EXPERIENCES OF DISABLED STUDENTS AT TWO SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES: A CAPABILITIES APPROACH

by

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Declaration

Oliver Mutanga

Experiences of disabled students at two South African universities: A capabilities approach

I declare that this scholarly work is my original and independent thinking submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies at the University of the Free State. I have not previously, in part or its entirety submitted it for obtaining any educational qualification. This work is published by the University of the Free State (UFS) in terms of the non-exclusive license which I granted the UFS.

Date: 20 November 2015

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Abstract

Experiences of disabled students at two South African universities: a capabilities approach

Using the capabilities approach, this thesis examines how disabled students experience higher education at two South African universities: University of the Free State (UFS) and University of Venda (UniVen). Located within the equity and inclusive agenda, the study seeks to exert influence over higher education policies and practices. South Africa prioritises equity issues. It is among the few countries in the world (156 as of 2015) to have signed and ratified one of the most acclaimed conventions on disability, the 2008 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). However, there is no legislation (in 2015) that specifically looks at disability issues in South African higher education (SAHE) and data on disabled students is thin. I argue that the capabilities approach is important in framing our understanding of disability issues in higher education. It also provides an analytical framework to measure progress towards social justice. The capabilities approach acknowledges the interplay between individual bodies and various conversion factors in the concept and construction of disabilities. This thesis advances knowledge in higher education and disability disciplines by outlining the complexities in disabled students' lives at the two universities.

This study sought to answer the following questions.

1. How do disabled students experience their studies and interact with higher education?
2. How do lecturers and Disability Unit staff understand disability and the experiences of disabled students?
3. What are the differences and similarities concerning university policies and other supporting arrangements for disabled students at the University of the Free State and University of Venda?
4. How does the capabilities approach account for the experiences of disabled students in higher education?

5. What implications can be drawn for disability policy to enhance social justice in higher education?

As a result of the historical trajectories that still influence the present-day state of SAHE, two universities with different historical and cultural backgrounds were selected. UFS is a historically-advantaged urban-based white Afrikaans university. It has gone through the processes of major transformation in recent years. By contrast, UniVen is a historically-disadvantaged rural-based university. It was established under apartheid policy to serve the African black community. Officially, it reports the highest number of disabled students in SAHE.

Purposive sampling was employed to recruit participants into the study. Participants included fourteen disabled students from various disability categories, four lecturers and three Disability Unit (DU) staff. Students were recruited from the DU by telephone after being provided with a list of registered disabled students. The DU staff were approached directly and recruited to the study. Lecturers were recruited through their respective Heads of Departments. An information sheet was provided to every participant; this was accompanied by a conversation with each participant before they signed the consent form.

Data in this qualitative study were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations and institutional document analysis. In-depth interviews with disabled students, lecturers and the DU staff focused on their experiences with disability issues and their perceptions of the needs of disabled students. Field observations were also incorporated into the study in order to expand my understanding of the experiences of disabled students at the two universities. In order to get a comprehensive understanding of relevant issues, I spent a day with one participant at each university, in their setting from residence to the classes. I was able to determine how the students interact with their peers, what happens in classrooms and in their places of residence. Furthermore, some university policy documents (e.g. disability policies, assessment policies and residence policies) were reviewed in order to understand how the two higher education institutions (HEIs)

purport to address issues and then the results of the review were juxtaposed with what was gathered from the other mentioned data collection methods.

Data were analysed thematically with the help of NVivo software and five key findings emerged from the students' data. Findings from this study highlight the complexities around the adoption of an identity as a disabled person by these students. Understanding disability within a given social and cultural context is important, as interpretations of what is disability are influenced by context. The study also found that, as a result of the current thinking around disability, some practices and non-actions in higher education perpetuate injustices towards disabled students, although their intended goals are to create opportunities for all students. Another finding from the study is that, in most cases, the challenges faced by disabled students in higher education are not the same and they respond to these challenges differently. It was further found that regardless of these challenges, disabled students have the capacity to aspire and they showed educational resilience. The last finding from the students highlights that disabled students, just like other students, know what they value in higher education. Participating students identified key valued freedoms and opportunities that are needed to access and succeed in higher education. Eleven key valued freedoms and opportunities were extrapolated, and I argue that these are needed for the formulation of socially just disability-inclusive policies. Interviews with university staff show a lack of awareness among lecturers on disability matters due to lack of training and at times this is compounded by their socio-cultural backgrounds and job expectations from their universities. On the other hand, DU staff showed an appreciation of disability matters. However, their efforts at times are compromised by arrangements within the university linked to lack of national and university policy guidelines. The thesis ends by suggesting some key points for SAHE to consider for an inclusive-disability policy framework.

Opsomming

Ervaringe van gestremde studente in Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite: 'n Vermoëns-perspektief

Deur die gebruik van die vermoëns-perspektief, ondersoek hierdie tesis hoe gestremde studente hoër onderwys ervaar aan twee Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite, die Universiteit van die Vrystaat (UV) en die Universiteit van Venda (UniVen).

Gesitueer binne 'n agenda van gelykheid en inklusiwiteit, poog hierdie studie om hoër onderwys beleide en handelinge te beïnvloed. Suid-Afrika prioritiseer sosiale gelykheid en is een van min lande in die wêreld (156 teen 2015) wat een van die mees bekroonde konvensies rakende gestremdheid, die 2008 Konvensie op die Regte van Mense met Gestremdhede, geteken en bekragtig het.

Daar is egter geen wetgewing (in 2015) wat spesifiek omsien na kwessies rakende gestremdhede in Suid-Afrikaanse hoër onderwys (SAHO) nie en data oor gestremde studente is min. Ek stel voor dat die vermoënsbenadering belangrik is om ons begrip van kwessies rakende gestremdhede in hoër onderwys te verdiep. Dit verskaf ook 'n analitiese raamwerk om vordering na sosiale geregtigheid te meet. Die vermoënsbenadering erken die wisselwerking tussen individuele instellings en verskeie omskakelingsfaktore in die skepping van gestremdhede. Hierdie tesis bevorder kennis in hoër onderwys en dissiplines rakende gestremdheid deur die kompleksiteit van gestremde studente aan twee universiteite se lewens uit te lig.

Hierdie studie beoog om die volgende vrae te beantwoord:

1. Hoe ervaar gestremde studente hul studies en hoe lyk die interaksie tussen hulle en hoër onderwys?

2. Hoe verstaan dosente en personeel aan die eenhede vir gestremdheid gestremdhede en die ervaringe van gestremde studente?

3. Wat is die verskille en ooreenkomste tussen universiteitsbeleide en ander ondersteuning vir gestremde studente aan die Universiteit van die Vrystaat en die Universiteit van Venda?

4. Hoe neem die vermoënsbenadering effektief die ervaringe van gestremde studente in hoër onderwys in ag?

5. Watter implikasies kan afgelei word vir 'n beleid oor gestremdheid om sosiale geregtigheid te bevorder?

As gevolg van historiese trajekte wat steeds hedendaagse SAHO beïnvloed, is twee universiteite met verskillende historiese en kulturele agtergronde geselekteer. Die UV is 'n histories-bevoordeelde, stedelike, voormalige wit, Afrikaanse universiteit wat deur verskeie transformasie prosesse gegaan het die afgelope jare. UniVen is 'n historiese-benadeelde, plattelandse universiteit wat in die apartheidsjare geopen is om die swart, Afrika gemeenskap te dien. UniVen rapporteer offisieel dat hulle die hoogste aantal gestremde studente in SAHO het.

Doelgerigte steekproefneming is gebruik om kandidate vir die studie te selekteer. Die kandidate het bestaan uit veertien gestremde studente uit verskeie kategorieë van gestremdheid, vier dosente en drie personeellede van gestremdheid eenhede. 'n Lys van geregistreerde gestremde studente is verkry van die eenhede, waarna geselekteerdes telefonies deur die eenhede gekontak is. Die personeel aan die eenhede was direk gekontak om deel te neem aan die studie. Dosente was deur hul onderskeie departementshoofde gekontak. 'n Inligtingsdokument was aan elke kandidaat gegee en 'n verbale gesprek is met elke kandidaat uitgevoer voordat toestemmingsvorms geteken is.

Data in hierdie kwalitatiewe studie is deur in-diepte onderhoude, veld observasies en institusionele dokument analise gekollekteer. In-diepte onderhoude met gestremde studente, dosente en die eenhede se personeel het gefokus op hul ervaringe met kwessies rakende gestremdhede, asook hul

persepsies oor die behoeftes van gestremde studente. Veld observasies was ook ingesluit in die studie om my eie begrip van die ervaringe van gestremde studente aan die twee universiteite aan te help. Om ŉ omvattende begrip van kwessies te kry, het ek ŉ dag saam met een kandidaat by elke universiteit spandeer, van hul wonings tot klasse. Dit het my in staat gestel om te ervaar hoe die studente met hul medestudente omgaan, asook wat in die klaskamers en wonings gebeur. Sekere universiteitsbeleide (bv. Beleide oor gestremdhede, assessering en behuising) was ook ondersoek om beter begrip te kry van hoe die twee hoër onderwys institute beweer om kwessies aan te spreek. Die resultate van die ondersoek was daarna opgeweeg teenoor data wat deur die ander genoemde metodes ingesamel is.

Data is geanaliseer volgens temas met die hulp van NVivo sagteware en vyf sleutelbevindinge wat deur die studente se data na vore gekom het. Die bevindinge van die studie lig kompleksiteite oor die aanneming van ŉ identiteit van ŉ gestremde persoon deur die studente uit. Om gestremdhede binne ŉ gegewe sosiale en kulturele konteks te verstaan is belangrik omdat interpretasies oor wat gestremdheid is, word beïnvloed deur konteks. Die studie het ook gevind dat sekere handelinge en uitgelate handelinge in hoër onderwys ongelykhede bevorder teenoor gestremde studente as gevolg van huidige denke en begrip oor gestremdhede, selfs al is die beoogde doelwitte om geleenthede vir alle studente te skep. Nog ŉ bevinding van die studie is dat in meeste gevalle, die uitdagings wat gestremde studente in hoër onderwys moet oorkom nie dieselfde is nie en hulle respons teenoor die uitdagings ook verskil. Dit is verder gevind dat gestremde studente die kapasiteit het om te streef na doelwitte en opvoedkundige veerkragtigheid toon ten spyte van die uitdagings. Die laaste bevinding van die studente is dat gestremde studente, net soos ander studente weet wat hulle waardevol vind in hoër onderwys. Deelnemende studente het sleutel vryhede en geleenthede geïdentifiseer wat nodig is om toegang te kry tot en sukses te behaal in hoër onderwys. Elf sleutel-gewaardeerde vryhede en gelykhede is geëkstrapoleer en ek stel voor dat hulle nodig is vir die formulering van sosiale geregtelike insluitende beleide vir gestremdhede. Onderhoude met universiteitspersoneel wys ŉ gebrek aan bewustheid onder dosente oor kwessies rakende gestremdhede as gevolg van ŉ gebrek aan opleiding, wat ook soms saamgestel word deur hul sosio-kulturele agtergrond en werksverwagtinge van hul universiteite. Aan die ander kant het personeel aan die eenhede vir gestremdhede waardering vir kwessies rakende gestremdhede,

alhoewel hul pogings met tye in gedrang kom deur sekere reëlings binne die universiteit, wat terugverwys kan word na die gebrek aan nasionale en universiteitsbeleide wat riglyne gee. Die tesis sluit af deur sekere voorstelle te maak vir SAHO om in ag te neem vir ’n insluitende gestremdheidsbeleid raamwerk.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Pictures

Acronyms

CAST	Centre for Applied Special Technology
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHETL	Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning
CICOPS	Centro Internazionale Cooperazione per lo Sviluppo
CRHED	Centre for Research on Higher Education and Development
CRC	Convention on the Rights of Children
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability
CUADS	Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DoE	Department of Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DSC	Disabled Student Council
DSE	Disability Standards for Education
DU	Disability Unit
FET	Further Education and Training
FOTIM	Foundation of Tertiary Institutions of the Northern Metropolis
HEDSA	Higher and Further Education Disability Services Association
HEIs	Higher education institutions
HDCP	Human Development, Capability and Poverty International Research Centre
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health

ICIDH	International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps
INDS	Integrated National Disability Strategy
MoE	Ministry of Education
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NCESS	National Committee on Education Support Services
NCSNET	National Commission on Special Education Needs and Training
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
NRF	National Research Fund
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
ODP	Office of the Deputy President
SAHE	South African higher education
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SENDA	Special Educational Needs and Disability Act
SRC	Student Representative Council
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UDL	Universal Design of Learning
UFS	University of the Free State
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UniVen	University of Venda
UPIAS	Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation

USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organisation

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Attending to equity issues in South African higher education (SAHE) continues to be highly challenging. It is complicated because of the past and present social, political and economic imperatives, as well as the current framing and understanding of the concept of inclusion. Providing for the needs of disabled students is even more challenging, due to polarised and one-dimensional frameworks for understanding disability. This study is situated within a commitment to inclusive and socially just higher education that encourages full participation of diverse students. Drawing on Walker's capabilities list, this thesis covers theoretical ground on issues related to the inclusion of disabled students from a social justice perspective, understood here as the expansion of opportunities and agency freedom for all students. Social justice demands the equalisation of the individual's capability to achieve well-being (Terzi, 2005). This is particularly significant due to the increasing international promotion of and commitment to inclusive and equitable quality education for all (UN, 2015).

The aim of the study is to understand disability and the experiences of disabled students at two South African universities as a matter of social justice through the capabilities approach (Sen, 1992, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000, 2006, 2011). As a result of the empirical findings from this study, the term 'disabled students' is used in this thesis. However, it needs to be acknowledged that this does not mean this term is better than the term 'students with disabilities'. Using the term 'disabled students' is intended to acknowledge that in some instances, individuals with impairments are disabled/disadvantaged by various factors. At the same time, the impaired body might cause one to be disabled. In some instances, it will be used interchangeably with the term 'impaired'.The capabilities approach was pioneered by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. It provides a framework for understanding what disabled students at the universities are 'able to be and to do' and what limits their 'beings and doings' (Sen, 1992). The approach requires us to look at inclusion as a matter of social justice and to move beyond measuring inclusion through statistics to

recognising what each disabled student 'values to do and be' at the university, their agency and well-being.

In this chapter I situate the focus of my study within the South African equity agenda. While equity is a policy focus in South Africa, most attention has primarily been on race and gender. Disability issues have been trivialised in redressing inequalities, particularly in higher education. The research problem and the significance of the study are also highlighted here to motivate the rationale for this study. The profile of disabled people in South Africa and various policies linked to inclusion and participation of disabled students are also discussed. I will then motivate why a capabilities-based approach to understanding disability and framing of socially just-inclusive policies is important in resolving the tensions around inclusion and exclusion discourses. Though they will be elaborated in Chapter Four, I will also briefly discuss the research design and methodology. I also discuss how I am positioned in this study and lastly outline the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Background

Since the advent of democracy in 1994, South Africa has been committed to transforming its institutions, including higher education. Inequalities were embedded in many spheres of society as a product of colonialism and systematic exclusion of blacks under apartheid (Badat, 2010).[1] The whole education sector was integral to apartheid ideology and practice (du Toit, 2000). The apartheid higher education system was differentiated along racial lines, resulting in the advantaging of historically white institutions and disadvantaging historically black institutions (Jansen, 2003). Post-1994 there has been a wide array of transformation-oriented initiatives seeking to effect positive institutional change. For example, the 1996 South African Constitution and other legislation have directed the state to fulfil a wide range of imperatives in and through

[1] Apartheid was a system of racial segregation in South Africa enforced through legislation by the National Party, the governing party from 1948 to 1994. Under apartheid, the rights, associations, and movements of the majority black people and other ethnic minority groups were curtailed, while Afrikaner white minority rule was maintained.

higher education. These include restructuring the higher education landscape to widen participation. Within the broad transformation agenda, higher education institutions (HEIs) have been encouraged to embrace individuals representing groups that have been previously excluded on the grounds of age, race, gender and disability. However, including previously excluded students into higher education has not been without challenges.

Internationally, the impetus for change to a more inclusive society was initiated in 1990. The 1990 *World Declaration on Education for All* adopted in Jomtien, presented an overarching vision for the future, namely universalising access to education for all children, youth and adults, as well as the promotion of equality. This international drive for the availability of educational opportunities for all people is also reflected in the Salamanca Statement, which laid down the framework of inclusive education. This global policy focused on providing quality education for all students in a single system (Prinsloo, 2001). The Salamanca Statement reaffirms, among other things:

1. The right of every individual to education;

2. That educational institutions should accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic and other conditions;

3. That provision of support services is of paramount importance for access and success in education for all (UNICEF, 1994).

The assertion in the Salamanca Statement is that inclusive education aims to achieve two things. Firstly, to reconstruct the educational provision for all students; and secondly, to expand educational opportunities to marginalised groups who historically have had little or no access to formal education. In addition, the Salamanca Statement shows the social benefits that could be derived from inclusive education, including the increased acceptance and appreciation of diversity, improved life skills, increased moral and ethical development and increased self-esteem (Stafford & Green, 1996). In 2000 the commitments for universal education were reaffirmed at the World Education Forum in Dakar. This promotion of equal access to education is also enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989).The most significant push towards inclusion

for disabled students globally has been the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the only international legal instrument dedicated to the rights of disabled people, with article 24 focusing on education. These global initiatives regarding inclusive education have influenced the drive towards inclusion in South Africa (Naicker, 2005). However, despite the broad commitments expressed in the policy and legislation addressing the needs of previously disadvantaged students, including disabled students, many disabled students continue to face challenges in higher education (Howell & Lazarus, 2003). There seem to be gaps between theory, policy and practice (Howell, 2006).

1.2.1 Disabled People in South Africa

Accurate information on the actual numbers of disabled students in SAHE remains unavailable, due to complexities in measurement (Trani, Backshi, Bellanca, Biggeri & Mardetta, 2011). However, a study conducted by Statistics South Africa in 2005 found that the total number of disabled people enrolled at higher education was 65 342 out of a total of 2 188 456 enrolled students (Magongo & Motimele, 2011). Their study showed that disabled people are the minority at HEIs. Statistics South Africa's 2001 census recorded a total of 2,255,982 people in a population of 45 million as having some form of disability. This number constitutes 5% of the total population. It also indicated that 99.28% of the disabled that are employable are unemployed, and 33% had received no schooling at all. In 2001, a disability-related question in the census read:

> *Does the person have any serious disability that prevents his/her full participation in life activities? None 0; Sight 1; Hearing 2; Communication 3; Physical 4; Intellectual 5; Emotional 6.*

In 1996 disability was estimated at 6.95% of the population (of a total of 40 million). The census question on disability was:

> *Does* (the person) *have a serious sight, hearing, physical or mental disability? If yes, circle all applicable disabilities for the person: Sight 1; Hearing/Speech 2; Physical disability 3; Mental disability 4.*

These two reports are not comparable; the phrasing on disability issues has been varied in all the census surveys carried out in post-1994 South Africa. The classifications used in the 2001 and 1996 census surveys was based on the World Health Organisation (WHO) International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH) (1980), which define disability as a physical or mental handicap that has lasted for six months or more, or is expected to last at least six months, which prevents the person from carrying out daily activities independently, or from participating fully in educational, economic or social activities. This definition was changed for the census of 2011, in which disability was defined using the Washington Group method that evaluates difficulties encountered in functioning due to bodily impairments or activity limitation, with or without the use of assisting devices. In 2011, the question read:

> *Does (the person) have difficulty in the following: A seeing even when using eye glasses?; B hearing even when using hearing aid?; C communication in his/her language?; D walking or climbing stairs?; E remembering or concentrating?; F with self-care such as washing all over and dressing/ feeding?*

The 2011 census says that most people (about 10% of 51.7 million people) had *difficulty* or *limitation* that prevented them from carrying out certain functions at the time of the census. The lack of consistent and reliable data regarding the number of disabled people impacts on the ability of government and other stakeholders to make accurate social policy decisions regarding the needs of disabled students.

1.2.2 South African higher education and Disability Policy Framework in brief

Here I track the evolution of higher education and disability-related policies in relation to the inclusion and participation of disabled students in SAHE. I will do this by exploring some of the educational policies promulgated since 1994 and discuss the extent to which they address disability issues in higher education and how they relate to the equity and transformation agenda.

Prior to 1994, apartheid policies such as the Extension of University Education Act (1959) led to the creation of distinct racial and ethnic universities. Cloete (2002:87) notes that the post-1994 period 'saw unprecedented changes in South African higher education'. He says that the period 1994-1996 was characterised by 'a massive, participatory drive towards policy formation', the culmination of which was the 1996 National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) report. The commission was set up to advise the Ministry of Education (MoE) on the transformation of the segregated higher education into a system that would respond to the national development agenda. Following the proposals of the NCHE, a policy framework for transformation was developed in the Education White Paper 3. As a necessary means to overcome the deficiencies of the legacy of apartheid higher education, the Paper laid out the foundations for financing disadvantaged students and the establishment of the CHE. The Education White Paper 3 (7-8) specified four purposes for South African higher education, as follows:

- *To meet the learning needs and aspirations of individuals through the development of their intellectual abilities and aptitudes throughout their lives. Higher education equips individuals to make the best use of their talents and of the opportunities offered by society for self-fulfilment. It is thus a key allocator of life chances and an important vehicle for achieving equity in the distribution of opportunity and achievement among South African citizens.*

- *To address the development needs of society and provide the labour market, in a knowledge driven and knowledge dependent society, with the ever-changing high level competencies and expertise necessary for the growth and prosperity of a modern economy. Higher education teaches and trains people to fulfil specialised social functions, enter the learned professions, or pursue vocations in administration, trade, industry, science and technology and the arts.*

- *To contribute to the socialisation of enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens. Higher education encourages the development of a reflective capacity and a willingness to review and renew prevailing ideas, policies and practices based on a commitment to the common good.*

- *To contribute to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge. Higher education engages in the pursuit of academic scholarship and intellectual inquiry in all fields of human understanding, through research, learning and teaching.*

This policy was legally formalised in the 1997 Higher Education Act, which expresses the desire to establish a single, co-ordinated higher education system that would promote governance and transformation of programmes and institutions so as to respond better to the human resource, economic and development needs of the country.

With specific reference to disability, and to facilitate the inclusion and participation of disabled people in all spheres of the economy, the National Commission on Special Education Needs and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) were appointed in 1996. Their findings (DoE 1997:126), produced in 1997, stated that:

> *The primary challenge to higher education institutions at present is to actively seek to admit learners with disabilities who have historically been marginalised at this level, providing them with opportunities to receive the education and training required to enter a variety of job markets. Alongside this is the challenge to develop the institution's capacity to address diverse needs and address barriers to learning and development. This includes not only learners with disabilities, but all learners. This requires that adequate enabling mechanisms be put in place to ensure that appropriate curriculum and institutional transformation occurs, and that additional support is provided where needed.*

This report pointed out that there was a need to admit more disabled students, and to facilitate their full participation (Matshedisho, 2007b). The Integrated National Disability Strategy (INDS) was introduced in 1997 with the intention to both guide and support increased employment of, and to

some degree to serve, disabled people within government structures. Former President, Thabo Mbeki (Office of the Deputy President (ODP) 1997:2), acknowledged this:

> *This White Paper [INDS] represents the government's thinking about what it can contribute to the development of disabled people and to the promotion and protection of their rights. We believe in a partnership with disabled people. Therefore, the furtherance of our joint objectives can only be met by the involvement of disabled people themselves*.

The government thus recognised both the need for the rights of disabled people to be protected as well as their involvement and participation in matters affecting their lives (Howell, 2005). INDS endorsed the social model, which, as will be found in Chapter Three, has some shortfalls.[2]

In 2001, the government released the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE). The NPHE outlines the framework and mechanisms through which the policy goals and transformation imperatives of the White Paper 3 and Higher Education Act could be implemented (MoE, 2001). Among other things, the NPHE established indicative targets for the size and shape of the higher education system. Although there is no reference to disabled students, of particular relevance in the context of this study is the strong focus on equity issues through the identification of non-traditional students as a target group for inclusion in higher education.[3] It also recommended that participation rates in higher education should increase from 15% to 20% by 2016 (MoE, 2001). In the same manner as the INDS, NPHE (2001) lamented a lack of data on the status of disabled students in SAHE. Again, in the same year, the Education White Paper 6 primarily covering the education of disabled students at primary and secondary school level was released, stating that disabled students should have fair and equal opportunities to access and succeed in higher education.[4] The Paper provided guidelines to remove obstacles and challenges that hinder disabled students' access and participation. It was also suggested that HEIs' responses to the needs of disabled students was important and regional collaboration among HEIs was important in this regard. However, although it purports to cover inclusive education and participation of disabled

[2] In general, the social model sees disability as a social construct. Disability is not the attribute of the individual; instead, it is created by the social environment and requires social change.
[3] These include: workers, mature students, females, and disabled students.
[4] This paper is entitled 'Special Needs Education: Building an inclusive education and training system'.

students in SAHE, some of its provisions seem to suggest otherwise. For instance, *Section 2.2.5.3* (DoE, 2001b:31) states that:

> *It will not be possible to provide relatively expensive equipment and other resources, particularly for blind and deaf students, at all higher education institutions. Such facilities will therefore have to be organised on a regional basis*.

However, there are no details on how this can be implemented in practice. Moreover, there are no legal sanctions for failure to comply with this duty. By insisting that it 'will not be possible' to provide equipment and resources to a section of the population, justifying this in economic terms, the Paper arguably risks perpetuating inequalities. Instead of the assurance of service provision, this Paper (and others before and since) places the burden on disabled students to justify their right to be included in higher education in such a way that does not place economic burdens on HEIs.

In 2013, the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training was released. It states that HEIs need to accommodate students with diverse needs and remove barriers that hinder the development of all students. This is a positive move towards inclusive practices in higher education. The Paper states that the government remains committed to improving access and success for 'non-traditional students' (disabled, black and female). It therefore prioritises increasing student participation rates, improving their performance, success and throughput rates. The Paper (DHET, 2013:xv) further says that it will develop a strategic policy framework to drive this initiative:

> *The DHET will develop a strategic policy framework to guide the improvement of access to and success in post-school education and training for people with disabilities. The framework will require all post-school institutions to address policy within institutional contexts and to develop targeted institutional plans to address disability.*

In December 2014, a Ministerial Committee was set up by the Minister of Higher Education and Training to develop the strategic policy framework as articulated in the 2013 White Paper. The committee is still working on that framework. Even though certain elements require ongoing critical debate, inclusive initiatives in SAHE as explicated in various policy documents are currently being pushed and action is evident. Notwithstanding these significant policy initiatives, a number of challenges continue to confront HEIs. For example, some goals and values are in

tension with one another; for example, pursuing social equity and redress alongside the production of high quality graduates in the context of inadequate public funding and initiatives to support underprepared students (who include disabled students). While South African policies are impressive on paper, the real question is why there are still challenges in SAHE. In 2012 CHE reported that of the 892,936 (726,882 undergraduates and 138,610 postgraduates) students enrolled in SAHE, only about one in four students graduate within the minimum required time, and only 35% of the total intake graduate within five years. When allowance is made for those who come back after dropping out, 55% of the intake will never graduate (CHE, 2012). Again, commenting on the issues of inclusion, Carrim (2002:14) argues that:

> *Although it would be fair to state that South African education and training legislation and policies promote an expanded and rich use of the notion of inclusion, it cannot be assumed that this is reflective of current, and emerging, practices. Instead, mounting evidence seems to suggest that various forms of exclusion still prevail throughout the system currently.*

This calls for more careful consideration of the equity issues and the barriers within the SAHE system which restricts full inclusion and participation of disabled students. The current policy momentum clears the way for a platform to contribute the findings from this study.

1.3 Research Problem

Theoretically, tensions have polarised the disability field, with critics torn between the medical model and the social model. It is against this background that I bring in the capabilities approach as an alternative framework, among the existing ones, to understand disability issues. In doing so, I hope to show that all models or frameworks have powerful aspects in our understanding of disability issues.

From a policy perspective, transformation in SAHE has, in many instances, focused primarily on race and gender issues, and disability continues to be overlooked (Howell, 2006). This has also filtered through into studies on disabled students in SAHE where data is still thin in comparison

to that on race and gender issues (Foundation of Tertiary Institutions of the Northern Metropolis (FOTIM), 2011). This is despite the fact that South Africa is among the few countries in the world (156 as of 2015) to have signed and ratified one of the most acclaimed global conventions on disability, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) in 2007. Furthermore, there is no legislation (in 2015) that specifically looks at disability issues in SAHE. Nonetheless, a Ministerial Task Team was set up by the Minister of Higher Education and Training in December 2014 to develop a Strategic Disability Policy Framework. In the absence of a national framework, HEIs are using different approaches in response to the needs of disabled students (FOTIM, 2011). These are the driving forces behind my study, which seeks to contribute to reducing social inequalities and exclusion in higher education. This is important in light of the government's stated imperative to increase access to higher education for disabled students as part of a broader equity and transformation agenda. Furthermore, this is important in the context where inequalities are high and stratified along racial and gender lines; for example, white student completion rates are on average 50% higher than black student completion rates (Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2012). Again, approximately 46% of all students who started three and four-year degree programmes in 2005 had dropped out by 2010 (CHE, 2012). The data does not show how many disabled students are affected. As such, more careful consideration needs to be given to the equity issues and the barriers within the SAHE system, which restrict access, limit full participation, and undermine the success of students.

1.4 Significance of the study

The overall aim of this study is to examine the processes through which disabled students at two South African universities make their educational choices and negotiate different structures on their way to, and in, higher education. Full participation and success of all students in higher education are important for the economy and social development (Badat, 2010). The underlying principle behind this study is a commitment to full inclusion of all students in higher education. Additionally, the present lack of research of this nature in South Africa motivated this study, which aims to bring the capabilities approach into conversation with our conceptual understanding of the experiences of disabled students in SAHE. As will be highlighted in Chapter Three, the current

global conceptualisation of disability offered by existing disability models and frameworks e.g. the medical model, the social model and the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), is limited. I argue for a capabilities-based framework for understanding disability in higher education. I empirically apply the capabilities approach to the framing and understanding of disability in the higher education context in Africa, and South Africa in particular. This, I think, will 'push back the frontiers of knowledge' regarding the inclusion of disabled students in higher education. Hopefully, this will provide a foundation on which further studies can build in order to comprehensively grasp the lives of disabled students in SAHE and attend to inclusive matters. Besides factoring in agency and resources as important in people's experiences, this framework acknowledges the interplay between individual bodies, political and socio-economic environment among other variables. This study is timely to South Africa as it initiated the development of a national policy framework on disability in the Post-School Education and Training systems in December 2014.

The following questions arose from my review of literature and models of understanding disability.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How do disabled students experience their studies and interact with higher education?

2. How do lecturers and Disability Unit staff understand disability and the experiences of disabled students?

3. What are the differences and similarities concerning university policies and other supporting arrangements for disabled students at the University of the Free State and University of Venda?

4. How does the capabilities approach account for the experiences of disabled students in higher education?

5. What implications can be drawn for disability policy to enhance social justice in higher education?

In order to operationalise the capabilities approach, I designed a qualitative research study, discussed in section 1.7.

1.6 Developing a Theoretical Framework

Throughout this thesis, I argue that the capabilities approach is important in framing our understanding of inclusion and exclusion of disabled students in higher education (see Chapter Four for an in-depth discussion of the capabilities approach). For this reason, I will focus more on this approach here (though it will also be expanded in Chapter Four) to provide a better understanding of the capabilities approach. The approach provides an analytical framework to measure progress towards inclusion and acknowledges the interplay between individual bodies and various conversion factors in the creation of disadvantages.

In applying the capabilities approach to questions of provision for disabled children and special educational needs, Terzi (2005) tackles inclusion challenges and engages with the concept of 'dilemma of difference', which is the risk of reinforcing the stigma associated with assigned difference (such as an impairment) either by focusing on it, or by ignoring it (Minow, 1985). To do the first is to risk labelling the person by calling attention to their difference from others; to do the latter is to risk not providing the enabling conditions that enable the person's quality of life. The dilemma of difference translated into institutional action involves having to choose from two equally problematic solutions in order to provide equitably for disabled students. The first option would be identifying the needs of disabled students and providing for them according to these needs, such as providing a university bus to take disabled students shopping because local taxis either will not transport them (if they have a guide dog), or charge double if they travel with a wheelchair. The bus is tremendously helpful, but this individualised support marks the students out as different and does not address the need for policy changes. As Salais (2009) points out, the

common good beyond the individual good would be best served by public policies that genuinely expand people's capabilities so that the real possibility of an alternative way of being exists, enabling 'free access to a real possibility' (2009:6). Another option would be to treat all students as the same and offer standardised provision, but this result in the failure to make relevant external provision, such as adapted student residences or additional learning support, for those who might require it, for such 'free access to a real possibility.'

Using Sen as her reference point, Terzi (2005) argues that the capabilities approach can resolve the dilemma of difference. By reconsidering this dilemma through the opportunities to do what one values, the capabilities approach moves beyond the dual framing of disability in the individual (stigmatise) or the social environment (treat all as equal) to a relational approach that considers both individual impairment and educational arrangements. It considers the specificity of a situation as well as each individual's agency. In this manner, it avoids labelling disabled people based on their impairments alone.

The capabilities approach helps us push inclusion debates further by asking how disabled students are actually 'doing' in higher education. It encourages us to think of inclusion beyond enrolments of disabled students to what can be done to create and expand opportunities within higher education for disabled students to succeed, in line with the commitments outlined in the Salamanca Statement.

1.7 Research Design and Methodology

While Chapter Four will elaborate more on the audit trail of where, from whom and what data was produced, and how it was analysed, a brief discussion is provided here in preparation of what will follow later in this thesis. This qualitative study was conducted in South Africa at two universities in order to understand how disabled students negotiate different spaces at their universities and the complexity and nuanced aspects of disability.

Two South African universities, UFS and UniVen, were chosen for this study. These two universities represent HEIs with different historical backgrounds as a result of apartheid. UFS is a formerly-advantaged white university, while UniVen is a historically-disadvantaged black university. Any universities with the same characters and backgrounds could have been chosen as case studies. Cognisant of the time limitations for my doctoral study and finances involved in research, I pragmatically chose these two universities. I am based at UFS, so access, data collection and financial issues were ameliorated. I was a Research Assistant for a Centre for Research on Higher Education and Development (CRHED) project in which UniVen was a partner university. It was easy to combine that research work and my own study as the costs were met by the CRHED project and I could revisit participants to clarify my interpretation of their narratives.

Participants in this study included disabled students, lecturers and Disability Units (DUs) staff. After obtaining ethical clearance to conduct the study at both universities, eligible participants were invited to participate in the study. Eight students at UFS and six students at UniVen from different races,[5] disability categories, levels of education and programmes of study agreed to participate in the study. Although this study focused on the experiences of disabled students, a few lecturers and DUs staff were also invited to participate. In-depth interviews, field observations and document analysis were used to gather data from disabled students, lecturers and DUs staff. University documents (e.g. disability policies, residence policies, mission statements and assessment policies) were reviewed to establish principles underlying the notion of inclusion and equal participation to quality education for disabled students.

[5] Although the concept of race is problematic, I use it here as it is an important variable in this study: historically (and also presently), and together with class, race determines one's access to resources in South Africa.

1.7.1 University of the Free State (UFS)

UFS is an urban university founded in 1904 as a white English university.[6] In the late 1940s it became an Afrikaans-speaking university, but with the advent of democracy, the university shifted to parallel media of communication in 1993, offering both English and Afrikaans. Since the 2008 Reitz incident,[7] the university has undertaken many transformation projects aimed at improving diversity, especially around race. The current student population is 72% black and 28% white, and there are 31,244 students. The university has a DU which looks specifically at the needs of disabled students and staff. The DU, established in 2001, was recently renamed Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS). CUADS supports '*an inclusive view on disability, as indicated by South African legislation, recognising the fact that disability is a varying and personal matter'* (UFS, 2014). The centre is not explicit on how it defines disability. However, it states that it is informed by the South African legislation, which endorses the social model of disability. Various support services are given to 'students with visual impairments, hearing impairments, mobility impairments, specific learning difficulties, psychological impairments and disabling chronic illnesses' (UFS, 2015). There are eight fulltime staff and four part-time staff at CUADS. As highlighted in Table 1.1 below, since 2010 the number of registered disabled students at UFS has been expanding, but still less than 1% of the overall student body.

[6] Under apartheid, HEIs were designed to serve only one of the four apartheid racial groups (Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Whites). Generally, most white universities were advantaged in terms of their resourcing, and black universities disadvantaged, with fewer resources and students coming from poor socio-economic backgrounds.

[7] The incident took place in 2008 at a white male student residence called Reitz. White male students were filmed humiliating black cleaning staff in a mock 'initiation' ceremony. The video became public and resulted in a Ministerial Commission into race at all South African universities. See Soudien 2010; Suransky & van der Merwe, 2014.

Table 1.1: UFS Disabled Students Data

Year	Total registered Disabled Students	Total Student Population	Percentage population of Disabled Students at UFS
2010	118	30868	0.38%
2011	125	32370	0.39%
2012	130	32935	0.39%
2013	138	32286	0.43%
2014	142	31481	0.45%
2015	143	30431	0.47%

1.7.2 The University of Venda (UniVen)

UniVen is a rural university, established in 1981 during the apartheid era in the Thohoyandou area in the northern province of Limpopo. UniVen was a branch of the University of the North (now the University of Limpopo), which served the local people and students from other African countries. It became a stand-alone university in 1982 with a population of 177 students with minimum financial assistance made available by the government for its operations. The university has redefined itself as a comprehensive university, offering both vocational and general qualifications (UniVen, 2012). More than 98% of the student population are black/African from poor backgrounds and currently it has a student population of 14,133 students. Regardless of various government efforts to redress the challenges that came as a result of the segregation policies, UniVen continues to face significant resource constraints (Tugli, Zungu, Goon, & Anyanwu, 2013) which ultimately affect how they provide services for their students, including the disabled. Just like UFS, UniVen has a specialised unit that provides services to registered disabled students. UniVen's DU was also established in 2001, with only two part-time staff. The appointment of fulltime staff came in 2005. Currently the DU has three fulltime staff. The DU

claims that the university has the highest number of disabled students in South Africa '*as a result of high incidences of disabilities in the province'* (UniVen, 2012). According to the university, the DU supports students with various conditions, including: visual, hearing, physical, speech impairments, chronic illnesses (e.g. epilepsy), back injuries and carpal tunnel syndrome, bipolar disorder and severe anxiety/depression (UniVen, 2012). Table 1.2 below shows the total number of students registered at UniVen's DU.

Table 1.2: UniVen Disabled Student Data

Year	**Total Registered Disabled Students**	**Total Student Population**	**Percentage population of Disabled Students at UniVen**
2010	117	10785	1.08%
2011	118	10440	1.13%
2012	108	10368	1.04%
2013	95	12027	0.79%
2014	118	13611	0.87%
2015	133	14133	0.94%

UniVen's DU states that it offers the following services: training in adapted technology for students; technical academic support for visually impaired students such as Brailing and scanning of learning materials, tests and examinations; advocacy for the purposes of enhancing physical access for students; training staff and students in basic braille and South African Sign Language; facilitating academic accommodation for students with learning disabilities; coordinating rehabilitative services for students with fine-motor problems with relevant professionals both inside and outside the university; and coordinating special library services for visually impaired students (UniVen, 2012). During my field visit I noticed that the DU at UniVen is well equipped

with computers and modern compared to other buildings around the campus. I also learnt that students with mobility challenges are provided with electric wheelchairs by the DU.

1.8 Positionality

My initial conversations about my research with disabled students made me realise that, as a person categorised as non-disabled and probably as a result of the history of control and manipulation by non-disabled researchers on disabled people (Oliver, 1996), some eligible participants were not willing be part of my study. I then engaged a few disabled people at UFS to explore disability-related matters. From this exercise came the draft of the interview schedule for students; I learnt that being a non-disabled researcher is not totally negative, but taking an approach that valued recognition, dignity and respect was important. Subsequent experiences in my life made me curious about this field of study. I was diagnosed with advanced open angle glaucoma during the first year of this project.[8] The condition had already progressed and could not be reversed except by reducing the intraocular pressure through the application of eye drops daily. Although I did not disclose this to the participants in this study, this changed how I situate myself in this study: I no longer viewed myself as a non-disabled person, but neither do I identify as disabled.

My eyes and accompanying challenges cannot define my personality. This position helped me appreciate most participants in the study who seem to share the same view as mine with regards to identity. This experience and continued interactions with the participants led me to continuously pay attention to possible bias and every detail as I was researching disability as a 'non-disabled' person. My earlier professional background has had an effect on this study in terms of my research focus, design, methodology and analysis as I prioritised approaches (e.g. the use of in-depth interviews as a data collection method) over other methods. Goodley's (2004) methodological work in disability studies has been useful to help me explore disability issues as a non-disabled

[8] Glaucoma is a term describing a group of ocular (eye) disorders resulting in optic nerve damage or loss of the field of vision. Open-angle chronic glaucoma tends to progress at a slower rate and patients may not notice they have lost vision until the disease has progressed significantly.

person. His work shows that as long as one maintains rigour and integrity in a study, it is possible for a non-disabled person to undertake high-quality disability research (see Chapter Four).

1.9 Structure of the study

This section presents an overview of the chapters in this thesis. Although the relevant literature is presented in Chapter Two, I engage with different literature throughout the thesis. I found this approach to managing the literature appealing, as it allowed me to make my arguments for a capabilities-based approach to disability issues in higher education more clear.

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter sets the scene for the study by giving the background and introducing the problem of inclusion of disabled students in higher education. I also present the research problem, and the significance of this study. I briefly discuss disability prevalence in South Africa as well as SAHE and policy frameworks (South Africa, Australia & the UK) as they relate to disability and inclusion of disabled students in higher education. The capabilities approach is introduced to argue how it is helpful in understanding disability as well as framing disability-inclusion policies. The chapter includes a summary of the research design and methodology. An account of my personal reflection as a researcher is also presented. The outline of the thesis concludes this chapter.

Chapter Two: Disabled Students in Higher Education: A Review of Literature

In this chapter I discuss relevant literature on the experiences of disabled students both internationally and in South Africa. Before going into the literature focusing on disabled students' experiences, I briefly discuss the concepts of inclusion and exclusion focusing on the works of Sayed, Soudien and Carrim (2003) and Sen (2000). This review touches on the disabled students' transition into higher education, the first year at HEIs, teaching and learning experiences, social experiences and access among other issues. I argue that the capabilities approach provides a useful

framework for understanding the hugely complex and nuanced issues emanating from literature on the experiences of disabled students in relation to their inclusion or exclusion within higher education. I further this argument by stating that to properly understand the complexities around disabled students' lives it is necessary to understand their individual agency as well as how they relate or interact with other (conversion) factors around them.

Chapter Three: Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks for Understanding Disability

The theoretical framework employed in the study is explained in Chapter Three. I explore four approaches that have been used to understand disability. In this chapter I propose that the capabilities approach provides a better way of understanding disability i.e. acknowledging that disability is plural and has many layers and dimensions to it. I build on the analysis and arguments of the previous two chapters and present a case for the value of the capabilities approach for understanding disability from a social justice perspective. The chapter begins by introducing other approaches (medical, social, social-relational, ICF) that have been used to conceptualise and understand disability. This is followed by introducing the capabilities approach and the central concepts on which it is built. After setting out the conceptual underpinnings of the capabilities approach, the chapter ends by arguing for a capabilities-based framework for the inclusion of disabled students in higher education.

Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology

Chapter Four outlines the research design and methodological approach chosen for this study. It includes the research design, description of the methods used, ethical considerations and the criteria used for the selection of participants. I present why qualitative methodology was used for this study. This is followed by a discussion of the research process and the sampling procedures. A discussion of the various ethical considerations of the study, including voluntary participation, no harm, and anonymity and confidentiality is pursued. This chapter ends with a description of the manner in which I managed and analysed my data. The limitations of this study are not included in this chapter as they are discussed in Chapter 8.

Chapter Five: Experiences of Disabled Students at the University of the Free State

This chapter presents a descriptive and analytical account of disabled students' experiences on their way to and at UFS. The chapter foregrounds the voices of the disabled students that participated in the study. Importantly, the chapter includes information about the context of the students' lives outside of the university in order to situate them within the realities of their everyday lives. Five key themes are discussed in the chapter. The chapter ends by showing valued capabilities that are important for full inclusion and success of disabled students at the university. I believe that this chapter, through operationalisation of the capabilities approach, provides additional findings that are missing from the current body of literature.

Chapter Six: Experiences of Disabled Students at the University of Venda

This chapter presents a descriptive and analytical account of disabled students' experiences on their way to and at UniVen. The chapter also foregrounds the voices of the disabled students that participated in the study. Key themes similar to those identified in Chapter Five are discussed here. The chapter ends by showing the valued capabilities that are important for full inclusion and success of disabled students at the university. Of particular interest is comparing and contrasting the student experiences at these two universities. Both Chapters Five and Six present the complexities around disabled students' lives at the two universities. The argument running throughout these two chapters is that the complex nature of disabled students' experiences is better understood through a multi-dimensional approach such as the capabilities approach.

Chapter Seven: Experiences and Perspectives of Staff Members at Two South African Universities

This chapter reports on staff experiences with, and perspectives on, disabilities at the two case study universities. The aim is to understand their thoughts about how the needs of disabled students are acted upon at their universities. The chapter is arranged in two sections. The first section looks at the views and experiences of three DU staff, and their perceptions of disabled students' lives at their respective universities, while the second section considers the views, experiences and perceptions of four lecturers. The perspectives and insights of these staff members help us

understand various factors that influence the inclusion, participation and success of disabled students at universities.

Chapter Eight: Reflections, Ways Forward and Conclusion

Chapter Eight begins with a brief review of the thesis, summarising the rationale and argument of the study. I then turn back to the research questions that guided the study and reflect on what has been learnt and how this study has added value to the current literature. As such, I present both reflections on, and answers to, the research questions. The chapter concludes by arguing that using the capabilities framework provides us with an analytical framework and an informational base with which to judge progress towards inclusion. This thesis ends by providing key points for SAHE to consider for inclusion policy.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the background to the study; its focus; its data; the contribution the study hopes to make; and how I am situated in this study i.e. how the study focus was chosen. I have started to develop my argument for the relevance of a capabilities-based approach in understanding the experiences of disabled students in higher education. I have also outlined the significance of the study and the research questions that guided it. In the next chapter, I turn to reviewing relevant literature on the experiences of disabled students, both in South Africa and in other countries, in order to understand key debates, focus areas and approaches in the field, so that I can position this study in relation to them.

CHAPTER TWO: Disabled Students in Higher Education: A Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an account and synthesis of the international and South African studies on the experiences of disabled students in higher education. The aim is to establish the state of knowledge and any conceptual and/or empirical gaps. An understanding of these issues is important in giving us a sense of where different countries, including South Africa, stand in relation to equity and inclusion of disabled students in higher education.

I hope to make some contributions by mapping the complex nature of the issues emanating from research on the experiences of disabled students in higher education both internationally and in South Africa. I continue with the argument I developed in Chapter One, that a capabilities-based framework provides us with a better understanding of inclusion and disability issues. This review is organised into two sections: the international literature and the South African literature. Discussions of international literature begin with how different scholars conceptualise disability. I will then discuss the differences between and within HEIs on how they deal with disability issues. The absence of entrenching disability policies and practices in HEIs is also noted. I will also discuss literature focusing on the experiences of disabled students in higher education, highlighting both negative and positive experiences. The diverse nature of the experiences of disabled students and how they are related to those of non-disabled students closes the review of the international literature. The section on South African studies discusses the conceptualisation of disability, then moves to literature that focuses on policy development and progression, and the implications for disability or disabled students. Literature on how different HEIs respond to the needs of disabled students and on the experiences of disabled students in higher education closes the review of South African literature. The implications of the studies conclude this chapter.

Overall, the research appears to favour Global North countries[9]. In South Africa and other Global South countries the field is still young. In addition, the majority of empirical studies are qualitative in nature, as opposed to quantitative or mixed methods. This could be indicative of the fact that the field is still in an exploratory phase, rather than confirming theories or hypotheses. Drawing on these studies, I will identify existing gaps and motivate the need for this study; in the process I will argue for a robust approach to conceptualise and frame disability as a matter of social justice.

2.1.1 Inclusion and Exclusion

Because I have situated the study within the inclusion agenda, I will briefly discuss the concept with reference to issues raised by Sayed *et al.,* (2003) and Sen (2000). The concept of inclusion is not straightforward: superficial forms of inclusion may create exclusion. Sayed *et al*. (2003) argue that the main conceptual weakness of current understanding around inclusion and exclusion is a failure to engage with social justice concerns. For example, it is difficult to agree on what educational exclusion means. Sen (2000:9) says, 'Indeed, the language of exclusion is so versatile and adaptable that there may be a temptation to dress up every deprivation as a case of social exclusion.' Sayed *et al.* (2003) also raise four concerns around the conceptualisation of inclusion and exclusion that are significant to my study.

Firstly, Sayed *et al.* (2003:233) argue that the conceptualisation of inclusion in literature is laden with normative stance that inclusion is good and exclusion is bad. They state that, 'While this may be laudable, it fails to recognise the possibility that inclusive policies may result in new forms of exclusion.' As an example, disabled students only remain in HEIs if they meet certain academic standards; those who fail to reach the required threshold are excluded even if their failure is due to an unchanging and hostile higher education environment. Physical inclusion or access is obviously an important consideration for HEIs, as if disabled students cannot get into university in the first place, they cannot access the teaching. However, inclusion is a multi-layered issue encompassing

[9] I have chosen to use the terms 'Global North' and' Global South' as opposed to 'developing' and 'developed' countries respectively due to the contestation of those terms.

the physical, attitudinal and curricular. Curricula can help in both expanding individual field-based skills and knowledge as well as transforming areas that reinforce and reproduce inequality.

