

RADICAL INCLUSION: STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES' PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER LEARNING

S. Ndlovu

Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies

University of Johannesburg

Johannesburg, South Africa

e-mail: swadenga@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Inclusion of all in learning and workplace spaces has continued to be an urgent agenda for democratic governments and relevant stakeholders in higher learning, globally and in South Africa particularly. However, whilst the focus is on this, the original idea of inclusion has been lost, resulting in different versions, which stakeholders “tick off” as meaning inclusion. By virtue of a misconstrued idea of inclusion, students with disabilities in higher learning contexts are individually accommodated rather than included. This empirical article isolates what the key stakeholders supporting disability at a specific institution of higher learning in South Africa, consider as inclusion and how students with disabilities are fitted into the system, rather than a total institutional transformation, in which all students are included in their diversities. The article recommends a radical inclusion as a re-invention that can recapture the original idea and discourse of inclusion, which has been lost.

Keywords: radical inclusion, accommodation, professional learning, students with disabilities, higher learning, institutional transformation

INTRODUCTION

The original idea of inclusion as proposed by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO 1994) has been generally lost to stakeholders in higher learning who are willing to implement an inclusive educational practice to all diverse students. Without the right framework of the original inclusion, other groups of students such as those from previously disadvantaged backgrounds continue to be excluded in learning contexts understood as inclusive. Students with disabilities specifically are excluded in learning because the system seeks to change them in order to be included rather than changing the institution to be inclusive of all students. This article asks three major questions, firstly, what do the particular stakeholders “tick off” as the way in which students with disabilities are included in professional learning at the institution? Secondly, how does this reflect a lack of radical inclusion for all diverse students, including those with disabilities, in professional learning?

Thirdly, how does the specific way of understanding inclusion impact on students with disabilities' professional learning at the institution? I hope to answer these particular questions through the particular stakeholders' accounts of the inclusion of students with disabilities in professional learning. Titchkosky (2007) argues that giving attention to how words and narratives are used is imperative because it determines how disability is understood, the way of knowing about it and actions in relation to inclusion in a particular social context. Thus, by way of reading between lines in the accounts of the specific stakeholders, what they perceive as inclusion is teased out, how students with disabilities are individually accommodated is revealed and the negative impact on their professional learning is discussed.

In the specific higher learning context, responsible stakeholders tick off "provisions" and "accommodations" as inclusion. Thus, individual accommodation of students with disabilities by a few academics in professional learning, access arrangements, funding, provision of accessible infrastructure and transport are misconstrued as ways in which students with disabilities are included in professional learning at the institution. Without fully understanding that the original idea of inclusion relates to a total institutional transformation in which all diverse students are included to access and succeed in learning, the unintended outcome of the agenda of inclusion might be exclusion rather than inclusion for students with disabilities. As proposed by Walton (2016), it is important that stakeholders in education go back to the drawing table to understand the original meaning of inclusion. I further argue that from schooling to higher learning, efforts of transformation should be focused on transforming the learning contexts to be inclusive to all students rather than pasting students with disabilities onto the system through provisions and accommodation. I thus engage with the notion of radical inclusion with the intent of encouraging responsible stakeholders to change their way of thinking and talking about inclusion, so that there can be a return to understanding what genuine inclusion entails.

The article starts by discussing the meaning of radical inclusion and its relevance to change stakeholders' misconstrued understanding of the lost idea of original inclusion. It further presents and analyses the accounts by the key stakeholders, who are Disability Unit staff (DU) members supporting students with disabilities, to reflect on what they "tick off" as inclusion of students with disabilities in professional learning. It further seeks to reveal how lack of *radical inclusion* results in the exclusion, rather than the inclusion, of students with disabilities in professional learning. The article concludes by recommending that radical inclusion be adopted, despite the practical challenges of its implementation in the South African context.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative interviews were used to collect data from seven key stakeholders who support students with disabilities at a previously advantaged institution of higher learning. The institution was selected for having the best Disability Unit and consequently the best disability support in the whole country. By virtue of having such a support structure, the particular stakeholders became the most appropriate sample to interview as they are the ones in charge of the specific structure, and who are responsible for providing support services to students with disabilities to access learning. The focus was on how inclusion of students with disabilities is understood by the specific stakeholders at the institution, the impact on the learning of professional programmes, and hence the justification of the adoption of radical inclusion.

