EXPLORING THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES TO TACKLE INEQUITIES IN ASSESSMENT AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The intention of this article is to underscore the significance of using digital technologies to tackle inequities in assessment at higher education institutions. It is imperative to be mindful about the barriers that students with disabilities encounter when assessed and identify the potential of technology to overcome these barriers. This becomes an obstacle for safeguarding equal opportunities to access and gain from digital technologies. Furthermore, a qualitative approach, with key informant interviews prevailing as data instruments were employed. With its rapid succession of innovations, Information and Communication Technology, provides opportunities and brings comfort to students to be involved in assessment. The concern to ensure equity and equality in assessment is evidenced in the findings. Several noteworthy findings such as social exclusion, impairment issues and assistive educational technology were deliberated on. This was in response to the research questions posed. It is therefore, proposed that digital technology for students with disabilities needs to be addressed by policymakers and researchers. Students with disabilities should have the same rights to participate in assessment as other students.

Keywords: digital technologies, inequities, assessment, disability, visually impaired, higher education

INTRODUCTION

Equal opportunities are a necessity in general human flourishment and in education. Moreover, they are of paramount importance in the growth of students with disabilities and determine their future career prospects. Educational access should also not be determined by subjective conditions, of any student such as race and gender (Booth 2018). Disabilities may be perceived unequally at global level, through various theoretical perspectives. Two key classes that seek to clarify disability in community are identified namely, the collective class and the remedial class. The collective class on the one hand, regards disability as a curse to community on human beings who do not possess similar capability like other people in the society. The remedial class on the other hand, functions as an outline structure that views disability as an unacceptable

remedial situation that necessitates stipulated cure. The remedial class attempt to concentrate on pinpointing the origin of disabilities, as well as any suitable remedy (Bartz 2020; Bausch and Ault 2015).

Dikusar (2018) argues that in the African continent, the number of students with disabilities at Higher Education Institutions was estimated to be higher than 29 per cent in 2017. As for now the figure could have risen. The South African government's regulatory framework on students with learning disability; at HEI, recommend a critical analysis of current institutional policies that recognises gaps pertaining students with disabilities. It is imperative that programmes for HEI should promote inclusion of students with disabilities (Goodwin 2012).

Universities should make it a point that they provide equal opportunities for all irrespective of considering the type of disability experienced by any student. Their curriculum should accommodate even visually impaired students. The assistive technology used for them should make a difference in assessment. In so doing, all students with disabilities will be compelled to study. For collaboration to be effective, HEI should be committed to technology inclusion. This is vital to support the students with disabilities. (Behling 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Burkholder, Sims and Killen (2019) assert that students with disabilities are not treated fairly like their peers despite the aid of assistive educational technology. It is imperative to take into cognisance that equal assessment practices are provided by all HEI. Decisions about them are taken at an institutional level. The choice of each assessment practice determines the assessment technique.

Moreover, crucial decisions should be prioritised about the type of assessment to be used, curriculum intent thereof and all the students. The selection of assessment technique enables the teacher or lecturer to provide feedback to a student. The assessment technique may be in the form of formal or informal, summative or formative (Booth 2018; Desmond et al. 2018.).

Furthermore, for a lecturer to collect tangible data; various assessment tools can be used that include written assignment, examinations, dissertations, thesis, oral, field work, research presentation and individual and group projects. The above assessment tools enable the lecturer to provide detailed feedback to the student with disability (Kendall 2016; Fernandez 2021).

All students with disabilities encounter stumbling blocks in obtaining worthwhile results as compared to the ordinary students. Furthermore, students with disabilities are subjected to harsh treatments of inequality, stigma of being labelled, slim chances of equal opportunities for all. With the assistance of digital technology, a lecturer can apply a principle of

individualisation especially to "at risk" students. Failure to address the challenges encountered by a student may be serious to such an extent that one may end up as a drop out. The support for students who are at risk is supposed to be detailed. By so doing, the students "needs and interest are met and the educational goals are achieved" (Louise, Allan, and Johnstone 2017).

It is a sad and astonishing reality that the number of students with disabilities does not decline, instead it rises every year, and this is a cause for concern. Hauschildt, Vögtle, and Gwosć (2018) maintain that every 8th student is a strong candidate of some form of impairments. Fourteen per cent of students with disabilities attend school in low-income countries and about 7–20 of them fail to obtain assistive technology in view of financial constraints. Such students require financial assistance from various organisations. In the absence of the financial muscle, they will always be unequal to their counterparts. This destroys their confidence when studying and may end up with inferior results.

The United States of America is one of the countries that tries to grapple with this arduousness. In some parts of the country, the number of students that need exclusive settings has increased from 30 to 35 per cent over the previous 5 years. It is guaranteed that from primary to secondary schools, it is impossible to find a class without a student with disability. The same applies to HEI, from undergraduate to postgraduate, there are students with disabilities, and they need serious individual attention (Snyder, De Brey, and Dillow 2019).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework of "intersectionality" underpins the study. The concept of intersectionality is coined by Crenshaw (2017) who argued that when inequality persists, race, gender, disability, social status, linguistic diversity, age and ethnicity coincide (Goodwin 2012; Kent 2015). Students with disability may be viewed as the ones who are marginalised. The concept of inclusion versus exclusion is also emphasised. When circumstances for equal learning opportunities are created, it tends to be inclusion. There is need for respect of an individual and access to all educational resources without fear or favour (Healey et al. 2006).