The second aspect is the notion of inclusion operating on the principle of 'normalisation', where certain groups, communities or individuals are perceived to lack access or entitlement to certain public services e.g. the way black, female and disabled students are homogenously treated as *non-traditional students* in the policy frameworks mentioned above. As such, special arrangements and measures targeted at groups, communities or individuals are put in place to overcome their exclusion. One of the consequences of this imperative is that disabled students in higher education will be considered as the *other* who need to change through interventions, while the nature and functioning of HEIs, bearing legacies of the apartheid system, which have the potential of perpetuating structural and ideological barriers for disabled people, receives little attention in policy deliberations. The dominant discourse within this approach to inclusion is deficient and sees disabled students as lacking, while the institutions see themselves as well-equipped. This seems to be the emphasis of the current South African policies mentioned above (section 1.2.2).

Thirdly, Sayed *et al*. (2003:233) argue that that the concepts 'elide differences between and within groups, communities and individuals.' Students, as we have observed in the discussion of various policies, are categorised as 'non-traditional' and this assumes that there are 'traditional students.' Disabled students are treated as a homogenous group. Limited attention is paid to the effect of other inequities such as those associated with socio-economic status, individual agency and types of impairments of these students.

The fourth challenge of the discourse of educational inclusion and exclusion raised by Sayed *et al.* (2003) is that it fails to articulate the relationships and interplay between different forms of difference e.g. race, class and gender. They show how theories like relational framework (Apple & Weiss, 1983) and hierarchical framework (Sarup, 1986) fail to capture, as McCarthy (1990:83) notes, the 'mix of contingencies, interests, needs, differential assets, and capacities in local settings

such as schools.' Sayed *et al.* (2003) thus proposed an interlocking framework in an effort 'to avoid the essentialising and managerialist features' of these four premises. They argue that the interlocking framework 'recognises the highly complex ways in which race, class, gender and other categories intersect and inter-relate to produce unique individual and group experiences' (Sayed *et al.*, 2003:243). I will show how the framework is embedded within the capabilities approach in the next section. However, before turning to that section, it is important to reflect on this current section.

The concepts of inclusion and exclusion require closer analysis in order to understand who is excluded and who is making the inclusion decisions. This means that the creation of an equitable and just higher education system for disabled people should involve a more careful and rigorous process of enquiry into how these barriers emerge and are reproduced within HEIs. Without such an understanding it will be difficult to engage with the complex ways in which inequalities emerge and are sustained.

Below I analyse the Australian and UK disability legislative and policy frameworks as they relate to disabled students in higher education. Firstly, these countries are among those that have made significant policy developments in relation to equity for disabled students in higher education and are often cited positively as a point of comparison (Madriaga *et al.*, 2010). Secondly, much of the available international literature on the experience of disabled students in higher education is from these two countries. As such, an attempt to pick up on key policy and practice issues from countries that have been at the forefront in terms of policy initiatives will be made.

2.1.2 Australia and UK higher education and Disability Policy Frameworks in brief

Australia

The Australian Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992 defines disability in broad terms; it includes intellectual, physical, sensory, mental health, learning, behaviour and/or medical needs or conditions. This means that disability is equated with challenges that are related to impairment. In 2005 the Disability Standards for Education (DSE) were formulated under the DDA, providing greater clarity to education service providers regarding the obligations and responsibilities they have towards disabled students (DSE, 2005). The DSE clarify the obligations of education and training providers to ensure that disabled students can access and participate in education without experiencing discrimination. There is a requirement that all HEIs plan in advance for inclusion rather than simply responding to individuals on ad hoc basis. It is unlawful for educational authorities to refuse to admit a disabled person to a professional or skills-based training course on the basis that he/she is unlikely to be able to work in the profession or trade because of his/her impairment. However, qualifying or professional bodies may refuse to authorise or qualify a disabled person if he/she is unable to carry out the inherent requirements of the trade or profession, or for health and safety reasons. Educational authorities cannot overrule the qualifying body.

HEIs in Australia are required to make 'reasonable adjustments' to enable a student to participate in education on the same basis as a student without a disability. An adjustment is reasonable if it balances the interests of both the student and the HEI. In assessing whether a particular adjustment is reasonable under DSE (2005), consideration is given to:

- The student's disability and his/her views;
- The effect of the adjustment on the student, including effect on his/her ability to achieve learning outcomes, participate in courses or programmes and achieve independence;
- The effect of the proposed adjustment on anyone else affected, including the education provider, staff and other students; and
- The costs and benefits of making the adjustment.

There is no doubt that there is something to be learnt from the Australian experience with regards to legislative frameworks for disabled students in higher education. Of particular note is that balancing the interests of disabled students and those of HEIs is most likely to favour HEIs as they command more power than individual students. If we are to achieve the SDG 4.3 that all men and women must access affordable and quality education (UN, 2015), we need to look at inclusion through a lens that does not 'elide differences between and within groups' (Sayed, 2003). Who will determine whether or not an adjustment has benefits for, or is costly to, these parties? On what basis are these decisions made? Any adjustment that is deemed too expensive by a HEI will ultimately result in the exclusion of the concerned student, and create a new form of exclusion.

United Kingdom (UK)

In the UK, disability is defined by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA, 1995) as, '*[a] physical or mental impairment which has substantial and long-term adverse effect on one's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.'* Within higher education, the Tomlinson Report (1996) recommended the move towards inclusive learning and the 1997 Dearing[10] and Garrick[11] reports, together with governmental initiatives on lifelong learning, stressed the importance of widening participation for disabled students and those that experience social disadvantage (Tinklin, Riddell, & Wilson, 2004). As a result of these policy frameworks and initiatives, there have been attempts to improve access and opportunities for disabled students entering UK higher education through inclusive education initiatives such as 'reasonable adjustments' including adjusting assessment and curricula. With the passing of the DDA in 1995, equal opportunity discourse began to take centre stage in UK higher education (Hurst, 1999). However, the educational needs of disabled students were not addressed by the DDA (Riddell, Tinklin & Wilson, 2005). It was only in 2001 under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) that it became unlawful to discriminate against disabled students. SENDA (2001) placed HEIs under a legal obligation to provide 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled students and to ensure they are not discriminated

[10] A series of major reports into the future of higher education in the UK published in 1997. It made recommendations concerning the funding, expansion and maintenance of academic standards.
[11] Same as the Dearing report, but focused on Scottish higher education.

against. Furthermore, the Act places a duty on higher education funding councils to require HEIs to publish Disability Statements containing information on existing policy and provision, future activities and policy developments for disabled students. However, these policies do not guarantee inclusion as there are pockets of resistance. In a study on institutional responses to widening participation policy (Riddell, Weedon, Fuller, Healey, Hurst, Kelley & Piggott, 2007), some academic staff expressed a sense of irreconcilable tension between widening access and quality assurance agendas. While differential treatment is justified in terms of fairness (Stowell, 2004), some academic staff think that there is a danger of favouring disabled students.

In this section I have tried to show some of the challenges around the conceptualisation of inclusion within Australia and UK policies. I have highlighted how these can perpetuate injustices and create exclusion. Caution must be exercised when designing policies aimed at improving inclusion of disabled students in higher education. Below, I now turn to the empirical studies to see how they address the challenges raised in this section.

2.2 Disabled students' experience in higher education – a synthesis of international literature

A synthesis of the findings from international studies relating to the experiences of disabled students in higher education is now discussed. Most studies reviewed in this section are drawn from the UK because this is where most empirical studies on the experiences of disabled students have been undertaken. For a better appreciation of this chapter, it is important to recognise that:

- Most studies reviewed in this chapter draw explicitly on a social model;
- The social model is now subject to criticism (Mitra, 2014; Shakespeare, 2014; Thomas, 1999);
- Understandings of disability are evolving from individual and medical perspectives, to socially-related thinking, and recently to multi-dimensional approaches; and

- As a consequence of criticism of the narrow approaches to understanding disability, attention has shifted to developing a better understanding of the social, political and cultural factors that put barriers in the way of disabled students in higher education (Strnadova, Hajkova & Kvetonoa, 2015).

Although this review does not set out to offer an exhaustive exploration of all the scholarship in the field, it provides an overview of key themes and findings emerging from the studies. This review clusters key findings under two broad headings: a) higher education responses to the needs of disabled students; and b) experiences of disabled students in higher education. Although nearly all countries strive to provide inclusive education, this review shows that:

- There are disparities in attending to disability matters even within HEIs;
- HEIs, both within the same country and also across countries, vary in their approaches to disability issues; and
- The embedding of disability-related policies and practices in HEIs is absent in many countries.

The second sub-section draws together work on the experiences of disabled students in higher education, including: challenges faced by disabled students; positive experiences; the diversity of their experiences; and how they link with other non-disabled students. Issues around transition, disclosure, support structures, attitudes, teaching and learning, assessment and accessibility are explored. Below I discuss how disability is conceptualised in various reviewed studies.

2.2.1 Conceptualising Disability

Within disability studies, debates have been on the definition of disability i.e. whether disability is an individual impairment (medical approach) or a matter of the social barriers faced by impaired people (social model). The former places disability within an individual, while the latter shifts the focus to society (Oliver, 1990). Chapter Three offers a detailed discussion on the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, but it is important to recognise from the outset that there is no agreement on what constitutes disability among scholars and this is an area which is not fully addressed by current empirical studies. For example, Singal, Mahama, Iddrisu, Casely-Hayford & Lundebye,

(2015) use the term *people with disabilities*; Claiborne, Cornforth, Gibson & Smith (2011) use the term *students with impairments;* while Beauchamp-Pryor (2012) prefers the term *disabled students*. In most instances, justifications for these terms are not usually supported by empirical data. For example, Papasotiriou and Windle (2012:936) state that their preference for using the term *disabled students* as opposed to *students with disabilities* is based on the fact that, 'physically impaired students are disabled in various ways by universities.' On the other hand, Hutcheon and Wolbring (2012) argue that the person-first language (*with disability*) affirms and defines the person first, unlike the term *disabled student* which, in their thinking, implies that disability is the person's most important quality. In these debates one thing is apparent: the views of the disabled participants or students with impairments are missing. Commenting on representation of disabled people through text and talking, Grue (2015) reminds us that disability language has the power to influence social relations. Furthermore, language points to the attitudes that people hold about themselves and about others. Al Ju'beh (2015) went on to state that disability language can either reinforce or challenge negative attitudes and stereotypes. Thus, disability terminologies need to be critically analysed and deliberated. Adnan and Hafiz (2001:655) in their study on education policies and disability in Malaysia argue that definitions matter: 'It is believed that current policy and practice do not meet the needs and requirements of these learners, partly because of the different definitions of disability adopted by various government agencies that are empowered to assist them.' Similarly, in a study examining the experiences of disabled students and how these could be improved at one UK HEI, Jacklin *et al.* (2007) reported that although the phrase *disabled student* was seen as useful for policy, it stigmatised the students. These findings motivate an inquiry on how disabled people (in my case disabled students) conceptualise and understand disability terminologies. Current studies have not incorporated disabled participants' views.

2.2.2 Higher Education Institutions' responses to the needs of disabled students

This section interrogates various studies that have looked at how HEIs respond to disability issues globally. Across countries and within some countries there are variations in how HEIs attend to the needs of disabled students, owing mostly to the absence (or lack of embedding) of inclusive

policies and practices, especially in the Global South. Variations in attending to disabled students needs are also noticeable even within a single HEI.

Positive responses by HEIs

There is evidence suggesting positive responses to the needs of disabled students, especially from the UK. Tinklin *et al.*'s (2004) study on policy and provision for disabled students in higher education in Scotland and England found that the majority of the 90 HEIs had structures and staff to support disabled students. Another study examining institutional responses to disabled students in HEIs in England and Wales in 2008 reported enthusiasm and innovation amongst staff in efforts to improve the service provisions for disabled students (Harrison, Hemingway, Sheldon, Pawson & Barnes, 2009). Even outside of the UK, positive experiences are reported. In a study on the experiences of students with mobility disabilities in Cyprus, extra time was given to the students during exam time (Hadjikakou & Hartas, 2010). Similarly, in a study of the lived experiences of disabled students in HEIs in Northern Ireland, most participants reported timely delivery of provision (Redpath, Keaney, Nicholl, Mulvenna, Wallace & Martin, 2013). In Namibia, Hugo (2012) and also in Tanzania (Tuomi *et al.*, 2015) positive experiences were reported.

Good practice was reported in teaching and learning aspects of higher education (see Fuller, Bradley & Healey, 2004; Madriaga, 2008). In a study about the learning experiences of disabled students in Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences at six HEIs, Hall and Healey (2004:23) report that:

> *Perhaps the most surprising finding is that… over half of disabled students, and often as many as three-quarters of them, have not experienced disability related barriers with different forms of teaching and learning. Even field trips, where it might be expected that the barriers to learning would be highest, only one in five disabled students reported they had experienced difficulties.*

Related to teaching and learning is the issue of assessment. Pockets of positive experiences were also reported (see Fuller *et al.,* 2004). Students who participated in Waterfield and West's (2006) study appreciated being given extra time for assessments, spreading modules over a semester and taking the course in five years instead of the traditional four.

These findings are important in challenging negative preconceptions about the role of society portrayed by the social model approach to disability (Chapter Three): not everything in society inhibits the aspirations of disabled students. The findings also highlight the importance of embedding inclusive cultures in HEIs. Alongside this, however, are signs of inconsistences and challenges in the current provision for disabled students.

Differences between higher education institutions

This literature study suggests that at an international level, there are marked variations in terms of support services offered to disabled students by HEIs and ultimately students' experiences. Within one locality, in a study on the experiences of disabled students in the London Metropolitan area, they were huge contrasts between HEIs in the degree to which they attend to disability issues (Barer, 2007). At national level, Hugo (2012) found differences between HEIs' responses to the needs of disabled students' across Namibia. Only one HEI in Namibia had a disability policy and others had no policy guiding students, lecturers, and administrative and academic staff regarding services available to disabled students, procedures of disclosure, and the management of disability data. This is also similar to the conclusions arrived at by the Centre for Disability Studies and the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds (2009), which report that while some HEIs had a range of good practice in provisions for disabled students, others did not even providing adequate website information about their services for disabled students.

Of particular concern to my study are not only the challenges that emanate from these variations but the explanations for the variations mentioned above. May and Bridger (2010) in their UK study of ten HEIs on inclusion-oriented change processes highlight how some particularities of HEI (e.g. language and institutional audit) influence how different HEIs or departments within them respond to disability matters. Following the same line of thought, Riddell *et al.'*s (2007) study on four contrasting HEIs in the UK found differences in how pre-and post-1992 HEIs responded to the

quality assurance agenda. They argued that the reason for this might be that the post-1992[12] universities were used to centralised control, but pre-1992 universities were resentful of the changes, arguing that this meddled in their internal affairs. However, in a study focused on provision and support for disabled students involving a national survey of 72 HEIs in the UK, Harrison *et al.* (2009) found no particular pattern to suggest that best practice is to be found predominantly or disproportionately within any particular types of HEIs. How can one explain the variations in responding to disability by HEIs in the same country and guided by the same national policies? How can scholars arrive at different explanations after studying the same types of HEIs in one country? These questions highlight the complex nature of disability-related issues. Besides a need to fully understand each HEI history and culture, this is also a call for theoretical lenses that can explore complex issues from a multi-perspective view.

Differences within higher education institutions

While there are differences in responding to the needs of disabled students between HEIs, the review also identified variations in the responses to disability within HEIs. Some HEIs pay attention to pedagogical matters more than to assessment issues. In a study on the students' lived experiences and views of transition from induction through to employability at one HEI in the UK, Vickerman & Blundell (2010) found that while other staff were aware of and willing to assist disabled students, a majority of staff were not enthusiastic in making major changes to the curriculum and assessment. By contrast, other HEIs put assessment procedures as their top priority and focused less on curriculum. Weedon and Riddell's (2008) study on disabled students and their transition to higher education reported that when teaching staff were asked to discuss the nature of adjustments to teaching and assessment, they had nothing to suggest about adjustments to the curriculum (also see Moswela & Mukhopadhyay, 2011). It is possible that disabled students may be accepted into HEIs without changes made to the curricula to reflect their interests or new ways

[12] Post-1992 universities are former polytechnics and colleges that were given university status by John Major's government through the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

of seeing things. This is another area that warrant further studies as curricula are foci of power (Sayed, 2003).

In other HEIs, adjustments and adaptations to pedagogical practices are made while assessment modes remain unchanged. In their report on enhancing the quality and outcomes of disabled students' learning in UK higher education, Fuller, Georgeson, Healey, Hurst, Riddell, Roberts & Weedon (2008) say that while there was very little evidence of any move towards adjustments in modes of assessment in some disciplines, there was evidence of willingness to make adjustments to pedagogy to accommodate different students' needs, e.g. 'virtual' field trips for physically disabled students. This shows firstly the importance of a holistic approach towards provisions for disabled students in higher education: although pedagogical matters are important, these are one among the many aspects that are valuable for the full inclusion and participation of disabled students in higher education. The danger of prioritising pedagogical issues over assessment is are that disabled students will be unfairly assessed (Konur, 2002). Secondly, the importance of lecturers in the lives of disabled students in higher education is highlighted through their influence on pedagogical practices. As such, they are important participants in studying the experiences of disabled students in higher education as their views are valuable in comprehending the lives of disabled students.

On one hand, other HEIs focus more on transition into higher education and less on the processes after admitting students. For example, West, Kregel, Getzel, Zhu, Ipsen & Martin's (1993) study on forty college students in the USA reported that most students were satisfied by the services they had received in transitional phases into their colleges, but indicated that they had encountered barriers e.g. lack of understanding and cooperation from some administrators, staff and other students during their time at college. On the other hand, in some HEIs there is poor management of transition into higher education for disabled students even when services are available for them. In their study on the experiences of disabled students from universities in Northern Ireland, Redpath *et al.* (2013) noted that pre-transition information to students doesn't always articulate the support available, and often students felt that specific information on course content and assessment methods was lacking. Full inclusion requires HEIs not only to encourage disabled

students to disclose their disability status but also to follow this through in all aspects of student life in higher education. Social justice requires that all aspects that are important for full inclusion, participation and success of the students be treated equally. Assessment or transition issues cannot be prioritised over other equally important issues e.g. pedagogies, the curriculum and the social environment within HEIs.

Lastly, the literature shows that at times there is provision of 'special accommodations' in some cases that does not benefit students. In a study on the experiences of international disabled students in Britain, Soorenian (2013) reported a case of two visually-impaired students who were not benefiting from the services meant to help them. One student commented that although there was a washing machine in her residence, she could not use it as she was unable to set the programmes on the machine. Another student complained that she is always allocated inner rooms as people who allocate rooms assume that because she had a visual impairment she would not want a pleasant view from her window. Similarly, in their study on the staff experiences of providing support to students managing mental health challenges at two Australian universities, McAllister, Wynaden, Happell, Flynn, Walters, Duggan, Byrne, Helslop & Gaskin (2014) report that the major concern raised by students was the non-availability of counselling services to students at peak demand times or when crises tend to occur, such as in the lead-up to exams, during evenings or weekends. What seems to be common in these studies is the absence of consultation with disabled students when HEIs design or provide services to them. Three important aspects that need to be explored further are reflected in this study, the role of individual agency on the part of disabled students, the freedom and choices available to them and how students negotiate these challenges.

Besides the differences in making provisions for disabled students within HEIs, literature also points to the absence of the embedding of disability-inclusive policies and practices in HEIs, as I outline in the following section.

Dearth or absence of entrenching of disability-inclusive policies and practices in higher education institutions

Although the international framework highlighted in Chapter One calls upon HEIs to widen opportunities for all students, studies show that disability issues are yet to become a policy priority for most HEIs. Harrison *et al.* (2009) highlight the lack of embedding of disability matters in a more generic way within HEIs. Again, Fuller and Healey (2009:176) capture this:

> *Much of the support on offer to disabled students is still framed within deficit models. Universities in this project are still caught in the tradition of making adjustments for disabled students as opposed to creating more genuinely supportive learning environments.*

In Spain the provisions for disabled students are laid out in Organic Law 4/2007 for Universities, which establishes that the principles of equal opportunity and non-discrimination should be ensured and that university environments (buildings, grounds and facilities) should be accessible. However, Moriña, Cortés and Melero (2014) reported that some lecturers refuse to give out copies of their lecture notes. The same sentiments were echoed by Mwaipopo, Lihamba and Njewele (2011) in a study on the experiences of disabled students in Tanzania. Chataika (2010) calls for improved policy and practice to ensure meaningful disability inclusion in higher education.

The absence of the entrenching of disability policies and practices in HEIs perpetuates challenges for disabled students. Rizvi and Lingard (1996:21) note that '…while access and equity policies enable individuals to gain entry into mainstream institutions, they often leave the institutions themselves unaltered.' This was the case in a study by Halloway (2001) on the experiences of higher education from the perspectives of six disabled students at a single university in UK. She found students having difficulties in hearing lecturers, gaining access to buildings (e.g. accessing the library), failing to receive hand-outs in appropriate formats and of frustrations of negotiating arrangements. This is similar to the findings that Madriaga, Hanson, Heaton, Kay, Newitt and Walker, (2010) report on learning and assessment experience of students with disability at a single university in the UK. Disabled students identified greater difficulties than non-disabled students with the amount of time required to complete assignments and to write exams. As such, numerical

numbers of disabled students admitted at HEIs, even if they improve, will not tell us anything about how well they are doing. Their wellbeing might be compromised. As such, indicators of inclusion should go beyond numbers to look at the opportunities and freedoms that are available to disabled students in higher education.

2.2.3 Experiences of disabled students in higher education

International studies focusing on the experiences of disabled students in higher education have evolved in focus. In 2004, Fuller *et al.* noted that the voices of disabled students were missing from studies on widening access and participation in higher education. Since then there has been growth in the body of work incorporating the voices of disabled students in various HEIs. Disabled students' voices help to amplify issues regarding HEI responses to disability discussed above. It should be noted that most work on the experiences of disabled students is nuanced and rich in detail. As such, it is difficult to synthesis along clearly defined stand-alone titles and headings.

Literature on the experiences of disabled students in higher education also highlights differences in disabled students' experiences and perceptions. Furthermore, it shows areas of commonality between disabled and non-disabled students. These findings are important in challenging the idea of treating disabled students as a homogenous category that overlooks the varied experiences among disabled students. The treatment of disabled students strictly as a separate group runs the risk of obscuring areas of commonality that exist between the experiences of disabled and non-disabled students. For example, in their study on disabled students' experiences of e-learning, Seale, Draffan and Wald, (2008:3) report how, 'some [students] were extremely familiar with technology prior to entering higher education, [while] others experienced limited availability and use of computers.' Although this example is about what happened prior to entering higher education, it highlights how pre-higher education experiences play out either positively or negatively in higher education. Even in studies focusing on students with similar impairments, differences in perspectives and experiences are also evident. For example, Madriaga, Goodley, Hodge and Martin (2008) found that not all students with Asperger's Syndrome experience anxiety in a group setting. Hall and Healey (2004) gave two examples of dyslexic students with contrasting

experiences in oral examinations: one said that although she sometimes misspells words, she is good at oral presentations; the other said that she hates oral presentations because it is difficult for her to explain her ideas aloud – not because of loss of confidence, but because of speech problems.

From the reviewed literature, it is also clear that there are various ways in which the concerns of disabled students are similar to those of non-disabled students. In some studies (see Peltzer, 2014), disabled students' decisions about higher education are reported to be unrelated to impairment in some studies. For example, (Jacklin, Robinson, O'Meara & Harris, 2007:23) report that, '*The students gave a wide range of responses, most of which (80.7%) were non-impairment related reasons, for instance, the course of study, reputation, ethos, the HEI's location near a town (for social life), and so on*.'

There were some similarities also with the learning and assessment experiences at universities, Madriaga *et al.* (2008:5) says that, "*Difficulties faced by many respondents were <u>not principally</u> the result of the impairment effects of Asperger's Syndrome*" (my emphasis). Fuller *et al.* (2008:3) add that, '*<u>For the most part</u>, disabled students have similar experiences of learning and assessment to non-disabled students. However, disability-related barriers have had a significant impact on their experiences of learning and assessment in a <u>minority of situations</u>*' (my emphasis).

It is not suggested that there are no differences between disabled and non-disabled students, but that it is easy to assume a great divide and overlook the overlap between the concerns of disabled and non-disabled students. For this reason, Fuller *et al.* (2008:3) propose that disability in higher education should be viewed in terms of students' differences, as opposed to separate categories:

> *It is invidious to treat disabled students as a separate category. They fall along a continuum of learner differences and share challenges and difficulties with other higher education students. Sometimes the barriers are more severe for them, but sometimes they are not.*

In several studies, disabled students mention enablers that help them during the transition period from school into higher education. For example, one student in Soorenian's (2013) study was particularly pleased with being allocated accommodation on campus. Similarly, in a Tanzanian

study of the factors that enabled access and participation for educational success of disabled women, Tuomi, Lehtomaki and Matonya (2015) report that peer networking and study groups were significant for success through enabling the disabled women to live and study with non-disabled students (see also Hadjikakou & Hartas, 2008; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010). Social support from family and friends was also highlighted as an important element for success in higher education as it increases disabled students' sense of security, belonging and self-esteem. According to Babic and Dowling (2015:620), 'it appears that without this form of support [social support] a student with disabilities is unlikely to participate in higher education in Croatia' (see also Couzens, Kataoka, Bradon, Hartley & Keen, 2015; Trailblazers Report, 2014).

This review has established HEIs' responses to disability issues from various countries and the experiences of disabled students in higher education. I found some positive responses by HEIs to disability matters; differences between and within HEIs in attending to the needs of disabled students; and a lack of embedding of disability policies and practices. Positive experiences and perceptions of disabled students were also reported alongside challenges they face in higher education. The diversity of experiences of disabled students and how they connect to the experiences of non-disabled students was also discussed.

It is clear from the discussion of the reviewed literature that framing disability-inclusive policies is challenging. It is therefore important to establish some frameworks within which the complex issues highlighted can be better understood. Alongside that, because how disability is conceptualised affects how disabled people see themselves and those around them, and form the basis on which policies are implemented (Groce & Zola, 1993), an understanding of how disabled students appreciate the disability concept is valuable in establishing what is true about disability in general and what is unique to specific individuals. Additionally, disabled students live within a network of factors-family, friends, community, country, etc. As such, there are a number of factors that should be considered when exploring the lives of disabled students e.g. the socio-economic status of the family into which one is born, region, cultural affiliation etc. Knowledge of how different factors (some highlighted in the studies reviewed) intersect with impairment to create

disadvantages or advantages is of vital importance for the establishment of inclusive programmes that make positive impact in the lives of disabled students in higher education.

Drawing on these underlying concerns, my study advances a capability-based social justice framework in understanding disability as well as evaluating disability-related policies. Below I move to the review of the South African literature.

2.3 Disabled students' experience in higher education – a synthesis of South African literature

In order to obtain a perspective on the research findings as well as theoretical persuasions in the study of disabled students in SAHE, a synthesis of the findings and implications of South African research relating to disabled students is provided in this section. Four aspects will be discussed namely: (a) conceptualisation of disability; (b) access, inclusion and participation in education; and (c) supporting mechanisms for disabled students. This section will show why a capabilities-based framework is important in understanding the complexities around the experiences of disabled students and inclusion matters in higher education. I will summarise the key studies and provide an overview of the implications for the reviewed literature at the end of this chapter and motivate a capabilities-based inclusive framework to understanding disability.

2.3.1 Overview of South African literature

South Africa has a lot of anti-discriminatory legislative provisions as highlighted in Chapter One. However, Crous (2004) reports that few disabled people participate in higher education and the small number that access higher education face a lot of challenges. Partly this is because, as highlighted in Chapter One, policy provisions are fragmented and there is no national policy on disability to guide higher education. In most instances when disability is mentioned in the current policy framework, either it has no reference to higher education; or when it does, it is hazy. For

example, the NPHE includes disabled students as part of 'non-traditional students' along with female and black students. Combining disability with gender and race issues seems to have relegated disability issues to the periphery as racial and (recently) gender matters are given priority as a result of apartheid (Howell, 2006). There is thus scant literature on the experiences of disabled students in SAHE compared with other countries such as Australia, the UK and the USA. Limited studies in this field might be indicative of the fact that it is still in an exploratory phase in South Africa. Most studies on 'non-traditional students' focus mainly on race (black students) and gender (female students) issues.

Studies on the experiences of disabled students in SAHE stem from three main sources: commissioned reports, scholarly articles and masters and doctoral studies theses. The bulk of these studies are qualitative in nature, focusing mostly on a single case study HEI and targeted at a particular type of impairment. For broader perspectives of the experiences of disabled students, I chose to expand my focus by exploring the lives of students with different types of impairments.

2.3.2 Conceptualising Disability

As highlighted in Chapter One, the South Africa government asserts that it views disability from the social model perspective. It is therefore not surprising that most South African studies seem to be influenced by this perspective. For example, Watermeyer, Swartz, Lorenzo, Schneider, Priestley and Schneider (2006) dedicated their whole edited book to social oppression of disabled people in South Africa, anchoring their arguments in the social model. Ultimately, this has led to the absence from most of studies on the experiences of disabled students, of the role of impairment effects on the disabled students' ability to do what they value. Again, just like other international studies, most South African studies have not included disabled students in justifying the concepts they choose for disability. For example, Morrison, Brand and Cilliers (2009:202) say, 'for the purposes of this article, the term 'students with disabilities' is preferred to 'students with special educational or learning needs' for its brevity.' On the other hand, Crous (2004) argues that he adopted the term 'students with impairments' because the official South African definition of

disability is based on the socio-political perspective. Furthermore, Matshedisho (2010) uses the term 'disabled students' without giving reasons. This is the one of the gaps that my study addresses. This issue of identity is one of the reasons why my main argument in this thesis is the advancement of the capabilities approach as an analytical framework to explore opportunities and freedoms that are valued by disabled students from a social justice perspective within the South African context. I now move to the discussion of various studies reviewed in South Africa.

2.3.3 Disabled students' access and participation in higher education

This section traces the historical developments around inclusion of disabled students in SAHE as reported by different scholars. It outlines what the literature says about the state of disability-related policy frameworks for higher education during and after apartheid. This will show how history in the context of SAHE is important in understanding the current equity and inclusion imperatives. The other part of the discussion will look at studies that focus on physical access challenges in SAHE. In these discussions I summarise and discuss the studies with reference to the challenges around the inclusion and exclusion discourse raised by Sayed *et al.* (2003) and Sen (2000) mentioned in the introduction of this chapter.

Apartheid Period

During apartheid, disabled students were excluded from the education system. More than 80% of disabled students were not in school (DoE, 2001). For those that had access to education, the system segregated them into 'special schools' and prevented them from coming into contact with non-disabled students. The reason for this was based on the medical approach to disability, which argues that disabled students can only flourish in education when specialised care is provided to them by medical professionals (Nel, Engelbrecht, Nel & Tlale, 2013). However, the 'special schools' were not the same. A lot of 'special schools' for black disabled students were not well resourced compared to those for white disabled students (Naicker, 2005). At times disabled students were enrolled in mainstream schools but had their own 'special classrooms' separate from non-disabled students (Howell & Lazarus, 2003; Swart & Pettipher, 2011). This exclusionary

schooling system did not prepare disabled students to enter higher education and for most, there was no progression into higher education. The historical imbalances of apartheid and the conceptualisation of disability as an individual problem put barriers in the way of full inclusion of disabled students in SAHE. The relevance of this discussion to my study is that the 'special schools' and 'special classrooms' were legitimised by the education system and national policies. As such, we also need to explore how institutional policies and practices are performing with regards to participation and inclusion of disabled students. For example, we can start to ask ourselves the difference between the principles of DUs to those that established 'special schools' and 'special classrooms.'

Post-1994 Period

Howell (2006) explored the historical context of SAHE (given in Chapter One). She argues that because of apartheid, post-1994 equity policies have largely focused on increasing the participation of black students in higher education. Although access of women and black students to higher education has increased, limited attention is paid to disabled students. As a result, she argues, disabled students continue to be excluded from higher education. Howell goes further, saying that although the schooling system in the post-1994 period has the potential to support greater participation of disabled students in higher education, barriers still remain. Howell and Lazarus (2003) explored the challenges faced by SAHE in increasing access and participation for disabled students in the wake of White Paper 6 and the NPHE (discussed in Chapter One). They maintain that some of the reasons for the continued inclusion challenges for disabled students are that inequalities for disabled students in higher education are linked to their schooling experiences. In addition, barriers within higher education relate to attitudes to disability, academic curricula, physical environment, teaching and learning support, allocation and distribution of resources.

Howell and Lazarus (2003) further argue that in addressing the challenges of increasing access and participation of disabled students in SAHE, more needs to be done to attend to issues of student diversity and other challenges confronting higher education. In agreement with Sayed *et al*.'s

(2003) concern about the current framing of inclusion, they are cautious that increasing participation should be differentiated from making students fit into an unchanging education system. They state that policies should be aimed at changing the education system so as to accommodate a larger and more diverse population. Matshedisho (2007a) also looked at the challenges of support for disabled students in SAHE. Most of the challenges he raises are similar to those raised by Howell (2005). These challenges include lack of funding, lack of data on disabled students and the slow pace of transformation of the higher education system. A lack of transformation was also highlighted by Bell (2013) in a study on the teaching and learning support for students with hearing impairment at a university in the Western Cape. Matshedisho (2007b) argues that one of the difficulties of redressing unequal access to higher education for disabled students arise out of the challenge of transforming formal rights into real rights. In order to resolve this challenge, three considerations are suggested: the need to transform policies so that they address ideological impediments to what constitutes reasonable support; formal rights do not automatically make rights real to people; and the need to involve academic staff in decision-making processes about the support for disabled students. These issues informed my study in that understanding how disabled students view their identities can help us to address the ideological impediments for supporting disabled people.

In another study, Matshedisho (2007b) interrogates the challenges of access to higher education for disabled students from a human rights perspective, and convincingly argues that the South African legislative, policy and institutional framework gives disabled students formal rights and not actual rights, unlike the legislative framework of the UK's SENDA. He states that the SAHE system has been systematic in perpetuating structural inequalities and social injustice. Matshedisho says that South Africa seems to be moving along a contradictory path of espousing disability rights and the social model of disability, yet being embedded in the practice and legacy of 'benevolence'. He posits that this position is evident from the challenges that disability support services face and the lack of political commitment to disability issues by government and higher education. A part of dealing with the problem is to have a disability policy for HEIs and to prioritise disability as part of redressing social inequalities in South Africa. While he seems to blame acts of benevolence, these acts are not inherently negative; however, they should not be the sole solutions to provisions

for disabled students. Again, since the promulgation of the 2014 White Paper, it seems the government (through the DHET) is now more committed to improve access, inclusion and success of disabled students in higher education. A framework requiring all HEIs to develop clear plans to address disability within their contexts is already being formulated by a Ministerial Task team.

In a report commissioned by the CHE, Howell (2005) reported on issues of access, policy framework and participation of disabled students. The study was based on institutional interviews, focusing on administrative staff. Although the study targeted all HEIs, only fifteen universities and nine technikons[13] responded. The report highlights four challenges faced by HEIs in addressing access issues for disabled students: a failure by most HEIs management to design and implement a disability policy for supporting disabled students; legacy of exclusion of disabled students at all levels of education (apartheid); attitudinal barriers, and a lack of reliable data on disabled students in SAHE. The report highlights differences in 'commitment' in terms of how historically black universities and historically white universities approach disability issues (there was no elaboration of the difference in 'commitment'). However, if we take into consideration the findings by FOTIM (2011) that even some small DUs from rural HEIs showed more zeal and innovation towards service provision for disabled students than large universities, it might be that this 'commitment' was linked to resources made available by these HEIs at that time. This report also highlights key concerns regarding SAHE e.g. the need to overcome a history of unequal provision due to the legacy of apartheid and the lack of integration of support services for disabled students into the core functioning of HEIs. Of particular importance to my study is the importance of institutional historical context in understanding the experiences of disabled students in SAHE. This literature must be understood within the context of that historical background. These studies are connected in that they mostly present the policy and historical trajectories of South African education and the reasons for the continued challenges even in the wake of new policy frameworks. Different solutions are suggested, including a national disability policy framework for higher education students, as in the UK and Australia. These studies emphasise strongly the complex nature of the contextual environment within which disability occurs. This informed my choice of having a historically-advantaged white university and a historically-disadvantaged black university as my

[13] Similar to a polytechnic in other countries.

case universities. One of the areas that have received a lot of attention from researchers in South Africa is physical access challenges faced by disabled students in SAHE.

Physical access challenges

One of the greatest challenges faced by disabled students within higher education is physical access. Tugli *et al.* (2013) assessed the perceptions of disabled students concerning access and support in the learning environment at the University of Venda. Responses of the participating students highlight challenges pertaining to facilities, student support material and physical access within the university environment. 28 students affirmed that the physical environment constituted a great barrier in their learning, and more than half of the participants maintained that the physical environment made them vulnerable to dangers. Tugli *et al.* conclude that increased access and support services are needed at university to allow equal participation in social and academic life. In another study, Ntombela and Soobrayen, (2013) explored the nature of access challenges faced by visually-impaired students at the Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Two DU staff were interviewed and institutional documents were analysed. Findings show that although access has improved for disabled students at this university, there are still systemic barriers that limit the participation of students with visual impairments in the academic programs. Some of these challenges emanate from understaffing at the DU, which negatively affects support provision. Other challenges relate to the curriculum e.g. placements of visually-impaired students who are enrolled for Education course at schools where there are no auxiliary teacher aides. They conclude that improved access requires partnership between government and HEIs to monitor and support systemic transformation.

Another recent study by Engelbrecht and de Beer (2014) comprised 23 visually- and mobility-challenged students. The aim of this study was to determine if a group of students living with a physical disability experienced constraints with regard to access to a South African HEI. Just like Buthelezi's (2014) study on the challenges faced by physically disabled students at an FET college in KwaZulu Natal, they found that students living with a physical disability experienced accessibility constraints. These challenges were around physical access in the form of accessing

the library and parking spaces. An earlier study by Losinsky, Levi, Saffey and Jelsma (2003) undertook a descriptive cross-sectional study to establish the ease of accessibility to students who use wheelchairs at one university in South Africa. Accessibility was defined both in terms of access to buildings and the added time and distance travelled by wheelchair users on the campus. Five faculties were randomly selected and typical routes travelled by a first year student in each faculty established. Losinsky *et al.* found that two buildings were fully accessible, while three were completely inaccessible. Inaccessible toilets were the most common problem. Wheelchair users consistently had to travel further and for longer between lecture theatres in all the faculties measured. These students were therefore unable to reach their lectures within the ten minutes allocated by the university. They concluded that the inaccessibility of the buildings limits the full integration of students who use wheelchairs into campus life.

All the studies I have summarised above have some things in common. All these studies report the same kind of challenge: physical access. This is not surprising as the participants in these studies either have visual or mobility disabilities. However, what is remarkable is that in the ten years since Losinsky *et al.'s* (2003) study, the challenges of physical access still persist. Inclusion of disabled students in SAHE has been and continues to be a challenge; it is not unexpected that only around 1% of the student body are disabled (FOTIM, 2011). Those that make it into higher education have to struggle with physical access (Losinsky *et al.,* 2003; Engelbretch & de Beer, 2014) and attitudinal problems of their peers and staff (Howell, 2005). There is no full participation for disabled students in SAHE (Lourens, 2015). Among the reasons given is limited institutional support because disability is not prioritised by most HEIs (Tugli *et al.,* 2013; Ohajunwa, McKenzie, Hardy & Lorenzo, 2014) and lack of political commitment (Matshedisho, 2007b). As a result of these challenges, it is evident that access to higher education does not guarantee disabled students' access to education once they arrive at the university. Inclusive education from a capabilities-based social justice framework demands expanding opportunities for students by attending to their needs so that they can access knowledge and acquire skills, just like other students. Another issue teased out by these studies is the issue of attitude within higher education towards disability and disabled students. What makes people to react the way they do towards disabled people? Where negative attitudes prevail, a more positive culture can be promoted, for example through curricula that value diversity and the plurality of humans.

Below, I look at what studies say about the supporting structures available for disabled students in SAHE.

2.3.4 Supporting Mechanisms for Disabled Students

South African literature has also focused on different supporting mechanisms available to disabled students in higher education. These include support offered through DUs and lecturers.

The Role of Disability Units

DUs provide some of the services required by disabled students. These include provision of study materials in accessible formats (e.g. books in braille format or large prints); facilitation of extra time during assessments for those requiring those adjustments; and facilitating the availability of sign language interpreters (FOTIM, 2011; Matshedisho, 2010; Naidoo, 2010). Disabled students value the services they receive at the Units. For example, Matshedisho (2010) reported that 25% of disabled students in his study felt comfortable and welcome during their transition into the university as a result of the support given by the DUs. In instances where DUs did not play a part in providing services, disabled students felt unwelcome. Transition to higher education is easier when disabled students are supported by HEIs.

One of the major studies carried out in South Africa on the service provision for disabled students was done by FOTIM (2012) with the aim of describing and analysing the role and functions of DUs at the different HEIs in South Africa. FOTIM conducted this study across fifteen universities with DU staff and students. Some of the key findings include the following:

- The study confirmed factors beyond the control of higher education, e.g. schooling and family backgrounds impact on disability inclusion;
- The functions and operations of DUs vary across HEIs;

- Disability is defined differently within HEIs and students are classified differently. The definitions in use suggest that a medical model of disability remains predominant;
- At many HEIs disability is still managed in a fragmented way with the DUs being reactive in their approach. Disability issues are largely managed as separate from other diversity and transformation imperatives;
- The proportion of disabled students is roughly estimated to be less than 1% of the total student population at the participating institutions. The number of disabled students at the different institutions varies from 21-400 as reported by interviewees;
- Not all HEIs cater for different types of impairments. The more established and larger DUs tend to provide services for most impairment needs, while the newer and smaller DUs tend to provide services primarily for visually- and mobility-disabled students; and
- It was not necessarily the case that the more established longstanding DUs had best practice in place. Howell (2005) found that having more financial capacity does not always equate to best practices in responding to the needs of disabled students. Similarly, FOTIM study report that some of the small DUs at historically black universities showed innovation and emerging best practice features.

Financial constraints also affect the operation of DUs, especially for historically black HEIs (FOTIM, 2011; Howell, 2005; Matshedisho, 2007a). A lack of resources leads to other DUs being under-staffed (Naidoo, 2010; Sukhraj-Ely, 2008; Tugli *et al.,* 2013), resulting in delays in students receiving study materials (Naidoo, 2010). It is important to note that it is not always the case that disabled students do not receive good services at historically black HEIs. Despite financial challenges, some DUs at historically black universities contribute to a positive experience for disabled students (Howell, 2005).

Despite the positive role of DUs towards the full inclusion of disabled students in higher education, they have limitations and challenges. They are limited in the services they offer. They are not autonomous and fall under different departments (e.g. student counselling or student affairs) and this restricts their activities (FOTIM, 2011; Naidoo, 2010). The approach of some departments

opposes the direction some DUs want to take e.g. those DUs led by Counselling Services viewed disability through a pathological lens and reinforced the perspective that disability is a medical condition (Lyner-Cleophas, Swart, Chataika & Bell, 2014). Furthermore, others have pointed that the establishment of DUs has also kept disabled people out of mainstream higher education activities (DHET, 2013; FOTIM, 2011).

The importance of DUs cannot be denied. However, caution is needed to avoid stereotyping disabled students and alienating them from the rest of the student population while maintaining the same dominant culture that views disabled people as second-class citizens who must be helped by a DU to fit into an 'unproblematic' higher education system. DUs should not be seen as the only way of being responsive to the needs of disabled students. Given the position of DUs in relation to social justice and the needs of disabled students as shown by the literature, it is important to critically interrogate their role against principles of social justice i.e. creation of equal opportunities for all students to fully participate and succeed in higher education in order for them to pursue their aspirations.

The Role of Lecturers

The literature also reports on disabled students' perceptions of the conduct of lecturers. Some students perceive that lecturers' lack of disability awareness results in them failing to make necessary provisions (Matshedisho, 2010). Swart and Greyling (2008) found that students in the Humanities and Social Sciences were more positive about the support they receive from lecturers than students in the Natural, Economic and Business Sciences. Focusing on one HEI, Ohajunwa *et al.* (2014) investigated whether and how disability issues are included in the teaching and research of three faculties: Health Sciences, Humanities, and Engineering and the Built Environment at the University of Cape Town. Similar to Swart and Greyling (2008), the study reveals low levels of disability inclusion and disability not being viewed as an issue of social justice. However, there were pockets of inclusion, the nature of which differed from faculty to faculty. In the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, disability is included as an issue

of legislation, space and environment. At the Faculty of Humanities the focus is on the sociocultural and economic impact of disability. The Faculty of Health Sciences introduces disability with an emphasis on individual impairment, environmental effects, community-based rehabilitation and inclusive development, as well as the prevention and management of disability. The authors proposed the creation of an institutional system that will build the capacity of lecturers to include disability in teaching and research across faculties, in line with the university's transformation agenda. This recommendation is supported by Crous (2004) who found that 67 per cent of disabled students believed that their lecturers had limited knowledge of disabilities. Where lecturers thus seemed unhelpful, students often related it to their lack of awareness regarding disability, rather than unwillingness to help them.

Lack of awareness on the part of lecturers was also highlighted by Mayat and Amosun (2011) in their study, which explored the perceptions of academic staff of admission of disabled students, and their accommodation once accepted into a Civil Engineering program at a South African university. It observed that disabled students in South Africa are still excluded from certain academic fields like Engineering and Natural Sciences. Even though the five participating staff members expressed willingness to teach disabled students, they showed some reservations. The authors argue that staff members were concerned about the perceived limitations of the disabled students. They expressed concern that disabled students would not be able to meet all the course requirements. One lecturer even wondered whether disabled students would not be an 'embarrassment' to their able-bodied peers. These perceptions exclude disabled students from participating in academic programmes they might want to pursue.

Another study on the role of lecturers is van Jaarsveldt and Ndeya-Ndereya's (2015) study on the e-learning needs of disabled students at a South African university. Lecturers were interviewed and their responses indicated that some of them distanced themselves from the responsibility of providing support to disabled students. These lecturers displayed a lack of involvement with the students and tended to refer them to the DU. An inclusive learning environment at this university

remains elusive. The authors argue that although HEIs' disability policies are necessary, personal responsibility from lecturers is also essential in bringing about inclusive campuses.

While these studies clearly show a need of understanding how lecturers from different departments understand and experience disability, differences across Faculties and among lecturers point to an absence of embedding of institutional disability policy and practices as highlighted in the international literature reviewed earlier. It is clear that disabled students' support is dependent on the DU and some individual lecturers willing to offer support. It is therefore important to understand the attitudes and views of lecturers. A vital area which requires further exploration is the reasons behind the lack of involvement from some lecturers.

The Role of Assistive Technology

While assistive technology enhances access to learning for disabled students, at times it excludes other students. To ensure that they do not perpetuate injustices, the role of assistive technologies is key in the creation of inclusive environments. For example, in their study on the learning experiences of visually-impaired students, Mokiwa and Phasha (2012) report that JAWS software for visually-impaired students could not read mathematical and scientific signs or graphic material. Furthermore, multi-digital technology in the form of PowerPoint presentations or other visual technology was unhelpful to visually-impaired students (Sukhraj-Ely, 2008). Similarly, Kajee's (2010) study was on a technology-based English course that incorporates face-to-face and online modes of delivery at a South African university, and reported how the only visually-impaired student in the class felt powerless and isolated in most instances as a result of pedagogical problems. These studies highlight the need to be cautious and to interrogate even the systems that are designed to help disabled students, as they have the potential to create disadvantages for them. In the midst of these challenges, there were enabling factors that assisted disabled students.

Challenges and Enabling Factors

The positive contributions of family, friends, non-academic staff, and some academic staff are highlighted by three studies. In one of the few studies that engaged with disabled students, Matshedisho (2010) interviewed thirty disabled students from different HEIs who answered a self-administered questionnaire through their respective DUs. Most students attributed their success to the supportive friends they made during induction. With regards to the attitudes of academic staff, students had mixed reactions with some reporting positive attitudes while others had bad experiences. The importance of social network and social relations is highlighted by Roux and Burnett's (2010) in their exploratory study involving four disabled students, who were elite sport participants from the University of Johannesburg. Some challenges were identified within the university (e.g. visibility of stairs, inaccessible infrastructure and some exclusionary practices in sports). However, these students were managing through the network of support from family, friends and coaches. Roux and Burnett concluded that students in HEIs should be encouraged to participate in decision-making to meet their special needs. Lastly, in his study on deaf teachers' experiences of being students at the University of Witswatersrand, Magogwa (2008) found high levels of academic success among the deaf students owing to the institutional commitment to deaf education through (for example) the availability of interpreting services.

These three studies highlight the importance of support from family, friends, academic and non-academic staff in the creation of inclusive higher education. The differences in the attitudes of academic staff in Matshedisho's (2010) study points to heterogeneity among staff members. Instead of generalising that all academic staff are negative towards disabled students, it is important to recognise that others have a positive attitude: knowing how and why staff behave the way they do is an important area of inquiry. The experiences of disabled students are therefore a product of iterative interactions with the environment (physical, social, political and economic) and individual agency. Thus, considerations of a just-disability policy cannot be secondary to the study of one's environment, but must be integrated with it.

In a quantitative study, Crous (2004) at three South African universities (the largest distance learning university and two large residential universities) found that 63% of participating students did not disclose their disability to lecturers. There are various reasons for this; students were sometimes under the impression that DU or university administration would transfer their information to relevant lecturers. Yet, in many instances this did not happen. It is evident that not all students exercise their agency and although some students cope effectively in the midst of challenges, government and HEIs should not neglect their duty of creating inclusive environments for all students.

