According to Smith, Flower and Larkin (2009), critical to phenomenology enquiry is the need to understand the life-worlds as experienced by individuals.

5.4 Research design

For purposes of this research, case study research involved examining issues of inclusiveness within the Student Walk, allowing for an in-depth analysis. This was done from a phenomenological perspective that described the meaning for several participants in their lived experiences (Yin, 2009). This was conducted in a grounded theory that goes beyond description to generate or find out a theory or an abstract analytical schema of a technique. It is also a qualitative studies design in which the inquirer generates a popular elucidation of a method, actions or interplay fashioned by the views of many individuals (Creswell, 2017)

The present study used the case study design involving data collection from students as well as the staff of South Africa's oldest university, namely UNISA. A case study strategy (Yin, 2009) was selected for the study because UNISA is the largest ODeL higher institution in South Africa and the continent at large and enrols students of diverse backgrounds. Owing to its approach, it is assumed that UNISA as a University without walls can be more inclusive and accessible than mainstream academic institutions (UNISA, 2018). Creswell (2017) describes a case study as an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth within its real-life context". A case study research strategy allows for the development of understanding as the case progresses and can cope with a range of uncertain influences and contextual variations (Robson, 2002).

It is acknowledged that case studies have been criticised for being too descriptive, for not being generalisable (Robson, 2002), and for being too time-consuming (Yin, 2009). However, Morris and Woods (1991) emphasise that a detailed case study approach

provides a much richer descriptive data than a larger scientific quantitative investigation of similar phenomena, leading to a deeper and different understanding from the larger sample quantitative study. Robson (2002) also concludes that the case study provides a useful strategy in real-life organisations and adds that if the trade-offs between relevance to organisational context and generalisability are articulated and understood, the technique is appropriate for the study of organisation-based phenomena.

Considering the reviewed literature and the gaps identified, this qualitative case study seeks to examine the issues of decolonisation and the inclusive Student Walk model at UNISA. The research is not an attempt to verify any existing theory; but rather aspires to take the concepts of decolonisation and inclusion and apply them in the context of South African universities to explore accounts of individuals who manage these institutions as well as those affected by them. The investigation into the issues of decolonisation and inclusive student support in HE in this specific context considers the approaches that would lead to realities, comprehensive strategies, policies, and approaches that are facilitators of decolonisation and inclusive student support at the studied institution.

The researcher opted for a qualitative research methodology to bring out the core characteristics of the situation (Yin, 2009). This approach generally does not predict hypothesised relationships between independent and dependent variables but describes a population because of variables.

The research uses a case study design involving data collection from disabled students, students and student bodies, as well as lecturers and support managers. A case study strategy (Yin, 2009) was selected for the study because it enables the development of a comparative sample of colleges within the University. Yin (2009:17) describes a case study as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth within its real-life context.” A case study research strategy allows for the development of understanding as the case progresses. Moreover, it can cope with a range of uncertain influences and contextual variations (Robson, 2002).

Leedy and Ormrod (2010) emphasise that a detailed case study approach provides much richer descriptive data than a larger scientific quantitative investigation of similar phenomena, leading to a deeper and different understanding from the larger sample quantitative study. Goble and Yin (2014) also conclude that the case study provides a useful strategy in real-life organisations. In addition, if the trade-offs between relevance to organisational context and generalisability are articulated and understood, the technique is appropriate for the study of organisation-based phenomena.

The study of decolonisation and the inclusive student support component of HE is influenced by the Student Walk framework on which the introduction section touched briefly (See chapter 1: The Student Walk model steps)

5.5 The Research Sample

UNISA was selected because of its ability to reflect a diverse population size and geographical representation of South Africa as illustrated in Table 5.1

Research purposively recruited students, managers and lecturers and support staff at UNISA to participate in the study. They participated in interviews and offered a wide range of experience and involvement in the field. Furthermore, they were probed on research and consultancy in both disciplinary and decolonisation contexts; support and administrative roles in library and information services and international offices; managerial roles particularly related to international collaborations and partnerships; and individuals who bring the experience of professional roles overseas to their current practice. My choice of UNISA for this study was motivated by two factors: first, I have in-depth knowledge and understanding of UNISA, having served the institution in various capacities. I served as acting dean of students at the institution between 2016 and 2017. I later served as the director and chief of party for a USAID sponsored leadership development program hosted by UNISA for three years between 2017 and 2020. In 2020, I was appointed as the Executive Dean of Students. Proximity and access to students, teaching and support staff made it relatively easy for me to recruit participants for my study. Second, given its profile as Africa's most successful distant education University, population size and student composition, UNISA is uniquely placed to lead the challenge of transforming the higher education sector in the country.

Purposive sampling as mentioned by Merriam and Tisdell (2015) was used in this study because the researcher was aware that UNISA has not fully developed a decolonised policy. Also, UNISA has teaching and academic staff who are leading voices decolonisation of higher education and are at the forefront of driving decolonial strategies in the country. After permission had been granted to research at the University, participants were sent an email invitation with a short explanation of the project aims, what role they would play, and a summary of the predicted benefits accruing to the institution. This practice was deemed ethically sound to gain access. The email remained the method of communication with participants. This proved not only cost-effective but also a fundamental practice as it was deemed most equitable in avoiding any possibility of bias against the participants as well as the institution. The research instrument had a standard set of instructions; informing participants of the purpose of the study and what it hoped to achieve.

The study targeted UNISA staff who preside over the management and implementation of the Student Walk, teaching and academic staff, support staff and students. The position I occupied at UNISA at the time of writing this thesis afforded me access to students, teaching and academic staff and support staff whose work involves interacting with students with disabilities. Some from the population sample had a disability themselves. Convenience sampling proved to be both cost effective and efficient since I could follow up with participants to ensure they responded to emails sent to them by the researcher. I took reasonable effort to ensure that the sample is representative of the UNISA population.

By selecting this institution of HE as a case study, the researcher hoped to remove some of the institutional variables that would otherwise get in the way of the analysis of the process and content of the decolonisation of HE strategies (Botha, 2007). It was hoped that the choice of location would offer some possibilities and insights into staff actions that would not be discernible if a different institution or different institutions had been chosen. While it would have been good to have more case numbers, after constant lobbying and engagement with some institutions, it also became necessary to stick to one institution, a decision that was partly based on the difficulty experienced in gaining access to other institutions.

5.6 Demographic summary of participants

The demographics of the participants included students with a disability as well as support managers in the Student Walk programme.

Table 5.1: Demographic presentation of the sample size and data collection methods

Distribution of Sample Size of 30 Participants into Sample Subgroups			
Face-to-face semi-structured interview sample subgroups: Distribution of student participants (N=22)			
Gender		M 15	F 7
Type of sample subgroup		Undergraduate students	Postgraduate students
Disabled students		9	3
Non-disabled students		2	3
Student leadership		1	
Francophone and lusophone international students from sub-Saharan Africa		3	1
Face-to-face semi-structured interviews: Distribution of key expert participants (N=8)			
Type of sample subgroup		Number of participants	
Senior management participants		2	
Lecturers		5	
UNISA Student walk Director		1	

5.7 Data Collection

For this study, an interview guide was developed and used as an interview tool (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Yin (2009) places more emphasis on piloting the case study approach. However, rather than developing a full survey, a decision was made to begin the study with a pilot survey that will enable researcher to refine questions while simultaneously gathering useful data for the study.

A semi-structured interview approach was adopted with a series of questions and prompts used for each interview, but with plenty of scopes for secondary and follow-up questions to pursue issues if appropriate. Informed consent was sought to record interviews for transcription later. Transcribing was used to capture interview data, and a thematic coding system was developed for analysis. Interview questions were based on the key themes of the research and aimed to provide enough interview data. The population is "an aggregation of all elements that share the same characteristics for which a study is being conducted" (Punch, 2006: 155).

The research information sheet was a standard set of instructions as an attachment to the cover letter for the participants, informing them of the purpose of the study and how to respond to the questions, and motivating them to take part in the study.

In-depth interviews were held with students, staff in charge of all matters of student support and teaching at Unisa and those who are directly involved in the support of students with disabilities. A maximum of three sessions with participants was held with each session lasting 30 – 40 minutes. Focus groups discussion (four groups) having eight to 10 participants and lasting between 30-60 minutes were also held. Participants for the four group discussions were recruited based on demographics detailed in table 5.1 above. A total of 32 people participated in the group discussions. Focus group discussions were used in addition to in-depth interviews to obtain diverse perspectives from a large group of participants. It was also used as a follow up to issues raised in in depth interviews and to probe discussion around issues that may be contested.

5.8 Data Analysis

The processes of data analysis comprised multiple steps, beginning with data collection, data organisation and finally, data interpretation (Patton, 2014). The

process of data analysis began after the data collection procedure had been completed. The method utilised to analyse qualitative data was thematic analysis, which involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes the data set in (rich) detail. However, it also often goes further than this and interprets various aspects of the research topic (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2018). The range of different thematic analyses will be further highlighted concerning several decisions regarding it as a method.

To understand lived experiences of students with disabilities, the study utilizes critical social theory. Critical social theory is a multidisciplinary tool with the implicit goal of advancing the emancipatory function of knowledge production and dissemination. It achieves this by promoting the role of criticism in the search for quality education Leonardo (2004). As acritical form of discourse, critical social theory cultivates ability to crtitique institutional as well as conceptual dilemmas, particularly those that lead to domination and oppression in order to forge alternative and inclusive social arrangements. For this study, critical social theory helped to unravel how students with disabilities understand their experiences as they interact with and navigate the seven-step Student Walk model and the views around institution opportunities or barriers to inclusion.

The thematic analysis involved several choices that were often not made explicit, but which needed to be considered and discussed. In practice, these questions are considered before analysis and even during the collection of the data, and there is an ongoing reflexive dialogue on the part of the researcher about these issues throughout the analytic process. The approach captured important aspects of the data concerning the research question and represented some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data (Elo & Kyngas, 2008).

An important question that was addressed in terms of coding was what counts as a theme, or what ‘size’ a theme needs to be. This was the question of prevalence both in terms of space within each data item, and prevalence across the entire data set. Ideally, there were several instances of the theme across the data set; however, more instances did not necessarily mean the theme itself was more crucial.

The analysis was completed in three phases. In the first stage, the researcher distinguished key ideas utilizing content examination and a mind-mapping process and

evolved a conceptual framework to organise the information. The analysis team examined and coded a selected number of transcripts, then compared the codes against the domains integrated into the interview protocol as demonstrated in the three phases of analysis.

In this stage, two cycles of coding were conducted: in the first one, all transcripts were revised and initially coded, and key concepts were identified throughout the full data set. The second cycle comprised an in-depth exploration and creation of additional categories to generate the codebook. This codebook was a condensed document comprising all the perceptions singled out as primary and subsequent levels.

The second stage of analysis was the comparison and contrasting of the experiences, perspectives and actions of participants. The third and final stage of analysis intended to produce a theory-driven perspective and provide an in-depth understanding of the inclusive aspects of the Student Walk and decolonisation.

Here, data were coded into categories using the five (5) thematic areas that had been generated from the research questions as well as the data collection. For clarity, both the codes and the quotations were additionally examined throughout the content and thematic analyses. For content analysis, data was examined through aspects of the Student Walk, support services for students and decolonisation. Thematic analysis was constructed from these variables. To be clear in the process, memos were written as the coding went on based on emerging ideas. These codes were later clustered into thematic sections and further analysed to demonstrate the general meaning. The memos were assembled with the new themes into the findings.

This enabled the researcher to establish coding categories based on actual themes visible in the data. This was followed by an analysis of these themes to seek patterns and find the themes that were most common (Merriam, 2002). Coding is the process of qualitative data analysis, which includes open coding and closed coding. The former consists of discovering common themes and the latter consists of establishing coding categories. The research questions mentioned in the first chapter drove the process of data coding.

5.9 Ensuring rigour and trustworthiness

Yin (2011) suggests that qualitative studies are inductive and support theory development. Developing a theory incorporates concepts that require construct, internal and external validity, and reliability. The researcher ensured the credibility and dependability of this study. For the accuracy of the data, member checking and proper documentation were observed. Member checking was conducted by allowing the participants to review the transcripts and the write-up. Furthermore, proper documentation was achieved through storage and organisation of data and keeping an audit trail. To avoid researcher bias, the researcher observed reflexivity throughout the study. Literature and the interviews were familiarised by the researcher before data collection, and notes were taken during the data collection process. Constant self-reflection on how the data related to the researcher problems were also done by the researcher during data analysis. Finally, the researcher observed data saturation to ensure that no additional information emerged from the data through repeated immersion (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Merriam, 2002; Yin, 2009).

Reliability refers to the replicability of research findings and whether they would be repeated if another study, using the same or similar methods, was undertaken (Ritchie & Lewis 2003). The related concept of validity refers to the precision of a research reading (Ritchie & Lewis 2003). Greater reliability and validity were achieved by accessing and exploring multiple sources on a topic to get a more comprehensive picture of the topic being studied. Reliability and validity were further achieved by providing a transparent account of how the data were collected and analysed, while including verbatim quotes in the report added to data authenticity in the reporting process. The trustworthiness was achieved by eliminating bias and by checking formally with participants for accuracy during data collection (Creswell, 2010).

For trustworthiness, the researcher considered all the complexities that presented themselves in the study to deal with patterns that are easily explained. To achieve this, prolonged participation, peer debriefing, and triangulation of methods to verify sources and data were used throughout the study.

To achieve transferability, the researcher regarded the objects of study to be context-bound in that the goal of the research was not to produce accurate statements that could be generalised to others but to develop descriptive, context-relevant statements. This was ensured by collecting detailed descriptions of the data itself and the context so that the reader can make comparisons with other contexts. To achieve dependability, the researcher used several overlapping methods where necessary. Transferability was also established by providing readers with evidence that the research study's findings could apply to other contexts, situations, times, and populations.

Internal validity relates to certainty to which the design of a research study is a good test of the hypothesis or is appropriate for the research question (Creswell, 2010). External validity is concerned with the degree to which research findings can apply to the real world, beyond the controlled setting of the research. It relates to whether research findings can be generalised beyond the immediate study sample and settings. The following procedures were undertaken to maintain validity in the research:

i. The validity was confirmed by using a diverse population. The researcher also developed a structured interview guide. A letter explaining the study, terminologies used, and the importance of the study accompanied the interview guide;
ii. The dependent and independent variables were made explicit.

Therefore, conformability was also ensured through the triangulation of sources and methods to be reflexive—that is, to reveal assumptions or biases that could have affected initial questions or interpretations.

5.10 Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the study was sought from the Faculty of Health Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Cape Town (HREC 602/2018) and the UNISA Research Ethical Clearance Committee (URERC). Before they participated in research, the participants gave their informed consent. Information was needed because the right to a person’s freedom and self-determination could be compromised during the study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2004) argue that

informed consent should encompass four principles, namely competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension. In other words, the participants were able to understand the information that the researchers provided and based on that, to voluntarily participate or not in the research. These four principles were adhered to.

The process of voluntary participation went along with the understanding that participants were allowed to stop the interview at any time they deemed fit without any resultant disadvantage. It would have been preferred that their names are reflected in the study as the participants are public figures; however, based on their choice they will remain anonymous.

Confidentially was stressed throughout the research process as an important element of the research. Participants were assured of anonymity and freedom to decide on their participation in the study.

Furthermore, participants were always requested to maintain confidentiality. They were further requested not to discuss any issues that may have led to the identification of individual participants outside the groups. The researcher communicated to study participants that he cannot guarantee confidentially i.e., control what individual participants say outside the research process, although the need for confidentially will be communicated.

Although no negative consequences for participants were envisaged in this study, in the unlikely event participants could be negatively affected by the study, the researcher was able to refer affected participants to appropriate professionals for assistance. The well-being of the participants came was the primary consideration.

The raw data was kept in a safe place known only to the researcher, who conducted the study in strict confidence (Creswell, 2010:166). The researcher also was required to obtain ethical clearance from the University of South Africa as his research relates to the University student support systems.

In terms of dissemination, the researcher will disseminate the research findings through a variety of means, including, but not limited, to a publication of a thesis, conference presentations and proceedings as well as journal articles.

5.11. Limitations and Reflexivity

Certain limitations were certainly imposed on the methodology and research strategy, the most evident of which was the research period and the objective nature of the researcher.

The researcher's opinions have a strong impact on the views and opinions expressed in this study. There was no attempt to conceal the respondents' opinions. The subject material and the data were personally interpreted. The interviewer's opinions have had a certain effect on the interviewing method, for instance, the judgments on follow-up topics represent the priorities and expertise of the interviewer. All the results are, however, followed by four major factors related to the researchers' subjectivity, the limited sample size and the period and country quality of the analysis.

As a UNISA practitioner, it is important to note that my position had no important impact on the data collection process as well as on the results. The nature of the position I hold at UNISA permits very little contact with students and employees and therefore it is impossible that my position could have been a source of bias. Additionally, not all departments or schools at UNISA have policies on inclusivity, at least at the time of writing of this thesis.

