

Accessibility issues and challenges facing students living with disabilities in institutions of higher education and training: The case of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal's Pietermaritzburg campus.

By

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## Abstract

Institutions of higher education formally provide platforms for individuals to develop their talents and skills. However, for this to be achieved, individuals require access to relevant resources. This is not the case for students with disabilities as they face challenges of accessibility. With the case study of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Pietermaritzburg campus, this research interrogates the challenges faced by students with disabilities. Assuming that the participation and representation of students with disabilities is important for these challenges to be resolved, this study explores governance arrangement that will create a conducive environment for students with disabilities. This is a qualitative research study that relies on both secondary and primary sources. Secondary sources consisted of academic journal articles, books and online material that address the themes of this study. Primary sources consisted of in-depth interviews and questionnaires, government documents, and documents from South African Universities, including the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher interviewed a total of fifteen participants from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Pietermaritzburg campus. The study used the following theoretical and conceptual tools: The study conceptualizes people living with disabilities as a minority group. As a remedy to political marginalization, this study argues for a consociational democratic student governance. This study utilized the accessibility model to probe different factors affecting accessibility. The accessibility model is composed of four factors: physical accessibility, perceptual accessibility, financial accessibility and social accessibility. The major conclusion of this study is that the majority of participants interviewed do face challenges of accessibility at University of KwaZulu-Natal's Pietermaritzburg campus. The challenges faced by students with disabilities are: physical, social, financial and perceptual. The major accessibility challenge is the physical environment of the institution as well as the lack of support for students with disabilities from some of the academic staff. The study also discovered that there are students with disabilities who enrol in courses as a result of their disability and not their passion. The Disability Support Unit also appeared as one of the facilities which partially hinder access to information. The lack of engagements from the Student Representative Council with students with disabilities was also seen as a reason for the continuous experience of challenges by students with disabilities. The study recommends awareness campaigns to deal with social and perceptual challenges. Furthermore, the study recommends a consociational governance structure that will ensure that issues facing students with disabilities are fairly represented in all University governance structures.

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation titled — “Accessibility issues and challenges facing students living with disabilities in institutions of higher education and training: The case of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal” is my original work and has not been submitted in any form for any degree or diploma at any institution of higher learning. Where use was made of the works of other authors, these have been acknowledged in the text.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Miss Nompilo Nonzuzo Nene

As the supervisor of this candidate, I have approved this dissertation for submission.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Dr K. Mtshali

## DEDICATION

A special dedication to my mum (Thembisile Crescentia Hadebe), I just want to Thank you MaHadebe. I am all that I am because you loved and never stopped supporting me in all my endeavours this one is for you.

To my late grandmother, this is dedicated to you too MaThusi, I had wished that you would live till the day I would be able to make you enjoy the fruits of your children, however God had other plans besides the ones we had.. ‘ULale umphumlela wafuthi nokukhanya kwaphakade kuk’khanyele Amen’ (May your soul rest in peace and eternal light shine upon you). To my late Aunt Thandi Nene, I had wished you to see me graduate for my Masters but in heaven I am hoping to have made you proud once again.

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>AGM</b>	Annual General Meeting
<b>ACPF</b>	African Child Policy Forum
<b>ANC</b>	African National Congress
<b>CBD</b>	Central Business District
<b>CRPD</b>	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>CSRC</b>	Central Student Representative Council
<b>DA</b>	Democratic Alliance
<b>DASA</b>	Differently Abled Student Association
<b>DHET</b>	Department of Higher Education and Training
<b>DSU</b>	Disability Support Unit
<b>DSRA</b>	Department of Student Resident Affairs
<b>DoE</b>	Department of Education
<b>DPSA</b>	Disabled People South Africa
<b>DUT</b>	Durban University of Technology
<b>EFA</b>	Education for All
<b>EFF</b>	Economic Freedom Fighters
<b>ERH</b>	Eleanor Russell Hall
<b>HEDSA</b>	Higher Education Disability Services Association
<b>IFP</b>	Inkatha Freedom Party
<b>JAWS</b>	Job Access with speech
<b>LAN</b>	Local Area Network
<b>LSRC</b>	Local Student Representative Council
<b>NEC</b>	National Executive Commission
<b>NPO</b>	Non-Profit Organization

<b>NSFAS</b>	National Students Financial Aid Scheme
<b>PA</b>	Personal Assistant
<b>PMB</b>	Pietermaritzburg
<b>RMS</b>	Risk Management Services
<b>RSA</b>	Republic of South Africa
<b>SAHE</b>	South African Higher Education
<b>SASCO</b>	South African Students Congress
<b>SPN</b>	Scholarly Personal Narrative
<b>SRC</b>	Student Representative Council
<b>SWD</b>	Students with Disabilities
<b>UDM</b>	United Democratic Movement
<b>UKZN</b>	University of KwaZulu-Natal
<b>UKZNP</b>	University of Kwa Zulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg Campus
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
<b>WOB</b>	William O'Brien
<b>WITS</b>	University of Witwatersrand

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## Chapter One

### Background and the purpose of the study

#### 1. Introduction

This introductory chapter has the following sections. Firstly, it will provide the background and outlined the research problem. Secondly, the chapter will also list the research questions and research objectives that the researcher sought to fulfil. Finally, the first chapter will discuss the research methodology and research methods that will be utilized in conducting the research study.

#### 2. Background and outline of research problem:

According to the Independent Living Institute (2012) people living with disabilities have long faced challenges and discrimination dating back to the times of apartheid. After the democratization of the South African state many had hoped for a better life and a true sense of inclusion. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa's Bill of Rights give people living with disabilities substantive rights which includes the right to corrective (affirmative) action to overcome the effects of past discrimination. While the post-apartheid state opened many doors, the question is whether doors were opened for all. While students with disabilities have access to tertiary institutions, they still face many challenges. The purpose of this dissertation is to interrogate the challenges faced by students living with disabilities at South Africa's institutions of higher learning and training, in particular, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Pietermaritzburg campus.

#### 3. Statement of the problem

The University of Kwa-Zulu Natal is one of the institutions of higher learning and training which are very much honoured around the globe. However, this does not make the institution perfect because there are problems of accessibility which the university has not successfully been addressed. In particular this research deals with physical, perceptual, financial and social accessibility. Given the issues of accessibility, this study is interested in the role of students with disabilities in governance structures. The research will question the extent to which the liberal majoritarian governance can accommodate students with disabilities.

#### **4. Rationale for the study**

The primary reason to the choice of the research topic is that as a student who has been within the university for a few years, I feel that there are issues, relating to disabilities, which have been overlooked by the University. While there is research on accessibility for students with disabilities, existing studies have not tried to link these issues to governance.

##### **4.1. Research Problem**

The research problem for this study is whether there is a relationship between the inability to resolve issues of accessibility facing people with disabilities and the governance structure, in this particular case, the student governance structure.

##### **4.2. Main objective**

What this research paper would like to achieve in its execution is that for the University to be aware that there is actually a problem that exist within the Pietermaritzburg campus specifically with reference to accessibility. Further what the research study would like to achieve is that for all those in decision making capabilities and positions that there is an importance of the involvement of all concerned parties before decisions can be taken more especially if it is a diverse society such as the disability society as each ones needs and requirements are different from the others and there shouldn't be assumptions that students are coping due to no reactions to whatever may be happening in their environments.

##### **4.3. Specific Objectives**

- Investigate the challenges facing students with disabilities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg Campus.
- Investigate as to whether, is there any sort of representation of Student with Disabilities within the Student Representative Council of University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg Campus.
- Look into the functioning of the Student Representative Council in solving student matters more especially disabled students.
- To look at what is the role of the Student Representative Council in ensuring that the challenges and issues facing Student with Disabilities are resolved.
- Depending on the role of the Student Representative Council in resolving Student with Disabilities issues, how can that standard be maintained or improved.

#### **4.4. Research Questions**

1. What are accessibility challenges faced by students living with disabilities at the University of Kwa Zulu-Natal's Pietermaritzburg campus?
2. How has the Student Representative Council tried to resolve these challenges?
3. How are students living with disabilities represented in the Student Representative Council?
4. Does the representative structure of the Student Representative Council enhance or hinder the resolution of the challenges faced by students living with disabilities?
5. If the representative structure of the Student Representative Council hinders the resolution of these challenges, how can this structure be improved?

#### **5. Research methodology and methods:**

This is a qualitative study. Qualitative research is research that is completed through creating an interactive relationship between people, spaces and objects (Ezzy, 2002). The qualitative approach is the most suitable approach because it has methods that are specified on interpreting people's feelings and experiences rather than quantification and measurement quantitative (Terre Blance, Durheim & Painter, 2006).

This research used both primary and secondary data. Secondary data consisted of books, journal articles and other published information dealing with the theme of this research. The primary data for this research was collected through questionnaires and interviews, which took place during the beginning of the second semester when the interviewees were available. The population for this project was the students of UKZN (PMB campus) living with disabilities. Interviews were conducted on students with disabilities from different colleges which consisted of the college of Humanities, college of Science, Agriculture and Engineering, College of Law and Management and the College of Health Sciences within the institution. The research used purposive sampling to select participants. Furthermore, the sample size of the research was fifteen (15) students, split proportionally between the different disabilities found within the student population of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Pietermaritzburg campus and the different genders.

In addition to the research methodology the research paper made use of Scholarly personal narrative (SPN), in the generation of data. Heidelberger and Uecker (2009), explained SPN as a research methodology which offers the researcher the opportunity to go beyond the

scientific jargon. This research methodology therefore seeks to share knowledge of how things had been since the beginning of time. SPN the researchers avoid giving answers instead they share their experiences and listen to experiences of others in hope that they will be of assistance to others and further assist in constructing new knowledge. When analysing the data for the researcher will firstly conduct interviews, record them and also transcribe the response from the interviewees. Then lastly the data received was labelled and coded according to whatever themes that arose from the responses given from the interviews.

## **6. Chapter Outline**

The first chapter is an introductory chapter. It provided the background and outlined the research problem. The chapter also listed the research questions and research objectives. Finally, the first chapter discussed research methodology and research methods. The second chapter is a literature review chapter. The third chapter articulated the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that are used by the study. Chapter four discusses the research methodology and research methods that are used by this study. Chapter five presents the data collected. Using the chosen conceptual and theoretical framework, chapter six analysed the collected data. Chapter seven is a concluding chapter.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

#### 2. Introduction

The previous chapter provided background, outline of the research problem and research questions that will guide this study. This chapter will critically discuss existing literature on themes addressed by this research. This chapter will firstly commence with the discussion of what literature review is. Secondly it will discuss the role of literature review in social science research, and lastly, the chapter will provide a critical discussion of the contested concept of disability.

##### 2.1. Definition of disability

Disability is a topic which is very much debated and also one which is a concern amongst citizens of South Africa as it affects all individuals either directly or indirectly. With the above being said it is of importance to note that there are many definitions of the concept of disability. This is a result of different understanding of what a disability is. Liebman (1976) defines disability as a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities.). Furthermore, there are different types of disabilities which include physical, mental, intellectual, and sensory disabilities. Physical disability is defined as a restriction on a person's physical operational, mobility, dexterity or stamina. Other forms of physical disabilities include deficiencies which limit other aspects of daily living, such as respiratory disorders, blindness, epilepsy and sleeping disorders. Mental disabilities and intellectual disabilities are constituted by a wide range of mental health conditions and disorders that affect ones mood, thinking and behaviour. Moreover, there are also vision impairments, which is any diagnosed condition of the eye or visual system that cannot be corrected within normal limits.

Finally, sensory disabilities refer to a disability of the senses (e.g. sight, hearing), they also include mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders and addictive behaviours.

##### 2.2. The treatment of people with disabilities in history

Societies in which we live in have a major role in the way we end up thinking and carry out ourselves as members of the community and the society at large. Pritchard (1963) notes that history is full of examples of disabled people worldwide where they are mocked, slaughtered,

and left to die or condemned to permanent exclusion in asylums. In many of the African societies having a child with a disability is seen as a curse. This then leads to parents, more especially mothers of these children acting in an irrational manner. For example, in many societies, mostly African societies, having a child with Albinism was seen as a curse and punishment from God for the sins committed by the parent and they are termed “*isishawa*” meaning punishment. The discrimination against people with Albinism can lead to ritual murder of these individuals (Cruz-Inigo 2011). Kisannji (1993 cited Anang 1992:5), the ancient Greeks “abandoned their disabled babies on hillsides to die while early Chinese left their disabled people to drown in rivers.” Therefore, with the information given above it is clear that a person with a disability was seen as something which needed to be ridden off and which was not wanted in society, thereby further meaning that their rights to life and dignity which are more important in one’s life were actually deprived of such.

However, people with disabilities were not only treated in an inhuman manner but there were incidences where they have and are treated in a more humane manner. For example, Anang (1992) makes mention of the positive perceptions illustrated by Egypt towards the blind where they were given an opportunity to what is referred to as “gainful employment”. This did not only trigger an interest in the country to know more about eye diseases but also created an open mind to other countries about disability. As a result, countries such as India then promoted the use of prosthetic and artificial eyes. Many more countries such as Belgium then adopted a tradition of caring for the mentally ill. It was then that the notion of special schools for the disabled lost their popularity and a more inclusive educational system was created.

In addition, this can be said to be much more prevalent in the times of oppression more specifically if one examines the context of the Republic of South Africa (RSA), during the times of apartheid one of the key characteristics of the government of the time was the prevalence of gross human rights violations (rights of the “Blacks”) where only a certain kind of race group was given the opportunity to enjoy the privileges of life (“Whites”).

However, with the change in times and regimes of government, meant there will be a change in the statutes, and with change of statutes it meant that everyone now is able to enjoy all their rightful rights and are able to enjoy all that comes with life including persons with disabilities. In South Africa for example with the introduction of democracy there was also an introduction of the constitution of the republic which enshrines rights such as the right to life

and that of right to dignity which was only something which was only enjoyed by a certain class of the population. Arguably so there are still cases here and there where one will find that there was an abuse of any sort of a person with a disability but now there are organisations to which persons with disabilities can turn to like in South Africa there is what is known as Disable People South Africa (DPSA). Disable People South Africa is a non-profit organisation (NPO). They are also a democratic cross-disability body made up of member organisations of disabled people within South Africa. They are also recognised as the national assembly of disabled people by Disabled People International. The organisations mandate is to ensure that there is development and integration of disabled people into all spheres of life in South Africa (Disable People South Africa, 2013).

### **2.3. Disabilities and institutions of higher learning and training**

Before one engages in the discussion of how disability is addressed in institutions of higher learning and training there is a need to first define what is meant by an inclusive education. According to Ajuwon (2008), inclusive education is defined as the philosophy of catering for students with disabilities in general educational settings. From the definition provided above the notion of every child being an equally valued member of the school culture is anchored. Thus, children with disabilities will be able to benefit from learning in a regular classroom, while their peers without disabilities gain from being exposed to children with diverse characteristics, talents and personalities (Ajuwon, 2008).

Different countries provide legislative and policy framework to support inclusive education. To enhance retention and success rates, the South African Higher Education Policy frameworks (the Republics of South Africa, Department of Education 1997, 2001) highlights a renewed interest in broadening access and participation requirements for students with disabilities in higher education. Institutions of higher learning do not only receive people of the same kind that is, being only persons without disabilities, but a variety of people are enrolled in these institutions, this is so as to encourage tolerance amongst the university communities as everyone comes from different backgrounds hence different needs. It is a privilege that within the university environments of the world, people with disabilities are also being accommodated.

The successful accommodation of students with disabilities in institutions of higher education requires the formulation of policies which are to properly state how these students are to be accommodated. Mutanga (2017 cited Corus (2004:15) in reporting that from the small

amount who entre University do face challenges in these institutions. Mutanga (2017) adds that issues of disability are fragmented and also there is an absence of a national policy. Furthermore, Mutanga (2017 cited Matshediso (2007:7) in noting that the challenges faced by those disabled students who are able to entre University are created by the inability of the government to make formalised rights into practical ones. In addition, to the lack of a national policy on disability is that in policies where disability is mentioned there is no clear description of disability in higher education and when it is described it is just not clear. An example of such a framework is the national plan as given by the department of education. One of the reasons for the haziness of disability issues is due to the lack of information of students with disabilities and the exclusionary practices shown towards students with disabilities prior 1994 (Mutanga, 2017). As a result of these practices students with disabilities are therefore expected to fit into an unchanging educational system.

In consideration of the above mentioned statements, the South African government has a number of different framework policies which seek to include students with disabilities into the higher education system. These framework policies will be discussed below and the main arguments will be based on how they aim to make students with disabilities feel included in higher education. The framework policies to be discussed include the South African constitution, the education white paper 3, the national plan for higher education of 2001, the education white paper 6, the white paper for post- school education and training and the 2014 white paper.

It was after the 1994 elections in South Africa that framework policies such as the constitution came to being. The formulation of the constitution was to correct the injustices of the past and also to ensure that those who were once disadvantaged enjoy those rights and privileges which they once did not enjoy.

