Disabled students' right to quality education and inclusion in higher education: From disability policy frameworks to actionable inclusive practices

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Access to quality education for all students in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) agendas continues to be one of South African universities' priorities. In practice, these agendas tend to adopt homogeneous approaches that privilege non-disabled students, thus unfairly excluding students with disabilities (SWDs). Inspired by the decolonial lens, our study investigates the status of access to quality education for SWDs in South African higher education institutions (HEIs) by utilizing document analysis methodology to review the existing scholarly literature on the inclusion of SWDs in South African HEIs concerning quality education. The study found that access to quality education for SWDs in HEIs is being derailed by lecturers' negative attitudes towards providing quality teaching, provision of ineffective student support services by Disability Units, the university leadership's non-inclusive disability policy formulation as well as implementation processes; and inconsistent and non-expansive HEIs disability funding models. To conclude, we call for South Africa's HEIs to minimize barriers to accessing quality education for SWDs. We recommend HEIs prioritize consulting directly with SWDs and holding those who are not fulfilling their professional responsibilities, as stipulated in their national and institutional disability policy frameworks to account.

Keywords: inclusion in higher education; quality education for all; students with disabilities; inclusive education; decolonization; South Africa

Introduction

Inclusive education continues to be widely acknowledged as an important educational approach for quality education for all students, including those with disabilities, as it promotes the involvement of all students in regular classroom settings within mainstream educational institutions (Alzyoudi et al., 2021). The implementation of inclusive education in mainstream educational systems has been celebrated mostly because it promotes the 'acceptance and peaceful co-existence between students with disabilities and typically developing peers in classrooms' (ibid, 2021:1). At the heart of inclusive education is achieving quality education for all SWDs in mainstream education systems. This is evidenced by Molina Roldán et al.

(2021:2) when they argue that inclusive education emphasizes the provisioning of 'quality education for all' students (both those with and without disabilities) which benefits both groups in the regular classroom setting. Other proponents have also suggested that one of the overarching goals of inclusive education is to ensure the participation of all SWDs in quality education to develop the full potential of these students (Kaur and Arora, 2014).

Within the South African context, several scholars (see Ntombela, 2022; Chiwandire, 2019; Mutanga, 2018) have argued that the provision of quality education to students with disabilities (SWDs) is one of the ways in which transformation in higher education (HE) can be achieved meaningfully. Mashau (2022), for instance, has argued that HEIs are responsible for providing full access and participation opportunities for SWDs if this group is to enjoy quality education at their institutions. Mutanga (2018) calls on us to critically understand the concept of quality education through the lens of the South African government's commitment to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on 'education'. This SDG 4 calls for educational institutions to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' by 2030 (United Nations, 2023). Achieving this goal, especially for vulnerable or marginalized populations, including persons with disabilities, should not merely be about granting equal access to primary, secondary, technical, vocational, and tertiary education but also about taking a step further to ensure that such education is of better quality if we are to ensure the academic success of this group (United Nations, 2016). Strengthening efforts on the part of higher education institutions (HEIs) to provide this form of quality education is critical, given how the contemporary HE system is everchanging.

Despite this, however, the available scholarly literature has taken a generic approach to investigating issues of quality education in South African HEIs with the bulk of this literature investigating these issues mostly through the experiences of non-disabled students (Fomunyam, 2016, 2018). Yet, as Mutanga (2019) has argued, unlike non-disabled, students SWDs are not homogeneous, but rather a heterogeneous group with varied and unique learning needs which South African HEIs are to take seriously if they are to support this group effectively. Although this shows how important it is to have more studies investigating the issues of access and participation in quality education concerning SWDs in South African HEIs, to date there are very few studies that have attempted to fill this gap (McKinney and Swartz, 2020; Mashau, 2022). In her recent paper, Mashau (2022:159) for instance has called for South African HEIs to create an enabling environment if their 'students with disabilities [are] to receive better quality education' meaningfully within these institutions. However, the issue of access and participation in quality education for SWDs in line with the South African government to fulfill its commitment to SDG 4 as well as achieving inclusive education which takes seriously the right to access and participate in quality education for SWDs, is still in its infancy in this country.

Hence, it is against this background that the purpose of the present study is to fill this gap in

the existing scholarly literature by investigating the status of access and participation in quality education for SWDs in South African HEIs by utilizing document analysis as a methodology. Firstly, we begin by providing a broader context about issues of disability inclusion in HE from numerous contexts including the global South, Africa, and African South Africa. Secondly, the methodology employed to conduct the present study is discussed, and attention will be paid to providing an account of the research process, the data collection process, and the data analysis process. Thirdly, we provide a section that discusses the four dominant findings of the present study, which include: 'quality teaching and learning'; 'student support services' provision'; 'disability policy formulation and implementation'; and finally, 'disability funding model inconsistencies. Finally, and lastly, we provide a concluding section of the present study where we discuss what ought to be done by South African HEIs if they are to strengthen their efforts to achieve inclusion and quality education for all SWDs. We thus conclude this section by calling for relevant inclusive education stakeholders in South Africa to take the right actions by informing their disability policies, practices, and human interactions with inclusive education values. It is hoped that doing so may positively contribute to creating welcoming institutions that not only realize the disabled students' right to access and participation in quality education on paper, but also in practice. In the section that follows, the broader context about issues of disability inclusion in HE from numerous contexts including the global South, Africa, and African South Africa is discussed.

Context: Disability inclusion in higher education in the global South, Africa, and South Africa

To gain a holistic view of inclusive education from a policy and practice standpoint as well as access and participation in HE issues in South Africa, we take as a point of departure that decolonization should take context-specificity issues seriously if we are to have an in-depth understanding of whether the approaches of HEIs to inclusive education are enhancing the access and participation in quality education for SWDs. Taking such a holistic approach as suggested by most decolonial scholars writing from the perspective of disability inclusion in South African HEIs, would require us to take a critical analysis of this matter at four levels. Firstly, broadly from the global South context, secondly, from the African continent's context, thirdly, from the individual country context (which for purposes of the present study is South Africa), fourthly, from each South African universities' standpoint, and lastly from each disabled student's point of view.