RADICAL INCLUSION

Radical inclusion involves a social reconstruction. It is a new way of thinking of inclusion. In the context of higher learning it involves totally transforming institutions to be inclusive to all diverse students. It asserts that all students should be able to access, participate in, and succeed in higher education. It is argued that it refers to shifting from restructuring to reconstruction and the adjective “radical” that has been added signals that the original inclusion is falling short, hence the need to reconstruct it (Walton 2016). With specific reference to the schooling context, Slee (2011, 155) argues that inclusive education has been misconstrued and there has been an “inauthentic engagement with the aspirations of the original idea”, resulting in many versions of inclusion that retain the “embedded assumptions about individual defectiveness and special needs education”. It means stakeholders in the specific context think of inclusion in terms of provision and accommodation of those with disabilities in the mainstream, and meeting their individual needs. The result of such thinking has been a discursive practice in which there is prominent discourse on a version of inclusion which has not been dislodged from special education, which casts those with disabilities as a “surplus population” (Slee 2011, 70), who need their own support and accommodations. As observed by Walton (2016, 56), once such a kind of inclusion has been implemented, it is “ticked off and measured” as inclusion. What is “ticked off” as inclusion varies from one institution to the other. However, underlying everything is that students with disabilities are supported and accommodated so that they have the same access to learning as other students without disabilities. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) view this as a narrow version, in which inclusion is understood in terms of including a particular social group as those with disabilities, and not all diverse students. The version of inclusion is discriminatory and stigmatising because students with disabilities are viewed as different from other students. That such an inclusion has negative implications on the particular

students' learning cannot be overemphasised.

Radical inclusion is a strategy for making the social and learning *contexts* inclusive to all (Slee 2013). It implies that radical inclusion has to do with the transformation of contexts to include all rather than pasting diverse students on the system of education to suit the contexts of learning. Thus, it involves genuine inclusion in which all diverse students – with and without disabilities – have access to learning in general and in this particular case, access into professional learning within a transformed institutional context where they can access, participate and achieve in all their diversities. Thus, radical inclusion goes further than educating all learners, including those with disabilities, and meeting their needs within the mainstream, it involves an overhaul of the context and total transformation. While radical inclusion could be understood as institutions of learning accessible and responsive to all students, Walton (2002) still views that as inadequate. She argues that equity, identifying obstacles to access, participation, belonging, curriculum, facilities and support should constitute a version of inclusion that could be seen as radical (Walton 2016). Provision and individual accommodation might not achieve all of this, argues Walton (2016). Thus, a total overhaul is therefore required, which would involve a radical transformation of the contexts so that they would be made to suit all students. As noted by Walton (2016, 57), this requires a “return to the drawing board and a completely new way of thinking and doing education”.

Radical inclusion further involves a radical reconceptualisation. Explained by Pothier and Devlin (2006), it is a new way of thinking about social and physical structures, the practices, disability and self. It implies that within the context of that kind of inclusion, the mainstream society, including those with disabilities, should rethink and have a totally transformed understanding of disability themselves, structures and practices that make up their world. Thus, the two scholars view radical inclusion as a total reconceptualisation and change in the way of thinking, to think inclusively of all. Thus, radical inclusion should be viewed in a new order in which there should be total change in terms of thinking about disability and diversity, to enable access and success to all. I note that, according to the two scholars, it is not only the mainstream society that should change their ways of thinking about inclusion and disability, but also those with disabilities. They should change the way they think about themselves and disability too, from established discourses. When there has been a change in self-view by those with disabilities, they would not view the accommodations, support and provisions in learning contexts as a favour. They would understand that they are not favoured to be accommodated and provided with special provisions, everyone needs to be included.