My most valuable lesson was to understand that research strength and limits are related to social progress and growth. I saw its importance in the dissemination of ideas of higher education inclusivity and decolonised curricula and student learning experiences. Due to challenges especially bearing disability myself, I could feel anxiety about the participants but ensured that the analysis was simply an instrument of progress.

However, as an active manager, I have tried to approach the study as an "outsider" researcher, but with a deeper understanding of the context in which the phenomenon is experienced. This insider position was a true strength, a profound understanding of the phenomenon of inclusiveness and the context in which it took place as an advantage in connecting the theory and the empirical aspects of the study. Although

more students with disabilities shaped different positions in this research, I acknowledged and welcomed the multiplicity of voices and often worked hard to make them heard in our research.

Although it has been hard to identify and address findings, particularly due to the novelty of the deconiality aspect, I showed my ability to handle data concisely and correctly and still realise that it blurs my perception at the stage of the data analysis. It showed me how to discriminate between those who did not have to take the information given by participants into due consideration by selecting key and essential knowledge. Having heard the stories and thoughts of the participants on higher education inclusivity and decolonisation of understood by many. The participants' strength in their fight inclusivity and decoloniality of higher education is respected – how they can take pride in their challenges and see hope despite their difficulties.
During this process, one question I wanted to raise was all about interdisciplinary research design techniques. Although I understand the meaning, I was more aware of such obstacles in the analysis process. I felt that there were many academic, cultural and points of view which made the entire process complicated and unpredictable, owing to the variety and composition of knowledge participants, who provided a broader and more detailed perspective.

This journey enabled me to collaborate with other students, students with disabilities, support and academic staff, researchers, and participants. I have come to know that they continually negotiate our positions as people with disabilities through formation of ethical and cultural links. The several opinions and voices generated a synergistic and extended understanding of the decolonisation and inclusivity in HE more so in an ODeL.

5.12. Conclusion

This chapter has provided an analysis of the method that was utilised in the study, framed in the interpretive paradigm and utilising a qualitative research method. It has presented the research paradigm, the study population, the sampling procedures, the sampling techniques and the data collection procedures. It also included the measures taken to ensure rigour, trustworthiness, and ethical procedure. Lastly, it has delineated

data processing procedures, analysis and development towards the compilation and elucidation of the findings. The next chapter discusses the key findings of the study.

CHAPTER 6

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1. Introduction

As stated in Chapter Five, a qualitative approach was taken to identify the aspects of decolonisation and inclusive student walk within ODeL environment. This section presents the analysis of data and information gathered and its interrelatedness in order to ascertain the extent of decolonisation and inclusive support within the Student Walk in the University. The findings are organised according to themes generated from data analysis to address the research questions. It also includes the presentation of the findings. Finally, a summary is provided to conclude the chapter.

6.2 Findings from emerging themes

This section presents the findings from the thematic analysis. The section is organised according to themes and categories which correspond to the researcher questions. Each theme and category is presented along with excerpts from interviews.

For the student participants, code titles have been classified as Partially Sighted Male (PSM), Partially Sighted Female (PSF), Medical condition (MC), Blind (B), and Physical disability (PD), whereas the support services (staff) are classified as Physical disability (AR1), Blind (AR2), Paraplegic (TA) and Admission (AD).

The table below is the summary of the sample distribution explained above.

Table 6.1: Student-staff distribution of sample size

Disability Type	Gender	Degree of study	No. of Participants	Codes titles
1. Partially sighted	Male	Bachelor, Development Studies	**3**	**PS**
2. Paraplegic (wheelchair user)	Male	Bachelor, Policy Studies	**6**	**P**
3. Medical condition	Female	Bachelor, LLB	**1**	**MC**
4. Partially sighted	Female	Baccalaureus Legume	**3**	**PS**
5. Blind	Male	Administration in Human Resource Management	**2**	**B**
6. Physical disability	Male	Postgraduate, Media Studies	**5**	**PD**
7. Partially sighted	Female	Postgraduate, Psychology	**2**	**PS**
Staff		**Roles**		
1. Physical Disability	Female	ARCSWiD	**2**	**AR1**
2. Blind	Male	ARCSWiD	**1**	**AR2**
3. Paraplegic (wheelchair user)	Male	ARCSWiD	**3**	**TA**
4. Admission	Female	Student advisor	**2**	**AD**

Below is the presentation of findings in the form of five themes that emerged from the data analysis.

- Policies guiding inclusive support of students
- Perceptions of students of the importance of inclusive student support services
- Inclusive Student Walk model
- Features of decolonised programmes
- Opportunities for and barriers to the decolonised curriculum

6.3 Theme 1: Policies guiding inclusive support of students with disabilities

Owing to the institutional nature of higher education, this theme is based on the perception that the success of any inclusive programmes, initiatives or actions is most likely to stem from existing policy guidelines and the extent to which these are implemented and appraised. Below, therefore, are responses from the participants regarding the inclusive support of students with disabilities in ODeL.

There were also views from the staff and particularly AR1 that:

> *…the only instance that lecturers realize that a student is disabled is only when they have an appreciation of diversity. We can't do anything especially is we don't have a clue about that a specific student has a disability. I have been teaching for a while; however, I have not seen any student coming to me or even emailing now that we are an ODeL institution saying that he/she has a disability and needs help, but I know there are many…I believe that disability issues ought to be managed at the institutional level and not independently by staff or lecturers and since it's an issue that should be tended to at institutional level, such issues should originate from the institutional strategies (*AR1*).*

Another staff member also gave an insight:

> *For example, in assessments, if not specified, how would I realize that a student has a learning impairment? If I simply consider spellings, conceptualizing and constructions, it becomes a huge issue for most students and lectures. I need to depend on inputs from other relevant inclusive units to manage the process well (*AR2*).*

These responses point to relevant testing issues that lecturers face. Nevertheless, the basic considerations above show that students with disabilities and faculty staff are transferring the responsibility from their professors. The viewpoints and experiences of these lecturers reflect a lack of appreciation for diversity. While one may claim that the teachers allude to students with serious learning difficulties, disregarding their needs cannot be justified. The problems encountered by students with disabilities are personal and non-integrated, taking human considerations into account and other external influences. As a result, lecturers are unwittingly ignoring the inclusive arrangements for disabled students.

AR1 stressed that the students and student administrations services have a significant role to play in ensuring a decent environment for disabled students within the University:

> *'At the application, and specifically on the enrolment form, students are required to declare their disability status. The admin will then capture the data about all students, but lecturers do not receive any information or data about students and particularly their disability afterwards. We need to have a system that allows the administration to tell us about the students with disability in advance who may later need special care or attention (*AR1*).*

This response reveals that lecturers need information and backing to support all-inclusive initiatives. It is also essential for them to know about disability matters. The present circumstance may consequently result in the poor performance of disability students as theirs need may not be known because they have not disclosed these from the beginning so that adequate support could be provided.

Another issue common from the staff just highlighted by TA is the following:

> *The present thought of inclusion in the system is that students with disabilities are conjoined collectively as a homogeneous group. Most departments adopt a one-size-fits-all practice, as opposed to understanding that there's a contrast between a wheelchair client and somebody who is visually impaired* (TA)*.*

Some colleges or divisions are hesitant to adjust the framework for inclusiveness. The University's practice seems to be that students with disabilities have to be fitted into

existing structures instead of the institutions having to change to accommodate them. Top management tends to assume that only funding is available. One case of this assumption is the National Student Financial Aid Scheme's (NSFAS) bursary for students with disabilities.

Nevertheless, funding is not enough to ensure inclusion. A student advisor observed the following:

> Colleges' everyday tasks and systems are sustained and perpetuated structural and ideological boundaries contrary to any decolonisation drive. How will a student on a wheelchair access the main campus given its location, and several of its centres in the different parts of the country? (AD).

The research reveals that only a few students with disabilities felt integrated. For other instances, this approach does not address the undefined aspects of 'inclusion'. Reasonable inclusion proposes budgetary, social and academic multidimensional support, and all policies must enforce it. It is not enough to recognise the physical impairment of students.

While some staff usually support students with disabilities, requests for specific care are often overwhelming. It is not clear whether the values of education and tolerance should be changed to meet the needs of disabled students. In either case, the requirements of students with disabilities cannot be met unless academic standards and integrity have been adversely affected. This observation is similar to the finding of Riddell, Tinklin and Wilson (2015), who advises that not having adequate time to focus on any subject is one explanation of why instructors are hesitant to change or adjust their teaching methods.

6.4 Theme 2: Perceptions of inclusive student support services

Perceptions play an important role in moulding student response to certain institutional support programmes. As observed in chapter 2.5, views of student perceptions of the support programmes available to students with disabilities play an important role in students' accomplishment. This captures the student's perception of such.

> *Our performance is in part driven by our perceptions of an institution's ability to provide support to students like me, with a disability (PSF)*

Owing to several multifaceted issues arising from participants (both staff and students), the study presents and discusses sub-themes that have been shared by the participants:

i) 'Inflexible' access at the admission level

According to the University policies, institutional calendars, admission and confirmation are available to all students regardless of their race, religion, sexual orientation or disability status (UNISA, 2012). In terms of this aspect, the most staff mentioned that all programmes and courses are open to all students and they did not know of any students who had been denied admission on disability grounds. However, they take no defence of the view that there could be an isolated case where some students may have been forced to enrol in programmes that were not of their preference owing to their disability condition. Further, one staff member in ARSWiD revealed that students with disabilities were more likely to take courses in humanities, instead of those in the sciences or business resources as expressed below:

> *The academic courses that they [students with a disability] register for are for the most part in the Humanities. They rarely go for technical disciplines and sciences (AR2)*.

These messages appear to suggest that although students with disabilities had equivalent access to all resources on paper, there may be institutional limitations to their capacity to choose freely from various courses. Moreover, as one lecturer clarified, there were accessibility issues which were thought to have inhibited student with disabilities on certain programmes as AR1 observed that:

> *…it would be hard for a student with disabilities, for example, to do Economics since they would be required to be before PCs operation and manipulating data, information and all that, and how about the drawing of graphs? (AR1).*

The Admission Officer recommended that the accessibility issue may likewise be one of the staff's views of the competences of students with disabilities as shared by TA:

> *I recall one staff was going to reject or he rejected one student. It was taken back that students with visual impairment were not permissible in the Faculty of Law while it had lately accepted such students who concentrated until they*

completed their Law degrees. I think psychology not long ago dismissed them showing that they have not secured correct equipment (gear) for their needs (TA).

Several students with disabilities likewise shared their experiences which diverged from the admissions criteria and reflected different means by which they were rejected to pursue specific courses.

One student with cerebral paralysis noted the following:

I was told there were not enough resources for me to enrol for course (course title omitted on purpose). I was not admitted and afterwards, I went to the Special Education Unit of the Ministry of Education and Training since they said that if any student with a disability meets the requirements, the student must be given an opportunity. So, admission conditions are tricky because they will admit a student who falls within their scope of education. The question I ask is, which college should I go to if my needs are not addressed? (PD)

The participant with the hearing disability observed the following:

I was very taken aback when the lecturer told me that I would not have the ability to cope being here at school since I would need to sit in front and lip-read the instructors (MC)

Referring to the absence of support resources, the motive behind discouraging students from pursuing specific areas of specializations shows the institutional inflexibility to accommodate students whose technique of function differs from the standard. It likewise shows the instructor's misconception of disability. The lecturer did not seem to understand that lip-reading does not merely require seating any deaf student in the front. Likewise, it also requires lecturer training in a few aspects, including talking position and pace, appearances and mouth forming as preparing the HH of hearing understudy in focusing on and perceiving words from the mouth position of the instructor.

ii) Gaps in support services

The University shaped policies to help and support students with disabilities. However, this kind of student support is weak towards one classification of disability, namely visual impairments. This was clear in AR1's depiction:

> *We principally offer braille transcription and translation. That is our principle zone of activity. We translate materials into braille and we can likewise interpret from braille to ordinary content, so it's simply braille generally (AR1)*

The student participant further adds:

> *When I was about to write my exams, I had not gotten used to the computer that I was meant to use that time. They should have allowed to practice and get used to the computer before writing the exams, same with the test* (B).

It was also clear from several participants that partially sighted students would struggle to use the computers as well as the Internet and the software. Nevertheless, there are no vision-enhanced facilities. In some cases, computers and software were very old and could not take JAWS, for example. In some departments, JAWS 13 is used with Windows XP. As a blind student noted:

> *…in our first year, we battled with the Internet. Often our assignments, since we can't access books, we need to use the Internet to access books. So often there won't be the Internet. (B)*

There were not enough user-friendly study materials and resources, including brailed books and books written in large print, to encourage access to educational programme by students with partial sight as they use the Internet. This problem puts pressure on disabled students, which is not unique to those with inabilities but impacts on all students in the University. Nevertheless, as a partially sighted student takes note of, the issues observed and raised by students with disabilities may be on-going problems, and more in number than their able counterparts experience:

> *Sometimes the software that we have cannot read well. It is not such easy to use. For example, when I'm getting online, I can't most likely read such a significant number of things there. It turns out to be sluggish and it takes longer,*

so much time to get to things. It [computer] is absolutely not well-suited [with the introduced windows software]. I write tests and exams with my very own. I am absolutely not using those ones. Indeed, and I think they are useless (PS).

These experiences seem to appear to apply to many students (PD, B, MC and P). To support some students with disabilities, some tutorials are offered at some centres. However, students are expected to take notes of the lecturer's verbal or written introduction on the board. This strategy is not accommodative of the learning styles and pace of some students who may experience difficulties when taking notes of the materials exhibited. Since projectors are not utilized in some classes, students with visual impairment (partially blind) battle to take notes if the lecturer has poor handwriting. The issue is exacerbated by insufficient recommended reading books for most courses as well as the fact that accessible reading material is not deciphered in several alternative formats, for example, huge print, to encourage access for students with incapacities, for example, partial sightedness. The students' dissatisfactions are communicated in the excerpts below.

One staff member echoed the sentiments of many, namely that accommodations appear to be left to lecturers' prudence and discretion. Does this imply that students with disabilities are frequently abandoned because of lecturers' inability to perceive and consider their needs? One student noted the following:

I have had instances where lecturers would simply look at me wondering what to do for me. They are at a time not even sure how to refer to the various aids for various disability. It is even worse when you call in for guidance and you are unfortunate to speak to such lectures whose appreciation of diversity is remarkably limited. That is very frustrating (PSM).

The support personnel will provide help to students whose disabilities fall within the boundaries of their own experience, expertise and power. Legitimately articulating the inclusion of "*needs certain substantial amounts of expertise and authoritative improvements*" (AR2), should be provided for in such a way to encourage successful learning and should be facilitated by highly skilled and motivated staff to become productive. While several instructors are optimistic regarding inclusion, preparation for inclusion is essential to ensure that learning support services are suitable for all

students. Currently, available facilities and systems are restricting inclusion. The specific circumstance and conditions under which the participating staff in this study instruct additionally make it difficult to promote students' inclusivity.

The most important access to an inclusive environment where adapting needs to occur is physical access, as without it, curricular and social access, for instance, cannot occur. It ought to be managed without being viewed as an extravagance, but as the absolute minimum expected of the learning place to address the needs of the considerable number of students with impairments (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010). Ruedel, Fulcher, Diamond, O'Cummings, Jackson and McInerney (2005:11) found that "... for certain students, assistive technology (AT) is a prerequisite for guidance because without it they can't work academically. The equivalent AT gadget that is utilized for one student to capacity may simply be a helpful help for another". Where the general educational plans need to be investigated based on proven approaches and techniques using resources which are expected to instruct and evaluate students, a distinction has to be made regarding the learning procedure (pedagogies). Support staff, for example, computerized media and advancements (PCs, cell phones, among others) can extend guidance and provide "elective ways of learning" (Ayala, Bracce & Stahl, 2012:9).

6.5 Theme 3: Inclusive Student Walk model

While the University requires disabled individuals to indicate their conditions for the University to be able to fulfil their requirements, the implementation of this policy is difficult. As a student advisor mentioned that:

> *Information provided by the students is captured, but admissions are processed without using the data, thus forcing students with disabilities to compete for admission space equally with non-disabled peers (AD).*

She felt that this makes the admission process at the institution unjust for students with disabilities, a situation which could easily be rectified:

> *Access can be facilitated if disability data are used at the admission and planning stages (AD).*

Her views were echoed by a disabled senior lecturer:

Disability students' participation is low, as disability information is not used during admission, among other factors. The preservation of impairment records has negatively impacted the level of service received by teachers and has culminated in reluctance on the student needs and exclusion." (AR2).

Failure to utilise disability data can be attributed to poor planning and consultation between different University units and departments responsible for students' support.

As exemplified above, it took seven weeks for a deaf student to have a sign language interpreter assigned (TA)

Within the Student Walk model, there have been calls to properly map and deal with disabilities accordingly:

Equitable access is also negatively affected by the disability unit's lack of development over the years. Support for students with disabilities is skewed towards students with visual impairments thus limiting support currently provided by the institution (AD).