Although South Africa has persuasive policy framework aimed at improving equity and inclusion of disabled students in higher education (see section 1.2), empirical studies highlight that there is still a long way to go towards realisation of equal access and participation of disabled students. Literature in this subsection points at the complexities around disability issues in higher education. Moving further than analysis of policy developments, some of the studies explored academic staff views. Of particular interest are the findings by Ohajunwa *et al*. (2015) who state that disability is not viewed as an issue of social justice and propose that these challenges can be solved through curricula. Given the myriad of challenges highlighted in the reviewed literature, disability issues benefit from being viewed as a matter of social justice and this is where the capabilities approach fits as I will argue in Chapter Three.

Below I discuss the implications of both international and South African studies reviewed in this chapter.

2.4 Discussion

Disabled students in higher education are faced with complex challenges. Although some studies state that they are influenced by the social model, as has been shown in this chapter, on its own it cannot tell us the whole story about the experiences of disabled students in higher education. An expansive explanation is possible through a framework that allows for multiple perspectives to understand disability issues. Furthermore, when one looks at the findings from the studies presented here, the importance of seeing a disabled student as a dependent part of a group (or groups) as well as an individual operating within a specific personal, social, economic and familial context that may be quite different from the context of other disabled students is clear. Hart (2011:2) argues that 'whilst significant group differences can be helpful in indicating patterns of inequality this is not adequate to comprehensively identify disadvantage for specific individuals.' It would be wrong to assume that all disabled students, for example, are faced with physical access challenges. However, common challenges cannot be denied. This literature review has shown from studies on disability in SAHE that disabled students continue to face different challenges in higher education owing to a lack of policies to give direction. However, this might suggest that there are no successful experiences among disabled students as they face different challenges and devise individual coping strategies. Little attention has been given to positive experiences because most studies have not approached disability issues through a lens that takes into account people's agency. Relatedly, while some studies have looked at the experiences of students in higher education holistically, others have focused on certain aspects (e.g. sports, access and support structures). It seems there are benefits in understanding all the different aspects of a student's life both from the pre-higher education period through to the post-higher education phase.

Both South African and international studies have looked at the experiences of disabled students from two angles. On one hand, some scholars have focused on a single impairment, while other scholars explore the experiences of students with varied impairments. In all cases, the experiences of disabled students are highlighted, but it is those studies that focus on different types of impairments where the complexities can clearly emerge. What is evident is that different

individuals with different impairments face unique challenges and experiences. As such, in order to obtain a richer picture, my study focuses on students with varied impairments.

Internationally many studies have focused on disabled students to understand their experiences. In South Africa, this is a new trend, having focused much on policy developments as they relate to disability. Although some of these studies highlight issues of inclusion and participation that are all linked to the success or failure of students in higher education, the views of academic staff and university administrators, which from the findings highlighted by international studies are valuable, are missing in most of the South African literature. It is important to know what does and does not work for the academic staff in their quest to create inclusive environments for disabled students. This is also true for the administrators at the universities whose voices are absent from most of the reviewed studies.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided the context for this study by summarising the literature with regard to disabled students. It is evident that countries that have had comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in place (e.g. Australia and the UK) have made significant progress towards provisions for disabled students. However, difficulties in providing adequate support services for disabled students in these countries reflect some significant gaps between policy and practice. From the reviewed literature, it is apparent that accessing higher education does not ultimately result in inclusion and full participation for disabled students. Complex challenges still exist and the capabilities approach helps us understand disability issues as well as giving a framework that can help in designing disability-inclusive policies.

Below I discuss the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that have been used to understand and inform disability policies.

CHAPTER THREE: Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks for Understanding Disability

3.1 Introduction

Despite interventions and policies highlighted in Chapter One, the previous chapter showed that disabled students continue to face persistent complex inclusion challenges in higher education. In this regard, it is important to have a framework that helps us to understand these disabled students' experiences in an effort to create an inclusive higher education environment. Currently, there are different disability frameworks or models, the key ones being the medical and social models, and more recently the social-relational model, International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) and the capabilities approach.[14] I will examine the usefulness of each framework i.e. what each brings to our understanding of disability and inclusion of disabled students in higher education. I will try to answer the following questions: how does each framework contribute to our understanding of disability? How does each model enrich our thinking on policy and action in attending to the needs of disabled students?

This chapter sets out to show how the capabilities approach, through its central concepts, recognises the highly complex ways in which various factors intersect and inter-relate to produce unique individual and group experiences that influence the inclusion of disabled students in higher education. The approach provides us with a multi-dimensional analytical framework to explore opportunities and freedoms that are valued by disabled students from a social justice perspective. The capabilities approach can also serve as the informational base for the promotion of an 'inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all', which is the fourth Post-2015 sustainable development goal (SDG). The complex nature of the experiences of disabled students highlighted in the previous chapter suggests that disability cannot be

[14] Models of disability are tools for defining disability that provide a basis upon which interventions for meeting the needs of disabled people are designed and implemented.

conceptualised in narrow terms. For this reason, I motivate for the capabilities approach as an alternative framework to understand, design and evaluate disability-inclusive policies.

Below I give an overview of the disability models, showing their strengths and limitations in understanding disability.

3.2 The Medical Model

The Medical model is acknowledged to have been the first analytical framework to understand disability (Dubois & Trani, 2009). The model has been a predominant way of thinking about disability as bio-individual defects due to diseases, injury or other health conditions (Howell, 2005; Shakespeare 2014; Watermeyer, 2013). It views disabled people as having deficiencies which should be diagnosed, treated and, in some cases, cured (Burchardt 2004; Oliver, 1996; Shakespeare & Watson, 1997). The model distinguishes between 'impairment' and 'disability.' Impairment is seen as 'any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function' and disability as 'any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity (resulting from an impairment) in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being' (Oliver, 1996:30). As a result, the medical model is criticised for adopting an 'abnormal-normal' perspective and locates the problem of disability in the extent to which an individual differs from the 'norm'. Critics say that the medical model is not representative of the experiences of disabled people as it fails to consider the social, economic, historical and political factors that play a part in the lives of disabled people (Barnes, 1990; Reindal, 2009).

The medical model, is not, however, without merit, since being healthy has enormous influence on people's lives e.g. lung transplants have increased life expectancy for many people with cystic fibrosis (Shakespeare, 2014). It is from this perspective that interventions (such as rehabilitation, income maintenance programmes and the provision of assistive technologies that are undeniably helpful) came. However, these are just a part of the lives of disabled people. Treating any

impairment as a medical issue also misinforms policy-makers by insisting on medical interventions for conditions that might not warrant such mediations e.g. someone who is visually impaired might need environmental and social interventions rather than medical interventions. Also, while it is important to acknowledge the connection between impairment and disability, not all impairments lead to disabilities and the concept of impairment is not straightforward. The medical model's one-dimensional approach to disability leaves power and privilege in the hands of health professionals who decide what constitutes impairment and the manner and type of interventions that will be employed. This paternalistic approach restricts disabled people's opportunities to make choices, control their lives and develop their potential. Lourens (2015:21) relates this to the South African history of apartheid which was 'marked by countless examples of nonchalant, unexamined, careless discrimination.'

In the education field, the medical model led to the creation of 'special' schools and classes where professionals take care of the needs of disabled students (Swart & Pettipher 2011). This reinforces the stigmatisation of disabled students by *othering* them from the rest of the student body. The medical model justifies exclusion of disabled students in some programmes of study pointing to an individual's inability to do what is considered 'normal' in higher education, without addressing the actual causes of exclusion. Furthermore, the segregated nature of provisions at the DUs in higher education treat disabled students as a group of students whose success depends on being part of the DU. Although the DUs are important they cannot compensate for the exclusionary practices of the whole higher education system and potentially further the exclusion of disabled students by 'marking' and 'othering' them.

I now turn to the social model, where most critics of the medical model emanate from. This model currently informs South African disability policies at the national level.

3.3 The Social Model

The social model originated in the UK with Finkelstein, Hunt and Oliver among others (Shakespeare, 2014). It has different versions (Mitra, 2006) as it has been adopted and adapted in other countries including South Africa and the USA. The variations are also as a result of disagreement among its proponents and this makes it more difficult to understand its precise interpretation of disability. For example, Finkelstein (2001:1) argues that the social model is not an explanation, definition or theory but 'a tool for gaining insight into the way that society disables people with impairments.' However, by stating that the social model 'is a tool for gaining insight' (my emphasis), Finkelstein seem to be confirming that the social model is a conceptual and theoretical tool. Nonetheless, in all its variants, the social model argues that disability is a result of social arrangements (values; political economy; physical structure) and not a characteristic of an individual, which restrict the activities of people with impairments (Oliver, 1999). Physical limitations, it is argued, become disabling because society does not accommodate the differences in human functioning (Oliver, 1996). Disability is the outcome of social barriers (Thomas, 2004) and it is society that needs to adapt in order to include disabled people (Oliver, 1996). By separating disabling barriers from impairments, the model enables us to focus on what denies people their human and civil rights and points to action that needs to be taken (Morris, 2000). Finkelstein (2001:30) states that, 'Disability is something that is imposed on top of our impairment…It is society that disables us'. For him and others who follow the approach, there is a strong distinction between disability and impairment. Impairment only becomes a disability due to discriminatory social arrangements (Brunton & Gibson, 2009).

The underlying philosophical stance of the model is that disabled people are an integral and indispensable part of society. According to Shakespeare (2014), the approach strongly influenced international thinking on disability, as expressed, for example, in the CRPD. This model opened up the way for the emergence of inclusive education (Goodley, 2011). It has helped to shape and restructure education settings through shifting the focus from individuals to the societal barriers that hinder equal participation (Howell, 2005). In higher education, the model has been significant in the fight against discrimination by promoting access and inclusion in all spheres within the

system. Both the South African disability movement and the South African government approach disability from a social model perspective (Greyling, 2008).

Although the social model of disability is currently viewed as the dominant model by disability activists and academics within higher education globally, and while it is the preferred conceptual model as enshrined in the CRPD, it is important to understand that this approach is also not without criticism. While the social model has rightly pointed out the weakness of looking at disability solely through a medical lens, it has the problem of over-emphasising the social aspects of disability (Terzi, 2004). Locating disability only in society misses other aspects e.g. the issue of individual medical conditions highlighted by the medical model. The social model ignores what Thomas (1999) refers to as 'impairment effects' i.e. the limiting aspects of living with impairment, which are not created by society, but are a direct result of being impaired. French (1993), for example, has convincingly described how her visual impairment imposes social restrictions (for example, not recognising people or not reading social and non-verbal languages in social interactions). These restrictions are unaccounted for by the social model. The social effects play out differently as a result of culture and type of impairment. Those with visible impairments are likely to experience different social challenges than those with non-visible impairments. The social effects are also dependent on where people are located in terms of geography and their socio-economic background. For example, Groce and Zola (1993) report that in the USA, many parents who are well educated and expect their children to go to universities and colleges have more difficulty accepting an intellectually disabled child than one with mobility impairment. Again, it is mistaken to only view society and medical professionals from a negative perspective: most innovation and assistive technologies for disabled people have been designed by people who care about the needs of disabled people.

Just like the medical model, the social model is a 'one size fits all' approach. It assumes that social interventions will correct all imbalances and injustices against disabled people. This assumption comes out of the fact that the approach views all disabled people as the same. However, disabled people are not homogenous and by ignoring human diversity in favour of only a social perspective,

the intricately unique life of each individual is lost. Moreover, if disability is viewed only in terms of social arrangements, then attempts to mitigate or cure medically-related challenges may be regarded with suspicion. They will appear to be irrelevant or misguided responses to the true problem of disability. If disability is only understood as the product of structural exclusion, then knowing the numbers of disabled people requiring provision will be irrelevant. This is because the imperative for social change and disability provision will be to remove environmental and social barriers, rather than to meet all the needs of disabled people. As a way forward, without forgetting the imperatives of social dynamics and challenges, it is more fruitful to move from a reductionist single explanation account to multi-dimensional accounts of disability. The next three perspectives move in that direction by giving weight to different causal levels in the lives of disabled people.

3.4 Social Relational Model

Disagreements within the social model are further confirmed by Thomas (1999) in her adapted version of the social model calling for a refocusing on the relational approach within the social model. She argues that this was the case under the original Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) social model.[15] Thomas (1999) proposed an extended version of the social model, the social-relational model, which defines disability as 'a form of social oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments and socially engendered undermining of their psycho-emotional well-being' (Thomas, 1999:3). The social relational model emphasises the impact of impairment and the social experience of disability. Thomas's relational approach to understanding disability is commendable because it unpacks the relationships between different social factors in the creation of barriers for people with impairments. This concept allows us to account for individual limitations that arise from impairment, rather than from social oppression (Shakespeare, 2014). However, by limiting the barriers only to social oppression and discarding other factors, her approach misses other non-socially-related aspects of life. Even if all social barriers and oppression were eliminated, bodily limitations or 'impairment effects' will manifest in people's lives. Furthermore, to define disability

[15] UPIAS was founded in 1972 by Paul Hunt when he invited disabled people to form a group to confront disability issues. It established the principles that led to the development of the social model of disability.

entirely in terms of social oppression risks obscuring the positive dimensions of social relations that enable people with impairment 'to do what they value' e.g. positive socially related experiences reported by disabled students in Chapter Two.

Reindal (2008) argues that, by retaining the elements of discrimination and oppression, the social relational model is more suited to the 'morality of inclusion because the main issue of the social model, oppression is not obliterated' (Reindal, 2008:135) and the model can differentiate between personal restrictions in social settings versus social hindrances that are imposed on top of impairments, which hinder the individual in achieving vital goals (Reindal, 2008:144). The social-relational model of disability as a theoretical framework for inclusivity in higher education may therefore be appropriate in taking the ideals of inclusion forward in South Africa. However, like the other two models, it fails to account for individual choices and agency which we have seen from the reviewed literature to be important in disabled students' lives.

3.5 International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)

The WHO attempted to provide a multi-perspective view on disability and produced the ICF, an integration of the medical and social models. Within the ICF:

> *Disability is the variation of human functioning caused by one or a combination of …the loss or abnormality of a body part (i.e. impairment); difficulties an individual may have in executing activities (i.e. activity limitations); and/or problems an individual may experience in involvement in life situations (i.e. participation restrictions).* (Imrie, 2004:290)

The ICF is considered the international standard framework in defining disability and health-related states (Saleeby, 2007). The classification has been used for a variety of purposes: to describe, explain and analyse the lived experiences of disabled people (Mitra, 2006). As highlighted in Figure 3.1 below, the ICF is classified into components: *Body Functions and Structures, Activities and Participation*, and *Environmental Factors*. Domains for the first component of activities include physiological functions and structures. The second component has

activities (execution of a task /action by an individual) and participation (one's involvement in a life situation). Activities relate more to individual actions, and participation relates more to relations with society. The third component (environmental factors) includes the external influences on the individual with impairments that interact with the other two ICF domains. These environmental factors range from physical factors (such as climate, terrain or building design) to social factors (such as attitudes, institutions, and laws). Within the ICF functioning (note that that this term is used differently from 'functionings' within the capabilities approach) is the umbrella term for all body functions and structures, activities, and participation. In practice, activity limitations might be removed through provision of assistive devices (e.g. electric wheelchairs) while participation barriers need social and political interventions (e.g. changes to curricula). The ICF challenges the medicalisation of disability by noting that the presence of impairment 'does not necessarily indicate that a disease is present or that the individual should be regarded as sick'. (WHO, 2001:13). This classification helps us structure the lived experiences of health conditions.

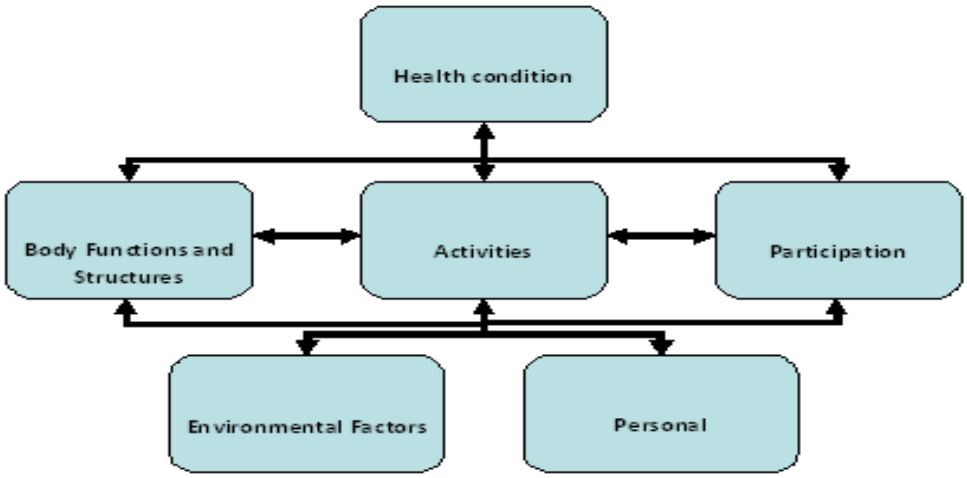

Figure 3.1: ICF Domains

The socio-medical approach that lies at the heart of the ICF helps us understand the complexity of disability. One of the advantages of this multi-layered conceptual framework is that it provides us with disability-related terminologies and a classification to assist policy-makers in developing intervention strategies (Saleeby, 2007). The ICF acknowledges that participation is the outcome

of the inter-relationship between the features of the person and social and physical environments (Üstün *et al.,* 2001). The policy significance of this perspective is that interventions can be undertaken at different levels (not just focusing on the social or medical) to enhance the opportunities of individuals by removing disadvantages. The importance attached to the social and physical environment in the ICF ties in with social model thinking, and recognises cultural influences on perceptions of disability. It also acknowledges the role of individual impairment and other factors in the creation of disability.

The ICF has some limitations, mostly because its classification (Table 3.1) remains firmly grounded in Western health scientific concepts (Miles, 2001). The classification maintains a vision of activities largely influenced by a bio-medical view and still sees biology as the most determining factor (Söder, 2009). Furthermore, the classification (Table 3.1) is a close-ended list of health-related attributes (Mitra, 2014). However, as has been seen in the empirical studies reviewed in Chapter Two, there is a complex interplay of other factors (e.g. economic, cultural or political) at different levels from national to institutional, which influence the lives of disabled students. Another limitation is that the ICF does not account for resources and people's choices and goals, which are important in analysis and description of people's lived experiences. For example, in a country like South Africa with high inequalities, economic resources and availability of public services influence how disabled people and their families cope with the consequences of impairment and not accounting for these factors will leave many issues unexplored.

Table 3.1: ICF components and domains

Body Function: Mental functions Sensory functions and pain Voice and speech functions Functions of the cardiovascular, haematological, immunological and respiratory systems Functions of the digestive, metabolic, endocrine systems Genitourinary and reproductive functions Neuro-musculoskeletal and movement-related functions Functions of the skin and related structures	Activities and Participation: Learning and applying knowledge General tasks and demands Communication Mobility Self-care Domestic life Interpersonal interactions and relationships Major life areas Community, social and civic life
Body Structure: Structure of the nervous system The eye, ear and related structures Structures involved in voice and speech Structure of the cardiovascular, immunological and respiratory systems Structures related to the digestive, metabolic and endocrine systems Structure related to genitourinary and reproductive systems Structures related to movement Skin and related structures	Environmental Factors: Products and technology Natural environment and human-made changes to environment Support and relationships Attitudes Services, systems and policies

Source: WHO, 2001:29-30

To sum up, the ICF is a multi-dimensional framework that has been adopted in many countries for censuses; it is significant to our understanding of disability in that it acknowledges the interplay of different factors in the lives of disabled people. Yet, its closed-ended classification falls short in accounting for resources, people's choices and goals. In the following section, I now turn to the capabilities approach and discuss some of its major constructs and how it can provide a richer understanding of disability.

3.6 The Capabilities Approach

This section argues for a capabilities-based social justice framework to understand and analyse the lived experiences of disabled people in order to inform policy and practices. I will not, however, attempt to present the capabilities approach as a superior model for understanding disability. The value of the capabilities approach lies not in its conceptual newness (most of the capabilities approach concepts are already in use e.g. through the works of Aristotle, Adam Smith, John Rawls, John Roemer, Margaret Archer, Nancy Fraser), but in its *focus* and ability to bring together these different concepts in conversations in exploring human development issues. The capabilities approach has been the basis for measuring quality of life, for example in the Human Development Reports. I will begin this discussion with a brief account of how the two leading proponents of the capabilities approach, Sen and Nussbaum, understand and relate it to disability. This understanding, together with those of other scholars, will be discussed throughout this thesis. I will then show how other scholars have furthered the approach in an effort to conceptualise disability, before moving on to the central tenets of the approach, which are important in developing my argument for a disability-inclusive policy framework.

The capabilities approach was pioneered by Sen (1980, 1992, 1999, 2009) and developed further by Nussbaum (2000, 2002, 2006, 2011). They were both influenced by Aristotle's view that an impoverished life is one without the freedom to undertake important activities, not only those highlighted by ICF in Table 3.1 but all the activities a person has 'reason to value'. I should also highlight that within the capabilities approach, a major drawback is confusion about some basic concepts. Some of the confusion is as a result of the refinements and clarifications made by both

Sen and Nussbaum, whose interpretations and emphasis differ. Choosing to privilege Sen or Nussbaum's conceptions over the other or attempting to bring both versions together requires a deep understanding of both versions: both their distinct and common elements. This is not an easy task, but I will attempt to do so in this chapter and throughout this thesis.

Sen's version of the approach came about in order to understand welfare economic concepts, especially poverty and wellbeing. Sen is critical of approaches that measure standards of living based on utility or ability to buy certain commodities, arguing that life is more than these aspects. His approach rather focuses on the opportunities and freedom people have to succeed in accomplishing what they value. Sen (2009) denies that Rawls's (1971) primary goods are an adequate index of people's wellbeing. For instance, he points out that a person who uses a wheelchair might have the same income and wealth as a person with ease of mobility, yet he might be much less well-off in terms of the ability to move around. Sen's insistence on the need to focus on the 'practical opportunities' or *capabilities* people have becomes important when we consider cases in which an individual's freedom to pursue what they value is hampered by various structures. For example, regardless of how much money can be given to a person in a wheelchair, he/she might still not have adequate access to public space unless the paths are redesigned to allow wheelchairs to move (Sen, 2009). This theoretical orientation is consistent with the social model as highlighted earlier in this chapter, but is much wider in the sense that social aspects are one among many other key factors in people's lives.

Nussbaum's version of the capabilities approach is influenced by philosophy and aims to be a 'partial' theory of justice. Nussbaum (2011) proposes a threshold to provide a basis to what is a dignified life, grounded in a list of ten universal and central human capabilities.[16] Sen (1999) is against a pre-defined list generated without public deliberation, although his basic capabilities are consistent with Nussbaum's list of ten central capabilities. Sen (2009) rejects the need for 'transcendental theories' aimed at arriving at perfect justice. His conception of the capabilities approach is not intended to be a theory of social justice. Sen contends that the transcendental approach is unhelpful partly because of the difficulties involved in reaching reasoned agreement

[16] 1. Life. 2. Bodily Health. 3. Bodily Integrity. 4. Senses, Imagination, and Thought. 5. Emotions. 6. Practical Reason. 7. Affiliation. 8. Other Species. 9. Play. 10. Control over One's Environment.

on that ideal state (Sen, 2009:10-12). His priority lies in identifying injustices. On the other hand, Nussbaum (2011) claims that her version is a 'partial' theory of justice as her list of ten central capabilities is concerned only with sufficiency or minimal threshold. So in either case, extending the capabilities approach to my study will not deliver a theory of disability; rather, it is an articulation of a framework that can help us to understand disability.

In determining the opportunities (capabilities) that a wheelchair user has to achieve what he or she values, the capabilities approach looks at the individual's agency (choices), how this specific physical activity (moving in a wheelchair) interacts with other (conversion) factors, such as the physical environment in which the person lives, the accessibility of the buildings, and how it interacts with what Sen (1999) calls personal 'conversion' factors, such as general strength, health, and aspects of attitude. In disability and education, the capabilities approach framework focuses on the relational aspect of how individual students interact with their environment and how they convert resources into functionings, while also considering the design of the environment.

3.6.1 Capabilities Approach and Disability

The capabilities approach has been utilised to explore disability-related issues. Within the capabilities perspective, in brief, disability occurs when an individual with impairment is deprived of opportunities and freedoms to do what he or she 'values to do' (Mitra, 2006). Sen has been concerned with the economic wellbeing of disabled people and mentions it repeatedly in his writings on the capabilities approach. For example, he writes: 'We must take note that a disabled person may not be able to do many things that an able-bodied individual can, with the same bundle of commodities' (Sen, 1985:7). Mobility equipment or other resources and help required by disabled people may soak up a large proportion of income that would otherwise be adequate (Sen, 2009). He further outlines two disadvantages from which disabled people might suffer. He says that some disabled people have a *conversion handicap* i.e. the difficulties in converting their resources or incomes into 'good living' because of disability (Sen, 2009:258). Additionally, disabled people might suffer an *earning handicap* as they might need more income to achieve similar functionings as others (for example, having to buy a wheelchair in order to be mobile).

Nussbaum has engaged with disability at length. Nussbaum (2006) claims that disability is one of the three social frontiers at the edge of the political community defined by social contract theorists. Her approach is commendable for prioritising severe and mental impairments as a central concern for social justice. Social contract theorists posit free and independent men living in a pre-social state of nature. Such men would have had little reason to form a society and submit to the authority of laws unless they individually benefit from giving up their absolute liberty. Therefore, the only social contract they could rationally agree to would be a mutually advantageous one. This orientation, Nussbaum (2006) argues, excludes from public policy anyone deemed not mutually advantageous for such cooperation and the most affected, according to her, are disabled people, migrants, and non-human animals. She claims that justice for disabled people should include whatever special arrangements are required to lead a dignified life, and the work of caring for disabled people should be socially recognised, fairly distributed, and compensated.

Other than Sen and Nussbaum, the capabilities approach has been used by many scholars on disability-related issues other than economic wellbeing. A growing number of scholars (Dubois & Trani, 2009; Mitra, 2006; Terzi, 2010) have used multidimensional poverty measures based on the capabilities approach to study the well-being of persons with disabilities. The limitation with most of these studies is that they have been mostly conceptual and few have applied the capabilities approach empirically. Terzi (2005) says that the capabilities approach highlights how disability has to be addressed as a matter of social justice, as this will potentially contribute to the equalisation of the individual's capability to achieve wellbeing (Terzi, 2005). This is difficult to achieve using other approaches; for example, Nussbaum (2006) contends that social contract theory cannot bring justice to disabled people because the framework does not allow their full participation in activities they value. Social contract theories conceive that basic political principles as a result of reciprocity: a contract for mutual advantage. In this scheme, disabled students will suffer as they are not among those 'for whom and in reciprocity with whom society's basic institutions are structured' (Nussbaum, 2006:98).

3.6.2 The Central Tenets of the Capabilities Approach with relevance for Disability

Functionings

According to Sen (1999), functionings are various things a person has 'reason to value doing or being'. Reason and the chance to reflect are important factors in choosing various functionings. When restrictions are placed on what an impaired person 'values doing and being', a disability will be present (Mitra, 2006). Examples of functionings include activities (e.g. being able to read) and desirable states of affairs (e.g. being literate). Terzi (2005) highlights the importance of the concept of functioning in people's lives. For instance, she notes that mobility is a functioning that enables other functionings, such as going to classes. In this sense moving about may be seen as a basic functioning enabling more complex functionings to take place. Some of these functionings are considered in the ICF model discussed earlier. As such, Mitra (2006) and Saleeby (2007) say that the ICF can be used to operationalise the capabilities approach. For example, the ICF provides a classification to identify and develop interventions that facilitate the development of capabilities among disabled people. The close-ended list presented in Table 3.1 can benefit if it is left open. Different interventions, depending on the locus of the problem or challenge, are executed either at the individual, activity and participation or environmental levels highlighted earlier in discussion of the ICF. This enables interventions from a capabilities approach to be approached from many angles e.g. social, medical and other fronts.

Capabilities

Capabilities are various combinations of functionings: the freedoms and opportunities of individuals to pursue and achieve what they value (Sen, 1999). When capabilities are introduced into the disability discussion, a lack of opportunities as a result of, for example, the interaction of an impaired individual's (a) personal characteristics (e.g. age, impairment), (b) basket of available goods (assets, income) and (c) environment (social, economic, political, cultural), potentially leads to disability by reducing the individual's functionings (Mitra, 2006). This then separates the capabilities approach from the social or medical models, which focus on single items or pre-determined classification with regards to the ICF, and fails to acknowledge the multi-dimensional

aspects of disability. In determining entitlement, the approach shifts attention from identifying whether a disability is individually/biologically or socially caused as such, to the full set of opportunities and freedoms available to a person and the role that impairment plays in this set of freedoms and opportunities. For example, in determining the needs of disabled students in my study, the focus was on the freedoms and opportunities they value and focusing on barriers that hinder them from achieving their valued functionings in and through higher education. The value of the concept of capability in the discussions of the experiences of disabled students in higher education lies in the value it places on the opportunities and being able to pursue one's life.

Conversion factors

Various factors influence individuals' ability to convert capabilities into functionings. Within the capabilities approach, these are called conversion factors (Sen, 1999) and are:

- *Personal conversion factors* e.g. physical condition, sex, reading skills;
- *Social conversion factors* e.g. public policies, social norms and practises; and
- *Environmental conversion factors* e.g. climate, infrastructure, institutions, public goods.

Conversion factors intervene at different levels: *individual* (age, sex, impairment), *family* (income, shelter, costs and expenditure), *community* (social capital, traditional rules, social participation) and at *regional or national* levels (public goods investment, legal framework, rights and obligations (Trani *et al.*, 2011). The relationship between individual conversion factors and other factors is highlighted by Trani *et al.* (2011) who argue that family support is a conversion factor that is also considered a resource e.g. a child with mobility challenges from a poor socio-economic rural family in war-torn Afghanistan is likely to have fewer opportunities and resources available compared to a child with the same challenges from a middle class family in London. In some cases, cultural beliefs may entail social exclusion for disabled people, leading to low self-esteem and isolation. It becomes difficult for disabled people to convert their bundles of resources into capabilities. Some of the sources of capability disadvantage arise not from personal conversion

factors, but from social relations and environmental features e.g. blindness can result from diseases linked to infection or lack of clean water (Mitra, 2006).

With conversion factors, we are not dealing with a concept that somehow has escaped the notice of other disability models discussed earlier. Rather, there are merits of the capabilities perspective that would enrich the broad approach of conceptualising disability. For the social model, the distinct conversion factor is the social environment; an individual's health is the important conversion factor to the medical model; and the relations between an impaired person and the social environment matters as a conversion factor in the social-relational perspective. Among the four models, ICF gets closer to the capabilities approach in its view to conversion factors being diverse: *personal* and *environment.* Within the ICF, personal and environmental factors are the conversion factors. The environmental conversion factor within ICF encompasses what is a stand-alone factor in capabilities approach: the *social* conversion factor. The major difference between ICF and the capabilities approach regarding conversion factors is that, as we have seen in Table 3.1, the ICF presents us with a list of mostly bio-medical items that are said to interact with the *person* and the *environment*. On the other hand, the capabilities approach presents three key conversion factors but offers no pre-determined list of issues that interact within those domains.

Heterogeneities

Sen (2000) convincingly argues that individuals have different characteristics connected with abilities, illness, age and gender, and so on, which mean their needs are diverse. How such personal heterogeneities should be treated is at the core of the debate in disability studies and policies (Terzi, 2005; Trani *et al.*, 2011). In disability debates, acknowledgement of heterogeneity makes the capabilities approach a better alternative compared to other approaches. For example, one student with hearing impairment may need expensive recording devices, while another may need relatively cheap technology to realise the same functioning as other students. This concept also acknowledges that the causes of deprivations of opportunities and freedoms for individual disabled students might stem from different and multiple factors, including health concerns and social issues, depending on circumstances. Disability is seen as an aspect of the complexity of individuals in their interaction with their physical, economic, social and cultural environment. In this respect,

the approach promotes a conception of disability as one aspect of human diversity, comparable to age and gender, without invoking notions of abnormality, as in the medical model (Terzi, 2005). Instead of uniform provisions to all disabled students, an example of a policy intervention based on this perspective might target the three domains (personal, environmental and social) mentioned above, in creating opportunities for disabled students to achieve what they value.

Agency

Within the capabilities approach, agency is defined as the effective participatory role of individuals '*who act and bring about change*' to achieve valuable goals (Sen 1999:19). The relevance of the concept of agency is that it goes beyond the other frameworks of disability, by placing value on individual choices and freedoms to act. The capabilities approach sees the freedom and choice to achieve what one values as of primary moral importance (Nussbaum, 2011).

How choices and decisions are reached is important in describing the lived experiences of disabled people, who may take different subjective actions depending on their choices, circumstances and personal goals. In the face of capability deprivation, some people may create 'compensating abilities' (Qizilbash, 1997), while others adapt their preferences to lower standards. An example of adaptive preference a student in a wheelchair who wants to socialise with other students after classes and at weekends, but cannot do so because most residences on campus are not accessible; she adjusts her desires in the direction of realistic possibilities and is now 'satisfied' with staying in her room alone most of the time. An example of compensating behavior is a disabled student working harder than other students in pursuing his studies because disabled people have lesser chances of getting employed than non-disabled. This student's wellbeing might be judged acceptable, but the adjustment done through hard work by this student is unjust: opportunities should be equal to all.

As highlighted in Table 3.2, Sen distinguishes between: a) agency-freedom; b) agency achievement; c) wellbeing freedom; and d) wellbeing achievement (Sen, 1999). These four dimensions highlight the importance of 'effective freedom' in terms of breadth of existing

opportunities. For Sen, equal capabilities do not mean identical dimensions, but that individuals should have equal 'effective freedoms' to achieve the functionings.

Sen (1999) makes a distinction between wellbeing and agency functionings. In Sen's version of the capabilities approach, a capability is conceived as having four dimensions (wellbeing freedom, wellbeing agency, agency freedom & agency achievement). It is important to point out that Nussbaum does not identify a distinction between wellbeing and agency, but makes a distinction between freedoms and achievements. She sees no additional benefits in highlighting or separating wellbeing from agency functionings (Nussbaum, 2000:14) because of the potential for confusion caused by the term 'wellbeing' being closely associated with utilitarianism.

Table 3.2: Sen's distinctions: wellbeing and agency

	Wellbeing	**Agency**
Freedom	Wellbeing freedom	Agency freedom
Achievement	Wellbeing achievement	Agency achievement

Sen's argument is that not all acts carried out by a person are necessarily beneficial to the person. Alkire (2005) gives an example of a person A who, whist enjoying a picnic, jumps into a river to save person B. Jumping into the cold river will not benefit A directly, but she carries out the act. The act of jumping in the river to help B illustrates A's agency functioning, but it would not be A's wellbeing functioning.

What Sen has achieved with the four dimensions, and is committed to asserting, is that though one might not be able to make interpersonal utility comparisons, we can make comparisons of people in each of the four quadrants. Each capability is multi-dimensional and each of the four dimensions contributes to the capability. This view allows us to conceptualise that different quadrants may be important in compensating for the weakness of other quadrants. For example, institutional arrangements can create barriers to a disabled student by excluding her from social events (negatively affecting all wellbeing aspects). That student may seek to act against this exclusion and the platform is there (agency freedom), but may decide not to act (no agency achievement).

These four quadrants help us understand complexity, iterative and interdependent capabilities and functionings. An individual might achieve wellbeing without having agency-freedom over the process leading to the accomplishment of the wellbeing. Sen's conceptualisation helps us to understand that 'a full conception of a good life does not reduce to a single property, and is thus able to incorporate some valuable aspects of diverse ethical theories separately and together' (Venkatapuram, 2007:106). Sen's distinction between power and process agency, combined with the four dimensions highlighted above, outlines a conceptual device to assess disabled students' inclusion in higher education. In exploring the experiences of disabled students, I will make use of these concepts in my empirical chapters.

Capabilities List and Higher Education

Sen refuses to identify a list of capabilities, though he endorses basic capabilities (health, education and democratic spaces), so his version offers us an 'empty' capability set. Capabilities important for the inclusion of disabled students in higher education will be whatever different societies choose to include through public deliberation. However, as noted earlier, Nussbaum (2000:35) makes a case for a list of ten central capabilities, arguing that, 'certain universal norms of human capability should be central for political purposes in thinking about basic political principles that can provide the underpinning for a set of constitutional guarantees in all nations'. I was attracted to the idea of visionary, capabilities-based norms to give 'bite' to public disability policy and to judge whether human dignity and social justice are being achieved. I made use of Walker's (2006) higher education capabilities list to construct the interview schedule as her list was also generated out of higher education context.

Having discussed the key concepts of the capabilities approach and their strength in conceptualising disability, I now summarise the models of disability discussed in this chapter.

3.7 Summary of the Approaches

Table 3.2 below summarises the descriptions, advantages and limitations of the disability models discussed above.

Table 3.2: Approaches to understanding disability

Framework / Model	Description	Advantages	Limitations
Medical Model	*Disability is the result of physical conditions due to trauma and diseases	*Its therapeutic aspects cure and alleviate the physical and mental pain of many people*	*Ignores role of the individual and society
Social Model	*Disability is a socially-created problem	*Advocates equality among individuals by altering society's perceptions of disability*	*Ignores impairment effect that may contribute to disability
Social Relational Model	*Disability is social oppression of the impaired bodies	*Acknowledges the role of individual bodies and society on disability.*	* Maintains the social environment and the body as the only major determining factors
ICF	*Considers disability multidimensional based on a classification list	*Values empirical evidence, is normative and universally acceptable*	*This fixed list of classification does not account for individual agency, resources and choices
Capabilities Approach	*Disability is a result of convergence of different factors (social, political, cultural, economic) with impairment *presents a holistic approach to disability	*Account for people's agency and choices and provides an open- ended outlook of disabling factors*	Difficult to operationalise and does not offer detailed guidance for action

It is clear from the table that each model is important. However, the ICF and the capabilities approach seem to be holistic in their understanding of disability. They both recognise the importance of context in understanding disability; the capabilities approach goes a step further by acknowledging the role of individual agency and choice in understanding disability. Plural well-being freedoms identified through bottom-up deliberations and interwoven with agency freedoms

make the capabilities approach distinctive. Although DUs and the provision of funding improve the well-being of disabled students, what is really important is when they are free to form and work towards their own valued goals.

3.8 Conclusion

This discussion has shown the strength and limitations of different models of conceptualising and describing disability. While there is value in understanding the medical, social and social-relational aspects of disability, on their own these perspectives fail to account fully for the experiences of disabled people. The ICF has many similar aspects to the capabilities approach and because of its classification it is among the models that can help operationalise the capabilities approach. However, because of its closed classification, it cannot account for the diverse experiences of disabled people's lives, while a capabilities-based approach can offer that. The capabilities approach avoids the error of conflating and simplifying the variety of disabled people's different experiences by looking at medical issues only, or trivialising the lives of disabled people by focusing on social related issues. Disability is complex, and differences in impairment contribute to different levels of disadvantage that individuals face. Failure to appreciate the multi-dimensional nature of disability contributes to some of the weak arguments about the nature of disability and the experiences of disabled people. Those who see disability as a tragedy that should be prevented at all costs are seeing only the most severe end of the continuum. On the other hand, those who deny that impairments can present challenges are seeing only the milder end. Any adequate conceptualisation of disability has to account for individual differences and the effect of multiple factors on people with impairments in creating disadvantages. The capabilities approach does so, thereby helping us understand and frame disability-inclusive policies. In the next chapter I will discuss the research design and methodology that I used to operationalise the capabilities approach in exploring the lives of disabled students.

CHAPTER Four: Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses in detail the design and research methods used for this study. In Chapter One I stated my research aim, research questions and specific objectives. I re-state my research questions here, since they were generated by the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and analysis of models discussed in Chapter Three. This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do disabled students experience their studies and interact with higher education?
2. How do lecturers and Disability Unit staff understand disability and the experiences of disabled students?
3. What are the differences and similarities concerning university policies and other supporting arrangements for disabled students at the University of the Free State and University of Venda?
4. How does the capabilities approach account for the experiences of disabled students in higher education?
5. What implications can be drawn for disability policy to enhance social justice in higher education?

Given the complexities around the lives of disabled students in higher education as highlighted in Chapter Two, I have argued for a capabilities-based framework to disability issues in SAHE as a matter of social justice in Chapter Three. The research design aimed to operationalise this framework in an empirical project. I begin with a discussion of why a qualitative research design was suitable for both unpacking disability complexities and how it is consistent with the capabilities-based understanding of disability proposed in the previous chapter. I will also explain how and why the study sites and research participants were chosen. While the limitations of my study are discussed in section 8.3, I will touch on some of them in this chapter. The research instruments and data collection methods used in this study are also discussed. The interview process is explored in more detail, together with ethical considerations for this study. Finally, an explanation of how data was analysed is provided. Below, I consider briefly the central tenets of

both qualitative and quantitative research methods as a starting point for motivating a qualitative research methodology for my study.

4.2 Qualitative Research Design

This section provides a rationale for positioning this study within the qualitative research design. According to Creswell (1998:15), qualitative research design 'attempts to build complex, holistic pictures, analyses words and reports detailed views of the informants'. It does not generate the kind of certainty in data and does not have the same predictive power as quantitative research (Bryman, 2008), but it is useful when going 'beneath the surface', as it allows for the exploration of complex contexts (Strauss, 1987). Qualitative research approaches are characterised by detailed analysis of phenomena, which better explain relationships too complex for large-scale quantitative approaches (Kerlinger, 1986). The approach values context in understanding the social world. All these reasons are relevant in the context of my study, especially given the complex and interactional nature of various issues that influence the lives of disabled students in higher education. The value of qualitative research has been proved by many disability researchers who have drawn on qualitative research designs to document stories of disabled people (Babic & Dowling, 2015; Redpath *et al.,* 2013; Vickerman & Blundell, 2010).

It is also important to have an understanding of quantitative research methods and how it has been applied in disability studies. Quantitative research design systematically analyses empirical evidence to understand and explain social life; hypothesis and the data is generally in the form of numbers (Neuman, 2007). While 'there is no cookbook for doing qualitative research', the research journey in a quantitative study is more clearly demarcated (Maxwell, 2005:79). Quantitative research can also be construed as a research strategy that emphasises quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2008). Finch (1986:159) argues that although the data obtained from quantitative surveys are useful, as they can 'document the outcomes of policy and practice in a way which is generalisable', they 'say little about the processes which produce those outcomes'. In disability, quantitative research designs have been used in censuses for measuring the prevalence of impairments.

The study aims to examine the processes through which disabled students make their educational choices and negotiate different socio-cultural and institutional structures on their way to and in higher education. Few South African researchers are involved in disability research, especially inclusion of disabled students in higher education. Qualitative research methods are known to be appropriate and effective when little or nothing is known about the situation, as they do not require a predictive statement and therefore seek answers to open questions (Stone, 1999). As such, a qualitative research design was suitable in this study. After a careful review of the research methods and my research questions, I found a qualitative research design to be most applicable for my research. The prioritisation of a qualitative research design does not imply any questioning of the value of quantitative research design in disability research and the impact it has had on disability policy; in fact, a mixed research design-combining qualitative and quantitative methods would have even a better alternative. However, due to the limited timeframe of my PhD, I focused on one research design. Qualitative studies have been criticised (mostly by quantitative advocates) for being 'unscientific'. However, according to Berg (2001), this criticism assumes certainty and loses sight of the probability factor inherent in quantitative studies. He further notes that one need not dismiss the qualitative research design just because some studies applied it inadequately. In other words, he emphasises that the value of a research design lies in it being carried out in a rigorous manner. Thus, besides highlighting qualitative research as a design I will employ, I will also talk in about how I ensured that it met the standards of a good research design. Although qualitative methods can examine social processes at work in particular contexts in considerable depth, the collection and analysis of this material can be time-consuming (Bryman, 2008). Nonetheless, this research design was important in my study because:

- I engaged more with participants than is possible with a survey;
- I had the opportunity to probe beyond the initial responses and questions from the interview schedule; and
- I had the opportunity to observe and interpret non-verbal communication (body language and facial expressions).

4.3 The Research Process

4.3.1 Development of the Research Questions and the Pilot Study

Through reading the literature and reflecting on the issues that were emerging, I designed an interview schedule constructed around conversion factors (personal, social and environment), and questions revolved around students' experiences before, during their transition to and while studying at university. Additionally, Walker's (2006) capabilities descriptions were utilised to formulate questions to identify valued, achieved and deprived capabilities (see Table 4.1 below).

Table 4.1: Questions derived from Walker's list

Walker's Capabilities	**Description from Walker (2006:128-129)**	**Generated Questions For My Study**
1. *Practical reason*	'Being able to make well-reasoned, informed, critical, independent, intellectually acute, socially responsible, and reflective choices. Being able to construct a personal life project in an uncertain world. Having good judgement.'	*What are your reasons for taking the course you are studying?* *How did you choose your course of study?* *In what ways do you think university education is helping you or will help you in the future*?
2. *Educational resilience*	'Able to navigate study, work and life. Able to negotiate risk, to persevere academically, to be responsive to educational opportunities and adaptive to constraints. Self-reliant. Having aspirations and hopes for a good future.'	*What are your personal characteristics and other external factors that help you in the university?* *What are your personal characteristics and other external factors that restrict you at times in your educational goals?* *How is getting around the university for you like?* *Where do you see yourself in the next five years?*
3. *Knowledge and imagination*	'Being able to gain knowledge of a chosen subject. Being able to use critical thinking and	*Which course modules do you like most and why?* *In what ways do you think your course of study is*

	imagination to comprehend the perspectives of multiple others and to form impartial judgements. Being able to acquire knowledge for pleasure and personal development, for career and economic opportunities, for political, cultural and social action and participation in the world. Open-mindedness.'	*preparing you for the working environment?* *Besides the working related knowledge, what are five major issues you have learnt from your course that are beneficial to your community?* *Describe how lecturers run classes. What do you like about the way they are run?* *What would you like lecturers to do differently*?
4. *Learning disposition*	'Being able to have curiosity and a desire for learning. Having confidence in one's ability to learn. Being an active inquirer.'	*Who inspired you on your university endeavours?* *What skills are helping you to succeed in your studies?*
5. *Social relations and social networks*	'Being able to participate in a group for learning, working with others to solve problems and tasks. Being able to work with others to form effective or good groups for collaborative and participatory learning. Being able to form networks of friendship and belonging for learning support and leisure. Mutual trust.'	*Have you changed a situation that affects you or other students here?* *In what ways do you support other students?* *Do you belong to any social club (in/ out of class)?* *How do you feel at home and when you are here? Are you treated differently here compared to your home?* *How do you feel about group work/ group assignments?* *How was it in creating friendships at this institution?* *Who are your friends in terms of gender, race or other identities?* *What is the attitude of your friends towards you?*
6. *Respect, dignity and recognition*	'Being able to have respect for oneself and for and from others, being treated with dignity, not being diminished or devalued because of one's gender, social class, religion or race, valuing other languages, other religions and spiritual practices and human	*What does disability mean to you?* *What does impairment mean to you?* *How do you perceive yourself? / Describe what it means to you to have a disability/ impairment?*

	diversity. Being able to act inclusively and being able to respond to human need. Having competence in intercultural communication. Being able to show empathy, compassion, fairness and generosity, listening to and considering other person's points of view in dialogue and debate. Having a voice to participate effectively in learning; a voice to speak out, to debate and persuade; to be able to listen.'	*How do you think other students and lecturers perceive you?* *Can you comment on the language policy of this university?*
7. *Emotional integrity, emotions*	'Not being subject to anxiety or fear which diminishes learning. Being able to develop emotions for imagination, understanding, empathy, awareness and discernment.'	*What is your greatest fear? How do you deal with it?*
8. *Bodily integrity*	'Safety and freedom from all forms of physical and verbal harassment in the higher education environment.'	*Were you ever made to feel that you were different to others by an event or personalities within this institution (with reference to your body)? (verbally and/ physically)*

I needed still to obtain insights on the appropriateness of the questions I had designed and how participants felt about the design of the interview process, so a pilot study was carried out in January 2013. The main reason was to refine the interview schedule and improve the interviewing process. Selection of participants for the pilot study was done using purposive and snowballing sampling methods. Purposive sampling is when 'a researcher samples on the basis of wanting to interview people who are relevant to the research questions' (Bryman, 2008:458). I only targeted disabled people at UFS, who included both staff and students. From the initial contacts, the 'snowballing effect' happened as I was introduced to their friends who are also impaired. I was able to recruit participants who committed their time and effort to the pilot study. A total of ten disabled people were interviewed. These included seven black (five students & two staff) and three white (two students & one member of staff).

Since a researcher is the primary data collection and analysis instrument, reflexivity (researchers engaging in explicit self-aware meta-analysis) is deemed essential (Merriam, 1998). As such, for the pilot study I incorporated cognitive interviewing techniques with the aim of exploring the underlying thought processes when responding to questions, as well as the context behind responses as shown in Figure 4.1 below.