The institution should ask the following questions; who should be taught? what should be taught? How should it be taught and why should it be taught? It is vital that the institution addresses these questions. HEI should be cognisant about the issue of diversity. Students with disabilities are the ones to be taught. The type of disability which they suffer from should be noted. Digital technologies to be utilised should also be borne in mind. The learning content to be taught should also be relevant and inclusive. Assessment and equity are crucial in this study. Students are not supposed to be divided based on the content taught. The lecturer should treat all students equally and fairly. Respect for all students is pivotal and no student should feel

marginalised (Booth 2018). Digital technologies that are supposed to support students who have disabilities should be made available. In a case where digital technology fails to assist the student, another one may also be tested until such a time that the most suitable one will be found.

Figure 1: Framework of intersectionality

When the assignment is sent back to the student, there should be detailed feedback. Comments from the lecturer should rather be constructive and not destructive. In the case of supervisor and supervisee relationship, the supervisor should not oppress the student. Time to complete a research chapter for a dissertation or thesis should be reasonable and the sources required should be available. Moreover, time to do the corrections when feedback is provided should also be fair. The supervisee is not supposed to work under duress.

RESEARCH METHOD

Statement of the problem

There are numerous concepts that clarify the concept of disability. Certain concepts explain phenomena relating to disability. On the other hand, there are those that are centred around

labelling and ostracising those affected with disabilities. According to Ahmed (2012) the processes of inclusion are more crucial than the promise of inclusion. HEI are not supposed to harbour the exclusionary, culture, instead they should have an inclusionary culture of accommodating every student regardless of physical condition, gender or race. They should tolerate the weaknesses of everyone but strive to create a welcoming culture. In so doing, students with disabilities will learn without any obstacle (Fernandez 2021; Anttila et al. 2012).

Kendall (2016) argues that there is no single technological solution that may be tailored to suit the needs and interest of all students with disabilities. The issue of diversity makes it cumbersome for HEI to design a curriculum which is relevant to the needs of all students with disabilities. The requirements for each group of students vary.

Assessment of students in the form of examinations is widely used by HEI. This is meant to gauge academic achievement for all students with disabilities. Where there is room for improvement students are given a supplementary opportunity. It has always been a challenge for students with disabilities to perform well when writing portfolios, online assignments, tests, examinations, and research projects. When students with disabilities fail to achieve well, HEI must account to the relevant structures (De Witte et al. 2018; Bartz 2020).

Institutions should underscore that their assessment practices are inclusive. Where they are exclusive, it becomes a source of concern because there is no equity. Some of the assessment tools may not address all the challenges experienced by students with disabilities (Marquis et al. 2016).

Intersectionality theory by Crenshaw (2017) informed research epistemology, priorities, and methodology. Deeper ontological research questions brought by inequities and chronic pain of students with disabilities were developed and set aside for the relevant session. The insufficient research on digital tools and assessment deprives students with disabilities from effective learning (Perfect, Jaiswal, and Davies 2019; Healey et al. 2006).

It is in this backdrop that a qualitative study of this magnitude was conducted and steered by two undergirding and overarching research questions:

- 1st Research Question: What kind of challenges do HEI students with disabilities encounter in using digital technologies to tackle inequities in assessment?
- 2nd Research Question: How can such challenges be addressed by HEI students with disabilities in using digital technologies to tackle inequities in assessment?

Responding to these questions is pivotal to backup participants' experiences at HEI.

Since this research was conducted in a South African university, the disability section

assisted with a list of students exposed to a series of disabilities. The study also intended to involve participants who are visually impaired. The Assignments and Examinations departments too, were involved in providing rich data.

A total of 12 participants (6 males and 6 females), 2 from Disability Unit, 2 from Assignments (male and female) and 2 from Examinations (male and female), took part in the study. All students were undergraduates aged 19–25 years old. Six of them came from public schools in deep rural areas where they had received teaching support from ordinary overcrowded classrooms. Dilapidated buildings without computer laboratory, no canteen and few qualified teachers with diplomas. On the other hand, 6 came from urban areas where there were special educational facilities, air conditioner which is a remedy for hot and cold temperatures in all the classrooms, computer and laboratory room, and reasonable teacher student ratio of 1:20, highly qualified teachers with degree qualifications, clinic in the premises of the school, canteen, state of the art ablution blocks and sleeping dormitories. All participants were purposefully sampled based on various eye disorders such as glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, amblyopia, myopia, retinitis pigmentosa, strabismus and stargardt disease. These conditions were congenital for all, except for one participant.

All 12 participants' vision were in one way, or another affected to a certain extent. With the permission of the university registrar, the Disability Section was supportive in providing the contact details for the 12 participants. Apart from this unit, permission to interview Assignments and Examinations departments was granted, because they are the custodians of assessment issues.