Meanwhile, in the interview session, it was indicated that support for students with visual impairments has also been lacking:

…*students with visual impairment usually do not know timeously about services institution provides for them (PS);*

… *students described existing computers as obsolete and software outdated (P);*

…*the library did not have books in e-text or Braille, therefore, the use of computers and Internet services was the only means of access to information for the students* (*MC).*

Students with visual impairments experienced more barriers than their peers with disabilities and non-disabled counterparts. Unlike their sighted peers who used library books, journals and other reference materials, students with visual impairments depended on lecture notes being recorded and material they downloaded from the Internet.

Essentially, students need to be consulted about their needs for meaningful access (Cherrington, 2018). but misunderstood disability data results in exclusion. Consistent with the finding of the Council for Higher Education (2012), there were students with disabilities at an institution who did not declare their impairments.

The study argues, as do Leathwood (2017) and Troyna and Vincent (2015), that giving the same treatment to students with disabilities as we do for non-disabled students is not equitable. Equity is achieved by efforts to compensate for the social disadvantage of students with disabilities (Dworkin, 2011).

For this reason, Salmi and Bassett (2014) state that access is denied when insufficient opportunities exist to allow students with disabilities to achieve their selected programmes. The findings indicate a shortage of positive discrimination (Gewirtz, 1998) to promote equality. However, data suggests that steps for positive discrimination are not evident. The institution's education and learning practices do not meet the fundamental principle of fairness where everyone has access to the same learning material. Lecturers' poor commitment to support students with disabilities may also be explained by their limited understanding of how to support students with impairments. These are all elements of an effective Student Walk model.

6.6 Theme 4: Voices calling for disability inclusion in decolonised programmes

The discourse on decolonisation poses core questions about control, information and learning. It offers the opportunity to re-evaluate the position of universities in economic growth and social development and to build a shared nation. Among the popular discourse have been different perspectives and views as the responses below indicate.

i. Student perspectives and views on decolonisation of programmes

From the student perspective, the idea of the decolonised curriculum within the University has not been properly understood and the difference between transformation and decolonisation remains a grey area for nearly all participants. Particularly, many of them could not distinguish between transformation and decolonisation. However, most students recognise the need for Africanising the

curriculum that it is relevant to the needs and the realities of the African continent and South Africa in particular.

A partially sighted undergraduate student observed the following:

> *To be honest, I saw the beginning of decolonisation during the fees must fall movement. Other than that, it's something that has never crossed my mind all. It also applies the transformation movements we hear around. But the question is if our curriculum is decolonised or transformed remains very unclear to many of us (PS).*

Another mobility-impaired student further added the following:

> *For me, I mean not really understand the issues of decolonizing, but I would appreciate if the University could relate to issues of our country. I get excited when I hear issues of language transformation where all those barriers that affect us to communicate are avoided. I think it is important for the University to reflect itself as a society rather than something foreign (P).*

The findings from the students indicate that the transformation and decolonisation of the curriculum remains a grey area. While many of them link these to the #FeesMustFall movement, there is no observation or relationships linked to decoloniality. Students' lack of knowledge and ignorance of transformation and decolonisation of the curriculum are summarized by the core ideas of the capability approach. The idea here is that individuals interpret factors such as social, environmental economic and individual agents to facilitate the processes of change through the utilization of functioning (Sen, 1999:1). Because the capability approach encourages individuals to exercise their choices especially in terms of what they value, it becomes difficult for such individuals to choose from things they do not understand or from things that they have never seen or heard of. So, they automatically become excluded from choices they value owing to the sheer lack of understanding of the conversion of factors. For curriculum transformation to take place inclusively, students should be given a platform to understand what it means.

The Student Forum as supported by the SRC together with the politically influenced deliberations of Student Unions is one reason that the transformational debate is driving the organisation's agenda. Similarly, these observations have related to the massive requirements for diversity and inclusiveness, especially of the curriculum.

Overall, most students did not seem to understand the elements of decolonisation and how it relates to inclusion. Similarly, there was general ignorance to how inclusive programmes would provide opportunities for and barriers to decolonisation.

ii. A quickly changing world

Discussions between academic staff and support staff raised interesting debates on the decolonisation of the curriculum. Academic staff who encountered students with disability noted that it would have been appropriate to have a transformed curriculum that relates to the challenges of our indigenous students. Across the board, academic staff midentified several aspects they view as pertinent to a transformed and indigenous curriculum. Below are some excerpts from AR2.

> *Most of our curricular are not fit for motivation. We have had a lot of discussion in different platforms within our colleges and they always bring up principal issues about the appropriateness or fitness of the current degrees across over faculties. (AR2)*

> *The fitness of most of our degrees has been questioned of late. there have been massive developments in higher education. It has opened in the previous two decades to South Africans across race and class lines. In any case, is the curriculum important and relevant to new students? many whom don't fit the profile of the regular "standard" working-class, white, "college prepared" 19-year-old fashioned matric leaver? (AR1)*

The physically disabled staff member of the Centre posed the following question:

> *Is our curriculum fit for the quickly changing world into which alumni of these degrees move into? You will agree with me here that many universities and colleges around the globe and now and again valiantly patching up their curriculum to address these progressions of demography and the future. I don't feel that we relate to this fact* (AR1).

These observations had been similar to the views expressed by participants 4, 5 and 6. They all point to the need for relevant and fit for purpose curriculum as one feature of a decolonised curriculum.

Another disabled staff member of the Centre noted:

> *As far as I am concerned, the issue of relevance and importance is a real test for our degrees. We have had challenges in most professional degree programmes such in health, engineering and law that think about their relevance to present realities. For instance, in an African medicinal curriculum, how do we prepare students for the issues such as working in the poor, provincial regions? Or then again both? Numerous curricula today have moved to issue-based or problem-centred. We are not even close to this ….*
>
> *The other issues have been balancing theory and practice, and many theories and strategies required to take care of the problems today. Not very many of the present problems can be settled through one point of view or one technique. These sorts of curriculum change are exceptionally intricate and challenged however are being undertaken in many disciplines (*TA*).*

The findings seem to point to the aspect of the global relevance of the curriculum. Curriculum change would require a critical questioning of the learning framework in teaching. What is critical is that this translates into strategic plans and actions that will produce an inclusive curriculum that is relevant to the current changes in the world today, similar to the Graduation step of the Student Walk model. Because it sets the contexts of each learning experience, it needs to be treated in such a manner that it structures combinations to form a coherent flow of courses into various degrees so that they are personally, academically and professionally relevant to learning and development in the modern world. This concept of the curriculum was emphasized by Maserumule (2015) in Curriculum Transformation (Chapter Three, page 61) of this study.

Concerning a further aspect of the decolonised curriculum within HE, staff participants seemed to all agree that students are indeed agents of change. One staff member shared the following:

These young people today are tech-savvy and we need to find a way of accommodating their voice in curriculum matters that affect them. We should question their meaningful representation in curriculum matters although some academics would be opposed to this. These millennials are clever and often know what they want and so their voices are important for curriculum planning. Currently, one faculty is in talks to reduce the number of year for one degree to voices raised by a disabled student as he did not see the relevance of all modules for four years, as compared to the specialized professional course for example student would do ACCA for two years and would easily be more employable that one who had done BCOM for four years …

Also, students, today are not gullible about their role in curriculum change. They realize they are not the experts - they have come to college to be educated by the experts. However, they do have a point of view that originates from their experiences both inside and outside the classroom. So, valuing their inputs as stakeholders would indirectly enhance curriculum change (AR2).

Another disabled staff member added the following:

Our training educational and curriculum programme is still sponsored by neo-colonialist and this needs to change. The curriculum ought to be student, learning and setting focused on the goal that it is to be receptive to surrounding conditions (AR1).

These aspects of curriculum decolonisation point to the students as stakeholders in curriculum change. Students are the very reason universities or colleges exist. It becomes the responsibility of the institutions to develop students' knowledge, attitudes, skills and talents as they prepare them to face various difficult situations in real life. This, therefore, points to the need to involve students at every stage of curriculum change as they are the ones directly affected and influenced by the curriculum. While many of the members of staff seem to agree that there are many stakeholders in curriculum development and change, they all point to the need to involve students as the other as a product and that any curriculum that does not speak to the product and discusses the students, in particular, is misplaced.

Other views raised by staff indicate that history and current affairs seem to have shaped curriculum transformation in HE.

A disabled staff member of the Centre noted the following:

> *One of the worries of decolonising is the means by which curriculum content /substance is taught by – to name a few – white, male, western, industrialist, hetero, European perspectives. This implies the material speaks to and underestimates the points of view, experiences of the individuals who don't fit into these standard classes … The present hullabaloo for change in the long custom of calls for curriculum change of the 1960s in post-colonial Africa and the moves of multiculturalism during the 1980s and post-1994. the distinction between embedding these new contributions to a current to a great extent unaltered curriculum versus a progressively radical re-evaluating of how the subject is taught … Once more, this sort of discussion happens best in individual disciplines – however, it very well may be hastened by external events, as has been the situation in areas such as economics and computer sciences (TA).*

Another staff member also noted that:

> *Us lecturers need to see the curriculum and any study material as impartial, we ought to comprehend a philosophical position of a specific source of information. A few reading materials can contain mistakes and wrong facts, a few books utilize superfluous photos, tests and erroneous logical facts. Numerous books give a misguided understanding of the material. Every one of these things ought to be considered and remedied by any lecturer (AR2)*

There is no doubt of the world views in curriculum transformation that range from political, social and economic. From the reviewed literature and findings, it is clear that HE curriculum change is currently subject to controlling worldviews. Decolonisation expects to engage with the varied experiences and points of view in each culture and part of the world rather than aimlessly following the Western 'universalism' and the idea that Europe and the West are the fountains of all learning. The curriculum must be freed from the epistemological influence of the Western world, from Eurocentrism and epistemic viciousness as well as from viewpoints directed at

degradation, failure and exploitation in Africa and other areas of the once-colonized continent.

Several participants called for the decolonisation phase to continue with a rapid reversal in status quo that challenges and replaces imperial and oppressive knowledge structures and maintains frameworks that perpetuate colonist thoughts and values as a solution for decolonisation as a method in curriculum reform. As Holmberg (2015) suggested, the curriculum has to adapt more drastically, to be driven by a revolutionary transition and to adjust the curriculum gradually.

In parallel thoughts, Andreotti, Ahenakew and Cooper (2011) argued for pluralistic thinking whereby empirical information, by logical and objective dedication, is not rejected but exerted to combat hegemonic forces. Nonetheless, they understand that this notion will backfire and contribute to "internalized injustice" and "ethanol-stress" (Andreotti et al., 2011:48).

With more observations made regarding curriculum elements, the staff with disability member of the Centre observed that:

> *The educational programmes – and especially their evaluation frameworks – serve to repeat society's more extensive disparities. This test has gotten next to no consideration in the ongoing discussions on "decolonising". It is how the curriculum at each point – from who gets admitted, who succeeds, who comes up short – reflects the chronicled and current inconsistent distribution of instructive resources in the more extensive society (AR1).*

Another staff member of the Centre further added the following:

> *If you can see today, there are more calls for internationalisation and globalisation of curriculum even more than decolonisation. The claim is that the world has become a global village and institutions of learning should be able to produce students who can fit in any working society internationally—they refer to "global citizens". So, you can see the contentions here as they fight for relevance. But all in context, rather than fighting to create equality, which is a natural aspect, why not be relevant (TA)*

Again, look at our institutions of higher learning, and I mean all of them. Why are the white privileges still pronounced? Why is one language more powerful than others? Is that fair? (TA)

In a different aspect, curriculum decolonisation and transformation are perceived as replicating inequalities. A disabled staff member of the centre mentions:

The University transformation drive argued that extending degrees from three to four years or more in the situation of extensive degrees would mainstream academic development, allow for more flexibility and lengthier funding durations, and would reduce high drop-out rates. However, the consequence of the initiative was a perpetuation of social inequalities, as students from more privileged backgrounds were able to finish their studies quickly and enter the working space one or two years ahead of their colleagues. It correspondingly provided a level of prejudice to employers, who questioned how long students had taken to secure their qualifications (AR1).

Her disabled male colleague also emphasized that:

Internationally, an opportunity to learn and finish an academic programme on time can be used not only for explaining the variation in students' achievements but also for evaluating equity and quality of the educational environments. Especially when global educational reforms emphasize accountability, the concept is used as an instrument to understand between-country variations in academic achievement and to guide their educational reforms and policy-making related to national curricula (AR2).

Overall, inequalities in South Africa and later in its Universities are a profound feature and the disabled students appear to be at the receiving end of such. The results suggest that the sample gaps play a significant role in the educational changes, particularly as total success is used to counter inequalities. Subject 'chosen' at a young age can shadow young people's education careers for a long time: what is a wrong turn in early adolescence, leads to locked doors. Nevertheless, demographic disparities in the social backgrounds in young people's changes often partly compensate for discrepancies in the curriculum subjects selected by young people, which indicate that fair curriculum will only play a significant role in fostering equitable

education outcomes rather than a leadership role. Another contending aspect of the decolonised curriculum as revealed from the study was the issue of curriculum and power plays. The disabled female staff member mentioned that:

> *In my college, numerous educational programmes are instructed in harsh conditions and never inclusive especially by staff who are disparaging, unprofessional and apply their capacity in manners that discrete unreasonably against students (AR1).*

Similar sentiments were echoed by participants 3, namely that:

> *Abuse of power by academics on students is basically unfortunate. The shortage of existing policies and procedures for uncovering and tending to the abuse of power has been brought under a cruel spotlight at South African colleges. The degree to which staff are ignorant of their "position" and its potential destructive outcomes on students will invalidate everything else that is complete. Thus, one could contend this is the most significant aspect of a decolonised approach (TA)*

Moreover, these responses imply that power elements do not resonate at institutional levels and at the national level. The curriculum development procedures and strategy improvement activities for HE consistently observes researchers from the global north dominating the process and procedure (Fenster & Kulka 2016). Whatever the purposes behind this may be, it has led to training to be to a great extent inert, particularly academically, monetarily and socially. These elements require a move to guarantee a level of influence and power. Students' culture, order and economy need to all have a say to guarantee that the education curriculum in preparing students is significant and profitable to the public. Responsiveness is affected by power and until the individuals in power have a thorough knowledge of local conditions and experiences, particularly regarding inclusivity, responsiveness and decolonisation, will remain a fantasy, as well as the success of the inclusive Student Walk. To confirm this further, one of the staff members contended that:

> *Everyone should be engaged with the curriculum development process particularly at the HE level since this is the place the destiny of the country is moulded. It delivers our educators, teachers, doctors, businessmen,*

specialists, astronauts, archaeologist, excavator, and rationalists among others (TA).

His disabled colleague included that:

> *Indigenous knowledge and information are side-lined because the individuals who pursue it and pushing for it don't have decision making power and control. What's more, the individuals who do, lean toward the ivory towers they are seating [sitting] in until this power dynamic is destroyed, our curriculum would stay inert and decolonisation would stay as another popular expression …*
>
> *A share of these difficulties may fit pretty much suitably on the "decolonising the educational curriculum" drive. Maybe it doesn't make a difference: they are extremely significant. The fact of the matter is that they will require various systems, various types of resources and skill, various lines of obligation and responsibility. The danger of not having an unmistakable procedure is that the curriculum will appear to be no unique in 2020 than it does tod*ay *(AR2).*

The views raised by participants regarding power dynamics are perceived as the focal point of responsiveness and decolonisation of the curriculum inclusively. Apple (2004) contends that curriculum is a political aspect in which the power for structure and annihilation lies. The individuals who impact the curriculum decide how responsive it will be in the HE framework. Apple (2004) further contended that schools or colleges and by augmentation, instruction, do not just control individuals, but emphasise importance and sense and this is done through the curriculum. Hence, the individuals who control the curriculum conversation control the power and determine what is seen to be genuine knowledge and information. To Apple, power and control form the main path through which authenticity can be built. Whether this learning makes for or defaces curriculum responsiveness and decolonisation is reliant on who controls it (Apple, 2004). It remains important that the bottom-up model of engagement as discussed in earlier chapters is applied: in this way voices of students with disabilities also are included in the discussions and decisions on curriculum.

Fenster and Kulka (2016) stress that since power is the capacity of specific actors to control and impact choices in positioning, planning, advancement and assessment of procedures that influence an individual and a network's regular daily existence, for

example, instruction, these voices of intensity decide the direction of the general public. The curriculum in HE turns into a play area where voices of real concern or those that should matter are hushed or advanced. To Fenster and Kulka (2016), learning is a result of intensity, particularly relating access to HE, financing or different resources. This intensity results from learning generation being legitimately associated with power as an asset. This power impacts what gets the opportunity to be viewed as information worthy of the curriculum. Scholars who control curriculum discussions in the instructive scene consequently regulate what would be conveyed or constructed as knowledge as the circumstance might be and who emerge as custodians of such knowledge.

Nonetheless, this research attempts to place the curriculum-makers in the sense of comprehensive curriculum creation to clarify what they think of a curriculum and what it requires to re-engineer the curriculum, despite the ongoing debates on decolonisation. Nevertheless, lecturers from various faculties as well as the University at large should be able to understand the difference between decolonisation and transformation. However, we always wondered about the decolonisation or transformation of the first language. Whereas there has been a prescient decolonised curriculum, much of this pressure has been internal. It has been largely a student-driven process with very little support from the policies. Within the University we have not implemented policy recommendations that accommodate students ' academic lives easily. Diversity and inclusion are generally incompatible with the strategic plans and the implementation of the annual plans. This was not facilitated by the interdependence of the university structures.