Starting with the global South context, in their recent study, Nseibo et al. (2023) begin their argument by highlighting that disability studies in education (specifically inclusive education) originated in the global North context. For this reason, they therefore caution global South researchers to be mindful of this reality and always try to avoid the risk of adopting ideas for implementing inclusive education 'exported to the global South by the global North, without relating to the contextual realities in which the implementation takes place' (37). In the context

of disability inclusion matters on the African continent, Karisa et al. (2023) have noted the complex nature of implementing inclusive education in African countries' educational systems could potentially be mitigated by adopting a critical stance which is foregrounded in indigenous knowledge systems that can support the educational needs of SWDs. As for South Africa's context of its HEIs, several decolonial scholars researching disability inclusion in HE matters have suggested that employing *Ubuntu* philosophy in theorizing issues of disability and inclusive education in a contextually relevant manner within these institutions (see Ndlovu and Woldegiorgis, 2023; Marovah and Mutanga, 2023; Chiwandire, 2021; Walton, 2018).

Apart from that, historicizing is important if we are to gain an in-depth understanding of South Africa's current efforts to achieve inclusive education for SWDs in HEIs most of which has to do with addressing the legacies of the apartheid era. In the context of the apartheid-South African educational system, for instance, the educational provisioning for learners with disabilities was biased towards the minority white population at the expense of Black learners with disabilities, and this was legislated by such discriminatory legislation as the *Special Schools Act* (SSA) of 1948. The *Special Schools Act* has been criticized for providing for a segregated education system that categorized children with disabilities according to both race and disability; hence this made it difficult for learners with disabilities to have equal access to decent quality education, which would help them get good grades that meet the entry requirements for enrollment in HEIs (Muthukrishna and Schoeman, 2000). To redress this historical injustice, the new post-apartheid South African government, under the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC), has since 1994 been enacting a disability inclusion policy framework that takes the human rights-based approach seriously.

The obligation to provide inclusive education in the mainstream educational system as a human rights-based approach is enshrined in Section 24 of the South African Constitution as well as through various national disability policies. Regarding HE national disability policy framework, South Africa's *Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the Post-School Education and Training System* (henceforth referred to as the *Strategic Policy Framework*), for instance, notes that ensuring the realization of the human rights of SWDs is key to ensuring equal access and success for this group in the post-school education and training (PSET) sector (DHET, 2018). It is hoped that by keeping with this inclusive approach, the South African government will increase the potential of SWDs to 'experience equal access and success in the PSET sector' (DHET, 2018:59).

Central to this human rights-based approach was the objective of ensuring that South African mainstream educational institutions make 'inclusive education… a fundamental right of all students' (Walton and Engelbrecht, 2022:1). One of the main motivations for adopting this approach is to right the previously named injustices (Chiwandire, 2019). One of the beneficial outcomes of post-apartheid South Africa's disability policies' reforms is how it improved the enrolment rates of SWDs in HEIs (McKinney and Swartz, 2020). This has been attributed

mostly to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) tailored bursaries for South African SWDs (Chiwandire and Vincent, 2019). Despite these increasing enrolments of SWDs, this group continues to 'remain seriously underrepresented within [South African] higher education, and experience barriers at a range of levels' (McKinney and Swartz, 2020:1).

As for each South African university's context, some HE policies (see DHET, 2012), have raised concern about how there is no systematic approach to implementing inclusive education policies and practices across all South African HEIs. Rather, each institution determines unique ways in which to address the inclusion of SWDs and this is often determined by the financial and human resources that each university has at its disposal. This is evidenced by key South African HE policies (see DHET, 2013; DHET, 2012) as well as scholarly literature (see Chiwandire and Vincent, 2019; Mutanga, 2019) which have reported that Disability Units at historically white institutions tend to have more financial and human resources for enrolling and supporting students with diverse disabilities effectively compared to their historically Black universities counterparts. Lastly, regarding each disabled student's context, in their effort to achieve quality education for all students, we caution against South African HEIs taking blanket approaches that respond to the educational needs of SWDs and their non-disabled peers as one group. To advance this argument, we draw on numerous scholars' suggestions (see Mutanga, 2019; Pretorius et al., 2018) that unlike non-disabled students, SWDs in South African HEIs should not be treated as homogenous. Rather they should be viewed as a heterogenous group with varied and unique learning needs which South African HEIs should respect accordingly if they are to support this group effectively (Mutanga, 2019; Pretorius et al., 2018).

Hence, by taking all these factors seriously and into consideration, we believe that Disability Studies in education scholars may potentially contribute to achieving a holistic and nuanced understanding of issues of inclusive education specifically related to access and participation in quality education for SWDs. Thus, these factors informed our research design, data collection, the coding and analysis of data, and lastly the reporting of the findings, and formulation of recommendations. Inspired by this decolonial lens, however, to best investigate the status of access to quality education for SWDs in South African HEIs, we pay more attention to the actions and non-action on the part of what we refer to as 'all relevant inclusive education stakeholders' (who for purposes of the present study include the university leadership, lecturers, Disability Unit Staff Members (DUSMs), and SWDs). This is because recent HE disability policies as well as scholarly literature on disability inclusion in HE have emphasized the need for coordinated efforts and interdependency among all these relevant inclusive education stakeholders if South African HEIs are to achieve inclusive education and potentially deliver quality education for SWDs. This is evident in the DHET's (2018:41) view that all-inclusive education stakeholders should 'foster a collegial culture which promotes fundamental human rights and creates an appropriate environment for teaching and learning' of all SWDs. This call has also been confirmed by several South African studies (see

Chiwandire and Vincent, 2022a; Mutanga and Walker, 2017), which found that inclusive education stakeholders (especially lecturers, support staff, and management) should act by working collaboratively and sharing the responsibility if they are to achieve meaningful inclusion for SWDs. In the section below, we discuss the methodology employed to conduct the present study.

Methodology

Despite the ongoing calls for the need to provide quality inclusive education for SWDs in line with South Africa's national and institutional disability policies as well as international commitments to the United Nations SDG 4 on 'quality education' for all, there is a dearth of literature on how South African HEIs are faring in terms of achieving this goal in practice, especially for SWDs. To fill this gap, we used Google Scholar to conduct a document analysis of existing published and unpublished scholarly literature – South African national and disability policies, local and international accredited peer-reviewed journal articles, online newspaper articles, and Ph.D. dissertations. Document analysis could be described as 'a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic' (Bowen, 2009:27). As a qualitative analytical research method, document analysis 'requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge' (Bowen, 2009:27). In searching for the existing scholarly literature, such keywords as 'inclusion'; 'diversity'; 'agency'; 'inclusive education'; 'students with disabilities'; 'curriculum'; 'quality education'; 'reasonable accommodations'; 'higher education transformation'; 'decolonization'; 'ableism'; 'lecturers'; 'disability funding'; 'Disability Unit Staff Members'; and 'Disability Units' were used.

