ACCESSIBILITY OF TERTIARY EDUCATION TO STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN ALL THE FACULTIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN CAPE

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Artium in the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, University of the Western Cape

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ABSTRACT

People with disabilities do not face the same circumstances, in their journey through tertiary education, as do people without disabilities. Studies have revealed that learning disabilities are often invisible and not identified at an early stage. Generally, the move to university could be challenging for students with disabilities, but very stressful to the students with learning disabilities, in particular. The principles of inclusive education, where people with disabilities and those without disabilities are educated in the same setting, have been the main focus for policy makers in this era. However, scant research has been conducted on the experiences of students with disabilities in accessing tertiary education, particularly, students with learning disabilities.

The focus of this current research was to explore the accessibility of tertiary education to students with learning disabilities, in all the faculties at the University of the Western Cape. The researcher aimed to explore and describe the experiences of students with learning disabilities, to inform recommendations for policy and practice. The study was guided by the anti-discriminatory practice and social inclusion theory. The research methodology involved a qualitative approach, using an exploratory descriptive design, with nine students and three staff members, sampled purposively and through snowball sampling. The researcher employed in-depth interviews and email interviewing to gather data, which were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively. All research ethics were considered and adhered to. The students with learning disabilities disclosed how their disability was diagnosed and how they experienced schooling. These experiences influenced the way they coped with teaching and learning at university. Most of them acknowledged that the university was supportive, in various ways, such as, assistive technology, support staff, extra time, as well as a separate examinations and testing area. However, they had difficulty disclosing their disability to lecturers, which made learning more challenging. They were of the opinion that, in order for learning to be inclusive, the university needed to do more to make this a reality. For example, the training of lecturers and staff on the realities of learning disabilities, as well as employing holistic approaches to educate students with learning disabilities.
KEY WORDS

accessibility
inclusion
inclusive education
learning disabilities
tertiary education
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
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<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organisation of African Union</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>OSDP</td>
<td>Office on the Status of Disabled Persons</td>
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<td>OSISA</td>
<td>Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDHR</td>
<td>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNCRPD</td>
<td>UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Education Scientific Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children Emergency Fund</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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DEFINITIONS

**Disability** refers to any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being (United Nations, 2016).

**Inclusive education** constitutes a paradigm based on the concept of human rights and social model that unites equality and difference, as inseparable values, and surpasses the formal quality education (Lehohla and Hlalele, 2014)

**Learning Disabilities** refer to a number of conditions that might affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding, or use of verbal, or non-verbal information (African Child Policy Forum [ACPF], 2011)
DECLARATION

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

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Walter Mhona
Date: November 2018

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my friends, Byron Chideya, Blessing Phiri and Tawanda Ziunye. My family of Champions World Assembly. Your support in this project is expressly appreciated.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The journey in tertiary education and this thesis has been a long, and tiresome one. It would not have been possible, if it was not for the grace of the Lord.

To my Prophet A. Chapfika who encouraged me to further my studies. I want to thank you for letting me take this challenge. You did a great and wonderful job. Thank you for your support during the thesis, every time. You made it all possible.

To my mother and father, thank you for what you did during this time. Though you did not know what I was going through, I just want to say thank you for encouraging me to reach the end of this process.

To my siblings, Vimbai and Allan, and niece, Rachael, thank you all for your support and encouragement, and for believing in me.

I would like to thank all the students and key informants, who participated in this study.

I would like to take this opportunity to express gratitude to Evadne Abrahams and the OSD at large, for their support.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

According to an organization, Inclusion BC (2016), higher education worldwide has been challenged to ensure inclusive education that focuses on developing and designing structures and activities for all students to learn and participate together. Similarly, the United Nations (2016), in Article 26, stipulates that people should enrol in education, irrespective of their statuses. Emerson, Hatton, Robertson, Roberts, Baines, Evison and Glover (2011) assert that there are 905 000 adults with learning disabilities in England, and only 189 000 are registered with the learning disabilities services. Correspondingly, Morin (2016) informs that, in the United States, only 24 percent of youths with learning disabilities will disclose their disability statuses in post-secondary schools. In addition, Morin (2016) highlights that 41% of students with learning disabilities, will finish their undergraduate studies in 8 years after leaving high school.

In Africa, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF, 2016) states that there is a lack of reliable data on the prevalence of disabilities. In a study conducted by Foskett (2014) in South Africa, it is reported that people with disabilities suffered due to apartheid, some doubly so, because of their race, as well as an unwritten system, which segregated able-bodied individuals from those with disabilities. However, the Foundation of Tertiary Institutions of the Northern Metropolis [FOTIM] (2011) outlines that, in South Africa, some tertiary education institutions have Disability Units. As the University of the Western Cape [UWC] has an Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), the researcher approached its coordinator to explore the possibility of doing research, involving students with disabilities. Actually, there were reports that some students with learning disabilities had been discriminated against, and marginalized by lecturers, as well as other students at the University of Western Cape [UWC]. In contrast, various accounts were also being disseminated, about students with learning disabilities, who had overcome their incapacities, and were serving as role models on campus. The researcher, therefore, started to outline the background to the study, the research aim, research objectives, research questions, limitations of the study, as well as the research methodology and study framework.
1.2. Disability defined

According to Murickan and Kararemparal (2004), people with disabilities are persons who have any form of impairment that limits their normal functioning in day-to-day activities. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2011), states that one billion persons are estimated to be disabled, which is almost 10% of the world’s population. In the same vein, the WHO (2011) highlights in their study that most of the people with disabilities are estimated to be living in developing countries, which provides insight into disability statistics.

Murickan and Kararemparal (2004) state that there are various types of disabilities in the world, namely, orthopedically handicapped (skeletal), acoustically handicapped (deaf and dumb), sensorial handicapped (sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste) and visually handicapped (blind). Additionally, these authors argue that individuals, who fall under the same category of disability, may not have the same characteristics, as symptoms may vary from mild to severe disabilities, for example, partially blind to blind.

1.3. Disability policies

1.3.1. Internationally

According to Tugli, Zungu, Goon and Anyanwu (2013), the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006) is an attempt to safeguard and protect the rights of the people with disabilities in the world. In addition, De Beco (2014) states that Article 24 of the UNCRPD (2006), provides for the right to education, emphasising the responsibility of governments to guarantee what the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF, 2012) refer to as an inclusive system of education at all levels. The UNCRPD (2006) treaty is valuable, as it outlines policy formulation guidelines for member states, and shifts the obligation onto governments; however, it fails to outline how the states and governments should approach the issues of inclusion.
1.3.2. Africa

In a study conducted by Kochung (2011), it was established that higher education in Africa reinforces inequality in education, as it has been responsible for the exclusion of many vulnerable members of society. Kochung (2011) continues that, in Africa, tertiary education has only been accessible to the rich and a few intellectuals, while people with learning disabilities have had limited access. This author further asserts that, people with disabilities in higher education, only constitute 1% in Africa, and their success has been limited, due to barriers outside the institution, as well as within. This is the status quo, despite the fact that UNICEF (2012) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNICEF and UNESCO, 2007) affirm the right to education for everyone.

1.3.3. South Africa

The White Paper on Education (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Department of Education [DoE], 1996) of the South African government is somewhat ambiguous in its demands, as it does not provide clear criteria for the implementation of inclusive education in the tertiary educational setting. It serves as a national strategy for educational reforms in South Africa, but is not clear on how the issue of inclusive education should be approached. Matshedisho (2007) explains that policies, supporting people with disabilities, should be implemented in tertiary education, and when disputes arise, they should not be resolved on the basis of entitlement, but within the human rights framework instead.

1.4. Students with disabilities in tertiary education

Barnes (2007) highlights that, in the last decade, there has been evidence of progress in making tertiary educational institutions more welcoming to students with disabilities. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2011), there is an increase in the number of students with disabilities, who are enrolling in tertiary institutions, in OECD countries. Similarly, in a study conducted by Hadjikakou and Hartas (2009), it was observed that the number of students with disabilities, in tertiary education, is increasing, as 8-10% of students with disabilities were registered and attending tertiary education.
However, Mafa (2012) argues that, in Africa, the journey has been slow, because people with disabilities have been neglected and mistreated, pitied and overprotected, until finally accepted and integrated into society. According to Statistics South Africa and Lehohla (2011), persons with severe difficulties had the worst educational outcomes in South Africa, as only 5.3% had attained higher education. Additionally, an increase in the enrolment of students with disabilities is occasionally accompanied by a decrease in the quality of education, due to larger class sizes, as well as the teaching methods employed (Grieder, 2010). Pacheco (2015) asserts that some students with disabilities also realize very soon that the personalized support system they had at high school, varies from the one at the university level.

1.5. Learning Disabilities

According to the CRC Health Group (2016), learning disabilities refer to a range of impairments that interfere with an individual’s ability to learn and be educated, including the ability to do mathematics, write, spell, speak, read and learn. Gaumnitz and Gaumnitz (2007) report that individuals with learning disabilities are intelligent, but have an inconsistency between measured ability and achievement, which cannot be attributed to either the lack of effort, or some physical, emotional, or environmental condition. Additionally, Denhart (2008) asserts that learning disabilities are viewed as socially constructed, because of the way an individual’s brain is permitted to function, in a given cultural values and restrictions. Consequently, it could be argued that the concept of learning disabilities is both psychological, as well as social.

At UWC, the Office for Students with Disabilities [OSD] was established to promote equity, equality, and inclusivity, by empowering students with disabilities to function as independently as possible (University of the Western Cape [UWC], 2013b). In a report by the Centre for Student Support Services (University of the Western Cape [UWC], 2013c), it was reported that, currently, there are 204 students with disabilities at UWC, and among them, 38 students with learning disabilities. the facts provided points to the fact that UWC is attempting to ensure inclusive education by enrolling the students which is the first step.
1.6. Social work and disability

Disability, according to the Jamaican Government (Keaveny, 2014), is any restriction to fulfil an activity, in a way that is considered normal for a human being. Rubin and Babbie (2011) state that social work, through research, provides knowledge, which social workers require to solve the problems they confront. In addition, these authors state that social work, through research, provides the evidence needed to alleviate human suffering, and promote social welfare. Therefore, the social work profession perceives individuals with disabilities as a diverse group, and encourages individualized service to a person, at the expense of responding to the group’s needs (Roulstone, 2012, cited in Macdonald, Carter, Hanes, Skinner and Mcmurphy, 2014).

1.7. Theoretical framework

1.7.1. Anti-discriminatory practice

Nzira and Williams (2009) state that anti-discriminatory practice aims to promote inclusion. In addition, Nzira and Williams (2009) propound that social inclusion is aimed at challenging the status quo by addressing the injustices between the people with power and those without, through a commitment to attitude change, awareness and positive action. According to the researcher, this evidences that action and awareness; also, need to be taken into consideration, when dealing with inclusive education.

