Researching organisational capacity for disability-inclusive curricula

Theresa Lorenzo¹, Judith Mckenzie² and Chioma Ohajunwa³

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Rationale: Institutions of higher learning need to integrate disability as a social justice and diversity issue rather than merely a medical problem. As such, transformation of curricula is required rather than only focusing on admission and reasonable accommodation of disabled students and staff.

Purpose: These Vice Chancellor's Strategic Goals of UCT are identified as essential for addressing the marginalisation and inequities experienced by disabled people:

- Expanding and enhancing UCT's contribution to SA's development challenges
- Enhancing the quality and profile of UCT's graduates.

Aim of research: to determine the extent and nature of disability inclusion in teaching and research in curricula at UCT.

Methodology: A case study approach was used to elicit the experiences of disability inclusion in teaching and research across six faculties at UCT.

Data gathering: Desk top analysis of UCT's research reports for period 2006-2009 and faculty handbooks of 2009 and 2010. In-depth interviews of academic staff based on responses to phone and email survey.

Data analysis: Descriptive statistics was done on quantitative data and thematic analysis on qualitative data

Findings

Limited research has been undertaken in the field of disability, except in the Faculty of Health Sciences where research focuses largely on impairment.

Figure 1 illustrates the different ways disability is included in teaching and learning across different disciplines.

Topics

Mental Health
Intellectual impairment
Inclusive education
Space and environment
Accessibility and reasonable
accommodation
Models of disability
CBR and advocacy
Disability prevention
Disability assessment for occupational health

Focus

Individual impairments
Primary health care
Socio-cultural aspects of disability
Socio-economic issues
Intersectionality
Family context
Development practice
Environmental effects
Legislation
Community issues

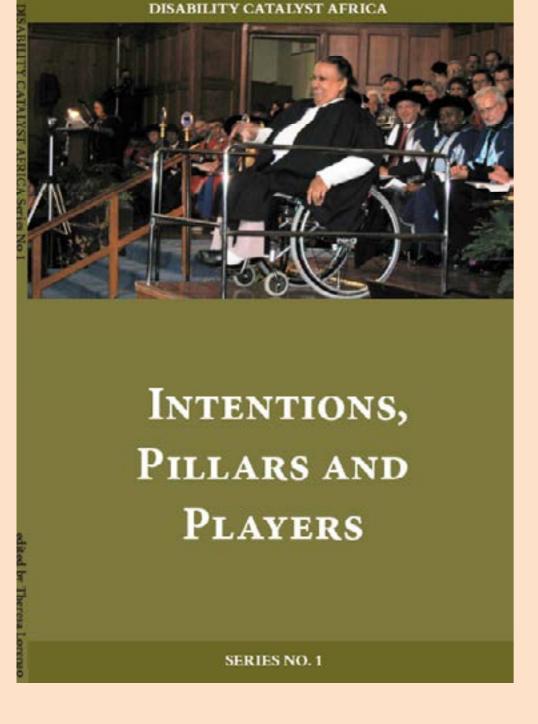
Programme

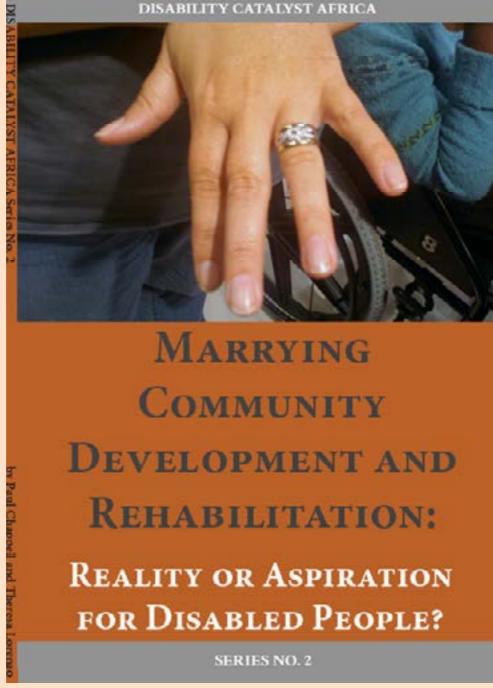
management

Learning strategies

Experiential learning
Practical experiences
Clinical practice
South African Sign Language
courses e.g. strategy for making
health care services accessible
for deaf persons and their
families

Knowledge generation and dissemination





Relevance of disability inclusion to developmental challenges and graduate attributes

Teaching

strategies

Participatory methods e.g.