Externally, the Department of Higher Education, the Council of HE as well as the Department of Social Development have been at the forefront of curriculum transformation and the new organisation in general (Smith, 2002). Much as many institutions and unions have gutted mandates to follow the requirements of regulators, we have not seen a dedicated policy to decolonise and transformation that inclusively addresses disabilities. In the case of a few policies, they have lacked proper monitoring and support at all levels that render them incompetent to deliver the transformation mandate.

6.7 Theme 5: Missed opportunities for and barriers to disability inclusion in a decolonised curriculum

This aspect of opportunities for and barriers to the decolonised curriculum was indeed revealing one. A good number of participants had diverging views regarding barriers to a decolonisation project and the opportunities missed. They observe that UNISA is not a contact University in terms of its reputation on graduate outcomes and student support is not exclusive to diversity or inclusivity alone. However, the challenges of enforcing the plans are not widespread if they are to have a real effect on the activities and achievement. While there is a considerable direction for the transformation projects in principle, there is a major challenge relating to the pressures of time and consequences of the staff workload.

i. Missed Opportunities

One teaching staff mentioned that:

> *One missed opportunity is that our compensation programmes are largely focused on science. Many institutions have greatly increased their reputation and funding for inclusive and good teaching. Nonetheless, there is such a great amount of weight on new staff for research, get grants and publish that it is hard for them to give the imperative attention regarding imaginative and innovative inclusive instructing and sound student support (TA).*

His disabled colleague in the centre explained the following:

> *Individuals are inclined to state that 'the educational curricula' or 'college /University curricula' ought to be decolonised. This is a deceptive method for talking. There is no single substance which is classified as the curricula or University curricula. When such expressions suggest anything, at that point they allude to set of individual courses offered by every division or department overall schools and faculties. Be then to constantly refer to such a huge (and differing) set is excessively broad and unhelpful. It would be insightful, at that point, to quit talking about University curricula as though it were a certain something since it isn't. We ought to rather allude to smaller sets of courses or individual courses within mainstream University. This opportunity to clarify issues around it had been missed and subsequently misleading (AR2).*

Regarding barriers, a student advisor on Admissions mentioned that:

> *In being explicit we have an objective. Given the idea of the course, there is just a constrained scope of choices for how such a course could be changed. One could without much of a stretch develop an argument concerning why the given course should change. Significantly, such a contention could be assessed for its vigour (AD).*

A disabled male colleague observed that:

> *We ought to recognize two unique concerns. One, we might be worried about how a course is instructed or taught besides, we might be worried about what is taught in that course. Call the main concern one of the instructional methods normally the pedagogy and the second concern is with "course content". Then again carefully, the content of the material about which students will be examined or assessed. So, to me, the issue is very complex (WC).*

The advisor observed that:

> *Basically, is a contrast of pedagogical and course content issues, and they essentially require various solutions. But what is the benefit of spotting the differences? Inability to recognize that creates barriers that are a hindrance to practical solutions. That, without a doubt, is to be maintained a strategic distance from, and one of the ways is by spotting these differences. As an example, with English, we could consider the discussion encompassing "trigger warnings", should students be told in advance whether the script, topics and poetry they will cover so to or recollect some horrendous experience? As how could that experience be decolonised? You see....*
>
> *I worry concerning how to approach the material of the course, including the supposed motivation behind the course. An alternate kind of discussion would be about whether poems, certain literature or subjects ought to be incorporated or excluded from the course itself – that would be a discussion around course content (AD).*

A senior lecturer further observed that:

> *We ought to recognize that instructive or pedagogical and content concerns are course relative. Various disciplines, courses, degrees, will have various types*

of problems which will require specific solutions. To allude to such multifaceted issues essentially as a problem of "decoloniality", or of "western knowledge frameworks", or whatever, is to be damagingly loose, unfortunate and illiberal (AR2).

Furthermore, one staff mentioned that:

One thing that has been so common within our department is resistance to change. Its s considerably more prominent among staff for whom such change causes major philosophical or social issues. Because of lack of proper understanding of the issue around decolonisation and decoloniality. Remember many of us are not historians let alone professional teachers who would easily draw line between foreign courses or pedagogies, or content (AR2).

Another view by the disabled female staff member of the Centre was the following:

Most of the personnel in our department are from the previous time…you know what I mean…where there were low intakes, and so small numbers and where dropout rates were seen not as a sign of disappointment but rather as symbols of high values. The present-day students speak to an extensive base of the population and many consider HE as a right and not a privilege. This makes a University a place where students are considerably more demanding and display an uncommon feeling of entitlement. So, unless they understand what we want to do with the decolonising curriculum, it could backfire (AR1).

The personal view of participants, confirmed by the literature review, is that the challenges of decolonisation had been developing a level of appreciation to which our higher learning institutions should be increasingly responsive, progressively versatile and increasingly exhaustive in their way to deal with teaching and learning. Furthermore, the lectures cannot only mimic the way they were taught, and lastly, the separation of the cognitive from the affective and the systemic is also anti-productive in the sense of staff assistance in this sector (cf. Zawacki-Richter, 2010). The verifiable evidence by post-secondary graduates, both personally and collectively, has provided every participant with a sincere obligation to ensure that our institutions of higher education are highly receptive to the various needs of graduates in an equitable way. There are summative observations that curriculum, content and teaching approaches

are complex and multifaceted aspects that ought to be handled with care. They may not easily be positioned to coloniality and indigenisation or localisation at the same time. These views have been echoed by Lyner-Cleophas, Swart, Chataika and Bell (2014).

Findings from participants allowed for the identification of specific institutional barriers to the decolonisation of the Student Walk model from an inclusive perspective. The pronounced ones from the responses are shared below.

ii. Institutional finance constraints

University financing has been at the centre of change for a long time and has a significant influence on not only curriculum innovation and change but also on capacitating inclusive initiatives, particularly for historically black HE (FOTIM, 2011). One respondent mentioned that:

> *…the absence of assets prompts other disability units to be understaffed that often results in delays in students getting study materials (TA)*.

It is not generally the situation that students with disabilities do not get great services historically (Naidoo, 2017). Regardless of the financial difficulties, the University has made some positive commitments to the lives of their students. While observing data from different faculties, there is evidence that inclusivity has become a key pillar of information access and sharing.

The financial constraints mean that the Student Walk model tends to be less independent, as it is a cluster of various divisions (for example, student counselling or student affairs) and this limits the services they can offer. A participant commented as follows:

> *…the practice of certain offices contradicts the progression of some inclusive initiatives needed to take place, for example, some departments within counselling services viewed disability through an unreasoning lens and stirred the perception that disability is a health or medical condition, which required specialised care (AR1).*

These views seem to correspond with those mentioned by Lyner-Cleophas et al. (2014), namely that such specialised perception of disability care often calls for funding which is often lacking (i.e., setting up specific health assessment and care units). Further, participants indicated that in some departments, there were no clear policies to follow or details of this aspect.

The significance of funding inclusive initiative cannot be denied. In any case, the intention is to abstain from stereotyping students with disabilities, create opportunities and stop alienating them from the remainder of the student community, while maintaining a similarly dominant society that perceives individuals with disabilities as second-class citizens who must be helped by a specific inclusive effort to fit into the system. Disability initiatives ought not to be viewed as the main method for addressing and responding to the requirements of students with disabilities. Given the situation of inclusive initiatives relative to the necessities of students as observed in the literature under student support, it is imperative to fundamentally probe their role against standards of social equity, for example, their capacity to create opportunities for all students to fully contribute and prevail for them to achieve their objectives and satisfy their needs.

iii. The role of lecturers

Staff perceptions of students' disabilities showed little awareness; therefore, no provisions were made for students with disability:

> *…lecturers' lack of sensitivity to the disability leads to failure to provide such students with the necessary provisions (AD).*

Such opinions align with those stated by Matshedisho (2010) and Haywood (2014), who noticed that the help that teachers give to disabled students in education, economics and business studies is gradually becoming more positive. Their findings showed that low rates of representation with impairment and disability were not a matter of social acceptance, as were the findings of Swart and Greyling (2011) or Greyling (2008).

Lack of staff awareness was also addressed in Mayat and Amosun's (2011) study which explored the views of academic staff who were once accepted for a Civil

Engineering programme at universities in South Africa. They noticed that students with disabilities are still excluded from certain faculty qualifications. Even though the most staff who took part in the study expressed their willingness to teach and support disabled students as much as they could, some had indicated a few reservations. Some staff were worried about the apparent confinement of disabled students and stressed that they would not meet all the course/degree requirements. One staff even pondered whether*:*

> *…disabled students would be a 'shame' to their non-disabled peers in programmes like law and engineering (AR1).*

These reservations prevent disabled students from participating in academic programmes of their interest and would assess the relevance of any decolonisation initiative without realistic inclusion. Referring to two technical education and training (TVET) schools, Ngubane-Mokiwa and Khoza (2016) noted that disabled students are not supported technologically as far as their learning is concerned owing to lecturers' limited knowledge, teaching methods and resources.

The lecturers also noted a lack of professional education in diversity management and especially in disability issues. This absence adds to the lack of awareness, and eventually to their detachment and negative frame of mind towards disability matters. One respondent shared:

> *The issue is that as instructors, we are not prepared to deal with [disability] matters, for example, we need to manage the gradualness [of some disabled students] while simultaneously you have enormous classes and you are hurrying to comply with faculty deadlines and general time constraints (TA).*

He further added:

> *'I am a science lecturer and all I need is my students to acquire the science fundamentals let's say…. the basics of Physics. I don't think I am well prepared to manage disability issues of a respective student. There has to be a guiding and strategic policy (TA).*

If physical structures and other institutional plans should come under discussion, lecturers may have less impact to realise positive change. Nevertheless, together with

different partners such as students with inabilities, the college, the board and government and private segment players, elective plans and arrangements may be made. This study focuses on how lecturers can act, albeit with limitations, to ensure consideration of and access for students with disabilities at colleges. Full incorporation of students with disabilities is conceivable when every one partner is included and cooperative.

While findings agree with various studies regarding the role of staff in inclusive initiatives, these findings unmistakably demonstrate that it is necessary to determine how lecturers from various faculties comprehend and experience disability. There are differences across faculties and among lecturers' opinion regarding an absence of entrenching established disability policies and practices within HE institutions. Support for disabled students is subject to disability initiatives and individual lecturers. It is consequently critical to comprehend the attitude and perceptions of lecturers concerning students with disabilities and decoloniality. A fundamental area which requires further investigation is the reason behind the absence of full participation and interest from some staff members

iv. Unfamiliarity with assistive technology

While assistive technologies and innovations promote access to learning for students with inabilities, it may exclude others at times. To guarantee an inclusive environment, the role of assistive technology becomes key so that technology is not used to perpetuate injustice. For instance, in their investigation on the learning encounters of visually impaired students, the findings from several responses indicate that the inclusive approaches as well as obtaining skills in using technology might be a result of several factors such as evaluation and assessment, content change, pedagogy among others. One staff particularly mentioned the following:

> *One of the main considerations which can impact the success or failure of students with disabilities is the pedagogy and other instructing strategies that are not pertinent to how disabled students learn in their own specific circumstances (AR).*

As seen above and as indicated by Shidza (2014), instructional methods (pedagogies) assume an extremely essential role in the students' academic performance.

Another response was the following:

> *The use of assistive technologies requires staff to be familiar with varied pedagogies to have the option to choose the appropriate methods for specific disabled students (AR2)*

This can also relate to the evaluation of decolonisation from an understanding of pedagogy and content. The use of the one-size-fits-all technique is not always effective as students and all disabled individuals will never be equally abled. Most participants agreed that every student is unique; therefore, assistive technologies should be utilized diversely to include all students in their classes, regardless of their disability condition. Mokiwa and Phasha (2012) contend that this would be similar to the use of the Job Access With Speech (JAWS) programming for visually-impaired students who cannot read numerical and logical signs. This largely associates with the decolonisation drive, especially if the current change in curriculum requires new ways of teaching different disabled groups of students to be entirely inclusive in manner.

6.8. Summary of findings

The responses above reveal interesting perspectives and views regarding inclusion and decolonisation. These responses had been articulated in thematic format and the following keywords emerge as a summary of each theme:

Table 6.2: Thematic summary of the findings from the study

	Themes	**Major issues arising**
1	Policies guiding inclusive support of students	Ad hoc institutional support is in place for decolonisation, inclusion, teaching and students support
2	Perceptions of students of the importance of inclusive student support services	Students realise that support services are a pillar of their successful inclusion, yet these are inadequate across the board
3	Student Walk model should be improved for students	No streamlined and specific student support is in place for inclusion later of decolonisation

4	Features of decolonised programmes	Global relevance, students as stakeholders, controlling worldviews, replicating inequalities, curricula and power plays and a clear strategy
5	Missed opportunities for and barriers to the decolonised curriculum	Decolonisation is not well understood by both staff and students, but hypothetically points to more barriers than opportunities

6.9. Conclusion.

As far as policies guiding inclusive support of students are concerned, the study shows that there is ad hoc institutional support in place for decolonisation, inclusion, teaching and student support. It is necessary to optimise and promote inclusive training at all stages of national policies and guidelines. Public legislation ought to state that all citizens have a right to inclusive education. In partnership and consultation with disabled person organisations, NGOs, parents of students with disabilities, students with disabilities themselves and other community members, it is therefore essential to introduce inclusive education policies and guidelines. Far too frequently, the findings assert that university inclusive curriculum strategies remain ambiguous, uncompromising and ambitious. The principles of the multicultural curriculum are not explicitly articulated in terms of public policy.

Perceptions of students of the importance of inclusive student support services are essentially negative. The perception of student support programmes related to the various student counselling, the relevance of feedback, peer mentoring and non-academic counselling potential applications. However, the common view is that student support services are not organised, therefore eligible students are not informed of the resources they provide. Another perception is that the extension of online support hours and funding for students with disabilities is exceedingly week, especially as poor Internet connectivity and accessibility related to computer infrastructure and online learning.

The study further indicates that there is no streamlined and specific student support in place for inclusion later of decolonisation. The Student Walk model was meant to improve student support, especially those with disabilities. However, this never

happened. The findings indicate that the lack of inclusivity, poor conceptualisation from the start and the exclusion of students with disabilities undermined its progress towards decolonisation. This was coupled with a poor understanding of staff of issues of disability (especially pedagogy) and how the model would be supported. The findings further show that the University had limited resources to institutionalise inclusivity and decolonisation.

There appears to be a deep divide between curriculum and disability. This implies that curricula were not adaptive to specific disabilities. This does not speak to the realities of the environment in which teaching and learning take place. The Student Walk was meant to support students with disability and design curricula that would not only relate to such students but could be pedagogically managed well inclusively.

The responses show that an inclusive curriculum can be decolonised to restore the ideologies of HEIs. In this study, the personalities, stories and diverse forms of information are part of the curriculum. That may change both the people (staff or student), as well as the implications that they could have for the environment and community. This may not be a quick change; however, it would be long overdue and must be tackled in all the fields and positions of inclusion. Concerning decolonizing the curriculum, what is present is not viable; therefore, HE cannot keep avoiding this issue. Academia is called upon to function for the organisation and must help promote this to contribute to meaningful institutional change.

Regarding the opportunities for and barriers to the decolonised curriculum, it has been observed from the study that decolonisation is not well understood by both staff and students; there appear to be more barriers than opportunities. While HE in South Africa enjoys intellectual independence, most of the ODeL curricula tend to foster western philosophies and ideas that perpetuate the hegemonic state of information, education, learning and research. Western influence is embodied in policy, institutional goals and programme design. The Eurocentric knowledge body continues encouraging graduates to enter the market; however, it is unwilling to allow appropriate changes to the social and economic status quo. Inclusive curriculum transformation has been perceived as a missed opportunity.

Barriers to inclusive education, including inadequate government and legal aid, services and equipment, trained staff, instructor development, instructional capabilities, adaptive teaching methods, supportive management and cultural attitudes, have been well documented in the study. Nonetheless, findings indicate that it could be more beneficial to find methods of recognizing and growing already positive inclusive education practices than dwelling on vulnerabilities.

The next chapter is a discussion around the inclusive Student Walk model, which contributes disability inclusion to the frameworks and theories of decolonisation. The section is a product of what would have been best practices through a critical perspective of the findings, which are grounded in theory and practice.

CHAPTER 7

A FRAMEWORK FOR A DECOLONISED, INCLUSIVE SUPPORT SERVICES IN OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

7.1. Introduction

As this chapter shares cardinal conclusions and implications, it is important to recall that it is based on the theoretical and conceptual framework that explored various aspects of learning within an ODeL environment and that these aspects are pertinent to inclusivity. Study conclusions as extracted from the findings in the previous chapter are linked to the theoretical and conceptual frameworks which are summarized according to the broad themes. This chapter sums up the theoretical implications and lays the foundation for a framework toward inclusivity from a decolonisation perspective.