Data was collected through social media and interviews. Data collection was comprised of two cycles. The cycle of data collections started in January to September 2023. The first cycle was carried out from March to April and the second one was from August to September. This was a few weeks prior to the commencement of summative assessments for the first and second semesters. All 12 participants were still prospective students registered in the Faculty of Education at a famous university in South Africa.

The staff who were interviewed from the Disability Services unit, Assignments and Examinations departments elaborated on what transpired from the findings of working with students with disabilities. The collected data was useful to identify concerns from participants' own experiences. All sessions were recorded. Confidential online assignments and examinations results from Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (Moodle) were provided.

In cycle one; semi structured interviews with the 12 participants were conducted during the commencement of the first semester, various topics although not limited to these ones were

addressed in the interviews. These included;

- the university experiences of the 12 participants with disabilities,
- the kind of challenges they encounter in assessment,
- how equity and other challenges are dealt with in assessment
- the role of digital technologies in this regard and
- their personal views of the Moodle.

In the second cycle, telephone interviews were used linking all 12 participants. WhatsApp and Facebook group page; were other sources of data collection, which were created following in-depth suggestions from the participants. Data collection instrument employed in the second cycle was summed up with individual interviews. Although participants were visually impaired, it did not deter them from using WhatsApp and Facebook. Data was analysed thematically (Sileyew 2019).

It was highlighted earlier on that rich and detailed data regarding the challenges experienced by participants was gathered using techniques, such as interviews and social media. Discrepant evidence and negative cases were sought (Neuman 2018) when data was analysed. This enabled the researcher to revisit data analysis and interpretation of key findings. All 12 participants were provided with transcripts of their interviews and detailed feedback was sought.

THEMES AND DISCUSSION

An intersectional framework will be used to elaborate fully on the identified themes and discussion (Crenshaw 2017).

Social exclusion

All students, irrespective of any physical circumstance that hampers a person' senses, have a right to equal opportunities in higher education. Students with disabilities have rights to continue studying and have full access to educational resources. Since 2007, the comprehensive policy in South Africa protects and promotes the rights of students with disabilities. It is pathetic that students with disabilities continue to be side-lined from the teaching learning situation. Some staff members view students with disabilities as misfits in the community and they are not supposed to learn. Staff members should understand the significance of inclusivity, prior valuing diversity in the human society. According to them, they should be avoided at all costs

(Seale 2013; Goodwin 2012).

Lack of friendships allowed students with disabilities to remain in silos and they experienced boredom. In the interview session, participants remarked on being lonely and missing their classmates.

When asked about this issue, Ndamulelo, who is from a well-known boarding school in town, commented:

> "I always think about my friends from high school. We used to joke with each other and unfortunately, I miss their sense of humour. This is really frustrating me because I am forever on my own."

The time of forging new relations at campus level is taxing and participants' last resort is on social media. Those with WhatsApp and Facebook are forever glued to their gadgets. Thandi from Botswana commented that she hardly meets with her high school friends, who came from a university in South Africa to "hang out and study together."

Impairment issues

Participants viewed fair assessment as meant for the chosen few. They were referring to the ordinary students because to them it was arduous. According to them, impairment was a barrier obstructing them from achieving worthwhile results in assessment. Most students with disabilities stated that they primarily underestimated its influence on various educational undertakings. They remarked on spending more time reading course material for the online assignments than their peers without disabilities. Independent of the eye condition and level of functional vision, participants lamented about losing concentration repeatedly. The vision was blurry when reading course outlines for their study material. For one to complete an assignment, write a test or examination using Moodle, there should be a thorough preparation. Such was the case for Ntombikayise, an undergraduate student from the College of Education who suffers from retinitis pigmentosa.

> "It is strenuous and time consuming to read. I easily get exhausted when I read study guide in preparation of a task, and it takes forever to complete a task for a research project."

Although students were strongly advised to disregard it; most participants were frustrated to such an extent that they had to drop some registered courses. This was after the start of the first academic semester while some had to cancel their studies indefinitely. Some participants also highlighted that their impairment had a negative influence on developing social relations. One

of them, Ntombikayise, with congenital diabetic retinopathy, commented that for her to communicate well with her peers, they should greet and sometimes introduce themselves because she had a serious challenge of recognising them.