The selection of scholarly literature sources was guided by the main purpose of the present study which was to investigate the status of access and participation in quality education for SWDs in South African HEIs. To achieve this, we were guided by a two-phase process which also impacted our inclusion and exclusion criteria of the scanned literature. In the initial phase, the focus was to gain a bird's-eye view of issues of inclusive education and disability inclusion issues in HE in South Africa. Thus, we conducted a holistic review of scholarly literature published between the period 1994 to 2023, and 45 articles (most of which were peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters) were included in this initial review. In this initial review phase, for purposes of in-depth analysis, we excluded sources published between 1994 and 2014 because many of such studies tended to focus mostly on discussing issues related to increasing access for SWDs in HEIs as this was one of the highest policy priorities of the early post-apartheid South African government. Hence, most of those studies paid little to no attention to how these HEIs should also improve access and participation in quality education for SWDs, which is the focus of the present study.

Regarding the second phase, out of 45 initially reviewed sources, we focused our analysis on

24 sources (all of which were published between 2015 and 2023), mostly scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters. These 24 sources were prioritized for inclusion purposes because they covered recent debates on timely and pressing issues in disability studies in education, including issues of access and participation in quality education for SWDs in South Africa. In this second phase, in our analysis we prioritized including a wide range of studies which were based on literature reviews, perspectives and learning experiences of SWDs, experiences and perspectives of DUSMs and/or lecturers at various HEIs, the status of Disability Units at South African HEIs. Apart from that, we also analyzed three major South African HE policies (see DHET, 2018; DHET, 2013; DHET, 2012) to gain an in-depth understanding of the obligations they impose on HEIs to respect and promote the rights of SWDs including the right to access and participate in quality education for this group.

Given that most of the South African literature on disability inclusion in HE has mainly been written from the perspectives of what we have previously referred to as 'inclusive education stakeholders' who as discussed in the previous sections mostly include lecturers, DUMSs, the university leadership, and SWDs, we reviewed the literature on all these stakeholders to achieve a holistic representation of diverse voices with particular attention paid to what actions and/or inaction these stakeholders are taking to achieve quality inclusive education for SWDs. Data were coded and analyzed using thematic analysis as espoused in Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of inductive and deductive thematic analysis. In reviewing, analyzing, and coding the data from the relevant scholarly literature, the present study sought to discover the following:

- What kind of actions are being taken or not being taken by inclusive education stakeholders?
- What are inclusive education stakeholders' motivating factors for inaction and or action-taking?
- How are inclusive education stakeholders' inaction and or actions contributing to the inclusion and provision of quality education for SWDs?

- What are the subsequent consequences of inclusive education stakeholders' inaction and or action-taking?

In what follows, we discuss in greater detail the dominant findings of the present study in the form of themes that emerged deductively from the raw data of reviewed scholarly literature.

Findings

Quality teaching and learning

As most proponents have suggested, quality teaching and learning are key to achieving inclusive classrooms, as such an environment is important in improving students' sense of

belonging. Arguing from a South African HE context, Pattman and Carolissen (2018) contend that inclusive teaching and learning within an inclusive classroom setting is one of the key indicators of a transformed institution. Hence, it is important to ask what a transformed classroom would look like. Proponents of inclusive education propose that achieving a transformed learning environment requires HEIs to provide the necessary support required by SWDs if these students are 'to be able to compete on an equal level with their non-disabled peers' in the classroom setting (Pretorius et al., 2018:165). Against this background, it is suggested that without lecturers who are dedicated to delivering quality teaching, a level playing field is unlikely to be achieved for SWDs in HEIs. Most of the studies we reviewed, generally highlight how one of the ways how lecturers may level the playing field for SWDs to participate on an equal basis with their non-disabled peers in the teaching and learning process is through the formers' willingness to provide the latter with reasonable accommodations. For instance, in their qualitative study, van Jaarsveldt and Ndeya-Ndereya (2015) examined what contributed to lecturers avoiding the responsibility of meeting the diverse learning needs of their SWDs at one South African university. The study found that most sampled lecturers were intentionally dodging their responsibility to support SWDs in their classroom, and rather resorted to constantly referring SWDs to the Disability Unit. Such lecturers' distancing behaviors from their professional responsibilities were reported to have had detrimental consequences on SWDs such as negatively impacting not only their motivation but also their academic performance, thus consequently denying them access to quality education. The authors concluded by calling for lecturers to be more responsive through informing their learning and teaching practices with 'a learner-centered approach…[which]…requires lecturers to adjust their educational practices to enhance learning for all students', especially those with disabilities if HEIs are to level the playing field for this group (ibid, 2015:2). It could be argued that this learner-centered approach can help these lecturers to move away from seeing or associating the student's disability with inability, and for them to find ways to support a disabled student as a whole person who is unique and learns differently if provided with appropriate support to learn effectively.

Some South African studies on disability inclusion in HE have emphasized the need for the provision of reasonable accommodations[1] to SWDs upon request promptly by lecturers if this country's HEIs are to guarantee quality teaching and learning for SWDs. This issue of access to reasonable accommodations for SWDs was at the heart of Lourens and Swartz's (2020) qualitative study of 23 students with visual impairments at two different South African universities. The study reported that some lecturers held negative attitudes toward providing reasonable accommodations to SWDs, thus making it difficult for some of these students to access their required accommodations. Those lecturers denying SWDs reasonable accommodations cited a lack of awareness of the legal obligations to provide reasonable accommodations as prescribed by their national and institutional disability. To this end, Lourens and Swartz (2020) concluded by suggesting how HEIs need to prioritize setting out clear guidelines regarding students' and lecturers' roles and responsibilities when it comes to

issues related to receiving and providing reasonable accommodations as this will benefit both groups at the sampled institutions.