7.2. Policies guiding inclusive support of students with disabilities

The findings indicate that the ODeL institution has inclusive policies in place. There have been discussions around decolonisation although strategically not well documented. Michelle (2010) claims that the main challenge regarding decolonisation through an inclusive approach is policy issues. Having policies in place to drive the decoloniality project as well as inclusive approaches to education is one matter and understanding and implementing them is another.

There are indications from the findings that staff members did not support the existing inclusive practices which left the disabled students feeling alienated from the mainstream. It is clear in the University policies that all students, regardless of disability, race, religion, gender, class or even background, and all aspects of social diversity should have equal opportunities to education. Unfortunately, such practices which are very clear on paper are not easily transferable or translated into realities. Shava (2013) argues that institutional models that regulate how teaching and learning processes take place from admission to graduation are a global trend and institutions

should be aware that such globalization has a profound influence on decolonisation. This would require institutionalization of diversity programmes that would accommodate all students from all backgrounds and not just lip service.

This study reveals some interest in and enthusiasm for diversity from some lecturers and departments. However, there is real work to be done to eliminate exclusionary barriers. Significant in the findings is that lecturers' limited knowledge on handling inclusivity, the attitude to disability, and ignorance towards education, especially differentiated education are some of the barriers that could easily be addressed within an inclusive policy. The findings also indicate that some lecturers were essentially naïve regarding the handling of disabled students and could not interpret policies well enough to support disabled students. Khan (2013) contends that an ODeL environment could indeed realize the benefits of decolonisation through an inclusive model; however, that requires an attitude shift from members of staff.

Given the challenges involved, an ODeL institution has to be flexible, adaptable and more systematic in its approach to teaching and learning. The faculties/lecturers cannot merely replicate the way they were trained because of the distinction of/between cognitive-affective and behaviour are both arbitrary and counterproductive. It is a prerequisite for all stakeholders to ensure that institutions respond at a high level to the different needs of the various groups of learners. This would be irrefutable evidence of how much value higher education has to both individuals and society.

This study shows that students with disability should be well informed and educated from the beginning regarding issues related to teaching and learning assessments so that they are aware and prepare themselves physically and resource-wise. During student admission, many students felt that the University and all its departments were inclusive as was advertised in policies and circulars; however, everything looked so different, from poor lecturer interpretation and transcription of braille, the computers for the disabled, audio and visual resources, to poorly interpreted learning guides, just to mention a few. Such findings confirm that without proper institutional policies which are inclusive in their implementation, inclusivity will still be far from reality.

7.3. Perceptions of students of the importance of inclusive student support services in the student walk

Most students perceive that the University may not be doing what is needed to enlighten the student community about the support that it offers to disabled students. This was shown by many participants who did not know about the offices and support structures that are in place for a student with disabilities. The findings show that the IT offices at the various colleges are the best support bases for all students regardless of their conditions. This relates to the immense help for the appropriation of e-learning as an instrument to advance better awareness and inclusivity of students with disabilities into the typical education structure.

There were also mixed views regarding their perceived staff support. There are instances where participants felt that staff had supported them well; however, those were very few across the board. The general perception was that disability was not well understood by many of the staff who felt that it was not their responsibility to ensure that disabled students are well supported and guided through their academic programme. It was commonly felt that disability units and career guidance would have been largely responsible for these.

7.4. Student Walk model for students with disabilities

The Student Walk was designed to be not only inclusive but also to support all students with disabilities from the time they enrol in the different/various faculties or departments until they finally graduate. The study findings, however, indicate that the envisaged role of the Student Walk model has not been realized. The study results point to so many instances where students with disabilities had not received assistance at the point of registration, where disjointed help had been available during the course itself, and where students with disabilities had been alienated from the mainstream assessments and examinations compared to their counterparts. Surprisingly, some members of staff did not have sufficient understanding of the Student Walk to reasonably adjust themselves and how they could use it to assist students with disabilities throughout their programmes of study. The student walk model was new to most members of staff, which seemingly was very unfortunate. It is for this reason that a framework that could support and enhance inclusion is suggested

in 7.8 of this section. The study recognized ODeL as an adaptable framework and it legitimizes the ODeL philosophy intended to be comprehensive and inclusive to address diversity.

To support the Student Walk, the perspective of faculty members about the curriculum is an important subject. The more that staff leaders can find any academic programme to incorporate diversity in their classes, the more possible it is. In combination with the course, the lecturers who invest in the promotion of student success are supposed to make greater progress towards sharing everything that takes place in the curriculum relating to the inclusion of diversity.

While diversity is included in the courses of all faculty members, it is much more likely for women and faculty members of colour than for white or male colleagues. In comparison to the other examples from the findings, this indicates that those that engage in quality enhancement will urge qualified study committees to look closely into female candidates and female candidates of colour and to consider opportunities to support black and white faculty members locate aspects in their courses that enhance their inclusiveness.

This Student Walk approach can be realistic in several areas, including inclusive course design and assessment. The system, for example, allows educationalists in the field of education to challenge and agree on the inclusiveness of each dimension while planning or making course changes. The framework provides versatility with components being addressed by a faculty member and attempts being made to draw up policies on specific aspects of inclusivity.

It can also be said that with current finance and budget limitations, the Student Walk model may less independent, as it is a network with specific departments (e.g., student counselling or student matters). This would specifically protect students with disabilities whose enrolment and study on a certain programme cannot be dictated by a single individual or department but as a systematic unit.

The push to reform the ODeL institution argued that extending degrees from three to four years or more would contribute to further student progress, have longer durations of funding and mitigate dropouts. The effect was thus a perpetuation of socioeconomic inequality, in which more affluent students would be able to complete their studies one

or two years ahead of their peers and join the workforce. It even placed employers at risk, who wondered/questioned how much time graduates had taken to obtain their certificate.

7.5. Features of decolonised programmes

The observations shared by some senior staff members from various colleges point to the distinctive features of decolonised programmes. Within a decolonial framework, a decolonized curriculum is one that liberates knowledge production and dissemination from dominant ‘able-ism’ and opens it up to diverse social groups including people with disability (see Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2020:3) . In decolonizing the curriculum, participants emphasised the need for a clear strategy on how to achieve this.

They argued for the leadership of academics and curriculum design decision-makers on all fronts to decolonize the curriculum and make teaching and learning more democratic. This needs to be conducted along with students who are actively interested in the learning process to re-imagine the experience.

Several obstacles threaten the implementation of the decolonisation of South African teachers' curricula and policymakers have a prominent role to play. On the other hand, there was an observation from participants that discourses around educational programmes or curriculum decolonisation are famously unproductive and unstructured. The reasons had been that these dialogues happen in a language which is unclear and imprecise; the decolonisation topic itself inherits this ambiguity and imprecision.

The findings indicate that decolonisation within an ODeL connects with broadened demographics. This way of thinking is by implication an inclusive practice only if it is managed well. However, questions will always linger on as to whether such systems would offer space for inclusive practices. It is worth noting that students who choose HE often make career choices at their secondary schools. However, time after time, the standards and prerequisites to keep up quality teaching here and their trade-off the essence of inclusive ODeL initiatives. Further, education and training are the only hope for marginalized individuals whose objectives are generally dashed by such discernments and perceptions.

Consequently, decolonisation within HE inclusive practices confronts many barriers and challenges as referred to by Kochung (2011) and Kerr and West (2010) such as negative attitudes towards individuals with disabilities, discriminative practices and dormant policies and systems of inclusion. A study of twelve African nations by Ncube and MacFadyen (2006) made comparable findings that confirm those of this study, namely that much decolonisation from an inclusive approach would be ideal within an ODeL learning environment. However, this is faced with many challenges such as those identified in the findings.

Customarily in African culture and society, education was all-inclusive and equal to everyone within the community and everybody took an interest and participated at their level. Fundamentally this inclusive practice was to support the effort towards a decolonised and inclusive education (Kochung, 2011). Such indigenous approaches and systems of education respected people and did not allow any individual to be victimized owing to differences. It advanced value and social equity. However, at present, habitual expectations are disregarded because of western influence (coloniality). The elitist reasoning influences the creation of colonized systems and social strata (first- and second-class citizens). This denotes the start of disproportion in providing inclusive quality education (Kochung, 2011).

The study also found a perception that power play and the influence of standards and systems seem to disregard decoloniality and inclusion. The exclusion of disabled students in HE appears to be very common (Ohajunwa, McKenzie & Lorenzo, 2014). Colonial systems, according to Shava (2013), were largely built around exclusion and therefore learning institutions need to break free of that history by admitting individuals from a society whose learning needs require modifications and more provisions.

To understand their thought processes about the curriculum and what it means for the restructuring of the education system considering the ongoing debates about decolonisation, this study aimed at positioning curricular decision-makers within the context of inclusive curricular development. The distinction between decolonisation and transition would be recognised by lecturers from various disciplines as well as the ODeL institutions in general. Although there was a draft framework for decolonisation, all of it was internal. This was a mechanism guided primarily by students with a very significant amount of ordinary political funding.

This study shared the view that decolonisation concerning the ODeL system can fundamentally be inclusive throughout. It is in most African nations; decolonisation features are sometimes independent and unrestricted in their choice to address diversity and inclusion. In that way, what HE incorporates avoids, belittles or contrasts with inclusion. Social equity and inclusion are universal qualities but need epistemologically inclusive implementation methods. Consideration needs to address social disparity and exclusionary practices (Shava, 2013). Decoloniality would mean to prohibit a predominant approach and become agreeable to barring others from applying the set parameters. This is proof to educationists that imperialism did not end with autonomy since its effects are still profoundly and deeply embedded within universities and colleges. Such concealment is viewed as typical by western epistemologies. Acknowledgement of disability is viewed as a pseudo practice.

7.6. Opportunities for and barriers to the decolonised and inclusive curriculum

The study shows that the institution has an ad hoc approach to inclusion and is not geared to supporting disabled students (Kochung, 2003). The absence of enforcing rules and upholding principles negatively affects inclusive practices which eventually contravene/negate the objectives of the Student Walk. According to the perception of Shava (2013), it justifies legitimising the requirement for learning and knowledge recreation, the basic scrutiny of existing standards and paradigms, epistemological establishments of existing ideal models and recognisable proof of the confinements to ODeL inclusive practices. The study points to many barriers; ODeL institutions need to connect with and engage in matters of decolonisation proactively. Fittingly, Perry and Francis (2010) observed that elite learning organisations urge their students to complement themselves for being there and for what being there can accomplish for them. This has in certain instances closed the minds of certain Africans about what their identity is, the place they originate from, their qualities and the accommodation of others in their circles.

As was noted by Staley (2015), the study asserts that curriculum development should include inclusion and closely relate it to certain metrics of successful instructional practices. By including variety/diversity in their classes, faculty members are far more likely to promote engagement between colleagues through distinction, demonstrate

meaningful approaches to learning, encourage productive teaching methods, engage with students, and achieve results such as analytical and functional competence or moral and social accountability in the curriculum.

Unlike many poor institution and departments, to navigate the barriers to inclusion, some institutions have committed a lot of resources from the world-class curriculum to their instruction. However, the disparity among national HE frameworks has widened in the previous decade. ODeL needs to address such barriers and subsequently improve inclusion initiatives. Similarly, quality assurance in HE has been taken to extreme levels in many countries (Maldonado-Torres 2011) and if not well managed, its motivation might be ruined as well. It implies that there is a need to guarantee the quality of how HE is attending to diversity while addressing decoloniality.

The decoloniality project, if well handled, has massive opportunities, according to Perry and Francis (2010), for traditional universities to reflect on the culture and social institutions of their setup being relevant to their societies. One also remembers that Africa has a rich history of knowledge that has not been exploited and so to assume that colonial knowledge (the Western knowledge) is a masterpiece of all is misplaced. History will tell us that traditional African societies had advanced technology (in that era) from the way they lived, farmed, treated illnesses and, above all, educated societies inclusively.

The drive towards decolonisation by higher institutions of learning is from the perception that it would address the injustices of the past and reduce the level of marginalization, especially for those who were oppressed. The missed opportunities, therefore, are where institutions are required to highlight the local versions of decolonisation, explaining and understanding history from the perspectives of not just the colonizers but also allies. They have a significant role to play, especially concerning resources. The emphasis is on the role of indigenous languages, cultures and their value, in positioning towards curriculum redesigning, and how such cultures and languages can easily be incorporated into the curriculum in a systematic and meaningful way. This would address the components of functional education and curriculum that is specifically tailored to the needs of society while incorporating indigenous and knowledge cultures that are relevant to the masses in general.

7.7 Decolonised ODel and inclusion

The study revealed and recognized that ODeL learning is more extensive than formal learning as it can happen anywhere – at a country or urban home, or in the working environment, among others. That is, it happens/takes place in one's setting. This view is upheld by Maldonado-Torres (2011) who recommends that ODeL institutions should develop a comprehensive and inclusive ethos that may integrate, collaborate and stimulate learning where everybody is appreciated. MoodleLey (2012) further indicated that, without changing institutional societies and cultures, a manageable change is probably not going to happen. Consequently, responsibility and support by staff cannot be undermined if ODeL is to meet its comprehensive vision and objectives.

Research results show that students with disabilities bear expenses to which their non-disabled peers are not subjected. They focus on information access, technologies and therefore avail equipment such as tape recorders. The study revealed that students cannot benefit fully from technology, but that lecturers do not adjust their teaching approaches accordingly. Student observations indicate that they believe they cannot control how their lecturers project their voices or move about the lecture rooms nor can they manage to capture all the lesson material.

ODeL institutions would improve access to curricula if there was sufficient allowance made for training and research. Some people have noted the unsatisfactory accommodation for students with different disabilities. Where necessary, consultations between students and employers may discuss concerns relating to the academic environments of students. As stated by Claiborne et al. (2011), they could assess the students' needs through consultations with disabled students. The ODeL institutions have thus failed to acknowledge the needs and expectations of students with disabilities.

The facilitation of teaching-learning renders disabled students vulnerable. Classes are reluctantly offered to students with coordination difficulties; others who are visually impaired and cannot make notes rely on peers; and related problems exist for those who are partially sighted, as a consequence of lecturers' illegible handwriting. Visually impaired students also depend on the verbal and visual presentations of the lecturers. Therefore, during casual conversations with friends, students are able to obtain the

material they missed during instruction. It helps students with disabilities to interpret and reflect on their topics and to be open to misunderstandings.

As revealed by the findings, for a considerable length of time exclusionary barriers have affected the level of inclusion negatively. This is proved by selective and exclusive types of assessments and the elitist schools for the well-off that still exist today. Another distinctive aspect is the presence of students who are disabled and underprivileged in the system yet who are insignificant in numbers. This connotes some concern regarding both regular and ODeL University inclusive practices and would require a top-down policy-driven approach to tackle all exclusionary pedagogical aspects.

Although this is beyond the scope of this study, it is worth noting that restructuring for a decolonised educational programme is about thinking of the overall effect of HE institutions on the international markets, standardizations and knowledge. This requires an all-encompassing survey, a profound intellectual willingness and awareness, a deliberative and participatory commitment by all partners associated with inclusive education through the decolonised curriculum. Nonetheless, a concerted dialogue of a ‘cross-pollination’ of reasoning is needed in terms of strong support and compelling reasons that identify and redress historical deception and pursue respect for indigenous learning using a process of correction and renegotiation between the old and the new approaches. It is not just about being candid in lambasting 'old' Eurocentric and Westernized ways of learning systems and then adopting a new programme. Curriculum developers have to develop down-to-business options for a logically pertinent educational programme that upsets prevailing westernized knowledge frameworks and to position them alongside indigenous knowledge systems.

The study further indicates that the University has worked to provide students with disabilities with remarkable support. However, many services have been reported as lacking by students at certain schools, such as student engagement officers and unique access applications. E-learning has been accepted by many educators as playing a significant role in helping disadvantaged students. Ultimately, the challenges and difficulties encountered by students with disabilities cannot be ignored to provide fair opportunities to all. For instance issues of illegible handwriting of lecturers and

inability of those with visual impairment to take notes and reliance on peers for note-taking arise in distance learning was raised as examples of support that is lacking at the institution.

The study deduces that students with disabilities are generally admissible; however, there are specific confinements for students with visual impairments. The study depicts ODeL as an elitist approach to HE learning because of its learning architecture and infrastructure that is increasingly focused on the advantaged, for example, technology and learning materials. The other view behind such a depiction is the extremely low intakes of students with disabilities into ODeL, yet they are assumed to be best suited for disabled students. This is central to the goals of ODeL of open access to all notwithstanding their conditions.

HE institutions, therefore, are then reminded to be in touch with diversity. As per the study findings, the concept of inclusion depends on full participation, human rights, equal opportunities and social equity and given the correct inclusive support, all students being able to explore their potential fully. The study convincingly claims that political will is relevant to infuse corporation within ODeL inclusive practices. ODeL is urged to remain open and prepared in expectation of fully admitting and supporting students with disabilities and providing them with opportunities to believe, having little regard for limitations and obstacles.