The South African constitution is the guide of the country in ensuring that all those who reside within the country enjoy full and equal rights and are accommodated as advocated for by the constitution. According to chapter 2 of the constitution, the bill of rights section of the constitution speaks of equality. It is in section 9 (3) under equality which speaks to the non-discrimination of citizens on any basis including disabled persons. Furthermore, the constitution of South Africa also enshrines the right to education for all. This is enshrined in section 29 (b) whereby the constitution clearly states that everyone has the right to further

their education where reasonable measures are put in place, and must be made progressively available and accessible to all (The constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The second policy framework that the South African government put in place for the catering of students with disabilities is the Education white paper 3. According to Ramaahlo (2018), the education white paper 3 is the government's first attempt to address the lack of equity in higher education. In addition Ramaahlo (2018 cited the DoE (1997:14) in noting that it is a Programme for Transforming the Higher Education landscape and was gazetted officially in 1997. The transformation focused in that student with disabilities should not be the responsibility of individual institutions rather that of the entire higher education system (Ramaahlo 2018 cited DoE 1997:7 and FOTIM (2011: 4).

Thirdly, National Plan for Higher Education was released in 2001, and provides limited guidelines for the transformation of institutions and the higher education system (Ramaahlo 2018 cited DHET (2001).

In addition, in catering for students with disabilities in institutions of higher education, the South African government utilises the education white paper 6. In recognition of support for students with disabilities. In its content the Education White Paper 6 recommends regional collaboration between universities when increasing access, participation and throughput of students with disabilities (Ramaahlo et al 2018 cited the DoE 2001). Regional collaboration refers to institutions admitting and providing specialised support only to students with certain categories of disabilities and excusing all others. Lastly, the notion of regional collaboration was to directly address inclusive education with specific focus on basic education system. However, it was only better able to fit in Higher education by alluding to an inclusive system (Ramaahlo et al, 2018).

Furthermore, a policy framework that the South African government uses as its guide in providing for students with disabilities is the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training. This policy framework is similar to the other previously discussed frameworks. However, it only differs in that it is able to identify and acknowledge gaps that other inclusive policies have. This is proven to be true as Ramaahlo (2018 cites the DHET (2013:10) by noting that students with disabilities still experience challenges related to access, curriculum, student funding together and student support.

Lastly, the 2014 white paper is a policy framework that focuses more on improving access, inclusion and the success of student with disabilities in institutions of higher education

(Ramaahlo, 2018). One can safely say that this policy framework has a differing factor which is the consideration of the success of students with disabilities. This is important because the government may make the physical and social environment accessible but the way that these students perform is also important. A substantiating reason can be that which is highlighted by the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training in challenges facing students with disabilities in Higher Education.

Akoojee and Nkomo (2007) argue that an inclusive educational culture and a transformed higher education can only be achievable and be successful when accompanied by accessibility. This further reiterates the argument presented earlier in the discussion that accessibility of students with disabilities is of significance as this ascertains their success. Obiozor, Onu and Ugwoegbu (2010) argue that enhancing accessibility in tertiary institutions has to start with the lecturers themselves. However, Mutanga (2017 cites Matshediso 2010 and Hoywood (2014:15) in noting that there is a lack of disability awareness amongst lecturers themselves and this impacts in their ability to provide for students with disabilities. The lack of disability awareness can be mitigated through making lecture theatres accessible by always making sure that lecturers pay special attention to the students who need assistance. This is not to say that they be treated differently from other students as there is an equity element that should be upheld, but rather for the lecturer to be able to accommodate the student in every possible way.

Furthermore, the lack of disability awareness further leads to a more exclusionary environment as opposed to an inclusionary one. This is because in institutions of Higher Education disability inclusion differs from faculty to faculty (Mutanga, 2017). In addition, Mutanga (2017 cited Mayat and Amosuri (2011:29) in arguing that some lecturers are rather sceptical when it comes to admitting students with disabilities into universities, as a result they end up distancing themselves from assisting SWDs and they refer the students to the DSU as a place where they can get assistance from.

Bhengu (1997:3) mentions that in the White Papers of 1997 that relate to Education and Higher Education, students with disabilities must be seen and addressed as important stakeholders in the country of South Africa. With specific reference to the public institutions of higher learning South Africa. By virtue of the above statement made by Bhengu it is clear that disability is taken seriously in the country, but the question that remains is, is the

seriousness of the matter just strongly emphasized on paper or is it effective in the practical world?

In South Africa the University of Witwatersrand (WITS) is among one of the universities which have standing and existing university policies which seek to accommodate students with disabilities. In ensuring the well-being and inclusion of students with disabilities they have been able to offer their students the following services: there is what they call the Disability Rights Unit whose role is to provide academic support to students with disabilities. The Disability Rights Unit assists in the promotion of integration of students with disabilities at the University. It also enables the university to provide reasonable accommodation which serves as an enabler for the students with disabilities to participate effectively in any academic activity (WITS Policy, 2016).

Furthermore, WITS also has a principle which is aimed at eliminating attitudinal barriers by implementing ongoing sensitisation and advocacy initiatives. These include attitudinal and skills training that promotes and maintains an inclusive and enabling learning environment. The University of Pretoria and the University of KwaZulu-Natal have policies that are similar to that of WITS. They both have similar principles and the most prevalent one is that of encouraging accessibility and providing reasonable accommodation.

However, even with the legislative frameworks and institutional support for student with disabilities in institutions of higher learning and training there are challenges. The White Paper of 1997 on an Integrated National Disability Strategy remarked on the dismal lack of data on disability in South Africa. This data which can allow the government and other relevant organisations to design, plan, and implement strategies for people with disabilities. However due to the deficiency of this data strategies cannot be implemented. According to the Office of the Deputy President (1997), the Integrated National Disability Strategy claims there is a serious lack of reliable information pertaining to the nature and prevalence of disability in South Africa. The Office of the Deputy President (1997) continues to elaborate on the lack of reliable data by arguing that this is because, in the past, disability issues were viewed as being an issue which is primarily dealt with using the health and welfare framework. Therefore, this led to a failure to integrate disability into mainstream government statistical processes.

Moreover, taking into consideration a document which was issued by Vaal University of Technology which shows different institutions of higher education and training (Ramaahlo,

2010). This document shows that there are only two institutions (Durban University of Technology and Mangosuthu University of Technology), which do not have disability support units and policies which are designated for students with disabilities. On the other hand, other universities do have policies which are existing, others have policies which are under revision or the drafting phase (Ramaahlo, 2010). In addition to the policies these institutions also provide specialized support services. With this information it shows that disability in institutions of higher education is indeed taken very serious as there are institutions which accommodate students with disabilities.

With the implementation of inclusive education comes challenges for the implementation of inclusive education in higher education. One example that one can make is that of the role of Disability Support Units. According to Mutanga (2017), the services provided by these units are not all the same. Some DSUs do not cater for all types of impairments. This is because when disability is mentioned in policy documents, either it makes no reference to higher education; or when it does, it is hazy, (Department of Education 2001). For example, most of the African tertiary institutions fail to implement their own guiding policies. This then results in differences in services provided by these units. Newer and smaller Disability Support Units tend to provide services primarily for students with visual or mobility challenges, leaving out other impairments and due to insufficient facilities, this can lead to students dropping out of university. On the other hand, the more established and larger Disability Support Units provides services for most impairment needs.

One of the challenges that hinder the provision of inclusive education is the fear of not wanting to disclose ones disability to the staff of the institution. This fear is created by the attitude (stigmatization) that is shown by the university staff and/or the general public towards students with disabilities and this affects more the students with invisible disabilities. According to Rohwerder (2018), stigma is a presence of elements of labelling, stereotyping and prejudice. These elements later lead to status loss and discrimination for the victims and it occurs in situations where they are disempowered, thereby leading to not wanting to disclose disability as an individual. This is done to avoid pity from the general society.

As a result of not wanting to disclose ones disability is one that Sachs and Schreuer (2011 cited Jung 2003 and Johnson 2006), make note of when they argue that students end up missing out on the benefits which they are entitled to which are provided by the university for them.

Despite the challenges that are faced by different countries on disability there are identifiable successes. For Mutanga (2017), according to the FOTIM study, there is evidence that the historically black universities are showing signs of growth. This is the case as they are now able to provide best practice features and show elements of innovation in the provision of needs of students with disabilities.

Through most of the readings that have been consulted it is evident that a lot of countries, both African and Western, have some sort of disability legislation. In the United States of America there is the American with Disability Act of 1990 together with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which binds all post-secondary schools to abide to these legislations. These statutes also prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities, (Mantsha, 2016).

Drame and Kamphoff (2014 cited UNESCO 2000 and ACPF (2011:50) claims that in Africa for every ten children one has some type of disability. Drame and Kamphoff (2014 also cited Ruijs, Van der Veen & Peetsma, (2010) in saying that since the early 1990s, there has been a movement aiming at educating students with special needs in an inclusive school environment. This international push of achieving an inclusive educational setting was first initiated at the Jomtien Education for All (EFA) Conference in 1990 and was later reaffirmed at the ten-year follow up in Dakar, Senegal, West Africa at the 2000 World Education Forum.

There are other African countries which seek to achieve an inclusive higher education environment for students with disabilities. Some of these countries include Tanzania and Ghana. The Ghanaian government in 2006 passed the Persons with Disability Act in Ghana (Ghana Centre for Democratic Development, 2006). Thereafter Tanzania introduced its National Policy on Disability in 2004 (United Republic of Tanzania, 2004). In addition to the collaboration between universities in the United Kingdom, Ghana and Uganda started promoting the enrolment of deaf students into higher education institutions. This therefore created additional support for the deaf students through the offering of language interpreter training and computer literacy courses (Morely and Croft, 2016). In addition, Morely and Croft (2016 cited Lutalo-Kiingi, 2010:10) when they noted that Uganda also developed a deaf studies diploma course in support of the deaf students.

The collaboration between Ghana and the United Kingdom was able to encourage many other countries in wanting to have higher educational institutions which are inclusive of disabled students. For example, the University of Namibia has been able to enrol students with

physical and sensory disabilities since 2003 and also has a disability support unit for additional support the students (Morely and Croft, 2016).

In a study conducted on institutions of higher education in Israel, Sachs and Schureuer (2011) showed that students with disabilities achieved higher marks compared to non-disabled students. However, when it came to participation in social events within the university students with disabilities hardly showed any interest towards them. The level of participation of disabled students in institutions of higher education is an issue of both equal opportunities and of empowerment. However, despite a growth of interest in inclusive higher education, the voices of disabled students themselves have hardly been heard.

Further in public a commission that examined the implementation of the equal rights for persons with disabilities held in 2005, it was found that institutions of higher education still fail to meet the requirements on the inclusion of students with disabilities into the university community. As a result, the national insurance institute allocated resources which were to make the lives of students with disabilities easier. These resources included the adjustment of buildings, additions of computers and other necessary assistive devices. In countries such as Israel there are statutes such as the Accessibility Rights for People with Disabilities Act, which looks into the equal treatment of persons with disabilities. Naidoo (2010 cited Dowrick, Anderson, Heyer & Acosta, 2005:15) argues that inclusive education in higher education for the disabled can successfully be achieved through the elimination of attitudinal barriers. The willingness of staff members to adjust the environment to suit the needs of the disabled students is also important in the combat of attitudinal barriers.

Moreover, it was also noted that accessibility rather than ability is the determinant of ones success in the university. This simply tells us that if one can be able to access all the provided necessary resources for academic excellence then one will be ready for success Sachs and Schureuer (2011) points out that students with disabilities took a longer time to complete their studies.

For Heatly, Pretorius and Bell (2013), Disability Support Units (DSU) are facilitators of access and integration. Therefore there should be constant communication between the DSUs and the institutions management so as to overcome accessibility issues and any other issues for that matter that disabled students may come across. According to Mutanga (2017), DSUs are the ones which provide SWDs with accessible study materials and they provide extra time for SWDs during tests and other forms of assessments. These services are very

much appreciated by the students as it assists in the transition from a basic education environment to a HE environment. Mutanga (2017) continues to add that DSUs are able to deal with matters beyond the HE. These matters include the family background of the student as well as the previous schooling history, this is done so as to ensure inclusivity of SWDs within the HE environment (Mutanga, 2017).

However, the provision of services of the DSUs differ and they too experience challenges in one way or the other. For example, historically black universities with financial constraints face problems related understaffing of the DSUs, and this is due to the lack of resources and the impact of such circumstances is a delay in issuing course materials for the students (Mutanga cited Naidoo, 2010; Sukraj-Ely,2008; and Tugli, 2013:13).

Morely and Croft (2016 cited Haihambo 2008 p8) to state that students with disabilities in Namibia had requested for a review of the government provisions for students with disabilities. These provisions included students loans given to students with severe impairments and to do a sensitisation campaign would definitely improve their education and for them to be able to participate actively in mainstream system of education. According to Morely and Croft (2016), persons with disabilities want to be enrolled into universities so that they too can gain status and be some-body one day. As a result, there is a dire need for universities to promote inclusive Higher Education with the necessary supporting properties.

#### **2.4. Disability at the University of KwaZulu-Natal**

In a democratic state many issues are addressed through the implementation of policies. These policies in turn have to be adopted by those whom are affected by that particular issue, and the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal is no exception as it is affected by the issue of having students with disabilities as part of the university community. In order to be able to effectively and efficiently ensure the wellbeing of students with disabilities there needs to be a policy which will serve as a guideline for the institution. According to Zitha (2014), the University of KwaZulu-Natal was formed by the formation of a merger between the University of Durban Westville, University of Natal and Edgewood College in 2004. This was one of the major decisions to be taken and which was not a very easy journey for both universities since they used to operate in different ways like for example, they used to cater for different races specifically and respectively. With such an important and significant event of the formation of a merger between these two institutions this then meant that they could no longer use individual policies. Therefore, the need for the existing to be revised or better still

new policies had to be theorized, designed, voted in and adopted and put into action altogether.

Insight of the above given brief history, it is important for one to note that one of the policies that the institution ended up adopting was that which is still in use in the present day, which is the “Students and staff with disabilities policy”. The sole aim of this policy is to ensure that the University is a barrier free environment which enables for the university’s both students and staff members to enjoy an accessible and hindrance free environment in all aspects which may affect them respectively. Furthermore, Seyama (2009:29), acknowledges that the formulation of the policy that is used by the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal is in accordance with the environmental policy which affords an agenda for averting violations of the human rights of people with disabilities wherever they may be.

In addition, with the assistance of the policy the institution has what can be known as the Disability Support Unit or Disability Support Services. Due to the forever increasing number of students with disabilities who want to enrol in to institutions of higher education this has called for the establishment of Disability Support Units (Mayat & Amosun, 2011). Institutions of higher education put these Disability Support Units to offer specialised services to disabled students, in order to facilitate access and integration of these students within their respective institutions. According to Crous (2004), for many students with disabilities, the Disability Support Unit is the first point of interaction. These units function in enabling access and ensuring participation in the university for students with disabilities. These include making “sound modifications” and providing support for students with disabilities to ensure full participation and ensure that they are afforded equal opportunities as those afforded to non-disabled students.

It is worth noting that although universities, may regulate support in slightly different ways, many universities follow similar trends, in order to accommodate and support students with specific disabilities according to their needs, (Mantsha, 2016). For Cheausuwantavee and Cheausuwantavee (2012), appropriate support systems in teaching and learning are vital in ensuring equal access for students with disabilities. The level of commitment of different institutions to facilitating support and participation depends on its willingness to change admission, curricula and assessment procedures, as well as physical accessibility of the institution.

In the case of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the disability support unit is an office which is found in all five campuses of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This office is the first point of contact for students with disabilities as mentioned prior when they enrol into the institution. The disability unit of the University of KwaZulu-Natal affords students with disabilities different kinds of assistance which is aimed at creating a much more accessible environment as argued by Mayat & Amosun (2011). Furthermore, one can safely say the university of KwaZulu-Natal is following similar trends like those of other South African universities as argued by (Mantsha, 2016). The services offered by the Disability Support Unit include the following: Firstly, the disability support unit negotiates with the examination's officers for the provision of permission for the students with disabilities to be able to write their examinations at a venue which will be conducive and comfortable for these students. For example, students with visual impairments, the totally blind students to be specific, are given permission to write at the disability unit since they require scribes would write their answers on the examination answer booklets.

It is important to note that the Pietermaritzburg campus does not have resources to cater for deaf students; these resources are only available at Howard Campus, in Durban. The DSU also has access to the Job with Access Speech (JAWS) software, which converts texts and components of the windows operating system into synthesised speech, allowing the student to have access to Windows-based computer systems. Visually impaired students are also given digital voice recorders, a device that allows the student to record all lecture sessions for later use and for test/examination purposes. Students who are partially sighted, including those with albinism, are allowed to write their exams at a separate venue from the main examination venue within the disability support unit. In these venues, these students have access to enlarged scripts and the room lighting is also adjusted.

However, assistive technology does not cater entirely and fully for its target market. Although they provide access to education but it also plays an exclusionary role to the students. Mutanga (2017 cited Mokiwa and Pasha 2012:16) in stating that this is because for example JAWS cannot read mathematical, graphic and scientific signs.

Secondly, according to Naidoo (2010) the disability unit also provides assistance to students with health impairments, examples of health impairments include chronic Asthma and chronic epilepsy. This allows them not to be in panic and also for invigilators to know what

to do should the students get ill in the middle of an exam. Students with physical disabilities are also well accommodated in all their needs.

