



Exploring access to teacher education through distance for students with disabilities

Ruth Mampane & Ruth Aluko

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Purpose of Study

To interrogate the nature of institutional resources & forms of support available to DE students with learning disabilities

Gaps in Literature



- There is a dearth of research in relation to DE students (Moisey, 2004)
- Lack of information whether DE is reaching disabled students (Kim-Rupnow, Dowrick & Burke, 2001)

Introduction



- History of basic education
- Basic education & separate streams (mainstream & special education)
- HE- mainstraming

LEGISLATION & DISABILITY



- 1992 Lawyers for Human Rights launched Disability Rights Charter of South Africa
 - Underpinning disability rights are the following legislations
1. Constitution, the Bill of Rights (Act No: 108, 1996)

LEGISLATION AND DISABILITY



2. White Paper on Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997)
3. The National Plan for Higher Education (2001)
4. White Paper 6. Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (2001)

HISTORY OF UP



- Has six campuses, nine faculties and one business school
- It has about 63 500 students (44 000 contact, 20000 distance & \pm 3000 international)
- One of the institutions that has endorsed the White Paper 6 on inclusive education

FACULTY OF EDUCATION



- The faculty has \pm 23 000 students (3800 contact and 19 395 distance education)
- DE trains \pm 16 000 practicing teachers (70% women, 60% over 35 years and most from rural areas)

Unit for distance education (UDE)

- UDE was established in 2000
- Programmes in UDE
 - B.Ed (Honours) Education Management
 - ACE Education Management
 - ACE Special Needs Education
- Other distance qual. PhD and M.Ed

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS @ UP

- Department of Student Affairs
- It is divided into:
 1. Office of Dean of students
 2. Student Development (Student governance)
 3. Student Support
- Student Support has three divisions

DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT AFFAIRS



Centralised services (Main Campus)

1. Student Health Services (primary health care)
2. Counselling Unit (psychotherapy and crisis intervention)
3. Disability Unit/ Unit for Students with Special Needs (services to all disabled students)

UNIT FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



- Became specialised unit in 2003
- Has 3 staff members
- 2008- it reported to have 350 disabled students, currently 370 students
- Majority of students visually impaired
- Currently records reflect 370 disabled students –
- Distance education students- not specified

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



Disability	Explanation	Number
Auditory	Deaf (complete)	6
	Hard of hearing	9
	Other hearing impairments	11
Visual	Blind (legal blindness)	19
	Visual impairments e.g. cataracts	83
Neurological	processing information/ communication	1
Communication	Speech impairments [Augmentative device (AAC)]	9
Physical / mobility restriction	Quadriplegic (other wheelchair ridden problems)	20
Learning	e.g. Dyslexia	12
Other	Not specified	99
Total students accessed by UDE ADMIN STAFF		269

UNIT FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



Services offered by disability unit

- Provide study material in accessible format e.g. braille printing and large prints
- Liaise with departments and faculties for tests/ exam papers
- Develop strategies for marketing services of the unit campus wide
- Conduct assessment for prospective applicants to the university

UNIT FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



- Arrange special placement in wheelchair-friendly residents
- Organise awareness weeks as part of advocacy
- Provide letters for extra-time, test venues & recommend proper medical assessment
- Distance education students- where do they feature?

FORMS OF SUPPORT PROVIDED



IT Support for visually impaired learners

- OCR Scanning software (fine reader- edit documents)
- WYNN reader (reading)
- Electronic books (media files)
- Infrastructure: Providing access (wheelchair ramps; lifts)
- Education Campus in the process...

Findings



- The Unit for Students with Special Needs is under staffed
- No proper records exist to indicate the actual number of DE students with disabilities
- Only one student with visual disability has graduated in 2009
- Facilities to assist DE students are only situated on the main campus
- If DE has been recognized as a means of reaching out to the disadvantaged in SA, then HEIs involved in DE should reach out to more disabled students in their marketing



THANK YOU!

ruth.mampane@up.ac.za
ruth.aluko@up.ac.za