To understand the urgent need for radical inclusion, it is important to understand how the concept of original inclusion came to be misconstrued and lose its meaning. Citing Edward

Said, Slee (2011, 153) explains that in a movement across space and time, the concept became “tamed and domesticated” and, as a result, its “original insurrectionary force” was lost. It implies that the original idea of inclusion as proposed by UNESCO (1994) was misunderstood by the responsible stakeholders in teaching and learning contexts and as time went by, they reduced it to a simple version, which was a counterfeit and an imitation of the original. It could thus be argued that an unfortunate by-product of this has thus been the unintentional perpetuation of exclusion rather than inclusion. An unintended consequence is inevitable when an off-track movement is a driving force.

INDIVIDUAL ACCOMMODATION TICKED OFF AS INCLUSION

Individual accommodation of students with disabilities at the institution is understood as inclusion. All seven key stakeholders supporting students with disabilities' accounts reflect that their perception is that those students are *included* in professional learning as are all other students at the institution. They state that in cases where they are excluded in learning it is because the academics in question might not know that there are students with disabilities in class, as some of those students do not disclose their disabilities. One of them said:

“If there is a deaf student or a partial sighted student, the lecturer might not even notice that there are such students. How is he expected to accommodate that student? But when he knows, he would request that the student sits in front. When he is drawing on the board, he will also explain what he is drawing and the partial sighted student would know and follow.” (Participant 4).

The statement above reiterates that individual accommodation of students with disabilities in learning by academics is ticked off as inclusion. The perception of the staff members is that students with disabilities are excluded by lecturers when the students do not disclose their disabilities. It is also interesting to note that the accommodation available only happens when the students have disclosed their disabilities to the lecturers. I view that as infringing the rights of students with disabilities who find themselves compelled to disclose their disabilities. Still placing the responsibility on the students with disabilities, another one stated:

“If you don't tell us you are blind and you need JAWS, how do we organise that for you? Disclosure is for statistical reasons, allocating resources, fund raising to get resources and also for individual assistance. When the student discloses to us, we write a letter of reasonable accommodation to the lecturers. That's when they will have Braille paper, that's when they will have JAWS. You can't assume anything until the student discloses.” (Participant 5).

The accounts provided suggest that though students with disabilities disclose their disabilities on their application, they still need to disclose further for them to be included. It has been noted

that students with invisible disabilities were not willing to disclose their disabilities for fear of discrimination and isolation (Olney and Kim 2001; Rose 2006). When students find themselves in a position where they have to disclose their disabilities, and not willing to do so, it could be surmised that there has not been a radical reconceptualisation in terms of thinking about disability (Pothier and Devlin 2006). Students with disabilities are viewed as a “special group” of students, different from others, who have the responsibility of disclosing their disabilities to the academics for them to be *included* in learning. I argue that this contradicts the understanding of radical inclusion whereby students with disabilities should be viewed as all other students who are diverse and that it is the learning contexts that should be transformed so that all students – with and without disabilities – are included. Oliver (1990; 1996) argued against individual accommodation of persons with disabilities generally. He argued that persons with disabilities do not need to be accommodated in society, but there is need for a total overhaul of the social context to be inclusive to all people. With that in place, persons with disabilities can also have access, they belong, they participate and achieve despite their differences. When the exclusion of students in professional learning by lecturers is blamed on those students' failure to disclose their disabilities, it could be argued that inclusion is misconstrued. In terms of professional learning, it implies that only those students who disclose their disabilities are the ones that would have access to learning because lecturers would *include* them in their teaching. Those who do not, might have limited access.

The staff members also stated that lecturers do not have time to devote to individual students with disabilities because they are overloaded with the responsibility of catering for many other students. They stated that, in some cases, the problem of exclusion is with students themselves because some of them come from disadvantaged schooling contexts and have language obstacles which inhibit their ability to communicate effectively with their lecturers. These students, according to the particular staff members, cannot not cope because lecturers are diverse and have different accents. I argue that, from the accounts provided, there is no reflection of radical inclusion because the exclusion from professional learning is viewed as resulting from the shortcomings of students with disabilities who cannot match the lecturers' standards. I argue that this view suggests that it is students who should make sure they are included by understanding different accents of diverse lecturers. We cannot talk of radical inclusion when its students who should transform in order to fit the system. Arguably, those who cannot cope drop off.