Besides academic assistance the disability support unit is able to also offer financial and accommodation assistance. Financially, students with disabilities are offered the NSFAS bursary funding which enables them to get the required assistive devices and be able to cater for their general needs on a daily basis on campus. For accommodation, the DSU negotiate with the Department of Student Resident Affairs (DSRA) for accommodation that will be suitable for students with different disabilities. The DSU also offers independence training. This type of training is mainly meant for the students who have visual impairments, in particular (totally blind). A professional independence trainer teaches students with visual impairment how to navigate around the institution in order for them to be able to get access to the various academic departments. This initiative is of crucial importance in the breaking of attitudinal barriers which according to Smith and French (2000), are those behaviours, perceptions, and assumptions which discriminate against persons with disabilities. Smith and French (2000) continues to argue that these behaviours, perceptions, and assumptions emanate from a lack of understanding, which can lead people to disregard, to judge, or even for them to have misconstructions about a person with a disability.

This initiative of independence training is of great benefit to the students more especially because the previously mentioned barriers are broken down or better still eliminated whereby attitudes such as pity no longer exist. Thereby resulting in a better understanding though not entirely but there are those who develop the sense of understanding and appreciate the fact that these students are actually independent.

All these services provided for student with disabilities are to make them feel as equal as their counterparts. This will be achieved if they can effectively communicate, be socially competence beings, be employable, and have personal independence. In order to accomplish these goals as identified by Huang (2004). However, Seyama (2009 cited Shakespear (2006: 173) in arguing that there has to be modifications and adjustments to their educational programs for disabled students to achieve becoming equal counterparts in societies.

From the literature consulted it has become evident that most if not all South African universities do have DSUs within their institutions as supporting structures for disabled students. For example, the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg. The University of Pretoria, the University of Cape Town are examples of institutions of Higher

Education with functioning Disability Support Units, including the University of KwaZulu-Natal. However, according to University of Witwatersrand (2010) the University is one of the institutions that is considered to be the best in catering for disabled students. This is because the university uses the Higher Education Disability Services Association (HEDSA) as a forum for benchmarking best practices for DUs in South Africa, as a result services offered by WITS are also offered by other Universities although these differ from institution to institution, (Mantsha, 2016)

If one takes a look at the WITS University as a point of referral the University of KwaZulu-Natal still has a lot of work to do before it can be regarded as one of the best institutions which offers the best for its disabled students. This is because from the experience that I have had with the services provided by the unit they do not match those of WITS. These include outstanding assistive technology services, which UKZN does not have as the computers in the DSU computer LAN are very much faulty. In addition, WITS University does quality checks on scanned or edited materials as well as providing annual evaluation forms for disabled students to rate of the DSU. On the part of UKZN this does not happen as there are no evaluation forms given to students to fill in and there is no quality check for scanned nor reformatted or edited work.

## **2.5. Models of disability**

There are many models of disabilities. According to Engel (1989), the medical model arose from the biomedical perception of disability. It is also a term used in psychology, indicating the notion that abnormal behaviour is a consequence of physical problems and should be treated medically. For Areheart (2008), the medical model holds that a disability is an individual's misfortune. The medical model situates disability in the physiological conditions of an individual. The social environment does not bear any responsibility to the limitations faced by a person with a disability. The model further believes that this disability may decrease the individual's quality of life and the belief is that, with medical intervention, this disability can be eliminated or rectified.

During the 17th and 18th century it was of paramount importance for patients to narrate their impairments to their medical practitioners as these helped in developing intimate relationships between the doctors and the patient. This would also assist the doctors in developing treatment plans in a time where diagnostic and treatment options were inadequate (Engel 1989). With regard to institutions of higher education, the implication of this model is

admitting students with disabilities within this discourse is viewed as doing them a favour. This is in contradiction to South Africa's constitution in which all individuals are equal. The medical model seems to dominate social discourses and practices since in most schools persons with disabilities are not accepted at first encounter but rather referred to "special" schools. This is because disabilities are individualized, and the assumption is that the individuals should bare the "burden" alone (Engel, 1989). This argument is further upheld by Areheart (2008) who argues that the only assistance that persons with disabilities can get is rehabilitation and medical cure for their disabilities.

The above presented argument suggests is that persons with disabilities should suffer in isolation with no available assistance aside from medical assistance which is offered to them as the disability is perceived as a personal "burden". By virtue of this, persons with disabilities are seen as "special" beings who need to be kept away from society hence the referral to special schools. However, these special schools which are referred to by Engel which serve as rehabilitation assistance together with medical that is offered.

For Brisenden (1986), the medical model of disability views disability as a result of a physical condition intrinsic to the individual. This model concerns itself only with the person receiving medical help without implementing the necessary societal changes. From the information gathered, the medical model can be said to be relevant in other kinds of disabilities and irrelevant to others depending on one's discretion i.e. this model is relevant to temporary disabilities. For example, if an individual gets involved in an accident and is told that they will be using a wheelchair for a certain amount of time before they can go back to their normal self, in that scenario the medical model can be utilized with no doubt. The relevance of the model is in the point where it argues that with medical help the condition can be "corrected" and this is valid because with physio therapy the individual will be able to walk again.

However, the validity of the model is questionable when one explores permanent disabilities such as hemiplegia, quadriplegia and blindness in its different forms in that how then does this model intervenes in an individual's life betterment, because if a person has hemiplegia for example, that condition is permanent, and no amount of medical intervention can be able to correct that persons condition. The essence of the medical model is that disability is an individual's problem which can only be "rectified" through medical procedures. It has shown that the medical model as the name suggests it only considers disability on medical grounds,

forgetting that there are other contributing factors to the limitations, stigmatization, and exclusion of persons with disabilities.

In contrast to the medical model is the social model of disability. The social model of disability emerged as a reaction to the dominant medical model of disability which analysed the body as a “machine” which needs to be fixed in order it to be able to adapt with normative standards (Davis, 2017). According to Davis (2006), the social model of disability recognizes systemic barriers, negative attitudes and the exclusion by society which can be done purposely or mistakably. Zalta (2016) maintains the argument presented by Davis by noting that the social model of disability understands disability by looking as the relationship between the individual and their social environment. While physical, sensory, intellectual, or psychological disparities may cause individual functional limitation or impairments, the society is the main instrumental factor in “disabling” individuals. The presence of physical, sensory, intellectual or psychological limitations do not have to lead to disability unless society fails to take reasonable measures of and include people regardless of their individual differences. The social model of disability highlights the ‘disabling’ role of physical and social environment in the lives of people with disabilities (Ntombela 2006; Morrison et al. 2009). Thus, a building that has stairs and no ramp, or a multi-storey building without functional elevators, make it impossible for an individual who uses wheelchair to fully utilize that building. This is further elaborated upon by Wright (2007) when she mentions that the challenges which are faced by persons with disabilities are not created by their impairments but by the environment in which they live in.

The post -1994 South African government and its policies are influenced by the social model of disabilities. According to the South African constitution everyone is equal before the law including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those living with disabilities. The bill of rights section 2 forbids inequality and discrimination. The South African higher education policy frameworks have its interest broadening access and participation requirements for students with disabilities to enhance retention and success. Howell (2001) adds that institutions of higher education are a dais whereby one can discover themselves and be able to empower themselves as they become exposed to different things, which allow them to be able to identify and discover their different talents which may have not been identified. Therefore, it is important for tertiary institutions to have a culture of tolerance as everyone comes from different backgrounds hence different needs.

According to Zalta (2016), the social model is divided into two strands which assist in a better understanding of the model and exclusion of persons with disabilities. The first strand is the minority group model. The minority group model argues that persons with disabilities are exposed to stigmatization and exclusion, and this exclusion and stigmatization can be put in the same lines as that of racial and ethnic minorities. The second strand of social model to understanding disability is the human variation model. Zalta, (2016 cites Zola 1989) where they defined this model as one which understands disability as variations in humans which are further related to viewing disability as a universal condition. In addition, the human variation model sees that exclusion is promote by the inability of contemporary society to take into consideration the existence of people with disabilities. Moreover, this branch of the social model concludes that exclusion of individuals with disabilities is due to the mismatch between their characteristics and the physical and social environment.

The crux of the social model to disability that the disabling factor is manifested not in deliberate segregation but in the built environment and the social organisation which limit participation of individuals with disabilities, hence exclusion (Zalta, 2016).

## **2.6. Students with disabilities and student governance**

Before one looks at what student governance is there is an important need to first provide a definition of what governance is on its own. Governance will be looked at on a political perspective. The sole reason for this is because this section is to deliberate more on student governance and there therefore before going on to define student governance one first needs to understand what governance is. Kooiman (1993) defines governance as referring to processes relating to accountability, transparency, responsiveness rule of law stability, equality, inclusiveness, and broad-base participation. These are further supported by relevant structure/institutions and policies. In addition to a better understanding of governance is given by Pierre and Peters (2000) defines governance as an essentiality related to politics, and that politics is often understood as the “art” of governance. They continue to add that just as politics talks about governments, institutions, power, order, and the ideals of justice, governance also deals with the public sector, power structures equality and principles of public administration.

The above definitions are a true reflection of how societies are run and administered. Nonetheless governance is not just a crucial element in our communities and societies, they

are also of significance in institutions of higher education and training. The administration of governance in institutions of higher education and training is in the form of student governance

There are different definitions that are given for the term student governance. Firstly, according to Merriam Webster Dictionary (1989), student governance is the organization of student life by various student organizations. Secondly, Millet (1978), defines student governance as the manner or way that students are administrated in institutions of higher education with an aim of involving them in decision making. It is through these organizations that students get to participate and make their issues heard.

According to Menon (2003), students are recognized as being the key stakeholders within institutions of higher education; hence their views and opinions are of value to the institutions in which they are based. Cele, Keon and Libhaber (2006) argue that the formation of student bodies such as the South African Students Congress (SASCO) was envisioned as a mechanism of infusing the principles of democracy with the institutions of higher education. Most of the existing research addresses the common issues pertaining to students however, issues pertaining to disability are not adequately addressed. In addition to accessibility issues, this research will interrogate the role of students living with disabilities in student governance.

Even though student governance has a significant role to play in the way that student matters are dealt with, but institutions may not feel the need to always include them in decision making processes for different reasons, one of the reasons stated is the rational of exclusion. According to Menon (2003), the formulation of educational aims solely belongs to those in managerial positions, simply meaning that the student body together with the student representatives do not have a say whatsoever on educational issues which affect them anyway at the end.

However, Barnett (1998:249), feels that students are the “key factor” in higher education. He argues that in order for the institution to be able to attain its mission is through the involvement of students. In as much as the involvement of students in decision making processes is of importance but in some cases their involvement is limited due to the following reasons: firstly, the inability to promote interests of the group, i.e. the interest of the student body in its entirety. Secondly, the lack of experience and sufficient knowledge in matters of decision-making, but if this is the case and students’ views are viewed as important, then why

does the institution not make means to empower students in the above stated point as they are identified as areas of weakness hence prohibiting the students from playing a significant role in decision- making processes. The exclusion of students leads to some issues and matters not being attended to hence the emergence of problems but through the implementation of programs of empowerment, arising problems can be mitigated.

Thirdly, another reason for the exclusion of students in governance issues is the reason of discussion of sensitive matters such as student grading and faculty promotion, as this is felt as being the “private business” of the management team of the institution, hence the involvement of students would result in a chaotic situation. Agreeably so but the involvement of students in the institutions matters is of importance and one cannot dispute the fact that there are other things which cannot be easily changed due to their being in the national legislation under the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), hence their status quo remains unchangeably so and an example of such is the minimum entry requirements needed for an admission to a university either for a diploma or a degree qualification.

Furthermore, Menon (2003) notes the importance of student participation by stating that it is viewed as a way of expression in an ideal democracy whereby each and every stakeholder is granted an equal voice in decision-making. According to Cabannes (2004), participatory democracy is defined as a type of democracy whereby the broad participation of constituents in the direction and operations of political systems is emphasized. Cabannes (2004), continues to add to this definition by saying that participatory democracy attempts to create prospects for all members of a population to make meaningful contributions towards decision-making, and pursues to extend the range of people who have access to such prospects.

From the above definitions it is clear that this type of democracy is of essentiality within institutions of higher education as it is in the political setting of countries that the citizens are given the opportunity to voice out their concerns in matters that affect them directly as every voice is important and can make significant changes on different matters. By letting the concerned parties to participate in decision making processes it enables them to feel empowered and that their being matter. In addition, participatory democracy is believed to having the contributing element to personal growth and development of students by allowing

them to learn by example, through the application of democratic principles in real life situations (Lee, 1987).

Moreover, there are also benefits of student governance and they are as follows. Firstly, by the institution having effective and efficient student governance it assures and ensures the well-being of students. This is achieved through allowing the participation of students in decision-making processes and seating's as this allows for the students to be able to bring forth their stresses and troubles to the attention of the management. Through such settings of allowing students to be a part of decision making processes it shows them that their opinion is viewed as being of importance, however it must be noted that in tertiary institutions it is the presence of Student Representatives Councils which is viewed as the proper platform that the cries of students are being channelled through to the management and not the direct involvement of students as there will be a conflict of interest in that there will be too many views brought forward and this will lead to chaotic outcomes. But who is the SRC and what is their role in institutions of higher education and training? According to (UKZN SRC Constitution: 2006) the Student Representative Council is and its component parts of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, acting as the primary student governing body on all issues of student governance, from the aforementioned description we are given the impression that the SRC exists in institutions of higher education and training so as to give a sense of a governing body which deals with the issues of the students both individually and as a whole.

Secondly, there is an easier implementation of decisions in a participatory democracy setting because each and every one can be able to voice their concern and be able to push their views and stances forward. Furthermore, the institution can also be able to spot their weaknesses if they are able to engage with students because one may find that the students are facing a problem that the management team had thought it was non-existent or had been resolved. An example is that of accessibility within UKZNP as mentioned prior if there was active participation of students more especially the disabled students then the university will note the problem and find ways to overcome it. An atmosphere of openness and trust between the students and the institution is also created if there are interactions between the students and the management and the likelihood of confrontation between the two is eliminated. With the above it has shown that student participation is of essence as there are mutual benefits within the process.

Menon (2003) goes on to talk about the nature and extent of participation of students in decision-making process. Bridges (1967) state that stakeholders (students) should be involved in decisions which are of importance to them, for example, the issue of the fee increment that was taken in all Universities in South Africa, before that decision is taken there was supposed to have been consultations between the students and the management team of each University respectively as the issue of funding is problematic in this current year.

The same applies to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) decision to centralize the applications for funding, in as much as the decision is binding nationally but universities were supposed to have come back to its stakeholders and explained everything clearly as to how things were to be done instead of just accepting the process as is because it has come with a lot of problems which could have been prevented.

If stakeholders feel the topic under discussion is not of personal stake, i.e. less relevant they will not bother themselves in participating. Through personal experience and observation this is what is happening with students with disabilities (SWDs) in that the nature of the meetings that take place more especially the ones which are called by the Students Representative Council as the only passage or channel that we as students can voice our concerns, they never address issues pertaining to disability hence there are fewer numbers of students that attend such seating's. Further the agendas of these meetings, mostly they include funding issues and other relevant businesses of which if you are a SWD that is irrelevant to you as your business is addressed by the Disability Support Unit (DSU) as the funding is different from the general NSFAS hence more reason for SWD not to attend. So then if students with disabilities do not feel the need to attend the meetings called by the SRC then can one truly say that the SRCs objectives and mission is to really ensure that each and every student is represented. Let us explore the mission and objectives of the SRC constitution and see if what they stand for is also meant to represent students with disabilities.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion this chapter has been able to look at the phenomenon of disability in different aspects. Firstly, in the provision of definitions for the term disability different aspects were looked at and it was seen that when disability is being defined it can be done by looking at two broad themes, i.e. the medical perspective and the social perspective. The chapter also went on to look at a brief history of disability on how persons with disabilities have been treated in different parts of the world in the past centuries up to the present times. The chapter

also looked at the different legislative frameworks, both national and university policies created to address issues of disability. A common factor was then established which they all argue for accessibility and reasonable accommodation in university policies.

In addition, discourses of disability were also discussed. It was revealed that it is the medical discourse that is dominant more in our current societies through the arguments presented in the content of the chapter. It was also found that there are differing views towards the medical model of disability in understanding what disability is. On the other hand the social model of disability was also deliberated upon, and the main argument of the social model was that there needs to be social changes to allow for the society to be a barrier free environment.

Lastly, the issue of student governance was also looked at in the sense that the relationship between students with disabilities and their participation in matters of student governance. During the chapter write up it was found that students with disabilities in most times than often do not find the need to go and attend and have a participatory culture towards issues of students governance due to their issues being dealt with at the DSU forgetting the importance to interact with student leadership.

The next chapter comprises of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. The accessible model and consociational democracy will be the back bone of the discussions of the chapter.