All the participants struggled to find a way to make amends for the effect of their impairment in digital technologies. Some resorted to digital voice recorders which were meant for recording both tutorials and lectures. Moreover, lectures had to be uploaded onto their laptops for further listening. Likewise, some participants relied on their smartphones to take pictures during lectures. As for coping with the workload of course materials, access to e-books was cited, because the participants realised that they were not reader friendly. Although digital technologies were utilised for impairment returns, participants relied heavily on assistive technologies. It is discernible that some form of disabilities; impede students to manoeuvre their handwritten manuscripts, instead technical instruments meant for speech identification were exploited.
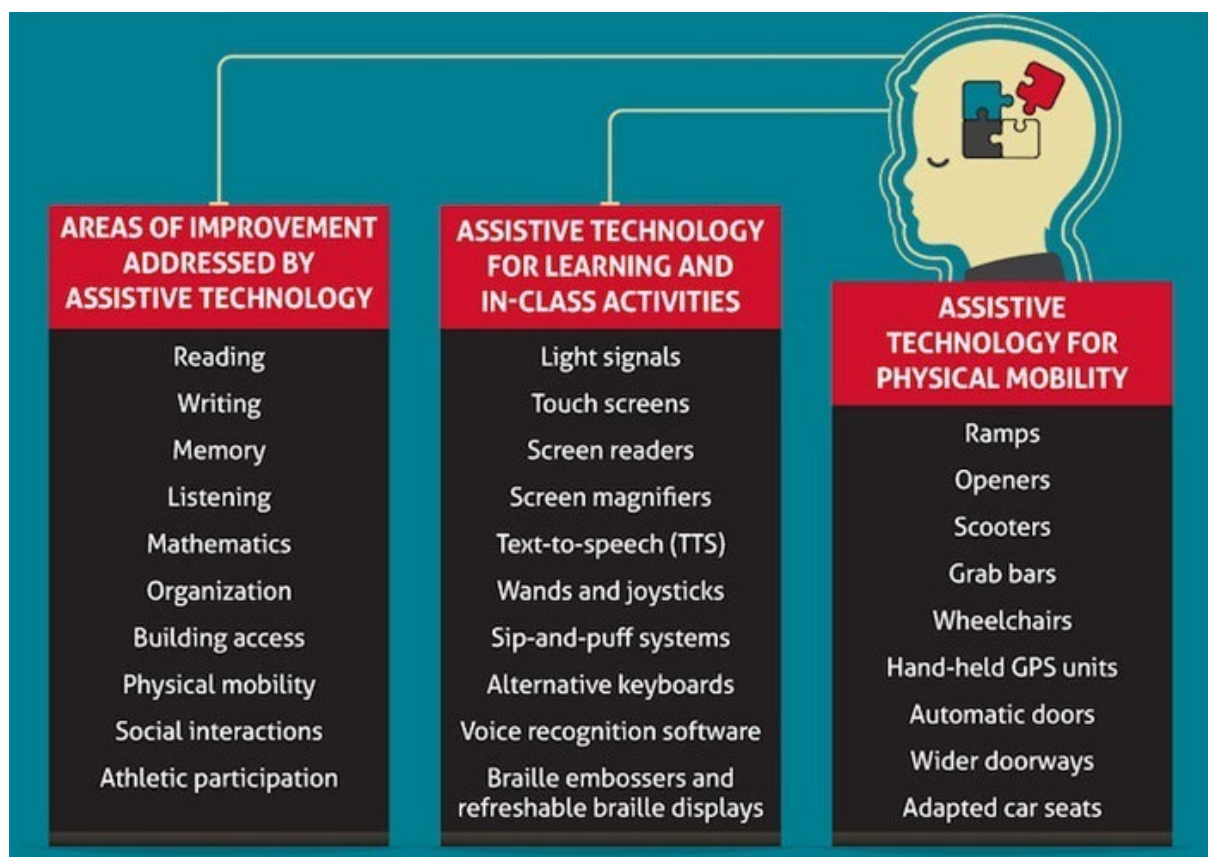
Assistive educational technology

Figure 2: Assistive Technology

It is worth noting that Assistive educational Technology (AT) includes innumerable devices,

that empower students with infirmities to avoid any learning disorder (Korstjens and Moser 2018). In an online examination, the computer is a necessity but there may be network challenges. In South Africa, this may also be exacerbated by loadshedding. Sometimes it may be slow due to the type of gadget the student is using. Once it becomes slow, there may be negative repercussions of running out of time (Bakken and Festus 2008).

When writing examinations, students with disabilities have done introspection and came to realise that they cannot participate on an equal footing with their ordinary peers. A formidable online assignment which requires a lot of reading may have a drawback on students with dyslexia. Students with infirmities may not stick to the due dates. Despite asking for due dates, they fail to meet the deadline. Ordinary students may cope with the burdensome task without risking their lives (Cloudebate 2019).

Ample Assistive technology enables students with disabilities to have access to educational resources. Access will make it easier for them to engage with assessment activities. When the duration of an online examination is 3 hours, most students with learning disorder grapple to finish their examination paper in the scheduled time. Moreover, when students are supposed to complete their research presentations in the prescribed period, they take longer than expected. A master's full dissertation which is supposed to be completed in 2 years or a PhD thesis with a duration of 3 years may take much longer than expected. Students with disabilities are delayed unnecessarily when collecting and analysing data. It is a challenge which must be taken seriously by HEI to promote equity. In the absence of equity, the curriculum may be irrelevant as it will not meet the needs and interests of all the students (Behling 2020; Hoogerwerf et al. 2017).

It is incumbent upon institutions to choose suitable Assistive Educational Technology for students with infirmities. The technique will enable the HEI to identify obstacles affecting such students and suggest possible solution. Most of the assistive devices have the following advantages:

- Students with disabilities are often pessimistic.
- Students realise their strengths and weaknesses.
- AT provides a sense of equal opportunity.
- It supports the sense of equity.
- AT promotes positive self-concept.

