

Chapter 91

Obstacles for Students With Disabilities in the Supervision Process at Postgraduate Level in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The chapter presents the obstacles in supervision for students with disabilities at post-graduate level in South African higher education. Data were collected through scanning South African and international literature available on Google scholar, ProQuest, in books, journal articles, and online resources. Decolonial theory informed understanding of why the obstacles are confronted by the particular students. The findings revealed limited supervision is the main obstacle. The argument for the chapter is that students with disabilities' obstacles in supervision are far deeper than those seen at surface level.

INTRODUCTION

Internationally and in Africa broadly, research output from institutions of higher education has become very important, as it is one of the factors considered for university rankings. However, it is revealed that in the South African region, many public institutions are confronting obstacles that limit research engagement. Kariwo (2017) has listed the obstacles as brain drain, inadequate infrastructure and lack of access to even the most basic tools to do research has outlined those. Also funding is another obstacle said to be an obstacle because it has several effects as inadequate research resources such as books and journals. Literature reveals that competitive funding that is made available when *priorities are made right*. This is manifested in the South African Research chair scheme (Kariwo, 2017). This implies that this kind of funding has specific requirements to be met, if it has to be awarded to researchers. It could be argued that the obstacles confronted at institutional level, transcend and affect the supervision pro-

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cess and consequently have implications for both the academics and students who are engaged in the research process.

Being the last to come out of oppression in all African countries, to attain democracy from the segregative Apartheid system, it is inevitable that South African higher education needs to engage in extensive research, more specifically at post-graduate levels. In the South African context, the research engagement has to include the formerly disadvantaged social groups as women, the blacks and those with disabilities, who were previously excluded in higher education. However, despite efforts being made for such students to also engage in learning broadly and research specifically, they continue to confront obstacles that limit them. Grant (2003) has noted that doctoral supervision in specific, and its pedagogic engagement, is the most mis-understood. This has resulted in researchers making effort to understand the issue of 'access with success' in South African higher education, among others, Schoole and Adeyemo (2016).

Before discussing the obstacle confronted by students with disabilities in supervision in the context of higher education in South Africa, the chapter starts by providing the context of research for students with disabilities in higher education. This is necessary to lay the foundation for understanding the obstacles in supervision, a process intrinsically interlinked, and which might not be separated from teaching and learning. Following that, the chapter also discusses Decolonial Theory (CDT), broadly and more specifically coloniality of power, a theoretical concept, that best illuminates the obstacle confronted by students with disabilities in supervision. The chapter concludes by reiterating on the argument and proposes further studies, which could focus specifically on dismantling structure of coloniality, which is an invisible, oppressive and the underlying cause of the obstacle for students with disabilities' supervision.

Context for Research for Students with Disabilities

The context of research for students with disabilities is important as background to understand the obstacles for students with disabilities conducting research in higher education in the South African context. With specific reference to doctoral research, Backhouse (2009) argued that contexts as among others, the discipline, the department, the supervisor, the students' background experiences as the family or community and the workplace, all intersect to influence the pedagogy of doctoral supervision. It means that there are different contexts that could be mediated on, to impact positively or negatively on the supervision process specifically and research generally; hence, it is important to understand these beforehand.

Exclusion in Teaching and Learning

Extensive research has revealed that students with disabilities are excluded in teaching and learning broadly in South African higher education context (Crous, 2004; Mosia & Phasha, 2017). One of the profound reasons cited for exclusion is the unwillingness by the academic staff to include those students in their teaching (Mutanga, 2017). The unwillingness emanates from the academic' view of students with disabilities as a burden (Ndlovu, 2017) and lack of knowledge of disabilities (Matshediso, 2007; Haywood, 2014) and consequently lack of skills and knowledge to teach the particular students (Matsshediso, 2010). These are the reasons also cited by Mutanga (2017), for the exclusion of students with disabilities in teaching and learning in higher education in South Africa. When the particular students are excluded in teaching and learning, it may not be expected that they can be included in the supervision

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