## Chapter Three

### Theoretical and conceptual Frameworks

#### 3. Introduction

A theoretical framework is one of the vital aspects of any academic research project. Among other things it validates that the author does not function in seclusion, but it associates the study to an existing body of knowledge. In summary, a theoretical framework provides the context within which the study is to be understood. According to Labaree (2013), a theoretical framework is used to limit the scope of the relevant data by focusing on specific variables and defining a specific viewpoint (framework) which the researcher will take in the process of analysing and interpreting the data to be gathered, understanding concepts and variables according to the given definitions, and building knowledge by validating or challenging theoretical assumptions. Appropriately, theoretical framework is the most vital component of the study. It guides the study's direction. This chapter will proceed as follows: Sections 3.1 and 3.2 provide a general discussion of the following: concept, theory, model and theoretical and conceptual framework. Section 3.3 is a critical discussion of consociational democracy, while section 3.4 conceptualizes people with disabilities as a minority group. Lastly, section 3.5 discusses the accessibility model.

#### 3.1. The difference between a theoretical and conceptual framework

It is important to note that there is a difference between a theoretical framework and a conceptual framework. According to Mugenda (1999), a theoretical framework is a structure which is able to hold and support a theory in a research project. A theoretical framework further introduces and describes the theory which explains why the research problem is in existence. Imenda (2014) provides an additional definition of a theoretical framework. According to Imenda (2014), a theoretical framework refers to the theory that a researcher chooses to guide him/her in his/her research. Therefore, a theoretical framework is the actual application of a theory. It can also be the application of a set of concepts drawn from one and the same theory, to offer an explanation of an event, or shed some light on a research problem.

On the other hand, a conceptual framework is defined as whereby the researcher cannot base their research or research problem on one theory and as a result they have to bring together existing views from literature concerning a particular phenomenon which can both be theoretical and empirical findings (Imenda, 2014). According to Hoy and Ferguson (1985), theoretical and conceptual framework is important in that for every research study conducted it serves as a guideline for the researcher on how to approach the research task.

### **3.2. The difference between a concept, a theory and a model**

According to Imenda (2014 cited in Fox and Bayat 2007:29), a theory is a set of unified propositions, concepts and definitions seeking to present a methodical point of view of identifying relationships between variables with a view to predicting and explaining certain occurrences. In addition, Creswell (1994) defines a theory as a hypothesis which is assumed for the sake of an argument or an investigation. Furthermore, a theory is also defined as the general or abstract principles of a body of facts, a science or an art to the definitions of what a theory is. A theory also has key characteristics which are taken to be the building blocks or key features Imenda (2014 as cited in Wacker 1998:363-364).

Imenda (2014) identifies three key defining characteristics which are building blocks of a theory. Firstly, a theory is “a set of interrelated propositions, concepts and definitions that present a systematic point of view.” Second, a theory “specifies relationships between / among concepts.” Lastly, a theory “explains and / or makes predictions about the occurrence of events, based on the specified relationships.” Furthermore, Imenda (2014 cited Liehr and Smith 1999:7), by defining a concept as a representation of an abstract idea an image or symbolic representation. In addition, Imenda (2014 cited Chinn and Kramer 1999:252), views concepts as components of theory which give a meaning to abstract ideas forming a theory. Moreover, Imenda (2014 cites Hornby 2005:5) in stating that concepts are very much influenced by their context. It is also mentioned that concepts reflect theoretical concerns and ideological conflicts.

According to Imenda (2014), a model unlike a theory is a synthesis of opinions drawn by researchers from both theoretical and pragmatic findings. Therefore, a model is a representation of an understanding of integrated issues. This understanding in turn guides the researcher in undertaking a specific research problem. In addition, a model can also be understood as a tool of understanding specific phenomena and also used to describe an application of a theory, (Du Plooy, 2014).

This research will utilize the following theoretical tools: consociational democratic theory, the minority model, and accessibility model.

### **3.3. Consociational democracy theory**

One of the research questions for this project asked about the representation of people with disabilities within the student governance structures. In the context of national politics, majoritarian form of decision-making has been criticized for systematically excluding minorities. Critics of majoritarian democracy, such as Arendt Lijphart, argue that this form of decision-making contribute to conflict as those groups that are systematically excluded from government may seek other means in order to achieve their goals. The purpose of this section is to discuss how consociational democratic theory tries to resolve the issue of representation and participation of minorities in governance.

Representation in all its forms is of vital importance to each and every society. According to Damanid, Bertrand and Fiorio (2004), representation is defined as the manner in which some individuals stand in the place of other individuals or a group. This can be in the form of the formation of social organizations and political parties/ organizations which are the ones which different people identify with and feel that their needs will be better advocated for. These organizations and parties are not just found in the midst of the general public but also in the university environment.

In most parts of the world, democracy is now a norm. According to Schmitter and Karl (1991), democracy is defined as a system of government whereby the supreme power is entrusted in the people and exercised by them (the people) directly or indirectly through a system of representation which usually involves free elections which are held periodically. There are different types of democracy. Schmitter and Karl (1991) identify direct and indirect democracies as the two types of democracy. Direct democracy is a kind of democracy in which people govern themselves.

The second type of democracy is that of representative democracy. It is a type of democracy which is indirect in nature and the sovereignty is held by the people's representatives whom they had elected.

There are various kinds of representative democracies, such as majoritarian democracy and consociational democracy. In a majoritarian democracy, it is the interests and the views of the majority which are given all the “special preference” over those of the minorities. This therefore means that the views of the majority will always be heard and those of the

minorities will not be taken seriously. This is problematic because even if the majority is wrong, but their views and strategies will be put into effect. In the case of South African national politics, minorities are represented by opposition parties which include the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the United Democratic Movement (UDM). However, they are ineffective as their positions are ignored by the dominant party. An example, the opposition parties tabled various motions of no confidence in an attempt to remove former president, Mr Jacob Zuma. These motions of no confidence were unsuccessful because the opposition parties could not garner enough votes.

Majoritarianism is also a prevalent form of decision-making in institutions of higher learning in South Africa. For example, there is majoritarianism in the UKZN SRC constitution. The seat allocation process for the Local Student Representative Council (LSRC) and the Central Student Representative Council (CSRC) - involves a contest for five seats by individuals or organisations contesting an election. The allocation of seats within the SRC depends on the number of votes that an individual or an organisation receives. Similar to national politics, an organisation that receives majority of the votes will be the one to take over student governance. As in national politics, minority organisations will have to follow the mandate of the winning organisation. In the case of UKZN, when SASCO was in power in both the LSRC and CSRC all decisions taken were beneficial to this organisation and those individuals who were close or interacted more with the leadership structure. Since SASCO performed poorly in the 2017 student election at UKZN Pietermaritzburg campus, in 2018 it was the agenda of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) that was dominant. Organisations that represent minorities such as Differently Abled Student Association (DASA) representing students with disabilities, are still marginalized.

Majoritarianism is not only prevalent at UKZN but also at other institutions of higher learning. Student Representative Council constitution for the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS) shows similar traits. This constitution clearly states that all decisions, appointments to positions made, and any other resolution by the SRC is achieved through a simple majority of the members present in that particular sitting (WITS,2016). Similarly, the DUT SRC constitution further emphasises the importance of a majority. Thus, the DUT SRC constitution puts a requirement of a quorum of 50% + 1 before any binding resolutions are taken. However, an additional 5% of registered students are required at a regular Annual General Meeting (AGM), ordinary mass meetings or special meeting (DUT, 2014).

In the past five years (2012- 2016) students with disabilities have not been represented in the UKZN SRC until the years 2017/18. In the year 2017, the Pietermaritzburg SRC had an individual with disabilities in the portfolio of student services, this individual was re-elected as Secretary General in 2018. The establishment of a portfolio that deals with disability issues encouraged students with disabilities to participate in SRC elections. The second type of representative democracy is that of consociational democracy. For Lijphart (1969), consociational democracy is a type of democracy whereby all the constituents of the society are represented through power sharing. For Andeweg (2015) consociationalism refers to power sharing by political elites in deeply divided societies as a means to maintain or achieve a stable democracy. Andeweg (2015) argues that consociational democracy grew out of European case studies of stable and peaceful democracies with deep social cleavages.

Lijphart (1969) identifies four characteristics of consociational democracy. These characteristics are: grand coalition, mutual veto, proportionality and segmental autonomy. In grand coalition leaders of the minority and majority work together in the attempt to form a cooperative relationship in order to avoid incidences of conflict and ensure fulfilment of interests of each segment. Mutual veto gives participating groups power to veto decisions. In addition, proportionality ensures that all groups or segments within a given society are proportionally represented. Lastly, segmental autonomy gives right to each group to have autonomy. A case study of South Africa can be used to explain the theory of consociational democracy in the political arena. South Africa is a democratic country as from the year 1994 when it gained independence from white domination. As a result, there has been cleavages which came to existence. South Africa's constitution of 1996 does not have the element of grand coalition and mutual veto. However, there are elements of proportionality in the form of proportional representation and segmental autonomy in the constitution of South Africa which are seen to be necessary for a stable democracy. Segmental autonomy, an element of consociational democracy, is enshrined in the second chapter of the South African constitution's the bill of rights under section (31) subsection (1). This section makes it clear that every cultural group has the right to practice and maintain its culture, religion and language in its communities (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). Therefore, each group has the right to segmental autonomy on certain issues that only affect them, i.e. to make self-binding decisions to them as a group. As a result, there is a need for the accommodation of every distinct group in all the decisions which are taken. South Africa's constitution also has an element of proportionality in the form of proportional

representation. According to Blais and Carty (1990), proportional representation is an electoral system in which parties gain seats in proportion to the number of votes cast for them.

This section of the chapter has been able to look at the theory of consociationalism which is a type of representative democracy. The four elements of consociational democracy are grand coalition, segmental autonomy, proportionality and minority veto respectively. This type of governance theory is also primarily used in national politics in order to include minorities in governance. However, the focus of this dissertation is to assess the relevance of consociational democracy for student governance. The theory was seen to be befitting in the topic of student governance because the landscape of student politics is also characterised by cleavages which include linguistic, ethnic, and racial cleavages, among others. The following section will conceptualize people with disabilities as a minority cleavage.

#### **3.4. People with disabilities as a minority**

As discussed in the previous section, consociationalism is appropriate for diverse and divided societies. The point of departure for this research is that university student population, in particular at UKZN (PMB campus), is diverse with different language, religious, and ethnic groups. While consociationalism is primarily concerned with inclusion of minorities in governance, the discourse and practice of consociationalism have not looked at the people with disabilities as minorities. This study incorporates people with disabilities as a minority within the consociational democracy discourse.

According to Scotch and Schriener (1997), people with disabilities and other groups recognized as minorities share similar characteristics and experiences. People with disabilities are exposed to attitudes displaying intolerance, discriminatory behaviour, and institutional and legal constrictions similar to those experienced by excluded groups and other disadvantaged groups. As noted by Scotch and Schriener (1997) persons with disabilities also come to face many barriers which include transport barriers, architectural and public accommodation barriers just to mention a few. Thus, Scotch and Schriener (1997) conclude by stating that persons with disabilities end up being excluded from social, economic, and political activities. In Hall's article the issue of people being the minority in societies is discussed. Hall (1985 cited Hahn 1985), in noting that people with disabilities do not only face stereotypical behaviour which is attached to their beings. However, forces of stigmatization are the order of the day as they confront these forces in their societies daily

thereby making them feel a sense of exclusion for oneself. Persons with disabilities are discriminated against in their communities, schools, and work places (Hall, 1985). In their work places, they are given hostile treatments and receive unreasonable demands from their superiors. In the schooling environment, they are attacked and bullied on regular basis. Hall (1985) further argues that due to the under estimation of capabilities of disabled people and the inaccessible environment, they end up playing secondary roles in all the activities they are part of. It is the lack of support from the essential structures of life such as the communities that individuals live in that are a cause for marginalisation of people with disabilities. Like other minority groups, people with disabilities are discriminated against, face barriers and exclusion from social, economic and political activities. People with disabilities can be considered as a minority group. The implication of for student governance is that people with disabilities should be accommodated in a consociational arrangement.

### **3.5. Accessibility Model**

A third tool that will be used in order to provide a better understanding of the topic under investigation is the accessibility model. According to Schwarz (1978), a model is a set of interrelated hypotheses; and it presents a systemic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables with the purpose of explanation and prediction. This utilization of the accessibility model allows the researcher to interrogate conditions that hinder or empower accessibility for students living with disabilities. According to Wright (2007), the accessibility model is one of the models which was utilized by Torkildsen (1986) in the study which was conducted in the field of recreation. This model had four critical factors which could either promote or hinder the opportunities of participation of persons with disabilities.

These four factors are perceptual accessibility, physical accessibility, financial accessibility and social accessibility. The first factor is perceptual accessibility. According to the Oxford Concise Medical Dictionary (2002), perception is a “process by which information about the world, as received by the senses, is analysed and made meaningful.” For Torkildsen (2005:103) “perception refers to the world as it is experienced as it is seen, heard, felt, smelt and tasted. Consequently, the way an individual perceives the world will largely determine his or her behaviour.” In perceiving an object, an individual also assesses his or her on capabilities in relation to that object. In other cases, based on one’s perception, an individual may assess the capabilities of other individuals. For example, one may look at the terrain and the way that buildings are set out within campus and assesses one’s ability to use various

facilities. Thus, a student who uses a wheelchair may be discouraged to attend their classes in lecture venues which are not accessible to wheelchairs.

The second factor of the accessibility model is physical accessibility. The concept of physical accessibility tries to capture the accessibility of resources to individuals living with disabilities. According to Hasanzada (2002), physical accessibility evaluates whether an individual with a disability is able to use or gain access to the physical environment. Physical accessibility is an all-encompassing factor when it comes to issues of “accessibility”. According to Riley et al (2008), some of the factors to consider in physical accessibility are “access routes and curb cuts; power-assisted or pushbutton-operated doors; visual and audible signals in elevators; access routes free from cracks, gaps, and raised edges; hand-held showerhead units; and obstacle-free paths to lockers”. The aforementioned definitions provided for physical accessibility make it clear that the main issue about accessibility is the built environment and its ability to meet the international accessibility standards of physical accessibility.

The third factor of the accessibility model is financial accessibility. According to Kennedy, Austin, and Smith (1987), financial accessibility is the ability of an individual to attain funds so as to be able to pay for what they require. However, for Johnstone (2003), Kennedy, Austin, and Smith (1987), financial accessibility refers to the financial means to attain whatever it is one may be needing, given the individual access to finances. In the context of institution of higher education in South Africa, financial needs of students with disabilities include costs of a student’s tuition, books, accommodation including meals, and an assistive device such as a wheelchair, Zoom Text software or a Jaws Reader, computer, or any other device which may be recommended by a doctor. Students with physical disabilities may also need human support. For example, for a student using a wheelchair, or a student with a visual impairment, and or those with chronic conditions such as severe epilepsy-may need to pay individuals who will assist them on the daily basis for the duration of their studies.

The last factor of the accessibility model is social accessibility, but before one can discuss what social accessibility is, it is best to first distinguish between social inclusion and social participation from individuals and groups in community-based activities and the broader social network. Hall (2009) adds that social inclusion occurs in all aspects of ones’ life as it covers all aspects of an individuals’ life. Mactavish et al (2000) further add that social inclusion can further enhance an individuals’ sense of belonging. However, social exclusion

is understood as a process whereby individuals are denied full access to various opportunities and resources together with rights which under normal circumstances are enjoyed by all community members as they form part of social integration, (Barnes and Mercer, 2005). According to Rickers-Ovsiankina (1956), social accessibility explores the ability of facilities, such as class rooms or recreational centres, to meet the needs of all its users. The concept of social accessibility allows a research to explore the extent to which users of a space or facility are able to interact on programmed and non-programmed activities. An important component of social accessibility is the policy that guides the given facilities or social space. Management, therefore plays a prominent role in social accessibility. Social accessibility can therefore be understood as a process where disabled people can be able to utilize the given resources to their full capacities while being able to integrate with able bodied individuals through reverse integration. Social inclusion and social exclusion are therefore two extreme points of social accessibility. A space where the facilities, community members and people with disabilities are integrated in mutually respectful way is socially inclusive. However, a space where the participation of people with disabilities is hindered, for example, because of facilities that are not user-friendly for people with disabilities, is socially exclusive.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide this study. The chapter firstly, commenced with a general discussion of a theoretical and conceptual framework. This discussion was followed by a critical discussion of consociational democracy. The theory of consociational democracy is relevant for this study since it is hypothesized that the practice of consociational power-sharing will reduce the exclusion of students with disabilities from student governance.

Given that consociational democracy is premised on the existence of cleavages and identity groups, this chapter then conceptualized people with disabilities as a minority group. Finally, this chapter discussed accessibility model. The model allowed the research to evaluate the accessibility of different sphere of the university environment to students with disability. The next chapter, which is chapter four (4), will be looking at research methodology in detail.

## Chapter Four

### Description of methodology

#### 4. Introduction

This chapter of the dissertation discusses research methodologies that are used in this research. In the contents of this chapter the researcher will firstly define what a research methodology is with the reasons for using the chosen methodology. Secondly the research approach will be discussed accordingly. Thirdly the research population will be identified as well as the research sample together with the sampling technique.

#### 4.1. Research methodology

According to Khotari (2004), research methodology and methods are defined as a systemic or theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. However, the term methods or method then means the ways that are to be used by the researcher in attaining the relevant and required information in order to execute the project successfully. The process used to collect information and data for the purpose of this paper will be the conduction of interviews together with questionnaires. Other methods of data collection will include publications from both present and historical information.