1.7.2. Social inclusion

Rawal (2007) asserts that, according to the available literature, it is clear that social inclusion has not been defined in isolation. In addition, Rawal (2007) emphasizes some scholars and analysts have argued that both social inclusion and social exclusion are very closely related, although opposites, as efforts to ensure inclusion can be achieved by eliminating exclusion.

1.8. Problem statement

According to Bell, Carl and Swart (2016), it was evident that students with disabilities are underrepresented in higher education, not only in South Africa, but also in developed
countries. Vogel and Adelman (1993) assert that students with learning disabilities in tertiary education include individuals with different personalities and attributes; however, consensus (agreement) is lacking on how to categorize, or sub-type learning disabilities. Some scholars, like Colin (2013), argue that learning disabilities are similar to intellectual disabilities, and depends on how they are addressed. However, it is noted that the number of students with learning disabilities, who are accessing tertiary education institutions, is on the rise (Cox and Klas, 1996; Heiman and Precel, 2003; Kirby, Cornish and Smith, 2008; Vogel and Adelman, 1993). Although, despite the increase, their graduation rate is still a concern, as only 3.6% of students with learning disabilities graduate, compared to 62.1% for students without disabilities (Murray, Goldstein, Nourse and Edgar, 2000, cited in Heiman and Precel, 2003). Previous research has been conducted by Tyobeka (2006) to explore ways of dealing with barriers to inclusive education; however, according to Nind (2008, cited in Pavlin, Elsner, Jagodnik, Batageli and Solina, 2015), the available literature proves that the research on students with learning disabilities, as a qualitative study, is rare and difficult. In another study conducted by Kiernan (1999), it was determined that people with learning disabilities only appeared as interviewees in a research study about them, in the 1980s. Additionally, according to Makhubu (2014), reportedly, researchers have not published any studies on the topic, in the South African context.

1.9. Aims of the study

- To explore and describe the experiences of students with learning disabilities in accessing inclusive education in all faculties at the University of Western Cape; and
- To find strategic interventions to improve their circumstances.

1.10. Research questions

- What are the experiences of students with learning disabilities in accessing inclusive education in all faculties at the University of Western Cape?
- How can students with learning disabilities improve their experiences through strategic interventions?
1.11. Research objectives

- To explore and describe the experiences of the students with learning disabilities in accessing inclusive education in all faculties at the University of Western Cape.
- To explore and describe possible solutions to inclusive education for students with learning disabilities in all faculties at the University of Western Cape.

1.12. Research methodology

Kothari (2004) asserts that research methodology is a way of systematically solving a research problem. Kothari (2004) adds that research methodology may be understood as a science of studying how research is conducted, scientifically. Therefore, research methodology is a guideline that informs the reader on how the research problem will be approached and solved.

1.12.1. Research approach

A qualitative approach was employed for this current research study, as it focusses on deeper understandings, describing contexts, generating hypothesis and discovery (Rubin and Babbie, 2011). According to Kgosana (2015: p. 38), “qualitative approach will allow the researcher to use different data collection tools”. The use of this approach was aimed at ensuring that the experiences of students with learning disabilities were chronicled. In addition, this approach allowed the researcher to understand the experiences of students with learning disabilities in the institution. The qualitative approach, instead of quantitative, was selected because Du Plooy (2009) avers that it allows the researcher to gather information on the feelings and behaviours of the participants and eliminates any speculation. Additionally, the qualitative research approach enables the researcher to make interpretations, as well as construct the qualitative aspects of communication experiences (Du Plooy, 2009).

1.12.2. Research design

An exploratory and descriptive research design was used in this current study, as it allows the researcher to obtain new insights, as well as describe the characteristics of phenomena or relations (Du Plooy, 2009). Additionally, Schutt (2015) explains that, in
exploratory design, emphasis is placed on determining how the participants in the research interact with each other, what meanings they attach to their actions, as well as what affects them. The researcher’s rationale for using an exploratory design in this current study was that, in South Africa, as far as students with learning disabilities are concerned, scant research has been conducted (Mutanga, 2017). Additionally, the use of a descriptive design was to ensure that a precise record of the concerns, relevant to the experiences of students with learning disabilities at UWC, was achieved.

1.12.3. Population and Sample

Rubin and Babbie (2009) defines a population as a group of individuals (or elements) from which the participants of a study (study sample) will be selected. The population for this current research study comprised all students with learning disabilities at UWC. The researcher received clearance from the Senate Human Research Ethics Committee (Appendix 1), to identify and approach the students with learning disabilities, through the OSD, at which all students with disabilities, from all the faculties, were encouraged to register. There were at that time only 39 students with learning disabilities registered at the OSD, all engaged in undergraduate studies.

From this population, a sample of 9 students (male and female) were selected as participants for this current study. Sampling refers to the selection of a segment of the population (sub-set) that would truly be representative of the entire population in the study (Polit and Hungler, 1995). The researcher used purposive sampling to select the 9 participants from, what Neuman (2014) describes as a difficult-to-reach and specialised population. The researcher did not select students because of their ability to speak English; every student participated, irrespective of their language preference. The Office for Students with Disabilities assisted in recruiting the students, as only those registered with the OSD, participated in the research.

In addition, the 3 staff members of the OSD were selected as key informants in this current study, in order to facilitate the triangulation of the data. A key informant refers to an insider, who is willing to inform about cultural mores, jargon and language
(Fontana and Frey, 1994). The final sample, therefore, comprised 9 male and female students with learning disabilities, as well as the 3 staff members of OSD.

1.12.4. Data collection tool

The researcher used in-depth, semi-structured interviews as a data collection tool in this current study. According to Du Plooy (2009), in-depth, semi structured interviews enable the interviewer to determine how the participant’s frame of meaning is constructed. The interviews were conducted in English, as it is regarded as the universal language, in which all the participants were conversant. The interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis, at the OSD. Each interview lasted 20-45 minutes. On average. An audiotape recorder was used to record the collected data, after permission was requested from the participants and this was deemed necessary to ensure that all the interview data were accurately captured. All the participants granted permission for the interviews to be recorded and detailed notes to be chronicled. The key informants were interviewed in their offices, and their interviews were lasted between 30-45 minutes each. The data was satisfactory in both participant groups, as the researcher ensured that data collection continued until data saturation.

1.12.5. Trustworthiness

Shenton (2004) refers to four guidelines of trustworthiness, which are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformity. The researcher fulfilled the credibility requirements by ensuring that an accurate representation of the phenomenon under study was being presented, and reviewed various relevant literature before conducting this current research study. Secondly, transferability, according to Shenton (2004), is a process of justifying whether the research results could be applied to another setting. The researcher provided sufficient detail of the fieldwork, for the reader to decide, whether the setting was similar to one that was familiar to them, and whether the findings of this current study could be applied. Dependability was justified because the researcher kept transcripts and recordings for a period before disposing of them, to provide some future researcher to replicate the study. Finally, confirmability was ensured, as the researcher took the necessary steps to confirm that the findings were based on the collected data and not the researcher’s personal biases.
1.12.6. Data analysis

According to Bihani and Patil (2014), the data analysis process commences with the cleaning, inspecting and transforming of data, conducted in an attempt to extract valuable information, draw conclusions and facilitate decision-making. To conduct the analysis of the data, the researcher followed the Creswell’s data analysis method and Tesch’s (1990) 8 steps of data analysis, as follows:

- **Step 1**: The researcher read the transcripts and jotted down some ideas.
- **Step 2**: The researcher contemplated the meanings, and recorded the thoughts on the margins of the transcripts.
- **Step 3**: The researcher made a list of themes and clustered the similar ones together.
- **Step 4**: The researcher formulated sub-themes from the list.
- **Step 5**: The researcher categorized the data from the sub-themes.
- **Step 6**: The researcher devised codes for every category.
- **Step 7**: The researcher assembled data belonging to the different categories.
- **Step 8**: The researcher recoded some of the material that required realignment.

1.13. Limitations of the study

The research was focused on one type of disability (learning disability); therefore, the findings will not be a complete reflection of the experiences of all the students with disabilities in the institution. The other limitation of this current study was that the students with learning disabilities, who participated, were only those who had revealed their disability statuses.

1.14. Ethics considerations

Ethics clearance was granted by the UWC Senate before proceeding with this current study. These following ethical considerations were adhered to:
Informed consent – Research participation was voluntary and no one was coerced to participate. The participants were fully informed about the study, and voluntarily agreed to participate.

Dealing with risks – According to Fouka and Mantzorou (2011), the goal of the research was to do no harm; therefore, the researcher minimized the risk of participation in the study by not sharing sensitive information about the participants. In addition, the researcher ensured that counseling services would be available for participants, who were traumatized during the interviews.

Value of study – According to Bell (2005), the research study must benefit the participants. The findings were used to ensure that the participants would receive better access to tertiary education.

Anonymity – This was ensured by using of pseudonyms for identification purposes.

Confidentiality – The collected data was reported only in aggregate (summarized form), so that no one could determine who responded in one way or another (Beins and McCarthy, 2012).

Autonomy - Participants could withdraw from the data collection process at any stage, without prejudice, if they no longer wanted to be part of the study.

1.15. Research structure

The researcher has set out this current research study in five chapters. The first chapter comprises the introduction to the research; the second chapter encompasses the literature review, in which a theoretical and an empirical analysis of literature was performed. In the third chapter, the research methodology is described, while in chapter four, the findings are presented and discussed. Finally, in chapter five, the researcher offers a summary of the study, recommendations and the conclusion.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter comprises the review of available literature (literature review), which is an outline of what happened, is still happening (empirical evidence), to establish a theoretical basis for the analysis of what influences the experiences of students with learning disabilities, in any given instance, or setting. This literature review is structured to include various aspects that affect students with learning disabilities, including the acts, policies and practices that were developed to ensure the welfare of these students, at institutional, national, continental and international levels.

Although the researcher aims to examine the accessibility of inclusive education to students with learning disabilities, at the University of the Western Cape, a background investigation into what people with disabilities face daily, is worth exploring, as it forms a basis of reflection for the problem under study.

2.2. Disability policy

2.2.1. International

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR], in Mothata (2000), outlines that everyone has the right to education. In addition, the UDHR outlines that the elementary stage of education shall be compulsory and free, while education will be directed at promoting tolerance and understanding between nations, races and religions, as well as ensure the maintenance of peace. This implies that education is an empowering and emancipating aspect of everyone’s life; therefore, it should benefit everyone in the best way possible. As an attempt to promote human coexistence in all sectors of human life, measures should be implemented to ensure that all students benefit from it.