The DU staff members also tick off reasonable accommodation as inclusion. This reflects when they said that lecturers do not have time to devote to individual students with disabilities because there are a lot of other students without disabilities they have to attend to. Howell

(2005) explains that reasonable accommodation means providing what is possible. The accounts of the members suggest that, due to time constraints and the number of students lecturers have to attend to, students with disabilities can expect to be “reasonably accommodated”. One might interpret that to mean that they can be accommodated if it is possible, – and that is viewed as *inclusion*.

Provision of transport also manifests as a way in which students with disabilities are understood to be included to access professional learning. The staff members remarked that there is accessible bus transport specifically provided for students with disabilities at the institution. The bus moves around campuses hourly. All seven members’ perception is that the provision of such transport is a reasonable accommodation. They stated that the university cannot afford many buses which are accessible to students with disabilities because there are so few of them, and the institution has a much larger student body to cater for. One of the accounts:

“That’s why they call it ‘reasonable accommodation’. You cannot have a bus that will run full circles and break and not have a bus at all. The bus has an inflexible time-table because it is modified in such a way that it cannot take strains of many rounds. (Participant 6).

In the statement above, the member actually uses the term “reasonable accommodation” to describe how transport is provided to students with disabilities at the institution and justifies why it is provided in that way:

“Why would you spend million Rands to provide transport for that one student? The university would not afford many accessible buses to students with disabilities because they are few as compared as other student population. The accessible bus has a crane and to maintain the bus is very expensive and only specific drivers can use the bus.” (Participant 2).

The statements above justify the way transport is provided for students with disabilities. Though there is justification for making such a provision, I argue that there is no radical reconceptualisation in terms of thinking about the transport system to include all. If there was, the institution would not have buses that are specifically designed for students with disabilities but instead would have all buses designed in such a way that all diverse students, including those with disabilities, could use them. This is because inclusion in its true meaning is all about transformation of the structures so that they are inclusive to all, and not just making provision for those who do not fit the system.

I further view the provision in terms of bus transport to students with disabilities as

oppressive. This is because what can be understood as “reasonable accommodation” to the stakeholders at the institution, might not be so to students with disabilities themselves who have a lived experience of disability, and who better understand the obstacles they confront in terms of their movement to classes. Dastile and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) argue that universities are colonial power structures that perpetuate the oppression of the “other”. I acknowledge however that in terms of professional learning, students with disabilities also are enabled access as they also can move from one campus to the other, to attend lectures. However, because the whole structure of the transport system is not transformed, those with disabilities continue to be excluded as that one bus could be delayed or break down and cause those students to miss lectures.

HIGH STANDARD OF INSTITUTION LEADS TO EXCLUSION

The standard of the institution is said to be very high, hence the exclusion of not only students with disabilities, but also those without disabilities from disadvantaged schooling contexts and backgrounds. A member stated:

“Here the standard is very high. It’s generally the way it is happening here. Most disadvantaged students, not only the disabled, are left out in learning. It takes almost a year and a half for students with disabilities, and even others who are disadvantaged, to follow. Lecturers are diverse and have different accents that cannot be accessed easily. Those from advantaged backgrounds do not have problems in learning; they adjust and learn well without problems. There is nothing we can do about that except that the student should read more.” (Participant 3).

Students with disabilities who have entered the professional programmes at the institution have met the entry level requirements just like all other students which suggests that there is no disparity in terms of their intellectual levels. When they have managed to enter and the institution is said to have too high a standard to include specific groups of students, it speaks to a lack of total institutional transformation. It suggests that while stakeholders and society expects that formerly advantaged institutions of higher learning have totally transformed, this specific institution has not yet transformed to this level, hence the exclusion of those with disabilities in professional learning. I argue that there might not be radical inclusion in a learning context in which students with disabilities are excluded by standards. It suggests, as propounded in Council of Higher Education (2008), the Soudien Report, that the internal inefficiencies prohibitive to transformation and consequently learning of all students are still experienced in this particular institution. While maintaining the high standard in terms of teaching and learning at the institution is commendable because inclusion is not about compromising standards, when the standard is too high to be accessible to some groups of

students, institutional transformation is questionable. However, by virtue of the specific institution being exclusionary to all diverse students because of its high standard, it might not be expected that students with disabilities, including those from previously disadvantaged learning contexts, could access professional learning at the institution with much ease.

ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

The DU members stated that the institution has access arrangements for students with disabilities that enable them to access professional learning. Among many others listed are assistive devices. They stated that there is a fund known as the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) through which assistive devices are sourced. The devices are said to include kindles, eye trackers, special magnifying glasses, hearing loops and motorised wheelchairs. They described a kindle as a small device to which books are uploaded so that the students with physical disabilities do not carry heavy books around. They said an eye tracker is for students with severe physical disabilities who cannot use their limbs; the device enables such students to control the mouse of the computer using their eyes. The device is said to sell for R65 000.00 and the specific institution is among the first to have it. JAWS is installed in the computers of students with visual impairments to assist their reading. It is the name of software that, when installed into a computer, enables a voice to read the materials to the students. According to the members, students with disabilities are trained at the Disability Unit with regard to how to use those devices to access learning. One of the members stated:

“We never had a case where students failed because there was no assistive device. The University provides assistive devices for students to complete their programmes of study. Support is there ... everything!” (Participant 4).

The statement above suggests that assistive devices are viewed by the DU staff members as enabling the inclusion of students with disabilities into professional learning. From the list of those provided, it seems the institution provides different assistive devices to help students with different categories of disabilities to be included in their learning. From the staff members' accounts, the institution is also leading in terms of buying and providing expensive and sophisticated assistive devices for students with disabilities. It shows how important those are viewed as a way of enabling the students' access to learning. As the DU member said that no student fails as the result of the lack of an assistive device, I also acknowledge that provision of assistive devices do enable students with disabilities to access professional learning. However, I argue that such a provision – which is viewed as facilitating inclusion of those students – is ableist (Hehir 2002). In ableism there is a devaluation of disability, considering it

to be inferior while valuing of what is considered “normal”. For example, speaking is valued over signing, reading print is valued over Braille, walking is valued over rolling. Against that background, assistive devices can be seen as meant to “able” students with disabilities so that they can act “normally” and access the professional knowledge “normally” like students without disabilities who learn in a “normal” way.

From the ableist perspective, assistive devices could also be seen as segregative and stigmatising because they are separate and special gadgets, specially designed for a particular group – students with disabilities (Story, Mueller and Mace 1998). Those gadgets could “able” them to fit and learn in the “normal” learning environment in which they do not belong. Reich, Price, Rubin, and Steiner (2010) argue that assistive devices could be without stigmatisation when used in an inclusive learning environment where they could also be used by those without disabilities. At the institution, assistive devices could be seen from the ableist perspective because it is students with disabilities who use them to access learning. Thus, assistive devices are understood as exclusively for students with disabilities. It could be said that they are instead provided as a “segregative device” to accommodate students with disabilities’ learning within an academic environment that was originally not designed for them. I argue that there is lack of radical inclusion in such a learning context because, as Slee (2011, 70) argues, students with disabilities are viewed as a “surplus population” who need their own special provisions to enable their professional learning. That could be viewed as a discursive practice in which there is a manifestation of prominent discourse on inclusion which has not been “dislodged from special education” (Slee 2011, 70).

Provision of assistive devices specifically for students with disabilities brings into picture normalisation and enablement, largely informed by the individualised conceptions of disability. Oliver (1990; 1996) heavily contests that and views those as oppressive to persons with disabilities because society seeks to make them who they are not. It is the same way that the view by the DU members of assistive devices as helping to include students with disabilities in professional learning is seen as seeking to “normalise” and making them learn in the same way as those without disabilities. I view the provision as a manifestation of lack of radical inclusion in the particular context, and I argue that students with disabilities are pasted onto the system through the specific provision so that they fit onto it. I argue that it is the system and the teaching and the learning context that should transform totally, in order to be inclusive to all students. They would then access professional learning in all their diversities and differences.