#### 4.2. Research approach

This is a qualitative study. According to Ezzy (2002), qualitative research is a type of research that is completed through creating an interactive relationship between people, spaces and objects. Qualitative approach is the most suitable approach because it has methods that are focusing on interpreting people's feelings and experiences rather than quantification and measurement quantitative (Terre Blance, Durheim & Painter, 2006). The research study thereby followed an interpretivist paradigm as this allowed for a better understanding of the lived experiences of students with disabilities of the university of KwaZulu-Natal at the Pietermaritzburg campus respectively. According to Du Plooy-Ciliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014) an interpretive approach to research relies on both the researcher and the human subject (participant) in the generation of data. This generation of data is done through conducting interviews and through observation. These lived experiences of students with disabilities were better explored through using the interpretivist approach further making the research exploratory. This research used both primary and secondary data. Secondary data consisted of books, journal articles and other published information dealing with the theme of this research. The use of such data enables the researcher to be able to gather different arguments pertaining to disability specifically and in that way the researcher is

therefore exposed to different perceptions and understandings of the phenomenon. This therefore brings about an open-minded perception towards disability.

The primary data for this research was collected through the use of interviews, observation and personal experience. This approach towards the research project enabled both the researcher and the participants to get the most out of the study. The researcher got much information through in-depth interviews with the participants. The participants got a chance to express their feelings and experiences of the different challenges they have faced at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg Campus as disabled students of the institution.

Following Denscombe (1998), this project used interviews, so as to explore emotions, experiences and feelings of the participants. The above-mentioned technique used, was aimed to be of assistance in reducing biases that sometimes come with the predetermined answers as participants are free to express their opinions. Of vital significance, it must be accredited that in-depth interviews are useful for data collection as the in-depth interview —purely extends and formalizes conversation (Greef, 2005: 282).

#### **4.3. Population of the study**

The population for this project was students of UKZN (PMB campus) living with disabilities. Interviews were conducted with students with disabilities from different colleges which are: the College of Humanities, the College of Science, Agriculture and Engineering, the College of Law and Management and the College of Health Sciences. The research used purposive sampling to select participants. The sample size of the research was fifteen (15) students, split amongst the different disabilities found to be present in the campus of Pietermaritzburg (physical disabilities, visual impairments, and chronic illnesses seen as disabilities.), within the student population of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Pietermaritzburg campus. The participants were also divided according to gender.

##### **4.3.1. Selection criteria and the characteristics of participants**

In the selection of the participants for the conduction of the research study, the researcher came to a decision to select only fifteen (15) participants out of the total number of students that are registered under the disability unit which is approximately  $\pm$  200 students. The reason for choosing fifteen participants it was due to the researchers' discretion of which students will be more than willing to assist in the research study as the researcher has existing relations with them. Furthermore, the researcher used quota sampling in the research study

for reasons based on inclusion of genders i.e. Male and Female students. In the use of the sampling technique it became apparent that there were more females than males who were willing to assist in the conduction of the study. As a result these participants (Male and Female) were seen to have been perfect representatives of the disability cohort in UKZNP taking into consideration the different disabilities.

Below is the criteria used by the researcher in the selection of the participants.

- The first requirement was that each participant be a registered student of the institution of the University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg Campus.
- The second requirement was that each participant be an individual with a disability.
- The third requirement was that each participant be registered with the disability unit of the Pietermaritzburg Campus.

The study was not targeting any specific type of disability but all types of disabilities present among the students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg Campus. This enabled the researcher to be exposed to different types of challenges which are faced by students with different types of disabilities. It is worth noting that even in the case of two individuals with the same disability, the experiences of these two individuals are not going to be the same.

During the conduction of the interviews it was very much evident that most of the students with disabilities are registered with the College of Humanities and the College of Law and Management. From my personal experience and observation, students, sometimes do not choose these two Colleges out of interests, but they choose these Colleges because they are not able to enrol for qualifications that are their first options. It is for example, difficult for students who are totally blind to enrol for Accounting or Economics programs because they are not able to use the supporting equipment's, such as calculators, which are required for these programs.

Students with disabilities also register in other colleges besides the college of Humanities and College of Law and Management. These colleges include the colleges of Agriculture and Engineering but students with disabilities who are enrolled in these colleges face challenges especially if they have to do practicals. Students with disabilities which suffer the most in such courses are those who are partially sighted, for example when experiments are done, and the props used are not enabling the student to participate fully and effectively. These students also face hurdles when their lecturers do not allow them to write their practical tests at the

DSU, arguing that they it is not a test which requires to be written at the DSU and this then leads to students failing the modules dismally. In some cases, students may end up wanting to change major subjects due to the inability to cope.

In the case of Psychology, there are aspects of the program that are difficult for the visually impaired especially totally blind students to understand. Statistics is one of the requirements for the upper levels of Psychology. However, it is difficult for a totally blind student to follow the mathematical steps that are required in calculating different statistics. If the student does not have an assistant or friends to assist in writing the tutorials more especially for statistics, they may end up wanting to change the major subject even before they reach that stage. According to Mutanga (2017), most of the challenges faced by students with disabilities are caused by the fact that policy provisions regarding disability matters are fragmented and currently there is no national policy. In most instances when disability is mentioned in policy documents, either it makes no reference to higher education; or when it does, it is hazy. In addition, barriers within higher education relate to attitudes to disability, academic curricula, physical environments, teaching and learning support, and the allocation and distribution of resources, (Mutanga 2017).

In addition, Matshedisho (2007) also looked at the challenges of support for students with disabilities in SAHE. Most of the challenges he raises are similar to those noted by (Howell, 2005). These challenges include lack of funding, lack of data on students with disabilities and the slow pace of transformation in higher education. In Education or Teaching courses students are required to do practicals in fulfilment of the requirements of their Degrees/ Diplomas. However, students with visual impairments face placement challenges in that they are placed in schools where there are no auxiliary teacher aids. This therefore deters students with visual impairments from pursuing Education related qualifications-Teaching qualifications.

#### **4.3.2. Sampling Method and Technique**

The research study was carried out at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus. This site was chosen primarily because it is easily accessible to the researcher and it encompasses students with disabilities who are registered under the disability unit whose numbers continue to grow each academic year. This group of students was simply chosen because as a student who is also disabled, I have seen that since 2013 there has not been any significant changes in making the environment more “friendly” for students with disabilities.

According to Patton (2005), sampling is when you use a portion of a population for your study as representatives that could be used to explain the situation of the population. From the given definition of sampling, this research study embarked on purposive sampling method. This type of sampling method according to Oliver and Jupp (2006), is a non-probability sample; the sample is chosen based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study. As mentioned above the researcher felt it relevant to use purposive sampling in the study because with purposive sampling the participants are chosen with a purpose that they are the relevant sources for the study and they will give precise information required pertaining to the topic. The second type of sampling method utilised was quota sampling. For Khotari (2004), quota sampling is a method where the researcher gathers representative data from individual of a specific subgroup. In this research study the researcher gathered data from students with disabilities which is a representative of what the student with disabilities at the PMB campus are facing. This was achieved through having students with disabilities from different age groups and different genders.

The process employed in choosing the participants to take part was through the researcher's own capabilities. The researcher already knew who to approach as she knew exactly who would be of assistance. Formal communication was made in the form of Emails and other forms of communications such as WhatsApp messenger were employed to notify them about the plea for their participation. The reason for the choice of purposive sampling is that through interviewing students with disabilities of the UKZNP, the quality of information will be rich and useful as the topic touches them directly.

#### **4.4. Data Analysis and Presentation**

An interpretative analysis was used to analyse the data which had been collected. One of the major objectives of an interpretative research is to put together people's words, observations, and documents into a comprehensible picture which is expressed through the voices of the participants (Jessup & Trauth 2000:12). All data collected was presented according to themes and all the results gathered were presented in the form of discussions as the project took the direction of being an interpretative research project.

#### **4.5. Ethical Issues**

In the conduction of the research there were no ethical issues which were encountered. This is due to the reason that during the application for ethical clearance to the ethics committee all the necessary requirements for a research project were met accordingly, hence full ethical clearance awarded. While the study is about disability, the study did not include persons with

intellectual disabilities. This exclusion meant that the research did not have to deal with some ethical issues related to mental disabilities. Moreover, although research related to disability issues has ethical considerations, it is worth noting that this research study served as an emancipatory research study. The study had aimed to hear the cries of the disabled students which is thought to have made them feel empowered as there was someone who is actually interested in how they feel they are treated in the university.

#### **4.6. Confidentiality and informed consent**

Confidentiality was essential in the conduction of this research project. The researcher provided informed consent forms to participants. In these forms, participants were briefed of all the necessary information which is important for the research. During the interviews there was no need for the participants to give personal information such as their name or any other personal information. The participants were also advised of counselling services should they need them. In the construction of research questions and research instruments, the researcher avoided personal and sensitive questions which might have made the respondent feel as though they are being “attacked” in one way or the other. For the distribution of the informed consent form, it was made available in accessible formats for students with visual impairments. This was done through emailing them the informed consent prior the scheduled interview date. During the interview sessions none of the participants were forced into taking part in the study.

#### **4.7. Limitations to the study**

One of the major limitations of the study was actually getting the students to actually partake in the study. This was due to the fact that by the time I had received full ethical clearance, the 2017 academic year was coming to an end. Thus, most students were busy either completing their assignments or preparing for the final examination. Therefore, the participants for this ended up being less than I had first proposed.

Secondly another setback or limitation in the conduction of the research was the unfortunate situation whereby I could not utilize the DSU boardroom due to the coordinator of the DSU not being able to authorize for the utilization of the boardroom. Furthermore, the students were not willing to go to the disability unit for the conduction of the interviews as they felt that it will be time consuming. The reasons they put forward were that they are most of the time occupied by their academic demands during the day. Another reason for not utilising the DSU boardroom was it is not always the case that they spend most of their time at the disability unit. Therefore, I had to find an alternative approach to conducting the interviews

which was by informing my supervisor of the problem at hand. The solution to the problem was that I rather conduct these interviews at the convenience of the respondents/ participants. Permission was then granted to me and I was therefore able to actually go into their different personal spaces (residences) respectively in order to be able to get the information required.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has given a detailed discussion of the techniques which have been used in the process of conducting the research. Since the research is qualitative in nature it has been discussed extensively ensuring that all relevant subtopics are covered. Chapter five which is the following chapter is a presentation of data collected through interviews and observations.

## Chapter Five

### Presentation of Results

#### 5. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present empirical data obtained from the respondents of this research. A total of 15 interviews were conducted with the informants. It must be noted that in most instances the respondents' response 'quotes are presented verbatim and in italics with an intention of distinguishing them from the general discussion of other findings. Furthermore, it must be noted that other information, data was also collected through observation. The data collection process happened over a period of about a month and two weeks. In quest of analysing data that was acquired, this was done by categorizing sections distinctively into four. This was further broken down to prominent themes namely, profile of respondents, general problems, limitations and difficulties encountered, services provided by support structures and the attitude of the University Community towards students with disabilities.

#### 5.1. Map of Pietermaritzburg Campus

It is appropriate that this chapter begins with a presentation and a discussion of the map of Pietermaritzburg campus. Located in KwaZulu-Natal province, Pietermaritzburg is the second biggest city and the capital of the province. Scattered all over the University campus are five student residences which are residences are: Petrie Hags, Petrie Lodge, Petrie ERH, WOB, and Denison. The map shows that Cecil Renaud Library is closer to Petrie Hags, Petrie Lodge, Petrie ERH and WOB while the Law Library is closer to Denison residences. The map also shows major gates. What the map does not show various turnstile gates that allow able-bodied individuals to use short-cut when they are going various places on campus. However, students with physical disabilities, especially those who use wheelchairs are not able to use these turnstile gates. They therefore have to take longer route to go to various destinations on campus. Lecture venues and offices are in the Old Main Building (OMB), New Arts Building (NAB) and Commerce Building.

Table 5.1.2 show distances, in metres, between various residences and lecture venues and libraries, while Table 5.1.3 show distances, in metres, between lecture venues.

Figure 5.1.1: Map of Pietermaritzburg campus with lecture venues, libraries and residences

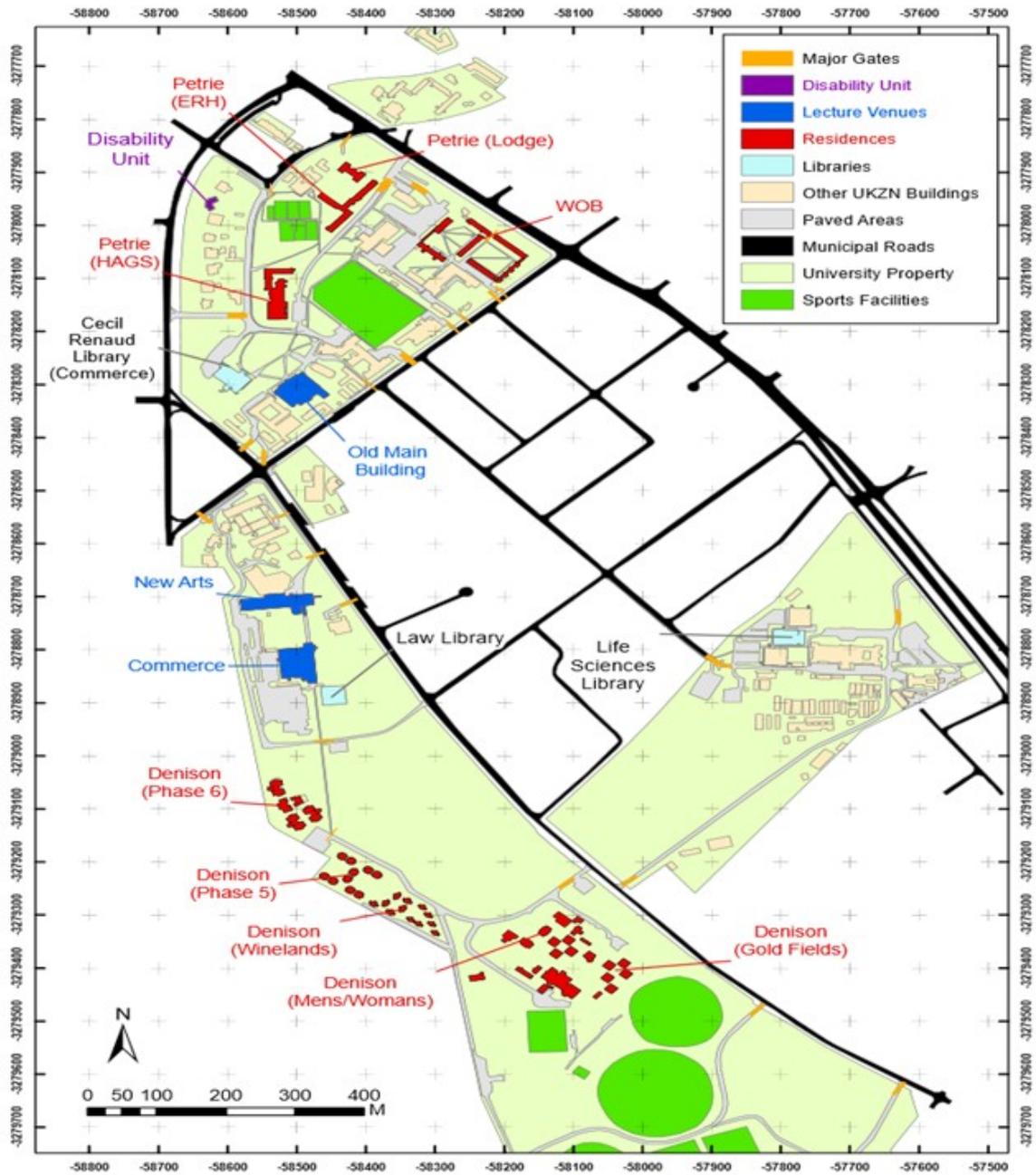


Table 5.1.2 Distance between residences and lecture venues and libraries

Student residences	Lecture venues				
	Old Main Building	New Arts Building	Commerce lecture venues	Cecil Renaud library	Law library
Petrie lodge	538.5m	12223,1m	1374m	540.1m	1375m
Petrie ERH	461.5m	1146.1m	1297m	480m	1299m
Petrie Hags	192.3m	876.9m	1030m	195.2m	1033m
William O'Brien	492,3m	1176,9m	1330m	498,1m	1332m
Denison phase 5	604,5m	592,4m	438,5m	610,1m	439,2m
Denison Winelands	698,5m	677m	523,1m	703,1m	520,1m

Source: Compiled by Author

Table 5.1.3 Distances between lecture venues

Lecture venues	Distance in Metres
Old Main Building to New Arts Building	484,6m
New Arts Building to Commerce	153,9m
Commerce to Old Main Building	838,5m

Source: Compiled by Author

From what is shown from table 5.1.2 it is very much evidence that students with disabilities travel more than 900m from their respective residences. This is especially the case for students that reside at Petrie Lodge, Petrie ERH and Petrie Hags. The distance is greatest from Petrie Lodge to NAB and the least is travelling from Denison Winelands to Commerce Building.