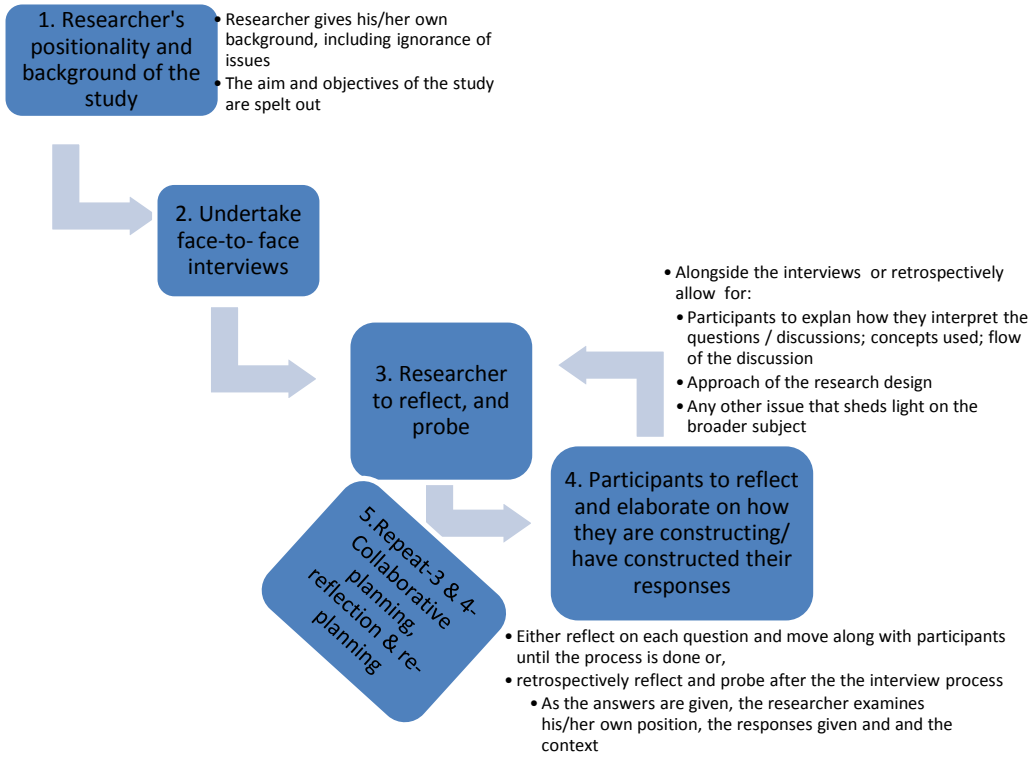

Figure 4.1: My own reflexive cognitive interviewing process framework

Cognitive interviewing was developed in 1984 by Geiselman, Fisher, Firstenberg, Hutton, Sullivan, Avetissian and Prosk, in response to ineffective police interviewing techniques. In this study, this was done iteratively through engagement with participants and my own self-reflection. A report with all the views and suggestions from participants was generated and adaptations were made in preparation for the actual data collection. As a result of this reflective and cognitive interviewing exercise, some questions were reworded to make the meaning clearer (see Table 4.2 below).

Table 4.2: Re-wording of questions

Initial questions	**Re-worded questions**
What is your disability? →	a) What does disability and impairment mean to you? b) Do you identify/ perceive yourself as such? c) How do you think or believe others perceive you?
How does your disability affect your educational experience and performance? →	How does the structure/ arrangement of the educational activities make provision that accommodates you?
How long did you take to complete your Matric? →	a) When did you start your Matric (high school)? b) When did you finish your Matric?

This was suggested by participants, some of who admitted that they were not comfortable with being the label 'disability' as they perceive it as derogatory. Similarly, the question, *How does disability affect your educational experience and performance?* was reworded to: *Does the educational structure or arrangements make provisions that reasonably accommodate you?* Participants felt that the original question was locating the problem in individuals, without giving room for environmentally-linked challenges. The results of the pilot study are not reported here, but written up as an article for a journal (Mutanga & Walker, in press *Africa Journal of Disability*).

Drawing from both the literature review and this pilot study, I developed open-ended interview schedules (see Appendices 5-7). The interview schedule for disabled students was constructed around their life histories: pre-university, transition and the university period. The focus was around different themes: enabling and constraining factors, aspirations, conceptualisation of disability, access, success, teaching and learning etc. The schedules for lecturers and DU staff focused on their perceptions of and experiences with disability. The interviews varied in length depending on each person's willingness to share his or her experiences. On average the interviews lasted 40-80 minutes. A possible explanation for this difference is people's varied traits e.g. whether one is an introvert or an extrovert. Below I give an account of how the universities and the participants for the main study were recruited.

4.3.2 The Study Sites and Participants

This section explains how the sites were sampled; I made sampling decisions at several points in the study. These decisions were informed by my theoretical work and various sampling methods used provided a basis for triangulation of the findings, since data was gathered from different groupings of participants and at different universities. The research processes and sampling procedures I made use of are outlined in the section that follows.

Purposive sampling was used in sampling both the universities at which the research was conducted, and then people (students and staff) within these universities. Neuman (2007) says that purposive sampling is used not to generalise to a larger population, but to gain a deeper understanding of cases/issues being studied. As mentioned in Chapter One, for the case universities I considered the history of SAHE, so in my selection of the universities, I wanted to include historically-white and historically-black universities located in urban and rural areas respectively. This was done to reflect the social and economic differences between the two types of universities. Initially I chose one historically English-speaking university, one historically Afrikaans-speaking university and a rural historically-black university. A historically English-speaking university was later dropped to pursue my plan of obtaining in-depth understanding rather than covering more universities. UFS and UniVen were selected as the study sites based on this stratification criterion. My assumption was that these characteristics have a bearing on what is currently happening in SAHE, as described in Chapter One; for example that UFS would be more advantaged in terms of resources and facilities than UniVen, and that cultural attitudes to disability might vary.

University of the Free State

UFS was chosen for a number of reasons:

- As indicated in Chapter One, a variety of transformation programmes had been introduced at this university;
- Pragmatically I chose this university as it is where I am based. This turned out to be positive as I managed to interact with most participants beyond the in-depth interviewing process;

- As a historically 'advantaged' Afrikaans university, it fitted my criteria of choosing case universities;
- It is at this university where the Reitz incident led to the 2008 Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions.[17] Although it does not mention disability, the Report recommended transformation within South African HEIs,

University of Venda

Besides the fact that Univen is a rural historically-black university, I chose this university because, according to its website, the university has the highest number of disabled students in the country.

The contrasting backgrounds of these two universities provided me with rich data on how history still influences present-day efforts to address the needs of disabled people in SAHE (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

Participants

Within these two universities, three types of participants were chosen: students, lecturers and DU staff. The sampling strategy for participants varied. While voluntary participation was at the heart of this study, for students, gender, type of disability and race (only at UFS because at UniVen almost the whole student population is black) were also included in the selection criteria. The rationale was not to seek representativeness, but to get a wide variation in opinion within that small sample. Snowballing sampling occurred through referral, where some students referred me to other potential participants (Bryman, 2008). Snowballing sampling was used for convenience. Students knew which of their friends met the eligibility criteria and might be willing to participate. This approach worked well, as I got students who were willing to share their life stories with me. Jane

[17] In 2008 a video was released showing four white students subjecting five black workers to various mock initiation activities, including being forced to consume food that appeared to have been urinated on. This was alleged that the students were protesting against racial integration in residences.

is the only student recruited into this study without the help of a DU. Jane had disclosed her status in another study I was doing for CRHED and volunteered to participate.

Students

After obtaining ethical clearance to carry out the research from both universities (see Appendix 8), I contacted the respective DUs. Lists of names and contacts for registered disabled students were provided by DU staff. Students were contacted via email and telephone. All eligible students were given information about the study verbally and in written form (Appendix 3) and those who volunteered signed a consent form (Appendix 4). Perhaps as a result of not wanting to be associated with disabled people, or previous negative experiences of participating in research, six students who were approached declined to take part in the study; eight students at UFS and six students at UniVen agreed to take part. The total number of students was determined before the study. Using the recommendation of Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) who statistically demonstrated that by twelve interviews, nothing new was being added, I initially planned to do six in-depth interviews with disabled students at each university. Besides this study, a number of studies (Babic & Dowling, 2015; Goode, 2007; Holloway, 2001) reviewed in Chapter 2 provided rich data after interviewing only a few students. Data analysis was iterative in nature and started with the initial data collection. Although each student had a unique story to tell, I stopped data collection after realising that I was no longer generating new themes. From staff (lecturers & DU staff), I wanted snapshots and with seven staff, I could tell a story in support of the argument I am pursuing in this thesis. However, I could have made my case even richer had I added more staff interviews.

DU Staff and Lecturers

Initially I planned to do one interview with DU staff at each university, but when I first visited UniVen, Charles was the only one available. He had just three months' experience in the job. Although his contributions are valuable, he was unaware of most issues under discussion. An arrangement was then made with Gerry a month later to conduct a telephone interview.

Lecturers

Lecturers were recruited with the help of Head of Departments' Offices. Preference was given to lecturers holding a teaching and learning coordination role. This was done so as to get an insight about how those with leadership or managerial positions influence policies at institutional level and how they understand disability. A total of four lecturers were sampled. I was introduced to staff who were accessible at the time of my data collection. These lecturers volunteered to be part of the study for various reasons: Dr H is in charge of teaching and learning in his department and disability matters fall under his area of responsibility; Prof. J is one of the lecturers positive about disability initiatives and works closely with the Unit at UFS; Prof. M and Mr. Lee volunteered on the grounds that they were curious to be part of research focusing on disability. In-depth interviews were used to gather data from these lecturers. I could have interviewed more lecturers (this is one of the limitations of the study), but I already had overwhelming data from my primary focus: the students. I made a pragmatic decision therefore to only interview four lecturers (out of permanent instruction and research staff of about a thousand at both universities).

4.3.3 Data Collection Process

Qualitative research derives data from in-depth interview with individuals, small group discussions, diary and journal exercises, the collection of images, films, textual sources, projective techniques and in-context observation (Bryman, 2008). In-depth interviews were useful in order to delve into thoughts, emotions and actions, thereby providing rich narrative accounts of people's experiences. Other approaches (such as participatory action research and ethnographic research), while valuable, were difficult to apply to this study. Student participants were from different levels of education and programmes of study. As such, being together at the same time to do participatory action research was a challenge. Data was collected through primary and secondary data sources between 2013 and 2015. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with disabled students, lecturers and DU staff. Secondary data was also collected using document analysis.

In-depth Interviews

Following McLaughlin, Goodley, Clavering & Fisher (2008) who explored the lived realities of parents of disabled children using in-depth interviewing, the technique was a major methodological resource in this study. This data collection method was also inspired by a myriad of literature, some reviewed in the previous chapter, associated with disability research. Since I focused on the experiences of individuals, in-depth interviews enabled me to probe emerging interesting issues, which is difficult to do when using other data collection methods such as self-completed closed questions. Focus group discussions are an alternative approach which I avoided in this study. I had learnt from the literature review that being categorised with the same label does not equal to homogeneity of status. As a result, I did not consider focus group discussions with disabled students; it has the potential to negatively label students as a uniform group. Overall, rich data was generated in these interviews.

Participants were interviewed in their own settings; most students were interviewed in their own rooms in the student residences and the staff were interviewed in their offices. This helped create a relaxed atmosphere during interviews. Another possible reason why the in-depth interviews generated rich data is the rapport that was built before the interviews, especially at UFS where, because of my availability, I interacted with participants for longer periods before the interviews. There was also an opportunity to probe further where responses were ambiguous.

I took detailed notes and audio recorded the interviews, which I then transcribed. While the interview schedule proved to be an important guide during the interviewing process I was also open to other emerging issues as the interview progressed. This elicited more insightful observations from the participants, as will be seen in the next three chapters.

Document Analysis

Documents were accessed in electronic format. Relevant university policy documents (e.g. disability policies) were analysed to get an understanding of the universities' responses to disability. This was done in an effort to understand how policy and practice interact at these two

universities. While some policies (e.g. residence policy) were readily available and accessible on websites, other policies were difficult to access (e.g. disability policies). Besides institutional policy analysis, I also decided to include observations as part of my data collection.

Field Observations

Two volunteer students at each university were followed for a day in the course of their studies, before being interviewed. Neuman (2007) calls observations 'nonreactive' or 'unobtrusive' measures, where the observant researcher infers behaviour or attitudes from the evidence without disrupting the people being studied. However, in some instances lecturers noticed my presence when I accompanied students to their classes and this changed (I suspect) how they would normally behave in class. Observations were time-consuming, but proved valuable in exploring issues that cannot be teased out by interviews alone because of adaptive preference e.g. the case of Ralph in Chapter Five. The use of multiple data collection methods was intended to corroborate data and enhanced the credibility of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

4.3.4 Ethical Considerations

Since my research was conducted at universities and with human subjects, I obtained permission from the universities and the participants. I approached UFS at the outset of the study and formal permission was granted (see Appendix 8). In this study the first challenge had to do with the issues associated with doing disability research as a non-disabled researcher. The pilot study was part of that admission and the final interview schedule came as a result of both my input and the input of disabled participants. Additional ethical considerations are described in the sections below.

Voluntary Participation

The two universities did not volunteer to participate; they were selected at the outset because they fitted my predetermined criteria of history and geographical location. However, permission was sought from the two universities' research ethics committees and their respective DUs to conduct

the study, and they were free to decline. I was asked to apply for ethical clearance at UFS which was granted. Neuman (2007) warns that permission alone is not enough: participants need to make an informed decision and this should be based on full and open information (Christians, 2005). As such, all participants were provided with detailed information about the study prior to consenting to participate. As mentioned earlier, students were recruited through the two DU, lecturers were recruited via their Heads of Departments and the DU staff were approached directly. However, I explained the aim of the study to all participants, informed them that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Six eligible participants I approached declined to participate; those who agreed signed a consent form (see Appendix 4).

No harm

It is unlikely that this study could cause personal harm or injury. Data collection times were carefully arranged with participants. Every effort was made to minimise disruption to their teaching and learning activities for both students and lecturers. Most interviews with students were held over weekends or in evenings after classes. For the lecturers and DU staff, interviews were conducted during lunch breaks. This was done to minimise any potential harm to student performance, and privacy was ensured also by undertaking the interviews at times agreed by both parties and in places (student residences and staff offices) that ensured privacy.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

My other concern was to ensure that at all times I maintained confidentiality in the collection, analysis and presentation of the data. With the understanding that most HEIs hide behind anonymity in research, I wanted the university names to be retained. I asked for permission to retain the names and both universities gave me permission to do so. This might have compromised the anonymity of participants (e.g. in cases where a profile of a student is linked to a particular student), but I was open with participants and stated the likelihood of this happening in the information sheet. However, I anonymised the participants by using pseudonyms.

Authenticity

I have tried to let the voices of the participants come through in this thesis. I also incorporated my own voice, but I hope in doing so the authenticity of participants' views is not diminished unduly. While the voices in the research do not entirely 'speak' for themselves, they allow insights into experiences of participants which enlarge our understanding.

4.3.5 Data Analysis

This section briefly outlines how I managed and processed the qualitative data sources. I collected and analysed all the data and the analysis was an iterative process, which started from the first interview of the initial data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I paid detailed attention to narrative accounts and also recognised that the subsequent interpretations and representations of these narratives as those of the researcher, rather than suggesting participants' voices speak for themselves. All interviews were conducted in English, audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Before re-telling participants' narratives, I listened to each individual story by reading and interpreting interview transcripts, and connecting it to the circumstances and the context of each person. As English is not the first language for most of the participants, the English is poor; so in presenting participants' excerpts, I thoroughly cleaned the data before uploading them into NVivo 10 software in order for them to be understandable to people outside the research context. The data cleaning involved reconstructing some sentences. For example, a statement such as "Wherever I go I expose myself that I'm partially sighted so they can put me in front where I can see" was changed to, "When I go to lectures, I tell people that I'm partially sighted so that they can reserve a place for me at the front where I will be near to the lecturer."

The disadvantage of cleaning data the way I did is loss of information in reinterpretation of participants' texts. I minimised this by not reading the texts in isolation from the whole narratives. Additionally, in instances where I thought there was a risk of misinterpreting participants' views, I checked with the participants on the telephone.

The next step was to categorise data in terms of what was emerging from the interviews. As data collection was being undertaken, an attempt was made to understand what was common and different across the responses. The analysis involved intensive reading and re-reading of transcripts and generating categories of descriptions (see Figure 4.2). Some of the themes were Walker's capability descriptions and major capabilities approach concepts. Besides Walker's capability descriptions, interviews were also coded using Wolff and de-Shalit's (2007) capability descriptions. Descriptions I thought were not fitting into the existing capability descriptions were coded as new higher education capabilities. This was done with the help of NVivo software. Emerging themes that were not originally in the interview schedule were incorporated into subsequent interviews. The first round of analysis involved open coding, which is a process of breaking down, examining, comparing and categorising data e.g. pre-university, transition, university life. A second round was axial coding. At this stage a series of thematic codes (agency, aspiration, resilience, conversion factors, etc.) were generated, drawing mostly from the capabilities approach. This process focused on linking the actual findings to broader theoretical issues and discourses (Neuman, 2007). It involved moving beyond the concrete data towards abstract concepts (e.g. aspiration, agency, resilience, etc.). The third round was selective coding, which involved making notes during the analysis, which were intended to raise thoughts or ideas I had about the codes e.g. how agency and aspiration related to the data.

The use of NVivo 10 software enabled me to breakdown data into small, meaningful and manageable units in the form of thematic codes and nodes as shown in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Creation of Themes

Broad Areas/ Issues	Codes	Themes	Anna	Kudzi	Lerato
Transition to university	Choice of university	Aspiration Agency Resilience Social capital	*Quotations*	*Quotations*	*Quotations*
	Orientation				
Teaching & Learning	Access				
	Assessment				

This approach is in accordance with the thematic content approach to qualitative data analysis described by Green and Thorogood (2004), who argue that a thematic analysis approach is useful for answering questions about the salient issues for particular groups of participants.

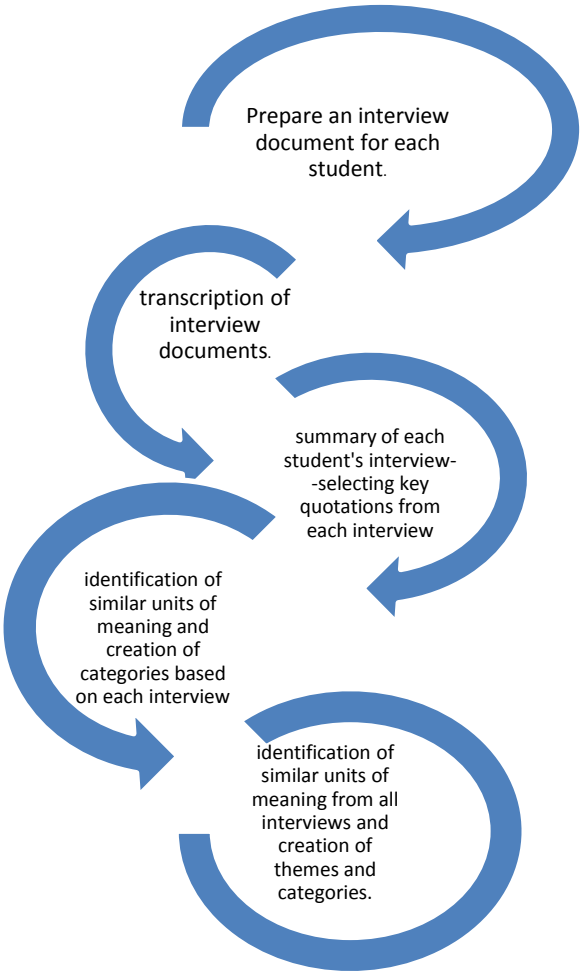

Figure 4.2: Data analysis steps. Adapted from Zakirova-Engstrand & Granlund (2009).

4.3.6 Rigour

This section discusses rigour, borrowing most of the terms from Lincoln and Guba's (1985) work on trustworthiness. The use of interviews with different groups of people (disabled students, lecturers and DU staff members) was intended to ensure triangulation, as was the use of different

data collection methods (field observations, in-depth interviews and document analysis). Triangulation offered a way of cross-checking and reinforcing findings and patterns by comparing data from these different sources (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

Reliability

Zikmund (2003) defines reliability as the degree to which research is free from errors and therefore yields consistent results if the same techniques are employed with the same participants, in the same environment (see also Miles & Huberman, 1994). In order to enhance the reliability of the findings from this study, detailed reports on the processes of research design and data collection are provided. A digital recorder was used to capture data from participants. Through a reflexive cognitive interviewing approach highlighted earlier, disabled participants were involved in designing this study. Through conference presentations highlighted earlier, peers reviewed my work. All this minimised errors that might result from my own research bias. The above measures, as well as the availability of all documents and field notes for an audit inquiry (Babbie & Mouton, 2001) further add to the dependability of this study.

Credibility

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) note that credibility in qualitative research refers to how far the explanations of phenomena match the realities of the world. In other words, it is about the extent to which a 'truthful' picture of what has been seen or heard is presented. In this study to ensure credibility, I have done the following:

- Piloting the study and getting constructive feedback from disabled people;
- Adopting research methods that are well established in qualitative research e.g. in-depth interviews and document analysis;

- Engaging intensively with literature before developing and finalising research questions; and

- Ensuring openness during the interviewing process by offering participants the opportunity to refuse to participate in the study. Only those genuinely willing to participate took part in the study.

Transferability/ External Validity

According to Merriam (1998), external validity is concerned with the extent to which findings of a study can be applied to other situations. This study, like other qualitative studies, cannot claim that the findings and conclusions are truly applicable to all situations. It was not the goal of this study to generalise, but rather to gain insight and deep understanding of the experiences of disabled students at these two South African universities. Although findings from this study are context-specific, the proposed framework in Chapter Three and the seven capabilities highlighted in the next two chapters are 'relatable' i.e. they help in understanding higher education and disability, not only in South Africa, but in other countries.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained the research design, methodology, study population, and provided the rationale for using the chosen methods. I have advanced a case for qualitative research design, arguing that it fitted well with my research questions and the aim of the study. Other related issues I have made explicit are the motivations for the selection of study sites and participants. Similar to the theoretical foundation of this study, the design and methodology draws largely on the capabilities approach. The way in which data collection was done was also discussed. The last sections have focused on how data was analysed and rigour maintained. The continuous thread that has cut across discussions in this section is the appreciation of the research design and data collection methods in answering the research questions and fulfilling the study aim. The next chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. Findings from the disabled students are arranged into two chapters. Chapter Five will report on the findings from UFS, while Chapter Six

reports on the findings from UniVen with an explicit focus on sharing and understanding the experiences of the participating disabled students.

CHAPTER FIVE: Experiences of Disabled Students at the University of the Free State

5.1 Introduction

This study was conducted in accordance with the design and procedures highlighted in Chapter Four. In this chapter, I report the findings from eight disabled UFS students. Insights into the lived experiences of these students will also contribute to our understanding of the state of inclusion of disabled students in SAHE. Throughout this chapter, I will show how the capabilities approach can be useful in our understanding of disabled students' lives. Although this chapter focuses on UFS students, it is necessary first to provide an overview of the presentation of the findings in this chapter and the next. Presenting the findings from the two case universities separately clearly brings this out the distinct effects of different contexts (rural *vs*. urban, socio-economic/race) on the lives of disabled students. However, in a broader analysis, the experiences of these students are similar and all the sections of these two chapters are closely connected. The separation of the chapters should be understood in the spirit of trying to show the complexities in the experiences of disabled students at the two universities.

5.2 Overview of the Presentation of UFS and UniVen Students' Data

Students' experiences at both UFS and, UniVen (as will be seen in the next chapter) were varied. The overall findings suggest that they aspire and exercise their agency in confronting different challenges they face on their way to and in higher education. The findings are presented as five interconnected themes and will be reported as follows: the first theme reports on the complexities around disability concept, exploring the views of the students and how they negotiate with disability identity. This is one of the aspects missing from the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The second theme reports on multi-dimensional aspects of disadvantages in the lives of disabled students in higher education; it challenges the idea of solely focusing either on an individual's health or social issues in explaining disability, as suggested by other models discussed in Chapter

Three. These students highlighted various factors that intersect with impairments in creating disadvantages. The third theme in this chapter brings to our attention the need to focus on how both policies and practices at micro and macro levels, intentionally or unintentionally, create barriers for disabled students. The fourth theme reports on how disabled students deal with various challenges both in and outside of higher education in pursuit of what they value. What emerges is that, despite these challenges, disabled students are resilient and use their agency and aspiration to access and succeed in higher education. The importance of choice and agency (which are missing in the ICF framework discussed in Chapter Three) is clearly highlighted in this fourth theme. The last theme focuses on key valued freedoms and opportunities that are needed for the realisation of full inclusion of disabled students in higher education. Four of the eight valued freedoms and opportunities on Walker's list emerged strongly in the students' narratives. Seven other key valued freedoms and opportunities that fall outside of Walker's list were identified by disabled students. From the UniVen students' data, two unique key valued opportunities and freedoms were extrapolated (religious affiliation and culture). These eleven valued freedoms and opportunities, I argue, are needed for the formulation of socially just disability-inclusive policies.

The emerging five key themes reported in this chapter are similar to those in Chapter Six. With the current sustainable development goals agenda (SDGs), these findings contribute to how higher education can begin to deal with the relevant challenges. The agenda on SDGs presented in September 2015 recognises that disability is one of the factors which influence equity and inclusiveness along the social, economic and political dimensions of development. It proposes to build and enhance existing education system across member countries in ways that allow disabled people to access educational institutions with ease by 2030. The findings chapters conclude that the capabilities approach offers a framework that leads to nuanced and unique insights about the lives of disabled people by using capabilities as the informational basis for justice-oriented evaluations and policy, and an analytical framework to measure progress towards social justice.

I now turn to students at the UFS and introduce the eight students by describing and analysing their experiences on their way to and at the university.

5.3 The Students

A brief description of each student is provided. Appendix 1 provides a brief background of the students' age, gender; race, their disability categories and the Faculties where they are pursuing their studies. Each participating student's experience, while unique, in different ways also characterises those of other students. Except for Jane who is a postgraduate, all the students are all undergraduates. Students took different routes on their journey to UFS. Some students came to UFS straight from high schools; others first went to different universities; some came from mainstream schooling, while others came from special schools. However, there are similarities in some of their backgrounds, and in their experiences of their quest for a university education. According to the university categorisation as presented in Appendix 1, three students have physical disabilities, two have visual impairments, while the other three have learning difficulties, hearing impairment and epilepsy respectively. These students are from varied backgrounds: home areas, ethnic backgrounds and socio-economic class. Their parents' backgrounds range from no education to degree qualifications. They came from families with two to six children with other siblings either in primary school, secondary school or having completed a higher education qualification. Most students were raised by their mothers or maternal grandmothers as their parents are divorced or they do not know their biological fathers. Below I give a profile of each student.

Anna

Anna is a 26-year-old wheelchair user in her final year, studying Social Work. Anna has a spinal tumour. She is involved in extra-curricular activities e.g. she is a member of the Student Representative Council (SRC). She attended special schools.[18] She went to the same high school as Lerato. When her mother died, her grandmother took custody of her and her siblings. Unfortunately, her grandmother also died and she is now left with her siblings, cousins and aunts. Although she is the first child to enrol at university, she was certain about her choice of programme of study from her early years. Anna was inspired to study Social Work by social workers she met

[18] These are sometimes called Special Needs Educational schools, which generally cater for the needs of the learners, e.g. autism, cerebral palsy, learning difficulties, etc.

when she was attending special schools. Her family is very supportive of her ambition to be a social worker; they left her to choose the programme of study and the university at which to enrol. In spite of people's negative attitudes about her potential to succeed, she kept working towards her set goals. At first she wanted to go to a South African university which she regard as offering better quality education, but did not apply as it is far from her home. She settled for UFS which is close to her home and where she gets emotional support from her family. Anna faces challenges within the university e.g. accessing buildings, lack of support from teaching staff and attitudes of other students. However, she is resolute and makes her voice known through the SRC. With regards to identity, Anna prefers the term 'with disability' to 'disabled', which she thinks is equivalent to 'useless'.

Carla

Carla is a 22-year-old Coloured female in her first year, studying a commercial course.[19] She has dyslexia. She grew up on her family farm in Kimberley and attended well-resourced special schools. Her parents play a big role in her life. Like Jane, Carla's family funds her education and offers her social and emotional support. The family understands her condition because her father is also dyslexic; he dropped out of school in the fourth grade as he struggled in class and no one understood his condition at that time. It was only later (when he was already a family man) that doctors certified he was dyslexic. Despite his lack of education, he is a successful farmer. Carla's mother is also enrolled at UFS for the same course at postgraduate level. They share a room in a campus residence and Carla gets educational help from her mother. Carla's challenge at university has been to convince people, especially lecturers, of her needs. This is mainly because her condition is invisible and some lecturers do not understand the implications of having dyslexia. She discovered that she needs a lot of time to comprehend what she reads; because of her poor short-term memory, she finds it difficult to write notes in lectures, so she records the lecturers and plays them back later. Stress worsens her dyslexia, so she tries to avoid working under pressure.

[19] 'Coloured' is an ethnic label for people of mixed ethnic origin who possess ancestry from Europe, Asia, and various Khoisan and Bantu tribes of Southern Africa. While it is a hangover from the apartheid era, it is still used for statistical data collection, including higher education. Such labels are nonetheless, very problematic.

As a strategy, she has opted to spread her modules across another year, so she takes fewer courses per year than other students. She is full of praise for the support given by the DU.

Dudu

Dudu is a 38-year-old black male sign language user who, if he can see the speaker, reads lips. He is in his third year in the Social Work programme. He does not regard his condition as a disability, but rather that he uses a different language. In his pre-university education, he attended mainstream schools. After high school he joined the army and in his first year of training had an accident which affected his hearing capacity. He quit the army and enrolled for a nursing programme at a nursing school, but dropped out as there were no sign language interpreters. While attending physiotherapy sessions he was advised to apply to UFS. He applied to UFS for Nursing but was accepted into Social Work, which was his second choice. He settled for Social Work because firstly, he sees it as a profession that directly deals with issues at the core of human development and is relevant to South Africa; and secondly, he would like to work with sign language users in poor communities after graduating. Dudu finds it difficult to take notes in lectures, because he cannot lip-read and write at the same time. He thus depends on the interpreters provided by the DU. He says that if there are interpreters in class, he has no challenges. He says that there is ignorance among other students and staff within the university about the challenges facing sign language users.

Jane

Jane has been epileptic since the eighth grade. She is in the Faculty of Humanities where she is enrolled for an Honours degree in Psychology and Music. She is twenty years old, white, female and the only student who did not disclose her disability status to the university. Jane grew up on a farm and her pre-university education was in mainstream schools. I recruited her into this study after she disclosed the status in another study in which I was involved on students who participated in a student leadership project at the UFS. Jane says that she was not aware that epilepsy is categorised as a disability by the university, and further states that even if she knew, she would not have registered at the DU as she wants to manage the impairment effects on her own. Jane also says that she does not see the advantages in declaring her condition. Her choice of degree was

informed by the fact that she is passionate about psychology and she excelled in music from primary school. Jane comes from an economically stable family. Her parents have degrees and her father has a managerial post, while her mother is now retired. The family is taking care of her education expenses. Jane's preferred university was UFS because it is close to home. Jane faces some difficulties at the university linked to epilepsy, e.g. she failed a module after she was suffered an epileptic seizures in the middle of a practical exam. Regardless of the challenges she faces, it is through her own determination and willingness to get around obstacles that she is managing to pull through. She is active in the SRC where she held an elected post at the time of the interview.

Joe

Joe is a 26-year-old white male with a visual impairment. He is in his first year studying Psychology. He went to a special school for the deaf and blind but completed his high school education as a private candidate.[20] Joe did not come straight to UFS. His parents were supportive of his university plans but wanted him to study through distance learning. They also wanted him to do Law, while he wanted to do BCom Information Technology. He enrolled at University of South Africa (UNISA) for a Law programme, but dropped out after a year because, he says, he faced challenges e.g. he did not receive his study materials on time and they were not in a format he could access. Joe then did a two-year Sports Management Diploma course, and then enrolled for BCom Information Technology at UFS in 2004, his preferred university of study because his older sister had studied there and told him of her positive experiences. In addition, UFS is the closest university to his home. After a year of study at UFS, Joe dropped out in 2005, because he was having problems accessing study materials. In 2011 he returned to UFS and enrolled for Psychology. He says his maturity and personal experience are the main drivers for his excellent results, as he is now more focused since his return to the university. Because of his academic achievements, he is on an Ian Memorial Fraser bursary.[21] Joe says he hardly uses the DU as he likes to 'manage' his condition alone. He thinks that most programmes for disabled students, especially the visually-impaired students that are run by the university, are there for marketing

[20] He did not register for his exams at his school, but registered at another school and wrote from home.
[21] Ian Fraser Memorial bursaries are only available to blind and partially-sighted students who can prove their blindness/visual impairment. The fund only considers applications from students who have, at the very least, successfully completed their first year of study at university or college in South Africa.

purposes: "the university is promoting itself as a blind-friendly place but in practice they are not doing much to help us." Joe has his own computer with a voice synthesiser that he uses in class. He stays off campus because he was told that he could not be accommodated on campus because most rooms are shared and that his guide dog would 'inconvenience' other students.

Lerato

Lerato has Osteogenesis imperfecta and uses a wheelchair.[22] She is 25 years old and a fourth year Law student. She was raised by her mother, who was unemployed as she had dropped out of school in her primary level of schooling. Lerato went to two different special schools: one underfunded, one well resourced. Mathematics was not offered at her first school, so she only did Maths literacy, which is not considered by universities for selection. Lerato was certain about the degree programme she wanted to pursue but, unlike Anna, she did not get much support from her family. Her unemployed brothers wanted her to look for employment soon after high school and discouraged her from pursuing higher education. Most of the support she received was through high school teachers. Moreover, her social background motivated her to pursue university education. In her narrative she mentions one university that she would have preferred enrolling at because she thinks it offers better quality education. However, Lerato did not apply because she could not afford the application fee or the tuition fees. Furthermore her grades were lower than those required by that university. She came to UFS because it is the closest university to her home. She faces a lot of challenges within the UFS e.g. she says it took her a while to settle into university. Induction programmes for first year students are designed and arranged according to where one is housed. However, when she enrolled, students who use wheelchairs were only housed in a senior residence, which does not participate in induction programmes. This meant Lerato, Anna and other wheelchair users were not able to participate in induction programmes. They were denied the chance to meet with other first year students in this social space. Lerato is open and proactive in asking for what she needs; she perseveres and is determined to pass. Her ambition is to be a successful legal professional.

[22] Osteogenesis imperfecta is a congenital bone disorder characterized by brittle bones that are prone to fracture.

Michael

Michael is a 24-year-old student in his first year studying Education. He has only one hand. I met Michael when I was visiting Ralph at his residence. They are friends and classmates. Unlike other students who are funded by government departments or self-funding, he is the only one in the group funded directly by the university. He was among the best students from his province and the university gave him a bursary. Michael was raised by his mother who earns a living through hawking. As a result, he attended three different secondary schools, moving between relatives so that he could get an education. Michael enjoys his programme of study, which he was encouraged to do by his high school teachers. He accompanies Ralph to class most of the time. Michael is determined to succeed in university as he was afforded an opportunity he never dreamt of: his mother was unable even to raise the R350 (around US$30) per term for his secondary schooling.

Ralph

Ralph is an 18-year-old Coloured student with a visual impairment. He is in his first year, studying Education. His parents are unemployed and he is the oldest of four siblings, and the first to enrol for a university degree. The educational costs are being covered by a bursary he has from his provincial government. He went to special schools for the deaf and blind for primary and secondary schooling. Ralph aspired to go to university, but did not receive enough information from his parents and the school. He applied to a university which he thinks offers better quality of education but his application was turned down because his results were not those required by the university. Ralph's parents were worried about him being too far from home on his own, so they pushed him to apply to UNISA for an Education programme, although his preferred programme was Law. He registered with the distance education university for the BA Education degree, but dropped out after a year, as he often received his study materials late. He then applied to UFS to study Education the following year. Although he is happy with the Education curriculum, he is contemplating dropping it to study Law. Ralph is not comfortable with being referred to as 'disabled', as to him it denotes uselessness and prefers 'differently-abled'. He faces challenges within the university e.g. getting materials in braille format late. As a result, he has resorted to electronic study materials. Below I report the major themes from this study starting with conceptualisation of disability.

5.4 What is disability and who 'counts' as disabled?

From the discussion in Chapter Two, it is clear that one of the under-researched issues within disability studies is how disabled people perceive and conceptualise the categories used to describe them. In this section, I report how disabled students interviewed for this study at UFS perceive themselves and the different terminologies used to describe them. The findings support the argument for a capabilities-based framework in understanding disability issues.

One of the most striking findings to emerge from the data is that the majority of interviewed students do not like being referred to as 'disabled' or 'with disabilities' and identify themselves as non-disabled students. Jane exemplifies this:

> *I am a university student, not a disabled student…I am just fine, I am normal. From a psychological point of view I don't want to see it [epilepsy as a disability], I avoid it. If I view it as a disability I am likely to see it as a challenge. The condition [epilepsy] has made me strong. I am one of the leaders in the SRC. Although at times I experience severe seizures, I choose not to see epilepsy as a disability. I am able to control it by taking my medication in the same way as those suffering from 'flu and colds take their medication.* (Jane)

Jane defines herself as non-disabled person and has no preferred alternative term, although she does state that she is epileptic. In her narrative, there is no denial of her epilepsy: it is not relevant to her sense of self. Jane describes herself as a "normal" person, pointing to the demeaning notion of associating disability with abnormality. In this instance, epilepsy is not seen as important to Jane's identity and she thus did not disclose her disability identity to the university or the DU.

The other aspect that emerged regarding the concept of disability is that alternative terms were suggested by students. Ralph and Anna proposed terminologies that they think are acceptable:

> *Even though it [disability] brings a lot of challenges, labelling someone as disabled is wrong. I personally think the term should be totally eradicated because even though we are visually impaired we can do stuff that sighted people can e.g. I also excel in my studies. So I would rather opt for the term differently-abled.* (Ralph).

I don't like it when someone refers to me as a disabled person. It means that I can't do anything, I am a helpless thing. It's better to say a person with disability or impairment. At least this means that I am a person with something. (Anna)

While Ralph differs from Anna on his preferred alternative term, "differently-abled" as opposed to a "person with disability" or "impairment", he too is not happy with the ascribed disability identity. Anna suggests that one of the reasons for resenting the term disability is that it is associated with someone not capable of doing something. Ralph's disapproval of the term stems from the fact that he sees himself as capable of accomplishing most social roles in life.

Another viewpoint emphasised by the students is the dominance of the societal assumption of the association between normality and disability. In reaction to this, Michael said "I am disabled but I am normal", while Lerato says:

It comes to me now as being: 'you are disabled and I am normal.' Most people always compare it 'you are disabled and I am normal.' I ask people, 'because you can walk you are normal, what is your definition of being normal?' It is only then that people realise that it is difficult to define disability. Recently we attended a beauty pageant at one of the residences. I was chosen as one of the judges and a contestant was asked to define disability. She went in circles saying that she was normal and that I was disabled. I asked her how she defines normality and then she looked at me and started to talk about DNA and that there is something missing in my DNA (laughs) (Lerato)

Jane, Lerato and Michael prioritise their academic identities above those imposed on them that focus on the body. Lerato highlights how some people negligently associate disability with abnormality and Michael admits that despite challenges disabled people are normal. It may look like he is content with the term 'disability' but the inclusion of the word "normal" here confirms resentment towards negative constructs like "abnormality" that are associated with disability. Furthermore, Michael's use of disability taken as a whole is equivalent to 'impairment' and is not related to the inability to perform particular social roles that are regarded as 'normal'. The assumption about what is normal as highlighted by the person in Lerato's narrative excludes those who are not able to reach those standards. On the other hand, Carla's sentiments are different. For her, "Everybody has a disability whether it's physical disability or mental or

people with emotional disabilities; it's just something seen in a negative way. It's a weakness. A disability is a weakness every human being has." However, she does not disclose her invisible dyslexic condition to her peers, while she "sneaks" without their knowledge to seek additional support for learning at the DU. As for Carla, due to the invisibility of her impairment, she chooses when to make her disability known, unlike Lerato, whose disability is always visible.

Discussion

We can learn a few things from these students' views. Students highlight that the concept of "disability" is problematic. They reject this identity because of social attributes attached to the persons categorised as such. Most students have physical impairments but these do not pose the greatest challenges compared to those brought about by their social, political and economic environments. This is why socially just higher education matters: it provides the foundation for social networks and social relations that nurture personal and professional strategies needed when confronted by social challenges. The capability of social relations and networks points us to a range of social opportunities and processes in the informational space for evaluating how well disabled students are doing in developing their agency and wellbeing in and through higher education.

Findings also highlight feelings about societal imposition of a label on disabled people and how ingrained the idea of connecting disability with abnormality is within social consciousness. Paradoxically, these students see themselves as normal and different at the same time, but also reject the "disability" or "impaired" identities as they are connected to the normal-abnormal dichotomy. Their definition of normality is not only performing the same social roles as anyone else, but doing what they individually think is important for them. Thus, they imply that human difference has little consequence to their self-worth. Consequently, they do not view their differences negatively, but embrace them positively. Students' narratives highlight that this is not to suggest that these students would like to change their psychological and physical conditions. This confirms Scott's (2004) finding in her guided imagery exercise study with a group of children with dyslexia. She asked them what they would exchange from the things they owned for anything they wanted. Only two out of over thirty children wanted to give up their dyslexia.

These accounts suggest that 'disabled' people have the ability to construct an independent self-identity which is not constituted in one's disability or impairment, and that one can embrace impairment as a condition without losing a sense of self. Although 'coming out' as disabled in higher education may bring certain benefits, such as access to various support services, it may also undermine the possibility of inclusion in certain courses (e.g. archaeology, health and physical education) (Beauchamp-Pryor, 2004). Thus, the real or perceived disadvantages can indeed inhibit students from disclosing their status to the university. Although most students disclosed their disabilities to the university in order to get assistance, they are reluctant to acknowledge it as part of their identity. Watson (2002) also found the same issue and argues that disabled people may choose to pass as 'normal' in order to avoid stigma and discrimination. Thus, they challenge societal narratives, just as most socially oppressed groups (women, sexual minorities etc.) have resisted the language used to describe them (Prowse, 2009). As such, these students present themselves as active agents who can decide the course of their lives. Participating students contest the polarised thinking of disability and demand a new view beyond disabled/non-disabled or normal/abnormal binaries. Attending to this issue in terms of policy might involve challenging definitions that frame policies and marginalise people, replacing them with those that engender solidarity and dignity (Barton, 1993). It is through this agency that these students are able to challenge identities ascribed to them on the basis of their impairment. However, as discussed in Chapter Three, this agency functioning does not mean that these students' wellbeing is achieved. They still have to deal with negative labelling.

Other people might argue that these students are distancing themselves from other disabled students and are therefore reinforcing a stigmatised image of disability by denying that they are part of the group. However, it could also be argued that the acceptability and the importance of an identity depends on what purpose it serves in a society and the perceptions of a category are a result of how that society treats those belonging to it. By rejecting the label, while at the same time accepting heterogeneity as part of humanity, these students are highlighting the dilemma they face. They either accept a demeaning identity in order to access services, or reject the label and lose access to help. This is the 'dilemma of difference' highlighted in Chapter Three, as it works out in each of their lives. An added element to disability discussion from this data is the rejection of the

label by the students, who at the same time accept and embrace their difference. Discrimination and injustice build disabilities around students with impairments. Students like Jane should not be forced to disclose their disability status when there may be injustices activated by such a disclosure. The goal of higher education should be to open opportunities for every student. As the experiences of social inclusion and exclusion within higher education arise in the context of interaction and out of identities placed on students, higher education must bestow positive identities that recognise each student as a person who matters. This requirement is closely linked to Walker's (2006) respect, dignity and recognition capability, which I will explore later in this chapter.

Findings discussed here support the social model's view of the social environment in perpetuating disabilities. Chapter Two has shown how scholars theoretically opt to use either 'disabled' or 'with disability' as their preferred terms. Again, from Chapter Three we have disability movement activists like Oliver (1996) arguing for the use of the label 'disabled' as opposed to 'with disabilities' because people are disabled by their social contexts. However, it also seems that impairments are necessary but not sufficient conditions for disability, because it is not just disability but impairment that has a social component. As such, understanding disability concepts and terminologies in a socio-cultural context is critically important, as these terms can be demeaning and perpetuate social exclusion. Although there was no conclusive agreement about alternative disability terminologies, students refuse to be associated with demeaning concepts. This has important implications for developing socially just disability-inclusive policies in higher education. Demeaning social labels should be replaced with concepts that acknowledge that disabled students' experiences fall along a continuum of differences and they share many of the same challenges and difficulties as other students. Students with the same disability (Lerato and Anna) may have widely different experiences. Because society's understanding of disability affects how policies and programmes are designed, we need frameworks that acknowledge heterogeneity among individuals.

I am attracted to the idea of visionary, capabilities-based norms to inform disability policy and to adjudicate whether human dignity and social justice is being achieved. I did not, however, rely

only on theory in my understanding of disabled students' issues. Rather, I also paid attention to Sen's (1999) argument for contextual deliberative processes through my research process grounded in students' voices. While not strictly deliberative in the fullest sense, as students did not debate on the list of the capabilities, I took seriously those voices and lives of those affected by disability policies. By paying attention to the voices of the concerned students and being sensitive to their different backgrounds, this chapter raised the value of participatory and deliberative engagements and recommends the need for facilitation of spaces for public deliberation, as this helps navigate power relations for those who are socially weak. These deliberations must attend to social differences (for example, impairment/ disability), without forcing or expecting anyone to accept dominant views.

Having presented the findings about where these students are situated in terms of self-identity, I now move to the second part, which looks at how different factors interact or cluster in creating disadvantages for this group of students whose ascribed identities socially exclude them.

5.5 The intersection between impairment and conversion factors in the creation of disadvantage for students with impairments

This section reports on the interplay between impairment and various factors in creating disadvantages in the lives of disabled students. I will show that disadvantages for students with impairments are not only created by the social environment.[23] Disadvantage is a multi-dimensional concept that I adopt from Wolff and de-Shalit (2007) to describe a situation where an individual or individuals are at risk and or are lacking valued capabilities and functionings. An understanding of disability as a disadvantage (among others) arising out of the interplay between different conversion factors avoids stigmatisation. Findings suggest that factors like gender, race/class, institutional policies and type of impairment influence the freedoms and opportunities of students with impairments to achieve what they value in higher education. I begin by examining the relationship between impairment and gender. I will then move to other variables (race/class, type

[23] In this section and part two of the next chapter, I use the term 'students with impairments' to make a distinction between disability and impairment.

of impairment, university policies) that emerged from the data. I conclude this section with a discussion of these findings.

5.5.1 Impairment, Gender and Disadvantage

In this study, except for Lerato, students did not relate gender with disadvantage. She says, "When you are a disabled female and you pass your high school exams, it will be taken as one of the greatest achievement on this earth." Lerato makes a general statement about disability in relation to gender; she could not give concrete examples from her own experience. However, she highlights the lower expectations of society for disabled female students. The lower expectations might be indicative of an appreciation, by some, of the conversion factors that affect disabled females, leading to lower expectations which may entrench disadvantages for them. Also, in societies where financial resources are few and where people carry the views highlighted by Lerato, it is unlikely that many disabled girls will access higher education.

In response to the question of how gender plays out in her life, Lerato said:

> *It doesn't really affect me. I don't believe that if you are of certain gender then you get treated better or given things more than others. I just believe that whether you are female or male if you work hard there is no problem in you achieving your goals. Gender is just you are male and I am female. I can do whatever you do and you can do the same.* (Lerato)

There are possible explanations for Lerato's views. Firstly, her response might have been influenced by the fact that the prejudices that Lerato and other students with impairments are subjected to might be so many that she is not able to distinguish whether some prejudicial actions are only related to her impairment or are connected to other variables like her age, race, class or gender or a combination of different variables. Secondly, Lerato's level of education could be influencing her to think critically, apply reason and be able to stand her ground for what she believes in (something an uneducated disabled woman might fail to do). If this is the case, then this is an example of the intrinsic value of education.

5.5.2 Impairment, Race/Class and Disadvantage

As can be seen from Appendix 1, two participants are white (Joe and Jane), two are coloured (Ralph and Carla), while the other four are black (Anna, Lerato, Michael and Dudu). While Jane and Carla come from middle-class backgrounds, the others are from poor, working-class families (Michael, Lerato, Anna, Dudu, Joe and Ralph). Some students felt that their impairments had created challenges in their lives:

> *I know I cannot do everything, definitely there are things I can't do; even degree programmes I can study. There are degree programmes I can study but won't be able to do the work. I have a friend who did her honours in Agricultural Economics but she can't actually do the work because it requires driving around. There are limitations but you have to work with what you have.* (Joe)

> *I know I can't get a driver's licence but that is perfect. I can get someone to drive me around.* (Jane)

Most studies report inequalities in South African being structured along racial lines (le Roux, 2014); this study found that inequalities are also evidenced along class structures. Although Joe is white, he comes from a socio-economic background such that he cannot afford higher education without external financial assistance. At the same time, although Carla is from a racial category that is historically considered disadvantaged, the family is paying for her education as they can afford to do so. Social security policies thus need to take note of other dimensions when allocating benefits, as these can benefit people who do not need help, or exclude people who deserve to be assisted. Even in cases where income levels are high, it does not solve all challenges affecting students. Carla and Jane's families are economically better off than those of other students, yet they seem to face similar difficulties to the others. These examples highlight the importance of interrogating disability from a variety of angles.

Students report that they had been prevented from seeing impairment as a hindrance by their families and friends. Having social support and being encouraged to do things independently made them view themselves positively:

She [Dudu's cousin] is the one who arranged an appointment with the Social Worker because I was depressed and she took me to a Social Worker. I could not really use sign language but the Social Worker inspired me, after seeing my Matric certificate, she recommended me to apply at UFS saying UFS has sign language interpreters for students with disabilities. (Dudu)

My dad supports my future financially and creatively. He is very creative on how I should go into business because he has the same condition [dyslexia]; he understands my situation better. My mother, on the other hand, assists me with my academic work. (Carla)

Positive attitudes might not only be associated socio-economic status e.g. in Carla's case, who saw herself as 'fortunate' because of the support of her parents, especially her mother, who has an enlightened attitude and encourages her to be ambitious. Also, in Lerato and Anna's cases (whose guardians were their maternal grandmothers with limited or no formal education), and for Ralph, Joe, Dudu and Michael (whose parents were not educated beyond high school level), positive attitudes were nurtured and encouraged.