Additionally, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [UNCRPD] compels its member states to bring people with disabilities into the mainstream of society and development (Kachaje, Dube, Maclachlan and Mji, 2011).
The UNCRPD is an optional protocol; therefore, the requirements and regulations for disability policies and practices contained in the document, are binding exclusively to those states that have ratified it. Simultaneously, the UNCRPD has been used as a blueprint to draw up disability policies and strategies for intervention throughout the world. However, despite the use of the UNCRPD as the ultimate disability rights charter, the world also initiated other instruments to respond to the necessities of students with disabilities, through the Salamanca Conference in 1994, and the Dakar Conference of 2000. According to Kochung (2011), the Salamanca Conference of 1994, was a world conference on special needs education that addressed issues of access and quality. In addition, Kochung (2011) posits that the major focus of the Salamanca Statement was on promoting, what Doulkeridou, Evaggelinou, Mouratidou, Koidou, Panagiotou and Kudlacek (2011) refer to as, educational inclusion of students with disabilities, in regular education settings, in order to increase access to education. Notably, the World Economic Forum in Dakar, Senegal of April 2000, was another forum, at which nations reaffirmed their obligation to realizing Education for All its citizens, by the year 2015 (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2015). These international frameworks have been used to draft policies on various continents of the world.

The Education for All (UNESCO, 2015) states that, between the years 2000 and 2015, the Millennium Development Goals was in use as a guide, with 8 Goals, among them a section on education; however, it was only valid until the year 2015. Consequently, the United Nations (UN, 2014a) states that, after ending of the Millennium Development Goals, the global community developed a new instrument, the Sustainable Development Goals, which would be a point of reference until 2030. Similar to the EFA (UNESCO, 2015), the Pacific Indie - the Guidelines Manual (Monash University, CBM-Nossal Institute Partnership for Disability Inclusive Development, Pacific Disability Forum and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2016) states that number 4 of the SDGs is aimed at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, and promotes lifelong learning prospects for all, as its specific target. To clarify this, the United Nations (UN, 2014b) publication explained that the SDG agenda is focused on building new partnerships between states and civil society, in an effort to enable the states to fund their own initiatives, among these education (UNESCO, 2015). In addition, the same article highlights that the SDG shares the same vision as the EFA
(UNESCO, 2015) movement, which maintains that all levels of education are interrelated. Similarly, the Education for All (UNESCO, 2015) adds that the development of education policies for the inclusion and equitable access to education resources, must happen at all stages of educational achievement, because the education system is a chain that is interconnected, as one level leads to another. This implies that success on one level, would ensure coping in the next; hence the need for appropriate support services, as proposed by the SDGs. Therefore, in the SDGs, much emphasis is placed on ensuring that there is completion of secondary education, and the provision of equal access to tertiary education (UNESCO, 2015). The aim is an attempt to make the social, economic, political and academic infrastructure more accessible to everyone, regardless of his/her physical, economic and social status.

The Education for All (UNESCO, 2015) outlines that the international community has set targets to be achieved by the year 2030, through the Declaration of the Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, the UN post-2015 SDGs, agreed in September 2015, aim to ensure access to vocational training and tertiary education by 2030, to the vulnerable groups of people, including people living with disabilities, indigenous people and vulnerable children, as well as the elimination of gender imbalances in education (Ruhil, 2015). The idea behind this international instrument is that all people in the world will be able to perform equally at all levels of life, irrespective of their status in society, as all the barriers would have been removed, through the promotion of inclusion and equity (Du Plessis, 2013). The EFA (UNESCO, 2015) confirms that this forms the basis for policy formulation in the ensuing years, which makes it easy for the governments to develop policies, as the blueprint has already been drawn. In contrast, according to the EFA (UNESCO, 2015), the United Nations Secretary General argues that the targets under the Sustainable Development Goals are not specific and clear, as some of the targets cannot be measured, which will threaten their accountability. In addition, some of the targets cannot be met in a fifteen-year period, the issues of equity are not adequately articulated, and critical issues need to be targeted in each educational level, namely, primary, secondary and tertiary, instead of on a one size fits all basis.

It is true that the United Nations declares a certain regulation and member states ratify the agreement to develop policies around these specific requirements and expectations (Maluwa, 2012). Eskay, Onu, Igbo, Obiyo and Ugwuanyi (2012), however, explain that
there is also the element of culture that hinder people with disabilities from attaining the goals to be met on a large scale, worldwide. To affirm this, Eskay et al. (2012) highlights the role culture plays in relation to disability, by stating that the individual’s disability and culture determine how s/he will behave. In addition, the aspect of rewards also comes into play in cultures, where the people who conform to the norm, will be rewarded by the society, which, as a result, would shape how the students will behave.

2.2.1.1. United States of America

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Federal Government of the United States [FUS] IDEA: Amendments of 1997), annually, in the USA, millions of students with disabilities, at all levels, receive special services, intended to meet their unique needs. In addition, the IDEA (FUS, IDEA: Amendments of 1997) states that these services attempt to ensure that people with disabilities progress, study, and succeed in educational, as well as other settings. The IDEA (FUS, IDEA: Amendments of 1997) also categorises disabilities and outlines the symptoms that are relevant to people, who would be prone to various types of disabilities. The categorization of disabilities, under a specific act, as well as outlining the symptoms, ensures that there is no bias in the United States of America, about what constitutes a type of disability, as it is outlined in the law. By definition, a learning disability is a disorder that affects one, or more of the psychological processes controlling understanding and using language. It may manifest in the inability to think, listen, speak, read, spell, write and do mathematical calculations (Cohen and Cohen, 2007). This enables service providers of people with learning disabilities to identify which students may be in need of special support, or referral, which would improve early detections.

2.2.1.2. Africa

Musyoka (2007) states that, upon gaining their independence from colonial masters, most developing countries made concerted efforts to improve the welfare of their citizens, in order to combat disease, poverty, and ignorance that engulfed the continent. Additionally, Musyoka (2007) proposes that the majority of African states had been under colonial rule for a considerable length of time, and upon realising their independence, had put much effort into social welfare affairs. Statistically, according to the United Nations Economic Commission of Africa
(UNECA, 2016), there are 600 million people with disabilities in the world, 400 million are from developing countries, with 80 million from Africa. In contrast, the African Studies Centre (2008) cited a World Health Organization [WHO, 2011] source, which outlined that 40% of the African population are people with disabilities, and among them 10-15 percent are school-going children. Therefore, according to the African Studies Centre (2008), there is almost 300 million people with disabilities in Africa. Obviously, there is a huge disparity between the different statistics provided by the World Health Organization and the United Nations, which reveals a lack of consensus on disability statistics and needs. Even though the numbers do not correlate, what should be acknowledged is that much work needs to be done in Africa, to succeed at inclusion, especially in education, as it is the foundation for success (Dalton, Mckenzie and Kahonde, 2012).

Kochung (2011) posits that the people of Africa believe that education is an important part of the journey towards individual and social well-being, because emancipation is power. Additionally, the developments into inclusive education started in the 1990s; however, and progress has been slow, and involved many different models along the way (Tchombe, 2014). In addition, Musyoka (2007) emphasizes that, in recent years, African countries, as most other developing countries across the world, have implemented policies aimed at improving legal structures. These were aimed at promoting the right and privileges of people with disabilities to the fullest, to ensure equal participation in society (Musyoka, 2007). Additionally, Musyoka (2007) asserts that, regarding access and quality education, these policies attempted to address issues, such as enrollment rate, retention rate, completion rate and performance of students with special needs. These countries are also signatories to a number of international commitments on the provision of education for all, including children with special needs, such as the UNDHR of 1948, EFA of 1990, Salamanca conference of 1994, and the Dakar conference of 2000. Most African countries are signatories to the international instruments that aim to uphold the requirements of persons with disabilities.

Africans have pledged commitment to international instruments; however, “despite these commitments, problems still persist in the provision of education to
children with special education in these countries” (Musyoka, 2007: p. 106). In addition, “despite these problems being prevalent in the developing countries, most studies focus on teachers’ attitudes and perceptions of disability, teaching methods used with children with special needs, educational services for students with disabilities, development of special education in different countries, comparative studies on special education in developing and developed countries, and trends in special education for different categorical groups of children with disabilities” (Musyoka, 2007: p. 107). However, contrary to Musyoka (2007), not much is known about the transition of students from primary schools to high schools, because little research is available on inclusive education in high school, as compared to pre-primary and primary schools (Mastropiery and Scruggs, 2001, cited in Lehohla and Hlalele, 2014). This evidences that little research is focused on learning disabilities, or access to tertiary education.

Uganda has welcomed the aspect of inclusive education and is taking positive steps towards implementing it in every educational level (Emong and Eron, 2016). However, despite all the attempts to ensure inclusive education through legislation and policy practices, there is still evidence that students with disabilities are being discriminated against and excluded from the higher education institutions (Emong and Eron, 2016). Similarly, according to a study conducted by the African Child Policy Forum (2011a), people with disabilities are often considered a curse on their families, are discriminated against and stigmatized at home, in schools, in institutions, as well as in the community. Similarly, the ACPF (2011a) continues that children with disabilities are probably the most neglected group in both the policy domain and the private sphere. This results in the marginalization of people living with learning disabilities, who would fail to access tertiary education at the same rate as inclusive education is accessed by their fellow counterparts, because in some African societies people living with disabilities are considered a curse to the community.

A study conducted by Eskay et al. (2012) describes how culture affects disability policy and reform. Additionally, evidence exists that culture plays a greater role in shaping policies, used to address the issue of disability in the world, as government departments, tasked with overseeing the programmes on disabilities,
are affected by the aspects of culture, as well as the disabling condition (Eskay et al., 2012). Finally, the study discovered that the labels attached to the people living with disabilities, would impose severe limitations on them, and as a result, these limitations will isolate them (Eskay et al., 2012). This evidence highlights the fact that the drive to emancipate people living with disabilities from social isolation and marginalization, actually exists; however, there are cultural elements that need to be taken into consideration, during the drafting of policies, or else the outcome could be an incomplete policy.

2.2.1.3. Southern Africa

In a study conducted by Kotze (2012), it was established that there were low levels of awareness of disabilities among most academics in Southern Africa. In addition, no courses focusing on disability rights and laws were on offer in the law schools, instead these courses were being offered in the humanities and the health sciences (Kotze, 2012). In Southern Africa, the course that was on offer at tertiary level was still aimed at the medical model of disability, which suggests that a person with disability is in need of a cure, rather than deserving of the human rights perspective (Kotze, 2012). Additionally, the study revealed that the university lecturers, who were interviewed, were not aware of the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities [UNCRPD], did not know what had to be done to ratify the convention, and had no understanding of the cases of strategic litigation concerning disability rights (Kotze, 2012). The evidence provided by Katz (2012) highlights that the issues of disability rights in the Southern African tertiary education systems receive insufficient attention. Regarding the evidence provided by Kotze (2012), it is depressing to note that, in an era of the human rights perspective on disability, the tertiary institutions in the Southern Africa still approach disability education, as well as subjects related to it, with the medical model approach.