Thus, assistive devices work as interventions targeted at the individual students with disabilities so that these students could be changed to fit the learning environment. It might also not be all assistive gadgets that could enable access to learning. One example is of a hearing

aid gadget provided to a medical student with hearing impairment which made a noise and disturbed other students during learning. The particular student with disabilities ended up not using the aid because other students complained of its disturbing noise. Thus, not all provision enables access to learning for such students. Therefore, despite the specific provisions in terms of assistive devices, students with disabilities might still not be able to have access to professional learning as might be expected.

FUNDING

The DU members view funding as enabling students with disabilities' inclusion in professional learning. All seven members stated that there is funding specifically for students with disabilities. They explained that it is a bursary which is part of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS 2013). Unlike what the NSFAS provides to other students, to students with disabilities the grant is not a loan, but a bursary. The members said that they assist students with disabilities to access this particular source of funding at the institution. Importantly, this fund includes the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) which caters for assistive devices. All seven members also said that funding is sufficient for disability support at the institution. One DU member said:

“Bring any kind of disability [...] I am waiting for that student who says funding is not enough to tell us exactly what he needs that he cannot get.” (Participant 1).

The statement reveals that, according to the member, funding support is adequate for students with disabilities at the institution. Morris (1989), concurring with Hurst (1993), argues that students with disabilities need more funding because they incur additional costs that other students do not. By virtue of having adequate funding at the specific institution, on one hand I argue that students with disabilities could have access to professional learning – like students without disabilities – when they are well supported financially. However, on the other hand, I view the staff as speaking for students with disabilities. Professional degrees in general – and Medicine specifically – are said to be prohibitively expensive. Focussing on Architecture specifically, Le Grange (2014) also confirms that studying professional degrees is expensive, and that students from disadvantaged contexts such as Black people and students with disabilities cannot afford to study these. The DU members might not know the cost of students with disabilities' study of the professional degrees at the institution, given their unique financial needs, yet they speak for them. It is in that light that while financial support is important for all students, and students with disabilities specifically, in order to access professional learning, it

might not mean they are included. Mutanga (2017) also argues that stakeholders in the South African context of higher learning seem to perceive offering financial support as enough to include students with disabilities. It is noted in the provision of financial support specifically for students with disabilities in the National Student Financial Aid Scheme's (NSFAS) bursary. I hold the same view as Mutanga that providing financial support to students with disabilities equals individual accommodation. Money alone might not guarantee inclusion of those students, rather it should be used to transform the whole learning context so that it includes all diverse students. Students with disabilities in their own unique diversity will be included in such a context.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

All seven DU staff members agreed that the built environment at the institution has improved. They said that there has been restructuring to enable all students to access learning venues. They further remarked that there has been significant retrofitting and renovations of old buildings, in addition to the construction of new structures which consider diverse students' needs from the outset. The members stated that the construction is ongoing; it started at one of the university schools, and the ultimate plan is that the whole institution will be renovated. The adjustments made to old buildings have been made specifically for the access of students with disabilities. Fitchett (2015) also states that universities have recently begun to review their facilities to respond to the increasing number of students and staff with disabilities. Building of new physical structures with persons disabilities in mind from the outset is commendable because it shows that the stakeholders are making an effort to comply with the principles of the Universal Design (Centre for Universal Design 2002) in terms of the built environment. Therefore, I argue that radical inclusion could be considered because there is a rethinking of inclusion in which the physical structures are transformed to include all persons from the outset and not transforming the students with disabilities to fit the context. In terms of professional learning, students with disabilities could have access because they can get to lecture venues in time without wasting time negotiating access. When looked at from the Universal Design perspective, when the DU members view the improvement of the built environment as enabling the inclusion of students with disabilities' professional learning, I consider it as a step in the right direction. Of importance is that, when they have accessed the building, they are able to access learning. Barnes (2003) shares the same view, that inclusion is not all about access into the buildings. It implies that all that enables learning should be transformed to be inclusive to all students because even if they can access buildings, they can still not access professional learning when there has not been a radical reconceptualisation of teaching practice, of self, and

rethinking about disability in general.

CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING RADICAL INCLUSION

Radical inclusion, though a noble idea that could be traced back to the original inclusion, might not be without challenges in terms of practical implementation in higher learning. In the South African context specifically, the implementation of the idea could be met with resistance by the responsible stakeholders. Changing to think differently from the usual is usually met with resistance from those who should change. For those stakeholders who have lived to “tick off” accommodations and provision as inclusion, they might need workshops to help them shift from that thinking to embrace a new way of thinking, talking about inclusion and implementing it. However, workshops to change ways of thinking about inclusion and implementing have been found not to be all that effective. Speaking in the context of using workshops to train teachers in schools to include all diverse teachers in teaching, one teacher commented that facilitators can train them until they are blue in the face, but they will still not understand how to include all learners in the mainstream (Walton et al. 2014). A comment as this-coming from a stakeholder in inclusion suggests that it might not be easy to train someone to think differently from what has been engraved on his or her mind. Thus, while radical inclusion could be useful in terms of making a change to include all students, including those with disabilities, the need to shift the way of thinking might be met with resistance from the responsible stakeholders.

While useful, the implementation of radical inclusion might be met with the challenge of funding in South Africa. As it requires a total overhaul of both social and physical structures, and total transformation, it might not be a day's project. Currently resources and funding are already overstretched to meet all agendas of redress and transformation. Wolpe (1991) argues that the economic resources required to address the inequalities of the core structural conditions of the legacy of Apartheid in Education sphere are not available and will not be in the near future. It is a situation that has implications for economic resources which are currently overstretched to address all transformational issues. Badat (2015) confirms this when he argues that South Africa has low state funding for higher education. While there has been an increased access of diverse students to higher learning, the government subsidy has not increased. Furthermore, though NSFAS for disadvantaged students has been increased, it is still not enough (Badat 2015). Without adequate funding, meeting transformational agendas in institutions of higher learning within such a context could be limited and a radical inclusion in which all diverse students, including those with disabilities, are fully included might be difficult to achieve. However, despite the challenges, I still strongly recommend a move geared towards radical inclusion because if there is a total overhaul and transformation of the system of higher

learning, all students could be genuinely included.

CONCLUSION

The DU staff members' accounts reveal that they "tick off" *provision and individual accommodations* as inclusion at the institution. While those enable students with disabilities access to professional learning at the institution, inclusion is not conceived as inclusion in its true meaning, but the version that superficially patches students onto the system. There is need for a radical inclusion which demands a total transformation of the social and physical structures, teaching and learning practices and a rethinking of disability itself. It could be compounded to make an integrated site of knowledge production and learning. This could also further translate into an institutional transformation in which all diverse students, from former disadvantaged backgrounds, with and without disabilities, are totally included. There is thus the need for a total overhaul in thinking about inclusion, to understand that it should involve total transformation of all the systems necessary for professionalisation.

I conclude by proposing a radical inclusion that involves a total overhaul of systems by rethinking transformation of structures and practices, if all diverse students – including those with disabilities – are to be genuinely included in higher learning both broadly and at the specific institution. The concept of such an inclusion needs to be inculcated in all stakeholders involved in teaching and students themselves who are involved in learning. I however do not overlook the practical implementation of radical inclusion in the South African context of higher learning. It might not be without challenges, given the challenge of changing established ways of thinking and understanding inclusion, over-stretched resources, lack of funding, and addressing all transformational issues. Piecemeal transformation towards radical inclusion at present might make a difference and could improve the professional learning of all students at the institution, including those with disabilities. Further research could be carried out with the academic staff to understand what they themselves tick off as inclusion of students with disabilities in professional learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author gratefully acknowledges the expert logistical and literacy services and facilities of Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies at the University of Johannesburg.

REFERENCES

Ainscow, M., T. Booth and A. Dyson. 2006. *Improving schools, Developing inclusion*. London: Routledge.