A study by Mukwevho and Gadisi (2021) employed a mixed methods approach to explore the perceptions of SWDs on the role of reasonable accommodations concerning accessibility and facilitation of teaching and learning at one South African university. In that study SWDs especially blind students' participants raised concerns about how they encountered insurmountable barriers in accessing reasonable accommodations which made their full participation in the classrooms a challenge (Mukwevho and Gadisi, 2021). Mukwevho and Gadisi (2021) attributed the lack of access to reasonable accommodations for SWDs to resource constraints at the sampled institution and concluded by calling for South African HEIs to increase the enrolments of SWDs within these institutions if they are to bridge the gap between policy and practice. Bridging this gap, among other things, should take the form of prioritizing resource allocation, especially in Disability Units if these institutions are to ensure that these students have full access to reasonable accommodations including the whole teaching and learning process (Mukwevho and Gadisi, 2021).

Other studies have pointed to lecturers' attitudinal barriers toward SWDs as having an impact on whether these personnel may provide SWDs with reasonable accommodations or not. For instance, a study by Abrahams et al. (2023) which investigated the experiences of the barriers and facilitators to inclusion for SWDs in universities in South Africa, Ghana, and Ethiopia through focus groups with SWDs participants, is a case in point. In this study, it was reported that lecturers' harmful attitudes were one of the barriers that hindered full access to quality education and inclusion for SWDs at their institutions (Abrahams et al., 2023). The participants further reported that they often had to battle to gain reasonable accommodations from their lecturers, as these lecturers would often treat the request as a burden or favor and not a human rights entitlement. Seen from this light, this study highlights that there is still more work to be done in terms of transforming lecturers' negative attitudes so that they can honor their professional responsibilities to provide SWDs with reasonable accommodations. Furthermore, Abrahams et al. (2023) highlight how HEIs should also prioritize providing financial support as well as appropriate relevant university services aimed at making the smooth provision of reasonable accommodations possible.

Despite most of the lecturers at South African HEIs being reported as holding negative attitudes toward SWDs, there are a few lecturers in certain institutions who have been reported to be exemplars of good practices, especially concerning providing reasonable accommodations to SWDs. A notable example is Tekane and Potgieter's (2021) study which investigated the measures being taken by one historically white South African university to make teaching and learning strategies more inclusive and fully accessible to one blind student (referred to as John) who was enrolled in STEM fields, specifically in science disciplines within this institution (Tekane and Potgieter, 2021). The study found that one of the factors that made John excel and

graduate on time with his biological sciences degree was because of the holistic academic support he received from his lecturers including other relevant stakeholders who consulted directly with the former on how he wanted to be supported academically (Tekane and Potgieter, 2021). The study concluded by noting that apart from John's commitment and dedication to learning, one of the factors that were central to his successful completion of a bachelor's degree was the availability of 'lecturers who ensured that John was well accommodated in lectures, tutorials, and practical sessions' (Tekane and Potgieter, 2021:1). Now we turn our attention to discussing the second dominant theme from this study which focuses mainly on reporting issues related to the provision of student support services to SWDs.

Student support services provision

Some proponents have argued in favor of the provision of student support services by HEIs if these institutions are to achieve access to a quality education that positively enhances the academic performance of students (Kaur, 2016). Within the South African HEIs, the provision of student support services for SWDs is often provided by Disability Units by DUSMs working in these Units. There is a consensus in South African HE policies that improving the provision of student support services for SWDs is crucial if these institutions are to enhance opportunities for participation with success for this group. The DHET (2012), for instance, calls for the need for Disability Units at South African HEIs to be fully equipped and capacitated if they are to redress the historical exclusion as well as current structural barriers to inclusion experienced by these SWDs. The DHET (2013) has suggested that South African HEIs should improve their student support services if they are to strengthen the provision of quality teaching and learning, as doing so is paramount to facilitating the full inclusion of SWDs.

Considering these HE policy documents' calls for South African HEIs to prioritize the provision of holistic student support services if they are to guarantee quality education for SWDs, in scanning the relevant scholarly literature on disability inclusion in HE, we were particularly interested in investigating the measures which HEIs were taking to fulfill this goal. Thankfully, numerous studies provided some insights into this matter with most of them pointing to adequate provision of student support services being contingent on how capacitated individual Disability Units in South African HEIs are. Pretorius et al. (2018), for instance, conducted a document analysis study that investigated the provision of student support services and reasonable accommodations by Disability Units at various universities in South Africa. The study found that there were inconsistencies regarding the provision of adequate student support services by Disability Units to SWDs with diverse learning needs. One of the major findings was that most Disability Units at South African HEIs were reported to be fully capacitated to provide reasonable accommodations and other related services and supports which were tailor-made to serve every disabled student's unique learning needs. The study further found that resource constraints and lack of fully-fledged Disability Units were a huge marker of difference with historically Black universities being disproportionately affected in

comparison to their historically white university counterparts. This unfavorable situation negatively resulted in most universities tending to support certain impairment types at the cost of others. For instance, most universities were reported as being able to provide student support services to students with physical disabilities, those with specific learning disabilities especially dyslexic students, and students with psychosocial disabilities (ibid et al., 2018). This has been at the cost of other disabled students whom most institutions deemed as too costly to support, mostly SWDs who require more specialized support and services. Such students were reported to include those 'who are Deaf (making use of South African Sign Language (SASL) and/or who have a hearing impairment (making use of technology and spoken language)' (ibid et al., 2018:160).

Other studies we reviewed investigated the issue of the impact of student support services provision on access and participation in quality education for SWDs through the lived experiences of SWDs on South African university campuses. For instance, in one qualitative study of 20 SWDs on four campuses of a South African historically Black university, Makiwane (2018) examined whether such campuses prioritised student support services provision for SWDs. This study found that it was mostly campuses with established and fully-fledged Disability Units that prioritized providing holistic student support services to SWDs with diverse learning needs including those who are reliant on assistive technologies in comparison to their counterparts with poor functioning Disability Units. The study concluded by calling for the sampled university to ensure that all this institution's campuses with poorly functioning Disability Units are also fully and equally capacitated if they are to provide adequate student support services to all SWDs regardless of their impairment.