The pace of the voice software utilised in dictations is viewed as problematic. Their writing skill becomes questionable when they are dictating. They always perform badly in their

examinations while in their ordinary essays they obtain a higher score. When students make use of a different AT, they can be faced with a list of stumbling blocks, such as:

- labelling from their peers,
- destructive criticism
- negative self-concept about the gadget.

Apart from being physically challenged, girls were discriminated against and viewed as inferior to boys. It was in view of such criticism that some students lost interest in studying (Bartz 2020). Categories of students' disabilities are elaborated on below.
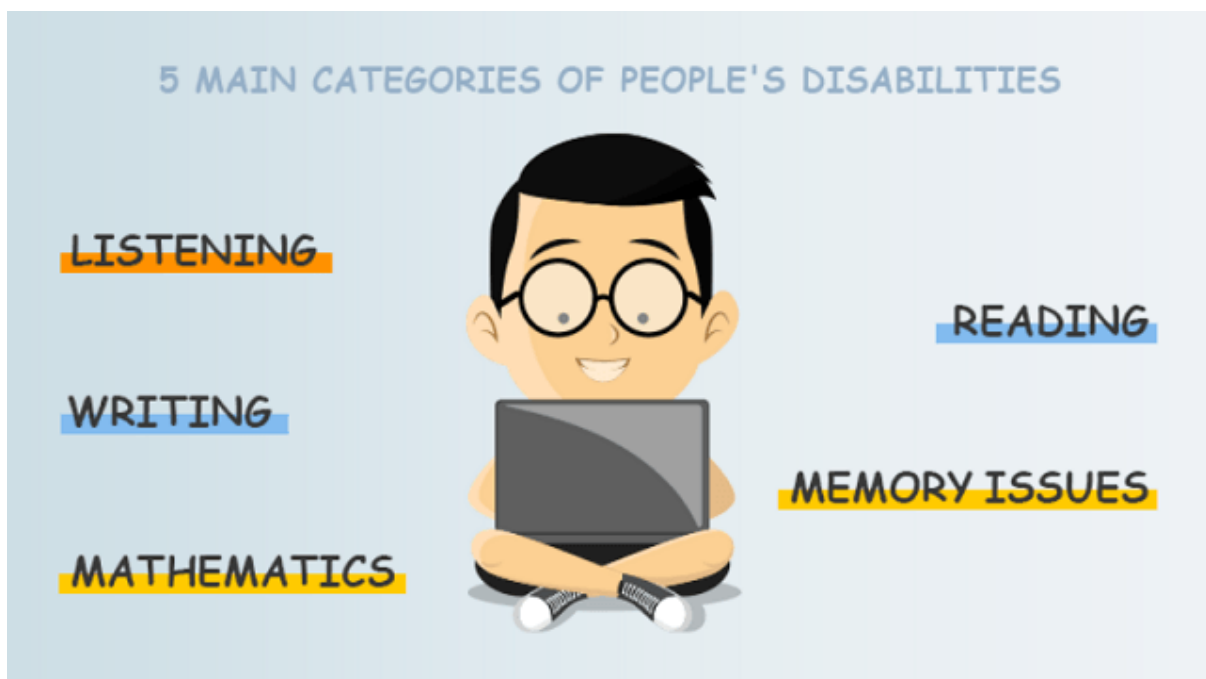

Figure 3: Categories of disabilities

It is imperative to note that AT gadgets may be of high-tech and low-tech quality. The ones for low tech feature can be managed physically, while e-learning are operated with the assistance of extremely creative high-tech devices such as desk and laptops, and additional micro electrical apparatus. Five main categories of students' disabilities are identified (as illustrated in Figure 2) such as physical, sensory, cognitive, psychiatric and health related. In terms of the identified five categories, students with disabilities are faced with various challenges in the process of gaining access to quality education. Ahmed (2012) lists the problematic learning disorders below:

Listening

Assistive Technology is a necessity for students with hearing disorders. They lack skills for

listening to any spoken language.

Mathematics

Some students who encountered challenges with solving mathematical exercises e.g., brackets of division, multiplication, addition, and subtraction hereafter referred to as BODMAS are candidates for Assistive Technology.

Writing

The type of student infirmity determines the assistance that may be required by each student as an individual. Students who experience challenges with capital letters, pronunciation, punctuation and spellings may be addressed by AT.

Memory issues

Students who repeat each class are in most cases affected with loss of memories. Modernised AT equipment may assist in identifying the cause of the problem and how it can be addressed. Unfortunately, many students fall behind their classmates because of memory issues. A detailed programme can be organised on how to address such mishap (Marquis et al. 2016).

Reading

Students who suffer from myopia unlike ordinary students are confronted with reading. Despite reading glasses it does not make any change when there is an assessment task. They struggle to read what is on the paper and computer. AT can be a remedy to visually impaired students. Bardin and Lewis (2008) cite the examples, which include:

- *Personal computers or laptops*

Onscreen assignments and examinations in Moodle can be completed making use of computers. Internet sources and materials can be downloaded from the computer. The font of classroom materials can be enlarged to suit the level of each student. Dissertation and theses can also be typed making use of such gadgets (Booth 2018; Martinez, Scherer, and Tozser 2018).

