Chapter 2
Leadership Challenges to Inclusion:
Students With Disabilities in Higher Education

Vimbi Petrus Mahlangu

 https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8251-750X
University of South Africa, South Africa

Sithabile Ntombela

 https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4196-9769
University of South Africa, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions have a responsibility to address past and present social inequalities, one of which is the marginalization of people with disabilities in education. The chapter explores and highlights leadership challenges to the inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education (HE). A qualitative approach and interpretive paradigm will be used to review the literature and analyze documents as data generation methods. The chapter will contribute to the debate on the role of leadership in the inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education. Aspects such as the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral factors are key in understanding the inclusion of students with disabilities in HE. Some of the leadership challenges to the inclusion of students with disabilities, amongst others, include institutional and architectural barriers, leadership strategies, and institutional policies. Policy and practice may serve to obscure the challenges of inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

The South African Department of Education (1997) and Angelides (2011) note that universally, education system in democratic societies seek to provide their learners with equal opportunities to quality education to enable them to reach their full potential. These are opportunities to learn, develop and participate in curricular and extracurricular activities as young people are prepared for meaningful citizenship. However, despite these noble intentions, there are many students who do not benefit from education because they experience barriers to learning. Barriers to learning, development and participation are those factors that prevent the system of education from accommodating diversity, thus causing learning breakdown or limiting learners' access to education (DoE, 1997).

Barriers to learning are sometimes located within students (disabilities, psychological and/or emotional issues) and sometimes external to students (negative attitudes, inaccessible learning environments, rigid teaching methods, etc.) (DoE, 1997). Regardless of their location, it is important for educational institutions to find ways to minimize the impact of these barriers on the teaching and learning process. This realization led to The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) which called for governments to develop responsive and inclusive systems of education where all students, regardless of differences, are valued and able to participate.

Addressing issues of diversity is one of the key goals and responsibilities of universities. This chapter focuses on the education of people with disabilities as an aspect of diversity agenda or what Adserias, Charleston and Jackson (2017:316) refer to as "identity-based social inequities". We concur with Salmi & D'Addio (2021) that attaining a higher education qualification has enormous benefits potential to improve the quality of life for all young people. The benefits are even bigger for people with disabilities who generally struggle to access and success in higher education. Therefore, the full inclusion of students with disabilities should be prioritized in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to ensure that they, like other students, can have positive educational outcomes and enjoy social and private benefits that accrue. However, Adserias et al., (2017) maintain that universities tend to be change resistant, therefore, implementing a diversity agenda is not easy. They add that leadership is critical in changing the culture/climate within organisations. Bunescu (2021) shares the same sentiments, arguing that the support of institutional leadership is important for the development of strategy as well as for the provision of resources to ensure sustainability of diversity initiatives.

The intention of this chapter is to contribute to Building Integrated Collaborative Relationships for Inclusive Learning Settings. The number of university students with disabilities is increasing in many countries. The United Nations Human Rights-Office of the High Commission (2020) asserts that persons with disabilities face

15 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/leadership-challenges-to-inclusion/282795

Related Content

The University Environment and Graduate Entrepreneurship: A Study of Ranchi City

Bhavna Taneja (2022). *Promoting Entrepreneurship to Reduce Graduate Unemployment (pp. 164-194).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-university-environment-and-graduate-entrepreneurship/303876

Assessment and Culturally Relevant Inclusive Education: The Case of Tanzania

Angi Stone-MacDonaldand Japhari Robert Shehaghilo (2019). *Global Perspectives on Inclusive Teacher Education (pp. 228-245).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/assessment-and-culturally-relevant-inclusive-education/222685

Critical Reflective Practice, Critical Pedagogy, and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Unpacking Assumptions and Taking Action

 (2020). *Antiracist Professional Development for In-Service Teachers: Emerging Research and Opportunities (pp. 64-90).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/critical-reflective-practice-critical-pedagogy-and-culturally-relevant-pedagogy/258230

Teacher-Centred Delivery Approach in Uganda's Secondary School Education and Empowering Learners With Higher Order Skills

Dorothy Businge Kabugo Kakongoro (2019). *Handbook of Research on Promoting Higher-Order Skills and Global Competencies in Life and Work (pp. 99-116).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/teacher-centred-delivery-approach-in-ugandas-secondary-school-education-and-empowering-learners-with-higher-order-skills/208594

Resources

 (2022). *Implementing a Virtual Coaching Model for Teacher Professional Development (pp. 216-230).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/resources/294624