Most South African HEIs are grappling with the challenge of de-prioritization of national or institutional funding tailored for campus disability inclusion initiatives including student support services aimed at enhancing the quality teaching and learning of SWDs (Vincent and Chiwandire, 2017). Through scanning the literature, we found that most Disability Units at South African universities are not an exception as they are also experiencing de-investment, and this has been reported to be limiting their full capacity to provide the necessary support aimed at enabling students with diverse disability to access quality education at these institutions. The negative impact of underfunding Disability Units on these Units' capacity to provide support services to their SWDs was one of the issues that were discussed in Ntombela's (2022) study which explored the experiences of SWDs at one South African university. Participants in this study raised concerns about how barriers and delays in accessing student support services negatively impacted their learning. These challenges were further exacerbated by the fact that, at the time when this author's study was being conducted, 'there was only one full-time Disability Officer attached to this office and a few temporary student workers on short contracts' (Ntombela, 2022:33). Hence, this shows how staffing shortages in most Disability Units at South African HEIs becomes one of the barriers that negatively impact access to quality education for SWDs as such a shortage is forcing these Units to operate with a skeleton

staff.

As has been discussed in previous sections, although South Africa can be applauded for continuing to experience a decent growing number of SWDs enrolling in HEIs, it is reported that keeping up with providing efficient student support services that cater to students with diverse disabilities, continues to be a challenge due to understaffing in Disability Units. This issue was raised as a matter of concern in Chiwandire's (2019) review of the literature study which investigated issues concerning the inclusion of SWDs from the perspectives of curriculum transformation and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework implementation in South African HEIs. This study found that DUSMs complained of experiencing burnout because of the need to juggle different roles and portfolios in their efforts to try and support the learning needs of students with diverse disabilities. This was also exacerbated by unresponsive lecturers reported to be constantly referring SWDs to Disability Units rather than engaging their students and finding the best ways to support them as part of these lecturers' professional teaching and learning obligations (Chiwandire, 2019; see also van Jaarsveldt and Ndeya-Ndereya, 2015). In the section that follows, we discuss the third dominant theme, which unpacks issues related to how inclusive education and disability policies' formulation implementation processes could be said to be or not achieve quality education for SWDs.

Disability policy formulation and implementation

Although most scholars have commended the post-apartheid South African government for enacting numerous enabling HE disability as well as inclusive education policies which have positively resulted in a progressive increase in the numbers of previously excluded SWDs accessing HEIs, however, some proponents of quality education have cautioned against the uncritical acceptance of such an optimistic view. Rather, these proponents have argued that more attention also needs to be paid to how inclusive these South African HE disability policies' formulation and implementation processes are. This issue was raised as a matter of concern in McKinney and Swartz's (2020) qualitative exploratory study which sampled 22 SWDs about their experiences of integrating at one South African university. This study found that the practical implementation of national and institutional HE disability policies has remained a daunting challenge as most HEIs were reported to have been struggling to do enough to provide adequate support for SWDs (McKinney and Swartz, 2020). This not only negatively resulted in SWDs continuing to remain disproportionately underrepresented within HEIs, but also experiencing barriers to participation at a range of levels within these institutions (McKinney and Swartz, 2020).

Other scholars have investigated the issues of access and participation in quality education for SWDs by focusing attention on who is or isn't involved in the policy formulation and implementation processes in South African HEIs. For such scholars, centering the voices and

perspectives of SWDs in policy formulation and implementation processes, could be one step in the right direction if HEIs are to achieve access to quality education for this group. Among such scholars is Mashau (2022) whose recent study investigated the factors which hinder health promotion for SWDs South African HEIs, which the author believes is important in achieving inclusive education holistically for this group. This study found that the process of reviewing current policies and practices, as well as further designing policies and developing strategic frameworks in South African HEIs continue to be dominated by the university leadership at the expense of SWDs who are being unfairly excluded from these processes. Against this background, Mashau (2022:159) cautioned that unless South African HEIs begin to prioritize 'utiliz[ing] students with disabilities' experiences' and voices in designing HE disability policies, access to quality education for this group will remain elusive for this group. This is because the author strongly believes that 'everything which focuses on students with disabilities should be done in consultation with this group, as this will be in line with the slogan 'Nothing about us without us' (Mashau, 2022:160).

In most South African HEIs, the university leadership or the management personnel are the ones who make key decisions regarding the functionality of HEIs including the formulation of institutional policies including disability policies. To this end, there is growing South African literature exploring whether the university leadership is also making efforts to ensure the practical implementation of their disability policies to ensure full participation in quality education for SWDs. Kamga's (2019) study, for instance, examined these barriers to inclusion for SWDs in various South African HEIs by reviewing relevant scholarly literature as well as legal and policy documents to gain an in-depth understanding of whether such policies were being enforced especially by the university leadership. That study found that SWDs continue to face barriers to accessing and participating in quality education because existing HE national and institutional disability policies are not being implemented effectively (Kamga, 2019). The author attributed this to the lack of enforcement mechanisms at both national and institutional levels to hold to account the university leadership, thus making it difficult to foster the full inclusion of SWDs in HE (Kamga, 2019). In her study, Mashau (2022) also raised a similar concern. This is evident when she argued that 'part of the problem lies with the lack of a proactive leadership role being played by top management when it comes to ensuring enforcement of policies and putting them into practice'.

There is a need to change the concentration of power in one inclusive education stakeholder (mostly the university leadership) as currently is the case in most South African HEIs, since this is believed to be derailing the process of having policies that are implemented effectively to provide quality education to SWDs. Among other HE disability policies, there have been calls suggesting how through the effective implementation of the provisions of the 2018 *Strategic Policy Framework*, universities may positively contribute towards placing 'disability at the center of institutional transformation' (USAf, 2022). These efforts have not yielded many positive outcomes as there is still no systematic implementation of this policy,

mostly because of the lack of cooperative university leadership. Hence, concerns have been raised that without the equal sharing of responsibility between the university leadership and DUSMs, Disability Units at South African universities will continue to experience challenges in providing meaningful quality education to SWDs served by these Units (USAf, 2022). Seen from this light, it could be argued that it is through partnerships between the university leadership and DUSMs that both stakeholders may collaboratively address meaningful access and participation in quality education for SWDs. In the following section, we discuss the fourth and last dominant theme which focuses on issues related to how South Africa's HE disability funding model has several shortfalls that make the provision of quality education in HEIs unsustainable.