In Kenya, the Persons with Disabilities Act (Republic of Kenya [RKE], 2012, Act No. 14 of 2003, revised edition) provides for the human rights, privileges and rehabilitation of people with disabilities, to achieve equalization of access for persons with disabilities. The Government of Kenya placed its best foot forward by ratifying the UNCRPD in May 2008, as well as the passing of the Persons with
Disabilities Act (RKE, 2012, Act 14 of 2003, revised edition). The evidence provided, highlights that the Government of Kenya is, in principle, committed to protecting the rights of people with disabilities. This is undoubtedly a positive step, as an Act facilitates a response to the challenges faced by people with disabilities, because all aspects of disabilities, therefore, will be addressed, from social, political, and educational, among others.

According to Kotze (2012), in the Southern African region, many of the universities have a Disability Unit; however, they have proved to lack a formal disability policy. However, Kotze (2012) regrets that those Southern African universities, with a disability policy, did not make them available to the researchers, during the study. The only exception was a copy of a disability policy that was located by one of the researchers at the University of Zimbabwe, from their Disability Unit (Kotze, 2012). However, at the other participating universities in the Southern African region, the only documentation accessed was in the form of pamphlets from their Disability Units (Kotze, 2012). The concept of a disability unit is noble, as it acts as a medium between the disabled students and the institution, to ensure an understanding between the two parties. Based on the findings of Kotze’s (2012) research, it would appear that little is being achieved regarding the disability crisis at universities. Besides, if they fail to implement measures for the students with manifest disabilities, what about the ones with the unobservable disabilities.

At the University of Zambia, a blueprint is provided of how the university and law school could adopt new strategies in the field of disability rights (Kotze, 2012). This was largely due to the fact that the Law School and the International Labour Organisation’s [ILO] Project on the Employability of Persons with Disabilities (PEPDEL) had signed a memorandum of understanding for one year (2010), to conduct research and training in disability rights, with students and staff members (Kotze, 2012). This was a positive move on the part of the university, as it indicated that they were taking positive steps towards human rights, through educating and training staff, as well as students in the disability related field. Subsequently, the University of Zambia has made an aspect of disability rights compulsory, and has included compulsory and mandatory Human
Rights and Labour Law courses in their curriculum (Kotze, 2012). The training of personnel to make students and staff aware of the needs of students and people with disabilities, is ideal to foster inclusion.

The lack of research and strategies to deal with matters relating to the students with disabilities is cause for concern to researchers. As detailed in the evidence above, it is high time to be proactive about ensuring that students with learning disabilities in tertiary education are acknowledged in Africa, and for the responsible parties to propose new strategies to address this problem.

2.2.2. South Africa

In a study conducted by Jerven (2009: p. 13) the findings revealed, “…it can be concluded that Gabon, Seychelles and South Africa were consistently richer than others”. However, despite South Africa’s relative wealth, there are huge disparities between rich and poor, and the country has a low ranking (129 of 182) on the United Nations Human Development Index (African Child Policy Forum [ACPF], 2011c). Historically, according to ACPF (2011c), South Africa has undergone radical transformation, following the ousting of the Apartheid regime, and its replacement with a democratic government in 1994. As a result, the Apartheid regime, which served as a class system, was ended in 1994, by the attainment of democracy, by the black majority of the South African populace (ACPF, 2011c). Even though there has been a shift in policy, in response to the unfair justices of the Apartheid regime, the majority of students of low-income earners are still facing the after-effects of this regime (ACPF, 2011c). However, in some countries like South Africa, there has been some positive efforts to strive towards the enforcement of education rights to children with disabilities (ACPF, 2011c). Although there are still injustices, according to the ACPF (2011c), the Republic of South Africa (RSA, Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities [DWCPD], 2013) has taken the initiative, and implemented some reforms to ensure the availability and accessibility of quality education. However, the evidence suggest that inclusive education is not adequate; therefore, reforms are being implemented to meet the requirements of inclusive education (Du Plessis, 2013).
In South Africa, there is an excellent and enabling constitutional environment; however, it is not clear how South Africa aims to meet some requirements under the UNCRPD (Ngwena, 2013). Although, South Africa has taken positive steps to implement an enabling legal and policy framework for the attainment of inclusive education (Ngwena, 2013). Additionally, in an attempt to address the challenges that affect, not only the education sector, but also the diverse South African landscape, the government has implemented measures for the post-apartheid transformation targets of ensuring inclusive citizenship, generally (Ngwena, 2013). However, the Western Cape Forum for Intellectual Disability, a forum for people in the Western Cape that monitors learning disabilities, revealed poignant inconsistencies in the implementation of inclusive education by the state (Ngwena 2013). In addition, Ngwena (2013) highlights that this was used to describe the situation in South Africa, regarding Article 24 of the UNCRPD, as merely policing disability strategies, but not implementing them practically, which affects the process and urgency of inclusive education. In view of this evidence, it is clear that much more needs to be accomplished in terms of inclusive education of students with learning disabilities, in tertiary education.

According to Moabelo (2012), with the advent of democracy, and the end of the Apartheid era, the South African government has developed strategies to address the social injustices that black people (women, young people and the people living with disabilities) had been facing. In addition, Moabelo (2012) highlights that, even though there are inequalities and discrimination towards persons with disabilities, black people had to endure the discrimination doubly. However, the Bill of Rights, states that, in South Africa, everyone has the right to basic education, as well as adult basic education (Moabelo, 2012); therefore, South Africa is attempting to make education accessible to all students at all levels of education. This has opened doors to many practices in disability welfare, at institutional and national levels at large. The constitution declares that the rights of the people with disabilities are supposed to be upheld; however, it is not enough, if it is only in writing.

Additionally, South Africa is perceived to have an excellent legislation framework for people with disabilities; however, evidence highlights the fact that tertiary education institutions still do not agree on a single definition of disability (FOTIM 2011). The study further reveals that, of the definitions being used in tertiary education, there is
evidence that the medical model is still dominant, despite the call to make educational institutions inclusive, by adopting the rights model of disability (FOTIM 2011). Regarding the outline of the FOTIM (2011) study, it is safe to argue that the plight of students with learning disabilities is far from being terminated, as the people who should be ensuring their well-being at the university, do not even agree on a definition. If the universities are unable to agree on a definition of a disability, it is uncertain how they will agree on ways to address it, as disability would mean different things to different individuals.

However, South Africa is dedicated to make education accessible to students with disabilities, as it a signatory to the international instruments of human rights that uphold the rights to inclusive education at all levels of education. Additionally, the South African policies on inclusive education are based on the principles within the EFA, the MDGs, the UNCRC and the UNCRPD (Tyobeka, 2006). All the instruments are aimed at ensuring the fair treatment and welfare of people with disabilities in education worldwide. Besides, it is primarily subscribed by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, Department of Justice and Constitutional Development [DoJ and CD], Act 108 of 1996). Therefore, being a signatory to the various treaties worldwide is a positive step towards realizing inclusive education to students with learning disabilities.

At the same conference, held in Acapulco, Mexico, 2006, it was stated that the South African inclusive education policy, adopted by the Education White Paper 6 (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Department of Education [DoE], 2001), emphasises the link between EFA and inclusive education (Tyobeka, 2006). For inclusive education to be possible, the need for strategies that attempt to respond to the diverse needs of the entire student population, need to be acknowledged, and should not addressed as a single entity (Tyobeka, 2006). For inclusive education to be a success, the concerned parties have to understand that the needs of the students with learning disabilities are diverse. In addition, the role of the support services in tertiary education must be focused on the elimination of these barriers, to ensure full participation of the students in the education process (Tyobeka, 2005).
Tyobeka (2006) noted that the White Paper on Education was somewhat ambiguous in its demands, as it does not give clear criteria for the implementation of inclusive education in the tertiary education setting. In another study, it was revealed that some of the tertiary institutions in South Africa have disability units, which offer services to students with disabilities, as a way of promoting inclusive education practices for all students in higher education (FOTIM, 2011). In addition, despite having many forms of legislation that safeguard the rights of students with disabilities, as well as their access to education, it has been established that practices on the ground, render services in a detached setting, separate from existing transformation and diversity programmes (Lyner-Cleophas, Swart, Chataika and Bell, 2014). Evidence reveals that there is many disability-friendly paperwork in the form of legislations and policies; however, practices on the ground hamper the attainment of inclusive education.

In another study, it was argued that ensuring accessibility to good education for students with disabilities, as well as those with special needs, is important for the achievement of equity and social justice in democracy (Deliwe, 2016). Deliwe (2016) remarks highlight that, for inclusive education to be achieved, schools and institutions of learning should attempt to ensure that they create a good learning environment for students with disabilities. It was further argued that, to meet the needs of the students with learning disabilities, is a challenge, because of the diverse nature of their disabilities, as well as the individual requirements in learning support (Deliwe, 2016). This implies that, for the needs of the students with learning disabilities to be realized, measures that respond to every students’ requirements should be implemented in the educational settings.

Consequently, the diverse and multi-faceted nature of the students with learning disabilities, is a threat to the attainment of SDG 4 in South Africa (Deliwe, 2016), and therefore, the achievement of inclusive education. Additionally, after the declaration of 2014, as the inclusive education year, the Medium Term Strategic Framework for 2015-2019, now features application plans to this end, with clear action, targets and expected output (Deliwe, 2016). Disturbingly, only information on the policies that were passed in research exists, but very little outlines what is happening at the coalface. This is a drawback to inclusive education, because the measure of inclusive education is not in
the number of policies available, but in the number of people, who are accessing a certain service.

According to Deliwe (2016), there were about 390,000 children with disabilities, aged 7 to 18 in 2014. Of these, just under 23,000, aged 7 to 15, were not attending school, while almost 325,000 were attending school. In addition, around 21,000 children, aged 16 to 18 were not attending school and only around 25,000 were in school. Regarding the information provided in this current study, there is detailed information on the students with disabilities before 18 years; however, there is little information on the students with disabilities after 18 years of age, which suggests that research, involving students with disabilities in tertiary education, must be conducted, especially with learning disabilities. If students with learning disabilities are to access tertiary education, the government should also conduct a survey, aimed at establishing the number of students with learning disabilities, as a way of determining appropriate resource allocation.