5.5.3 Impairment, Parenting and Disadvantage

Some parents and families of students with impairments seemed overprotective of their children and are frightened of them attending university, residing alone and pursuing certain courses. This was evident in Carla (dyslexic), Joe (blind), and Ralph (blind). This emanates from their concerns about disabled students' ability to cope on their own. Joe and Ralph enrolled for distance learning programmes at first as their parents wanted to be near them. Carla was advised to enrol at UFS and for the same programme which her mother is pursuing at postgraduate level so that she can receive assistance from her mother. While in all these cases the parents influence the choices of students out of genuine concern, they limit the independence and choice-making of the students.

5.5.4 Impairment, University Arrangements and Disadvantage

Students highlighted policies and practices within the university that they believe create disadvantage in their university lives. For example, Anna commented that she feels that institutional arrangements and people's attitude towards disability create barriers for them:

> *This is a big university but their support to disability issues is disappointing. The DU is very small. The staff at the DU are so helpful but the university does not support them.* (Anna)

According to the FOTIM (2011) report, the biggest challenge within DUs is lack of funding. Economic-driven managerial principles have increasingly been applied in higher education (Brabazon, 2015). When economic rationalism is placed ahead of social imperatives such as inclusive policies, social justice considerations are a low priority.

5.5.5 Type of impairment and Disadvantage

For Dudu, Carla and Jane, having 'invisible' impairments means that they experience lower levels of disability-related prejudices from within their different racial groups, gender and social classes. This experience may be less true for people with directly observable impairments (Ralph, Joe, Anna and Lerato). Students with visible impairments may have less choice in their group affiliations, as they cannot easily conceal their impairments. As such, relationships between impairment and disadvantage may not be as relevant to individuals with invisible impairments who do not experience the same physical difficulties and who can more readily pass as non-disabled. Also, disabled students do not face similar challenges. Ralph and Joe often face challenges when accessing study materials. While Lerato and Anna face physical access barriers.

5.5.6 Type of Schooling

The types of schools attended by the students also matter. As noted in the profile of Lerato, she did not study mathematics because it was not available at her under-resourced special school. As a result she was already disqualified from university courses that require mathematics before she enrolled at the university. On the other hand, Carla went to a good special school as her parents could afford the fees. She managed to do everything she wanted to do during high school.

Discussion

The current discourse on disabled students' experiences in higher education fails to specify the relationship between class, race and gender, and other forms of difference and impairment, and to show how these relate to each other. Findings from this study reveal a complex web of factors that interact to create disadvantages/ advantages in the lives of students with impairments at UFS. Disadvantages arising from socio-economic class seem to be the most significant as this affects and supersedes other variables.

A lack of stronger links on the interaction of gender and disadvantage in this study seems to contradict other studies that found disabled women in worse conditions than non-disabled women, as they are often perceived as weak and dependent (Thomas, 1999). Froschl, Rubin, and Sprung (1999) argue that although all disabled people are often discriminated against, disabled women and girls are subjected to multiple discrimination. Additionally, black women and girls who are disabled face a third layer of discrimination; for instance by being treated less favourably on the grounds of gender in one situation and race in another (Froschl *et al.,* 1999). A weak association between disability, being female and disadvantage could suggest the importance of higher education as a significant capability in itself. Students' capacity to make decisions on matters that affect them might have expanded through education, placing male and female on a similar platform. However, these results should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size of participants. Furthermore, the number of disabled students at UFS is less than one per cent of

the total student population[24] (below the national average of 10%). Those already enrolled in universities are a privileged minority, whose environments (though different) support their aspirations and help them surpass challenges related to gender. It would be fruitful to pursue further research about disability in relation to gender to help policy-makers and institutional leaders respond to the associated challenges.

It is also clear that some conversion factors that bring positive experiences in the lives of disabled students are the same factors that disadvantage other students. For example, Lerato is pressurised by her brothers to quit university and look for work, and they offer her little emotional support. However, Carla receives maximum support from her parents. While working-class and poor family backgrounds are often associated with lower aspirations from literature in the Global South (Appadurai, 2004), this study highlights positive contributions by non-middle-class families.

From a capabilities approach this analysis is important for policy to understand the dynamics of different factors in disabled students' lives as shown in Figure 5.1 below. It helps us appreciate heterogeneity of human beings and connects individual biographies and social arrangements. Thus, in thinking about a disability-inclusive social justice policy, we focus on equalising the valued capabilities and ensuring fairness and individual freedom. Therefore, Dreze and Sen (2013) and Otto and Ziegler (2013) are correct in inviting people to look at the impact of different policies on different societies, especially on the freedoms and opportunities available to people.

[24] The national statistics shows that 1 in every 10 people has a disability but at UFS it is (using the 2013 data) approximately 1 student in every 200. This shows that the demographics at UFS are not a reflection of the general societal figures.

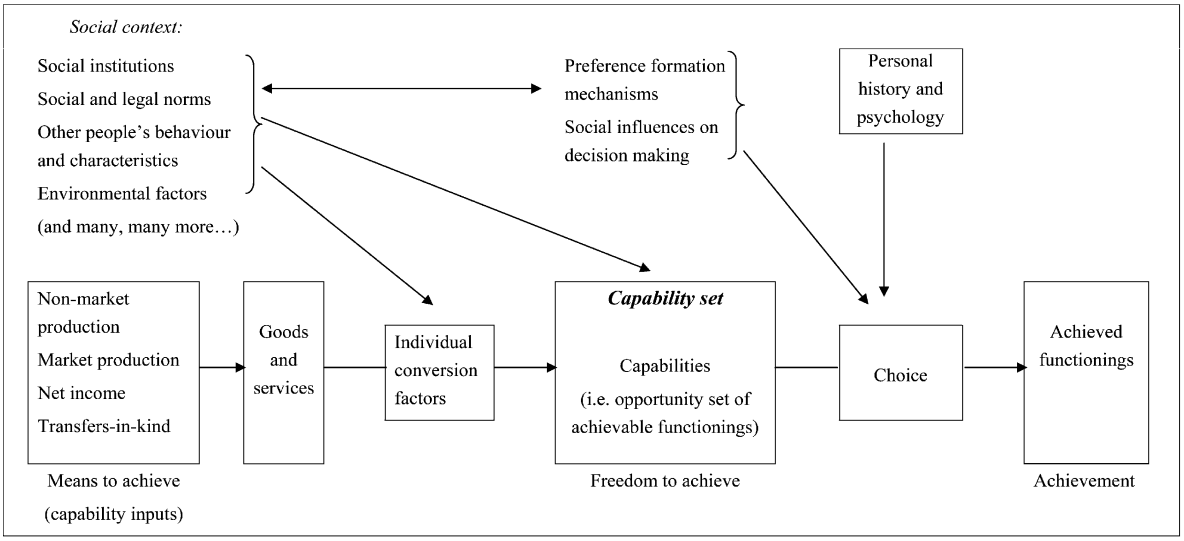

Figure 5.1: Representation of the Capability Approach and a person's capability set (Robeyns, 2005:98

These findings also points to the 'degendered' thinking by society towards people with impairments, which comes from the normal-abnormal dichotomy highlighted in the earlier section, whereby society does not think in terms of gender or sexuality when it comes to people with impairments. As highlighted in the previous section, both male and female students gave accounts that they were equally under-valued on impairment grounds.

Inequalities in South Africa are mostly structured along racial lines (Seekings & Nattrass, 2005), but from my study, class-based inequalities also manifested. The expansion of educational and employment opportunities for previously excluded groups have created a new middle and upper class. To redress past inequalities, policy need to take into account the fact that redistributive initiatives that only focus on the addressing apartheid challenges can create future problems by forming another disadvantaged group. In line with the capabilities approach, policies need to create opportunities for all people without putting barriers on other sections of the population.

Students also dispute the distorting aspect of the social model, that if we remove the social obstacles that prevent disabled students from fully participating in higher education, disability will

disappear. Even if social arrangements are ideal, Carla would still have moments of distress due to anxiety because of dyslexia and Jane would still have seizures. Yet, the social model's emphasis upon the social environment directs attention away from these experiences onto the social environment.

The findings in this section have highlighted that higher education has the potential to create and sustain exclusion by failing to appreciate the multi-dimensionality of disabled students' lives. This is incompatible with the capabilities approach, which understands the role of education as one of enhancing agency, wellbeing and freedom (Sen, 1992:41). Using a multi-dimensional capabilities approach to disability issues enables us to take into account multiple factors, how they intersect and which are important for the development of another in the promotion of inclusion for students with impairments in higher education.

Below I report on different dimensions of injustices that take place in or through higher education.

5.6 Prejudices towards disabled students

Findings in this section highlight prejudices towards disabled students by society and HEIs in South Africa. This section pushes the argument I have been developing throughout this thesis on the importance of the capabilities-based approach to social justice. This section reveals that not all forms of discriminatory behaviour are easily identifiable and that some subtle forms of prejudices exist in higher education. Findings highlight that what is considered fair in society might be in many ways unjust. This is expressed throughout students' lives, before and during their university lifetime. The prejudices against disabled students are pronounced through university policy and practice (e.g. funding and accommodation arrangements). Policy-makers, university or higher education administrators should attend to these equally damaging forms of social injustices.

5.6.1 Lack of Career Guidance

All six students are funded by either the university or government departments.[25] Students' narratives highlight that if it was not for this funding, most students would not have made it into higher education. This is to be applauded, as funding is one of the main reasons many prospective students do not make it to university (De Beer & Mason, 2009; Letseka & Breier, 2010). As described earlier, Dudu went to Vista University in Bloemfontein after completing his Matric, but dropped out after a year due to financial problems. He then applied to join the army where he had an accident leading to hearing challenges and he was only able to come to UFS because of the NSFAS disability bursary. The following narratives also add to this discussion:

> *I wanted to do BCom Accounting but when I was doing my Matric, my high school teachers convinced me to pursue teaching as a profession. Then I came to the university and enrolled for a teaching programme but I am now realising that the teaching field is not for me. I now want to pursue Law and now I am contemplating moving to the School of Law.* (Michael)

> *I wanted to study at either UFS or UCT but my parents pushed me to enrol at UNISA. Actually I wanted to study Law but because of advice from high school teachers I decided to study for an Education programme.* (Ralph)

It is apparent in these sentiments that evaluating inclusion for disabled students in higher education should be more than focusing on the number of enrolled students; it should also look at the processes regarding how choices regarding programmes of study are arrived at. Choice and how decisions are arrived at regarding the lives of disabled students can be analysed through the capabilities approach. Within the approach, particular attention is paid to the substantive freedoms people have to fulfil their desires.

[25] Ralph: provincial Government; Lerato: NFSAS; Joe: Ian Fraser bursary; Michael: university bursary; Anna: NSFAS; and Dudu: Department of Social Development bursary.

5.6.2 Failure to Support Social Relations and Social Networks

The contribution of the university to the creation of social networks and social relations for disabled students is weak, especially if one looks at living arrangements. All registered disabled students are guaranteed accommodation within the university. However, the arrangements need to be looked into:

> *As a first year obviously I was looking forward to the induction experience…you know, those induction activities like singing together and running around the campus, but I missed all that as I was accommodated into a senior resident [building] which does not participate in those induction activities which are arranged in junior residences. No junior residence was accessible to wheelchair users. So obviously I did not get contact with other first year students. I had no idea what was going on… I was alone in my room. So basically we [first year wheelchair users] missed that whole first year experience.* (Lerato)

This is a form of social injustice: students have to be content with staying in senior residence from their first year of study. Although Lerato views interactions with peers as playing a significant role in their success in the university, opportunities for this interaction are limited.

5.6.3 Ignorance of disability matters among students and staff

Students highlight the ignorance of staff and students, including some disabled students, with regards to disability:

> *I have been asked how I dress myself, how do I eat... I always tell people that I am blind but not stupid and people think because you are blind you are on the slow side of things.* (Joe)

> *Most of my lecturers don't understand [dyslexia] and that's why I just record the lectures because I learn better by hearing [at my own pace] and I just have to embrace that part of me…*(Carla)

Ignorance of disability issues among students and staff is not the only the only challenge faced by disabled students at UFS; they also struggle with access issues.

5.6.4 Access Challenges

Findings also suggest that some lecturers' offices are inaccessible to disabled students, and no effort is made by the lecturers to arrange alternative consultation arrangements with students. Additionally, certain lecture halls are inaccessible to Lerato and Anna (wheelchair users) who have to ask for alternative venues. These actions inevitably reduce contact and, therefore, opportunities for disabled students to create meaningful relationships with the wider university community will be severely hampered. Besides these challenges connected to students' impairments, disabled students also face challenges that affect all students, such as failure to provide study material on time and clashes in timetables.

Similar to challenges mentioned by Riddell *et al*, (2005), Joe and Ralph (both visually impaired) mentioned delays in receiving their study materials at UFS:[26]

> *I don't know of any challenges apart from the study material I receive late. I just fight, go see lecturers. I have learnt to study all night just to know that if you write a test you can relax and that is not the end of the world*. (Joe)

> *We do get our materials [braille study material] but at times it is late and it causes problems as a student. Because of that I decided that I am going to use electronic materials.* (Ralph)

This is the same reason these two dropped out of their courses with UNISA. Some students (Dudu, Michael) mentioned that they had dropped core courses as they clash with other core courses:

> *I am taking a module now that I couldn't take last year because the time clashed with another module but this year the subject is falling nicely in place so I am taking a second year module in my third year.* (Dudu)

> *Last semester I dropped a module because the time table clashed with another module.* (Michael)

In addition to access challenges, different assessment procedures pose different challenges to disabled students.

[26]At UFS students are given study guides, study notes and audio recordings of classes.

5.6.5 Assessment Procedures

Students were asked their preferred assessment method. There were varied responses (tests, assignments, oral exams) but it all points to the fact that not all methods are fair or desirable to all students. One of the determining factors is the type of impairment:

> *I usually don't have problems with test and exams, it is blind friendly in most cases: they change the phrasing of the questions a bit e.g. it will be describe rather than draw a picture. However, I have challenges with assignments, where you research in the library and find [a] textbook, that's a bit of a problem for me…I really don't like assignments especially if it is a group assignment because generally other students, don't want to talk to me. I really don't know a lot of people in my class and now I must go and find a group. So I must go and find five other people who want me in their group. It's complicated because I get my reading materials late so I don't want to be in a group because I can't contribute. I will be sitting there and they will all take out their textbooks and I don't have anything so I just ride along. So I really don't like [group] assignments.* (Joe)

> *I like assignment[s] but with tests and exams…I am still a bit anxious about them. When I am about to write my tests and exams at times I go into panic mode, I will be anxious and in the process I lose information because of anxiety*. (Carla)

Assessment of students' progress matters, as does planning and design through marking and moderating procedures. However, without attending to how fair the process is, higher education will block some students in succeeding in higher education.

Discussion

Overall, these findings highlight the diversity and heterogeneity within people. For example, the assessment method preferred by Carla places Joe at a disadvantage (the opposite is also true). This is in agreement with Sen (1992) who insists that human diversity is central to and explicit in the capabilities approach: 'no secondary complication to be ignored, or to be introduced later on; it is a fundamental aspect of our interest in equality' (Sen, 1992:xi). This confirms the importance of looking at disability from the lens of the capabilities approach, which emphasises the creation of

opportunities and freedoms for all people to do what they value, and then works to put the conditions in place to remove the '*un*freedoms'. Caution should be taken when attending to the needs of disabled people, as their needs are different and treating them all the same is unfair.

Similar to Lourens (2015), this study found a lack of career guidance at some schools. Few of the students are pursuing the degree programmes of their choice or know the career paths they want to pursue afterwards. While funding is made available to enable them to study, little effort is put towards cultivating and opening their horizons of future career paths. This is why all of Sen's four dimensions of capability (wellbeing freedom, wellbeing achievement, agency freedom and agency achievements) are important in our analysis of the opportunities and freedoms available to disabled students. Besides funding, there is much more that needs to be done to help all students (disabled and non-disabled) to succeed in higher education before they enrol. It is easy to blame high school teachers for failing to advise these students, or parents who push their children to pursue certain courses, or the students for lack of agency, but the problem might go beyond teachers, parents and students. Actors, processes and mechanisms that operate at a national level (e.g. the whole education system that privileges other schools, courses of study and universities) are problematic. Although this is not only unique to disabled students, it appears that disabled students are expected to go to extreme lengths and display skills to access some opportunities and entitlements in higher education (Brandt, 2011).

While higher education has the potential to help students challenge negative perceptions of their impairment and alter their self-concept through social capital formation (Papasotiriou & Windle, 2012; Brabazon, 2015), participants reported fairly limited social networks and social relations at university. The contribution of the university to social capital is weak, as most barriers are connected to physical restrictions and subtle forms of exclusion related to attitudes towards disability. This lack of social network and social capital nurturing is problematic, as previous research suggests that support from fellow students is crucial to help students persist with their studies (Stone, 2008; Papasotiriou & Windle, 2012). For the creation of an inclusive higher education, programmes that foster understanding among all students should be implemented.

Creating more equitable opportunities for all students is important. Most of these forms of unfairness may not even be recognised by HEIs, society or disabled students as negative or warranting action, but still have significant impact upon the lives of all students (not only disabled students). Additionally, it is vital that frameworks of interpreting attitudes towards disabled students are further developed in order to identify all forms of injustices; otherwise thin forms of discriminatory practice will remain entrenched and will be left unchallenged. The fact that some challenges faced by disabled students are also common to non-disabled students highlights the need for policy-makers to be aware of the thin line between the needs of students.

Access came out as an important element in the realisation of an inclusive and just higher education. However, access should not only be seen in terms of gaining entry into to higher education, but needs to be viewed in terms of participating equitably in all spheres of higher education, including teaching and learning. Factoring these into conceptualisation of access will not only able us to identify, understand and address the challenges faced by disabled students, but also how they make their choices (e.g. regarding programmes of study), which might point us to inaccessibility and subtle injustices towards disability within different faculties and departments (e.g. assessments). Joe and Carla are not against the assessments modes they highlight, but worry about what each method entails for them: the hassle of finding books in the library for someone with visual impairment, and managing group dynamics for someone with dyslexia. Universities need to create dynamic inclusive support structures and environments, and design curricula that considers multiple users from the start in order to create a variety of learning opportunities.

While the university can do much in improving the challenges faced by Joe and Carla, their narratives presents the limitations of the human body, something that is downplayed by the social model as highlighted in Chapter Three. This finding calls for a review of assessments method within a diverse student population. As dropout rates remain high in SAHE with many students leaving campuses prematurely, students and families' hopes and aspirations are lost, dented and demeaned. The scale and number of dropouts of students, including disabled students, tell us that such failures cannot be solely individualised. There is an absence of key support.

The capabilities approach helps us understand and evaluate social justice by directing our attention not only to the educational outcomes, but also exploring the processes that lead to the different inclusive results. In doing this, it is possible to unearth programmes and practices designed to help disabled students that are actually achieving the opposite. Some policies and practices designed and sanctioned by higher education can by themselves exclude and perpetuate injustices. Attempts to tackle injustices against disabled students in higher education should not only focus on overtly discriminatory practices but also have appreciation for other subtle manifestations of intolerance. The following section reports how disabled students manage their lives, given the complex challenges they face in higher education.

5.7 Resilience among disabled students

This section reports the findings on how disabled students at UFS navigate power relations and respond to oppressive practices highlighted in the previous sections. Both personal and interpersonal responses to disabling practices and factors that support resilience are highlighted. Narratives of disabled students at UFS highlight that, in the face of challenges, they navigate studies and life. They work hard to overcome a wide range of physical, attitudinal, social, cultural and political barriers. In doing this, they make use of their individual agency as well as interactions with other people i.e. collective, social and affiliation capabilities (Dubois & Trani, 2009). This is a manifestation of resilience defined as the measure of a person's capability to resist a downward movement of wellbeing by mobilising his/her potentiality (Dubois & Rousseau, 2008).[27] This section highlights the value of the capabilities approach in foregrounding issues of choice and action, absent in other disability models discussed in Chapter Three. Disabled students develop resilience as a response to social disablement (inaccessible environment and prejudicial attitudes). I now turn to how resilience manifested in these students' lives.

[27] For others, resilience is the capacity for successful adaptation to a changing environment (Cicchetti & Cohen, 1995). Bartley *et al*. (2007) describe it as the ability to react and adapt positively when things go wrong.

5.7.1 Aspirations and Resilience

Findings from this study reveal the relationship between aspirations, individual agency and resilience. This is highlighted by Ralph:

> *When I was in high school I watched some of my friends failing because of peer pressure. I made a decision that I would not follow that path but will control my life. I decided that in order to be successful I had to work hard. I used to monitor my performance in school and consult my teachers. If I get an average of 80% this term in all my modules, I would set a target of a better average grade for the following term.* (Ralph)

Under circumstances where he could have been influenced by peer pressure, Ralph took it upon himself to strive for the best grades. Joe and Lerato also did the same. After dropping out from two universities, Joe came back to the UFS in 2011:

> *I decided that I don't want to end up sitting at home like most other blind people so that's my main motivation, to actually finish my studies. I know my studying career has been clouded with drop outs but now it's going well, I got an academic excellence award this year.*

In Lerato's case, she wanted to go to university, although there was no funding available for her:

> *There is a provincial premier bursary in this province that funds the best 100 students. Our principal advised us that even though our families [can't] afford the fees, if we pass we would be funded. So I really worked hard.*

In these narratives, resilience is a reflection of individual agency. Where individual agency is weak, resilience is also compromised. Ralph's narrative also shows where agency was fainter:

> *At first I felt being excluded in some instances in the class because no one was there to explain to me, visual things they were showing in the lectures. I would just sit there and hear people laugh. I would be having no clue about what is taking place. But now I am used to that, I just accept that its part of life.*

Resilience in the lives of these students is not a one-off, but a life story. Their lived experiences on their way to and in university are full of manifestations of the ability to persevere.

5.7.2 Agency and Resilience

UFS was built in 1904 before the concept of inclusive education, hence some of its buildings are inaccessible. The current study found that the physical structure of the campus presents challenges to some disabled students:

> *This university is not accessible for first years who want to stay inside the residence, that's why you see me in the senior residence.* (Anna)

Access to physical space affects mostly wheelchair users; other disabled students did not mention accessing buildings as a challenge. Lack of accessible accommodation led Lerato and Anna to stay in a senior residence during their studies, even though they really wanted to stay in a junior residence in their first year. This resulted in them missing out on the early social capital formation during induction week. They stayed there and along the way had to fight battles with supporting staff. Anna moved to a new residence where she is one of the student leaders. On the other hand, instead of complaining, Lerato has turned that same space into what she has reason to value:

> *At first I didn't like being in a senior residence because I felt I was missing out on being a first year and making new friends and all that, but after a while I started to appreciate it because I have my own space. In junior residences they share rooms. When I feel that I don't want to go out I just lock myself in my room.* (Lerato)

As already highlighted, students and staff' awareness about disability is another problem faced by disabled students at UFS. Disabled students noted that some students and staff view them with pity and curiosity. This arises from what Oliver (1990) calls 'personal tragedy theory', which is institutionalised in dispositions that view disabled people as objects of benevolence (this is not top say that benevolence is bad, but that it cannot be the only reason for service provision to disabled students). Lerato described the demeaning lack of awareness by a member of staff:

> *Recently I had one of my lecturers offering me one of her recordings because 'I am a disabled student.' (Laughs) I failed a module last year so I am repeating it this year. She said to me 'I noticed that you are doing this module for the second time, what is your problem?' I am like, 'I don't understand'. So for the e-learning students they do recordings for them and those recordings are not supposed to be given to us—contact based students. She proceeded saying 'because you are a*

disabled student in my class doing the module for the second time, I am going to offer you my recordings' so I said 'I don't understand.' She said 'because you are a disabled student I am going to offer you my recordings' I asked 'Because I am disabled so I need recordings?' Apparently there are fourth year students who are repeating the same course again for the third time, but she only sees me. I was a bit offended and very angry at her. So I was like 'thank you very much madam, and, like any other student, if I have a problem I will come to you, like any other student'. (Lerato)

Lerato's narrative is in agreement with data from Field *et al.*'s (2003) study of staff who appear to know very little about disabilities. This was further confirmed during my field observations.

5.7.3 Factors that enable resilience

There are various factors that enable disable students to negotiate various challenges: individual characteristics and personal background, and external support structures.

Individual characteristics

Disabled students at UFS utilise their varied backgrounds and personalities to reach their goals. Some have supportive structures that enabled them to reach their goals and others are motivated by their backgrounds and view education as the only option for success.

Although some disabled students admit being ignorant about university life prior to enrolment, they all aspired to higher education. Most disabled students pursued university education because they saw it as an economic necessity. They saw university education as a way of empowering themselves to cope with social, political, and economic challenges. Lerato and Michael say:

Work opportunities for disabled people (especially blind people) after high school are quite scarce. Or let me rather say are non-existent so one basically needs a higher education or a College certificate to enhance his or her chances of getting employed. Without these qualifications you will

struggle to get a job and you will have a problem satisfying your needs. So higher education, especially a university degree guarantees you a job afterwards. (Michael)

… in my family no one has had the motivation to go and study further. Being a third child, with my elder brothers struggling to get jobs with their Matric qualifications and all of us being raised by a single parent with a Grade 11 certificate [who] couldn't get a permanent stable job so I declared that I want a different lifestyle. I want to get a proper job and work, be able to earn my own money and have my own home. I don't want to be counted among those who receive a disability grant. Some of my classmates would say that they are content with a disability grant but I would say it won't be always enough for me to cater for everything I need. One day I will need a house, my own house. I can't live at my mother's house forever. And also the fact that my mother passed away when I was 14 and since I never knew my father, you know, it was just basically me and my brothers, so I felt I am responsible of taking care of my younger sister. I just said, 'let me just do the university thing', so since I have the passion for something I should just go and explore it. (Lerato)

Both Michael and Lerato knew little about university life. Lerato's applications were done by her high school teacher, while Michael came to the university after being chosen via a university bursary scheme for high school students with good grades. Both aspired to have a university qualification despite challenges and how society viewed them. For others, the decision to enrol in university was precipitated by a need to prove their self-worth to others and themselves:

I am determined because I don't want to fail in anything. I once dropped out of the university. I have this pride of wanting to show everyone that I am not a useless person. (Joe)

Some disabled students (Anna, Joe, Michael, Lerato) had difficult childhood experiences- including living with unemployed single parents, being involved in a fatal accident, and having to leave their family homes to stay with relatives in order to get a high school education:

…my mother had me when she was young so I grew up with her family, so I lived with my grandparents while my mother was working in another province. (Anna)

I was involved in a car accident in 1996 when I was 9 years old. (Joe)

I had a difficult childhood life. I was raised by a single parent who was a hawker. I like grew up on my own. I struggled with a lot of things. I can say for most of the things I have to suffer before I get them. I never had a chance to live a really good life. (Michael)

Regardless of these difficult childhood experiences, these disabled students remained optimistic and determined to change their lives for the better through education. Having been discouraged in their lives, they want to affirm their self-worth. As a result of societal barriers, some disabled students are toughened and are more active in fighting for what they value in life when it is not available. Anna became an activist, joining the university's student politics and governance structure (the SRC), and Lerato often talked about having to fight bureaucratic rules:

> *Every time you had a problem and you went to a lecturer, the lecturer would say 'go to those people at the centre' and I would say 'but this is your module and you are my lecturer and I expect you to assist' but they would say 'go there'. So we decided that we are going to skip everyone and went straight to the Rector. We sat down with the Rector and we told him that Prof. this has been happening for a while now and we have been here for this long but it seems like nobody is willing to accommodate us or listen or to try to do something to improve conditions and the way that they treat us and everything. So …he listened and he was like no he is going to make a point that we don't feel like we are different from other students or we are treated differently in whatever so since then a lot has improved because now when they give me problem I just say okay I will go straight to the Rector. Now he knows me*. (Lerato)

However, not all disabled students take an active role like Lerato when negotiating obstacles at the university. Ralph's narrative illustrates this:

> *I know that people have got different opinions or different belief systems concerning how things ought to be. So I just act as if there is nothing wrong. We are all different and I don't think I can change things much for the better.* (Ralph)

When faced with physical and psychological hurdles, others resign themselves. They adapt their preferences and start to believe that they are not capable of positively influencing the status quo.

The other way in which disabled students show capacity to spring back in the face of adversity and develop social and academic competence despite exposure to stress is shown by how disabled students deal with the assumption of identity, as shown in the first part of this chapter. In achieving their goals, these students also benefit from the support they have from other people.

External Support Structures

Family and Friends

Disabled students' stories illustrate how material support and positive encouragement from parents and other family members can be inspirational to further education (Ceballo 2004). Financial and moral support gave students a sense of hope and assurance that they were capable of academic success. Lastly, it should be noted that not all disabled students had difficult family backgrounds; some like Dudu, Carla and Joe had supportive backgrounds.

Friends had a positive influence on disabled students' lives. Lerato's interactions with Anna boosted her self-esteem and confidence and Michael and Ralph benefit from their strong friendship. The desire and need to access and utilise social capital by some disabled students is evident, yet it is not fostered by the university. While friendships are important to other disabled students, some are not keen on friendships. Limited contact with others is a survival strategy to some students. Joe says he doesn't share much information with his friends and this is a personal choice. Similarly, Jane attempts to manage how people react to her by not disclosing her status. She values privacy in order to deal with the impairment effects.

> *I have friends but I don't really share my deepest thoughts with everybody. I got a girlfriend whom I share with some of the stuff but ultimately I always try to depend on myself, not to depend on others; at least I will know what went wrong if something goes wrong*. (Joe)

> *When it comes to friends it is very difficult for me to have friends. Let me be honest. I am a person who likes being around people. I am a person who likes hanging with people but most people I have included in my life it's like they are always using me. They will be my friends when they want to help me with something but when days are dark for me, when I need help … they always hide from me and go away. I face this challenge; I don't trust them. I know that probably one day they will run away from me.* (Michael)

Teachers

Before entering university, high school teachers seem to have played a significant role in disabled students' lives especially motivating students to aspire to go to the university:

> *My high school has been my home and will always be my home. That is where I realise that there is life. Besides teaching me the academics they also taught me life and motivated me. The teachers were so supportive, academically and socially. They were like my parents. Whenever I go home, the first thing I do is to pass through the school to meet the teachers. Even when my sister kicked me out of her place it was high school teachers that gave me a place to stay.* (Michael)

> *A lot of my high school teachers believed in me. At home it was just a question of finish school and start working.* (Lerato)

Unfortunately at times these teachers' influence was limited and did not always bring positive results in the lives of the disabled students; for example Michael and Ralph were encouraged to study Education by their high school teachers. Besides that, there was no proper career guidance and advice on either study programmes or university life. Although they are studying towards Education degree qualifications, they are not enjoying this and are thinking of switching to the LLB programme. Joe admits to a lack of advice about higher education:

> *No one really made you aware of what student life is going to be like at the university. It is difficult for people to adjust to university life and I mean now you read a 300 page book in preparation for a 50 mark test whereas at school we had a 200 page book to study for the whole year*.(Joe)

It is clear from Joe and Lerato's conversations that disabled students secure benefits as a result of membership of social networks or other social structures, both before and within the university. This supports previous work that suggests the support, friendship and assistance students receive from fellow students is crucial to helping them persevere with their studies (Skinner, 2004). However, not all disabled students participate in social clubs at university, and in many visits to Michael, Ralph and Lerato, I saw them in their rooms alone (with the exception of Lerato who stayed with her young sister for some time in her room as she wanted help with the wheelchair).

Lecturers

Some disabled students make use of staff that have positive attitudes about disability. Not all lecturers are ignorant:

> *I have had some good lecturers that help; they will give you permission to write a test on a different date to make an accommodation for you.* (Joe)

> *Now when they give me problem I just say okay I will go straight to the Rector. Now he knows me. So every time he sees me he says 'how are you Lerato?' and I say 'hi' (laughs) because every time I would email him and say Prof. this thing has been happening for too long now.* (Lerato)

Support from family, friends and staff shows that individual resilience is nurtured and cultivated by other external agencies. There is a cyclical relationship between the two.

Discussion

Whether wanting to prove something to others or desiring to prove something to themselves, there is a commonality shared by disabled students with regard to pursuing university education. Their stories demonstrate that, contrary to the assumptions that disabled people are passive individuals, these students have goals and take action towards having better lives.

Appadurai (2004:69) defines aspirations as, 'a navigational capacity which is nurtured by the possibility of real-world conjectures and refutations…thrives and survives on practice, repetition, exploration, conjecture and refutation.' While other literature explores aspirations as something outside individuals and a property that can be infused to those lacking it, especially students from low socio-economic status backgrounds (Smith, 2011; Gale, 2012), this study highlights how this thinking can be misleading. Appadurai's framing of aspirations is the understanding that everyone aspires, but that to move from hope to the actual realisation of aspired state, many factors play out (Ibrahim, 2011). This is supported by my study, as all participants, regardless of their race, gender,

type of impairment and socio-economic background, 'imagine alternative kinds of 'good lives' for the future' (Zipin, Sellar, Brennan, & Gale, 2013:4).

These findings show that aspirations open up possibilities for agency (Conradie & Robeyns, 2013), hope and action needed to initiate changes. Hopkins (2011) asserts that disabled students feeling unwelcome in the early stages affects their success at university. Lerato and Anna did not receive a dignified welcome into university, but exercised their agency and are progressing towards expanding their skills and knowledge. These students took initiative to apply for different grants. Their educational goals will likely be compromised if they do not self-identify as disabled. As a result, most disabled students align themselves to the institutionalised bio-medical understanding of disability, regardless of the beliefs they hold about themselves. As a strategy, this agency is in part, it seems, achieved by focusing on their ultimate goal of succeeding in higher education. Their self is premised on the notion of what they are capable of and not by what others suggest they should be. Even though this act is at an individual level, it connects to external support.

From the findings we can also see how the capability to aspire unlocks resilience. In agreement with Goode (2007), findings from this study suggest that disabled students are actively 'managing' their challenges. Differential access to social and economic resources affects students' capacities to articulate their aspirations, but through perseverance and networks, they find resources to aspire. The functionality of external agencies cannot be underestimated in these students' lives. Disabled students showed that they have access to other external capabilities (Foster & Handy, 2008), through their families, friends, teachers and lecturers, with whom they have positive relationships. It should be acknowledged that although these participants are active on matters that they value, individual agency is independent of support from external agencies. Support from friends, family, schools and the DU plays a part in their lives. By recognising the importance of agency, the capabilities approach enables us to focus on people's choices and aspirations, beyond considerations of impairment. This highlights the limitations of the ICF, which only measures the performance of an individual to achieve a given activity without questioning that individual's right to choose. Understanding the role of the external agencies in disabled students' lives helps us to

answer questions such as ‘who are the best external agencies to enhance certain capabilities?’ Answering a question like this helps us design socially just policies.

This section has highlighted the challenges faced by disabled students and the resilience manifested in disabled students’ agency. Some challenges are common to all students, but place extra burden on disabled students as they have other encounters that are unique to specific impairments. I traced the challenges and resilience from the societal level where they struggle with identities that are imposed on them, family and social relations that are supportive and those that are not, the schooling environment, and processes in the university. Given the myriad of constraints on people’s capabilities, understanding people’s aspirations is valuable as it enables us to understand capabilities that people are unable to achieve. Lerato and other students in this study are all enrolled at university, but this says very little about how they experience higher education and whether or not they are realising their goals. Data highlights how the capability to aspire propels agency and resilience among participants. However, this should not negate the responsibility of the university to take into account the uniqueness of each student and provide for each students’ needs.

The analysis provides us with a way of thinking about what can be done in relation to inclusion of disabled students in higher education. It widens the equity debate beyond access and success in higher education to include what happens before, during and after enrolment. It also emphasise the need to look at how disabled students need to adapt in order to access and participate in higher education. In the next section, I conclude this chapter by reporting on key freedoms and opportunities identified in the students’ narratives.

5.8 Disabled students' key valued freedoms and opportunities in higher education

This section reports on what disabled students value at the UFS. While some of the students' key valued freedoms and opportunities are applicable to all students, others seem specific to disabled students. Disabled students identified key valued freedoms and opportunities that they need to access and succeed in higher education. Four of the eight valued freedoms and opportunities on Walker's list emerged strongly in the interviews. Five other valued freedoms and opportunities that fall outside Walker's list were also identified. I suggest that these nine key valued freedoms and opportunities are needed for the formulation of socially just disability-inclusive policies. I will also argue that the capabilities approach provides a framework that leads to unique insights into the lives of disabled students by using the capabilities as the informational basis for justice-oriented evaluations and policy (Sen, 1999), and an analytical framework to measure progress. This is important given that different information will lead to different policies.

5.8.1 Capabilities and Derived Functionings

This section sums up the previous themes by reporting on key valued freedoms and opportunities needed for disabled students to access and succeed in higher education and how this is nurtured in and through higher education. This is important given that one of the acknowledged shortfalls of the capabilities approach is difficulties when operationalising its concepts. Through this section, I hope to contribute to how the capabilities approach can be operationalised in both the higher education and disability fields by providing the informational basis for social justice claims.

Various functionings and capabilities were drawn from the interviews (see Table 5.1) and matched to Walker and, Wolff and De-Shalit's lists thematically. In this section we discuss capabilities that emerged from participants' data. We first discuss capabilities from Walker's (2006) list; this will be followed by a discussion of the capabilities from Wolff and de-Shalit's (2007) list. The last section explores the capabilities that are not in Walker, nor in Wolff and de-Shalit's lists.

Table 5.1: Extrapolated capabilities from functionings

Functionings from the data		**Capabilities**
Walker	Being able to ask for better teaching and learning conditions Being able to offset pressure from unsupportive people Being able to study regardless of language and other barriers	Educational Resilience
	Developing and having the required skills in one's field of study Being able to develop further skills Imagining a better future	Knowledge and imagination
	Not being diminished because of impairment Being appreciated as a person	Respect, dignity and recognition
	Being able to associate and work with peers Being able to create friendships Being able to participate in a group at the university either for learning or pleasure	Social Relations and social networks
Wolf & de-Shalit	Being able to comprehend the language of instruction Having your language understood	Language proficient
UFS students' data	Being able to imagine a better future	Aspirational
	Being able to be identified with a dignified label	Identity
	Being able to move from one place to the other	Mobility
	Being able (and allowed) to express your thoughts/opinions/views and make them count on issues of importance	Voice

5.8.2 Capabilities from Walker's (2006) List

Educational Resilience

Educational resilience is one of the capabilities listed by Walker (2006). These students showed remarkable resilience in their education experiences, despite overwhelming challenges generated by conversion factors. Most of them practised educational resilience in order to secure their other

valued capabilities. The way Lerato manages pressure from her family, who do not fully support her educational endeavours, while at the same time negotiating physical barriers in some classes and attitudinal problems from peers and some lecturers, provides a vivid account of how these students negotiate social and educational lives and persevere. It is clear that educational resilience is important. However, resilience on the part of disabled students should not be used by universities to obscure the need to address the limitations of providing for the needs of disabled students. Universities need to play their role in ensuring that all students are treated with dignity.

Knowledge and imagination

According to Walker (2006) the capability of knowledge and imagination is about being able to gain knowledge in one's field of study. This involves knowledge for personal development, for career and economic opportunities, for political, cultural and social action and participation in society. This was exemplified by Lerato:

> *I appreciate the university environment and the people around because I have learnt a lot since I got here. I have become more independent, I am more aware of what the outside world holds. Within the university there are people who open your eyes to the possibilities of your future and what tomorrow holds*. (Lerato)

Acquisition of the capability of knowledge and imagination can occur where students' social relations are smooth and affiliation (respect and recognition in relationships) is present to build their confidence. The students also value field- or discipline-related skills and knowledge. This is to be expected, given that this is why they have enrolled for higher education. Alongside acquisition of knowledge and skills are other 'beings and doings' that are equally important.

Respect, Dignity and Recognition

Most students value being treated with respect. This capability is at the centre of what disabled students need to access and succeed in higher education.

> *I have gradually adapted into the deaf culture. I feel emotionally and psychologically supported and appreciated when I am amongst deaf people than when I am amongst non-sign language users.* (Dudu)

When the capability for respect, dignity and recognition is taken away by universities, some students may give up on exercising their individual agency. This was exemplified during data collection when I spent a day with Ralph, a blind student, and accompanied him to classes. In one of the morning lectures I recorded a lecturer instructing students: "See…after page 5, you will see a Table with surface learning [approach] on one side and deep learning [approach] on the other side." No account was taken of any student unable to see the page. Later that evening, I accompanied Ralph to a different lecture (there were about twenty people in the lecture room) where they sat at the front, closer to the lecturer. The lecturer played a movie clip and instructed students to watch it for a discussion afterwards. I was surprised because at no point did she seem to notice Ralph's presence, yet we were seated very close to her. In both cases Ralph was not 'seen' and not being seen was accorded neither respect nor recognition of his different identity, nor was any effort made to address his learning support needs. This is a good example of 'same treatment' to all students by higher education institutions, leading to very unfair service provision.

Social Relations and Social networks

The capability for social relations and social networks is linked to functionings, such as being able to participate in a group at the university either for learning or pleasure. Having a network of friendships from varied backgrounds and being given the opportunities to create friendships within the university, which was also valued by the students:

> *First year students have an orientation week full of activities where they build friendships within residences. So at the end of the induction week friendships and networks would have been created. As wheelchair users we were thrown in[to] a senior residence as it was the only residence that was wheelchair friendly. However, senior residences are not involved in the orientation week activities. We felt unwelcomed at this university. We missed out during the orientation week*. (Anna)

Disabled students that were part of this study highly value social relations and social networks, both during their transition into and during their period in the university. Unfortunately, UFS fell short in promoting this capability in relation to disabled students.

Four capabilities on Walker's list did not appear strongly in my analysis. These are: *practical reason*, *learning disposition*, *emotional integrity*, and *bodily integrity*. There are possible explanations for this. In some cases, students' responses to the questions generated for one capability tended to speak more to other capabilities. For example, I could have coded Dudu's narrative about the language capability under *Bodily integrity* or *Emotional integrity*, but given the context of the students and how they are identified, this seemed to be speaking more to the *language* capability as described by Wolff and de-Shalit (2007). Most responses to the questions about emotional integrity and bodily integrity were often negative one word answers (no). Either students had not thought about these issues, or the phrasing of the questions was difficult to comprehend. Another reason might be that students had adapted to conditions that they would not have accepted in fair situations. These capabilities might not be their primary concerns compared to challenges associated with being identified as disabled students. Ralph's narrative under *Respect, Dignity and Recognition* seems to suggest adaptive preference. With regards to *learning disposition*, students showed 'curiosity and desire for learning' in their narratives about how they made it to universities and how they 'persevere academically' at the university. In this thesis, this is captured under educational resilience as it highlights how they exercise their agency when faced with barriers that hinder them from securing their well-being.

5.8.3 Capabilities from Wolff and de-Shalit's (2007) list

Language Proficiency

A capability that falls outside Walker's list of capabilities but that is derived from the data is language proficiency. Wolff and de-Shalit's (2007) highlight it as the ability to understand and speak the local language. Wilson-Strydom (2015) has a similar capability under her capabilities for university readiness. She highlights the importance of the language capability, which she describes as 'being able to understand, read, write and speak confidently in the language of instruction' (Wilson-Strydom, 2015:131). UFS uses both Afrikaans and English for teaching and learning and language competence is important to all students. Lerato sees language as suffused also by issues of race. Afrikaans-speaking lecturers and students in these classes are predominantly white; some lecturers lapse into Afrikaans or explaining in Afrikaans in what is supposed to be an English medium class:

> *There are also race issues within this university. Some lecturers have a tendency of conducting their lectures in Afrikaans. What if I don't understand Afrikaans?* (Lerato)

What we see is again an overlap between respect (respecting each person's right to learn in either English or Afrikaans) and recognition (of all identities at the university, not privileging an Afrikaans identity over others), and that of language proficiency.

For Dudu (a sign language user), the absence of interpreters has an adverse impact on his life at university:

> *I did nursing at the Free State school of Nursing after I resigned from the army. I only passed my first year. It required a lot of effort because there were no interpreters. I eventually left in the second year just because it was hectic, no interpreters to facilitate. I went home until I met that guy who advised me to apply to this university*. (Dudu)

His case reveals that not only does the capability of language competence and confidence encompass being able to understand, read, write and speak confidently in the language of

instruction but also being able to access knowledge in a language that is accessible to students and respecting student diversity.

5.8.4 Additional Higher Education Capabilities

Students' narratives show that there are capabilities descriptions that can be foregrounded to stand as important capabilities for disabled students (see Appendix 3 for the full list of the capabilities).

Aspirational Capability

The capability to aspire also emerged from the data as significant opportunities and skills that are important to disabled students and need to be fostered in higher education.

> *... in my family no one has had the motivation to go and study further. Being a third child, with my elder brothers struggling to get jobs with their Matric qualifications and all of us being raised by a single parent with a Grade 11 certificate and [who] couldn't get a permanent stable job so I declared that I want a different lifestyle. I want to get a proper job and work, be able to earn my own money and have my own home. I don't want to be counted among those who receive a disability grant. Some of my classmates would say that they are content with a disability grant but I would say it won't be always enough for me to cater for everything I need. One day I will need a house, my own house. I can't live at my mother's house forever. And also the fact that my mother passed away when I was 14 and since I never knew my father, you know, it was just basically me and my brothers so I felt I am responsible of taking care of my younger sister. I just said let me just do the university thing*. (Lerato)

> *I am studying for my degree so that I can have a proper job one day. For me this is the most important thing of being in higher education because I want to be independent. I don't want to be dependent on my parents for the rest of my life.* (Joe)

Unlike the view that positions some students as lacking aspiration, these findings highlight that capacities to articulate and pursue aspirations are within students, but are affected by and affect other capabilities.

Identity

Being able to choose one's identity is a capability that emerged strongly in the interviews with students with disabilities. They expressed a dislike of the negative identities used to define them, and the need to respect diversity:

> *To me it [disability] doesn't really mean anything. It's not how I see myself. It doesn't define me but people tend to categorise me with that label e.g. I am rarely introduced as "Lerato the law student," it's usually "Lerato, the disabled law student" or "Lerato the disabled student" or something along these lines. Some people like to see it [disability] as a term to define your obstacles e.g. the fact that I am in a wheelchair makes it okay for other people to say that I have a disability, I am differently abled or any other term they happen to come across. I am not disabled. I am me. I am Lerato. I am just like any other person…you know I go through the same things that you go through the only thing that is different is that I use a wheelchair.* (Lerato)

The capability for respect, dignity and recognition underpins Lerato's wanting to be able to define who she is for herself, not to be labelled by others, or to be defined by her disability. Lerato sees herself caught up in a dilemma. She does not see herself as a disabled student, yet she is registered as such with the DU so as to receive support. We also see resilience at work and social relationships in a form here that Lerato does not value, from which we can extrapolate the kind of social relations she does value.

Mobility

Being able to move from one place to another within the university was highlighted as important. We can extrapolate this from Lerato:

> *The university knows that they have students who use wheelchairs. Surprisingly, some lectures and exams are scheduled in rooms where there are stairs and no lifts. We are forced to go to the lecturers who in turn have to arrange with the people who organise exam venues. At times it takes more than a week for corrective measures to be found and all this time you will be missing classes. Once you fall behind it's really hard to catch up. It's one thing that is not changing at this university*. (Lerato)

The presence of an accessible higher education environment allows ease of access to offices, classrooms and residences.

Voice

The ability to express one's opinions and thoughts and make them count (Bovin & Moachon, 2013) came out strong in the interviews. In Walker's list of capabilities this is part of the respect, dignity and recognition capability. However, having a voice to participate effectively in university, individually or collectively, emerged strongly warranting it to stand as a separate capability:

> *I mobilised other disabled students when we were having persistent challenges at our residence. We decided to skip all the bureaucracy and we went straight to the university Rector. We sat down with the Rector and we highlighted our concerns. Since then a lot has improved because now when we have problems we approach the Rector directly.* (Lerato)

Lerato is resilient, has a voice and is an agent, and her resilience and voice are crucial to this agency – she does not give up in the face of adversity. Again we see how one capability strengthens another and how capabilities are necessary for agency and vice versa.

Discussion

A set of basic conditions and opportunities necessary for securing the wellbeing of disabled students in SAHE were extrapolated from their valued functionings. Well-being supports agency; agency supports wellbeing. Taken together, students can be empowered. Although this was a

small-scale study and further studies are needed, nonetheless, paying attention to these capabilities for both disabled and non-disabled students within higher education should be a necessity for policy. For disabled students in SAHE to access an education that allows them to flourish, equal opportunities should be made available to them.

A list of capabilities is useful in resolving the problem of 'dilemma of difference'. Instead of focusing on human differences, policies would be targeted at freedoms and opportunities that support the identified capabilities and no capabilities will be overlooked through omission (Nussbaum, 2000). It is arguably easier if we do not have a list of capabilities to provide information to policy-makers for policies to overlook those who might have adapted their preference under bad circumstances (for example resigning themselves, as Ralph does, to being ignored by lecturers and hence possibly not mentioning the need for lecturer support). Moreover, when we have a list of capabilities, there will be no excuse on the part of powerful institutions like universities to deny marginalised people their valued opportunities and freedoms. Programmes, pedagogies and curriculum can be designed accordingly to foster these identified capabilities. I think that the identification of capabilities is important and that student provision should be designed accordingly. Policy evaluation to measure the progress of different higher education institutions would then be based on how they are performing against the list.