Whereas access to entering the colleges is not limited, the University needs to accomplish more to boost opportunities for students with disabilities to prevail and do well in their studies. Such endeavours could conveniently incorporate an approach on how disability information ought to be utilized. This is because there seems to be no guidance or initiative from any division or college on how to access the University resources, its learning spaces and assets that are closely linked to a given learning programme. It is observed that the University only offers some support to students with disabilities, especially those with visual impairment; however, this support seems inadequate.

Another vital finding is that ODeL should remain positioned in expectation of acknowledging and supporting students with disabilities. This is only conceivable if clear inclusive strategies are set up. The study reflects ODeL as an adaptable and a fitting way to deal with inclusive instruction which ought not to be impacted by elitism.

It urges ODeL institutions to be driven by their vision, mission and objectives. While the study acknowledges quality assurance, care must be taken to oversee this. Brennan (2017) and Holmberg (2015) caution readers of this research to take note that, while competition has consistently been a power in the academic world and can create intelligence, the loss of vision, mission and conventional qualities and values can also be added. Despite deeply embedded self-righteous reasoning methods, ODeL organizations should continue to teach across all areas within an institution. As the authors have shown, the presumed obstacle will challenge the so-called elite students if adequately trained. This requires an all-inclusive buy-in for all parties involved and the implementation of such programmes in terms of accommodation and adjustments with positive in mind.

There might have been no overt imperial norm, but there is expansionism as societal, cultural, policy and information-driven repression going on in its various masks (Sardar, 2008). Despite the likelihood that the term 'politically sanctioned racist apartheid' will be included after 'imperialism' in this statement, we have a clear understanding of South Africa's post-political racist discrimination, which underestimates bigotry and abuse in specific fields, including higher education, by provinces and politicians. If universities and academics are to transform South Africa's educational landscape, they have to change what they teach and do so significantly.

Combined with epistemic viciousness, the new Eurocentric education system will not contribute to the desperately required reconstruction of past and future on the African continent. This will be done by a programme which 'rebuilds' Africa from the chronicled, modern, cultural and financial viewpoint of the community (Mamdani 1998).

The obstacle to change has been put into the hierarchical structure which does not have to be conveniently distinguished between power, income, legitimacy or basic leadership. This study offers an opportunity for criticism, struggle and dilution of reforms since any learning disability that is contradictory to the norm of any field of research inspires frustration among citizens who benefit the most from the norm (Lagardien, 2014). In this way, numerous universities struggle to discuss decolonisation.

Decolonisation calls for an overwhelming number of citizens who seek reform both internationally and in the national sphere. Political and structural reform never happens

anywhere in the world without advocacy, encouragement, disagreement, disruption or debate. This is not just because an action is the best way to be revolutionary and convincing, but because they that behave as societal innovations and masses oblige them to do so.

Dynamic scholars and teachers should take a leadership role and not rest until changes in the institutions occur. Their education programmes must be decolonised and their learning spaces democratized. Through a transition of curriculum programmes, instruction and preparation time, they can involve students. Students and teachers will do that by rendering their learning halls a "hostile to democratic" place for all to read, join, discuss and profoundly reflect together (Rouhani, 2012:1731). This is used as an instructive field by Freire (1970:69), where speakers and students collaborate to reveal the facts, to grasp and recreate the knowledge profoundly. This is in line with the Motta concept (2013:88), namely "With the development of instructional methods (as a technique and substance) for pupils, it is important to recuperate and revamp the road to knowledge building as a simple demonstration of free opportunity".

"Radical take-offs from the norm are never simple. They are in every case at the same time representative and instinctive. In any case, they open new potential outcomes for addressing what was once unchallenged and certain" (Msimang, 2015). This is what the South African HE framework needs today – an extreme take-off from the norm and scrutinizing the provincial and politically-sanctioned racial segregation learning bases that as of recently have not been addressed adequately, if at all. The development to change and decolonise high education – an alliance of students, dynamic scholars, college staff and concerned public – must find approaches to hold the establishment responsible and keep up the peaceful, scholarly, proof-based, passionate and well-known battle until Eurocentrism and epistemic savagery at colleges is eradicated.

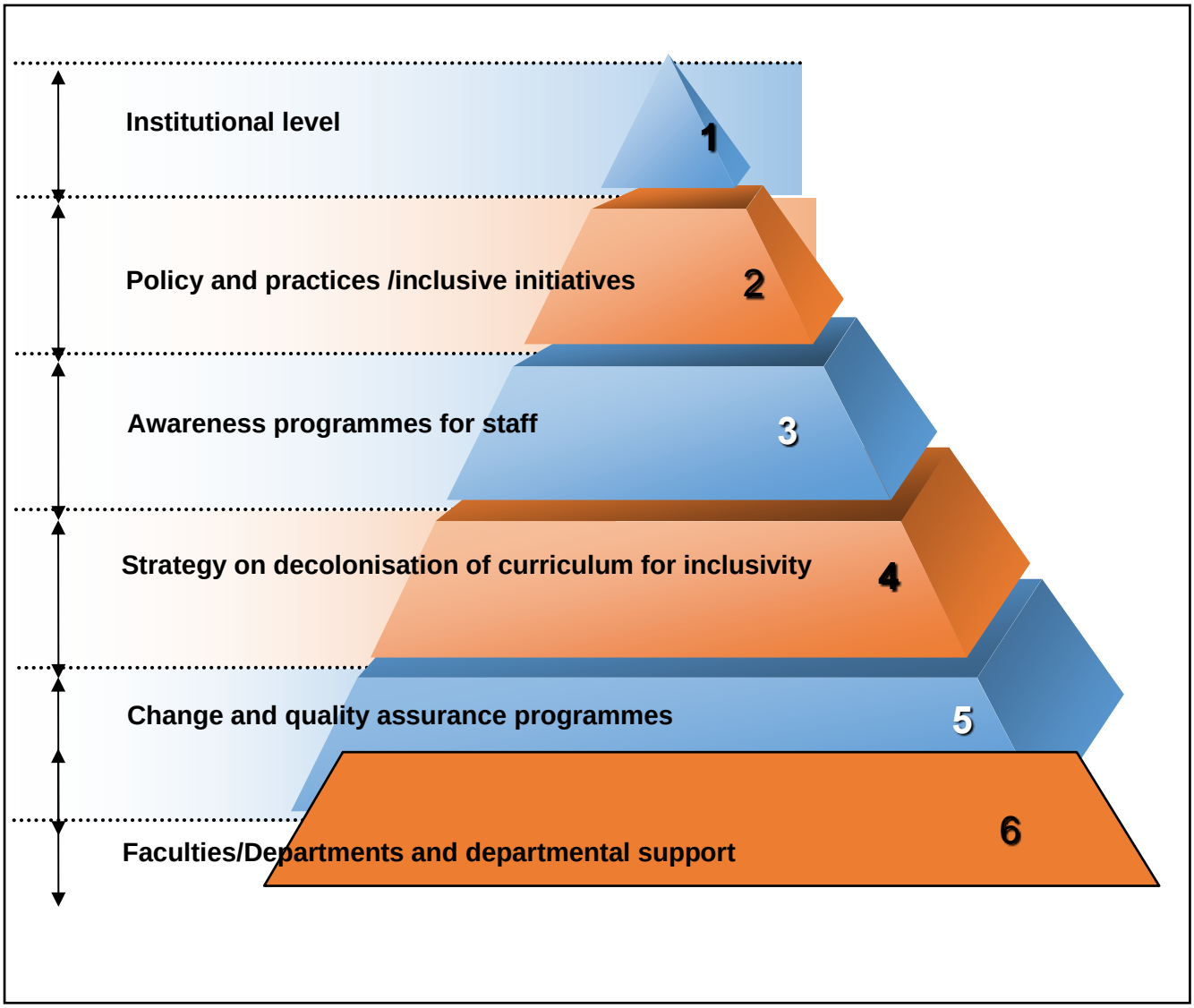
Finally, the study highlights that the ODeL institutions need to move from only having the modern ODeL systems to accessibility for all students. In an inclusive environment, all students, regardless of their disabilities, can easily learn from each other. Such constrained environments limit the potential and abilities of students with disabilities. HE should help dissolve social disparities and provide access opportunities through research, instructing and learning. Instruction frameworks should be progressively

practical and aware of diversity to close the social class gap in training. Continuous checks on experiences can enable institutions to improve their administration. Despite the featured difficulties, the study assesses the ODeL mode as the best since one keeps on living in his/her condition with fundamental adjustments while studying. Guidelines towards the framework should not be negotiated because students with disabilities remain in their specific environments.

7.8. Suggestive pillars of inclusive Student Walk model

UNISA needs to pronounce itself regarding the practical implementation of regulations about inclusive initiatives with decolonisation in mind. Specifically, the study recommends that a clear policy on support of students with disabilities be developed by universities, with the aid of disabled person organisations, students, and other key stakeholders. To enhance the chances of success of the Student Walk model, the policy should (i) indicate how information about disability can be used; (ii) stipulate how various university divisions can offer support to students, (iii) how teaching and learning services can be strengthened to make it simpler to use the system; (iv) stimulate research on the success and completion rates of students with disabilities the University enrols and (v) explore ways to adapt programmes currently inaccessible to students with disabilities, all of these from a decolonisation perspective. While such a plan will not ensure that students with disabilities be enrolled and engaged in HEs successfully, it would still be a significant initial phase towards presenting both students and organizations with a starting point and structure to continue to tackle current gaps in participation as well as in the inclusion of education and learning in general. These are summarised in the model below:

Figure 7.1: Proposed pillars of inclusive Student Walk



To understand the application and interconnectedness of these pillars of the Student Walk model to inclusivity in an ODeL environment, these are briefly discussed below:

i. Institutional level

At the institutional level, issues of decolonisation which offer an inclusive approach to teaching and learning processes within an ODeL environment would require inclusive support from all institutions within the University. There is a need to rethink the direction of decolonisation from different department levels and ascertain its relevancy and trajectory towards curriculum revision in an inclusive approach. It would also be

necessary to relook into the admission to various programmes within the various institutional schools, especially those that alienated the students on disability grounds. Moreover, sound career guidance and counselling services need to be provided so that students understand the course requirements at the admission level as well as the foreseeable challenges.

Institutional barriers towards academic and professional development entrenched in an inclusive approach should be investigated. Further issues that require consideration at an institutional level are the under-representation of staff members with disabilities in charge of students; the limited awareness of most of the staff members of the issues of diversity and cultural sensitivity as well as an overall understanding of disability issues and finally, the relevant pedagogical approaches that should be adopted.

Curriculum design and redesigning are culturally and institutionally sensitive and require a firm commitment and professional dedication. A university comprises several schools, institutions or departments and together they strategically maintain an organic control that significantly warrants strategic debates and discussions around curriculum redesigning and inclusivity at large. An institution should realize its role in diversity and inclusive curriculum redesigning.

ii. Inclusive policy and practices initiatives

There need to be systematic policies and guidelines in place to support inclusion and those that create a conducive environment for innovation to produce a curriculum that is culturally and institutionally relevant. The ODeL institutions need to review diversity and inclusion, not only regarding the number of students enrolled with disabilities but also a fair and conducive environment for learning for disabled students. This would require early inventory into the comprehensive barriers to enrolment and throughput on certain programmes by students with disabilities. Without such a broader understanding of students' challenges, it would be difficult to devise inclusive initiatives. Whereas several initiatives are inclusive, apart from the enrolment, there are noticeable gaps throughout the tenure of the students on certain programmes during assessments. Such comprehensive initiatives would entail a detailed examination of learning materials, the forms of assessment for students with

disabilities, and online support for the various disability categories to offer students opportunities to succeed.

When there is an unclear policy on decolonisation, there have been few strategic and departmental debates about it. As was observed by Higgs (2016), the success of any HE systems is based on the curriculum; an inclusive approach should be based on a thorough understanding of the indigenous knowledge embedded in it. This requires systematic support through strategic policies and procedures that create the right place for sharing knowledge systems, and that are innovative enough to explore the relevant curriculum. One obvious issue was the staff overload and that many of them are inclined to pay attention to the basic tasks of teaching and student support while giving insufficient attention to a critical examination of curriculum, content redesigning and discussions related to curriculum redevelopment. Such policies and guidelines would provide a platform that supports and develops critical and analytical thinking by members of the staff relating to exploring indigenous knowledge to produce contextualised and indigenous curriculum.

iii. Awareness programmes for staff

One shortcoming identified by this study was ignorance exhibited by members of staff about disability and at worst, a lack of knowledge on how to deal with students with disabilities at various levels during the programme of study. Second, knowledge about decolonisation was limited to very few members of staff. This showed a total lack of understanding of both decoloniality and inclusivity. It would be ideal if the current crop of staff faculty were trained and occasionally informed about issues of disability and inclusivity. Moreover, they need to be encouraged to learn more about the decolonisation of curriculum and whether their current positions require post training, research and innovation support towards decolonisation. It might be worthwhile to consider that members of staff who embrace transformation and decolonisation initiatives have relatively small workloads so that further research and curriculum development initiatives can be driven by such cohorts.

iv. Strategy on decolonisation of curriculum inclusively

The University needs to investigate the various ways and forms through which the curriculum is conveyed in and imposed on several qualifications. It is particularly important to investigate the content that students are always exposed to (convert

colonial curriculum). This would require institutions to specifically pay attention to the content, knowledge pedagogical approaches and all aspects that are embedded in the ways of knowing. There is also a need to relate decolonisation and transformation to internationalization by ensuring that this is in line with global developments aimed at improving the quality of livelihoods of people who consume it.

Institutions should reduce the level of student stigmatization, especially that linked to disability and language, for example, cases where additional classes offered to improve students in English language and academic writing to place such students at an acceptable academic level were a reflection of colonial knowledge consumption and perpetuation. As was reflected by Shay (2015), the language and knowing are synonymous and apart from subjects such as medicine or the sciences. Students can adjust to different content taught in the home languages as that would constitute an aspect not only of diversity but cultural contextualization so that no one is left behind based on language inadequacies. It is important to identify imperial ideologies and how they shape academic practices. As was emphasized by Scott (2015), there are no way institutions can create new ways of leaving and learning by reverting to the old way of doing things. Therefore, decolonisation cannot be achieved through old outdated formulas but would require extensive innovation across languages culture, technologies and content.

v. Change and quality assurance programmes

Several institutions in Africa are tackling decolonisation and internationalization of curriculum in an inclusive manner. Decolonised teaching does not necessarily mean the adoption of compliance-based approaches which may entail good teaching through a contextualized cultural environment. The University and its departments should then benchmark the existing good evidence and practices from international platforms to identify which work well from an indigenous perspective. This would require reaffirming the cardinal role of staff in promoting and supporting good practices and opportunities, as well as institutional agendas for professional staff development, innovative teaching and acknowledgement. Such initiatives would undoubtedly lay a foundation for quality assurance measures in curriculum development.