However, for students residing in Denison either phase 5 or Winelands it take them less than 700m to travel from their residences to either NAB or Commerce. Furthermore, the table shows that students residing in Denison Phase 5 or Denison Winelands travel more than 600m to get to OMB. The table labelled 5.1.3, shows that the greatest distance travelled by students with disabilities is from Commerce to OMB, and the shortest distance being from NAB to Commerce.

## **5.2. Profile of buildings in the Pietermaritzburg campus where students with disabilities attend.**

During the data collection period a lot of the students complained about the venues in which they attend in. Students with disabilities mostly attend in three venues within the campus. These buildings include the Old Main Building (OMB), the New Arts Building (NAB) and the Commerce building. These venues are problematic to the students because of these reasons, to be outlined. Firstly, the Old Main Building does not have any elevators within it to ensure accessibility, and most of the students who participated in this study attended or still attend in this building. The building is a two-story building. The problem is that without the elevator it makes it difficult for a physically disabled student (wheelchair users) to attend lectures or even consult with lecturers. The venue has two main entrances which are the front and back entrances. However, the front entrance does not have any ramps; it is only has a stair case way. This is shown by the picture labelled figure 5.2.1.

Although the building may have a back entrance which is accessible to wheelchair users and crutch users but there are times where the door is closed. It is there and then that the assistance of Risk Management Services (RMS) is needed. By virtue of this happening the student is then delayed for their lectures.

Figure 5.2.1 Picture showing the front entrance of the Old Main Building.



Source: Taken by Author

The New Arts Building, is also a building with a lot of staircases which lead to lecture halls, tutorial halls and administration or lecturers' offices. It must also be noted that it is a triple storey building. Students with disabilities therefore rely on the elevators as their aid to reaching these locations. Thus, a problem arises for students with disabilities when elevators are not working. . An example of the stair cases that students have to use is depicted by figure 5.2.2.

Figure 5.2.2. Picture showing an alternate entrance students with disabilities have to use if the lift is not working.



Source: Taken by Author

Moreover, the commerce building is no difference from Old Main Building. This is because there is an entrance with stair cases which is normally used by the “able bodied” students and there is an entrance for wheelchair users. The problem begins in lecture theatres like the C12. The make of this lecture venue is an auditorium setting and it is not so friendly for students using wheelchairs and those who are partially sighted. This is so because they have to sit at the back of the theatre all the time. This then has destructive effects on the students because these students would be unable to either record or take down notes effectively as there is a great distance between the lecturer and the student. The setup of these lecture halls is shown in figure 5.2.3.

Figure 5.2.3. Picture showing the front and back view of the commerce lecture venue, specifically C12.



Source: Taken by Author

As an individual with lack of balance, when elevators are not working or when access to the lecture venue is through the stair cases, I had to find someone to accompany me to class or defer attending the class altogether as I was fearful that I might fall and injure myself. The case was similar at the main campus when I had to attend in the Old Main Building which has stair cases to lecture venues. This was very emotionally draining as I was constantly reminded of the difficulty awaiting me, so I relied on my friends to walk with me to class. The other problem is that lecture venues are far apart while there is only ten minutes between lectures. Thus, because of distance between lecture venues, ten minutes between lectures is not sufficient for a physically disabled student to move from one lecture venue to another. Lecture venues are also far from residential areas, thus I would have to leave my residence area early so as to have enough time to walk and to get to class on time.

The participants made it clear that they appreciate it when given opportunities to be independent as this enables them to show case their talents. This also takes away the stereotype of a person with disability as a dependent person. In essence, despite their various disabilities, the participants felt that they should be treated like all other students. However, they were of the view that they should be afforded opportunities by the university which should ensure that their disabilities are catered for to enable them full participation in university activities.

### 5.3. Profile of the participants

The envisioned population sample of the participants was a total number of fifty (50) students with disabilities. However, the number had to be reduced as far as to have fifteen (15) students with disabilities as participants of the study. The reason behind the change of the population sample was due to the limited number of students with disabilities who were interested in partaking in the research study. Others at first seemed to be eager to participate but along the way when they were due for the interviews they would not avail themselves as they would have different excuses and some claimed to be having tight schedules.

The study chose to use students in second, third, fourth year and postgraduate students. The sole reason for this was because students at these levels of study will be more knowledgeable and would have experienced more challenges compared to the first years. The study was also liberal in terms of schools and colleges to focus on, i.e. there was no specific college of focus, and hence all colleges offered in the Pietermaritzburg Campus were included. During the process of data collection it was evident that for students with disabilities, their disabilities determine the college to which they will ultimately belong.

For example, a blind student may be interested in commerce related studies but due to their disability they will end up at the Humanities College as it is more accommodative to them. The study utilized quota sampling with the respondents categorised by gender. The 15 participants were split into 6 males and 9 females. This ratio reflects the fact that there are more female students with disabilities than male students with disabilities. The male to female ratio in the study's sample, also reflects the national demographics. The South African National Census of 2011 shows that, in South Africa, the number of females is greater than males. According to The South African National Census of 2011, in South Africa, there was a total of 26,581,769 females while males added up to 25,188,791. The choice of diverse sample allows the researcher to tap into the experiences of different segments of the population.

### 5.4. Age

Table 5.3.1 shows students with disabilities by age and gender. Most of the participants were in their twenties; there was only one incident of a participant being above thirty-five.

Table 5.4.1. Students with disabilities by age and gender

Age range	Number	of	Male	Female
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	participants		
18-25	12	6	6
26-35	2	2	0
35 and above	1	0	1
Total	15	8	7

SOURCE: compiled by author

Table 5.4.2. Shows students with disabilities by type of impairment and gender.

Nature of disability	Number of participants	Male	Female
Partially Sighted	4	3	1
Totally Blind	5	4	1
Physical Disability	5	1	4
Chronic Illness	1	0	1
Total	15	8	7

SOURCE: Compiled by author

As table 5.4.2. Shows, the study was made up of participants with different disabilities. Out of 15 participants, 4 are partially blind, 5 were totally blind, 5 had physical disabilities and 1 had a chronic illness. Furthermore, it must be noted that the participants were more than willing to engage with other students in any form be it academic discourse, social engagements and personal matters. It can be argued that this also plays a fundamental role in making the most of their independence and also develop their interpersonal skills. In essence, despite their various disabilities, the participants felt that they should be treated like all other students who are part of the institution/ University. However, they were of the view that they should be afforded such an opportunity by the university which should ensure that their disabilities are catered for to enable them full participation in university activities like all other students.

Table 5.4.3. Shows the number of participants in each level of study

Level of Study	Number of participants
First year	0
Second year	4

Third year	5
Fourth year	2
Honours	1
Masters	3
PhD	0

SOURCE: Compiled by Author.

### **5.5. Issues and challenges facing students with disabilities as highlighted by the participants**

A number of challenges were highlighted by the participants as obstacles to their full participation in their education more on the aspect of accessibility. Out of many challenges that they come across, lack of environmental/physical access and access to information and technologies were the ones which appeared to have more impact. A total of 73% of the interviewed population highlighted this as a major challenge or barrier that hinders them to actively participate and have equal access to facilities with others. This was presented as a concern by a number of participants who felt let down by the university.

#### **5.5.1. Issues and challenges encountered by students with disabilities as identified by SWDs.**

The participants pointed out their main challenges that they face in their everyday lives at the University. From the points gathered, the institution is portrayed as one that does not care for the disabled community even though there is a fully functional disability unit. Listed below are the challenges that are faced by students living with disabilities.

#### **5.5.2. Inspirations behind the choice of study field.**

The inspirations behind the courses that the participants are doing differed based on different reasons. It was also evident that most of the students are registered under the College of Humanities and only a few under the College of Law and Management. The main reason for their belonging to these two colleges was that it is only these two who are able to accommodate the different disabilities. For example, the College of Humanities is able to accommodate students with physical to visual impairments, hence the high number of students with disabilities in this college. The College of Law and Management can also accommodate all disabilities except for those students who are totally blind. The reason for this is there is no teaching alternative to accommodate blind students more especially in

graphical lectures. Therefore, as a result for some the courses that they are doing are not out of their own personal liking but is circumstantial. Therefore, yet again accessibility is also an influencer to the type of course that students undertake. For example, a blind student may be passionate about Agricultural sciences but due to their disability they cannot take that course. These are responses gathered from the participants. One of the participants, Laurencia, a female student responded this way:

For me what I can say inspired my choice of study is my disability. I am registered under the school of social sciences and am doing my honours in Anthropology studies. Although it is not what I am passionate about I have grown to love and enjoy it. However, my passion is in Accounting, I even have past qualifications in Accounting but because I am a totally blind student I am unable to do so. I acquired my disability at the age of 35 years.

With regard to physical accessibility, Zama, a female participant had this to say:

Mina ngangiyithanda iGeography kodwa ke ngenxa yenkinga yamehlo eyangiqala ngenza ugrade eight (8) uthando lwayo lwaya ngokuphela. Enye into eyayingi discourage(er) kwakungukuthi uThisha wami wayengakuqondi mangithi angiboni uma sifunda iblazwe. Konke lokhu kwakwenzeka amehlo ami engaka valeki.( I used to love Geography as a subject before I became totally blind, but due to my eye problem that started when I was in Grade 8, that love and passion slowly decreased. One of the other reasons for the decreasing love and passion for geography was that my teacher would never understand when I told her that I cannot see, more especially when we studied maps.) So then through attending schools for the blind after I became blind had then changed my passion from graphical subject but now to more theoretical subjects. Therefore my choice of modules at tertiary level. Currently I am doing my final year in Anthropology and isiZulu studies.

However there were cases where it was found that the students actually love what they are doing and their disability does not stop them from succeeding in their respective colleges and courses. Mloni, a male participant had the following to say about what inspired her choice of course of study.

As a partially sighted and a student with Albinism, the course that I am doing which is economics I am really enjoying it like I did back in high school. Although I have a disability but it does not meddle with the way I perform or cope with my studies as I am using eye glasses, they are what assists me with seeing graphs and other graphical representations that we use in class.

Scelo also made it a point that he loves what he does. This is what he had to say:

Oh I love dealing with numbers. Like I mean numbers and me are hand and glove. The problem I have with my being a partially sighted student does not discourage me in any way, as I am able to cope with graphs and all that goes into accounting studies.

In addition, similar sentiment were shared by other participants like Sindiswa, Xolo, and Mandla.

Furthermore, for participants like Sithabiso, Jobe, Slindile, Lungelo, Nsika and Simlindile the choice of the field of study was imposed by conditions. For example, Jobe a male participant had this to say:

It had always been my dream from a very young age to become a civil engineering, but God had his own plan about me and my fate. I became blind at the age of 15 years. Thereafter I was compelled to moving from mainstream schooling to schools which could accommodate my disability. When I started in schools for the blind I found that there were no subjects which could make my dream come true and besides I stood no chance anyway. I then groomed into more of a theoretical way of learning and I can that doing the cause I am doing now is not out of my choice.

This is the response from Nsika, a male participant.

well for me although being partially sighted, I do like what I am doing but my real passion was in electrical engineering, but due to my disability which seems to be worsening I had no choice but to choose something else when I came to varsity. It was my medical check-ups that had confirmed that my eyes will not be able to cope with the strain that comes with the field hence I had to reconsider my options.

### **5.5.3. Physical Access to the University facilities**

Students showed that they understood the importance of attending lectures. Most of the respondents, who noted that they have accessibility challenges are those students who have physical disabilities. Most of these students have a huge problem when they have to attend classes where the venues are not on the ground floor and where there are not working elevators. As a result, these students end up arriving late for their lectures. One of the participants, Zola, a female student responded this way:

As a student who resides at Petrie ERH, one of my major problems as a student with spastic deplegia, which is a physical disability, is with attending my classes on time. This is more of challenge to me especially if I have to attend at New Arts Building only to find that the lift is not working and this will mean that I will have to walk up the stairs. This takes me about up to a good 2 to 2 and half minutes as it is very difficult to walk up a flight of stairs using crutches. I therefore get to class very late even though my lecturers are aware of my disability and what it comes with. Even though academic letters are given out by the DSU stating my disability and what I require, then lecturers do not seem to care much. I say this not because I want to be felt sorry for. There should be a sense of caring in that maybe the lecture should try to reserve the front row for me or any other student with a disability. I say all this because most of the time I arrive to class having to find that they are half way through the lecture. This will mean that I have to sit at the back, thereby becoming lost for a few minutes before being able to catch up with the rest of the class again.

With regard to physical accessibility, Mandla, a male participant had this to say:

Well firstly I reside at the William O'Brien hall well known as WOB on the ground floor as it is a double story building. One of the issues that I have faced in my field of study is reaching my class in time. Although, I am not physically disabled but the disability I have leads to shortness of blood in my system due to renal failure thus resulting in shortage of strength to walk. This means that I have to take regular breaks along the way to lectures. The distance travelled from my residence area to the commerce also has a role to play.

Lungelo, a male participant, added:

The issue I mainly struggle with is access to lecture theatres. This is because it requires long distance travelling which means that by the time I get to class I am already tired, this is the case even in the mornings when I travel from Denison winelands. Also, there is not enough time between lectures for one to travel from one venue to the next. Being physically disabled means that I have to minimise my mobility in order to conserve strength and UKZN does not allow that.

With such utterances it is very clear that physical accessibility is the main struggle for those students who are physically disabled. The main cause of frustration for students with disabilities is the absence of working elevators there are also those students who are partially sighted and have difficulties when they have to take down notes from the lecture slides. This happens more if they have to sit at the back of the lecture hall.

Nsika, a male participant had this to say:

I am a partially sighted student so reading small print was a bit difficult; I didn't have difficulty in reaching lecture halls and classes.

Niska's comments were supported by Mlonde:

For me as I am and visually impaired – severely partially sighted, I have a major problem when I have to be accommodated in the classroom. Most of the time I am late and have to sit at the far back where I cannot see what is being reflected by the lecture slides. The reason for my lateness is that I have to walk at a much slower pace so as to navigate my paths properly. Another reason for me being late is that I reside at WOB. Sitting there in the back is the same as not being in class as it is a noisy area as it is always crowded.

Lastly, Dikeledi also shared her experience towards physical access within the University.

This was her response:

For me as a student who uses a manual wheelchair attending lecture theatres is not my only problem. I mean as I stay in Denison Phase 5. This is the only part of Denison residence which is wheelchair friendly. I always have to worry about as to whether the side gate at 75th avenue is working or not, like I don't have other stressors urgh!! In times when the side gate is not functioning I have to call the RMS office at the main campus who have to further contact the technicians who take their own time to come

render their assistance. This then results to me losing out on a lecture or arriving very late, which really annoys me.

However, students who are visually impaired and have personal assistants they do not really face any challenges accessing the physical environment.

This is what Slindile had to say in this regard.

As a totally blind student who resides in Petrie Hags I can safely say that I normally do not face any challenges with accessing my lecture venues. This is so because my personal assistant and I usually leave a bit early to avoid not finding place to sit in the front row in lecture halls. However, if it happens that, we arrive late even though I may be at the back or in the middle rows, it is my assistant who hands over the recorder to the lecturer for it to be on the podium. By doing so my lecturers do not have any problems as we have a good relationship and they understand my disability.

For some blind students who do not have personal assistance it is a different story. This is so because they encounter different obstacles along the way which disturbs their navigation to lecturers. This is how Sthabiso responded:

For me even though I stay far from my lecture venues as I reside at WOB I do not really need anybody to assist me along the way. This is because most of my lectures are at the Old Main Building and I am used to depending on my white cane for assistance and I feel independent enough to walk alone. Therefore, I can easily go there hassle free but the problem starts when there are constructions happening on campus which some end up blocking my normal route. Eish, when this happens, I feel frustrated because I end up getting lost and end up looking like a stupid and disorganised individual, but if this happens when going to OMB I think it's better than it happening going to NAB. This is because like the route to NAB is already complicated now just imagine being obstructed by a construction and the constructors are not there. It will then mean that I will arrive late because I need to find my way all over again.

Zama also shared her experience similar to that of Sthabiso. This is what she had to say:

For the years that I have spent in this campus I am able to locate all my lecture venues. Even when I decided to move to Denison Winelands from Petrie Hags I have not faced any troubles with arriving on time for my lectures despite that I attend at OMB. However, what I have found to be an obstruction to my navigation is the constant constructions at the 75<sup>th</sup> avenue gate. That is the only reason that makes me to be late for my lecture.

#### **5.5.4. Impact of financial accessibility**

The issue of finances is one which is very sensitive and close to the hearts of students. Therefore, if there is no financial assistance coming from the university to assist a student it can be a stressor as the student may need to find alternative to finance whatever it is that they

may be in need of. The participants of this study did not really indicate any problems on financial accessibility except for only one postgraduate student. Dikeledi is a Masters candidate who was not funded for the year 2017/18. Her situation of not being able to secure funding for her studies has adverse consequences. This was her response:

I have become personally equipped to get around campus. For example, I can manoeuvre around campus with much problem, but there are those times whereby I really need someone to assist me. It is times whereby I may need a door to be pushed. Photocopying a book or taking a book at the library shelf that I need a person who is physically fit. In order to be able to get someone to assist me in this regard I will have to pay that individual for their services. Therefore, I use a portion of my disability grant to employ a fellow student as my helper. He opens doors for me, gets books out of the library and uses the photocopier for me because it is too high for me to use comfortably from my wheelchair. This is because sometimes the library assistants are too busy and I might be in a rush. So just to avoid any delays I decided to have someone to assist me during the day in and around campus.