2.2.2.1. The University of the Western Cape and other Local Universities

According to the Centre for Student Support Services at the University of the Western Cape (UWC, 2014), the Office for Students with Disabilities was founded, after the realization that students with disabilities need academic support, test and examination support, as well as advocacy in their pursuit of tertiary education. Additionally, the Office for Students with Disabilities offers consultation services to students with disabilities, and when the department/university is unable to meet the demands of the student, s/he is referred to professionals, who will assess and attempt to satisfy the needs of the students (UWC, 2014). In 2014, the University of the Western Cape had 38 students with learning disabilities duly registered (UWC, 2014), which is proof enough that UWC is moving towards the realisation of inclusive education, in terms of learning disabilities. In addition, the university had accumulated detailed information about these students, which was significant, as some of the students do not disclose their status.

In a research study, conducted by the Department of Basic Education (Republic of South Africa [RSA], DBE, 2009), it was proposed that all participating

http://etd.uwc.ac.za/
universities be equipped with a disability unit, to indicate their progressive commitment to ensuring the realization of inclusive education. In addition, the Department of Basic Education (RSA, DBE, 2009) suggested that universities implement resources and measures, namely, braille systems and devices, the use of growing fonts (Microsoft Word 2013), consultations and other assistive technologies, which the students with disabilities could access, in their pursuit of tertiary education. This evidence is encouraging for inclusive education, but for students with learning disabilities, it is disheartening, as less discourse about the meaning of the term, learning disabilities, is evident in these universities.

2.3. Inclusive education

Most countries define inclusive education as a means to improve the quality of education of all students (Soriano, Watkins and Ebersold, 2017). Additionally, there is evidence that many countries have some established policies on inclusive education, and are working towards developing policies to lessen the dropout and early school leaving rates (Soriano, Watkins and Ebersold, 2017). Since the move towards inclusion, after the introduction of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 1994), higher education began implementing new strategies to cope with the high numbers of students with disabilities, who were enrolling to access tertiary education (Lyner-Cleophas et al., 2014). Simultaneously, higher education attempted to make inclusive education accessible to all students, but the diverse nature of the needs, made it a difficult to accomplish (Lyner-Cleophas et al., 2014). In addition, it is now a requirement that some education practices be reviewed, and directed towards inclusivity, which upholds the realization of human dignity and human rights (Lyner-Cleophas et al., 2014). Therefore, the pursuit of inclusive education is a move towards the realization of human rights for everyone.

Many questions are being raised about what inclusive education is and why; however, it is important to acknowledge that the aspect of inclusive education aims to address the inadequacies of special education (Tchombe, 2014), which has led a new practice in education that upholds, and respect the rights of everyone. Previously, modest attention has been paid to addressing the issues of accessibility, student retention, as well as progression and participation of students with disabilities in tertiary education institutions (Lyner-
Clephas et al., 2014). Because of the initiatives and developments in policy and practice, it can be argued that inclusive education has a larger role to play in making education accessible to all students, successfully (Thobe, 2014). Remarkably, in the 1990s, while South Africans were debating what is inclusion implied, according to the Confederation of Family Organizations in the European Union (COFACE, 1996), Europeans were practicing inclusive education already. The study also highlighted that inclusive education calls all the educational systems into question, and aims at the development of an individualized system of learning, which would assist the students to address school failure (COFACE, 1996). There is need for an individualized approach to educating students with learning disabilities; therefore, inclusive education has a major role to fulfill in developing a culture of social inclusion that aims to promote self-determination, as well as non-discrimination towards people living with disabilities (COFACE, 1996). This implies that the practice of inclusive education in Africa lags behind Europe; this is mainly to the fact that there have not been enough studies around inclusive education. Therefore, Africa needs to act fast, because the practitioners of inclusive education urgently need to implement infrastructure and services in higher education settings, to meet the requirements for inclusive education, as well as access.

In Pakistan, according to their government (Republic of Pakistan [PAK], Ministry of women development, social welfare and special education, 2002), plans have been implemented to establish training programmes for educators and social welfare workers, while programmes for the postgraduate level include an element of awareness training in disability related issues. The training of teachers will impart an awareness of the characteristics and needs of people with disabilities, to the individuals who serve this population. The Government of Pakistan has also developed a strategy to monitor the disability programmes, from the grassroots to the highest level, through the coordination of activities, from district government, provincial government, as well as the federal government (PAK, 2002). In Pakistan, therefore, measures have been implemented to ensure that there is a positioning of legislation at all levels of administration. In addition, the mandate of the Government in Pakistan has been to ensure that there is access to inclusive education, which is, arguably, a move in the right direction (PAK, 2002).

Ainscow, Dyson and Weiner (2013) state that inclusion is the process of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing exclusion from, the curricula and the community of local education settings. They also observed the need to focus on the restructuring of policies
and practices in schools, which will respond to the diversified needs of students with learning disabilities (Ainscow et al., 2013). Additionally, some elements of this way of theorizing inclusive education are of significant importance, namely: inclusion is focused on all children and young people in schools; it is concerned with the presence, participation and achievement; inclusion and exclusion are interconnected, as inclusion includes the active combating of exclusion, and is deemed a continuous process. This implies that inclusion is not focused on one age group, which is why it needs to start in primary school, so that, when the students enter tertiary education, the centres of higher learning will not be overwhelmed by the demands of students with learning disabilities (Ainscow et al., 2013).

Educational institutions worldwide are moving towards the realization of inclusive education (Mafa, 2012). In addition, according to Mafa (2012), social inclusion is the attempt to ensure that the educational institutions are ready and adjusted to respond to the needs of the students with disabilities, which is achieved by being more accessible to the students, in accordance with the UN Declarations. The process of inclusion is about transforming environments in tertiary education to meet the requirements and demands of students with learning disabilities. Mafa (2012) adds that, over the last two decades, the notion of inclusion has advocated that all children and young people, regardless of their diverse cultural, social and educational backgrounds, be entitled to equal learning opportunities in all forms of schools. Because of this realization, the emphasis is on producing inclusive surroundings, which should include valuing, understanding, as well as addressing cultural, social and individual diversities, providing equal access to quality education and close coordination (Mafa, 2012). Therefore, the focus of inclusive education is based on cultural relativism, which is understanding that an educational setting includes people from different cultures, but, who also require individual treatment for them to perform fully, to the best of their abilities (Dalton, Mckenzie and Kahonde, 2012).

Although some educators may be ill equipped for inclusion, they are positively disposed towards its successful implementation, besides the individual and institutional requirements (Majoko 2018). According to Majoko (2018), it does not only involve teacher training, but also depends on what the institution embraces, regarding inclusive education; hence the need for institutions to be more accessible to students with learning disabilities. In addition, inclusion, basically, involves guaranteeing access, permanence, quality education, as well as full involvement and integration to all, especially members of underprivileged and poor

http://etd.uwc.ac.za/
societies, those with disabilities, people who are homeless, workers, or people living with HIV and AIDS, and other vulnerable populations (Tyobeka, 2006). Consequently, in an inclusive learning environment, there is an acknowledgment of the fact that all students have something to bring to the classroom, and their input should be respected (Väyrynen, 2003).

According to other researchers, who conducted an extensive literature review on inclusive education (Chireshe, 2011), the attitudes of teachers, parents and students all play a role in inclusive education. In a study conducted by Mafa (2012), it was observed that some factors that hinder the pursuit of inclusive education include teachers’ attitudes, limited resources, unavailability of properly drafted policies to advise practice, and social consequences, such as isolation and stigmatization. However, often, children with special education requirements are not assisted to meet their educational potential in conventional schools, due to internal and external factors (Mafa, 2012). This indicates that the challenges in inclusive education are broad and varied. Some are due to the incapacitation of students to perform, while others are because the students are viewed as underperformers, affecting their dignity, and causing fellow students and teachers to undermine their contributions (Dalton et al., 2012).

According to Losert (2010), educational systems, in general, are ill suited for the assimilation of inclusive education practices with the main limitations being structure, equipment and technology, educational personnel, learning resources and textbooks, curricula, assessment tools and procedures. This implies that, the shift towards inclusive education is the objective of many; however, making it a reality, amid limited resources, poses a challenge to the individuals, who are responsible for implementing inclusive education for the students with disabilities, especially the ones with learning disabilities (Lebona, 2015). In light of the evidence provided, it is argued that even when people have a clear understanding of the principle of inclusive education, the practices on the ground are still dominated by integration and segregation (Tchombe, 2014). The OECD (2011) observed that, currently, access to inclusive education in tertiary education is still a challenge, because of a lack of reliable statistics, which makes it difficult to design meaningful strategies for the implementation of disability-friendly initiatives. Kochung (2011) concurs that this is a reality in Africa, where an insignificant number of people with disabilities have access to tertiary education.
2.4. Students with disabilities

Fraser (2012) acknowledges that, although research studies and evaluation in science education rely on the assessment of academic achievement and other learning outcomes, in actual sense these measures cannot give a complete representation of the educational process. In addition, effective service delivery for students with disabilities rely on a philosophy of recognizing and reacting to difference, by linking policy with practice at an institutional level, instead of engaging in dialogues with separate students about teaching modification and exam accommodations arrangements (Hadjikakou and Hartas, 2007). For example, in Cyprus, scant knowledge is available on the prevalence and the experiences of students with disabilities and special needs, enrolling at tertiary institutions, and receiving support services (Hadjikakou and Hartas, 2007). In light of this evidence, the idea of linking policy and practice in Cyprus may be almost impossible to accomplish, when scant knowledge is available about the experiences of the students, whom the law is supposed to protect, and the country is supposed to provide for (Hadjikakou and Hartas, 2007).

According to the Disability Rights Commission (2002, cited in Hadjikakou and Hartas, 2007), the discrimination of students with disabilities does exist, and could be evident in many forms, namely, treating them less favourably than other persons, or failing to implement a reasonable legal amendment, when individuals with disabilities are placed at a significant disadvantage, because of their disability. In addition, much of the research on disability and service provision has been conducted on an institutional and policy making level (Hadjikakou and Hartas, 2007), indicating that the focus is on building a sound legislative framework, when research should be exploring ways in which infrastructure should be changed, to meet the requirements of students with disabilities. Finally, the Disability Rights Commission (2002, cited in Hadjikakou and Hartas, 2007) avers that the provision of inclusive education is multifaceted, and raises concerns about the equality of access to tertiary education, as well as resources and knowledge, the understanding of disability, assessment, and identification. Therefore, these issues should be investigated, in order to construct new systems and strategies to respond to these needs (Hadjikakou and Hartas, 2007).