- *Audio description*

Students with disabilities will always vary to a certain extent. Audio description is perfect to the visual impaired students. Some may require dictation of words or translation of visual information into words due to low vision. It was originally developed as an access accommodation in live theatre, cinema, television broadcasts and museum collections. Most

HEI offer audio description tools which may benefit students with such a challenge (Brusling and Pepin 2003).

- *Smartphones*

Smartphones are not necessarily meant for making and answering calls. Nowadays most students with disabilities have one or two smartphones which may be used for a variety of issues. Downloading apps for various functions, jotting down of notes, searching data which may be used in completing online assignments. Teams meeting may be used when students are notified about assessment tasks. Smartphones with cameras can be useful in taking pictures that can be used for class presentations (Burkholder et al. 2019).

- *Electronic books*

Students with reading disorders need assistance before they drop out of school. They are agitated and always feel that they are left out when reading books are in an ordinary print. They are distressed because to get them, there are financial implications involved. Electronic books can accommodate students with visionary challenges depending on the type of a print which may not be reader friendly. In addition to recorded book collections for students who are visually impaired, it is possible to obtain and access mainstream electronic books and periodicals (Cloudebate 2019; Morin et al. 2018). HEI should recommend book collections that may benefit the visually impaired students. There should be access to electronic journals and manuscripts :

   – Project Gutenberg
   – Amazon Kindle Books and Barnes and Noble Nook Books
   – Google Play Books and the iBooks Store
   – Reading eBooks on a Portable Device (Dikusar 2018).

- *Modified keyboard*

The rationale of modifying keyboards is to accommodate students who are visually impaired. Bright colours and Braille can benefit the visually impaired. They always derive joy and find it easy to type assessment tasks and prepare assessment activities. Visually impaired students and those with other similar challenges need large keyboards in bright colours, a 3-colour backlit keyboard, Bluetooth keyboards with large print, alternative keyboard with special purpose for left, right or ambidextrous, large print labels for computer keyboards (Fernandez 2021).

- *Virtual assistants*

Technology is now at an advanced stage. Amazon Alexa and Apple Siri can serve a good purpose for studying. Students with learning disorders rely on them because they simply pose out questions loudly and get answers instantly. Visually impaired students are enabled to have full access to educational resources (Marquis et al. 2016).
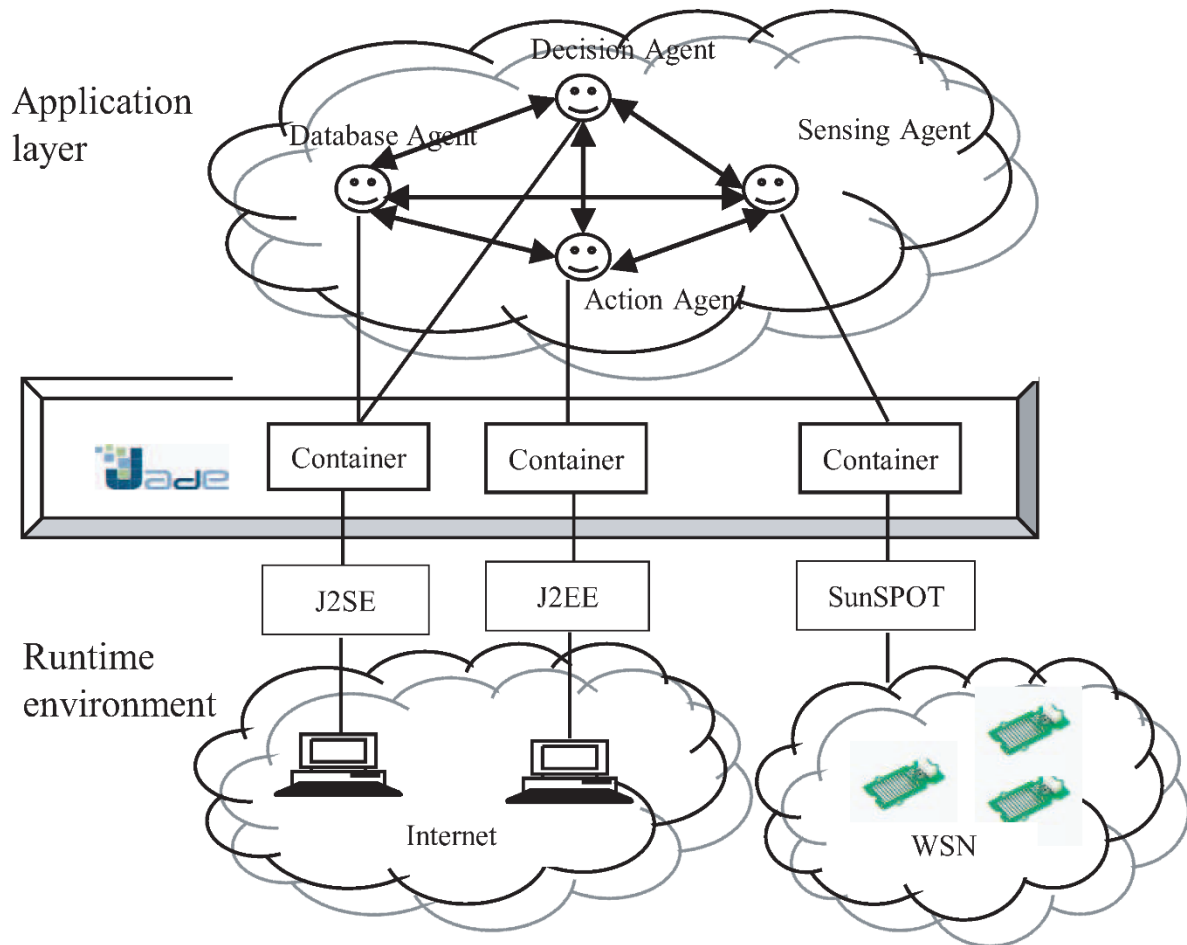
The adaptive computing