Dikeledi's narration shows that there is an issue of financial accessibility to her as a student. This is shown by the fact that she employed her friend as her helper and that payment is taken from her meal allowance. For her as a postgraduate student without any funding the only source of income is her disability grant which she has to take away a portion for someone to assist her. However, this was not the case for other students who participated in the study as they were either independent or still in their undergraduate studies and had not to worry about paying from their own pocket as the NSFAS bursary paid for personal assistance.

Although undergraduate students may face times where they have to pay out of their pockets, but it is for the fixing of damaged assistive devices as they can only quote them once from the Disability Support Unit. According to the participants it really does not interfere with their finances on a monthly basis.

This was Slindiles' response:

We are very fortunate to be beneficiaries of the NSFAS bursary as disabled students. I say this because the type of assistive devices that we require are much specialised and hence very expensive. Now just imagine if I had to install JAWS on my laptop from my pocket, eish! That would be very expensive. However, there are times when I need to pay from my own pocket and that is only if one of my devices is giving me problems like my laptop for example. Anyway that does not really have any significant impact on my finances because like I have my disability grant and meal allowance to sustain me throughout the month.

### 5.5.5. Access to information

Access to information is one of the most important aspect of university life for students. All students need to do their assignments and that requires one to have sufficient information in order to effectively complete their task. However, for visually impaired students especially those who are totally blind gaining access to information in platforms such as the library services is a challenge. For Zama, a female participant:

One of the prominent challenges is getting access to information through the library as there are no brailled books or even computers with the JAWS software.

Participants also voiced their dissatisfaction with the Disability Support Unit. For Slindile, a female participant:

...the long waiting list at the disability unit for reformatting of notes and this is caused by the shortage of staff and this leads to me being unable to start on time to study for tests and exams and to do assignments.

With regard to the services provided by the Disability Support Unit, Sthabiso, a male participant, added:

Mina (I) was once given my course pack a week before my final semester exams and I was doing my final year, had it not been that I had a study group which had become my source of reliance when it came to me being able to gather information. I would not have been able to cope more especially because for political science the notes were on the course reader which I happened not to be able to utilize. How can I forget my friends who understand my disability? They were also another way which I opted for as an alternate coping mechanism. They were always willing to assist me at all times and were also willing to host extra study sessions which carried me through to the end of second semester. This was possible because my friends were still in my class slots and hence I was able to pass my undergraduate studies.

Laurencia, a female participant, has similar experience:

One of the major problem that I have encountered is the access of the notes as they are in pdf format most of the time, although the DSU assists in the reformatting process but it takes forever to come back, one of my coping mechanism was study groups which were at times not productive as most of those part of my study group were not as eager as I was and hence I had a friend who was ahead of me and she was always willing to assist me. Another coping mechanism is to record lectures every time I attended class. Kodwa ke ukurekhoda akulula ngaleyo ndlela ikakhulu uma ngingakwazanga ukufika ngesikhathi Eklsaini. Inking iba sektheni ngigcina sengihleli emuva kanti ke akuve kunomsindo. Lokhu kuholela ektheni angazwakali kahle amarekhoding ami ngenxa yomsindo. Kanti ke futhi noThisha bami ababinankinga uma ngiba rekhoda. (However, it's not always so easy especially if I am late for class

and have to sit at the back of the lecture hall were there this a lot of noise. This then resulted in my recordings not be audible enough because of the fidgeting).

The only thing that the students can utilize as a coping mechanism is to rely on the recordings that they make in lecture halls. However, some students have encountered problems with the lecturers who did not see the need for recording lectures as students have textbooks and lecture note on Moodle.

This concern is reiterated by Jobe, a male participant:

Some lecturers do understand when I record their lectures as they teach in class as our relationship is healthy and they understand me and my disability and show a sense of care. I have been able to have this kind of relationship with them because they are always curious and want to learn more about my disability and as to how they can be of help to me in achieving the best results for my studies.

It was further discovered that it is not mainly students who are totally blind who have troubles with access to information but also the partially impaired suffer. Mlondi a male student had this to say:

Being partially sighted can be stressful more especially if there are no assistive devices to assist. Like for example, as a severely partially sighted student, reading sources from books or the computer screen either at the computer LANS or Library is a nightmare for me. It gets better when I get the materials in large print which is something that is not available around campus information facilities.

Lastly, due to the inability of students with disabilities to access the library and the LANS of the university, they rely on the Disability Support Unit and friends for information.

This is what Mlondi had to add:

Mina nje njengoba ngingakwazi ukubona imibhalo esezingcwadini zaseLibrary Kanye nokubhalwe kumakhompyutha angizixaki nje ngokuya lapho. Okungenani ngiziyela kuba ngani bami noma eDisability Support Unit ukuze ngizitholele engikudingayo. (I for one since I cannot see the writing on the library books and on computer screens at the LANS, I just go to my friends or consult the Disability Support Unit and just get what I need.)

#### **5.5.6. Level of support from the Student Representative Council**

There are mixed emotions when it comes to the level of support that the SRC gives to students with disabilities. Some believe that the SRC helps students as long as students raise their concerns with the SRC. Some students had cited a particular SRC member, Mungwe, who happens to be a disabled student and a member of the SRC at PMB. Some students with disabilities consider Mungwe to be the hope of the DSU student population as they are

somewhat more comfortable in engaging him as there is a sense of mutual understanding. This is the position of Xolo, a female participant:

Ngingathi nje uMungwe, (I would say Mungwe) since ekwiSRC uyena ithemba lethu (he is in the SRC, he is our hope) when it comes to addressing issues that we as DU students have, I say this as it is easy to engage him and he understands us better, by me saying that he understands us better I mean that as he is also from the disability unit he knows exactly what we need and require as well as our everyday challenges as students with disabilities.

While, some felt that he tries by all means to ensure that students' problems are sorted, others felt that he is just there for his own glorification and not that of the students. This is the position that is shared by Scelo, a male participant:

In my own view I feel that in as much as we may have someone like Mungwe within the SRC structure but, him being there for me does not make any difference. The reason for my expression is that I once had a very urgent matter which I wanted the SRC to resolve for me as it was a case of invasion of privacy, I did not get any support as I had requested for assistance which ended up in me getting nasty comments such as, I must forget as my case will not be attended to as the perpetrator was of a certain student organization. This to me as a blind person disappointed me and made me lose hope in the SRC as I had hoped that he would assist as I a disabled student who is totally blind and this incident was beyond my control.

Others such as Simlindile, a male participant prefer to consult other organisations rather than the SRC:

For me Nkosyam (My God) I do not really know if I can really say that the SRC assists us or not as I have never consulted with them on a personal level but rather if I have a problem I would rather consult with our own organisation/s if I need to be assisted with anything as I feel that I can easily communicate and relate with them much better.

There were also responses pertaining to the level of seriousness of the SRC to issues of students with disabilities during the course of the semester. Some respondents felt that the SRC shows issues of students with disabilities only during election campaigns. This is the position held by Sindiswa, a female participant:

.....ushoyiphi yona iSRC? (Which SRC are you referring to?) The only time I get to hear of the SRC is when there are upcoming SRC elections , ayke (hey) then that is the only time I get to know and hear of them when they go about knocking on our doorsteps pretending to be more concerned about our struggles....like really these things really irritate me really because at time you find that on their manifestos they make mention of disability students as though they know what they talking about abantu belokhu bekhankasa ngathi benzene ngathi bayasaz bebe bengaz lutho ngathi nx!!! (Finding people using us as their canvassing projects pretending as though they

know us while they know nothing about us Nx!!) so that is why I don't identify with the structure as I don't see their use because if they lived up to their manifestos then I am sure the DSU computer laboratory would be up and running as we speak and not what is happening now.

#### **5.5.7. Ways in which inadequacies of the SRC be improved in representation of students with disabilities**

As it was noted from the previous discussion there were differing views about the way that the SRC interacts with students with disabilities. Some thought they doing all they can to include students with disabilities while others felt they were just not budging. For those who felt that the SRC was not doing anything at all for students with disabilities had the following to say.

For Sindiswa a female participant had the following to say about improving the SRCs inadequacies:

Well as I said before I do not know anything about the SRC and the only way that this can be improved is by the structure making themselves more visible to the students with disabilities and show that they want to work with us.

Simlindile had a similar reaction to that of Sindiswa and she responded in this way:

Ey mina angazi noma kukhona yini okungashintshwa ngalaba Bantu (Ey!! I do not even think that there can be any improvements to these people.)

As for Scelo he just said

Maybe they can be improvements just that I do not know how at this point in time.

Furthermore, there was positive response on how the inadequacies of the SRC can be improved. For Xolo a female participant she responded this way:

Uhhh, I think the SRC can try better to consult with students with disabilities and the only way that they can achieve this is through liaising with the Disability Support Unit. This will enable them to actually know what the needs of students with disabilities are and how they can be addressed.

Laurencia also had a positive input to add.

Ahhh shame man these guys really try to come up to use and engage with us, well I don't know if they have just been good only to me but they do all they can to assist. However, I think that for where they fall short on disability issues like not doing any disability related programmes they should create a relationship with the Disability Support Unit. If they can do that then all will be alright for all of us.

#### 5.5.8. Inefficiency and inconsistency of the Disability Support Unit.

About 90% of the students who were interviewed and are registered under the disability unit feel that the disability unit is not efficient enough especially when it comes to the delivery of reformatted note for those students who have visual impairments, especially those who are totally blind. This concern is also raised by Simlindile.

Oh Nkosi Yam iDSU!!!Whew... njengabafundi abakhubazekile siyayijabulela impela indawo efana neDSU kepha iyodwa nje inkinga ngayo. (Oh my God the DSU!!! Whew!!As students with disabilities we appreciate the presence of the Disability unit, but there is only one problem with the office) we submit our reading materials on time to the Academics officer so as for them to relay the documents to the student assistants for them to reformat the work but only to find that you end up going to the DSU many times only to find your work not having being done. Most times when we ask as to why the office does not hire more staff, we are told that the Unit does not have any budget allocated to it, and then one wonders how that is possible as the office is recognized by the University.

The participant also commented on the inconsistency of the Disability Support Unit in terms of the contract length of the student assistants in that they are only hired for a period of six months which is too short and compromises the quality of the work that they do. Student assistants are trained to reformat the course materials and it takes practice before one can be said to be having the ability and skill of being able to execute the task of reformatting successfully. Laurencia, a female participant, points out the problems associated with short contracts and poor training of student assistants:

Yazi (You know) this thing of having to have different student assistants every six months is really ridiculous and senseless to me as this mostly affects us who are on the receiving end. Like I mean according to my own understanding being a student requires one to be able to execute their tasks very well as the end product will be used by another student and their success depends on what they have been given as study material, example last year 2017 we faced a huge problem as visually impaired students of the DSU of PMB Campus as the student assistants of the second semester were unable to spell simple words like “Sign” and this was very irritating to a student who is being offered the scribing services, like Mfwethu(My Sister) just imagine having to do that till the end of a test uyoze uyikhohlwe nento obufuna ukuyisho (You will end up forgetting what you wanted to say ), it would be understandable if it was a case of module or school based terms but just ordinary vocabulary, it’s shocking.

From the above responses it is clear that there are a lot of issues and challenges that the students with disabilities community are facing. It seemed like some are known but just that they are ignored as the students have learned to be resilient and independent individuals as they have found alternative methods of coping with whatever challenges that they might be

faced with at that particular point in time. Secondly, another issue which is felt to have been ignored is that of the DSU not being allocated budget which will enable it to hire more permanent staff more especially student assistants as it is felt and seen that their presence is of crucial importance design to the level of delicacy of their jobs. Lastly the SRC as well can be said to be ignorant of these issues and challenges. One of the participants, Sindiswa, felt that the SRC only knows students living with disabilities when it comes to election periods. This means that the SRC is aware of the struggles of SWDs but just chooses to turn a blind eye on these issues instead of making attempt to getting a solution.

### **Conclusion**

The chapter has been a descriptive chapter. The chapter was able to give a lot of information on all that was included in the chapter and in the process of data collection and the results which were collected during this period. Firstly, the profile of the buildings in the Pietermaritzburg campus where students with disabilities attend was given. Secondly, the profile of the participants was discussed which was were by the number of respondents who were expected to participate in the study was made mention of. In addition, the chapter went on to discuss the responses of the participants taken from the questions which were created to gain insight on certain aspects. The main purpose of these questions was to establish a sense of understanding of the challenges and issues faced by students with disabilities in the campus of PMB. However, there were also ignored issues that emerged and are believed to make the lives of students with disabilities even harder in their struggle for survival in the institution. The next chapter will be analysing the results collected in chapter five using the theories relating to the topic.

## Chapter Six

### Data Analysis

#### 6. Introduction

The previous chapter presented data that was collected; the current chapter will analyse these data. This will be done by looking at which issues had emerged during the process of data collection. Firstly, issues that emerged in the previous chapter will be discussed and analysed using the research theories chosen in chapter three. Secondly, the chapter will be discussing exactly how the participants were feeling or their emotional status when they were responding to the questions designated for getting insight about what the students are still facing at the University environment. Lastly a befitting conclusion will be drawn on the chapter.

During data collection there was quite a several number of ‘unknown’ issues which arose. It appeared that these issues and challenges are pushed under the carpet instead of them being resolved. The resolution of these issues would assist and ensure that the lives of students with disabilities are made better. This University policy on disabilities talks about the university’s preparedness to eliminate all barriers which may stand in the way of this segment of the university community. This will enable students with disabilities to be given an equal chance of becoming successful like the rest of the university population. However, this is only good on paper just as the rest of the policies. This is because there are still barriers which stand in the way of success of the students with disabilities of the Pietermaritzburg campus.

#### 6.1. Financial Accessibility

As argued by Kennedy, Austin, and Smith (1987) financial accessibility is when an individual has financial means to attain whatever it may be that they require. The inefficiency and inconsistency of the Disability Support Unit is one of the recurring themes in participants ‘responses

There are certain services which end up not being provided by the unit due to insufficient funding. Among these issues are printing services which are useful while students are awaiting their assistive devices.

These assistive devices are meant to make their lives easier as the students are given printers together with laptops and other devices that one may need as per their disability.

Nonetheless, even though the students might be getting these devices, but the process involved in getting them is lengthy. One of the participants, Laurencia, a female student, had this to say:

Assistive devices are very much helpful to us, but the problem starts when we are not allowed to apply for the same device/s twice. I mean like what am I to do because even our monthly allowances are not sufficient for me to purchase another item should the one, I have get damaged. For example, if my laptop decides to crash and fixing it is similar to buying a new one, the DSU does not allow for me to apply for a new one. This will mean that as a visually impaired student I will suffer a lot as I will not be in possession of a laptop and even if I do manage to get my work typed getting it printed out will be another problem. Printing at the disability support unit is problematic as we often told that we should bring our own paper as the unit does not have any and is running out of ink, like really now. This perplexes me as the LANS throughout the university are always supplied with paper every day and just imagine how many people go there to print and in different quantities at that.

Insufficient funding for the DSU leads to insufficient staffing for the office. The DSU in Pietermaritzburg has one permanent staff member the co-ordinator of the unit, and the rest of the staff members are on six months contractual basis. The high staff turnover rate has negative implication for students with disabilities. This means that the DSU has to train new people every six months. The result is that there are delays in providing services that students with disabilities need.

Therefore, when one looks at this scenario it is clear that students with disabilities, to a certain extent, do not have financial accessibility as they are unable to purchase devices which may be damaged. As a result, they have to look for other alternatives to enable them to reach their final goal and this means going to the extent of asking someone to type out their work for them. People might react to that request differently as some might require payment and others might not, and what makes it worse is that they are unable to get sufficient support from their only 'home' which is the DSU as it is unable to provide certain services.

Taking into consideration the above discussions, the accessibility model is very much relevant in this regard as it speaks to factors that determines one level of accessibility in one aspect affecting their lives. In this case the element of the accessibility model that best fits is financial accessibility as identified earlier. Financial accessibility plays a big role in the lives of disabled students in institutions of higher learning. This is so because disabled students are in need of special equipment or assistive devices to assist them with their academics more especially which happen to be pricy. Therefore without funding assistance from NSFAS

through the disability funding or any other funding assistance the academic life of a disabled student can be hard, as they are limited in the kinds of resources that they are able to gain full access to. a student with a visual impairment (totally blind or partially sighted) for example, they will experience difficulties in having full or partial access to the facilities provided for by the institution as they do not have the proper software's which enable full accessibility to facilities such as computer LANs.

## **6.2. Physical Accessibility**

Physical accessibility is the ability for the environment to allow individuals to be able to utilize the resources which it provides. For Hasanzada (2002) physical accessibility requires an evaluation of whether an individual with a disability can use or gain access to the physical environment together with its resources that are provided for by the environment. For example, the computer LANS provided by the university, are not physically accessible to a student with a visual impairment or those who use wheelchairs.