According to Barnes (2007), although universities have opened their doors to students with disabilities, Africa has a long way to go to realize inclusive education. To various degrees,
institutions of higher education are principally focused on the quest for educational excellence (Barnes 2007), frequently, at the expense of the actual experiences of the students. This certainly implies the existence of competition within academia, as well as the recruitment and selection of students and staff based on alleged academic ability (Barnes, 2007). Consequently, tertiary institutions would be focused on the students, who have proven their ability to excel, while the majority of the students would be denied access. Correspondingly, Barnes (2007) noted that, selecting people based on ability, therefore, would imply that those who were excluded, were considered unable to fulfill major obligations. Additionally, it seemed highly debatable whether inclusion was possible presently, or just being desired (Barnes, 2007), as, in higher education, emphasis was being placed on the eligibility criteria, and not on the status of the individual. In relation to the evidence provided by (Barnes) (2007) it is clear that much needs to be done so as to realize inclusive education.

In South Africa, specifically for students with disabilities, inequalities in tertiary education originated with inequalities that have shaped the whole education system (Howell, 2006). Additionally, the author highlights that, currently, while educational delivery was not being separated based on race, it is being exercised through the identification and classification of students into individuals, who are perceived to be normal, on one side, and individuals with special needs, on the other (Howell, 2006). Consequently, for inclusive education to be achieved, the mindsets of the people have to change, to realize that people with disabilities can also perform well, in the same settings, as other students, who were deemed capable for inclusion into the dominant, mainstream system (Howell, 2006). Conclusively, Howell (2006) highlights that this has resulted in the emergence of two different education systems, with the dominant mainstream on one side, and specialized education on the other. Prior to 1994, segregation on the disability and ability level, was further imposed along racial lines, where black students were excluded from the white education system, making it twice as challenging for black students with disabilities to receive quality education, if they ever received an opportunity at all (Donohue and Bornman, 2014).

2.5. Learning disability

People with learning disabilities are among the most vulnerable of an already disadvantaged group (Dimopoulos, 2016). This remark implies that students with learning disabilities face
discrimination, as all people with disabilities do; however, there are additional challenges that they face, besides the ones encountered by the broader population of people with disabilities. According to Dimopoulos (2016: p. 23), “producing precise information on the number of people with learning disabilities in the population is difficult. In the case of people with severe and profound learning disabilities, we estimate there are about 210 000; around 65 000 children and young people, 120 000 adults of working age and 25 000 older people. In the case of people with mild or moderate learning disabilities, lower estimates suggest a prevalence rate of around 25 per 1000 population – some 1.2 million people in England”. The availability of learning disability statistics, nationally, is an indication that the needs of students with learning disabilities are being addressed in England (Dimopoulos, 2016).

The field of learning disabilities has a relatively short history (Mihandoost, 2011: p. 194). In addition, there are three phases of transformation in the field of learning disabilities, namely, the foundation phase, the transition phase, and the integration phase (Mihandoost, 2011). The foundation phase (1800-1930) occurred prior to the establishment of the field of learning disabilities. Mihandoost (2011) explains that the foundation phase was a period of broad scientific research on the functions and disorders of the brain. During the transition phase (1930-1960), scientific studies of the brain were applied to the study of children, which, subsequently, were interpreted into methods of teaching (Mihandoost, 2011). In the same study, evidence was provided of psychologist and educators, who had established mechanisms for assessment, as well as ways of teaching, after examining specific forms of learning disabilities (Mihandoost, 2011: p. 194). Lastly, according to Mihandoost (2011: p. 194), “during the integration phase (1960-1980), learning disabilities became a recognized discipline in educational institutions all over the United States”. This indicates that the phenomenon of learning disabilities has been studied in the United States for many years. According to Mihandoost (2011), the dynamics reveal that the focus was once based on the medical model, which seemed to identify the cause, and the work towards healing it. Subsequently, the focus shifted to research, then towards integrating students into the education systems, and finally, the realization learning disabilities comprised many variations, which needed to be addressed individually.

Regarding a definition of learning disabilities, according to IDEA (FUS, IDEA: Amendments of 1997, cited in Cortiella and Horowitz, 2014), it is a disorder of the basic psychological processes involving understanding, or using language, spoken or written, which may reveal
itself in the flawed ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations. The evidence in this definition reveals that people with a learning disability display an inability to perform learning tasks, given to them at a particular time. This is because “learning disabilities arise from neurological differences in brain structure and function that impact on a person’s ability to receive, store, process, retrieve or communicate information” (Cortiella and Horowitz, 2014: p. 3). In contrast, there is a higher occurrence of learning disabilities among individuals living in poverty, possibly due to increased possibility of exposure to poor nutrition, ingested and environmental toxins (e.g. lead, tobacco and alcohol) and other hazardous factors in the course of early and critical stages of development (Cortiella and Horowitz, 2014). This is useful to shed light on the causes of learning disabilities; although, it could be argued that the causes of learning disabilities do not matter, and it may be necessary also to consider that many individuals hold different views on what leads to a disability.

Therefore, “learning disabilities are not caused by visual, hearing or motor disabilities, intellectual disabilities, emotional disturbances, cultural issues, limited English proficiency, environmental or economic disadvantages, or inadequate instruction” (Cortiella and Horowitz, 2014 p. 3). Cortiella and Horowitz (2014) explain what learning disabilities may not include, which indicates that a person’s inability to process information to the level of their expectation may not imply that they have a learning disability. The evidence highlights other factors, such as poverty and poor nutrition during the critical stages of a person’s development, which may lead to the development of learning disabilities. According to Cortiella and Horowitz (2014: p. 3) the most common forms of learning disabilities are the ones that affect the areas of reading, math and written expression. Below are the various types of learning disabilities, according to Cortiella and Horowitz (2014: p. 3-4):

- Dyslexia is related with reading,
- Dyscalculia is associated with math,
- Dysgraphia is associated with writing,
- Executive functioning deficits describes weaknesses in planning, organizing, strategizing, remembering details and managing time and space efficiently,
• Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is brain-based disorder that results in significant inattentiveness, hyperactivity, distractibility or an amalgamation of these characteristics,

• Visual processing deficits is used to define a weakness in the ability to comprehend and use visual information.”

Learning disabilities tend to manifest only after the children are enrolled in the education system, and fail to acquire academic skills (Mihandoost, 2011). Additionally, learning disabilities do not often manifest in all settings, except in the school setting, as people with learning disabilities usually display their symptoms in the educational settings, where they find it challenging to take on learning tasks, which may not be the case in other settings, for example, at home or somewhere else (Topkin and Roman, 2015). Consequently, the period of education is a huge stressor to a student with learning disabilities, as evidence reveals that their stress levels are lessened by the time they graduate from, or have exited, the schooling system (Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins and Herman, 1999, cited in Wilson, Armstrong, Furrie and Walcot, 2009).

2.6. Students with learning disabilities

In Africa, learning disabilities are considered a difficult phenomenon noting that there has not been an African derived delineation of learning disabilities (Taderera, 2015). At the onset of the twenty-first century, the discourse around inclusive education was being conducted in almost every university boardroom, and included in most government policies; therefore, students with disabilities are currently gaining access to tertiary education, in some universities in Africa (Meltz, Herman and Pillay, 2014). However, in a study conducted by Taderera (2015), the findings revealed that the paucity of knowledge on the subject of learning disability among the participants in the study had far-reaching consequences on their knowledge of programmes, services and policies that were supposed to benefit individuals with learning disabilities, as well as their parents. In the United States of America [USA], the number of students with disabilities is increasing in colleges across the country (Schelly, Davies and Spooner, 2011). In addition, the distributions of non-apparent and apparent disabilities have reversed, with noteworthy growth happening in the former category, and decline in the other (Schelly et al., 2011). To illustrate this, the study findings also revealed
that the percentage of undergraduates, who acknowledged having a mental, emotional, or psychiatric condition/depression, increased from 17.1% to 24.3 between 2000 and 2008, while the percentage of students who reported an orthopedic or mobility impairment, lessened from 29% to 15.1% in the same period (Schelly et al., 2011). It can be argued that this evidence highlights the right of access to tertiary education for students with learning disabilities.

On the other hand, the research findings also revealed that, even though the number of students with learning disabilities has increased, the number of students who graduate or complete their programs is less (Schelly 2011). The eligibility of students with learning disabilities to be in college or university is not enough; systems must be transformed to retain them. According to DeFur, Getzel and Trossi (1996, cited in Schelly et al., 2011) the chances of obtaining a degree are decreased by the presence of a disability. Additionally, the research findings revealed that only 6% of people with disabilities, between the ages of 21 and 64 years have obtained a bachelor’s degree in America (National Council on Disability, 2008, cited in Schelly et al., 2011). However, according to a previous study, individuals who completed their degree programmes did so in more years than the allocated time for the programme (National Council on Disability, 2003, cited in Schelly et al., 2011). Given these numbers, it evidences that the tertiary institutions are not completely accessible to people living with disabilities, as, even when they enroll at the university, there is no guarantee that they will receive a degree. Therefore, additional measures need to be implemented to ensure that tertiary education is made more accessible to students with learning disabilities.

Sultana (2013) asserts that making tertiary education accessible to all students with disabilities is a challenging and daunting task for educators, who would need to develop new strategies and skills, to educate students with disabilities in tertiary education. The researcher, therefore, is of the opinion that individualizing teaching methods and approaches may be the way forward, when teaching students with learning disabilities, who each exhibit different characteristics and behaviours. However, Sultana (2013) argues that this might be an overwhelming task for institutions of higher learning, with a demanding tutorial and lecture schedule. Sultana (2013) adds that the crucial adjustment to be made would be the method in which the students are taught to read and write. Judging by the various learning disabilities that affect the students enrolling in tertiary education, it would be an understatement to state that this process would be a strenuous challenge for the institutions of tertiary education.
In a research study, conducted in the United Arab Emirates, by Sultana (2013), the findings reveal that current legislation, development in technology, an encouraging social acceptance, the number of students with learning disabilities, who are enrolling in higher education, as well as the faculty play very significant roles in the students’ educational experience. Additionally, for students with learning disabilities to participate fully, and succeed in tertiary education, faculties have to play an active role in enabling the students to cope (Sultana, 2013). Therefore, increasing the knowledge and expertise of educators/staff to teach students with diverse learning needs, effectively, could potentially increase the tertiary education and learning results of these students (Sultana, 2013). This might be the way forward, if students with learning disabilities are to have positive learning outcomes in their educational experiences.