Disability funding model inconsistencies

The provision of adequate disability funding by HEIs is important if these institutions are to facilitate the full inclusion of SWDs by enabling this group to access quality teaching and learning processes in HE, and this view has also been backed by the South African National disability policy framework. As noted by USAf (2022), HEIs could place disability at the center of their institutional transformation initiatives by implementing the *Strategic Policy Framework*, especially its provisions, which relate to student disability funding. Yet several scholars (see Mbuvha, 2019; Chiwandire and Vincent, 2019; Ramaahlo et al., 2018) have raised concerns about how the South African government continues to be lagging in terms of earmarking disability funding for implementing inclusive education initiatives a priority. Hence, this lack of prioritizing disability funding expenditure is said to be negatively impacting the provision of equal opportunities for SWDs at South African HEIs. In what follows, we discuss the non-expansive nature of South Africa's HE disability funding model and how its inconsistencies negatively impact the provision of quality education for SWDs.

Kamga (2019) has provided a nuanced understanding of disability funding challenges experienced by South African HEIs by suggesting that the major challenge lies with the country's national contemporary HE disability funding model, which this scholar has criticized for being non-expansive especially when considering the way it is currently being implemented at these institutions. The non-expansiveness of South Africa's HE disability funding model, according to Kamga (2019), stems from its selective and exclusionary nature, whereby more funding tends to be channeled toward supporting the needs of students with physical disabilities whose academic needs are considered less costly at the expense of blind and Deaf students who are deemed too costly to support. Kamga's (2019) view on the less expansiveness of the current South African funding model has been confirmed in numerous studies exploring the experiences of SWDs at South African HEIs. As far as the disability funding for students with physical disabilities is concerned, other studies have noted that there are minority cases where the university leadership has committed to allocating funds for campus disability inclusion initiatives for the former. Despite this, such commitments have often been on an *ad hoc* basis

or sometimes take a foot-dragging approach, with most of such funds often being tailored toward making the physical built environment accessible to persons with physical disabilities, especially wheelchair users (Vincent and Chiwandire, 2017; de Beer et al., 2022).

Concerning students who are deemed too costly to support, especially those with hearing impairments, one study of seven Deaf students who use South African Sign Language (SASL) as a primary medium of communication, raised concerns about how their institution did not have adequate sign language interpreters (Bell et al., 2016). The Deaf student participants in this study complained about how this deprived them of opportunities to participate equally, not only in the process of teaching and learning but also in campus social activities, which mostly did not have interpreters (Bell et al., 2016). This lack of specialized sign language interpreting services at South African HEIs due to the reluctance of these institutions' leadership personnel to cover costs associated with hiring sign language interpreters is said to have left many Deaf students in limbo or prevented most institutions from enrolling future Deaf students (Bell et al., 2016; Ndlovu, 2023; Chiwandire and Vincent, 2019; Pretorius et al., 2018). Regarding the inclusion of students with visual impairments (mostly blind), several studies exploring the experiences of blind students at various South African universities (see Lourens and Swartz, 2020; Ndlovu, 2021; Pitsoane and Matjila, 2021; Mukwevho and Gadisi, 2021). These studies have reported that the understaffing in Disability Units at most universities and the lack of key resources such as assistive technologies have negatively impacted the full inclusion of blind students within these institutions. One of the major reported barriers experienced by these blind students is either being denied or being delayed accessing reasonable accommodations such as learning materials in alternative accessible formats. These studies have also attributed all these challenges to South Africa's university leadership personnel's oppressive actions of disinvestment of Disability Units and thus called for the personnel to do more if they are to address this challenge and subsequently provide quality education.

From this discussion, there is consensus that most of the university leadership at South African HEIs is to blame for the current non-expansive HE disability funding model for SWDs which is depriving this group of accessing quality education in HEIs fully. Within this unfavorable context, to fill this void, research (see Lyner-Cleophas et al., 2021; Chiwandire, 2020; USAf, 2022) has shown that DUSMs at various South African HEIs have been reported to be coming up with alternative plans such as the outsourcing of funding to support disability inclusion initiatives from external private stakeholders and entities. This outsourcing of funding from external private stakeholders by DUSMs has however been criticized for being unsustainable in terms of enabling Disability Units to provide their student support services to a diverse group of SWDs timeously (USAf, 2022). This has been reported to be true, especially in cases where DUSMs often find themselves having to single-handedly assume this responsibility without the support of their university leadership (USAf, 2022).

The impact of outsourcing funding from external private stakeholders by DUSMs was also raised in Chiwandire's (2020) doctoral study based on face-to-face qualitative interviews with DUSMs from 10 different universities in four of South Africa's nine provinces. That study found that despite these funds making a difference in purchasing assistive devices for Disability Units as well as hiring more human resources, sampled DUSMs however expressed concerns about how receiving such funds from possible private donors is not always guaranteed which resulted in putting SWDs at risk of being denied quality education (Chiwandire, 2020). In the following section, we provide a detailed discussion of the dominant findings of the present study.

Discussion

The first point is how quality teaching and learning can increase the chances of access and participation for SWDs in quality education. The studies we scanned to generate this theme (see Abrahams et al., 2023; Mukwevho and Gadisi, 2021; Lourens and Swartz, 2020) all highlighted how achieving this goal begins with transforming the regular classroom environment by also making the teaching and learning process as accessible as possible to SWDs. Proponents believe that achieving this goal requires the full cooperation of lecturers as well as having in place fully capacitated Disability Units. In practice, however, this has been a challenge in most South African HEIs because of various reasons. These reasons include lecturers who are intentionally dodging their responsibility to support SWDs by providing them with reasonable accommodations, resulting in the former constantly referring SWDs to Disability Units.

These lecturers' negative attitudes towards providing SWDs with reasonable accommodations may be an indication of how some lecturers are exploiting the lack of clear national and institutional guidelines regarding lecturers' roles and responsibilities regarding the provision of reasonable accommodations. In other HEIs, the denial of opportunities to access and full participation in quality education is not only attributed to lecturers routinely denying SWDs reasonable accommodations, but rather because most Disability Units (especially those in historically Black universities) lack the capacity to provide a wide range of reasonable accommodations required by students with diverse disabilities within South African HEIs. All these challenges mean that SWDs in South African HEIs are often finding themselves in precarious positions of either having to constantly fight to access reasonable accommodations (see Mukwevho and Gadisi, 2021; Lourens and Swartz, 2020), or being forced to adjust to an oppressive regular classroom environment without their required accommodations. For this reason, we agree with the consensus in most scanned studies calling for the provision of disability awareness and sensitization programs targeting lecturers could help in transforming this cadres' negative attitudes towards supporting the learning needs of SWDs including the provision of reasonable accommodations (Kamga, 2019; Mbuvha, 2019; Pretorius et al., 2018; Makiwane, 2018; Mutanga and Walker, 2017).