- Badat, S. 2015. Deciphering the meanings and explaining the South African Higher education students protests of 2015–16. *Pax Academica African Journal of Academic Freedom* 1 & 2: 71–106.
- Barnes, C. 2003. What a difference a decade makes: Reflections on doing “emancipatory” disability research. *Disability and Society* 18(1): 3–18.
- Centre for Universal Design, 2002. *Definition of Universal Design*. <http://www.design.nesu.edu/cud> (Accessed August 2017).
- Council of Higher Education. 2008. *The Report on Transformation in the Higher Education Sector in South Africa* (Soudien Report). Pretoria: DoE.
- Dastile, P. N. and S. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni. 2013. Power, knowledge and being: Decolonial combative discourse as a survival kit for Pan Africanists in the 21st Century. *Alternation* 20(1): 105–134.
- Fitchett, A. 2015. Exploring adaptive co-management as a means to improving accessibility for people with reduced mobility at the University of Witwatersrand. In *Making education inclusive*, ed. E. Walton and S. Moonsamy. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Hehir, T. 2002. Eliminating ableism in education. *Harvard Educational Review* 72(1): 1–33.
- Howell, C. 2005. *Higher education monitor: South African higher education responses to students with disabilities: Equity of access and opportunity*. Western Cape, South Africa: The Council of Higher Education.
- Hurst, A. 1993. *Steps towards graduation: Access to higher education for people with disabilities*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Le Grange, S. 2014. “Archischools in crisis: Reflections on architectural education in contemporary South Africa with specific reference to transformation and good design teaching.” Unpublished Paper presented at the Architectural Symposium, WITS, 24 January 2014.
- Morris, J. 1989. *Able lives: Women’s experiences of paralysis*. London: The Women’s Press.
- Mutanga, O. 2017. Students with disabilities’ experience in South African higher learning: A synthesis of literature. *South African Journal of Higher Learning* 31(1): 135–154.
- National Student Financial Aid Scheme. 2013. *Guidelines for students with disabilities for the Department of Higher Education and Training Bursary Programme*, NSFAS.
- NSFAS see National Student Financial Aid Scheme.
- Oliver, M. 1990. *The politics of disablement: Critical texts in social work and the social work and the welfare state*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Oliver, M. 1996. *Understanding disability: From theory to practice*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Olney, M. F. and A. Kim. 2001. Beyond adjustment: Integration of cognitive disability into identity. *Disability & Society* 16(4): 563–583.
- Pothier, D. and R. Devlin. 2006. *Critical disability theory: Essays in philosophy, politics and law*. Vancouver-Toronto: UBC Press.
- Reich, C., J. Price, E. Rubin and M. A. Steiner. 2010. *Inclusion, disabilities and informal science learning*. A CAISE Inquiry Group Report, Washington, D.C: Centre for Advancement of Informal Science Education (CAISE).
- Rose, C. 2006. *Do you have a disability – Yes or No? Or is there a better way of asking?* London: Learning and Skills Development Agency.
- Slee, R. 2011. *The irregular school: Exclusion, schooling and inclusive education*. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Slee, R. 2013. Meeting some challenges of inclusive education in an age of exclusion. *Asian Journal Inclusive Education* 1(2): 3–17.
- Story, M. F., J. L. Mueller and R. L. Mace. 1998. *The universal design file: Designing for people of all ages and abilities*. Raleigh, NC: The Centre for Universal Design.
- Titchkosky, T. 2007. *Reading and writing disability differently: The textured life of embodiment*. London: University of Toronto Press.
- UNESCO see United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

- United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation. 1994. *The Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Walton, E. 2002. "The role of education managers in implementing a policy of inclusion in independent Christian schools." Masters diss., University of South Africa.
- Walton, E. 2016. *The language of inclusive education: Exploring speaking, listening, reading and writing*. London: Routledge.
- Walton, E., M. N. Nel, H. Muller and O. Lebeloane. 2014. "You can train us until we are blue in our faces, we are still going to struggle": Teacher professional learning in a full-service school. *Education as Change* 18(2): 319–333.
- Wolpe, H. 1991. Education and social transformation: Problems and dilemmas. In *Education in a future South Africa*, ed. E. Unterhalter, H. Wolpe and T. Botha. Policy Issues for Transformation. London: Heinemann.