According to Katrina Scio (2015), a senior lecturer in clinical psychology at the University College London, UK, a new study had highlighted that the public’s attitude towards people with learning disabilities is still being influenced by misconceptions. She added that those individuals born with a learning disability would probably suffer many injustices in their lifetime, over which they would have no control. They could feel mostly unnoticed and lonely, or excluded from the most worthwhile activities in life, for example, companionship, love, occupation, leisure, as well as further education, and the aspiration of living the life they deserved, would seem impossible (Scio, 2015). People with learning disabilities tend to suffer in silence, and in some instances, certain changes in their lives could prove to be overwhelming. Scior (2015) adds that the lack of insight and erudition about learning disabilities seem to be causing confusion, which needed to be addressed. Ultimately, Scior (2015) suggests three possible solutions to address the problem. Firstly, encourage more people with learning disabilities to speak up about their plight (as self-advocates are effective, and should be supported). Secondly, educate young people to change their attitudes about people with learning disabilities (as reportedly most incidents of ill-treatment and mocking of people with learning disabilities, are done by youth); and thirdly, increase employment (as an insignificant percentage of people with learning disabilities are gainfully employed, and contact facilitates understanding). These suggestions could lead to a better understanding, which, in turn, could speed up the process of total access to tertiary education for students with learning disabilities.
2.7. Social work and disability

High ranking professionals seem to be deciding on what is needed by the people living with disabilities, and how many resources are needed if the need is going to be met and how the needs are to be met, and also how it is supposed to be accomplished (Elder-Woodward, 2002). In addition, the bureaucracy has been accused of adopting terminology that reinforce their domination over those they are supposed to support (Elder-Woodward, 2002). Elder-Woodward (2002) adds that the conference was about exploring the way the professionals were treating people with disabilities, or rather disability itself, as well as on creating a culture of disability and devising new ways of approaching and treating people with disabilities. The treatment refers to the way people with disabilities are treated, in relation to their able-bodied counterparts, with social workers working towards eliminating stereotypes about people with disabilities, by educating the community about what disability is, and is not.

According to Okitikpi and Aymer (2010), social workers and the social work profession, has worked tirelessly to address injustices and inequalities that occupy much of their practice. In addition, the field of social work aims to promote social change, as well as problem solving capabilities in human relationships, while empowering and liberating people, in an attempt to enhance well-being (British Association of Social Workers [BASW] – Code of Ethics, 2001, cited in Okitikpi and Aymer, 2010). The empowerment of the people is facilitated with theories of human behaviour, as well as social systems, with social workers becoming involved where people interact with their surroundings. Therefore, the values of human rights and social justice are important to social work (BASW – Code of Ethics, 2001, cited in Okitikpi and Aymer, 2010). The social work profession is concerned with the alleviation of distress and aims to foster social justice.

However, the findings of other studies have highlighted that the social work profession is rapidly changing (Gibbs, 2001). “One fundamental element remains unchanged, which is that social work is situated within some of the most complex, difficult and perplexing areas of human interactions; therefore, social work is, and has to be, an exceptionally skilled activity” (Trevithick, 2000 p. 1). The profession is made up of knowledge attained from various professions, which make it more responsive to the needs of humans, intent on assisting them with the challenges they encounter in their daily lives (Trevithick, 2008).
Additionally, the nature of social work is multifaceted, as it includes interaction across the diversities of “age, class, culture, disability, gender, geography, health, race, sexual orientation, religion, expectations and outlook on life” (Trevithick, 2000 p. 2). In the same study, Trevithick (2000) also argues that social work deals with vulnerable groups, and tries to enhance their coping capacities, with various methods of practice. Though it is the sole mandate of social workers to assist people to help themselves, it is not often easy for individuals seeking assistance, to spell out their needs, or attach words to their thoughts and feelings, especially, when these needs are situated in the midst of feelings of anger, despair, confusion, fear and humiliation (Trevithick, 2000). While trying to assist the vulnerable populations, it is not always easy for social workers to decide on strategies to help people in need, when, at times, these people may not be aware of the actual problem. Therefore, the social workers, through their expert knowledge, should assist people to identify the root cause of their problem, and address them (Trevithick, 2000).

When dealing with persons with disabilities, it is usually very important for them to know which resources are available to them, in the settings they will be in (Horn and Kang, 2012). In the education settings, the recommendation to setup disability units was acknowledged, as a way to assist the students with disabilities to cope in the educational institutions, they would be working in. One significant component in the education of students with disabilities, is the issue of disclosure, although associated with discrimination and stigmatisation, it is a basic requirement for the students with disabilities, as it allows them to access vital assistance (Von Schrader, Malzer and Bruyère, 2014). De Cesarei (2014) explains that disclosure to someone with a disability in tertiary education, represents a very significant step, as the revelation of a disability is one of the initial and utmost important steps, an individual with disability has to take. However, disclosure also exposes persons with disabilities to constructive consequences, such as the eligibility to obtain support, or accommodations, during the course of their university careers (De Cesarei, 2014). Therefore, social workers should encourage people with disabilities to disclose their statuses, as a way of accessing the assistance that is at their disposal.

Disability rights movements, across the world, are often concerned with the adjustments of infrastructure to ensure that people with disabilities are included all aspects of social, economic, political and academic spheres (Fleischer and Zames, 2005). The focus of the
social model is that the reformation of society is the *cure* to the concept of disability (Intellectual Disability Rights Service [IDRS], 2009), as most of the problems that people with learning disabilities experience, are the result of the social structure of society. Therefore, the focus of social workers must be on restructuring the infrastructure, to respond to the demands and desires of people living with disabilities, whom they are supposed to serve.

**2.8. Theoretical framework**

Theory is an essential component of research, as it helps to predict, describe and evaluate conditions and behaviours, as well as provide a justification for people’s actions, in response to, and involvement with, clients with particular histories, problems or goals (Raingruber, 2014). As a way of exploring disability, the researcher uses the Anti-Discriminatory Social Work Practice Theory, in a broad sense, and the Social Inclusion Theory in the direct sense.

**2.8.1. Anti-Discriminatory Social Work Practice Theory**

According to Okitikpi and Aymer (2010), it may be predictable, and certainly, an obvious initial point, but it is crucial to initiate the discussion with the important concepts of anti-discrimination practice, and the acknowledgement that discrimination does exist, which is the first step in the elimination of discrimination. In addition, acknowledging the presence of discrimination in society is essential, as it sends a clear indication of openness, as well as the ability to look beyond personal experiences (Okitikpi and Aymer, 2010). According to Nzira and Williams (2009), discrimination at an institutional level can be evidenced in the service delivery infrastructure, resulting in, for example, the adverse treatment of persons with disabilities, as well as people living in poverty, even if this was totally unintentional. Discrimination is a common practice against people with disabilities in all settings, which, in turn, affects their participation in these settings. The essence of the anti-discriminatory practice is to promote equality and participation for all people, regardless of their statuses in community institutions (Dalrymple and Burke, 2006).

Similarly, in acknowledgement of the service users’ susceptibility, and that they are at a disadvantage in their interaction with specialists, the anti-discriminatory practice
stresses that practitioners should not behave in a way that either supports the discrimination, or the oppression that people already face, or create an atmosphere that enables such practices to continue (Okitikpi and Aymer, 2008). Practitioners should operate in a way that removes discrimination, and limits barriers for the students with disabilities, especially learning disabilities, so that tertiary education could become more accessible. Anti-oppressive practice is offered as an emancipatory method to social work. It is dedicated to social justice and social change, setting free and taking the side of the people, who have been subjected to structural inequalities, such as, poverty, sexism, and racism, while seeking to help them in their need to reverse the situation they are in (Dominelli, 1998, cited in Wilson and Beresford, 2000). The aspect that underpins the anti-discriminatory practice is that all people should live their lives to the fullest; therefore, social workers should advocate against unfair practices, and find ways to alleviate the suffering and distress of oppressed people. Many structural injustices need to be addressed, if students with learning disabilities are to gain full access to tertiary education (D’Eath, Sixsmith, Cannon and Kelly, 2005).

Additionally, the anti-discriminatory practice is founded in the concept of social justice, and that people can be treated equally, with any negativity because of some preconceived biases (Okitikpi and Aymer, 2010). These biases about people living with disabilities, determine how, and if, they will be discriminated against. Besides, the core of oppression is the applied exclusion from essential opportunities and experiences (Nzira and Williams, 2009). Similarly, Nzira and Williams (2009) continue that the essence of anti-oppression is inclusion, which may be perpetuated by the perceptions of people, regarding their association with people living with disabilities. Therefore, the aim of anti-discriminatory social work is to ensure that people are emancipated from their preconceived notions about people living with disabilities, which hinder them from living their lives to the fullest.

Regarding participation, the concept of anti-oppression expects not only integration in the sense of physical presence, but also real involvement in equal proportions, and with equal results (Nzira and Williams, 2009). Therefore, anti-discriminatory practice does not only imply getting the person into a setting, but also, ensuring that the person is participating in events in the setting that s/he is a part of. Anti-discriminatory practice, according to Okitikpi and Aymer (2010), is focused on all the social work practice
areas, namely, casework, group work, community work, research and management that help to eliminate unfair practices on an individual, community and structural level, through research and the transparent management of infrastructure. In light of the anti-discriminatory practice, students must also contribute in the classroom settings, when required to do so. Therefore, the structures must be ready to enable the students with learning disabilities to participate in the education setting, which implies that the institutions must adjust the curriculum, to ensure that the students with learning disabilities will also benefit from the educational settings.

Neil Thompson developed the PCS (personal, cultural and structural) model, as an attempt to explain that discrimination occurs at various levels of human interaction, and as such, needs to be addressed likewise (Hafford-Letchfield and Cocker, 2014). Thompson (2012, cited in Hafford-Letchfield and Cocker, 2014) endorses an all-inclusive approach to discrimination, and critiques, what he refers to as the ‘managing diversity approach’, while recognizing the significance of upholding, and appreciating the importance of diversity, so that differences can be viewed as assets to be respected, rather than difficulties to be solved. Therefore, it appears that differences must be appreciated, and not be seen as grounds for discrimination in any way, while students with learning disabilities, and their diverse natures, are supposed to be treated fairly in educational settings. This discrimination is built through the interaction on a personal and cultural level, which is strengthened through various structures, such as the media, the governing bodies, as well as other forms of socialization (Burt, Simons and Gibbons, 2012).

Hines (2012, cited in Sobantu and Warria, 2014), asserts that personal, cultural, institutional and economic issues affect people’s behaviour, as well as their chances of developing to their full potential, for example, people living in oppressive circumstances. However, Sobantu and Warria (2014) state that the anti-oppressive practice constrains social workers to think differently and creatively about the dialectic of power and oppression. Focus must be placed on the structural inequalities that affect the experiences of individuals with disabilities in all levels of education. Social workers have been given the mandate to investigate the discrimination that occurs, as well as try to make services available for students with learning disabilities at the university. As highlighted earlier by Nzira and Williams (2009), social inclusion is the direct opposite
of social exclusion; therefore, inclusive education has to be viewed in relation to the social inclusion theory.