Although we agree how important it is to transform lecturers' negative attitude towards providing SWDs with reasonable accommodations, we also believe that it is equally important for SWDs enrolled in South African HEIs to be educated about their disability rights to inclusive education, especially concerning access to and participation in quality education. This is because, as suggested by Lourens and Swart (2020:320), it is concerning that SWDs in South African HEIs are still not receiving their 'information regarding their legal rights' to inclusive education. Hence, to enhance the access and participation in quality education opportunities for SWDs, South African HEIs need to invest in programs aimed at training SWDs about their disability rights if this group is to effectively self-advocate for their rights within these institutions. This is confirmed by previous South African studies (see Chiwandire, 2020; van Jaarsveldt and Ndeya-Ndereya, 2015) which have indicated that SWDs who have acquired good self-advocacy skills tend to fare better in terms of being more confident to self-advocate for their academic needs including reasonable accommodations from their lecturers.

Regarding the impact that the formulation and implementation of HE disability policies processes on access and participation in quality education, reviewed studies showed that there is a divergence of opinions about this. McKinney and Swartz (2020), for instance, attributed the denial to the lack of implementation of existing national and institutional HE-inclusive education policies at most South African HEIs and the subsequent negative impact this has on equitable access to quality education for SWDs (McKinney and Swartz, 2020). In contrast, Mashau (2022) has attributed this challenge to the silencing of voices and perspectives of SWDs not only right from the outset of policy formulation processes but also in the implementation of these policies' processes. In Kamga's (2019) view, the problem lies in the lack of democratization formulation and implementation of HE disability policy processes as these decisions tend to be single-handedly dominated by the university leadership at the expense of other inclusive education stakeholders, especially SWDs.

Against this background, it could be argued that it is not enough to have disability policies that are not formulated democratically (as in involving those who are impacted by such policies especially, for purposes of the present study, SWDs) and implemented systematically across all universities. Therefore, there is a need to rethink the disability policy formulation and implementation processes in the South African HE context if we are to enhance access and full participation in quality education for SWDs within HEIs. To achieve this, among other things, there is an urgent need for South African HEIs to ensure the systematic implementation of disability and inclusive education policies across all South African HEIs. Not only that, but the undemocratic disability policy formulation and implementation processes which only prioritize the university leadership's views should be dismantled as such process only further the marginalization and exclusion of SWDs from accessing and participating in quality education meaningfully.

To enhance access and participation to quality education for SWDs, there is an urgent need to democratize the current disability policy formulation and implementation biased towards the university leadership who seem to position themselves as experts as they tend to single-handedly wield power in decision-making processes regarding these matters. Against this background, we need to rethink and dismantle this narrow conceptualization of the notion of expert on disability inclusion and inclusive education in South African HE in favor of a broader approach. Firstly, we advocate for a broader approach that also positions SWDs themselves as experts on disability inclusion matters because of their lived experience of disability in South African HEIs, a view that has also been backed up by Mutanga (2019). Seen from this light, we call for South African HEIs to adopt a more bottom-up disability policy formulation and implementation approaches which following Mashau's (2022:160) are inspired by this disability rights movement and the mantra 'Nothing about us without us'. Apart from that, we also believe that access and full participation in quality education for SWDs can also be enhanced if DUSMs are accredited as experts in disability inclusion issues and inclusive education implementation in South African HEIs. This is because, as argued by Mbuvha (2019:57), Disability Units are often 'the first point of contact' for most SWDs upon arriving at university campuses to pursue their studies. Hence, it follows that DUSMs spend most of their work interacting hands-on and assisting SWDs with their diverse academic-oriented needs they need to flourish in education, thus this cadre should also be considered as experts worth consulting with on issues related to disability policy formulation and implementation processes, among other things.

Despite the consensus that disability funding through NSFAS bursaries for SWDs has played an important role in increasing the enrollment numbers of SWDs in South African HEIs, little is being done at a national level to also provide sufficient funding to facilitate the teaching and learning for SWDs if this group is to access and participate fully in quality education. As shown in previous sections, studies conducted at various South African HEIs have attributed this to the lack of concerted efforts to earmark funding tailored to support disability inclusion initiatives. Such lack of effort has been reported to be either at the national level by the relevant government departments or at institutional levels by the university leadership (Mbuvha, 2019; Chiwandire and Vincent, 2019; Simui et al., 2019; Ramaahlo et al., 2018). All these shortcomings make South Africa's HE disability funding model not only non-expansive, but also perpetuates inconsistencies which are evident in the allocation of disability funding in various institutions.

Regarding the university leadership's lack of prioritizing disability funding, such actions have two-fold consequences. The disinvestment in Disability Units by the university leadership has negatively resulted in forcing some DUSMs to assume additional responsibilities of outsourcing disability funding from external private stakeholders, efforts which are not always guaranteed. Given that most Disability Units are short-staffed, expecting DUSMs to assume additional responsibilities (which should otherwise be handled by the university leadership) of

applying for disability funding is more likely to result in them experiencing work burnout as has been confirmed by previous studies (Chiwandire, 2020). Not only that, but in his study, Mutanga (2018) raised concerns about expecting DUSMs to single-handedly address all disability inclusion in South African HEIs as unfair, and such a narrow approach is less likely to see these HEIs achieving their goal of achieving quality education for SWDs within these institutions. Rather, to be fair, unresponsive university leadership and lecturers need to be considerate and acknowledge that the 'responsibility for disability support should be a collective activity involving all the sectors within universities, not just Disability Units' (Mutanga, 2018:12).

Given that the disinvestment of Disability Units is leaving most of South African HEIs incapable of providing quality education to all their SWDs meaningfully, this has also impacted negatively by minimizing these institutions' capacity to achieve the retention and throughput rates for these students. This has consequentially resulted in higher dropout rates of most SWDs in comparison to their non-disabled peers as has been reported in most of the studies we scanned (see Chiwandire and Vincent, 2019; Chiwandire, 2019). To this end, SWDs who are being most disproportionately affected by inadequate disability funding and subsequently vulnerable to dropping out have been reported to be those who require more specialized support in the form of assistive technology especially for blind students and sign language interpreters in the case of Deaf students. This is because the learning needs of Deaf and blind students' include reasonable accommodations that are considered too costly to cater for by most South African HEIs.

Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the status of access to quality education for SWDs in HEIs in South African HEIs. By utilizing document analysis, the present study has added new theoretical knowledge to the field of disability studies theoretically by showing how certain inactions and actions on the part of inclusive education stakeholders may facilitate or derail access to quality inclusive education for SWDs at South African HEIs. This study also highlights the direct and indirect consequences of most South African HEIs' failure to provide a conducive and enabling environment for SWDs to access and participate fully in quality education opportunities on an equal basis with their non-disabled peers. It was found that this is mostly caused by what is often referred to as, firstly, the hierarchy of impairment, secondly, the unequal power relations biased against the university leadership and lecturers at the expense of DUSMs and SWDs, and lastly, the uneven playing field between historically Black and historically white when it comes to providing equal opportunities in accessing and participating in quality education for students with diverse disabilities and learning needs.

As evidenced in previous sections, the way the university leadership and lecturers dominate issues of access and participate in quality education and which SWDs deserve such quality

education shows how the former could be said to hold what Swartz and Watermeyer (2006) refer to as 'power, privilege, and status', which they are unfairly using to deny SWDs their rights to quality education which contravenes South Africa's disability policy framework. As for lecturers, the present study's findings have shown how this group single-handedly exercises discretion according to their personal beliefs and value systems in determining which specific group of SWDs should be given or denied reasonable accommodations. Likewise, the university leadership has also been reported to be single-handedly making key institutional decisions, including those related to HE disability funding allocation for Disability Units, disability policy formulation, and implementation without consulting with other important stakeholders, especially SWDs and DUSMs. These unequal power relations are attributed to the lack of oversight mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the practical implementation of disability policies as well as ensuring that relevant stakeholders are complying with these policies' provisions, which has made it difficult to maintain checks and balances on lecturers as well as university leadership's powers. It is recommended that oversight mechanisms should be created at both national and institutional levels if South African HEIs are to effectively hold to account both the university leadership as well as lecturers who are being irresponsive by not honoring their duty to respect and promote the rights of SWDs to access and participation in inclusive education.

Given the current context of how most are under-resourced in terms of human resources and finances especially in Disability Units at historically Black universities, the unwavering commitment by DUSMs who have been reported to be making concerted efforts to outsource disability funding from external private stakeholders should be commended. Despite this, such DUSMs' efforts have not been without incurring extra responsibilities, such as having to outsource HE disability funding which should be the main responsibility of the university leadership. Not only that but, as discussed in previous sections, DUSMs have been reported to have been assuming the lecturers' responsibility of having to find ways of supporting SWDs who are constantly being referred to Disability Units by their lecturers (van Jaarsveldt and Ndeya-Ndereya, 2015; Chiwandire, 2019). Not only is all this unfair, but DUSMs have also complained about struggling to cope with their job demands as well as experiencing job burnout because of being overstretched (Chiwandire, 2020). One of the right actions should be to employ a bottom-up approach that ensures SWDs themselves are consulted and involved fully in all decision-making processes that affect their lives and learning experiences on university campuses, as doing so will lead to good practice exemplars of inclusion and provision of quality education in HEIs.

Despite most of South Africa's national and institutional disability inclusion national and institutional HE policies recommending all HEIs to provide quality education to all SWDs across the country's institutions, the findings of the present study show that there is still a wide gap between historically Black and historically white universities practical efforts to achieve this goal. Historically Black universities have been reported to be the most disproportionately

affected in comparison to their historically white universities' Disability Units in terms of providing quality student support services to students with diverse disabilities. Efforts to close this wide gap meaningfully, we believe, should require us to historicize why historically Black universities are still grappling with providing quality education for all its SWDs. Through historicizing, we find out that since their established during apartheid South Africa historically Black universities have always been poorly funded compared to their historically white universities counterparts, and the former continue to face severe human, financial, infrastructure, and other resource constraints (Iilorah, 2006; Badat, 2015). Given that this trend has continued unabated in most historically Black universities' Disability Units discussed in the present study, we recommend that the South African government highly prioritize historically Black universities when allocating the annual budget if these HEIs are to improve the enrolment rates as well as access and participation to quality education for diverse SWDs. The other ways in which the present study has added new knowledge to the field of disability studies in education is by highlighting how the exclusion of certain SWDs takes the form of what some disability studies scholars (see Deal, 2003; Stewart, 2004) refer to as the hierarchy of impairments. For Stewart (2004:1), the concept of the hierarchy of impairments or disability hierarchies may be 'understood as the idea that some impairments are positioned as "worse" or more severe than others, and thus more deserving of stigma'. Although the concept of the hierarchy of impairments in disability studies conventional literature is often discussed through the lens of how persons with disabilities often believe and reinforce negative attitudes towards other impairment groups often in very subtle forms (see Deal, 2003; Stewart, 2004). From the findings of the present study, however, the hierarchy of impairments is, directly and indirectly, evident from how most South African HEIs are routinely prioritizing funding and supporting the learning needs of SWDs who are considered less costly to support, especially students with physical disabilities at the cost of students with hearing impairments, especially Deaf students. Consequently, such a narrow and biased approach further marginalizes and excludes many Deaf students because some HEIs that claim not to have fully capacitated Disability Units, will not enroll these students from the outset. As for those Deaf students who happen to be enrolled, they are often reported to experience restricted opportunities to participate fully in quality education because of a lack of sign language interpreters and other necessary reasonable accommodations. Against this unfavorable background, we recommend the need for all South African HEIs to avoid treating Deaf students as an afterthought as doing so will be a violation of its national and institutional HE disability policies as well as its international commitment to fulfill the SDG 4. Given the dearth of studies focusing on quality education in South African HEIs, to augment the findings of the present study, future research should focus on exploring the issue of access to quality education for SWDs in HEIs through qualitative studies with inclusive education stakeholders.

Notes

[1] According to Mukwevho and Gadisi (2021:592), a reasonable accommodation within the HE settings may 'relate to the change in ways things are usually done for the provision of equal opportunities/treatments for students with disabilities'.

Acknowledgements

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