This list of capabilities also confirms that valuable capabilities are context-specific. Four of Walker's capabilities that emerged out of international higher education with diverse student populations are applicable to students with disabilities in the Global South. These findings are important in challenging the idea of treating students with disabilities strictly as a separate group from other students. There is a danger of obscuring areas of commonality that exist between the experiences of disabled students and students without disabilities. It would be more beneficial to disabled students for higher education to concentrate on cultivating the identified capabilities than dwelling only on the difference between disabled students and students without disabilities, precisely because capabilities in their conceptualisation avoid the dilemma of difference trap. Of course a capabilities list also raises the need for tradeoffs in the provision of services for a diverse

student population. Not all capabilities from Walker's list emerged strongly from these disabled students' narratives. *Emotional integrity and emotions; Bodily integrity*, and *Practical reason* did not feature much. This might suggest that disabled students in higher education have different valued capabilities to those of students without disabilities, yet they all value the same things. Another reason might be my own interpretation of the data as a researcher. Walker (2006) notes that there are elements within her functionings list that might be foregrounded by other scholars as capabilities. For example, my capability for *identity* might be considered by others as fitting under her capability for *Respect, dignity and recognition*.

Based on the data from UFS students, this study is also important in assessing the significance of the capabilities approach in the fields of higher education and disability. As my data shows, most disabled students lack opportunities and freedoms to secure their capabilities. In responding to the SDGs agenda, HEIs and policy-makers ought to pay attention to institutional policies that determine actions and non-actions that negatively affect disabled students' opportunities to secure their 'valued beings and doings'. This might be achieved through induction programmes on inclusive and diversity issues for staff and more resources. As for the general student population, this calls for the fostering of extra-curricular, curricular and pedagogic practices that celebrate differences and commonalities, and develop student awareness, empathy and action with regard to the lives of students with disabilities.

Findings highlight the multi-dimensionality at work in that some capabilities enhance other capabilities, so that, for example, the capability of *knowledge and imagination* is closely related to the capability for *social relations and social networks*; they reinforce each other. Each capability should be incommensurable, but one or two may be architectonic. It is apparent in the analysis of these identified capabilities that the capability to *aspire* and *Respect, Dignity and Recognition* seem to be the key capabilities which enable the realisation of other capabilities. These capabilities have multiplier effects. Treating someone with respect involves according someone identities that are not devalued or demeaning, and further having the ability to choose one's *identity*. It also means recognising one's *language* with the same priority as other languages. With these in place,

social relations and social networks can be easily promoted, enhancing the capability of *voice* which ultimately promotes *educational resilience* leading to the acquisition of *knowledge and skills* in higher education.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a descriptive and analytical account of disabled students' experiences on their way to and at UFS. The chapter foregrounded the voices of the disabled students that participated in the study. As such, students' voices were presented throughout the chapter. Importantly, the chapter includes information about the context of the students' lives outside of the university in order to situate them within the realities of their everyday lives.

I believe that the findings presented here provide data that adds to the previous research on disability and inclusion in higher education. Five key findings are discussed in the chapter. The first section discussed how disabled students conceptualise disability terminologies. I motivated the importance of capabilities approach in emphasising public deliberation and paying attention to cultural context. In the second section, I highlighted various factors that intersect with impairments in creating disadvantages (and in rare cases advantages) in the lives of disabled students. The value of the multi-dimensionality of the capabilities approach is captured in this section. The third section reported on the prejudices towards disabled students and focused our attention on not only what happens in higher education but also what happens before students enrol, and why that should be of concern to higher education. In this chapter I also highlight how some practices and policies designed to improve inclusion of disabled students actually perpetuate injustices. As such, I argue for opportunity equalisation as the basis for evaluating fairness and how HEIs are doing with regards to inclusion of disabled students. This is important since HEIs are also a product of socio-economic and cultural society. The fourth section reported how disabled students navigate power relations in achieving what they value. While individual agency and resilience is important, I also showed the importance of external agency in their lives. Moreover, the trigger effect of aspiration on agency and resilience is highlighted. The fifth section reported on those capabilities valued by

the students. Identification of these capabilities makes it possible to move beyond evaluating educational outcomes based only on graduation rates and exam performance. It enables one to measure the gap between the lived experiences of students and what they value in higher education. All this show the contributions of the capabilities approach to our understanding of disability.

In the next chapter I turn to UniVen, focusing on the same issues explored in this chapter, and consider whether my interpretation of the value of the capabilities approach holds for a different university context.

CHAPTER SIX: Experiences of Disabled Students at the University of Venda

6.1 Introduction

As highlighted in Chapter Five, disabled students at UFS face complex challenges during their transition to and at university. These challenges include access challenges (study materials, physical access), and attitudinal barriers from staff and students. This chapter reports and discusses the findings from the six disabled students (see Appendix 1 for their profiles) who took part in this study at the UniVen, the second case university. The five key themes explored in the previous chapter are discussed here:

- Perspectives of disabled students on what is disability and who 'counts' as disabled;
- The intersection between impairment and other conversion factors in creating disadvantages for the students;
- Prejudices towards these disabled students;
- Resilience shown by these students; and
- Disabled students' key valued freedoms and opportunities in higher education.

Below I introduce the students who took part in this study at UniVen, I briefly describe their lives before they entered university and recount their experiences at university.

6.2 The Students

Kudzi

Kudzi is a partially-sighted 39-year-old student in her first year at university, training to be a primary school teacher. A mother of one, Kudzi enrolled at a university in her province after finishing high school in 1994. However, she dropped out the same year as she struggled with

Afrikaans which was used for teaching and learning. She stayed at home with her mother and step-father until she married in 2006. In 2008 she divorced and enrolled at UniVen in 2013. One of her motivating factors for enrolling with UniVen was to be closer to her son, who lives with his father near the university. As someone from a different province with its own culture and language, Kudzi says she struggles with the local language, which is also used within the university by lecturers. Regardless of this challenge, Kudzi values her university as a safe haven, as her family background presents her with some social challenges (she is divorced and stays with her mother and stepfather; she does not get along with her stepfather). She does not consider herself disabled; she says that her condition is better than that of the 'disabled' e.g. those with albinism who are affected by the sun. Hot weather thwarts her progress in the university as it affects her sight. Kudzi also says they have large classes, and there are no opportunities for close contact with lecturers, thereby negatively affecting her performance. She sees her partial sightedness as an advantage, because she has learned to work hard and to plan her work in advance. Kudzi regards the DU highly and the services she gets there (e.g. large print materials and access to internet). She says she manages to pull through in the university because of her maturity and personal character.

Mpho

Mpho is a 22-year-old physically-impaired second-year Law student who came straight into the university from a mainstream school. He is the current Disabled Student Council Chairperson at the university.[28] His right leg hurts and gets swollen at times, but he does not use a wheelchair or any assistive device. Because his condition is invisible to many people, he constantly has to explain to both students and lecturers why he is part of the DU. When Mpho was in his final year at high school he spend a long time in hospital, and had to repeat his high school exams. Mpho's father and half-brother's right legs also hurt. As a result, he thinks that his condition is linked to witchcraft i.e. someone is casting evil spirits on his family. Although he views himself as non-disabled, he says he accepts that he is different from other students. Like the majority of students in this study, Mpho does not know of any disability-related legislation even though he is studying Law (a

[28] At UniVen disabled students vote for their own representatives in their Disabled Students Representative Council.

programme which deals with core issues of human rights). Long teaching and learning hours affect him as his leg gets swollen if he sits for long hours. He initially wanted to specialise in electrical engineering, but he changed his plans as he cannot do difficult manual tasks.

Musa

Musa is a 29-year-old male studying Law. He has cerebral palsy and this affects his mobility due to balance and co-ordination problems. UniVen was not his first choice; rather, it was the only university that accepted him as his high school grades were low. He uses a battery-powered scooter secured on his behalf by the DU. He is grateful for the scooter, which now enables him faster mobility going from one lecture hall to the other. Musa comes from a poor socio-economic background and his university education, like all the participating students at UniVen, is funded by the government, through the NSFAS disability bursary. He says that at times he fails to attend classes that are conducted in buildings without ramps or lifts. At residences, just like other scooter or wheelchair users, Musa cannot access most student residences except his own residence and that for female wheelchair users. As a result of negative personal experiences, he plans to be an advocate for the rights of disabled students when he completes his studies. He prefers being at university than at home as he does not get along with most of his family members. Musa states that he is not disabled, arguing that he can perform most of the tasks that other people do and he even performs better in class than non-disabled students.

Pat

Pat is 30 years old, and a single parent from a rural village. Her peasant parents took her to a special school when she was still young as a way of protecting her, as she used to be teased by other children and people in the community because of her albinism. The special school was under-resourced. Pat completed her high school in 2004 with average grades. She wanted to go to university, but her family could not afford the fees and no-one told her of university funding opportunities. She tried to get a job but failed, so she stayed at home and only came to university

in 2008 after a former classmate who was now at UniVen told her about the NSFAS Disability bursary. Pat got the bursary and applied at UniVen for an IT programme; because of her low high school grades she was offered the Sports, Leisure and Recreation programme. She discontinued her studies in 2011 when she got pregnant. Although Pat is grateful for the support she receives at the DU, she says the bursary funding excludes other personal needs e.g. the skin lotions she requires. Because she is also supporting her son, the financial support she gets is inadequate. Pat says there are few job opportunities in her field of study, so when she is done with her studies she will take anything that comes her way as long as it gives her a better life. Pat thinks that all people are disabled in some way, because humans have limitations. She feels happier at university than at she is home because of the way most people in the village treat her, but she misses her son who stays with her mother.

Sipho

Sipho is a 21-year-old partially-sighted first-year student. He did not proceed straight from high school to university. After finishing high school Sipho gave his personal documents to a high school teacher who was facilitating his university applications because his illiterate parents were not in a position to help him and his home is in a remote area. The teacher died when he was still processing the application and Sipho did not recover his documents from the teacher's family. Without those documents he could not apply to a university, so he opted to go to a Further Education and Training (FET) college, which didn't require much paperwork. It was only after finishing a diploma from the FET college that Sipho was able to apply to UniVen. Some of his classes are very large and the rooms are small, and some students must stand during lectures. Because of the limitations caused by being partially-sighted, he says that he is quick to tell other students and even lecturers about his condition so that he can sit in the front during lectures. Sipho says that long teaching hours affect him as it strains his eyes. Sipho says that he is disabled, arguing that he is partially-sighted and there are impairment limitations as a result of that. Unlike other students in this study who feel more comfortable within the university than at home, Sipho feels better at home than at the university, as his family understand him better than people at university.

Toni

Toni is a blind 28-year-old male student doing his honours degree in Human Resources. He went to under-resourced special schools. Toni wanted to study Law, but during the registration process he was told that Law programme was not funded by the Department of Social Development. As a result, he opted to do the Human Resources Management programme because it was on the Department of Social Development funding list. In his culture, being visually impaired is associated with a curse from ancestors as a result of witchcraft carried out by the parents, but Toni does not believe that his parents contributed to his visual impairment. Although his church has been supportive, Toni says that he has been segregated by members in the church choir. The ability to perform tasks that humans do is important in his identity. Toni regards himself as disabled but says that he is capable of fulfilling many social roles. The university is a great place for him as it offers him the opportunity to exercise independence, unlike at home where everyone is cautious about his physical abilities and thus place limits on what he can do.

All the interviewed students have a similar rural socio-economic background; some of their parents or guardians are not educated beyond secondary school level. Others were raised and taken care of by both parents, or raised by their mothers or maternal grandmothers because their parents were either divorced or never married. Below, I move to the discussion of the findings, starting with the findings on the students' views of disability and how they perceive themselves.

6.3 What is disability and who 'counts' as disabled?

This section reports how the disability identity is constructed, acquired and negotiated by these students. In-depth interviews with six disabled students provide their own understanding as a concept and how disability is constructed and has differing meanings and relevance to different people at different times and circumstances. Findings highlight that there are conflicting discourses that confront disabled students in higher education, so that adopting the identity of a disabled person at university is complicated and presents a dilemma to students. On the one hand, there are

benefits in the form of service provisions for those who disclose to the university. On the other hand, this disclosure has negative aspects in other contexts both within and outside the university as a result of stigma and discrimination attached to disability.

Some students accept that everyone is disabled, arguing that disability is not limited to specific individuals, but that every individual is disabled by virtue of having some limitations to the things one can do. However, others reject the concept as a stigma that makes it a shameful identifier. Those who accept the concept interpret it differently from the social model advocates mentioned in Chapter Three. Instead, they equate disability with limitations caused by the interaction between one's impairment in relation to the environment, including (but not limited to) the social environment. UniVen students in this study went a step further than those at UFS by connecting their reasons for avoiding being identified as disabled to the cultural views on disability. The ways in which positive and negative discourses of disability interact in disabled students' lives is illustrated in this section.

Students' conceptualisations of disability varied. Most students do not like being referred to as 'disabled' and identify themselves as 'non-disabled' students. Others argue that they are not disabled, but acknowledge difference in humanity. This was highlighted by Kudzi, Mpho and Pat:

> *I don't consider myself a disabled person. I have challenges but they don't determine the course of the life I value.* (Kudzi)

> *Through counselling and family support I don't see myself as a disabled person. I live a normal life with the leg problem. It's something I cannot change or run away from. I have to accept it. The way I walk is different from the way others walk.* (Mpho)

> *I don't believe in disability. We all have disabilities because some people can't do certain things which a 'disabled' person can do e.g. we all have feelings and we cry and laugh. So I believe all people have disabilities.* (Pat)

Disability is associated with challenges and because some of these challenges do not stop students from pursuing their life courses and that everyone has challenges, these students distance

themselves from identified with the concept. Kudzi, Mpho and Pat here choose to view disability as a passing feature of their identities. However, other students with significant impairments accept being identified as disabled, but they interpret it to mean bodily limitations:

> *When I go to lectures, I tell people that I'm partially sighted so that they can reserve a place for me at the front where I will be near to the lecturer.* (Sipho)

There are variations in how these students conceptualise disability. The uniformity of a disability category is again (as at UFS) disputed. However, all students share the idea that disabled people are full human beings and this is measured by being able to perform roles done by any student in higher education.

In line with the social model views about disability construction, Kudzi conceptualises disability in terms of physical appearance; she views herself as partially sighted and not disabled:

> *Sometimes they [disabled people] don't look very nice which makes me feel very sad because they don't choose to be like that...I can see partially so it's much better than disability…It's usually hot in this area that's why I cover my skin like this, so imagine if you have albinism in this place; what's happening to you and we have [albinos] here and they look pink and orange, and I can only sympathise.* (Kudzi)

Discussion

How can we explain a situation where some disabled students reject disability identity, while at the same time registering as disabled students? Higher education has not engaged much with disability terminologies and most students in this study view disability as a deficient identity. This explains why disclosing disability status continues to be a challenge in higher education. Disabled students struggle against inclusivity and social acceptability based on bodily ideals. In order to get services that enable them to be on equal terms with other students, disabled students register with DU and conveniently accept an identity, which they also reject when it brings negative issues in their lives. The decision to be identified as a disabled student is dependent on the perceived costs and benefits. As previous research has found, even when students disclose a disability to the

university in order to receive services, there is reluctance to view disability as a key identifier (Fuller *et al.*, 2009; Riddell & Weedon, 2014). This is denied by the medical model, which prescribes medical solutions to disability issues, and the social model, which views disability from a social problem perspective. Both models deny a role for human agency in the construction and deconstruction of disability.

Kudzi's views above show the cultural construction of disability, not by means of creating barriers but that impairment as a concept can also be socially constructed. While Kudzi is concerned with the 'skin' as she seems to prioritise it (the words *pretty* and *light* featured in our conversation), she categorises albinism as a disability; yet Pat, who is albino, doesn't identify herself as such. Even though Kudzi is registered as a disabled student, she does not categorise herself as such, but labels others she thinks belong to this category. Kudzi's views seem to suggest that disabled people also hold different attitudes towards other impaired people. There exists a hierarchy among different types of disabilities, with some disabilities more socially acceptable than others. This challenges the idea of a homogenous disability group. Her view can also be interpreted as a way of enhancing her status and distancing herself from the 'disabled' group (in this case those with albinism, which she perceives as lower in the hierarchy). Such attitude is likely to further create stigma. Inclusion policies thus need to attend to these subtle prejudices in order to create wholly inclusive campuses.

The capabilities approach captures these complexities around construction and the power exercised in defining disability and disability identities. Sen (2006:14) argues that, "Muslims, like all other people in the world, have many different pursuits, and not all of their priorities and values need to be placed within their singular identity of being Islamic'. In the same manner, 'disabled' students have plural identities, priorities and values that need to be considered in higher education. The capabilities analysis argues that impairment and disability are aspects of human diversity and not individuals' total identity: an important argument in relation to connections between disability and disabled students' identities. As has been shown in this study, disability can impede the success of disabled students in higher education when support is not available, but it is not always the case that having a disability or impairment automatically excludes one from higher education.

The next section reports how various factors interact with students' impairments in creating disadvantages for them.

6.4 The intersection between impairment and conversion factors in the creation of disadvantages for students with impairments

In this section, the intersections of gender, geographical location, class and race, culture, institutional practices with impairment in creation of disadvantages, are reported. Thematic analysis of the interviews identified how various exogenous and endogenous factors interact with impairment in creating disadvantages. I begin by presenting the findings on the relationship between impairment and gender.

6.4.1 Impairment, Gender and Disadvantage

From a distance it seems that gender is not an issue in the lives and experiences of most students in this study as data reveal similar levels of disadvantages between male and female students. There was nothing to suggest gender-based patterns of disadvantage. A closer examination, however, shows gendering and dehumanisation of disabled students. Pat's educational costs are covered by a disability bursary that caters for her registration, tuition, study materials, accommodation and health needs. However, the bursary does not cover her child's needs.

> *I depend only on the bursary for all my needs and I have a baby to take care of also. I have to take half of my bursary money and buy stuff for my baby. It is challenging for me.* (Pat)

Even with the help of her (widowed, unemployed) mother, who takes care of the child during the semesters, Pat struggles. Although this is happening to a woman, the effect would be the same if Pat was a male student with a child to support. What is evident here is the concentration by funding agencies on giving assistance without paying attention to the varied financial needs of disabled students. On the other hand, Mpho downplays the significance of gender dynamics in his life:

If it was a woman experiencing what I go through it might be have been difficult to handle. Having said that, much depends with a person: whether you can turn negative experiences into positive experiences.

His response might be aligned to the societal thinking that women are weaker than men. The second part sums up how most students in the study react towards gendered experiences. They summon all their energies and use their agency in minimising the disadvantages that might be posed by the interplay between gender and impairment.

6.4.2 Impairment, Class and Disadvantage

Another relationship that emerged from the data is that between impairment and socio-economic class in the creation of disadvantages. While most disadvantages in South Africa are stratified along race and class, with race being a major determinant in the class structure, UniVen has most students belonging to one ethnic group. As a result, most of the discussions here focus on class and not race as previously highlighted at UFS. In the new democratic South Africa, universities are still struggling with that history. Thus, it is not a surprise that all six participants from this historically black/African university are black and come from poor socio-economic backgrounds. When this background combines with impairments it creates further disadvantages. This is exemplified by Pat's experiences. When Pat finished high school in 2004, she stayed at home (a rural village) for four years. Although she qualified to go to university, her mother, a single parent, could not afford university fees. Pat thought universities were only for 'the rich people,' even though funding arrangements like NSFAS bursary were in place. This information was not made available to her at her poor special school. As a result, she stayed home after graduating from high school. Although she tried to look for employment, she failed to secure any, with potential employers seemingly not interested to hire her because of her albinism. It was only in 2009 that through a former classmate that she became aware of the NSFAS bursary and applied to UniVen. By that time she was pregnant and the father of her child refused to take responsibility. Although she finally got into the university and is now in her fourth year, Pat is studying Sport, Leisure and Recreation which, if she had a choice, would not have chosen as she thinks that employability chances are limited.

6.4.3 Impairment, Culture and Disadvantage

One of the central findings unique to UniVen data was the connection between impairment and culture in the creation of disadvantages for students. When reference was made to the concepts, 'disability' or 'with disabilities', the students did not identify with those labels.

Students explained their cultural views regarding people with impairments:

> *The Pedi culture view[s] visual impairment as a curse from God or ancestors as a result of my parents/family's involvement in witchcraft.* (Toni)

> *I think my parents took me there [special school] because people in the community were calling me names when I was still young*. (Pat)

These strong culturally-linked definitions came out only at UniVen. This could be a result of the fact that all interviewed students at UniVen come from rural communities, unlike those at UFS who come from urban communities where traditional cultures might not be as strong. Similarly, Mpho thinks that his impairment has to do with someone casting evil spells on his family. However, it needs to be acknowledged that not all cultural attitudes are negative to disabled people:

> *Some believe that to have an albino child means [good] luck. Some even want just to be greeted by albinos saying this might bring them luck.* (Pat)

> *In the Venda culture, disabled people should be respected and not laughed at*. (Mpho)

Besides culture, university policies and practices intersect with impairment to create disadvantages to students with impairments.

6.4.4 Impairment, University Policies and Practices, and Disadvantage

Assessment and Accommodation policies arrangement at UniVen places students with impairments at a disadvantage. Musa says that male students using wheelchairs can only access two residences on campus: one for student leaders, the other for female wheelchair users. Again, students who have visual challenges and those who use wheelchairs find it difficult to access some

lecture halls and offices. Even if they manage to get into physical spaces like the library, accessing study material in a format that is friendly to them is also problematic:

> *We face access challenges. There are shortages of study resources such as braille books here and no assistance is provided in terms of who should assist me in searching for the books in the library.* (Toni)

However, when arrangements are made, some disadvantages disappear e.g. when I asked Musa how he feels about his electric scooter provided by the university, he said:

> *I feel very great because I am noticing that when I am moving from one place to the other within the university, I move faster than most students. I am able to get my things done on time.* (Musa)

In attending to the needs of disabled students, UniVen has established the DU to address issues affecting students with impairments. DUs have a mandate to promote equal participation of students with impairments in all university activities and to eliminate unlawful discrimination (DoE, 2005). Most students have positive stories about the DU:

> *When we want any service within the university we don't have to queue with the rest of the 11,000 [students] and that is a big relief and especially those people who can't be in queues for long periods. They have made this facility [DU] available for us and the DU manager is always available for queries, consultation, and clarification.* (Kudzi)

> *The DU try by all means to bring us adequate life conditions through their services.* (Sipho)

Additionally, the Disability Student Council (DSC), a student representative body for disabled students, has also been established at UniVen as a platform to represent the interests of disabled students. Members of the Council are voted for by disabled students along the same lines as members of the SRC. Although there were mixed views about the DSC from students as highlighted below, the initiative by UniVen is commendable:

> *If we want something we have our own council, the Disability Student Council. We go through the chairman who sometimes calls a meeting here and we raise issues, if he has answers he will respond. If he does not have the answers he looks into the matter*. (Pat)

> *Our student leaders are only concerned about themselves, actually they are [only] interested in solving problems that affect them individually, not us all*. (Musa)

The DU and the DSC give students with impairments at UniVen a platform to enhance their capability for voice.

6.4.5 Impairment, Geographical location and Disadvantage

From the data it emerged that one's geographical location plays a significant part in either reducing or enhancing disadvantage among students with impairments at UniVen. As mentioned earlier in Chapter Two, UniVen is situated in the northern part of South Africa where there is year-round sunshine. It can get extremely hot in the summer months (August to March), averaging 27ºC and sometimes reaching 45ºC. Extreme weather challenges Kudzi (partially blind) and Pat (albino):

> *I can't walk in the sun without sunglasses and it causes me to have severe headaches if I walk in the sun without shades. If I go in the wind again it's another story, if it's cold it's another story so I don't have much freedom as I used to have before the injury*. (Kudzi)

> *There is sunscreen I have to use every day and it is very expensive. There is SPF 20/40 but I use SPF 60 because this place is very hot. It is costly here than in big towns and I have to buy it every month* (Pat)

If UniVen was located in an area with mild temperatures, Kudzi and Pat would not be experiencing these challenges. Still on the issue of geographical location is the distance from modern medical facilities. The nearest town to UniVen, Louis Tritchard, is around 80 kilometres away. People like Pat or Mpho who need specialised medical attention have no access to health care services nearby. Thus, geography works as a significant conversion factor for disabled students at UniVen, producing greater disadvantages than would be the case in a different region with mild temperatures and better facilities.

6.4.6 Type of impairment and Disadvantage

Data also highlight the connections between type of impairment and disadvantages. Kudzi, Musa, Toni and Sipho often face challenges accessing study materials and buildings when structures are not put in place. The ultimate result is failure to prepare well for exams and tests, and failure in

their coursework. When this happens, they risk their bursaries being withdrawn because one of the conditions is that they attain a specific pass mark each semester. Mpho can access study materials and lecture halls, but when lectures are far apart, walking from one hall to the other strains his leg. However, Pat's challenges are mostly about funds to take care of her skin and her child. She does not find accessing buildings and study materials challenging.

Discussion

Although tackling disadvantage has been the preoccupation of most studies, little is known about how different factors cluster around impairment to produce/reproduce disadvantages for students with impairments. This is partly due to the treatment of impaired individuals as a homogenous group. The gap in the literature makes a strong case for an intersectional analysis of disability issues. This section aims to fill that gap. The experiences of disabled students described here demonstrate the interaction between personal, environmental, economic, cultural, social factors and impairment in the construction and deconstruction of disadvantages. According to Bayat (2014), there are tremendous shortcomings regarding disability programmes in Africa, mostly not as a result of lack of resources, but due to the misunderstanding of disability. In light of this and drawing from the students' interviews, it is important to understand how various factors interact with impairment.

While the literature is laden with reports that associate impairment, other social variables (especially gender and race) and disadvantage (e.g. poverty and inequality), this section has shown that the relationship is not straightforward. It has been established (Emmett, 2006; Groce *et al.*, 2013) that there is a link between poverty or inequality, gender and disability. These studies report that disabled black women face more inequalities than their disabled male counterparts. This study found a somewhat a different dimension. The link between impairment and more disadvantages for male than male participants did not emerge explicitly. However, this '*de*gendered' nature of issues in my study is not surprising. A similar point was raised by Rohleder and Swartz (2009) who argue that disabled people are usually deemed to be asexual and not part of the sexual world.

As a result of this exclusion, both male and female participants reported similar challenges. Again, because the studies that report the strong link between disability and disadvantage for women are outside higher education, this could be evidence of the importance and potential nature of higher education in equalising the lives of disabled students.

There is an interaction between how a society attaches meaning to disability and how it treats disabled people (Bayat, 2014). Some African societies regard disabled children as a punishment from God for one's sins or the sins of ancestors (Sousso & Yogtiba, 2009). People with impairments are then excluded and segregated. It was thus not unexpected that, with the exception of Toni, students did not refer to themselves as disabled or with disabilities. This might be partly due to the negative cultural and societal beliefs towards disability or disabled people. One's cultural view about disability is therefore central to the position or status given to an individual with impairment. Because cultural norms can undermine the achievement of goals by disabled students, attending to the inclusion matters for disabled students will be futile if local cultural practices have determining power over who can achieve what and when.

As was seen from the previous chapter, Musa's statement supports the conceptualisation of disability through the capabilities approach, impairment alone is not a qualification for disability. When opportunities are limited through inadequate arrangements, disability occurs. The major challenges of accessing buildings and study materials are not biological, but a product of human and social interaction and arrangements. University policies and practices can either challenge disadvantage, or perpetuate and intensify it. Another important point derived from the above narratives is that the factors that bring advantages in some disabled people's lives are the same things that create disadvantages for other disabled students. Of course cultures are dynamic: in the Global North, the treatment of disabled people has evolved from eliminating and excluding, to institutionalised treatment, and now to inclusion (Linton, 2006). As such, there are some positives that can be tapped from different cultures and societal beliefs in addressing disadvantages in disability issues. The social model was developed in the Global North, in 'secular contexts'

(Rhodes, Nocon, Small & Wright, 2008); it fails to engage with conceptions of disability among people from different cultural and faith backgrounds.

Although disadvantages seem to be exacerbated by the interplay between impairment and class among the students, choice and agency, albeit it constrained, appears to be within reach of everyone, regardless of class. For example, Toni relies on his friends if he has challenges accessing physical spaces and study materials within the university. On the other hand, Kudzi (as a result of family issues) and Pat (as a result of societal attitude in her village) stay on campus during semester breaks as they feel more secure (emotionally and physically) within the university than at home. On a more positive note, this section also shows how the educational funding of the South African government through various organs (e.g. NSFAS disability grants to students) has played an important role in creating opportunities for those unable to fund for higher education studies.

Indeed, 'when we examine the experiences of a gendered, racialized and disabled individual, we arrive at a complex web of cultural interpretation' (Meekosha, 2006). Understanding the experiences of disabled students from an intersectional view is valuable in pointing to specific areas where policy intervention is required. For example, for many students, poverty exacerbates their already socially-excluded experience as they have fewer social and economic resources to address disability-related challenges. Focusing on one standpoint (gender, impairment, race or culture) inevitably misses the larger picture concerning dimensions of disadvantage. Usually disadvantage comes from varied sources; impact differs when these intersect with impairments and disabilities are produced. When we take different variables into the frame, a larger picture and a clearer understanding is assured. In seeking to understand the inclusion of disabled students in higher education from a social justice perspective, identifying fertile functionings and corrosive disadvantages holds particular value because they point to specific areas for intervention.

Conceptually, these findings also highlight the problem with Roemer's (1998) differentiation of sources of inequality. According to Roemer, factors like choices and effort are individual-based

and an individual can be held responsible as a source of inequality. In the case of Pat, her choices are seemingly personal and individual, but are also informed by the circumstances she is in and the environment around her: the remoteness of her village and her socio-economic background. As such, not all choices are independent of an individual's environment. Many factors cluster to create disadvantages for Pat. Her remote location led her to miss information about funding opportunities; her (poor) socio-economic background resulted in her attending poorly-resourced schools where she obtained average grades that in turn meant that her choices of universities and programmes of study were limited. Being a parent without support from the university or NSFAS further disadvantages her. These corrosive disadvantages have a negative influence on what Pat can achieve in higher education now.

A capabilities understanding of disability is important for policy, as it goes further than stating the variables to exploring how they are related to people's opportunities and freedoms, and their agency. This section highlights that disadvantage at different times, locations and contexts. It is not always correct to equate impairment with disadvantage; various conversion factors play a part in the lives of disabled students. Disability transcends other social divides as it affects students of all gender, religion and class strata. Going back to the critiques raised by Sayed *et al.* (2003) in Chapter Two on the dominant conceptualisations of educational inclusion and exclusion, it is important to understand the ideological and structural forces that perpetuate the exclusion of disabled students in higher education and how these are legitimised by the education system.

Below I report on the ideological and structural forces that work against full inclusion of disabled students in higher education.

6.5 Prejudices towards disabled students

This section reports on the prejudice towards disabled students at UniVen. Disabled students continue to face challenges at UniVen despite the presence of institutional policies seeking to

address inequalities and support for the egalitarian principles of such policies. Although this is based on self-disclosure, figures from UniVen of the registered disabled students from 2010-2013 show a decline (see Table 2.1). However, this section is not focused on the numbers, but rather on what happens once disabled students are on their way to and in higher education. While the actual number of disabled students accessing and succeeding in SAHE is unknown, more needs to be done to enable full inclusion for every student.

6.5.1 Students' choices regarding University and Programme of study

Students' narratives highlight that they had limited knowledge about higher education that resulted in them making uninformed decisions regarding the university and programmes of study. Most of them are enrolled in courses they would not have chosen if they had been well-informed and had the right to choose any programmes of study. For Pat, Sipho, Musa and Kudzi, UniVen was not their first choice university. They argue that it offers lower quality education compared to the one offered in other universities. The fact that UniVen, with its vision of being the 'centre of tertiary education for rural and regional development in Southern Africa', is providing education to disadvantaged students is not factored in by those who measure the quality of education or relevance of each university. Again, while the perceptions about the bad quality of education is felt by all students, disabled students are burdened even more. Higher education might find those requiring extra provisions (reasonable accommodations e.g. extra-time) as placing extra burden on them, inhibiting or delaying their projects towards an improved quality of education. Pat's narrative below highlights how the whole education system disadvantages students, not only disabled students:

> *I applied for IT but I was told that it was full. I was told to look for other optional programmes. My second choice was Business Management and there I was told that because of my grades, I don't qualify. I went to almost all faculties but I was told that there was no space. I gave up here and went to this Technikon called Techniven; then I went there and applied for Financial Management and everything was well. A year later, the chairperson for the Disability Unit called me and advised me to apply at the School of Health for a degree in Sports, Leisure and Recreation. I told myself that I*

would apply and would change the programme in the middle of the semester because I was not interested in it [but] I was not able to change the programme. (Pat)

While Pat's challenges seem to be common to all students, they place her further into disadvantage compared to other students. Pat accessed university education, but she is pursuing a course she has no interest in and does not think people with the qualification are employable.

6.5.2 Funding regime and conditions

Given students' poor socio-economic backgrounds, all six students in this study are being funded by external funds through NSFAS bursaries or other government departments. While funding is made available to enable them to study, little effort is put towards cultivating and opening the horizons of future career paths. For example, Toni was enrolled for an LLB degree but is not studying law:

I wanted to study Law but I ended I ended up doing Bachelor of Administration in Human Resources Management. They offered me LLB but I changed because of financial implications. I am funded by the Department of Labour and they told me that they were not funding Law studies. So I switched as a result of the funding. (Toni)

While funds have enabled Toni to access higher education, his choices were limited. By focusing on what he actually values, we are able to identify an injustice. Although Toni is still enrolled, there might be others who faced similar conditions of being forced to do a certain programmes due to the funding arrangements and in the process failed to cope and dropped out of higher education. When students like Toni drop out or fail their courses, it is often reported as a result of under-preparedness on their part. Their schooling and social backgrounds are often blamed. From Toni's case, it is clear that the higher education system itself is not well-prepared to accept diverse students. This subtle disadvantage brought about by the system is overlooked and not reported.

Besides limiting the options of courses available to disabled students, most funding regimes are also conditional, based on satisfactory performance in coursework. This is a fair condition, but if

Toni struggles, which is possible because he prepared to study Law and not Human Resources, the bursary is withdrawn. Students are expected to pass regardless of other challenges they may be facing. Furthermore, at times the disbursement of these funds is delayed. When I was at UniVen for data collection, I observed Pat compiling the names of disabled students who had not yet received their grants. While Pat and other disabled students struggled with funding issues, other students proceeded with their studies. This, then, puts disabled students at a disadvantage, as their work is disrupted, so a failure to provide needed resources at the right time is an injustice. A failure in higher education shatters not only the dreams and visions for students, but also for their families who hope that their children's education is a route out of poverty, as highlighted by Sipho: "My parents said that now that I am at the university, they are happy as I will soon be able to improve the standard of living for the whole family." Just like the issue of lack of information on programmes, funding issues affect all students, disabled and non-disabled. Nonetheless, disabled students are affected more by the funding arrangements because their choices of programme of study are already limited as other fields are difficult for students with certain impairments e.g. chemistry for those with visual challenges.

6.5.3 Access issues

Students highlighted different areas within the university where they face access challenges: social space and activities, accommodation arrangements, and access to teaching and learning facilities.

Social space

Most of the students interviewed lack social networks and are not involved in extra-curricular activities, thus reducing opportunities for informal learning. When asked if they belong to any social club, all students' answers were in the negative. This is different from UFS where a significant number of disabled students (not in this study) are part of the national Paralympic team. While this can also be attributed to lack of agency on the part of students, the university is not doing enough to foster social capital formation for disabled students, which is also part of learning

and of importance to all students. Musa highlighted this frustration: "There are no sporting facilities for us [disabled students] and we feel the pain especially when our non-disabled friends tell us that they have been to other places like Durban for sport." Lack of understanding of disability matters seems to be one of the underlying causes of the problems mentioned above. Students reported negative comments that belittle the severity of some of the challenges they face. For example, Mpho's leg gets swollen if he stands up for a long time. When other students see him getting first preference when queuing for services, some comment that he is 'simulating disability'. Similarly, Pat highlighted this challenge:

> *Some of my lecturers don't seem to understand me if I tell them that I can't see what they write on the board. I sometimes think that they think I am lying and that I am an attention-seeker. Every time I have to remind them to write bigger fonts and I am told to sit in front*. (Pat)

If there were social spaces for disabled students to mingle with non-disabled counterparts, then an understanding of each other's life experiences might be built. The absence of social facilities for disabled students at UniVen could be as a result of the approach highlighted in Chapter Three, which views people with impairments as requiring attention and pity. The limited social space for disabled students does not end with a lack of extra-curricular activities; it spans how student accommodation facilities are arranged.

Student residence

Disabled students at UniVen who stay on campus are housed in two residences (one for males and one for females) designated for disabled students. This might have been done with the intention to provide services for them while they are housed together in one place. Sadly though, this alienates disabled students from the rest of the student body. Students who use wheelchairs and those who are visually challenged cannot access other student hostels besides these two and the one for prefects. This was highlighted by Toni, Musa and Sipho:

> *The university is not well set up. Sometimes I cannot access other residences. I need an assistant to do that.* (Toni)

We [disabled students who use wheelchairs] can only access two student residences. This is wrong; it seems as if the university is isolating us from others. We want to visit others. (Musa)

As a partially-sighted student they allocate me a room upstairs. When I object they say there is no alternative room. So I accepted and just struggle accessing my room. (Sipho)

Accessing teaching and learning facilities

Teaching and learning also highlights prejudices against disabled students. Some of the prejudices however, are not specific to disabled students. Those that are specific to disabled students include: failure to provide reading material in accessible formats, ignorance on how to assist disabled students, inaccessible lecture halls, and unfriendly teaching methods. Some of the challenges emanate from how lectures were structured:

The way the timetable is arranged is not good. At times we have classes from 8am to 3pm without breaks. So as a partially-sighted student, my eyes get tired. (Sipho)

Some classes are conducted in rooms that are far way and at times it takes longer to get there. By the time I arrive, there, I would be already late. (Toni)

Findings also suggest that some offices are inaccessible to disabled students and no effort is made to arrange alternative consultation arrangements with students. In addition, some lecture halls are inaccessible to wheelchair users who have to struggle to have alternative venues arranged. These actions inevitably reduce contact and, therefore, opportunities for disabled students to forge meaningful relationships with the wider university community. At times the size of the lecture rooms and number of students can be problematic:

The condition is not stable. We are 70-something, sometimes we attend in a class which is suitable to [contain] 40 students which means some students will get education standing. (Sipho)

In one of my classes we are around 700 which means that we sit on the floor at times. (Kudzi)

These challenges may seem small but affect disabled students' progress. These issues persist at times because they affect a few students who are expected to adjust, instead of the system

changing. This is not a problem unique to UniVen or South Africa. The Trailblazer Report (2013) found that only half of the one hundred UK universities studied had made all their teaching rooms, study rooms and libraries fully accessible for students with mobility difficulties.

6.5.4 Support Services and Student Governance

Most students appreciate the role of the DU and DSC in assisting them in their university lives.

> *We have our own Disabled Student Council which assist disabled students e.g. during registration process at the beginning of the year*. (Toni)

> *The DU serves me well. I come to the DU where I can use assistive devices when my eyes are tired and I study here. I don't have to crowd with rest of the 11,000 students in the main library and fight for internet. We have everything here.* (Kudzi)

6.5.5 Curriculum and Pedagogies

Findings suggest that the current UniVen curriculum falls short of promoting the inclusion of disabled students.

> *The other worst experience I face is when I am writing my research reports. My supervisor makes some comments; he uses the track changes facility. The speech software I use cannot pick the comments in the track changes. I use a keybody and it is difficult to see the comments. It hinders me from progressing with my research because I have to look for a person to read the comments.* (Toni)

> *I have bad handwriting and I feel that at times I get lower marks from lecturers who do not bother to ask me why my handwriting is not illegible to them.* (Musa)

While Toni and Musa appear to lack agency to bring these issues to their lecturers' attention, the real problem is a lack of space for open-minded dialogue between students and lecturers.

Discussion

Attempts to tackle injustice towards disabled students in higher education should not only focus on overtly discriminatory practices but also appreciate subtle and unintentional forms of intolerance, which can be equally damaging. A university is not neutral: it can either promote or inhibit social justice. Findings show that the gap between institutional intent to attend to inclusion and widen participation of disabled students and reality can be wide. In Toni's case the supervisor is doing a great job in supervising and giving comments, yet he is ignorant about the effect of how he is presenting the comments. For Musa, he is being unfairly judged based on his handwriting. In a socially just system, through the affected students' agency, alternative arrangements would be provided. However, students are not at the same level of exercising agency. It becomes apparent that educational resilience capability be promoted in and through higher education.

Students' stories highlight a lack of career guidance with regards to study course choice. Few students among the participants are pursuing the degree programmes of their choice or know the career paths they want to pursue afterwards. Although access is facilitated by the availability of funds, lack of career guidance is worrying. The funding universities can argue that their mandate is to provide finances only, and career advice is not within their jurisdiction, but committing money to a project without supporting structures is failing not only the students but their overall goal of the initiatives. Unlike most students, disabled students (especially those with visual and mobility challenges) have limited choices in terms of programmes of study (Fuller *et al.*, 2007). As such, limiting them further as a result of lack of information support (as in Pat's case) is an injustice that could lead to dropping out. It is no surprise then that a ten-year review in 2009 revealed that after spending 12 billion Rand to improve access of high school students from poor backgrounds to higher education, only 19% had graduated (Kadalie, 2011).

One of the reasons for ignorance about courses and choices is that students are underprepared for higher education. Unlike at UFS where most students that went to special schools attended good ones, at UniVen those who went to special schools attended poorly-resourced schools. This

schooling system produces students inadequately prepared for higher education. In addition, higher education is also ill-equipped to accommodate these disabled students. The issue of access becomes a political question regarding the kind of schooling disabled students attend and how they are accommodated in higher education. As such, I agree with Foxcroft and Stumpf (2005:18): 'the time is right for South African higher education to stop moaning about Matric and the poor quality of learners produced by the school system'. As I have argued elsewhere, 'an expanded higher education sector that offers opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge required for society's flourishing even at the basic education level (through the production of teachers, administrators and policy-makers) must be developed' (Mutanga, 2014:449). Walker and Unterhalter (2007) argue that education should equip all students with critical thinking by making them aware of social stereotypes, prejudice and exclusion processes.

Although social relationships play a critical role in enriching quality of life and are viewed as necessary for emotional wellbeing because they provide a sense of feeling loved and valued (Papasotiriou & Windle 2012), these students are denied this opportunity at UniVen. This accommodation arrangement is unjust as it is against inclusion principles. Even if disabled students at UniVen were able to access other students' residences, the set-up of separating them from the rest of the students perpetuates social exclusion. This analysis is important in drawing our attention to the fact that social inclusion could be a form of 'window-dressing' without any fundamental changes to the exclusionary behaviour towards disabled students. There are indeed different programmes set up to improve inclusion of disabled students in higher education.

While there is no doubt that the services provided by the DU and the DSC are helping students, a closer look at the experiences of these students also reveals another side. The existence of DU and DSC can be viewed as working against the principle of social inclusion. These two entities separate disabled students. The opportunity for education constitutes not just a means of achieving learning outcomes but also a space for social interaction, individual development and psychosocial support (Trani *et al.,* 2011). Having a DU separate from the rest of the student affairs does not help in broadening the understanding of human diversity for both disabled and non-disabled students. It

appears to be a ‘superficial form of inclusion’ (McLeod, 2011) that ‘purport[s] to be inclusive yet that often leave students isolated and disengaged’ (Hockings, 2011). While disabled students understand challenges faced by others with similar impairments, one cannot fully grasp the experiences of disabled students.

As such, a trade-off is needed when handling student governance, especially the issue of having another student body, otherwise the university would appear to be promoting the idea that non-disabled students are too different from others and cannot represent the interest of all students and neither can the non-disabled students represent the interests of disabled students. Regardless of these persistent challenges, disabled students strive to achieve their goals as will be reported in the next section.

6.6 Resilience among disabled students

The fourth theme that came out of the data is around resilience among disabled students in higher education. Findings in this section report how students exercise their agency in achieving what they value. This section illustrates that disabled students are not passive, but active agents who devise survival strategies when faced with challenges. Furthermore, it will also show that though the exercise of individual agency is important, on its own it is not enough; however, it does benefit from the support of external agencies. The findings report the connection between aspirations and resilience; agency and resilience, and the factors that enabled resilience.

6.6.1 Aspiration and Resilience

As shown in the first section, students’ narratives refute the idea that disabled people are passive and incompetent. They have goals and are committed towards a better future trajectory:

My plan was to do LLB. (Toni)

The standard of education in South African universities is not the same. I wanted to enrol at University of Cape Town. The main reason is that I want to get better standards of education. (Sipho)

6.6.2 Agency and Resilience

This study revealed resilience as a challenge to the discourse that views disabled people as passive. As shown in the previous section, students' narratives question how concepts of disability are understood. Disabled students are not doing anything that non-disabled students can't do. Instead, resilience is a response to disablement conditions, rather than to bodily conditions. For example, Musa struggles accessing some buildings on campus and Sipho struggles accessing study materials but they keep focused on their studies.

6.6.3 Factors that enable resilience

These students are able to persist not only because of their own individual characteristics but also through the external support they get from their social relations and social networks.

Individual acts of resistance against oppression

For some students, their personal experiences nurture their subsequent resilience,

There is a student bar on campus and we usually go there to play pool but it was inaccessible for students using wheelchairs so we approached the Chairperson for Disabled Student Council and it was sorted. (Musa)

Some of my lecturers don't seem to understand if I tell them that I can't see what they write on the board. I think sometimes they think I am lying and that I seek attention. Every time that I went to class I remind them that you must write bigger things. (Pat)

In response to disabling practices, interviewed students employed different strategies to resist internalising derogatory messages and practices. Some students react to disabling practices by physically distancing themselves from environments where they receive demeaning treatment. Through their individual agency, they decide not to remain in denigrating situations. Five of the six participants (Pat, Kudzi, Toni, Kudzi and Musa) admitted that they stay on campus during the holiday breaks as the university environment is socially safer than their own communities and homes. The university environment offers a safe haven for them and they use it to lessen direct exposure to negative experiences:

> *Usually I prefer being here [at the university] because I am able to exercise my independence here but at home this is difficult because they are cautious about my safety and they will be saying 'don't do that' or 'you will not do that.'* (Toni)

> *During semester breaks I go home for a few weeks to see my child and I come back. When I am here I feel very happy. At home, I don't feel very happy, some people will be teasing me about albinism.* (Pat)

> *I like being here [at the university] than at home because all is not well there. There are lot of issues at home, my parents are divorced, I am divorced. Stepmother or my Stepdad, or I have to deal with my son's father. It's very complicated for me so university is peaceful.* (Kudzi)

Toni and Pat highlight that there are things they value (independence and being respected as a full human being) that are absent in their communities and homes. As a result they prefer being in a university environment even during semester breaks. These decisions come at a cost of not spending time with their loved ones. Kudzi removes herself from her home because of her family and has nothing to do with disability or impairment. However, this shows that disabled students are likely to have greater challenges: some linked to their impairments and some common to every student.

Besides this action, disabled students also conceptualise disability differently from the dominant negative discourses. Thus, another way in which these disabled students show resilience is how they challenge the validity of stereotypes or cultural narratives about disability through three different approaches (see the first section of this chapter). Firstly they discount the legitimacy of

the dominant societal narratives about disability. Secondly, they turn discouragement that emanates from these societal narratives into motivation. Lastly, they replace derogatory narratives about disabled people with positive personal accounts. Some students resisted internalising negative narratives by discounting the weight of societal narratives about their abilities. They emphasised that they are capable to do and be what they value. As Toni states:

> *Being visually impaired…it means that I have the capacity to do a lot of things. I can show others that being disabled is not the end of the world.* (Toni)

While society looks down upon visually impaired people, Toni is not discouraged but works on highlighting to society that being disabled does not mean inability.

Instead of embracing negative external messages and allowing them to reduce their self-belief, other disabled students use insulting experiences as sources of motivation. The negative experiences give them a desire to prove their self-worth. Musa shared his own views about his childhood experiences:

> *When I was growing up people used to say that I will not go beyond primary school. Nothing is impossible on my side. If I fail to do something, I have a mouth and I will ask for help. That's why I'm saying if you are a disabled person, it's good to socialise with other people not to say 'I'm disabled, I can't achieve this and that.'* (Musa)

Most of these students refuse to allow people's beliefs to influence then negatively; on the contrary they aspire to prove people wrong.

Some of the students come from communities where some impairments are considered a curse (Toni), or are said to result from the parents' acts of witchcraft (Mpho). Instead of being discouraged by these myths, they devise internal positive strategies to succeed in their goals. Mpho, Sipho and Toni shared their daily experiences:

> *I work hard. I make myself ready on time, be it for exams or test. I am always two steps ahead of everyone.* (Mpho)

I stay positive every time and the moment I get assignments I do them on time. If I know I am going to write a test I start with the assignment and know I'm done. (Sipho)

In most cases what I do is related to academics, I do it early because I know that if I delay, I can be beaten by a deadline. (Toni)

These narratives highlight that disabled students have a big role to play in achieving their goals in higher education. Instead of taking a step back and letting people stigmatise them, they actively participate in the learning processes. The strategies they employ here (preparedness and time management) to offset impairment challenges can be employed by any student. These disabled students believe in themselves and their potential to succeed. Besides their own individual initiatives, students were helped by external structures to develop resilience.

External support against oppression

Findings highlight that resilience is not only a matter of an individual attribute or personal quality; external support (social and community) is also important in the face of structures that put barriers to their learning.

Religion

Another finding that is unique to UniVen students is how some disabled students in this study developed resilience by drawing on their religion and on their families and friends for support. However, Toni has had some bad experiences at church:

I am in the church choir. When we are practicing some dance moves I am excluded at times because they assume that I cannot cope.