Seminars

Tutorials

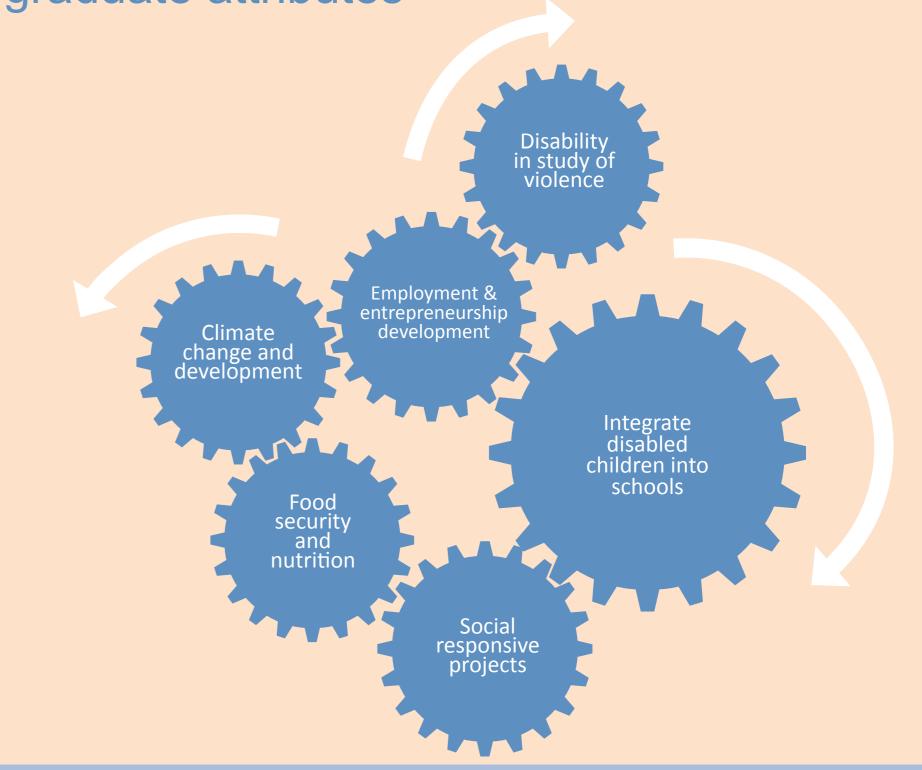
Journal articles

Media articles

Masters by full dissertation

Case study approach Life history approach

scussion groups, video discussions



Recommendations

- Disability should be seen as an issue of social justice and diversity and not just a medical or health issue, particularly for those with intellectual and psycho-social impairment as they experience greater marginalisation and stigma
- The issues for research relating to disability in the other faculties need to be highlighted by exploring research collaborations across disciplines with research units at UCT
- Academics and researchers are encouraged to liaise with the Disability Studies Division, Department of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences in the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Centre for Higher Education Development for academic support, as well as the Disability Services in the Transformation Office of the Vice Chancellor's Office for support in service provision
- Consider disability inclusion for staff performance appraisal related to Rate For Job, ad hominem promotions and merit awards

Conclusion

Integrating disability in research and service learning opportunities could contribute to shifting disability from a marginal or charitable issue to one of diversity and identity politics. The challenge remains for DIRECT to explore ways in which disability is related to social justice and global citizenship.

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- 1 Programme convenor, Disability Studies Division, Department of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, www.dhrs.uct.ac.za
- 2 Postdoctoral fellow, Disability Studies Division
 3 Junior researcher, Disability Studies Division