Figure 4: Application layer of computing

Specific invented Braille keyboards and JAWS provide students with infirmities an added advantage to operate the laptop with comfort. Rigorous assessment projects may be bypassed when making use of adaptive digital gadgets. An ordinary computing may not serve the purpose of assessment when given to students with special educational needs.
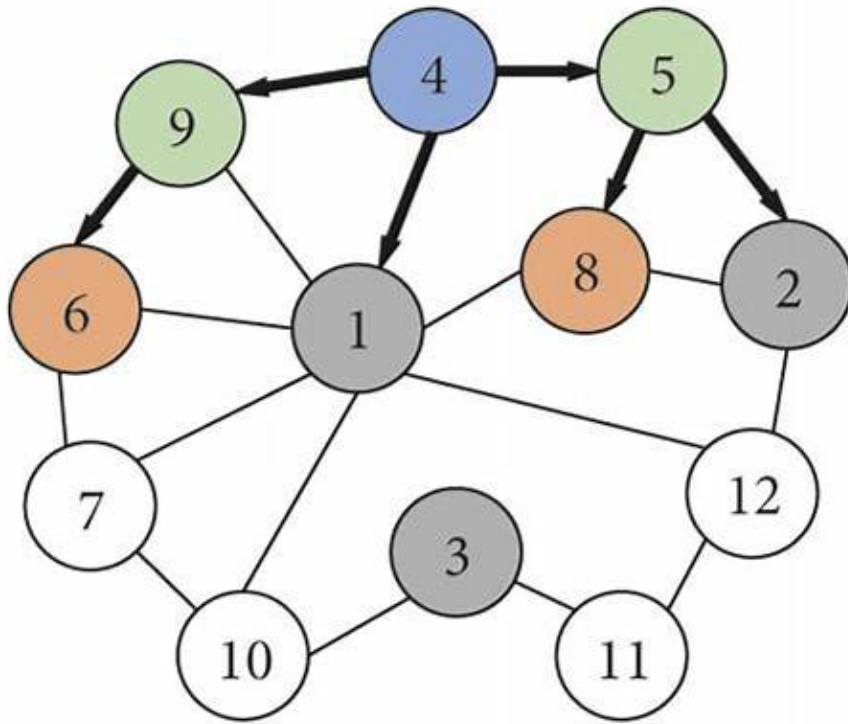
Figure 5: Adaptive computing

Figure 6: Braille

A mere touch enables the partially sighted and the blind students to read the unique tactile written words. Touching the dots send the message to the affected students' brains and becomes easier to read. The partially sighted and blind students registered their concerns regarding assessment. Their needs and interests are not met, and it becomes questionable when the issue of equity is ignored at all costs. The 3-hour duration of the paper is not sufficient to them. It is only reasonable to the ordinary students. Most of them end up sitting for supplementary examinations or completely fail the first opportunity examination. Although braille empowers such students to read, it needs time to go through the dots.

RECOMMENDATION

Efforts to promote inclusive education should address the identified challenges by raising awareness, refining institutional policies, and fostering an inclusive pedagogical approach from higher education institutions. An environment that ensures meaningful access and participation in higher education should always be created for students with infirmities.

Online app for assessing individual academic performance

Higher education institutions should design an inclusive education programme which meets the needs and interests of all students. An enabling environment should be created in such a way that students with disabilities should feel that they are accommodated. As for assessment, the issue of equity should always be considered. Students with dyslexia and dysgraphia disability should always be considered in individualised education programme (Kendall 2016; Muharib and Alzrayer 2018).

Lecturers at HEI should always monitor students' progress. When assessment activities such as assignments, examination, projects are below average, it should be a concern for the teacher, and something must be done about it. These students are labelled as "at risk" and there should be a tracking mechanism for them. Questions such as what are the causes for their high failure rate? How should such causes be addressed? This should always be considered (Medola et al. 2018).