These experiences show that the same institutions and spaces that support disabled students' endeavours are capable of producing and perpetuating inequalities.

Family and Friends

As for family support, Pat's parents sent her to boarding special schools from primary level because of how people in the community treated her as a result of her albinism. Unlike at UFS where some students received financial support from their parents (e.g. Carla and Jane), the best support given by most families for students at UniVen is emotional. It should also be noted that not all students have positive experience with their families and religion. As mentioned earlier, Kudzi's family offers her little support.

Family and friends shape the emergence of resilience:

> *My sister is always there for me and she is the one who always advise[d] me [to] go work hard in school.* (Musa)

> *I make friendship with people so that they can help me. At times I do not take notes in class and my friends give me the notes after the lectures.* (Toni)

This data shows that resilience can reside in the space between institutions, structures and individuals. It is not only an individual attribute, but a product of an individual's interaction with her external environment.

Discussion

This section has reported on the resilience shown by disabled students at UniVen. The findings add to our understanding of disability as an element of human diversity. Resilience as a concept is important as it can be used to reveal oppressive practices. Policy and practice in higher education should however, not celebrate the success stories of the few disabled students who exercise their agency and fight for what they are entitled to. Students believe that higher education provides them with the knowledge and skills required for success after graduation. However, they were met with a system that does not always provide timely support. Their personal experiences of disadvantage were a source of drive to be reflexive about their identity and give them the confidence for change

agency. Agency is thus important in repositioning disabled students as autonomous actors who have personal choices and preferences and whose agency should not be overlooked or underestimated. Inclusion of disabled students in higher education is not only about quantitative representation; it should 'nurture our understanding of social citizenship for disabled students' (Morley & Croft, 2011:383).

Based on these findings, it can be argued that individual agency is indeed dependent on social arrangements, among other factors (Hart, 2013). University attendance has the potential to develop the social networks of disabled students (Fuller *et al.*, 2004) through social capital formation, which enhance students' collective capabilities through socialisation and affiliation (Dubois & Trani, 2009). The university has the ability to help students challenge negative perceptions of their impairment and alter their self-concept, particularly in relation to their confidence and well-being (Papasotiriou & Windle, 2012). At UniVen, besides exercising individual agency, disabled students worked with DSC to advocate the reconstruction of images of disabled students.

It is in the best interests of the inclusion agenda to understand how religious ideas influence inclusion and exclusion. Although the religious experiences of individuals with disabilities and the religious experiences of their families or other caregivers are often overlooked in the multicultural pedagogy of special education and the practices of otherwise culturally-competent special educators (Blanks & Smith, 2009), religion is an important conversion factor for participants in this study. Future research should include wider and deeper exploration of religion and disability.

In the next section I report on students' valued freedoms and opportunities.

6.7 Disabled students' key valued freedoms and opportunities in higher education

In this section I present key freedoms and opportunities valued by the six disabled students from the UniVen.

6.7.1 Capabilities and valued Functionings

The study sought to examine the actual achievements (functionings) in the lives of these six disabled students, and how this is nurtured in and through higher education. Key freedoms and opportunities needed for them to access and succeed in university were extrapolated. Both similar and different capabilities and functionings as those highlighted in the previous chapter emerged from the UniVen data. Furthermore, differences exist in some capabilities descriptions e.g. while language capability at UFS is connected to the policy of having two official languages, at UniVen it was connected to cultural differences with students from other ethnic backgrounds experiencing some challenges when lecturers and students from the dominant local group resort to using their mother tongue.

Table 6.1: Extrapolated capabilities from functionings

Functionings from the data		**Capabilities**
Walker	Being able to ask for better teaching and learning conditions Being able to offset pressure from unsupportive people Being able to study regardless of language and other barriers	Educational Resilience
	Developing and having the required skills in one's field of study Being able to develop further skills Imagining a better future	Knowledge and imagination
	Not being diminished because of impairment Being appreciated as a person	Respect, dignity and recognition
	Being able to associate and work with peers Being able to create friendships Being able to participate in a group at the university either for learning or pleasure	Social Relations and social networks
Wolf & de-Shalit	Being able to comprehend the language of instruction Having your language understood	Language proficient
UniVen students' Data	Being able to imagine a better future	Aspirational
	Being able to be identified with a dignified label	Identity
	Being able to move from one place to the other	Mobility
	Being able (and allowed) to express your thoughts/opinions/views and make them count on issues of importance	Voice
	Being able to live without being stumbled by cultural beliefs	Culture
	Being able to have religious affiliation	Religion

6.7.2 Capabilities from Walker's (2006) List

Educational Resilience

Walker defines educational resilience as being 'able to navigate study, work and life…able to negotiate risk, to persevere academically, to be responsive to educational opportunities and

adaptive constraints. Self-reliant. Having aspirations and hopes for a good future' (Walker, 2006:128). Just like students at UFS, UniVen students show that they persevere amidst challenges from both inside and outside the university:

> *When I have some problems and I go to some of my lecturers they say to me, 'go to those people at the DSU.' I would say, 'but you are my lecturer and you are supposed to help me.' I avoid lecturers like that and work with those who understand me better…At times when I want to do an assignment but when I go to the library to look for reading materials but I don't find the books I want for that particular assignment. So I go to the computer lab for the internet, but at times when I get there the internet will be down.* (Sipho)

While it is clear that resilience is important in Sipho's case above, it is connected to agency. He uses his agency to achieve what he values. As noted in Chapter Five, students' resilience should not be used to obscure the need to address the limitations of provisions within these universities and the need to attend to practices that are unjust.

Knowledge and imagination

Similar to the sentiments expressed by disabled students at UFS, disabled students at UniVen value getting knowledge and skills in their respective fields of study. This was highlighted in both positive and negative experiences:

> *Before I enrolled for my degree in Development Studies, I did not know how people should respond when they are getting poor services from local authorities. Through the course I now know who to approach and I will take a lead when I go back to my community.* (Sipho)

> *At times group assignments put me off. Most students plagiarise in order to get good grades. I feel the assessment policies here need to be evaluated. As it is, the system is producing poor-quality graduates who can't construct even a simple English sentence. Should we just get into the university and graduate without the proper skills and knowledge?* (Kudzi)

Kudzi's concerns are genuine given the fact that students enrol for higher education to get knowledge as shown by Sipho. Kudzi highlights that in the process of knowledge acquisition, there

should be proper management and administration of the education environment (e.g. the teaching and learning process).

Respect, Dignity and Recognition

Students value being treated as full human beings. This was also expressed through both positive and negative experiences:

> *I think this university is nice. They don't look at you whether you are coming from a poor background. They are not particular about the way you dress: you wear what you want.* (Pat)

> *I once felt segregated. I was in a group for a group assignment and they said that there is no important contribution I could make. I was side-lined. Fortunately, I joined another group where I was accepted as a blind person who could make valuable contributions to the group*. (Toni)

As highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, most disabled students who took part in this study have similar socio-economic backgrounds to each other and to the majority of the student body at UniVen. During my visit for data collection, I was struck by the contrast between student attire and possession of electronic gadgets and the number of cars at student residences at UniVen and at UFS. I concluded that compared to UniVen, most UFS students are focused on designer clothing, own the latest phones and a significant number had cars. An environment like the one at UFS might intimidate and shock other students, and Pat is right in appreciating an environment where she feels she is not much different from others. Failure to understand disability issues might be among the causes behind Toni's treatment by his peers.

Social Relations and Social networks

Students value social relations and networking with their peers:

> *We [wheelchair user] only have access to two student residences on campus, our own and the one for female wheelchair users. It's wrong because it seems as if they are isolating us from the rest of the students. We want to socialise with others.* (Musa)

Because UniVen is mostly composed of one racial group, social relations are mostly confined to physical spaces and participation in extra-curriculum activities. This is different from UFS where relations are strained by having two dominant racial groups using two main languages.

6.7.3 Capabilities from Wolff and de-Shalit's (2007) list

Language Proficiency

UniVen uses only English for teaching and instruction, so the capability for language was connected to cultural differences. According to Kudzi, some lecturers at UniVen are from the Venda community, as are the majority of student population. Difficulties arise when Venda-speaking lecturers and students begin to converse in Venda in classes that are supposed to be taught in English. Language competence is important for students, both when they are conversing and when they are receptors. Kudzi dropped out from her first university as she was not competent in Afrikaans, which was used for teaching and learning (apartheid policies were still in place). Now at UniVen she faces language problems again.

6.7.4 Additional Higher Education Capabilities

Capability descriptions that came out strongly and can be foregrounded, as in Chapter Five, to stand as important capabilities for these disabled students, are: aspirational capability, the capability to a dignified identity, capability for mobility, capability for voice, capability to live without being stumbled by negative cultural beliefs and religious affiliation.

Aspirational capability

Participants in my study aspire to a better future that is connected to a successful higher education qualification. Musa says, "My plan is to be a successful lawyer and I also plan to be a disability human rights activist" while Pat says, "I hope to move to Johannesburg after my studies and get a good job there." However, these aspirations are threatened by the current arrangements in higher education, for example unsecure funding.

Identity

Similar to the views of disabled students at UFS, disabled students at UniVen also expressed a dislike for the negative identities used to define them:

> *I don't see myself as a disabled person. I live a normal life with my leg problem. It's something I cannot change or run away from. I have to accept it. The way I walk is different from the way others walk.* (Mpho)

> *I don't believe in disability. We all have disabilities because some people can't do certain things which a 'disabled' person can do. So I think all people have disabilities.* (Pat)

This capability intersects with respect, dignity and recognition capability.

Mobility

The ability and freedom to move from one place to another within the university was highlighted as important by students. Musa, Toni and Mpho highlighted the challenges they have moving from one place to the other within the campus. Because of his scooter, Musa is now able to move quickly between places on campus, but Mpho and Toni at times arrive late.

Voice

Being able to participate freely in the university, individually or collectively and making valuable contributions in decisions that affect their lives came out strongly. Because of the realisation that collective voice is more effective, students at UniVen mobilise their voices together through their own Council to get what they collectively value. "As disabled students we have our own Disabled Student Representative Council. We always push our chairperson to represent us well when he meets the university management" (Musa). Besides the capabilities, there are other capabilities unique to disabled students at UniVen.

6.7.5 Capabilities unique to UniVen students

Culture

Being able to live without being tripped by culture also emerged strongly. It was thus not unexpected that with the exception of Toni, students did not refer to themselves as 'disabled', or 'with disabilities'. This might be partly due to the negative cultural and societal beliefs about disability or disabled people. When reference was made to the concepts, *disability* or *with disabilities* it was to answer that they did not identify with those labels. Students explained their culture's views regarding people with impairments:

> *The Pedi culture view visual impairment as a curse from God or ancestors as a result of my parents/family's involvement in witchcraft.* (Toni)

> *I think my parents took me there [a special school] because people in the community were calling me names when I was still young*. (Pat)

These strong culturally-linked definitions came out only at UniVen. This could be a result of the fact that all interviewed students at UniVen come from rural communities, unlike those at UFS who come from urban communities where traditional cultures might not be as strong.

Religion

Religion featured in students' narratives as contributing to their survival in difficult times.

> *The bible sometimes consoles me at times. I feel good about the way I am because there are some comforting messages in it that we are all created in the image of God. Even some of the songs we sing at church, they sooth the soul*. (Musa)

> *I'm a ZCC [Zion Christian Church] member. Here on campus we congregate as members and advise one another and practice our religion. We are treated equally at church.* (Toni)

Discussion

In an effort to distance themselves from the medical model or discredit it, proponents of the social model have, in my view, neglected the need to understand disabled people's challenges emanating from other factors such as the individual, economic and political spheres. As a consequence of the limitations of existing perspectives to understanding disability, researchers' attention has now shifted to developing a better understanding of the multiple and intersecting social, political and cultural barriers which place obstacles in the way of access and success of disabled students (Fuller & Healey, 2009; Strnadova *et al.*, 2015). Nonetheless, these studies do not extend to addressing the freedoms and opportunities that individual disabled students value in higher education. In this section, using the capabilities approach as a frame of analysis I have introduced a language of wellbeing and agency to the inclusion of disabled students debates in South Africa, while still taking account of the relationship between individual opportunities and social arrangements that shape students' ability to convert their means to achieve into freedoms and actual achievements.

While scholars have come up with different ways of estimating capabilities, through the analysis of the narratives drawing on an existing list I have demonstrated that there is no single 'correct' approach in coming up with a list of capabilities. The capabilities across the two universities could be similar, but the functionings vary contextually. As the data has shown, most disabled students

lack opportunities and freedoms to secure their functionings. Higher education institutions and policy-makers ought to pay attention to institutional policies that determine actions and non-actions that negatively affect disabled students' opportunities to secure valued capabilities. This might be achieved through orientation programmes on inclusive and diversity issues for staff and more resources. For the general student population, this calls for the fostering of extra-curriculum, curriculum and pedagogical practices that celebrate differences and commonalities, and that develop student awareness, empathy and action with regard to the lives of disabled students.

One way of resolving the 'dilemma of difference' highlighted in Chapter Three within the capabilities framework is through the identification of a list of valued capabilities that are context-specific. Focusing on a list of capabilities for disabled students provides a way of not seeing differences pertaining to disability in stigmatising or discriminatory ways by focusing on the opportunities of individuals instead of their impairments. As noted earlier, Nussbaum (2000:35) makes a case for a list of ten central capabilities, arguing that, 'certain universal norms of human capability should be central for political purposes in thinking about basic political principles that can provide the underpinning for a set of constitutional guarantees in all nations'. I am attracted to the idea of visionary, capabilities-based norms to give 'bite' to public disability policy and to adjudicate whether human dignity and social justice is being addressed. I do not, however, propose a universal and comprehensive list as Nussbaum does, nor did I rely only on theory in formulating that list of capabilities. Rather, I tried also to pay attention to Sen's (1999) argument for contextual deliberative processes in the formulation of any list of capabilities through my research process (explained in Chapter Four), grounded in student voices. While not strictly deliberative in the fullest sense as students did not participate in all the stages of the formulation of the list, I took seriously those voices and lives most affected by any disability policy. I think that the identification of capabilities is important and that student provision should be designed accordingly. Policy evaluation to measure the progress of different HEIs would then be based on how they are performing against the list.

Regardless of the value of the capabilities approach against other disability models highlighted in Chapter Three, policy practitioners are discouraged by the difficulties of applying the capabilities approach. As inequality is increasingly becoming a source of public concern, with the UN putting inclusive and equitable education as one of its SDGs, findings in this section add to the literature that seeks to understand disability as an element of human diversity. The pluralistic conception of human diversity acknowledges how the high degree of heterogeneity in personal features such as gender, age, and race and psychological conditions makes each person different from others. This generates interpersonal variations in the conversion of different resources into what people are able to do in their lives. This section showed how the capabilities approach could be operationalised in both higher education and the disability field, and why capabilities are important in providing an informational basis for social justice claims in disability research and practice.

This section deepens and expands ongoing conversations in disability in higher education and within the capabilities approach. The capabilities list extrapolated here advances the capabilities approach by being specific to disabled students and focusing on higher education. I have argued that the relevant valued functionings identified by disabled students are not distributed fairly in and through SAHE. In this instance, the capabilities approach directs our attention to salient features of inequalities in higher education that perpetuate social injustice. Additionally, the approach provides a persuasive analysis of issues and enables recommendations for action. From the extrapolated capabilities, higher education and disability policy-makers can question the extent to which each one is being promoted or inhibited within and across different higher education institutions. The exercise of individual agency and choice (overlooked by other disability models) makes a difference in these students' lives. By focusing on a set of capabilities, we can move towards a theory of justice applicable to identity. Ultimately, these capabilities can be taken up pedagogically, instituted in higher education, and secured to disabled students through embedding them in the curriculum.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter has reported on the findings from UniVen. Five issues have been interrogated: how disability identities play out in students' lives; how various conversion factors cluster around impairment to create disadvantages; how these students use their agency and personal choices in respond to the challenges; and their valued freedoms and opportunities. While most of the experiences reported by these students are similar to those of UFS students, some unique experiences were also highlighted. For example, although most capabilities are similar to those extrapolated from UFS data, some capabilities explored in this chapter (for example, religious affiliation and culture) are unique to UniVen students. This brings to our attention the importance of paying attention to contextual factors when designing disability policies. All this shows the significance of the capabilities approach e.g. its emphasis on the importance of conversion factors in people's lives. The complexities in the experiences of disabled students were highlighted throughout this chapter. The value of the capabilities approach in exploring those complex issues is captured in this section.

So far my discussions have focused solely on disabled students. However, as I have shown in previous chapters, lecturers and the DU plays a part in the lives of disabled students in higher education. As such, the next chapter focuses on the findings from lecturers and DUs staff.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Experiences and Perspectives of Staff Members on Disability at the two Universities

7.1 Introduction

In Chapters Five and Six, I explored students' perceptions and experiences of disability at two South African universities. These play an important role in the lives of disabled students in higher education and their accounts are of value for policy-makers and higher education administrators in the creation of a disability-inclusive higher education environment. This chapter reports on staff experiences and perspectives of disability at the two case study universities. The aim is to understand their thoughts and views on how the needs of disabled students are acted upon at their universities. The chapter is arranged in two sections. The first looks at the views and experiences of three DU staff, and their perceptions of disabled students' lives at their respective universities. The second section looks at the views and experiences of four lecturers and their perceptions of disabled students' lives at their universities. Owing to their distinctive roles and responsibilities, some questions that were asked of lecturers and DU staff during the interviews were different (see Appendices 6 and 7). The perspectives and insights of these seven staff provide data that is helpful in understanding the lives of disabled students in South African universities. Unlike the previous two chapters that reported the findings according to each case university, this chapter combines teaching and disability support services staff from the two universities. The aim is to clarify how context (university policies, location and one's background) influence these staff as they attend to various disability issues.

7.1.2 Background of the DU staff

In trying to understand better the lives of disabled students in SAHE, this section focuses on the role, perspectives and experience of DU staff. Despite the fact that they are regarded by disabled students as important, as shown in previous chapters, little is known about their perspectives as their voices are missing from the current South African debates and discussions. This section examines the background of DU staff (disability status, years of experience in the field,

motivation), and how this relates to their perceptions of and attitudes to disability issues. The DU staff, as with other participants in this study, have been anonymised. I examine their backgrounds first, establishing how they respond to the needs of disabled students in higher education. A discussion of what constrains and enables them in executing their duties and responsibilities follows. I will then move to an analysis of their views on students' key freedoms and opportunities. To set the scene and give this discussion a context, I provide their profiles below:

Table 7.1: DU-Staff Profile

Name	Institution	Number of years in disability-related career	Gender	Race	Impairment	Highest Educational Qualification
Angela	UFS	6	Female	White	Learning	Postgraduate
Charles	UniVen	<1	Male	Black	Physical	Postgraduate
Gerry	UniVen	9	Male	Black	Visual	Postgraduate

DU staff were asked how long they have worked in a disability-related field, whether they have a known impairment, and their level of education. According to Nel *et al.* (2013), these variables are known to influence how staff perceive and ultimately respond to disability matters. Interviewees were two males and one female, two black Venda-speaking and one white.[29] They all have impairments and, except for Charles who had recently joined the DU, had more than five years of experience in their positions. While they all have postgraduate qualifications, these qualifications are from different fields: one in Political Science, and the other two in Management.

[29] This is an ethnic minority community found in the northern part of South Africa.

Cultural Backgrounds

A cultural perspective on disability was offered by Gerry and Charles, who are both Venda.

> *Long back, in our Venda culture when a disabled child was born in the family e.g. an albino, the family would hide or just kill the child. They saw disability as an abomination, but now things have changed for the better.* (Charles)

> *Once you have a mental or psychological challenge you are considered mad for life. Even if you get a higher educational qualification or medical treatment you are not considered normal, you will be considered unfit. It's something embedded within our culture. When you have a disabled child at home, people would be saying, 'oh shame to that family.' These days it's much better because in the past in our culture, society was cruel to disabled children. They were killed.* (Gerry)

Influence of Education

Although from a culture with negative views of disabled people, Gerry and Charles have positive views of disabled students, which might be linked to the influence of education. A connection between one's educational background and perceptions of disability is highlighted by Angela:

> *I am a physiotherapist by profession and obviously my expertise is very strongly biased towards mobility/physical impairment but I have learnt quickly about other impairment categories…I think students with learning difficulties or invisible disabilities are the ones who face most challenges in higher education because some are even ignorant about their conditions. It is made worse by the historical kind of approach to learning difficulties in societies with stigma around it and lack of knowledge in terms of diagnosing or misdiagnosing. There is also the labelling (stupid, naughty, rebellious, etc.). I might be biased about that because I experienced it myself when I was in university*. (Angela)

Angela acknowledges the role played by her educational background in influencing her understanding of disability matters. Her working experience and her own personal experience with her own learning disability then helps her to deal with the issues better. This is in line with studies

on the attitude of lecturers towards disability, which show a positive relationship between one's experience in the teaching field and how one responds to the subject of disability (Bierwert, 2002; Rao, 2002; Wilson, Getzel & Brown, 2000).

Motivation to work with Disabled Students

I also examined what motivates these participants in their various jobs and how this relates to how they attend to the subject of disability. Gerry explicitly relates his impairment status to how he understands disability matters:

> *I was actually born to work in the field of disability. I was in a mainstream primary school until I had an accident. It led me to be partially blind so I transferred to a special school because I couldn't read the ordinary books. It is now my passion to work with disabled students.* (Gerry)

Charles did not relate his motivation to impairment. Instead, he states that his experience when he was still a student at UniVen, seeing the struggles of disabled people, is the main motivating factor for him pursuing work in this field:

> *I have the passion of working with disabled people. Through my experience as a student here, I noticed that some disabled students were dropping out, not because they are not good academically but because of the challenges, especially consultations with the staff, accessing the libraries, and getting the study materials from all the lecturers.* (Charles)

A reference to the lives of other disabled students rather than his own experiences as a university student might be because he had never experienced problems in university: he is physically impaired (one leg is shorter than the other) but walks without any assistive device and can access any building. Angela, on the other hand, is driven by the passion to work with young people:

> *I am excited working with young people and I think that they should be given opportunities. I don't tolerate any kind of injustice or discrimination. From that point of view I see my work offering the chance to be involved in counteracting these challenges*. (Angela)

Although the sources of motivation are varied, they are important in mobilising positive energy needed for providing the services necessary for the successful learning of disabled students in higher education. As a result of their experience of working with disabled students, DU staff highlighted what disabled students value in higher education. Staff reported the importance of respect:

> *People tend to leave out the person within a disabled person which also plays a big role in their lives. They just want to be students; they don't want to be kind of bothered too much, they just want the opportunities to go about doing their daily lives and studies as everyone else. They want to participate in sport and culture, whatever is part of student life…From my personal experience, students need to be informed, they need to feel that they are heard, they need to feel that they have a voice, that they have a say in decisions that affect them.* (Angela)

> *Disabled students want to be treated with dignity in the same way as other students e.g. when students are told to do group work, some blind students are isolated. At times when you see some non-disabled students having closer relations with disabled students, they know that there is an advantage like squatting in a disabled student's room.*[30] *That's what I have seen*. (Charles)

> *Some visually impaired students need study materials in font size 16 or 21. Other students don't need braille material and prefer to have the material converted into audio version. That's what we do*. (Gerry)

These sentiments emphasise the need for disabled students to be treated with respect. While this is obviously not the only aspect that disabled students' value, it is significant as it is among the valued functionings highlighted by the students themselves in Chapters Five and Six e.g. Lerato and Anna's narratives on their feelings about the behaviour of some university students and staff. Gerry commented that provision for disabled students should be done carefully as their preferences are not the same, even if they have the same impairment.

[30] Because of accommodation challenges within the university, some students stay together in residences, sharing rooms without the knowledge of authorities.

7.1.3 Challenges faced by DUs

Despite the DU's efforts towards the full inclusion of disabled students at these universities, some restrictions on what they can offer still exist, as highlighted by Angela below:

> *Recently I learnt something which I was not aware of… that we [the University] are allocated a considerable amount of funding from the DHET and NSFAS for physical planning towards disability issues and other funding is directly allocated to students with disabilities.* (Angela)

One would expect Angela to know about these funding arrangements as she is the head of the DU but this is not the case. The DUs are not autonomous; the development and implementation of programmes are dependent on the managing divisions. This seems to be endemic to the model behind the DU, which seems to play a role in keeping disability separate from other transformation and diversity issues and therefore out of the mainstream (DHET, 2013). There are pockets of recognition of these DUs as an important vehicle for the inclusion of disabled students e.g. through the establishment of organisations like Higher Education Disability Services Association (HEDSA).[31] However, as discussed in Chapter One, recognition by the government through policy rhetoric without financial commitment is not enough to bring about positive inclusion experiences for disabled students. This might be one of the reasons why these DUs operate differently: there is nothing from national policy, so the mandate lies with each HEIs.

Funding

Angela highlights that lack of funding is not only found in historically-disadvantaged universities when she says, "It is sad that the yearly budget for the whole Unit is less than the monthly salary of the head of the Unit-the Dean of Students." This is a resourcing decision made by the university and one that they could change. On closer inspection, at times the issue around service provision for disabled students goes further than financial resources to include prioritisation issues. An example is a principle within the UniVen Policy on Disabled Students, which states that, "this

[31] A body that represents disability units in South Africa, it is concerned with matters around the achievement of equity, diversity and inclusion of disabled students on tertiary campuses.

policy is subject to the statutes and the resolutions of the Council of the University and is informed by the availability of resources in the context of all current and future priorities and commitments of the University" (UniVen Policy on Disabled Students).

Despite limited funding and institutional support, these DUs still go out of their way to make the university a positive experience for disabled students e.g. offering training workshops to academic staff members.

Staff Composition

Although UniVen has fewer students compared to UFS, the small number of permanent staff still seems to have a negative influence on the provision for disabled students. As Gerry narrates his role within the DU, it became evident that they are understaffed:

> *I develop study materials for the visually impaired students. I sometimes search for some journal articles for students then I scan materials for students and develop braille materials, and make sure that all laboratories within the Unit are functional. I am also in charge of adaptive technology then I research on assistive devices. I recommend disabled students to NRF[32] for bursaries and assistive devices. I liaise with students, academic and non-academic staff. I teach the blind on how to use adaptive technology and train them on how to use software.* (Gerry)

Lack of coordination on disability matters

A lack of coordination on disability matters among different departments and stakeholders within the university was also highlighted by these DU staff. Gerry and Angela explain:

> *There are problems that I see within the university where disabled students are excluded from some activities. There was an HIV Campaign on campus and students who act as peers were chosen but all disabled students were left out. We have sporting activities e.g. tennis, our students [disabled*

[32] National Research Foundation (NRF) is an independent government agency with the mandate to support research through funding and the provision of necessary facilities.

students] can play tennis but they are left out of the university sporting activities. People in charge of those programmes think that students with disabilities cannot do those activities. (Gerry)

The Student Academic Services is the one we work with on finding suitable lecture halls. We try beforehand to identify where our students need access by identifying courses they are taking but each year we have problems. Some students still fail to access certain buildings: it becomes very uncomfortable for everybody. (Angela)

Gerry's sentiments corroborate issues raised by Musa in Chapter Six regarding being overlooked in sporting activities. Again, it highlights a lack of appreciation of disability matters on the part of other stakeholders within the university. Angela shows that they try to involve the relevant stakeholders within the university, but it seems that some of the challenges (accessible lecture halls in this case) cannot be solved by the DUs alone.

There might be some people who are not sensitive to disability issues…others might say let there be a ramp here or an automated door there, it might not be done not because there are no resources but because somebody does not understand the importance of the initiative. Some will say that this is very expensive…of course the life of a disabled person is expensive. (Gerry)

As I have mentioned before, the DU at UFS is housed in the main library and it is the Library Services personnel who are in charge of the building. One of the challenges with such an arrangement is conflict of interests with those of the library services department. This is highlighted by an incident (see Picture 7.1 below). The entrance to the Main Library was being renovated and the Library authorities decided that one of the entry and exit points should only be used by 'disabled students'. Notices like the one below were placed. Besides misspelling the word 'disabilities', the people involved were also ignorant of the implications of this notice. Just to test how they would react I tried to use this entry point and was restrained by a security person who was manning the area, arguing that I was not disabled. When I asked him why he was certain that I was not disabled, he told me that if I was disabled I would be either be blind or in a wheelchair (personal diary notes). The notice was removed two weeks later after Angela confronted Library management.

Picture 7.1: A notice at the entrance of the main library at UFS

Source: Author photograph during fieldwork

Regardless of these challenges, there are some positive developments between the DU and other stakeholders:

> *In the beginning the relationship between disabled students and staff was very difficult because some people in the departments were resistant to helping students with disabilities. Some of our students have invisible disabilities and some lecturers were arrogant when they went for consultation in their offices. We have been telling them how they can work together with those students, there has been some progress… I think when there is support from the management, for instance, Faculty of Education was one of the most problematic when I first got here. There was a lot of resistance in terms of adapting some pedagogical practices. The appointment of a new Dean made a big difference. He supports us and he has insight of what we do.* (Angela)

> *When I joined the Unit I heard that Gerry offers training and workshops to lecturers especially at the beginning of the year to equip them at the beginning of the academic year.* (Charles)

While not denying that some people could still "resist" or are "reluctant" to help disabled students as postulated by Angela above, previous chapters and the notice above reveal that in most cases lecturers' actions are not deliberate. In most cases, they are as a result of ignorance. One way of attending to this ignorance is through offering awareness workshops mentioned by Charles, which could succeed if there is cooperation from all parties, and leadership, for example from the Dean mentioned by Angela, who has the same vision of adopting measures that support the creation of a favourable environment for all students. However, for these initiatives to work well, lecturers have a very important role to play.

> *One factor that stands out for me is approachability of lecturers. When you find disabled students doing well and excelling academically, usually there will be lecturers who make contact with us [the Unit] and we interact and share ideas on how best to create conducive teaching and learning environment.* (Angela)

Sadly, not all lecturers attend to initiatives like workshops. The workshops and training are not mandatory and most lecturers do not bother. Angela and her team then use another strategy to advance their work:

> *We have identified lecturers whom we know from the accounts of students and conversation with them who have got it right. We get them and share what works well for them, the practices and methodologies they use in supporting disabled students. We encourage them to share that with their colleagues.* (Angela)

Disabled Students' Preparedness and their Attitudes in Higher Education

Findings also highlight the reasons behind the failure of disabled students in higher education even for those that register within the DUs. One of the reasons is pre-university preparation:

> *When disabled students enrol at times you can see that they are far behind in everything-technologically and academically.* (Gerry)

Most disabled students are definitely not well prepared for higher education. I have heard serious altercations with high school principals and teachers. They are not giving disabled students proper advice about higher education. Most students lack even the basic stuff e.g. subjects and the scores that are required to enter certain fields of study… it's quite appalling because at the end it is the students that suffer. We have approached schools many times and participate in fairs that they have at different schools trying to get the information out there but problems seem not to be ending. (Angela)

Gerry and Angela show how the behaviour and attitudes of disabled students in higher education is influenced by pre-university experiences. In this way, students' success or failure is highly related to the social, economic and political contexts (the conversion factors) in which these students live.

Angela went on to specify that most students who are disadvantaged by the lack of information are those from under-resourced special schools:

Most students who face challenges are those from poor special schools. At mainstream schools students get good advice because of their inclusive nature. We see students coming here sometimes with very low scores…below 20 at times and they would have been told by their Principals that they would be able to enter into the university. At times they would be having the proper scores but without the requisite subjects for entry into certain fields of study and again they wouldn't have been informed about that at school. They come here with higher expectations…most of them want to be medical doctors or lawyers irrespective of their aptitude tests. (Angela)

The issues highlighted here are significant in that this aspect of unpreparedness and a lack of agency are also highlighted by the students themselves when they talk about external factors. At the same time, the lack of agency is also shown to be beyond the students themselves.

Discussion

The views of DU staff are important in my analysis of the inclusion of disabled students at these two universities. From the findings highlighted in this section it seems that disabled students are

seen as an *afterthought*, who need to be assisted by a DU for them to fit into a mainstream system whose own practices are not under scrutiny. Drawing from Sayed *et al.* (2003), concerns with the concepts of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' discussed in Chapter Two, one can argue that disabled students are 'included *into* higher education but excluded *in* education'. Targeted and at times insufficient support services are separately provided, mainly targeted at academic issues, leaving other spheres of student life unchanged. While service provision is important, as we have noted in the findings from this study, it perpetuates the 'othering' of disabled students, instead of looking at issues of inclusion as needing a holistic approach that focuses on the whole student body and other constituencies of the university.

Data from DU staff supports previous studies that show DUs play a significant role in the lives of disabled students in SAHE. Assistive technology and other services (including the conversion of printed material into braille and large print, audio-recorded textbooks, the provision of extra time for examinations, computer centres with special software like JAWS for Windows (special screen-reading programme), mobility training, sign language interpreters) are offered, at varying degrees, by the two universities. However, both government and HEIs must acknowledge the importance of DUs and commit to support them financially and through other mechanisms. This is because financial constraints seem to be one of the major problems at these Units, leading to understaffing, especially for historically-disadvantaged institutions. These findings are similar to those of Tugli *et al.* (2013) in their study on the perceived challenges of serving disabled students at a historically disadvantaged tertiary institution.

Disabled students' needs are diverse and the two DUs do not offer the same services. At UniVen there were no students with learning and hearing challenges. It may be that they are specialising in areas in which they are capable of providing services as advocated by the NPHE (2001) but then there are no signs of 'regional collaborations and strategies' with other HEIs around the province in offering services to disabled students, which the Plan advocates (MoE, 2001:41). This supports my earlier argument in Chapter One that the current South African disability policy framework is fragmented and resembles a *wish list* with no concrete implementation strategies. In order to deal with diverse needs of students, Scott, McGuire and Foley (2003) propose the application of the

universal design for learning (UDL) principles as a framework to anticipate the varied needs of disabled students. The principles related to the capabilities approach are:

- Present information and content in different ways;
- Differentiate the ways in which that students can express what they know;
- Stimulate interest and motivation for learning (Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST, 2011)

These principles are important in recognising the heterogeneity among students. Thus, the universal design principles can help us operationalise the capabilities approach. With regards to the capabilities approach, this section showed the role of external capabilities i.e. the ability to function that depends on direct human relationships (Foster & Handy, 2008). DU staff are important in the lives of disabled students in higher education but they have to be supported by other external agencies in order for them to fully support the inclusion agenda.

Another finding highlighted by staff, which has implications for the experiences of disabled students at these universities, is the coordination of support for disabled students by their respective institutions. At UniVen the Unit falls under the leadership of the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning (CHETL). Its vision and mission are:

> *…to strive to be a centre of excellence in conducting programmes and offering services that are responsive to the learning and teaching needs of students and staff.*
> *…to provide quality programmes and services to staff and students so as to optimize their abilities to realize the full outcomes of learning and teaching in higher education.* (UniVen, 2012)

The coordinators of the DU report to the Director of CHETL. At UFS, the DU falls under Student Affairs and the management of the Dean of Student Affairs. It has a mandate to "*manage programmes that enrich experience and holistic development of our students*" (UFS, 2015). Besides the DU, other divisions that fall under Student Affairs Unit are: Housing and Residence Affairs, Student Counselling and Development, and Student Life and Leadership. One problem which might arise as a result of these DUs not standing on their own is lack of autonomy or adopting the values of the divisions under which they fall. This might be the reason why, according

to Charles, UniVen falls short in making provisions for disabled students when it comes to extra-curricular activities like sports. CHETL is mostly concerned with teaching and learning.

Charles and Gerry's narratives about Venda culture and disability show that culture and perceptions are not static. Negative perceptions can change and this is important for educationists, as it is an affirmation that discriminatory practices can be challenged and it is possible to achieve positive behaviour. These views underscore the importance of exploring how different cultures perceive disability and how this can be incorporated in disability-inclusive policies.

One of the ways in which cultural factors manifest in disability management is how albinism is treated at UniVen. It is not referred to as a disability in any of their policy briefings. However, when talking to the staff and as highlighted in Chapter Six (Kudzi's reference to students with albinism), it is implicitly treated as a disability at this university. When I asked Gerry why albinism is regarded as a disability, he said it is because, "most of them, I would say 90% of students with albinism have visual problems." It is then surprising that they are separated from those with visual challenges and reference is made to their albinism instead. Also surprising is the fact that, as found from Pat's narratives in Chapter Six, she never mentioned her vision as presenting a major physical challenge. She cites problems with high temperatures that result in her having burns to her skin. Culture plays a part on the part of the staff and they see albinism as the problem. Eyesight challenges might not be the only challenge or the major challenge for all albinos.

Another point worth noting also is that although they acknowledge a shift in how their culture now understands disability, Gerry highlights that some norms have not yet shifted. This is important information for a number of reasons. It might be a possible explanation why some students are reluctant to disclose disability status and struggle in higher education as highlighted in Chapter Two e.g. where some students did not inform their lecturers or the DUs of their status because they were afraid of their prejudices and possible discrimination (Crous, 2004; FOTIM, 2011).
The next section focuses on snapshots from four lecturers who were interviewed for this study.

7.2 Snapshots: The Experiences and Perspectives of Lecturers on Disability at two South African universities

The aim of this section is to provide a snapshot of how selected academic staff understand and respond to disability issues at these two universities. This will be achieved through examining the narratives of four lecturers from the UFS and UniVen. This contributes to an understanding of the role academic staff play in the lives of disabled students, the barriers they face and also the support they might need to enable them to deal with diversity in higher education. The findings and discussions are organised into three sections: the personal backgrounds of lecturers, their awareness and attitudes towards disability, and their views on the role played by their institutions in the lives of disabled students at their respective universities. The next section then focuses on participants' level of awareness and their attitudes regarding disability issues. This is closely linked to the first section as the level of awareness is influenced by educational background and professional training in some instances, as will be highlighted later. The last part of the discussion dwells on these lecturers' perceptions on the role of their institutions towards the inclusion of disabled students.

7.2.1 Backgrounds of the Lecturers

These findings are based on the narratives of four lecturers from UFS and UniVen about their experiences with disabled students in higher education and the role staff play in their university lives. Lecturers were recruited with the help of Dean's Offices.

Table 7.2: Profile of Lectures

Name	Gender	Race	University	Field of study	Number of Years in practice
Prof. J	Male	White	UFS	Education	More than 25 years
Dr. H	Male	White	UFS	Law	Less than 10 years
Prof. M	Male	Black	UniVen	Human and Social Sciences	More than 15 years
Mr Lee	Male	Black	UniVen	Mathematical and Natural Sciences	Less than 5 years

7.2.2 Attitude of Lecturers towards disability

Lecturers like Mr Lee are not trained to handle disability matters. From undergraduate studies he went straight to postgraduate level and from there he was offered a teaching post because of his educational qualifications. It might be his contractual obligation to serve all students and make sure that they succeed, but again his performance, as mentioned earlier, is measured by the number of lectures he delivers within a specified time:

> *Some buildings were built years ago without disabled students in mind. What can I do when I have classes in those buildings? Students in wheelchairs are entirely excluded*. (Prof. M)

> *The only time that the faculty can know that a student has a disability is when we are informed about that. We cannot do anything if we don't know that a certain student has a disability. I have been the teaching and learning manager within the faculty since last year but I have not seen any student coming to me saying that he/she has a learning disability and that he or she needs assistance…I think that disability issues should be dealt at the institutional level and not individually by each faculty or lecturer because it's an issue that needs to be addressed at institutional level. Something like that should come from the institutional policies.* (Dr. H)

In all the above statements, elements of lack of awareness are present. Underlying these statements are elements of shifting the blame from individual teaching staff to either the disabled students and/or their respective institutions. Prof. J thinks that learning disability is difficult to detect as

some of the symptoms are related to challenges that are also faced by other students who might not be disabled. Prof. M blames the inaccessibility of some of their lecture rooms as a reason for the failure to create a favourable teaching and learning environment that is fair to all students. Dr. H points to the fact that if the affected students don't disclose the disabilities, they cannot be offered help by the teaching and learning staff. He also further argues that disability issues could be dealt with at institutional level and not at departmental level or by individual teaching staff.

These statements suggest a lack of understanding of diversity. Challenges faced by disabled students are individualised. It might be true that in an environment like South African education, distinguishing students facing learning challenges as a result of disabilities from those having challenges as a result of an unfair pre-university background is difficult. However, it cannot be a justification not to respond to students' needs. Putting it differently, Dr. H's thinking is that students, especially those with invisible or no physical conditions, have to declare their disability both to the university and to the teaching staff.

Some university teaching and learning practices that are not related to disability but which affect how they transmit knowledge to all the students, including disabled students, were also mentioned at both universities. Large classes and limited resources were highlighted:

> *Some lecturers do not want to spend much time on one or two students because of pressure and demands coming from huge classes. In some classes there are over 500 students. It becomes tough for one lecturer to provide individual attention.* (Prof. J)

> *We only have two laboratory technicians who are supposed to help between 20 and 50 students daily. How can we work well under these conditions?* (Mr Lee)

However, not everything about lecturers' responses to the needs of disabled students is negative. Some positive attitudes towards disabled students can be found,

> *Some of our practical exercises in class cannot be taken by other students e.g. partially sighted students because some of the instruments we use. An anoscope e.g. has too much light inside which is not good for the eyes. We also use laser which again is not good for the eyes and the vernier*

calipers which are very sharp. In instances like these we make alternative practical exercises for the partially sighted students. The reason for these adjustments is that we want fair assessment for everyone. (Mr Lee)

Assessments should be varied according to the barriers a student is experiencing. We try to be sensitive by having alternative assessments. (Prof. J)

7.2.3 Lack of Training to handle disability issues

These lecturers reported lack of professional training in dealing with diversity matters, and particularly disability issues, contribute to lack of awareness, and ultimately to their ignorance and negative attitude towards disability issues:

The issue is that as lecturers, we are not trained to handle [disability] matters e.g. we have to deal with the slowness (of some disabled students) while at the same time you have big classes and you are rushing to meet department and faculty deadlines. (Prof J)

I am a Physics lecturer and all I want is my students to get the fundamentals of Physics. I don't think I am equipped to deal with disability matters. (Mr Lee)

Another striking finding from this study is the acknowledgement by the lecturers of their own lack of awareness on how to react and act when confronted by disabled students or disability issues in their practice:

How do I know that a student has a learning disability? If I just think of spellings, conceptualising and formulations, it's a massive problem for most of our students. (Prof. J)

However, even when the DU staff have the same educational backgrounds and while there is an acknowledgement of not knowing how to respond to disability challenges by these lecturers, some of their statements point to the existence of subtle negative attitudes: "*It's a punishment. I have to change the font size in a lecture with visually challenged students, a lecture which is supposed to be one hour takes me two hours for those guys"* (Mr Lee). Mr Lee views his responsibilities as burdens. While lecturers have a responsibility to promote an inclusive environment, these lecturers also highlight lack of coordination and support from other departments within the universities.

7.2.4 Lack of coordination on disability matters

Lecturers highlight that the administration and the students have an important part to play in creating a good environment for disabled students in the university:

> *On the application forms students are asked to declare disability status. The administration captures the data but as the lecturers we never receive this information from them afterwards. The administration must tell us in advance about the specific students who need special attention.* (Mr Lee)

This is indicative of the fact that lecturers need information and support to build inclusive campuses. In order for lecturers to create inclusive environments, it is necessary for them to be aware of the perceptions of disabled students in their classes. The current situation might result in disabled students performing poorly in academics.

Although other lecturers are generally supportive of disabled students, they sometimes feel overwhelmed by requests for individualised support and unsure about the balance between maintaining academic standards and accommodating the needs of disabled. Lack of time is one of the greatest obstacles for lecturers to focus on disabled students in their classes. This finding is the same as reported by Riddell *et al.* (2005) who suggest that not having enough time to pay attention to each student was one of the reasons lecturers are reluctant to change or adapt their teaching methods. The learning issues affect all students but disabled students are affected more as these are not the only challenges that they face.

7.2.5 Disabled Students' Preparedness and their Attitudes in Higher Education

It emerged from the interviews that disabled students' negative attitude and lack of preparedness for higher education affect the full inclusion of disabled students. For example, some disabled students are exposed to new technology or ways of doing things, which are meant to help them,

only after they have been admitted into university: "Some students come here not knowing e.g. how to use braille materials. It's a mountain to climb" (Prof. M). The same challenge of disabled students being exposed to different arrangements for the first time in the university was highlighted by Prof. J also who complained that as university lecturers, "we cannot make them [disabled students] recover all that has been lost at school…" There are interventions that have been put in place at the two case study universities. However, these interventions are discipline-focused e.g. having alternative practical exercises and assessment criteria in Science and Information Technology subjects. Besides lack of preparedness, it is reported that some students lack agency to take initiative that might help them to flourish in higher education:

> *If a disabled student experiences a barrier but communicates well with a lecturer things are likely to run smoothly but the student must come to the fore. It is very tough if there are invisible disabilities that are not reported and it's not known by the lecturers.* (Prof. J)

> *Some disabled students have negative attitude towards learning. I expect my students to be at a certain level of competence in my course at a certain time regardless of one's status but if someone wants to be treated in a special way in school work because of a disability, it becomes a challenge and definitely people like that fail.* (Mr Lee)

Prof. J and Mr Lee highlight important aspects which need to be examined. These expressions convey an othering discourse ("people like that"). Furthermore, these lecturers seem to distance themselves from the responsibility of providing support to disabled students. Besides lack of training on diversity matters, individual agency on the part of the lecturers to enhance their own understanding of disability is also vital.

Responsibility lies with the entire university population, not the DU alone, but staff and students alike. Moreover, concerned lecturers who are aware of, and take an interest in, disabled students' issues make an effort to learn about the DUs and how they operate. Greyling's (2008) claim is valuable. She says that although DUs or divisions for student support services are crucial in providing individual support and addressing institutional barriers, they should not be seen as the exclusive providers of support to students with disabilities. Not only are the universities supposed to remain responsible for transformation of different departments and DUs, but all relevant players are responsible for creating an inclusive environment.

Discussion

Lecturers' narratives highlight that in most cases, they are aware of the need for creating an inclusive atmosphere for all students. However, they face challenges in in their quest to promote and create barrier free environments for students. Some of these challenges are influenced by staff's own socio-cultural backgrounds, while others are as a result of institutional policies and practices. This might be stemming from a concern or a belief that accommodating the needs of disabled students might lower academic integrity or is unfair to students who are not disabled (Fuller *et al,* 2004). While previous studies (Fuller *et al.,* 2004; Matshedisho, 2010; Morina *et al.,* 2014) portray disabled students as victims and lecturers as perpetrators of social injustices, these four lecturers highlight that teaching staff are also victims of a system that fails to equip them to deal with diversity challenges in higher education. They also point that in some instances, students create barriers to learning by their attitudes towards learning. Although they face problems, these four lecturers also showed individual efforts towards making sure that all students are treated equally in accessing knowledge.

With regard to teaching staff's awareness of disability issues and their attitudes towards disabled students, data shows that positive attitudes towards disability depend on the initiatives by the individual lecturers. This is not surprising considering how lecturers are appointed and promoted in these universities. In most cases a lecturer is appointed into his or her field of expertise based on the academic record for the related courses and the ability to conduct research in his or her field. Except for some programmes (e.g. Education where subjects like classroom management, pedagogies and curriculum studies are taught), in other disciplines this is left to the lecturer concerned to handle. This is contrary to the UFS value of "Human Embrace" or the mission of 'Advancing social justice by creating multiple opportunities for disadvantaged students to access the university', or UniVen's mission statement, 'responsive to the development needs of the Southern African region, using appropriate learning methodologies and research'. In practice, the advancement of social justice and appropriate learning methods for all students is missing at these two universities. Lecturers are often the first point of contact for students, especially in the first

term (Bierwert, 2002). But increased expectations on staff such as teaching large classes with around 700 students makes it difficult to dedicate time to the needs of all students.

Lecturers highlighted another dilemma which confronts higher education teaching staff, i.e. the need to balance classroom management and the need to reach the required departmental mandates e.g. taught modules delivered in a given timeframe. In some cases this challenge is acknowledged and corrective measures are put in place. University staff are, among other performance measures, evaluated by whether they have delivered so many lecturers to students. As such, the need to attend to pedagogical issues (e.g. paying individual attention to the needs of students) is relegated as a secondary issue. Prof. J acknowledged that some lecturers within his faculty at UFS have been sensitised to inclusive issues by the DU. He also revealed that there are some lecturers who, even with little support from the university administration, go out of their way to support disabled students with the assistance of the DU.

Lack of a sound relationship between lecturers and disabled students has a negative effect on the inclusion and participation of disabled students. Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009:32) express this: 'teaching methods and educational environments that motivationally favour particular leaners to the exclusion of others are unfair and diminish the chances of success for those leaners discounted or denied in this situation'. It is therefore important to pay attention to these issues in an attempt to create inclusive environments. Stojanovska-Dzingovska and Bilic (2012) report that lecturers in their study kept a distant from disabled students intentionally as they were afraid of offending their students by using inappropriate idiomatic expressions. Furthermore, Swart and Pettipher (2005) argue that beliefs and attitudes are directly translated into actions and educational practices, and inform decision-making. They further state that attitudes about diversity can either be a barrier to, or an enabler in, the realisation of inclusive environment (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). Therefore, lecturers need to be aware of their perspectives and perceptions. Self-reflexive behaviour is critical for staff to become more aware and active in meeting the needs of all students. This is only possible if staff are willing to self-examine their own conceptions. The capabilities and functionings of lecturers to enhance their knowledge about meeting the needs of disabled students should be provided so as to help create inclusive campuses.