It may also be necessary to put quality control processes and measures in place with results, where such information can be shared and peer-reviewed for further improvement of the design of the curricula. As was reflected in the role of students, such a process would take feedback from them to capture how certain courses are matched with students' needs skills and the existing job gaps.

vi. Faculties/Departments and departmental support

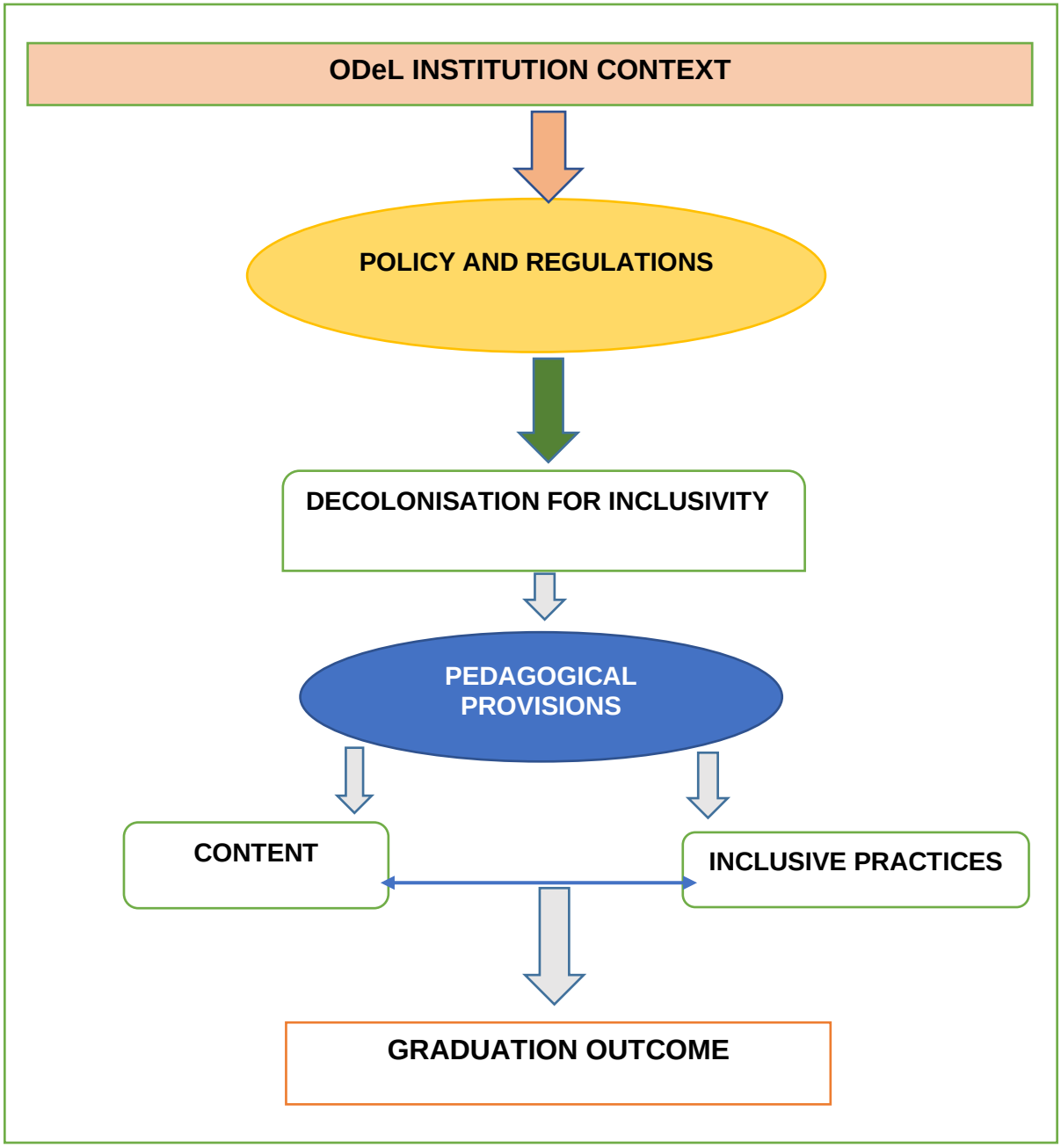
This study observes the role power plays at different institutional and departmental levels. A good staff cohort is the epitome of any successful academic institution. There should be coordinated and proper identification of staff who have a better understanding of internationalization of the curriculum and its pedagogical approaches. Such staff should be guided by deans who are well-respected academicians and researchers that are bound to lead by example. Further support requirements include a foundation for research excellence that is based on a well-supported and evaluated peer review process; the initiation of staff innovation award system, especially for high performing lecturers: and streamlined processes for better governance of the various schools or departments to meet certain diversity targets. Finally, promoting synergies and collaborations amongst individuals and research units that lay a proper foundation for indigenous curricula should be encouraged

7.9. A framework for decolonisation and inclusivity

The Student Walk model was developed as a would-be user-friendly framework to assist students in finding help within the respective student-related units and sections using a unique seven-step journey. Whereas the Student Walk helps every student to comply with requirements, maximise their UNISA experience and ultimately succeed at UNISA, the study shows that it may not succeed alone in ensuring decoloniality and inclusive access. The model accommodates students with disabilities at every step of the way. It should pay attention to the overarching context of the institution where students from all backgrounds learn.

In addition to the Student Walk model, the study envisages an inclusive framework that is summarised in the figure below:

Figure 7.2: A framework for decolonisation and disability inclusivity



The framework suggests that the institutional outlook to inclusiveness from a decolonised perspective would require institutional policies and procedures that drive the goals of the Student Walk model. It also notes that an inclusive approach as well the curriculum should accommodate provisions that are in general decolonised. Such pedagogical approaches should easily breakdown curriculum content in such a way that no student is left behind. Different forms of curriculum, whether hidden or not, may

translate in the production of graduates whose outlook regarding employability and lifelong learning is more assured.

For this reason, in the recent HE drive towards internationalisation, more prominent consideration has been paid to refreshing and modernizing the educational curriculum to make it increasingly comprehensive of the most recent disciplinary information and aptitudes as well as progressively intelligent of humanistic qualities (for instance, coordinating multi-culturalism, human rights and economic improvement into the educational programmes).

This supports two types of curriculum, the hidden and inclusive one. The hidden one alludes to those verifiable lessons adapted casually and even unwittingly through regular social cooperation and the communication with the more extensive institutional culture, for example, the organisation's culture, statements of faith and standards. This concealed educational curriculum may likewise impact one's mentalities and attitude on race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, social class and different variables.

Inclusive practice relates to the hidden curriculum that advances mentalities and acknowledgement of all aspects and barriers to diversity among people, especially those with disabilities. This is contrary to the common non-comprehensive and concealed educational curricula which may accidentally advance antagonistic generalizations and preference of others dependent on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class and different elements.

Actualizing a vision of inclusivity and value involves creating arrangements and projects reliable with that vision and building a long-term strategy that includes required objectives, targets and assessment as well as evaluation programmes that measure the adequacy of such arrangements. This generates reliable institutional policies and regulation not only linked to the overall organisational context but deeply embedded in the strategic plans. Such plans are bound to produce and support decoloniality efforts as well as indicating how inclusive such decoloniality can be.

This implies that decolonising curriculum may not be a pillar alone in the framework but should ensure that its content addresses the hidden and unhidden curriculum content through pedagogical means that advocate and support inclusivity at all stages of the Student Walk.

In the case of the ARCSWiD, inclusive student support programmes should begin at the institutional context to policies so that admission of students is a well understood and inclusive process throughout. The framework also advocates for content to be articulated inclusively through relevant pedagogical provisions so that it can be accessible to all students regardless of the disability. As an example, special computers for students with visual impairment have to be available to the students from start to end while their study material would require to be converted to alternative formats, namely braille, audio or soft copy so that teaching, learning and assessment would automatically translate into realistic outcomes – a decolonised curriculum in an inclusive manner.

7.10 Propositions from the Capacity Approach and Transactional Distance Theory

In this section, the thesis summary is a product of the application of current and previous thinking around inclusivity in HE, particularly in an ODeL environment. In a shared analysis of the applied theories of this research, (the capability approach and the Transaction Distance Learning Theory) can be adopted as theoretic reflexivity to interpret, understand and apply inclusivity in the curriculum. This section also offers insights into the key elements derived from data and its realistic and relevant implications.

Regarding the capability approach, the framework for the appraisal and evaluation of individual welfare and social arrangements, the design of policies and proposals and policies for social change were viewed as a broad standard. The emphasis of the solution lies in a person's freedom; it is not just an external entity that determines the case.

This method should be adopted by institutions as it relates to the well-being and quality of life to the success of the student since greater achievement means greater enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning, irrespective of disability. This holistic method, which focuses on individual satisfaction and enjoyment, does not, therefore, include other facets of student growth, conflict and general differences. One of Sen’s (1987) major achievements is that while considering student growth, health and the quality of life, he helps us focus our attention on other concerns.

In this case, functions become an essential category in the path to capability. Functions (like reading and writing), physical circumstances (e.g., well-nourished, and healthy and mental situations such as happiness). It is only normal that individuals would face a variety of choices because they will perform a range of functions.

Agency, which is defined by one's ability to achieve objectives which one values and which are essential to the lives of the people, is also an important element of the capability approach. Agency means to be an active contributor to planning and living. Regarding this approach, some argue HE is important for providing all students with intrinsic freedom as well as a collective action and democratic participation regarding their choices and opportunities. These are two distinctive but interconnected aspects of human life. Agency is, therefore, an important aspect of human welfare.

The concept of agency applies to a reflection on education because it implies three levels of demands: the claim that students with disabilities can realize their own decision making and expectations, the claim that they can reflect on the world and foresee desirable changes, and the claim that they can make such changes, in other words, learning aims to expand the agency of students with disabilities (inclusiveness) so they can be the authors of their own lives.

This analysis of the major components of a capability approach refers frequently to the commitment to human personality: personality, bodily well-being, integrity, the meaning of the individual, imagery and thought; emotions or feelings; rational reasoning; affiliation; creativity and thinking. These are the core requirements for a decent life and make up a minimum social justice agreement. The conviction that a social culture that does not guarantee the active cultivation of such genuinely human personalities is essential to the capacity approach.

For Sen (1987), the contribution of the capacity approach to education affects the expansion of other capacities, or human freedoms, at the level of one's education. Sen also argues that the opportunity to freedom to practice can, to a significant degree, directly rely on our education, and so education should evolve simply on an approach focused on skill. As far as education is concerned, capability can be interpreted as a collection of specific opportunities for students to do and to become what that means: individuals will have the same breadth of opportunities to operate essential and

important functions, like reading and writing, concentrating and fulfilling tasks, or criticizing one's actions.

The practical aspects of the capability approach are also based on the principles discussed above, including the need to develop these principles further. For example, what aspects of the practice must be changed in order to build cultural relationship integration? When Relational Inclusion is approached holistically, what aspects of students must be addressed? How does inclusion changeqa the assessment of "inclusive" versus "exclusive" ODeL environment and how does it help to highlight the differences in classrooms at different times for different students? How does a relational inclusion approach support participation? What are the characteristics of relations between instructors and students that facilitate capacity negotiation? While some instructors can practice according to some of these principles, they are likely to do so despite educational systems. Enhancement of these values and capabilities—including the ability to interpret the principles in relation to each student and instructor, and the expected participation of a specific student and instructor in this interpretation—requires immersion in the model through education and professional development.

While implementing the principles of Relational Inclusion partially requires instructors to start and internalise these values, structural change at the level of policy is necessary to promote inclusion. The capability approach underlines the three policy consequences of building a system where instructors can move from the traditional principles of inclusive education to the Relational Inclusion model. While some of these policy consequences have been considered in the context of ODeL, these can inform HE policy considerations as well.

One consequence for policy is that universal inclusive standards cannot be decided as regulatory bases. Instead, policies that instructors can interpret in relation to a particular student and instructor by cultural and contextual factors must be drawn up. This would provide the flexibility and convey the expectations that instructors can and must engage students in the development of pedagogy. Further flexibility, and therefore more administrative tasks, will require additional changes to assist members in the inclusive student walk in promoting relatively inclusive settings and programmes

that may affect several aspects of instructors' work, including their workload and their instructor-to-student ratios.

These policy implications do not suggest the removal by authorities of central regulation. Instead, a central regulation should evaluate how these principles are adhered to and to propose improvements to specific situations, taking context and participants into consideration. More flexible regulation, rather than universal standards of inclusion, would enable instructors and students with disabilities to create student and context-specific integration practices at the level of the individual ODeL centres. The regulation focused on Relational Inclusion principles would measure how those principles are updated and ensure evaluation and on-going programme revision. To support education providers, ongoing professional development and formative evaluation of the programme, students, instructors, managers and regulatory authorities must work together. These efforts can also be supported by current inclusive regulation in HE.

A second policy implication is more rigorous programs for early childhood instructors. Some suggestions include the addition of a strong theoretical component to education curricula including models for disability theory and practice, responsiveness to valued skills and relationship ontology. The advantage of regulating the education of practitioners and providing in-depth theoretical training is that it can enable inclusive learning, which is context, culture, and the respondent.

A third implication of policy is that instructors should be given the freedom to establish closer relations with the students and families with whom they work in order to build relationally inclusive pedagogy in order to support skills. Several factors currently prevent many instructors from being able to engage in more frequent and detailed interactions with students and parents, such as working hours financing, pupil/teacher ratios and professional development resources. These are factors which can be regulated in policy without breaking the flexibility that centres need to create their unique inclusive environment.

In addition, there has to be further theorisation about the ability of young disabled students to contribute to decisions on the reasonableness of their valued functions. While this question has been partially addressed here, consideration is necessary to examine how the relationships between the different system and participants

collectively contribute to the proper functioning of all collective members. This research suggests that as part of a team that assesses a reasonable function for its students, identification of key stakeholders in the process is important; the observation and analysis of their roles will further develop this idea and contribute to the theory and practice development.

Reframing inclusive education to enhance the students with disabilities' opportunity to work to achieve valuable and reasonable functions through related practices may lead to the development of many different practices. It will improve as long as it expands students' skills in achieving their valued and reasonable functions. The derived practices of inclusive education must be observed, interpreted, analysed and continuously assessed by instructors, students and key stakeholders to see how the abilities of students are being expanded with this model.

Furthermore, the capability approach could contribute greatly to the curriculum content definition process. The skills approach therefore suggests that an inclusive deliberative process must be developed in which all voices – those of students, teachers, university management and staff, politicians and society as a whole – can be considered under the principles of equity and diversity. Moreover, the programme design will not be autocratic with a set of predefined closed skills for use in all graduate curricula. General ideas can also be reinterpreted in conjunction with the desires, expectations and features of a particular educational setting.

Reflecting on TDT has interesting implications as well. It is also important to use the TDT to examine the understanding of teaching, motivation and external influences in student engagement. How can complexity theory be a thinking process, a device for understanding student commitment as a 'dynamic and non-hierarchical network, in which the variables are distinctive but then associated? This is unquestionably the situation exclusive to the psycho-social impacts as they appear in the system. For instance, how students react to an instructor's enthusiastic teaching relies on their desires, foundation and character. Essentially, the inspirations and desires of the students will impact the connections they structure.

The system additionally functions admirably for thinking about the focal component of the structure, the student's understanding of being locked in. As previously discussed in the TDT, the various components of engagement are subject to one another,

interlinked instead of discrete and detached. Moreover, to portray the entire structure as an interconnected system neglects to perceive that there is a prevailing course of impact from the forerunners to a commitment to the results.

Regarding the Transactional Distance Theory (TDT), the review student commitment and engagement in any learning as a psycho-social procedure is affected by institutional and individual factors, and entrenched within a more extensive social setting, incorporates the socio-cultural point of view with a consideration of the mental and behaviour perspectives. The theory does not simply incorporate those components inside an organisation's control, in this way guaranteeing a significantly richer and more profound comprehension of the student's understanding and experience when they are involved.

The TDA points to the important role of a high structure of inclusion though dialogue that can be developed in these students as a necessary approach to decolonised inclusive student walk. This would slow the decline in the attitudes of current systems towards disability that are apparent in many researches. Many students had experienced their own academic experience and promoted the use of manipulation and precise language in the development of practical inclusive framework suggest that applying TDT can be highly successful

As a direct result of this research into the redesign of inclusive approaches and curriculum, we think that TDT is a very useful exploratory framework for HE looking at providing online education courses.

However, it is important to admit that the TDT excludes every predecessor and result of dedication or commitment by students and may include some coverage of the fundamental and psycho-social implications on one hand and of the proximal and distal results on the other. In any case, the absence of a distinction between antecedents, engagement and results is the predominant constraint of TDT. From here on, the designed framework explains these distinctions and features the essential bearing of impact, in this way encouraging a common comprehension of the intricate procedure of student engagement and empowering the diverse research viewpoints to be woven together.

It makes sense to state that no single research later on theory considers all facets of this complex construct. Yet, by beginning from a position that recognizes the staggering phenomena and forms, and the perplexing relations between them, the emphasis can be on building a more prominent comprehension of one component without precluding the necessity of securing the others. The clearer our comprehension of student engagement and the impacts on it, the better situated we will be to address the issues of students, to elevate the student involvement, and to improve the instructive results.

7.11 Conclusion

This research offers a Student Walk as well as a decolonised model of inclusive education in an ODeL setting by providing extensive empirical evidence that inclusive education is compatible with mainstream African culture and society. The suggestive pillars of inclusivity, in particular, are therefore seen to be not insurmountable. One overall solution is to allow the use of inclusive education to promote the decolonial movement and to reject the coloniality of expertise, authority and life in areas of inclusive education. It may also be troublesome, as it may reflect the so-called innocence of colonists. However, eventually, it indicates repercussions for science and education.

CHAPTER 8

STUDY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Summaries of all chapters

Chapter One presented the introduction, the background to the study, the South African higher education (HE) sector, as well as students and instructors around the call for the decolonisation of education, particularly in institutions of higher learning. It also introduced the problem statement, research questions as well as the purpose of and rationale for the study. It also presents the flow of the chapters in the thesis.

Chapter Two presented the literature review as a means of laying a firm basis for the study. It depicted the context of student support in ODeL. It also explained a critical set of student support activities and the interactive processes that are intended to support and facilitate the learning process from an inclusive point within HE.

Chapter Three unpacked the main concepts that foreground this research study. These are decolonisation and transformation. It also exposed the linkage between inclusion on one hand, and decolonization and transformation on the other.

The conceptual and theoretical framework was covered in Chapter Four. It explored the adoption of two frameworks, namely the capabilities approach and the Transaction Distance Learning theory to position findings that are progressively substantial, satisfactory and appropriate to the theoretical constructs.

Chapter Five elucidated the research design and methodologies employed in carrying out the study. It presented the research orientation, sample, data collection and analysis procedure. It also explained how the rigor of data analysis was ensured as well as the ethical issues that were adhered to during the study.

The research findings related to the research questions were presented in Chapter Six. The section specifically presented themes that emerged from the data generated through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with the participants. These themes attempt to answer the research question.

Chapter Seven is the researcher's scholarly contribution that suggests the improvement of student support for students with disabilities.

The last chapter of the study is the summary of each chapter and the implications related to theoretical frameworks. Areas requiring further studies stemming from this one are also recommended.