Tests used to evaluate learning

Various types of tests such as oral or written may be used to gauge a student's level of understanding. For students with a learning disorder, the assessment could be formative or summative. Summative assessment which is usually conducted at the end of the instructional unit is meant to promote students to a higher level. The assessor is the one who decides on the type of a tests that he requires for any class of his choice (Fernandez 2021).
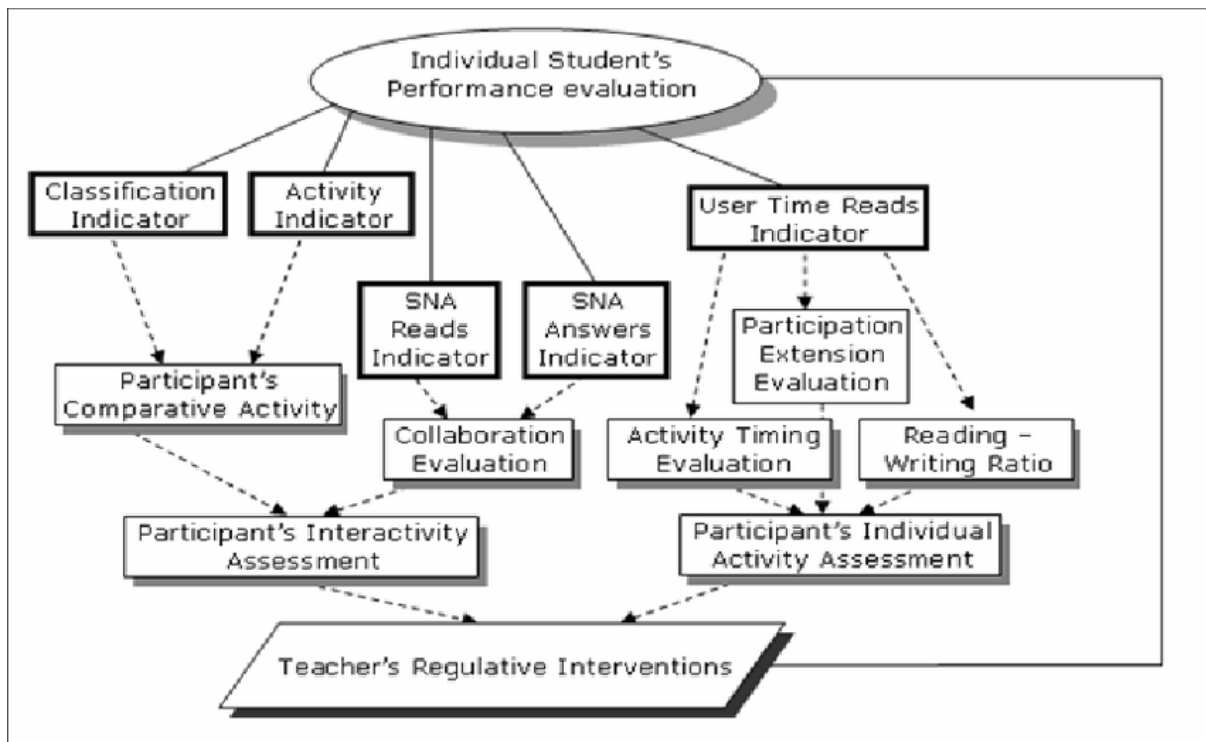
Figure 7: Student's performance evaluation

Intelligence tests

Disability varies in each university, depending on the type and its level. At HEI it is commonly meant to assess the extent of the diagnosed disability. This enables the institution to place the student where he belongs. The strength and the weaknesses of the individual are exposed by the intelligence test. The type of support to be given to each student is determined by the analysis of data (Brusling and Pepin 2003).

Achievement tests

The achievement tests are based on performance which evolves from mathematics, reading and writing. Dyscalculia focuses on the degree of difficulty of mathematics. Dyslexia is on the reading disorder while dysgraphia is on the handwriting skills. When all these tests are administered, it becomes easier for HEI to know about the type of support to be given to each student. (Perelmutter, McGregor, and Gordon 2017).

Visual motor integration tests

This test is meant specifically to test the student's brain. As soon as there is no connection between the visual cues to motor coordination, it requires the institution's attention. The type of support required for each test varies depending on the extent of disability (Burkholder et al. 2019).

Language tests

The language tests are meant to test the student's level of understanding of any written and spoken language. The student's response exposes the level of understanding and enables the HEI to give remedial attention. The Clinical Assessment of Language Fundamentals is the widespread test used by many HEI (Booth 2018).

CONCLUSION

This study is underpinned by intersectionality as a theoretical framework which argues that equal opportunity at higher education and training institutions is a cliché and a dream. The chronic pain experienced by students with disabilities is a serious matter of concern. Students with disabilities are oppressed in countless ways. Assessment from HEI disregard the notion of equity into account. Students never made the choice to find themselves in the current predicament. They should be treated with respect because they are human beings created by God. The academic criterion in assessment affirms that all students with infirmities should be supported with equal opportunities to fulfil their prospect. Although the norm-referenced assessment emphasises that the student should be compared to ordinary students, we should be mindful of the issue of infirmity. It is therefore proposed that the criterion referenced assessment is the panacea for the torture that is encountered by students with disabilities. These students should have open access to education just like any ordinary student. Furthermore, they are not supposed to be subjected to ridicule and destructive criticism. They should have access to the digital technologies that will break the barrier of disability. It is imperative to sum up by mentioning that, in the absence of equity to opportunities in access to quality education, we will keep on haunting the educational fraternity if nothing or little is done to address it. It is entirely incumbent upon the curriculum developers and policy makers to design a curriculum which will meet the needs and interests of all students.

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