A totally blind student cannot make use of computers which are provided since they lack appropriate software which is JAWS or Zoomtext. The printers as well are inaccessible for the very same reason. The credits machines which students use to load printing credits are inaccessible to totally blind students and those students who use wheelchairs. These machines are too high for a student on a wheelchair.

When a follow up question was posed to one of the female participants, Xolo on the issue the disability unit, on whether the coordinator is aware of what is happening in the LANS and other facilities that are used by students her response was that

well our co-ordinator is office based like her work requires but she really needs to gout there and have a look at our experiences and challenges and not just accept what she is told by us, maybe then things can be different, and we can be also comfortable on campus, because at times the environment really gets frustrating.

Another aspect of physical accessibility is the distance between residences and lecture venues, and the distance between lecture venues. Another aspect of physical accessibility is the distance between residences and lecture venues, and the distance between lecture venues. Table 5.1.3 shows that the distance between Commerce Building and OMB is 800m. A totally blind who stays at Petrie Lodge has to walk 1374m to Commerce Building. This

student will need more time to go this lecture venue especially because the path has a lot of obstacles.

Moreover, a student residing in Denison either Phase 5 or Winelands is not immune to this predicament. For a student using a wheelchair it may also take them longer to get to OMB due to faulty side gates as they have to wait for assistance from RMS.

The findings and also from the descriptions off the buildings provided in the previous chapter revealed that UKZN has failed to comply with its own Disability Policy and to adhere to recommendations made by the DWCPD and CRPD, since the majority of its buildings are old and inaccessible. The researcher also observed that elevators are often dysfunctional while there are lecture halls which are on 2nd and 3rd floors. Thus, a person who is a wheelchair user cannot reach these lecture venues without using an elevator. From personal experience, I had found some of my lecture venues to be inaccessible to me as a physically disabled student. For example, the NAB, and OMB. At NAB what made the venue inaccessible to me was when the elevators were dysfunctional and I had to utilize the stairs instead. As for the Commerce Building it is the lecture venues like C12 which are inaccessible more especially to wheelchair users.

### **6.3. Student Representative Council -Students with disabilities relations: The limit of majoritarian liberal democracy**

Another issue that emerged is that of the level of support from the SRC to students with disabilities. Both the SRC and students with disabilities depend on each other. However, data gathered indicate that SWDs feel that the SRC does not understand their needs. Some of the interviewees believe that the SRC uses their needs as tools for election campaigning. This become obvious when they assume office and neglect all the election promises that they made. Data collected show the weaknesses of majoritarian democracy. Majoritarian democracy discard the interest of minorities in the post-election period. This type of democracy further side lines the fact that students are regarded as key stakeholders at institutions of higher education and training as argued by Menon (2003) and Barnett (1998:249). They also argue that the views of all those who form part of the student population their views and opinions matter.

As a result there is a need for a more accommodating democratic setting such as consociational democracy. The employment of this kind of power sharing democracy will

thereby ensure that all groups within the campus of Pietermaritzburg more especially the disabled minority group also get representation within the student leadership structure as illustrated by the arguments of Lijphart discussed in chapter three. The SRC is always keen to take the student population's funding issues and other student related matters. However, the SRC tends to drag its feet when an issue faces only SWD since the SRC believes that the DSU will handle the issue. With consociational democracy the occurrence of situations such as the above mentioned can be limited. This will be achieved as those representing the minorities will be able to veto any decision taken by the majority which is to the detriment of the minority. Moreover, students with disabilities end up having an attitude of apathy towards participating in student politics as they feel that the student governance structure does not serve their needs as stakeholders but that of their own as leaders.

In conclusion the majority of the issues that were identified by the students of PMB seem to be revolving around the lack of support from the leadership structure of the campus in particular.

#### **6.4. Social Accessibility**

Rickers-Ovsiankina (1956), social accessibility explores the ability of the facilities to meet the needs of all its users. Social accessibility also looks at how facilities allow for the interaction of able-bodied individuals and individuals living with disabilities. Lecture venues with stair only and no wheelchair ramps or elevators are thus socially inaccessible. Thus, lecture venues in OMB, as discussed in the previous chapter, are socially inaccessible. Lecture venues whose layout restrict students with disabilities to the back of the classroom are also socially inaccessible, since students with disabilities cannot freely interact with other students.

Furthermore, the participants also pointed out their inspirations for their choice of study at this university. It was evident that most of the students were not really passionate about what they are doing currently in their tertiary endeavours. For some students the fields that they are doing are determined by their respective disabilities while others are fortunate to be doing what they love. From the sentiments shared by students it can be linked to social accessibility. This is so because it is evident that for those students who are doing what they do not love is because they are unable to utilise facilities which non-disabled students are able to use.

### 6.5. Perceptual Accessibility

Perceptual accessibility contains the claim that, in perceiving an object, an individual also evaluates his or her capability function in that world. A student with a disability may for example, look at physical inaccessibility of lecture halls and decide that they will not be able to enrol for a particular program. Data presented in the fifth chapter indicates that most of the students living with disabilities are not able to choose the study program that they want because of existing structures that do not accommodate them.

A student with a disability may also have low esteem and self-confidence with regards to their ability to utilize facilities provided by the institution. Such facilities may include computer LANS and sources of information in libraries (e.g. Books). The utilization of computers is of importance and therefore should one not be able to use the computers effectively they may not see themselves fit enough for a tertiary environment. These instances are seen in the data presented in the previous chapter when Mlondi a male participant had this to say:

Mina nje njengoba ngingakwazi ukubona imibhalo esezingcwadini zaseLibrary Kanye nokubhalwe kumakhompyutha angizixaki nje ngokuya lapho. Okungenani ngiziyela kuba ngani bami noma eDisability Support Unit ukuze ngizitholele engikudingayo. (I for one since I cannot see the writing on the library books and on computer screens at the LANS, I do not bother going to the library or the computer LANS. I just go to my friends or consult the Disability Support Unit and just get what I need.)

Given the structural challenges in the library and in computer LANS, some of the participants no longer even bother visiting these facilities. With the above utterances from students with disabilities it shows that there are times whereby they just feel that it is their peers who can be of assistance to them as the institution has failed to accommodate for students with disabilities. However, the reliance on assistance from other students may have financial implication, especially in cases where DSU is unable to pay for these services. Once more one can see that with consociational democracy being used a lot of other issues aside from lack support for disabled students from the SRC can be successfully given the attention they deserve to a point of finding solutions towards them. For example, if there is to be a representative for the disabled community in UKZNP students will not have to be facing troubles of accessibility to certain facilities including accessibility to study programs and there will be a sense of equality amongst students of PMB Campus.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has been able to give an analysis of the findings obtained in the data collection process. The analysis of the data was done through the use of the relevant theories which were identified in chapter three. The chapter had five sections which stemmed from the issues which emerged in the previous chapter. These sections included financial accessibility, physical accessibility, the SRC and SWD relationship, social accessibility and perceptual accessibility. These sections were discussed through looking at how they promote or hinder accessibility challenges for SWDs in the PMB campus of UKZN.

## Chapter Seven

### Conclusions and recommendations

#### 7. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter is to provide concluding remarks to the research study and also provide recommendations to problem areas identified. The first chapter of the research study had provided a view to what the research study project will be about. The second chapter then went on to review different scholarly literature on the accessibility of higher education institutions to students with disabilities. Different policy frameworks were also discussed which guide the accommodation of students with disabilities in institutions of higher education and training. The chapter also reviewed literature on student governance in institutions of higher education.

Furthermore, the third chapter of the research study focused on the theoretical framework of the study. The chapter discussed the accessibility model and the theory of consociational democracy which were used as analytical lenses for this research.

Assuming that the political landscape consists of identifiable segments, consociational democracy proposes power-sharing among the elected representative. Consequently, chapter three also discussed the concept of people living with disabilities as a minority. Accessibility model provide a tool for looking at different dimensions of accessibilities, namely, perceptual, financial, social, and physical.

The fourth chapter discussed the different research methodology tools that were used by this study. The chapter also discussed ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

Chapter five of the study then focused on the results that were gathered by the researcher from the participants. The following chapter, chapter six then analysed the results gathered in chapter five by utilizing the theories identified in chapter three.

#### 7.1. Summary of the main findings and conclusions

There were three outstanding findings that the research was able to attain. These are considered to being the causes for the accessibility challenges faced by students with disabilities in the university of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg campus. These issues

included the following which will be summarised in terms of what was said by the respondents.

There were a lot of comments, from participants, about the Disability Support Unit. One of the important issues that concerned the participants was insufficient budget which then result in under-staffing of DSU. Under-staffing and reliance on short term contracts impact negatively on students with disabilities. The second issue of concern is that of the relationship that exists between students with disabilities and the local student representative council. This lack of substantive representation is responsible for inadequate attention to the issues facing students with disabilities. The participants also felt that negative stereotypes about people with disabilities were responsible for poor support for candidates with disabilities. Participants in this study also felt that the SRC tend to renege on its responsibility of representing students with disabilities by claiming that it is the responsibility of DSU to attend to the interests of this student segment.

Another concern that was raised by participants has to do with access to resources necessary for their studies. Participants felt that the library was not accessible to students with disabilities, especially the visually impaired students and students who use wheelchairs. The LANS are also not accessible, especially to visually impaired students and students who use wheelchairs. This lack of access to resources further entrench the stereotype that students with disabilities are dependent. Participants also raised their concerns on lecture venues. The first concern is the distance between lecture venues and student residences. The second concern is the distance between lecture venues which contributes to late arrival to attend lectures. There is also a concern with lecture venues that are either on the second or third floor. A challenge arises when there are either no elevators, or when elevators are not functioning.

The issue of finances was not much of a problem for disabled students more so the ones in the undergraduate studies. However, it was problematic for postgraduate students as they do not get any funding from NSFAS or the institution. It was evident that a student will have to use their disability grant which is not much to ensure that they are able to get whatever it is that they may be in need of.

## **7.2. Recommendations**

As a point of departure it is of cardinal importance to take into consideration the findings of this study which are stated above. There are accessibility problems relating to the courses that

students with disabilities end up doing in universities, and it was evident that course choices of these students are circumstantial. One of the challenges that SWDs face in universities, more especially, is with lecturers as some fail to accommodate and assist SWDs appropriately. This therefore calls for awareness campaigns aimed at the academic staff of the university. This will therefore ensure that SWDs are better catered for and are able to enjoy equal opportunities as the other student population. Another issue that was identified by the participants was the challenges that they face at the disability unit. Most of the participants complained about the services that they get from the Disability Support Unit. It was evident that the also DSU faces challenges of being understaffed and a lack of sufficient resources. As a solution to the challenges faced by the DSU, which in turn affect the students registered under the DSU, the university, through student services department should make it a priority to ensure that the unit has all that it requires to perform its functions successfully.

In addition, the participants also raised concerns about the kind of relationship that exists between SWDs and the SRC. Participants felt that the SRC does not put the needs of SWDs as a priority as that of non-disabled students. It also became apparent that the SRC does not engage with SWDs to find out what their problems are. It was noted that the SRC believes that all issues of SWDs are dealt with by the DSU office. As a result SWDs are not able to overcome the challenges they face. Moreover, there were differing opinions with regards to the role that is played by the SRC. It was evident that for those students who have received positive assistance from the SRC believed that the leadership structure does play a positive role in addressing challenges of SWDs. However it is the opposite for one who have a different experience with the SRC. Therefore, as a solution to this concern the SRC as a leadership structure should work hand in hand with the DSU as this will enable them to know the troubles of SWDs and also eliminate the individualistic approach to solving SWDs issues.

A recommended solution that can assist the SRC of UKZNP to better communicate with the disabled student population is through consociationalism. This can be of assistance in that with consociationalism there is certainty of every segment of the community in question to be represented. Therefore, in a case of a tertiary institution the SRC should then make it a point that there is substantive representation of SWDs within the structure. This can be achieved when they begin to engage SWDs on issues that trouble them, this will further illuminate attitudinal stigmas attached to disabled students and they too can get the chance to be voted into the SRC by students with disabilities and those who are not.

Finally, with regards to whether there is room for improvement in the SRC or not the responses depended on the experiences that the participant might have had with the SRC. The above recommendation is also applicable to this predicament.

### **7.3. The project and its research questions**

As a point of departure it is important to note that all research questions were answered and the hypothesis of the study was proven to be correct, that there are indeed challenges faced by SWDs in the Pietermaritzburg Campus. The first question sought to find out the accessibility challenges faced by students with disabilities at the UKZN PMB campus

The responses to this question revealed that UKZN is not fully accessible to students with disabilities. This means that UKZN is not structurally and physically accessible. There are too many physical barriers that deter students who are disabled to freely have access to university facilities. For example, a number of students with disabilities who participated in this study complained about physical access. The Pietermaritzburg campus has too many steps and too little ramps for wheel chair users. In addition, technology (such as assistive devices) for them to use on campus is not accessible and the same could be said about study material. For example brailled materials for the visually impaired students and proper working elevators for wheel chair users.

The second question pertained to the role that is played by the SRC in resolving the identified challenges faced by SWDs at the Pietermaritzburg campus. The answers given in regard to this question showed that there is no healthy relationship existing between students with disabilities and the local SRC of the PMB campus. Another contributing factor is that within the student representative structure there is no substantive representation of student with disabilities therefore there is no one to vouch for the comfortability of students with disability in and around campus

As a result the participant's responses gave a clear picture that the SRC is unable to solve challenges faced by SWDs as there is no existing relationship between the two stakeholders. Hence there is no effective role played by the SRC. There seemed to be a lack of engagement between the SRC and SWDs. This was shown as being due to the SRC not showing any interest to wanting to know more about issues pertaining to SWD which is the reason why they are unable to overcome challenges faced by SWDs.

Furthermore, question four and five went hand in hand. For the fourth question when participants were asked about the negative or positive role played by the SRC in addressing challenges of SWDs the responses were based more on past experiences. Therefore the majority of the answers received for question five showed that the participants were unsure of whether there is room for improvement in the SRC structure. Question five read as follows: “Depending on your response to number 4, is there room for improvement within the representative structure in the level of issues facing students with disabilities?”

The apparent reason for such responses were that some of the participants did not know who the SRC members were and therefore did not identify with them as all the assistance they got was from the DSU. The above sentiments are a depiction that students with disabilities receive the raw deal from the institution.

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## **APPENDICES APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Questionnaire

Instructions: Please answer the following question by making a tick on the appropriate and box or writing answers on the spaces provided.

#### **SECTION A**

**Gender: Male**

**Female**

**Age group:**

18-25

26-35

36- 45

46-55

56-60

**Qualifications:**

High School

Tertiary Qualification

Bachelor's Degree

Post Graduate Degree

Honours

Masters

PhD

**College**

1. College of Humanities
2. College of law and management studies
3. College of health sciences
4. College of agriculture, Engineering and Science

**SECTION B:**

**Interview schedule**

1. What inspired you to take the course which you are doing? What are the issues and challenges that you face in your field of study? What impact do these accessibility issues and challenges you face on campus have on you as an individual and on your studies as a student of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal?

.....  
.....  
.....

2. What has been the role of SRC in dealing with these challenges? Do you think that the SRC has been successful in dealing with these challenges?

.....  
.....  
.....

3. Does the SRC engage students with disabilities when dealing with these challenges? Do you believe that the SRC represents students with disabilities?

.....  
.....  
.....

4. Has the SRC played a positive or negative role in dealing with the challenges faced by students with disabilities?

.....  
.....  
.....

5. Depending on your response to number 4, is there room for improvement within the representative structure in the level of issues facing students with disabilities?

.....  
.....  
.....

## APPENDIX II: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

### Dear Participant

My name is ...Nompilo Nonzuzo Nene (Student no.) 213540794 I am a Masters candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus. The title of my research is: Accessibility issues and challenges facing students living with disabilities in institutions of higher education and training: The case of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. The aim of the study is to highlight the challenges and issues of accessibility for students living with disabilities at the University of Kwa- Zulu Natal Pietermaritzburg Campus. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter.

Please note that:

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your views in this interview will be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in any form in the study.
- The interview will take (30 mins).
- Since the research study is focusing on physical and visual impairments, the questionnaire/ interview swill be provided in both hard and soft copies, this is so as to enable each participant to participate fully and comfortably with their needs being considered. The questionnaires and interview schedule will be formatted to accommodate various visual impairments (large font and Software format where needed).
- The participants need not to mention their names or any kind of personal information for that matter. That way they are protected i.e. their identities. The interviews will be one on one. The participants will not write their on the questionnaire. The interviewee will also not use the name of the participants when asking questions. The interview process will take place during business hours at the Disability Unit in Pietermaritzburg

- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my supervisors. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures).

I can be contacted at:

School of Social Sciences,

University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus,

Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg 3201.

Email: [nonzuzonene@gmail.com](mailto:nonzuzonene@gmail.com)

Cell: 0769615768

My supervisor is Dr. K. Mtshali who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Pietermaritzburg Campus University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Phone number: 0332605892

Email: [mtshalik@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mtshalik@ukzn.ac.za)

You may also contact the Research Office through:

P. Mohun

HSSREC Research Office,

Tel: 031 260 4557

E-mail: [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

Or alternatively contact

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee contact details are as follows: Ms Phumelele Ximba, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Research Office, Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za),

Phone number: +27312603587.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