Lecturers in this study had varied backgrounds (race, institutional affiliation, fields of teaching and number of years in the teaching profession). In this study, one cannot produce any link between lecturers' biographic characteristics and their perceptions and attitudes regarding disability and disabled students in higher education. This differs from previous studies (Rao, 2002; Rao & Gartin, 2003; Vogel, Leyser, Wyland & Brulle, 1999) which found a positive relationship between discipline (education, humanities & architecture), age (junior v senior lecturers), and experience with teaching disabled students, with the willingness to provide accommodations to disabled students. A possible explanation for this might be the limited number of lecturers involved in this study. It is important for lecturers to receive professional development emphasising the importance of an inclusive environment, as Hadjikakou and Hartas (2008) acknowledge that lecturers are not trained to deal with disability.

7.3 Conclusion

Most studies reviewed in Chapter Two concentrated on the views of disabled students and in the process portrayed them as casualties of an unjust system. As a result, the views and perceptions of other parties involved in the lives of disabled students are blank spots. A more comprehensive approach would include as many players as possible who are involved in the lives of disabled students in higher education.

This study tried to move towards this approach by examining the role, perceptions and experiences of staff regarding disability issues in higher education. In trying to create inclusive campuses, staff face challenges emanating from both internal and external factors. External factors include absence of institutional and national policy frameworks while internal factors include lack of knowledge, responsibility and skills. Lack of guiding frameworks results in institutions approaching disability differently, resulting in ad hoc and uncoordinated efforts towards disability matters. While institutional policy frameworks are important, personal responsibility on the part of the lecturers in expanding the opportunities of all students is important. Self-reflective education is vital in this case for the creation of a student-centred approach that enhances learning for all students.

DU staff exercise their agency by using their personal experience as motivation to positively influence the provision of services to disabled students. As a result of their experience working with disabled students, they provided valuable information on what students' value. It is apparent from this discussion that although DUs and the personnel within the DUs are crucial in providing support that addresses institutional barriers for disabled students, they should not be seen as the exclusive providers of support. Collaborative efforts amongst all the stakeholders (academic staff, supporting staff, administration and disabled students) is required to make inclusion of disabled students in higher education a reality.

The capabilities approach understands that individuals do not live in a vacuum. By exploring these conversion factors (DU staff and lecturers), the approach enables us to understand the underlying structures, mechanisms, tendencies and constraining conversion factors that produce certain behaviour and actions. We can start to see entry points in which measures to improve inclusion of disabled students could be initiated. Inclusion agenda can succeed if interventions account for and address dominant constraining factors that staff face in their quest towards inclusive environments. More needs to be done to help lecturers in SAHE to appreciate and deal with diversity issues, especially disability. There needs to be a shared sense of responsibility for meeting the learning needs of disabled students. According to DU staff, disabled students need to be part of the drive to secure an inclusive culture within higher education, by putting effort into their work and class activities.

While I have tried to expand the understanding of the lives of disabled students in higher education by including DUs staff and lecturers, a broader project involving many academic and supporting staff is advisable to further explore the issues raised by these staff. Furthermore, at UFS further research on the impact of the UDL on teaching and learning is necessary to confirm its relevance in establishing inclusive environment for all students.

In the next chapter I weave together the different strands that constitute this study: namely, the literatures discussed in different chapters, theoretical and conceptual frameworks examined earlier on, together with the findings and how they relate to the research questions in the study. I will also outline the scholarly contribution made by this study for policy, theoretical debates and methodological issues, highlighting blank and blind spots and areas that warrant further studies or different approaches.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Reflections, Ways Forward and Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The study set out to examine the experiences of disabled students at two universities with different historical backgrounds. To broaden this understanding, DUs staff and a few lecturers' perspectives on disability and disabled students' experiences were sought. Similarities and differences concerning these two universities policies, practices and supporting arrangements for disabled students emerged. The capabilities approach was operationalised to generate a theoretical understanding of disability grounded in human wellbeing and agency. The study also sought to establish the implications of the findings for disability policy and pedagogical developments to enhance social justice in higher education. Given a number of overlapping factors: the dearth of this kind of study in South Africa (Chapter Two); different theoretical tools used to make sense of disability and the contestation around the concept; a renewed international agenda focus on equity issues e.g. as shown by the SDGs agenda, and evidence of the importance of higher education for social justice (Ford Foundation, 2013; UNESCO, 2013), the research is timely. Findings from the research make original, contextually-sensitive contributions to disability and inclusive studies in an environment where inequalities of the past still influence the present state of affairs in higher education.

In this final chapter, different strands that constitute the thesis are pulled together. I reflect upon what the research sought to uncover, the theoretical and methodological contributions made to the disability and higher education fields, as well as the implications of this study. Having completed the study, a discussion on how each of the research questions was addressed starts this chapter. Key findings from the study that might inform policy and practice regarding the creation of a socially just disability-inclusive higher education will be discussed. As an acknowledgement that this thesis is not sufficient on its own to answer all that needs to be known about the lives and experiences of disabled students in higher education, study limitations and areas for further research are also highlighted.

In Chapter One, I highlighted that, in spite of an inclusive rhetoric of equity and social justice in different South African policy papers, SAHE falls short in advancing the needs of disabled students in higher education. As a result, SAHE is perpetuating injustices towards the small number of disabled students who manage to make it into higher education. Social injustices are manifested in: the failure to challenge negative societal discourses around disability; slow approaches to meeting disabled students' needs at universities e.g. late availability of study materials, inaccessible study materials, physical inaccessibility; and negative attitudes from some staff and student peers. Even the corrective measures put in place e.g. the establishment of DUs at universities can reproduce the inequalities they seek to address by forming an 'us versus them' distinction where disabled students are seen as DUs' students. Such practices and actions then act against disabled students accessing and succeeding in higher education and being treated as dignified human beings in a spectrum of diversity.

The previous three chapters outlined the findings which highlight the complexities around the experiences of disabled students in higher education. To fully grasp their experiences, I proposed the capabilities approach in both higher education and disability issues (Chapter Three) because of its engagement with diversity issues.

8.2 Reflections on the Research questions

8.2.1 Research Question 1: *How do disabled students experience their studies and interact with higher education?*

This question was at the heart of the thesis. In Chapters Five and Six I presented in detail how disabled students experience and interact with higher education. Disabled students shared their experiences both before entering the universities and at the university; they also spoke about their socio-economic backgrounds and their teaching and learning experiences. Chapter Seven has also contributed to this understanding through the voices of staff.

Disabled students' experiences on their way to, and in higher education are not the same. This is due to the differences in how different conversion factors play out in each individual's life. Their circumstances are influenced by, among other things, pre-university experience (type of schooling-mainstream or special school; well-resourced or poorly equipped), social environment (whether family and friends are supportive or not), geographical location (rural and urban) and university (UFS or UniVen). Depending on each individual, these factors resulted in either positive or negative higher education experiences. For example, Carla has challenges with written assignments and prefers oral assessments, while Joe has problems with oral assignments and prefers written assignments. For those who are progressing well, aspiration, personal determination and social support from family, friends, school teachers and lecturers is evident in their stories. It is important to note that some conversion factors that brought positive experiences in the lives of some disabled students are the same ones that resulted in negative experiences in other students' lives. For example, Carla is encouraged and supported by her mother who enrolled for a postgraduate programme and stays with her in residence. On the other hand, Lerato's older brothers are putting pressure on her to drop out of university and find employment so that she can take care of them. In these two cases, familial influence plays out differently for the two participants.

Pre-university schooling shapes the experiences of disabled students at the university. Disabled students who attended well-resourced special schools found it difficult to adjust at university as there were differences in terms of service provision. Some of these students bemoaned the fact that at university there was an absence of specialists like social workers, physiotherapists, psychologists etc. as was the case at their previous schools. However, it should be acknowledged that not all students who had gone to special schools share the same sentiments. Some students, especially those from UniVen, had gone to poor rural special schools. Thus, their experiences were different and they appreciate the services they receive at UniVen. Inequalities are thus still structured along geographical locations. This is important information for policy interventions that are aimed at improving the school-university transition, especially those targeting widening of opportunities and raising awareness about university life in schools.

Irrespective of disabled students' university of study or disability categories, disabled students raised the same concern: the need for the availability of opportunities for them to succeed at the university. For instance, Jane (epileptic) favours conditions that enable her to flourish at the university in the same manner as Joe (blind), who requires study materials to be made available on time. Being epileptic or blind does not define what Jane and Joe aspire to achieve in higher education. Disabled students identified key freedoms and opportunities they value to arrive at what they aspire to achieve in life and at university (see Chapters Five and Six). Eleven capabilities were extrapolated: capacity to aspire; educational resilience; cultural value; identity; knowledge and imagination; language; mobility; religious affiliation; respect dignity and recognition; social relations and social networks, and capability for voice. While I will not claim universality of these capabilities as proposed by Nussbaum of her list, I argue that these should be included in the design of disability-inclusive policies, to provide a richer informational basis to make judgements about justice effects. As a result of the complexities of disabled students' experiences, treating disabled students as if they are a homogenous entity and grouping them together in trying to solve inequalities should be done with great caution.

At both universities, disabled students appreciate the support they receive from the DUs; the support provides them with specialised services as part of their university mandate. Nearly all disabled students in this study spoke positively about the DUs compared to other spaces and departments within their universities. It is, then, not surprising that they speak of the DUs as if they are a separate entity. Regardless of positive comments about DUs, there are challenges with the current South African policy arrangements, which place the onus on disabled students to identify themselves as disabled, and initiate moves to access the services made available at the universities. For example, responsibility still rests on disabled students to get course materials in the format they can access. This is similar to other international trends (e.g. UK and Australia), but the difference is in the lack of reciprocal support from the two universities. Most disabled students felt frustrated each time they had to make extra effort to access services that enable them to fully participate in university education, or to be at an equal level with other students.

Important also is the fact that some challenges experienced by disabled students at these universities are common to all university students e.g. bigger classrooms and lack of proper consultation with lecturers. When these challenges are combined with individual characteristics of participants, and practices that disadvantage disabled students e.g. being visually impaired at a university where most study materials are in print format and other students and lecturers have negative attitudes towards disabled students, they multiply disabled students' disadvantages.

Despite the steps being taken by both universities towards inclusion, disabled students still face different challenges, owing to factors both within universities and other that are beyond university structures. A multi-dimensional framework such as the capabilities approach helps us understand and comprehend these complexities. What is clear is that disability cannot easily be reduced either to impairment or to a social relational conception of social oppression. Although this understanding is important theoretically, at the level of experience, it is difficult to disentangle. Disability is experienced as a complex interaction between varied factors, which have different relevance for different students at different times and in different contexts (Shakespeare, 2014). For some, like albinism, some of their disablement is social in origin, and this is a clear example of the relevance of the social model. Yet, the ambiguity of hearing impairments enables participants to distance themselves from the label 'disabled' and further impedes any sense of solidarity with disabled people, something the social model highly values. Rather than treating different models of disability as competing, it would be more useful for the field of Disability Studies to see them as complementary, offering different insights into a complex and multifaceted experience.

While the current capabilities approach literature on conversion factors foregrounds three aspects (personal, social and environment), with political arrangements subsumed under social conversion factors, the experiences of these disabled students highlight the significance of political arrangements as an important conversion factor that can either enhance or diminish the lives of disabled students. As discussed in Chapter One, various policies at both national and institutional

levels influence the opportunities and freedoms of disabled students by dictating how and what resources are distributed within higher education for disabled students to flourish. For this reason, I propose to add the political conversion factor as a distinct valuable conversion factor in our analysis and framing of disability-inclusive policies. The availability or absence of disability policies and how they are structured influences how disabled students achieve certain 'beings' and 'doings' in higher education. Setting politics as a stand-alone conversion factor enables us to scrutinise the political context in which a disabled student is operating in, and be able to judge whether or not the environment is enabling or just.

All participating students appreciate knowledge and skills (knowledge and imagination) they receive in their respective courses, but some challenges were reported e.g. moving from one place to the other within the campus (capability for mobility), accessing study materials, classes and other buildings on campus (knowledge and imagination, and social relations and social networks) and, at times, language problems (language capability). As highlighted in section 8.2.4, the seven capabilities in Chapter Five and Six could be among the yardsticks to measure progress towards disability inclusive policies. For example, universities can measure, each year, how far they have done to improve the *capability for voice* or *affiliation*.

8.2.2 **Research Question 2**: *How do lecturers and Disability Unit staff understand disability and the experiences of 'disabled students?*

As highlighted in the literature review, research examining higher education staff experiences with disabled students and their understanding of disability matters is needed. They are part of the external agencies that either remove or create barriers for disabled students. Their conduct either promotes or diminishes the wellbeing of disabled students and the freedom they have in bringing about achievements they value. Below, I recap the major issues that emanated from interviews with lecturers and DU staff. Interviews with the four lecturers show limited understanding of disability and awareness of disability matters. This, then, contributes to a lack of personal drive to

attend to the needs of disabled students. On the other hand, DU staff show an appreciation of disability matters and personal motivation towards facilitating full inclusion of disabled students in higher education. However, at times, their efforts in creating an inclusive environment for disabled students are compromised within universities due to poor support by universities as well as absence of national and university guidelines. Furthermore, at times they get overwhelmed by the responsibilities and expectations from their institutions.

Lecturers acknowledge that they face challenges in attending to the needs of disabled students. One of the contributing factors to these challenges is an absence of awareness of disability-related matters on their part. This lack of awareness is related to a variety of issues: university policies and practices e.g. absence of mandatory training on diversity management and large classes which place a burden on lecturers to attend to the individual needs of disabled students in classrooms. Failure to disclose disability status by students and lack of coordination among different university departments were some of the factors highlighted as contributing to challenges in the service provision by lecturers. An absence of motivation to attend to the needs of disabled students was also pronounced in the lecturers' narrative. Despite these challenges, some lecturers use their own agency in bringing about positive experiences for disabled students.

At a national level, concrete guidelines are needed to inform universities on how to deal with disability matters. This does not require a *wish-list* of ideas. Instead, proper policies that state e.g. how a student with a specific disability ought to be accommodated within a university, or issues of alternative assessment methods (currently left open in South Africa), are required as a matter of urgency.

A channel of communication and responsibility needs to be spelt out within universities so as to be clear how different disability related responsibilities are to be shared and coordinated. The creation of additional disability support staff positions at both universities, and particularly at UniVen is a necessity. These positions could be located at the following levels: administration,

departmental/faculty, in residences and in non-academic spheres of universities to assist in implementing and planning for the needs of disabled students.

8.2.3 **Research Question 3**: *What are the differences and similarities concerning university policies and other arrangements for disabled students at the two universities?*

As highlighted in Chapter One, the absence of a policy framework that gives direction on disability issues in SAHE has resulted in universities attending to disability matters without a reference point, leading to differences in service provision. Findings highlight both similarities and differences in service provision for disabled students at these two universities (See Table 8.1). At UniVen there is a written disability policy that guides the operations of service provision for disabled students. At UFS there is no disability policy. Since I began my studies in 2013, it was described as in the process of being designed, but even now (October 2015), it has not been finalised (UFS, 2015). Without denying the importance of having written guidelines, it may still be the case that the availability of a written policy on its own is not enough to bring about positive changes with regards to the inclusion of disabled students.

Just like UFS, UniVen is not explicit on the definition of disability, but states that it is guided by the Constitution of South Africa. This implies that it takes a social model to disability. Despite the inclusion of 'students with documented learning disabilities' and hearing impairments categories, there has never been a registered student belonging to these categories, as was the case at UFS. Instead, at UniVen albinism is considered a disability, which is not the case at UFS.

Furthermore, at UFS, most of the registered disabled students belong to the learning difficulties category, whereas at UniVen this category, though mentioned on the DU webpage, has never had a student registered in that category. Students with mobility challenges at UniVen were provided with mobile scooters sourced on their behalf by the DU (at the time of my research), whereas at UFS this was not available. However, for transportation, UFS has a bus that takes students with

disabilities to various places both on and off the campus. Similar to international studies reviewed in Chapter Two, there was evidence of reluctance in adjusting assessment, pedagogies and curricula to accommodate disabled students, regardless of the availability of an assessment policy at both universities.

It is helpful to highlight some of the issues regarding the two DUs at these two universities. Although there has been an increase in the number of registered disabled students, the rate of increase is still very low. The number of disabled students at UFS and UniVen is around 1% of the total student population. This is lower than the national figure of the 2011 census showing that one in every ten people has a disability. Furthermore, these figures alone do not tell us how disabled students are experiencing higher education. Both DUs started operating in 2001, but differ in structural arrangements. One of the differences is the number of permanent staff. At UniVen, there are only three permanent staff members while the UFS has eight. Although the number of disabled students registered at these DUs differs, UFS has a better disabled student-DU staff ratio. As such, the UFS staff can afford to do more than UniVen staff can e.g. staff contact with registered disabled students.

Another difference is the location of the DUs. At UFS, the location of the DU is not ideal because it is secluded; the offices are in the Main Library Building and the Library Services personnel are in charge of the building. As a result, DU is not accessible to students all the time. When the library closes, the DU is inaccessible. It is also at a distance from most residences and lecture rooms. On the other hand, at UniVen the DU has its own building. They have full authority on the affairs of the building and do not share the building with other departments. As at UFS, however, services are only accessible during normal working hours only (08:00-16:00) and only during weekdays. While disabled students have access to computer and internet services during working hours, after 16:00 all students who want to access the internet have to make their way to a hotspot where there are no facilities. This area has no seating; it is along a corridor and students have to use cardboard boxes as makeshift seats.

There is lack of coordination across different departments within the two case study universities in dealing with disability. All DU staff share the same sentiments: that they are seen as the only department that should solve all the challenges faced by disabled students. Table 8.1 below summarises the differences and similarities concerning university policies, pedagogical practices and other supporting arrangements for disabled students at these two universities.

Table 8.1: University Policies and other arrangements for disabled students

Area	**UFS**	**UniVen**
University Policies	• No written disability policy • Residence policy • Assessment policy	• A written disability policy • Residence policy • Assessment policy
Pedagogical practices	• Little evidence of adjustments to pedagogies to accommodate the needs of all students	• Little evidence of adjustments to pedagogies to accommodate the needs of all students
Other arrangements	• Support for disabled students is managed through a central DU • Ad hoc adjustments to curriculum & assessment practices • Provision of financial assistance to students but not investigating students' financial challenges • Transport: a small bus • Assistive devices	• Support for disabled students is managed through a central DU • Ad hoc adjustments to curriculum & assessment practices • Provision of financial assistance to students but not investigating students' financial challenges • Assistive devices

Both universities are trying to attend to the needs of disabled students through different provisions. UniVen is expanding students' capabilities by providing scooters to those with mobility challenges

(*capability for mobility*), supporting freedom of religion and assembly (*capability for religious affiliation*), and giving students a platform to organise and share their concerns e.g. the Disabled Student Council (*capability for voice*). Both universities need to expand students' capabilities.

8.2.4 **Research Question 4**: *How does the capabilities approach account for the experiences of disabled students in higher education?*

From the discussions in this thesis, it can be argued that the capabilities approach enables a more nuanced understanding of the lives of disabled students in higher education. From the discussion in Chapter Three, I argued that the complexity of disability issues in SAHE requires a framework that is broad in its focus.

Disability is conceptualised as disadvantages in the form of loss of freedoms and opportunities in relation to one's impairment and different conversion factors. These factors, as shown in Figure 5.1 are, personal (gender, class or impairment), social (policies, relations) and environmental (physical). Resources are an important element that interacts with individual disabled people. For example: Pat (albinism) complained about heat rash as a result of high temperatures, leading to physical pain as a result of not having enough money to purchase the skin creams required. Within the ICF framework, the focus would be on the environment (hot temperatures) and the person (albinism) in its explanation, yet resources (finances to purchase skin creams) and social (attitudes of people around her) are most important factors to be considered for her to be fully included within the university.

Another practical example from the study on the complexities of various factors is how osteogenesis imperfecta, the curriculum arrangements and residence policies at UFS play a part in Lerato's educational life. This expansive perspective is also shared with the ICF among the other perspectives discussed in Chapter Three. The ICF and the capabilities approach acknowledge the complexity of disability by acknowledging different factors that influence disabled people's lives

(Mitra, 2014). In ICF, disabilities are negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with an impairment) and the contextual factors (environment and personal). However, ICF and capabilities approach share two challenges; ICF has a closed-ended classification (with a list of mostly health-related issues), while the capabilities approach is difficult to operationalise (Bickenbach, 2014). The expansive nature of the capabilities approach adds on the engagement with disability issues. However, the capabilities approach has not been widely operationalised. As such, it can benefit from the ICF, which has been applied extensively in many countries through national census. Thus, the ICF can be used as one of the capabilities operationalisation tools.

Limiting the challenges faced by disabled people only to social oppression and downplaying the effects of impairment as suggested by the social model makes it harder to fully comprehend disabled people's lives. Again, even if social barriers and negative attitudes are eliminated, Lerato (wheelchair user) will continue to feel bodily pain associated with osteogenesis imperfecta. On the other hand, perceiving that disability is a biological condition inherent to an individual, does not give us accurate reflection of people's experiences e.g. Dudu (hearing impairment) uses sign language and the current state of his hearing is not something that can be corrected in a medical laboratory.

The capabilities approach pays more attention to issues of human diversity. It acknowledges that people are different due to the conversion factors discussed above. Given this heterogeneity, a framework that embraces these differences is important in disability and educational settings. It will accept that although Lerato and Anna are all wheelchair users, they have different needs as a result of personal characteristics (gender, age), external circumstances (social capital, assets), and the ability to convert available resources into valuable opportunities. The capabilities account for the wide range and diversity of disability experiences, by acknowledging the role of freedom, choice and agency in people's lives. This was evidenced by the actions of most students in this study who want to take control of their own lives (through succeeding in their university studies), for their own sakes and the sake of their families.

The capabilities approach opens critical space for voices of the marginalised e.g. disabled students to be heard. While the ICF also does the same to a certain degree, it is too prescriptive and top-down in its orientation as everything has to fall within an already complied list of health classifications. Instead, the capabilities approach opens everything to deliberative processes, encouraging a bottom-up, genuine inclusive perspective. The concept of agency also opens space for choices through reason and reflective thinking e.g. while DUs are important in the lives of disabled students, the capabilities approach tell us that they don't expand students' wellbeing. They increase the choices the students have, of either declaring a disability status or not, but this does not increase their freedom. For example, a student with invisible disabilities who previously experienced stigma and segregation may choose not to declare her disability status, like Jane. While this might not make sense to university management, it is intelligible to the student, who cannot handle the pressures that come as a result of stigma. This is one of the contributions of the capabilities approach: agency is important and underpins wellbeing freedom and the choices available to disabled students to fulfil their desires is something that can be analysed.

I extrapolated key capabilities from disabled students' valued functionings that might require enhancement and strengthening by public policies both within higher education and in society at large. I have argued that the relevant valued functionings identified by disabled students are not distributed fairly in and through SAHE. In this instance, the capabilities approach directs attention to salient features of inequalities in higher education that perpetuate social injustice. Additionally, the approach provides a persuasive analysis of issues and enables recommendations for action. From the extrapolated capabilities, higher education and disability policy-makers can interrogate the extent to which each one is being promoted or inhibited within and across different HEIs. This data makes it possible to move beyond evaluating educational outcomes based only on student graduation rates and exam performance. It enables one to measure the gap between the lived experiences of students and what they value in higher education. The exercise of individual agency and choice (overlooked by other disability models) is important in these students' lives. Ultimately, these capabilities can be taken up pedagogically, instituted in higher education, and secured to students with disabilities through embedding them in the curriculum and in institutions.

Another contribution made by the capabilities approach worth discussing here is about two capabilities: educational resilience and the capacity to aspire. Findings highlighted the close link between resilience, failed aspirations and resignation leading to adaptive preference. The study showed the potential effects of intergenerational transmission of capabilities failure (Lerato's narrative in Chapter Five), as well as the cumulative effect of a single failed aspiration (under-resourced primary and secondary schools) on what disabled students value (succeeding in higher education). In this instance, the capabilities approach helps us understand the likely disadvantages that might cluster around individuals in creating further disadvantages. Corrosive disadvantages that were found include: under-resourced schools, negative attitude by peers and staff, inaccessible buildings, large classes, and unsupportive families. Understanding these disadvantages could be one way towards instituting effective and more relevant policies that help disabled students on their way to and in higher education.

As seen in Chapters Five and Six, this capability gives hope and drive, including to those from lower social status, to work towards achieving what they value and move to a better socio-economic standing. However, on their own, these two capabilities are not enough. All capabilities need to be secured and guaranteed. Funding for students that is not guaranteed results in students dropping out of the universities or enrolling in subjects they would otherwise not have chosen (e.g. regardless of how resilient Lerato seemed to be during my interaction with her, she dropped out of the university in her fourth year). As such, valued capabilities and functionings should be secured to help disabled people to achieve their ambitions e.g. funding for disabled students should be guaranteed. The resilience capability nurtures other capabilities. For example, it drives students to create *social networks* or affiliations through, for example, SRC that gives them a *voice* to be heard collectively and to demand *respect, dignity and recognition*.

In light of this, educational resilience is an important capability that should be fostered and developed as foundational for other capabilities for disabled students to succeed in higher education. However, resilience on part of the disabled students should not be used to obscure an understanding of the limitations within universities and the need to attend to some practices that are unjust. I now turn to the implications for this study.

8.2.5 **Research Question 5**: *What implications can be drawn for disability policy to enhance social justice in higher education?*

There are implications for policy-makers and practitioners, HEIs and individuals that can be drawn from this study. Higher education management is at times caught between the survival of the institutions and the pursuance of social justice. Disabled students are still few and at times invisible. It is difficult to manage them as they are absent in most constituencies within higher education. As a result, there are few, if any, initiatives by HEIs to seriously critique current inclusive practices for disabled students. This thesis asks university managers to reflect on how their institutions' policies, practices and structures are either enabling or hindering disabled students to achieve what they have reason to value.

Most disabled students in SAHE face challenges as opportunities and freedoms to do what they value are limited. However, they adjust to this deprivation in two ways: either adapting one's needs to lower levels or by developing abilities to counter challenges. While the deprivations are in themselves unjust, the adjustments are a reflection of an unjust system. For those that develop abilities to counter challenges, the mistake by most institutions is to point at them as success cases whose stories should 'inspire' others to succeed under unjust circumstances. This should not be the case, opportunities and freedoms for all people 'to do and be what they value' should be opened up.

South African research literature and media report a great deal on the under-preparedness of students from secondary schools into higher education. As a contribution, this study highlighted the need for universities to look at how they are including students from diverse backgrounds in their programmes and structures. Whilst not denying that some students are under-prepared in other ways when they enrol for higher education, these findings challenge simply blaming students and their pre-university schooling. The arrangements at good special schools e.g. availability of specialists like social workers, physiotherapists, psychologists etc. have implications for how higher education allocates resources for disabled students. Disabled students come to higher education with different endowments of resources owing to their backgrounds. While the establishment of indicators and policies aimed at widening participation and inclusion of disabled

students is important, it is also vital to ask disabled students how they feel about the current inclusion efforts at their universities.

Although a sense of individual agency is pronounced in students' narratives, some students in the research succumb to the challenges within universities, resign and passively relegate themselves to accept a life they would have not chosen if they had alternatives. For example, some students adapt their preferences under bad circumstances (for example resigning themselves, as Ralph does, to being ignored by his lecturers and hence possibly not mentioning the need for lecturer support). In seeking to understand why disabled students continue to fail in a transformed higher education along with a majority of undergraduates, identifying corrosive disadvantages (Wolff & de-Shalit 2007) is important because it points to specific areas requiring policy intervention. In this study the starting point might be creating and enhancing the capabilities highlighted in Chapters Five and Six. As shown in Table 8.2, the following authorities might attend to the challenges faced by disabled students and HEIs in attending to the needs of disabled students.

Government, Relevant ministries & Policy-makers

As found in Chapter Two, national policies and legislative directives have made positive contributions in supporting the needs of disabled students in Australia and the UK. Policy directives that give guidelines on the parameters of fair adjustments and permissible accommodations would make it easier for teaching staff.

The South African government, through its various ministries, departments and partners, needs to steer the following:

- Creation of a national disability policy for higher education (this has already begun and contributions from this study were submitted to the team leading that). This needs to include a lot of stakeholders (disabled students and their families, academic staff, supporting staff, administrators, government departments and civil society);
- When the policy and other supporting legislative frameworks are in place, support is needed to enable HEIs to embed disability equity programmes within the broader inclusion frameworks. Dialogue and debate should be promoted among and within HEIs; and

- Promote initiatives aimed at encouraging involvement of disabled students and their organisations (e.g. DSC at UniVen) in the activities around campus.

Higher Education Administrators, Supporting & Academic Staff

Chapter Two and empirical evidence from this study has shown considerable variation in provision and support for disabled students both between and across HEIs. The following could be target areas to focus on:

- Improvement of physical and virtual access for disabled people at HEIs;
- Monitor the financial needs of students and responding accordingly;
- Improve communication between DUs and other university departments e.g. academic and residence;
- Continuous assessment of inclusive policies and programmes e.g. by documenting good practices from other HEIs, review of teaching and learning policies aimed at removing barriers; and
- Train staff on diversity needs and support them in changing the curricula and pedagogies, when necessary.

Disabled Students

As shown in the two empirical chapters, the agency of the disabled students is important in accessing and succeeding in higher education. In most of the change processes proposed above, it is important to realise the need for:

- Shared responsibility, with disabled students also contributing to the development of equity values in their universities; and
- Work with staff and other students who are willing to improve the inclusion of diverse students.

In closing this section, owing to their historical backgrounds, universities experience tensions which at times get policy attention at the expense of disability matters e.g. UFS has to attend to

language and racial issues, while UniVen is dealing with physical and infrastructure development and expansion. Alongside these important matters, disability issues should be prioritised also and responsibility for disability support should be a collective activity involving all the sectors within universities, not just DUs alone. While disabled students should be encouraged to disclose their disability status, efforts should be made in addressing issues of stigma and discrimination through curriculum and pedagogies that promote inclusion and human diversity. Disability support initiatives need to be framed alongside these universities' transformative development agendas.

Table 8.2: Possible Responsible authorities and solutions to challenges

Responsible Authority	Challenge	Possible Solution
Government as a steering partner	Under-resourced special schools	Infrastructure development support and revising the policies regarding special schools.
Higher education institutions	Negative attitude from some staff and students	Increase awareness on diversity and inclusive issues through training
	Inaccessible buildings	
Government as a steering partner	Large classes	Infrastructure development support at higher education institutions
All education institutions	Unsupportive families	Curriculum redesign in all levels of education to raise awareness about the issues surrounding inclusivity for disabled people

This study complements previous international research on the experiences of disabled students by operationalising the capabilities approach. It also provides the much-needed data that is lacking in South Africa. This research is important in two other aspects: reporting on both barriers and

what is working for lecturers to support inclusive learning has been limited in the literature. This discussion provided snapshots of some of the reasons behind the failure of staff in meeting the expectations of disabled students. However, further studies need to focus on lecturers, who are an important element in the lives of disabled students. All stakeholders (disabled students, non-disabled students, academic, non-academic, institutional, and national) are responsible for creating an inclusive environment for embracing differences.

Lack of awareness of disability matters owing to lack of training for lecturers highlights the need for training. From the DU staff interviews, it is evident that there are pockets of training made available to lecturers which are not well attended as they are not compulsory. At university level, and as a short-term measure, training might be incorporated into the staff development courses offered by HEIs. Again, and as a long-term measure, embedding disability issues within the education curriculum (from primary level to higher education) is another policy alternative. This might positively influence how society behaves, understands and acts on disability issues. Still at the policy level, changes in the legal framework may be required in order to secure and create opportunities for disabled students entering university. Future research will need to focus on, among other pieces of the puzzle not resolved in this study, the transition of disabled students from university to workplace/postgraduate education, as well as expanding the understanding of disabled students' capabilities mentioned in Chapters Five and Six, and the framework proposed in Figure 8.1.

8.3 Reflections on the Research Design and Methodology

In presenting my reflections on the research design and methodology, I discuss the strengths and limitations of this study that might be of value in higher education and disability studies. Disabled participants helped in the framing and construction of the interview guide during the pilot.

There are a number of implications for my own research practice that follow from conducting this study. Methodologically, this study challenges assumptions regarding how data collection should

be done on and with disabled participants. Prior to commencing data collection, a reflexive cognitive interviewing approach (see Chapter Four) undertaken in the pilot study proved helpful in subsequent interviews. It has been frequently reported that disabled people do not want to disclose their status and when they do, they under-report what they experience. To overcome this challenge, disabled participants were involved in the phrasing of questions at the pilot stage of this research. This study revealed that disabled students' main concern is self-respect and dignity; they don't want to be treated as people of lower value.

Although the sample of this study is not large enough to make generalisations, future studies that utilise mixed research methods might generate generalisable data. Quantifying their needs and concerns could be of value for policy-related decisions. However, Bassey (1981) makes a valuable point by stating that the *relatability* of a case study is also very important. In his opinion, an important criterion for judging the merit of a study is the extent to which data are sufficient and appropriate for someone working in a similar situation/condition to make policy decisions based on what is described in the study. The list of key freedoms and opportunities extrapolated in this study can inform other universities beyond these two universities. It is my hope that this study, with its sample of 14 students, four lecturers and three DU staff, has provided data which is valuable for inclusive policy and from which further studies can be developed.

Some issues have been deferred for future research because of the time constraints of my fellowship period. There are some people I now consider essential to the understanding of the experiences of disabled students in higher education that were not included in this project. These include: non-disabled students, disabled students' families and university administrators. They were not included in this study for logistical reasons, but are important actors in students' lives. Future research on the experiences of disabled students targeting these people could provide important insights on the experiences of disabled students in higher education.

Most studies exploring the experiences of disabled students have focused only on disabled students so that the attitude of non-disabled students and staff is mostly discussed through the eyes of disabled students. In doing so, this has neglected other people whose inclusion helps in understanding the lives of disabled students. Thus, lecturers and DUs staff were incorporated into

this study to broaden the understanding of the experiences of disabled students. While this is a move towards a better understanding of the lives of disabled students in SAHE, the number of lecturers interviewed provides only a snapshot of their experiences with disabled students.

I also cannot rule out a 'selection effect' on the part of disabled students who took part in this study. There is a possibility that most of the disabled students who participated are those who are resilient and have managed to overcome challenges in constraining environments. Moreover, the views of non-disabled students are equally important as Madriaga *et al.* (2010) and Healey *et al.* (2005) found both similar and different students' learning experiences in their studies which had disabled and non-disabled students. Future research including university administrators, non-disabled students and a larger number of lecturers, especially those from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields where there is the smallest number of disabled students at both universities. Again, as shown in Chapter One, for the past five years at UFS, most disabled students belong to the category of *learning difficulties*, a category absent in the South African literature on disability and higher education. In this study only Carla belongs to that category. Further studies should research students who belong to this group.

8.4 Conclusion

I spent some time with disabled students in this project talking to them about their experiences on their way to and in higher education. As I conclude this thesis, I provide below a list of areas of possible intervention (Table 8.3), drawn up as a result of the findings, which might help in building upon good practices underway at the two universities.

Table 8.3: Points for South African higher education institutions to consider for policy

Policy Area	**Issues to consider**
Transition into higher education	-Collaborate with high schools -Inform applicants about services and support available at each university -Promote disclosure -Provide a holistic approach among departments within the university
Access (physical, study material, social space)	-Proactive approaches rather than reactive -Besides physical access, identify and attend to all forms of access -Aim at dismantling some barriers than cushioning them
Teaching and Learning	-Promote staff awareness on disability issues -Raise awareness to everyone through curricula-include disability studies in modules -Promote responsive and inclusive pedagogy -Identify linguistic and cultural issues around disability
Assessment	-Institute proper guidelines on assessment procedures (mode and type) (assignments, exams)
Social Support	-Provide a holistic approach involving all stakeholders within the university (all staff, all students, university administration, external players)
Financing	-Make budgets that are equal to the needs (including assistive devices)
Monitoring and Evaluation	-Evaluate service provision progress and involve students

I have gone a long way in answering the research questions that I had for this study. Within disability studies, it is my hope that this study has brought other dimensions to bear on disability issues in a more expansive view especially the emphasis on agency (choices) and freedoms, with capabilities as the informational basis for social justice. At university level, it is hoped that after dissemination of these results, the two universities will take a look at the various issues highlighted and issues to consider for policy and practice as they work towards an inclusive-transformative agenda.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Student Profiles

UFS

Name	**Age**	**Gender**	**Race**	**Disability**	**Faculty**
Anna	25	Female	Black	Physical	The Humanities
Carla	22	Female	Coloured	Learning difficulties	Economic & Management Sciences
Dudu	38	Male	Black	Hearing	The Humanities
Jane	20	Female	White	Other	The Humanities
Joe	26	Male	White	Visual	The Humanities
Jane	20	Female	White	*Other*	The Humanities
Michael	24	Male	Black	Physical	Education
Ralph	18	Male	Coloured	Visual	Education

UniVen

Name	**Age**	**Gender**	**Race**	**Disability**	**Faculty**
Kudzi	39	Female	Black	Partially Sighted	Education
Mpho	22	Male	Black	Physical Disability	Law
Musa	29	Male	Black	Physical Disability	Law
Pat	30	Female	Black	Albinism	Human and Social Sciences
Sipho	21	Male	Black	Partially Sighted	Human and Social Sciences
Toni	28	Male	Black	Totally Blind	Human and Social Sciences

Appendix 2: Disabled students' capabilities in higher education

Disabled students capabilities in higher education	**Description (from Walker 2006:128-129) **[except for 5, 6 & 7]**
1. *Educational resilience*	'Able to navigate study, work and life. Able to negotiate risk, to persevere academically, to be responsive to educational opportunities and adaptive to constraints. Self-reliant. Having aspirations and hopes for a good future.'
2. *Knowledge and imagination*	'Being able to gain knowledge of a chosen subject. Being able to use critical thinking and imagination to comprehend the perspectives of multiple others and to form impartial judgements. Being able to acquire knowledge for pleasure and personal development, for career and economic opportunities, for political, cultural and social action and participation in the world. Open-mindedness.'
3. *Social relations and social networks*	'Being able to participate in a group for learning, working with others to solve problems and tasks. Being able to work with others to form effective or good groups for collaborative and participatory learning. Being able to form networks of friendship and belonging for learning support and leisure. Mutual trust.'
4. *Respect, dignity and recognition*	'Being able to have respect for oneself and for and from others, being treated with dignity, not being diminished or devalued because of one's gender, social class, religion or race, valuing other languages, other religions and spiritual practices and human diversity. Being able to act inclusively and being able to respond to human need. Having competence in intercultural communication. Being able to show empathy, compassion, fairness and generosity, listening to and considering other person's points of view in dialogue and debate. Having a voice to participate effectively in learning; a voice to speak out, to debate and persuade; to be able to listen.'
5. *Language*	Respecting each person's right to learn in either English or Afrikaans) and recognition (of all identities at the university, not privileging an one language over another),
6. *Identity*	Being able to choose one's identity which is not negative
7. *Voice*	Having a voice to participate effectively in the university, individually or collectively

Appendix 3: Information Sheet

Experiences of disabled students at two South African universities: A Capabilities Approach

Researcher: Oliver Mutanga

Centre for Research on Higher Education and Development (CRHED), University of the Free State, South Africa

Email: oliverm.junior@gmail.com Mobile: (+27) (0) 78 4310 356

Thank you for considering participation in this study.

The overarching aim of this study is to investigate how disabled students experience their university studies, and interact with higher education. The research study is examining the processes through which students with disabilities at the University of the Free State (UFS) and University of Venda (UniVen) make their educational choices and negotiate different socio-cultural and institutional structures in higher education. Data will be collected through in-depth interviews and field observations. Interviews (lasting between 40-80 minutes) will be audio-recorded.

The study will also focus on the differences and similarities concerning institutional pedagogical and other supporting arrangements for disabled students while the final part will focus on the implications for disability policy and further pedagogical development. The study seeks to address the gap in scholarship on diversity and the experiences of disabled students in South African higher education. Insights into experience of the participants will contribute to scholarship on agency, wellbeing and their opportunities in South African universities. In addition, nuanced understanding of the concept of disability will be enhanced. Participation in this study will serve to provide a better understanding of disabled students' experience in higher education. Participation in this study is voluntary. Although the researcher will be able to link the data to participants' identity, data will be anonymised in reports and final thesis and will be held securely in lockable cabinets and confidentiality is guaranteed. However, because of the nature of this study (in-depth interviews, few participants, the retention of identifiable variables like-gender, disability category, race, age, programme of study, etc.) anonymity might be compromised and is not guaranteed. This information will only be used for the purpose of this study only.

If you have further questions, feel free to ask me before you agree to be part of the research.

Appendix 4: Informed Consent Form

Experiences of disabled students at two South African universities: A Capabilities Approach

Have you been afforded time to ask questions about this research?

Yes

No

Did you get satisfactory answers to all your questions?

Yes

No

Did you get enough information about this research?

Yes

No

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from this research?

*at any time

*without giving any reasons

Yes

No

Do you understand that interviews (lasting between 40-60 minutes) will be audio-recorded?

Yes

No

Do you agree to take part in this study?

Yes

No

Name: _____ (Name of the participant)

Signature: _____Date: _____

Mobile Phone: _____Email address: _____

Witness: _____Date: _____(Name of the researcher)

Appendix 5: Interview Schedule for Disabled Students

Experiences of disabled students at two South African universities: A Capabilities Approach

Researcher: Oliver Mutanga (Ph.D. Fellow)
Centre for Research on Higher Education and Development (CRHED), University of the Free State, South Africa
Email: oliverm.junior@gmail.com
Cell phone: (0027) 78 4310356

1. Full Name:

2. Date:

3.a) When did you start your primary school?

b) What is the name of the primary school you attend?

c) Where was the school?

d) Was it a Special/ Mainstream/ Integrated primary school?

e) When did you complete your primary school?

4.a) What is the name of the secondary school you attend?

b) Where was the school?

c) Was it a Special/ Mainstream/ Integrated secondary school?

d) When did you start your Matric?

E) When did you complete your Matric?

5. Age: 6. Ethnicity:

7. No of brothers and sisters?

8. Parents/ Guardian highest educational qualification 1. Father:

2. Mother:

9. Parents/ Guardians occupations (if not retired) 1. Father:

2. Mother:

Do you ever feel/ think you are different to others on campus?

How was it in creating friendships at this institution?

Who are your friends in terms of gender, race or other identity?

What is the attitude of your friends towards you?

What does disability mean to you?

What does impairment mean to you?

How do you perceive yourself?/Describe what it means to you to have a disability or an impairment?

How do you think or believe perceive you?

How and when were you diagnosed? (if applicable)

Do you know of any disability legislation?

What supporting structures exist for you at this institution?

Have you ever accepted a condition/situation because you think what you really like is not achievable?

What are your personal characteristics that get you going in HE?

What is your greatest fear? How do you deal with it?

What are your personal characteristics and other external factors that either help you or restrict you in the university?

How does religion play part in your life?

How does gender play part in your life?

How do you feel/ think about this university?

Can you comment about the language policy of this university?

What do you appreciate about this university?

How is getting around the university for you like?

What are the toilets/ bathrooms like (both in residences & classes)? Accessibility and user friendly?

How do you travel within campus and around the town (when you are here)?

Were your parent/s /guardian/s aware of the university you wanted to go to?/the programmes of study you wanted, and how did they support you?

How was it in creating friendships?

Who were you friends with (gender, race)?

What was the attitude of your friends towards you?

Is this the university you wanted to attend?

Do you feel you had a say in choosing this university?

How did you choose your course of study?

Who is funding your university education?

Were you ever made to feel that you were different to others by an event or personalities within this institution (with reference to your body)? (verbally and/ physically)

What / who inspired you on your higher education endeavours?

What are the reasons for choosing the course you are studying?

Do your parent(s)/ guardian(s) know about your future career goals, and how are they supporting you?

How are you funding your higher education?

What stereotypes exist within this institution?

Which events/ person influence you in your studies?

What cultural issues are significant to you?

How does the structure/arrangement of the educational activities make provision that accommodates you?

In what ways do you think university education has helped you now or will help you in future?

Where do you stay during the semester?

How is the life where you are residing now?

So far, what have been-good & bad experiences at the university?

How do you cope with the challenges at the university?

Were you ever made to feel that you were different to others by an event or personalities within this institution? (positively and negatively)

What degree and major subjects are you now studying?

What are your reasons for taking this course?

How do you think you are doing in this course?

How do you access information about this course?

How is it like in your classes?

Which modules do you like most and those you don't like and why?

How do lecturers/other staff know what you want to do in the future, and discuss possibilities with you in a supportive way?

Can you describe your experiences with the modes of assessment---tests, exams, assignments?

What is your preferred method of assessment?

Describe how lecturers run classes. What do you like? What would you like lecturers to do differently?

What are your views on: the study guides, time you are given to complete your assignments?

Does the timetable work well for you?

Can you tell me about resources to support your learning (IT & study guides)?

How do you perceive the lecture-room(s) arrangements?

In what ways do you think your course of study is preparing you for working environment?

Besides the working related knowledge, what are five major issues you have learnt from your course that are beneficial to your community?

Do you have opportunities to talk about your learning experience with other students?

What do you do as an individual to make sure you succeed in HE?

Are you able to express your opinions and thoughts and make them count on matters that affect you in the university?

Do you belong to any social club (in/ out of class)?

How do you feel at home and when you are here? Are you treated differently here compared to your home?

Where do you see yourself in the next five years?

Have you changed a situation that affects you or other students here?

In what ways do you support others? Or have you changed situations that affect you or other students here?

Appendix 6: *Interview Schedule-DSU Staff*

Researcher: Oliver Mutanga

Centre for Research on Higher Education and Development (CRHED), University of the Free State, South Africa

Email: oliverm.junior@gmail.com Mobile: (0027) 78 4310356

1. Full Name:
2. Date:
3. Position:
4. Highest Qualification and Field(s):
5. How long have you been with this institution?
6. How long have you been involved with disability issues and in what capacities?

What are your personal motivational factors for this job?

What are the major responsibilities of your Unit?

Which model of disability informs this Unit?

Which university department does your Unit fall into?

Which other university Unit(s)/ department(s) (e.g. Teaching and Learning) do you work closely with?

What is your relationship with other university departments?

Which categories of disability do you work with?

For which categories are your programmes most effective?

What practice do you think is particularly effective in aiding the aspiration/ opportunities of disabled students in HE?

Can certain strategies/ programmes work with students regardless of their abilities?

Are you aware of programs that produce positive results for students with disabilities that have been initiated at this university? If so, please describe these programs

What programs or strategies typically do not work?

Who sets the criteria for determining what programs or practices would be used in your Unit?

Are you aware of any government ministry/ department which have specifically focused on addressing the needs of disabled students in HE? If yes, Do you (Unit/ university) receive any support from them?

Which disability policies (national & international) guide you?

Does your university have a disability policy?

Does the university have any policies or procedures that aim to raise the aspirations and opportunities of disabled students?
Does your Unit have any programmes or resources that aim to raise the aspirations and opportunities of disabled people in HE? If yes; What are these programmes? Do you think that disabled students make full use of your Unit? If yes;
a) At what point do you think they seek help?
b) Who/ which category usually ask for help?
c) Are there any trends or changes you have observed over the past 3 years?
d) Do you think your Unit is achieving its mandate?

Are you aware of any additional aspiration/ opportunity related initiatives that are available to disabled students in SAHE?

Do you think that disabled students are given enough advice on HE prior to their coming in HE?

Do you feel that disabled students face any additional educational challenges in HE than their non-disabled peers? If yes, what are these issues? And how do you deal with the issues?

Based on your experience, how should be the needs of disabled students addressed in HE?

What do you think are the major expectations for students with disabilities in your institution?

Do you have any additional comments on, or information regarding disabled students in HE?

Appendix 7: Interview Schedule-Lecturers

Experiences of disabled students at two South African universities: A Capabilities Approach

Researcher: Oliver Mutanga
Centre for Research on Higher Education and Development (CRHED), University of the Free State
South Africa
Email: oliverm.junior@gmail.com Mobile: (0027) 78 4310356

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1. Full Name:
2. Date:
3. Position:
4. How long have you been with this institution?

What are your major responsibilities?
Does your Faculty have any policies or procedures that aim to raise the aspirations and opportunities of students?
Does your Faculty have any policies or procedures that promote the inclusion of disabled students?
How do you work with the Unit for Disabled Students?
What challenges do you usually see among your students?
Do you feel that disabled students face any additional educational challenges in HE than their non-disabled peers? If yes, what are these issues?
How do you accommodate the teaching and learning needs of diverse students in your modules?
How do you ensure that different modules effectively aid the aspirations/ opportunities of students particularly disabled students in HE?
What are the assessment procedures in your faculty?
How do you ensure that you assess students' ability and not the effects of disability?
What teaching and assessment policies exist in the current academic practice in your department that removes discrimination and exclusion?

Is it reasonable to expect that students with disabilities should meet the same expectations and standards as students in general education?

How should be the needs of disabled students addressed in HE and in classes?

What do you think are the expectations for students in your programme?

How well prepared are you (as a Faculty) about the disabled students' particular learning requirements?

What value do you see your programme adding to the teaching and learning of disabled students?

Do you know of any national or institutional disability policy?

Do you have any additional comments on, or information regarding disabled students in HE?

Appendix 8: Authorisation Letter-UFS

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA FREISTATA

UFS·UV HUMANITIES GEESTESWETENSKAPPE

5 August 2014

Mr O. Mutanga
Centre for Africa Studies
UFS

Ethical Clearance Application: Experiences of 'disabled' students at SA universities: A capabilities approach

Dear Mr Mutanga

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of the Humanities, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence, is:

UFS-HUM-2014-46

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension in writing.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted in writing to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Katinka de Wet

Ethics Committee (Faculty of the Humanities)

Copy: Mrs Charné Vercueil (Research Co-ordinator: Faculty of the Humanities)

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