8.2 Empirical and practical implications

The core implication of this study is that institutions of higher learning must undertake institutional change and transformation that will make them inclusive spaces conductive for both learning and teaching by people with disabilities. Given current discussions and debate on decolonizing education, the next stage involves discussions on how to reform institutions of learning across the country so that they become inclusive communities. Furthermore, to promote the understanding of academics and professionals, it is necessary to consider these developments in both local and international contexts.

At policy level, this demands that ODeL service providers prepare for successful production and implementation of human capital in the provision of quality learner support. Although this analysis showed that support to students with disabilities is restricted by the faculty's dependence on temporary workers (teaching assistants), future studies may review interactions between both the skills of staff and how that helps learners engagement in HE. Accordingly, a strong government-led policy needs to be developed to prepare lecturers/academics to be able to offer physical, financial, psychological and emotional assistance to their trainees and cultivate quality support systems.

The study also attests to the various degrees of inclusiveness. To realize this, specific players such as students and lecturers can be empowered; however, educational institutions and policymakers at the highest level can have a significant impact on academic inclusiveness. One emerging concern is that inclusion will contribute to improving and empowering change, although others take personal and professional advancement into account. The common issue provides an in-depth view of the complex ways in which changes in personal and professional practice and the

establishment of student communities across higher education can support the emergence of inclusive transformations at the institutional level through theoretically, conceptually and practically examining of social and cultural phenomena at a higher level.

In a more inclusive ODeL environment, the members responsible for preparing and coordinating a course should explore their personalities, interests, and beliefs and how they can change the way they function in the class. Even teaching staff should learn different identities, prerequisites and values so that the course can be grounded in several perspectives.

The study revealed that the extent of diversity can influence inclusive participation and practice within the ODeL's student experience, teaching and learning and environment rather than individually limited characteristics. There is a tendency to focus on the equality of groups of students or to assume that inclusion only relates to students with a disability when considering inclusion and integration practices. Findings demonstrates that factors associated with this equality are often driven by compliance and can be restricted either in that they mask the complexity of multiple identities for students or lead to partial solutions that highlight 'need' as opposed to the entitlement of all students.

The study has identified the difficulties faced by students with disabilities in their engagement with higher education. Moreover, it offers the opportunity to enhance staff pedagogies by engaging educators in a positive manner. Greater higher education inclusiveness not only benefits students with disabilities but it also benefits their educators who can broaden their understanding of their professional practice by reviewing and changing their teaching methods. In addition to identifying practical ways to support students with disabilities in teaching methods, this study also guides teachers on a range of support practices on campuses and off-campus. Furthermore, it explores opportunities for them to create their own experience whilst at the same time frequently rendering more inclusive approaches within their tasks.

Referring to what decolonising inclusively means to the mind (Wa Thiong'o, 1981), the study points out that people are abstracted from their reality through the inadequate congruence between the colonial education and the reality of Africa. It observed that neo-colonialism perpetuates writing in foreign languages. This research argues that

the inability of South Africa's higher education to address curriculum and inclusion creates decolonisation crises within the system itself and can therefore not adequately address inclusive issues. Therefore, the term ‘curriculum’ (or its prevailing conceptualization) is reconsidered objectively in this study. It requires justifying decolonisation as well as the value of a modern curriculum and alternative solutions to curriculum decolonisation. The proposed solutions should not preclude one another. This aspect of the study does not aim to provide simple answers to complex questions but rather to open ways of (re)thinking the university curriculum decolonisation inclusively.

In the context of South Africa, the greatest challenge for the neoliberal order is that education in South Africa sustains and maintains asymmetrical power relations in higher educational institutions. This thesis also suggests that the presupposed ‘reasonable’ competition between students denies and nullifies the enduring disparity between students owing to their social and historical circumstances as normative consequences. The neo-liberal desire for international prosperity contributes to the removal of Africans, a systemic effort at colonialism and puts society on the fringes of higher education.

The thesis contends that these developments in the marginalisation of Africa implicitly rationalize normal coloniality and that all students ought to accept the current world paradigm. However, it is a profound alienation. An ideal education, as suggested in this study, should not ignore domestic conditions and contextual nuances that preserve traditions in unpoliced competition. This thesis suggests that higher education will consciously aim to preserve African independence using specific university principles and standards compatible with democratic equality.

At the cost of gaining political fair status that represents the people's historical and socio-cultural condition, the University may not value free-market capitalism and globalization. The University must not prize free-market capitalism and globalism at the expense of achieving democratic equality that is responsive to the historical and socio-cultural situatedness of the people.

Instead of a common political context, the thesis thus notes that decolonisation can be considered purely theoretically. It included decolonisation, which should not be restricted solely to the distinction between Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism, but

instead would identify and transcend indigenous failure. Decolonisation would be a requirement for knowledge democratisation worldwide. There the researcher suggests that decolonisation should contribute to democratic dialogue and open discourse about the essence and content of education where education is important to people's needs and contradicts the traditional neo-liberal structures of social development.

For a university to fulfil its role in democracy, it is essential for the university to remain non-paternalistic and strongly connected with the life experience of the social structure in which it continues to exist, to pragmatically disrupt the obstacles to the democratic prosperity of people in society and to suggest approaches to transformation. As a democratic system is also a social concept, the university needs to tackle the substantive difficulties of human experience rather than just general ones by responding to oppressive structures that are unique in different societies. Thus, the study argues that a university must take the public viewpoint without requiring that these opinions be modelled into political and cultural perspectives which characterise higher education.

To do that, an inclusive discourse needs to take place in which the historically ignored cultural identities and epistemologies are recognised as they are. The study argues that besides openness and dialogue, structural barriers to higher education should be removed to accommodate such a type of education. The need for universities to reach the marginalised indigenous epistemologies is equally essential for making higher education democratic as the power imbalances in relations under the prevailing hegemonic neo-liberal global order make it difficult for indigeneity to reclaim its legitimate place in academic spaces in isolation.

The thesis argues that universities are a theoretical double-edged weapon that can either perpetuate the inequality of culture as a unit of communities or accomplish a political transition of a community by being focused on the concreteness of local populations as a potent agent of decolonisation.

Finally, the decolonisation of curricula must give its stakeholders space to question the socio-cultural circumstances of individuals and to meet African social intellectual and inclusive material needs. The process of decolonisation is, therefore, a vital task of African indigenous communities and the development of information and

capitalisation. Ideally, decoloniality includes a rigorous analysis of any possibility, without excessive bias or hostility to other perspectives, as valid equivalent artefacts of knowledge. The study suggests, however, that this change is pursued through the financial and intellectual capital of African political leadership and inclusive higher education.

8.3. Implications for further study

It would be interesting to find out how to decolonise the framework as a rationale for teaching and learning which is a huge challenge, and how much it would assist students to circumnavigate contested and complex knowledge spaces on their way to understanding international worldviews of colonialism, indigenous worldviews, contemporary challenges and future goals.

It would also intrigue to explore resistance to the western inscription of knowledge, and their adoption of indigenous knowledge. This would explore the limits of current language and discourse for the navigating of a curriculum which is localized.

The rationale for focusing on politics and the role of government entities in the production of indigenous knowledge, regulations and studies is a cardinal question to ponder. Most of our education systems are regulated by government initiative which implicates and complicates the grounds for teaching both indigenous and non-indigenous curricula altogether.

More research is expected to further investigate the connections within the structure to fortify our understanding of every component. One specific area needing more prominent research in inclusive higher education is the role of feelings in student commitment and engagement.

One can easily state that a significant part of the emphasis has been on behaviour and insight and, while the importance of connections and the more extensive feeling of having a wider sense of belonging are perceived, little consideration has been given to students' increasingly prompt emotional reactions to their learning. For instance, does the restlessness and anxiety that numerous first-year students experience stem from different components of commitment – their behaviour and their psychological and cognitive methodologies? The proposed framework of the study ventures into that

emphasis on smaller masses, including single organisations, as it is obvious that expansive speculation of the student experience is not recommended. The utilization of top-down subjective strategies is prescribed to capture the assorted variety of experience, as well as longitudinal work that looks at the dynamic procedure that is student engagement. In particular, the framework emphasises that there are various roads for improving student engagement and that the duty regarding this capacity building lies with all groups: the student, the instructor, the organisation and the government.

Other research would also be to interrogate institutions on the way the propositions of curriculum decolonisation and inclusivity would instead render students captives of individualization. In such a rapidly changing world and environment, the intelligence and knowledge of forebearers and how such information is transformed and internalized as reflected from history would continuously appear to be current and relevant.

8.4. Personal practitioner reflections

Inclusive and decolonised practices should often view learning as a long-lasting process. Although admission, assignments and activities require cut-off times, the social activity of learning proceeds a long way past learning environment. Inclusiveness is likewise seen in a political focal point for individuals to be lifelong citizens.

As observed above, these key aspects that would depend on whether a practitioner within higher education can be regarded as a collection to support curriculum decoloniality, control proficient and individual learning. These aspects are woven all through my work on inclusive practices so that faculty and network individuals act in ways that assist students to feel the enthusiasm of enrolment and learning and strive to achieve their dreams.

Specifically, inclusive practices mean understanding the limit, or called desirable difficulty, to adapt viably for the student population at the learning environments. The more the college networks or large university communities work at supporting a wide range of students, the better the decolonised curricula and appraisals can be created.

Likewise, building quality curricula and subsequent syllabi with clear learning targets (changed periods of Bloom's taxonomy) and participating in discourse creates learning places with community-oriented situations of direction. Enrolment in higher education has always been a difficult and tedious process while learning itself does not make things any better. Nevertheless, it is acceptable for students to find all this uncomfortable at times. However, access and curriculum relevance can function as tools to simplify these. Student-focused or learner-centred situations are noteworthy components to address these challenges since teachers need to discover which learning aspects the students understood.

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Appendices

Interview schedule

Codes titles	Date	Times
PSM	15 April 2019	10: 00 – 11:30
P	15 April 2019	14:00 – 15:30
MC	16 April 2019	10: 00 – 11:30
PSF	16 April 2019	14:00 – 15:30
B	17 April 2019	10: 00 – 11:30
PD	17 April 2019	14:00 – 15:30
PSM	18 April 2019	10: 00 – 11:30
	Staff	
AR1	22 April 2019	10: 00 – 11:30
AR2	22 April 2019	14:00 – 15:30
TA	23 April 2019	10: 00 – 11:30
AD	23 April 2019	

Information sheet

Division of Disability Studies
Department of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences
Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Cape Town

TITLE OF PhD STUDY: **Exploring the nature of an inclusive student walk in the context of decolonisation to enhance learner support for students with disabilities in Open Distance Learning**

.

1. Who is the research team?

As Olwethu Sipuka a PhD Candidate for Disability Studies at the University of Cape Town's Health Sciences Faculty, I will conduct the research.

2. Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this research is to examine underpinning aspects of decolonisation in the Student Walk Model and identify support service needs of open distance learning disabled students. In order to fulfil this purpose, views and perceptions of disabled students on the importance, availability, and accessibility of student support services will be investigated.

The purpose of the proposed study is also to expand understandings of 'decolonisation' of HE institutions by engaging in a discourse that is inclusive of students with disabilities. The study aims to determine the relevance of the support services for UNISA undergraduate students with disabilities in the context of the UNISA's Student Walk model.

In investigating conceivable responses to this inquiry, the researcher endeavours to bring decolonisation and inclusive education in HE into a discussion with each other. This will be done first by sketching out ways by which inclusive education

can be studied from a decolonial point of view. In the wake of thinking about an Afrocentric inclusive education as a component of decolonisation, the researcher at that point contend (with a few provisos) that inclusive education, if cast as a critical education project or a basic instruction endeavour, might be tackled in the quest for decolonizing education and training. The study proposes a few considerations about the ramifications for research and inclusive education in HE. The study flags an intriguing and progressing epistemic journey as opposed to a goal, and it is trusted that this work will encourage conversations on this vital subject of diversity, curriculum, pedagogy and many other aspects of teaching in HE from the decolonisation point of view.

3. Why are you being invited to take part in the study?

In this study, I will invite participants who are staff members that deal with the Unisa student walk; I will also invite students with disabilities who have experience of the student walk.

Participants who agree to take part in the study, will be requested to sign an Informed Consent Form. The study is limited to disabled students and support managers who are actively guided by the Student Walk. It focuses on an Open Distance e-Learning university. The scope of this study is limited to students who are in constant interaction with the student walk model as well its managers within UNISA as a leading ODL University in South Africa and Africa at large and specifically, taps into disabled leaners as well as the overall perception to inclusive leaners support.

All the offices of the participants are in Pretoria. The researcher will use the information sheet to recruit participants. Two weeks' notice shall be given to participants prior to the interviews. The participants shall be allowed to decide the convenient time for them to be interviewed, and the interviews shall take place in their offices.

Where the targeted participants have other research commitments, their deputies will be invited to participate. The study will ensure that no additional burden is

placed on the participants in this study. Participants may also withdraw from the study at any stage if necessary. There will be no repercussions for research participants.

The process of voluntary participation will go with the understanding that respondents are allowed to stop the interview at any time they deem fit without any resultant disadvantage. It would be preferred that as the respondents are public figures, that their names are reflected on the study however based on the choice of the respondents they may remain anonymous.

All information which is collected will be stored in a safe place so that information remain private and confidential. To ensure validity of the data, participants will be requested to read the interview transcript to establish whether they agree with the themes that the researcher has identified.

4. Are there any benefits for staff or for the organization for taking part in this research?

The researcher where necessary will provide refreshments for some of the data collection sessions and reimburse participants for costs incurred to the meeting venues.

5. What are the risks and discomforts for participants taking part in this research?

Although no negative consequences for participants are envisaged in this study, in the unlikely event participants are negatively affected by the study, the researcher will be in a position to refer to the affected participants to appropriate professionals for assistance. The well-being of the participants come first.

6. Who will see the information which is collected about participants during the study?

The researcher will maintain high level of confidentiality during the time the study is being conducted with participants given time to further make correction on information provided.

7. What will happen when the study is over?

The raw data will be kept in a safe place known only to the researcher, who shall conduct the study in a confidential manner (Creswell, 1994:166). The researcher will also be required to get ethical clearance from the University of South Africa as his research is on the university student support systems.

In terms of dissemination, the researcher will disseminate the research findings through a variety of means including but not limited to a publication of a thesis, conference presentations and proceedings, and journal articles.

8. Who do I speak to (or contact) if I have any questions about the study?

The research has been approved by the Faculty of Health Sciences, Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC): Floor E53, Room 46, Old Main Building, Groote Schuur Hospital, Observatory, 7925

Feel free to contact me if you wish to have more information about the study or if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant.

Olwethu Sipuka
Cell: 078 456 1411
Email: osipuka@gmail.com

HREC ethics letter

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
Faculty of Health Sciences
Human Research Ethics Committee

Room E33-46 Old Main Building
Groote Schuur Hospital
Observatory 7925
Telephone (021) 406 6495
Email: [illegible]
Website: www.health.uct.ac.za/fhs/research/humanethics/forms

16 January 2019

HREC REF: 002/2018

Prof Theresa Lorenzo
Health & Rehab
F-floor, CHS

Dear Prof Lorenzo

PROJECT TITLE: EXPLORING THE NATURE OF AN INCLUSIVE STUDENT WALK IN THE ERA OF DECOLONIZATION TO ENHANCE LEARNER SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING (PhD Candidate - Mr O. Siguka)

Thank you for submitting your response to the Faculty of Health Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee received on 06 December 2018.

It is a pleasure to inform you that the HREC has **formally approved** the above-mentioned study subject to the following:

The HREC are confused by reference to advising participants the confidentiality couldn't be maintained (the kind of warning one gives to focus group participants) since the focus groups have been taken out and this seems not to apply. We also think he should add more description of the specific type of harms that might come out of the interviews, and specifically what kinds of services are available.

Approval is granted for one year until the 30 January 2020.

Please submit a progress form, using the standardised Annual Report Form if the study continues beyond the approval period. Please submit a Standard Closure form if the study is completed within the approval period.
(Forms can be found on our website: www.health.uct.ac.za/fhs/research/humanethics/forms)

Please quote the HREC REF in all your correspondence.

Please note that the ongoing ethical conduct of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

Please note that for all studies approved by the HREC, the principal investigator must obtain appropriate institutional approval, where necessary, before the research may occur.

The HREC acknowledge that the student Olwethu Siguka will also be involved in this study.

[illegible]

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR M BLOCKMAN
CHAIRPERSON, FHS HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Federal Wide Assurance Number: FWA00001637.
Institutional Review Board (IRB) number: IRB0001938
This serves to confirm that the University of Cape Town Human Research Ethics Committee complies to the Ethics Standards for Clinical Research with a new drug in patients, based on the Medical Research Council (MRC-SA), Food and Drug Administration (FDA-USA), International Convention on Harmonisation Good Clinical Practice (ICH GCP), South African Good Clinical Practice Guidelines (DoH 2006), based on the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry Guidelines (ABPI), and Declaration of Helsinki (2013) guidelines.
The Human Research Ethics Committee granting this approval is in compliance with the ICH Harmonised Tripartite Guidelines E6: Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice (CPMP/ICH/135/95) and FDA Code Federal Regulation Part 50, 56 and 312.