2.8.2. Social Inclusion Theory

According to the Cavan Local Authorities (2009), social inclusion can be explained as a series of progressive actions towards achieving equal opportunity of access to goods and services. This helps individuals to play a part in their community and society, by encouraging the involvement of all people in social and cultural life, to be conscious of, and to challenge, all methods of discrimination. Mitchell, Franklin, Greco and Bell (2009) also argue that social inclusion often includes being empowered by others to participate, whilst participation proposes a more active role with persons choosing to participate. The concept of social inclusion is employed to investigate injustices and eliminating factors that limit the access of another population group to some social practices and rights (Farrington and Farrington, 2005). In addition, fear and unawareness of disability present the largest obstacles to inclusion across the region; therefore, robust information and awareness-raising efforts are vital (United States Agency for International Development [USAID], 2010). Ultimately, it is vital that people change the way they perceive students with learning disabilities, as inclusion will prove difficult to achieve, without the changing of their mindsets.

Gidley, Hampson, Wheeler and Bereded-Samuel (2010) offer three relative and integrated ways of explaining social inclusion, as follows: the narrowest clarification relates to the neoliberal concept of social inclusion as access; a wider interpretation relates to the social justice notion of social inclusion as participation; while the broadest interpretation involves the human potential lens of social inclusion as empowerment. Consequently, this reveals the broad process of social inclusion, which encompasses a wide array of empowering aspects, namely, people should all have access, have a chance to participate, and lastly be empowered. Additionally, the Cavan Local Authorities (2009: p. 14) explain that real social inclusion results in each individual gaining an equal prospect of making choices that affect their quality of life, and involves “the fullest participation of the community including minority groups”. Social inclusion, therefore, includes the rights of minority groups, as well.
The European Commission (2015) asserts that social inclusion involves providing people with disabilities the chance to participate in decision-making practices, to make decisions about their lives. Additionally, according to the European Commission (2015), social inclusion is associated with the sense of belonging, acceptance, and the recognition of diversity. The major values of the social inclusion are based on principles that value diversity, and, simultaneously, promises support for each other, as everyone needs support, everyone can contribute, everyone can communicate, and everyone is ready (European Commission, 2015). The researcher, therefore, deduces that social inclusion encompasses the provision of access, as well as participation, to people who are denied access, because of their statuses.

Social inclusion can be maintained through the education of the students with learning disabilities, as highlighted by the European Commission (2015). Taking into account that exclusion might occur early in life, inclusive education is one of the most important mechanisms that will ensure the promotion and expansion of the concept of social inclusion. In addition, the European Commission (2015) argues that, if social inclusion, through inclusive education democracy in society, is encouraged, every member of the society will have an opportunity to speak, as well as be heard. Therefore, students with learning disabilities will be empowered to make decisions that will affect their learning environments.

2.9. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evidenced that, in South Africa, scant research on learning disabilities in tertiary education has been conducted. Therefore, it appears that studies regarding students with learning disabilities are still lagging behind in South Africa. In addition, statistics from other countries suggest that, apart from scant research being conducted on learning disabilities, the South African government remains uninformed of the exact number of people who are living with learning disabilities in this country (Visser, Nel, Bronkhorst, Brown, Ezendam, Mackenzie, Van der Merwe and Venter, 2016). Consequently, it could be argued that the focus must be shifted from viewing disabilities as a collective, to treating each disability independently, as they are a diverse population.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
3.1. Introduction

In this chapter of the research project, the researcher provides an overview of how the data was collected during the investigation; the aim being to provide details on the strategies and techniques that were employed in this current study. In addition, the researcher outlines the scope of the study, the study limitations and the delimitation of the study, among other things. This chapter comprises an in-depth insight to the approach, the design used, population size, sample and the sampling procedure followed, the techniques of data gathering employed, as well as the data analysis procedure. A discussion on the ethical considerations adhered to, as well as trustworthiness, is also presented.

3.2. Methodology

According to Kothari (2004), research methodology is the process followed to solve the research problem, systematically. Alternatively, it may be understood as a science of learning how an inquiry is conducted scientifically (Kothari, 2004). According to Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi (2006), research methodology is an organized method to resolve a problem. In addition, it is the art of studying the manner in which an investigation is to be conducted (Rajasekar et al., 2006). Ultimately, the process followed by investigators in their effort to describe, explain and predict phenomena, is referred to as research methodology (Rajasekar et al., 2006).

The researcher selected the qualitative research methodology for this current study, as the researcher was concerned with attaching of meaning to the academic lives of the students with learning disabilities. In addition, the word qualitative suggests an emphasis on the qualities of things, as well as practices and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all), in terms of magnitude, amount, intensity or frequency (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). In addition, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) state that qualitative researchers reinforce the socially built nature of reality, the close associations between the researcher and what is being investigated, and the situational restraints that shape the investigation. The qualitative type of methodology is more focused on exploring and discovering the relationships and realities of the research participants (Austin and Sutton, 2014). The purpose of this current study was to discover what the experiences of students with learning disabilities were like.
disabilities are, while the researcher is more concerned about the students’ explanations and meanings; therefore, this methodology fits the inquiry well.

According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is a way of exploring and understanding the sense persons, or groups, assign to a social, or human, problem. Therefore, the researcher used this methodology as a way of capturing the experiences of the students with learning disabilities. The research was conducted in the students’ own setting, namely, the OSD, as the researcher wanted to understand the participants’ university life in their own setting. The research procedure involved developing questions and processes, gathering data, characteristically, in the participants’ setting, inductively building themes in data analysis, from basic to overall, with the researcher making sense of, or attaching meaning to, the data (Creswell, 2009). This was a suitable design for this current study, as the researcher aimed to explore the accessibility of tertiary education to the students with disabilities, as a way to attach meanings, and make interpretations of the data.

3.2.1. Research design

A research design, by definition, is the basis, or plan for a study that is used as a guide to gather and analyse data (Churchill, nd, cited in Kumar, 2015). This is the map of how the research was to be conducted, provided for the quality of data that was to be gathered, and affected how the data was gathered (Labaree, 2009). The researcher selected the exploratory-descriptive research design, as it gave the researcher the liberty to explore and describe, in detail, the experiences of the students with learning disabilities in the university.

3.2.1.1. Descriptive design

According to Walliman (2011), a descriptive research, endeavours to inspect the situation, in order to establish what the norm is, that is, what can be predicted to occur again, given the same conditions. Additionally, subject to the type of information required, individuals could be interviewed; questionnaires distributed, visual records made, and sounds, as well as smells recorded (Walliman, 2011). This research design was incorporated into this current study because it allowed the researcher to observe all the aspects of human interaction.
Quality descriptions of the students’ sought after experiences, were obtained using this design.

According to Walliman (2011), research is obtaining information and developing an understanding, as well as gathering facts and deducing them, to form an image of the world around, and even within people. The aim of the research was to identify, as well as develop an understanding of how the students with learning disabilities experience university life at UWC. As a way of accomplishing this, the descriptive design was used; however, due to scant research on the topic, the exploratory design was used, as well.

3.2.1.2. Exploratory design

According to Manerikar and Manerikar (2014), exploratory research is the first research piloted, to clarify and describe the nature of a problem. Additionally, Manerikar and Manerikar (2014) explain that, although the characteristically exploratory research is not a substitute for conclusive research, definite evaluative evidence can be attained in exploratory studies. An exploratory research design was used because it allowed the researcher to explore the hidden emotions and thoughts, in relation to learning disabilities. This was done to ensure that the meaning and views of the students with learning disabilities at UWC would be revealed.

The use of both the descriptive and the exploratory design introduced the exploratory descriptive design, which allowed the researcher to investigate the experiences of students with learning disabilities, and attach meaning and thoughts to their experiences at the university. The descriptive design of the research process ensured that the experiences of the students with learning disabilities were gathered and reported in detail, providing a picture of the lives of the students at UWC.

3.2.2. Population

Hanlon and Larget (2011) postulate that a population is all the persons or components of interest: classically, there is not existing data for almost the people in a population. Alternatively, a population is a collective, or entirety of all the objects, subjects or
members that conform to an agreed stipulation (Polit and Hungler, 1999, in Marwat, Islam and Khattak, 2016). The population for this current study comprised students with learning disabilities at UWC. Research on the experiences of students with disabilities in education have been conducted worldwide, but very few studies have been conducted in South Africa, much less the University of the Western Cape (Emong and Eron, 2016). Therefore, the researcher had a particular interest in this group of people, as they constituted a segment of university students at the university under scrutiny. Most of the participants for this current study were registered with the OSD at UWC, which is a centre where the students with disabilities are offered various support mechanisms for their diverse needs.

At UWC, 39 students were registered with the OSD, as individuals with learning disabilities. These include both males and females, who are registered in various faculties, at various levels of education. However, there is a chance that some students may not be registered with the OSD, even though they have a learning disability, which is a limitation of this study.

3.2.3. Sample

A sample is a portion of a statistical population, whose attributes are investigated to gain the whole (Webster, 1985, cited in Osman, Bachok, Bakri and Harun, 2014). According to Hanlon and Larget (2011), a sample is a subsection of the persons/elements in a population. A sample of nine students with learning disabilities, who were enrolled at the OSD, as well as three key informants, who worked among these students on a daily basis, was selected to participate in this current study. The sample was a homogenous one. According to Alvi (2014), a population is homogenous when its elements are similar to each other in all characteristics.

According to Osman et al. (2014), sampling is defined as the action, procedure, or method of choosing a sample, which is a representative portion of a population, selected to determine bounds and characteristics for the entire population. A population of the students with learning disabilities was selected for this current study. In order to ensure that the most suitable participants among the students were selected, the researcher made use of the non-probability sampling technique. The sampling
procedure was selected because it was less time consuming, as well as specific. The researcher wanted to interview the students with learning disabilities, who were sometimes difficult to identify among other students. A non-probability sampling technique was the best procedure to follow, to locate these students.

The researcher opted to use the non-probability sampling technique for the research sample. According to Alvi (2016), in non-probability sampling, not every component of the entire population retains an equal opportunity to participate in the study. In addition, Alvi (2016) asserts that the selection of the sample is undertaken in accordance with the personal judgment of the researcher. Initially, the researcher employed the non-probability, purposive sampling technique to gather participants for the study, as it helped to identify suitable candidates. The researcher’s subjective judgement, regarding which students were needed for the interviews, determined who was eligible for the sample. A population of students with learning disabilities was identified, which students retained the choice of voluntarily participating in this current study. Subsequently, the researcher included purposive sampling with snowball sampling (another non-probability sampling technique), due to difficulties with finding suitable participants.

3.2.3.1. Purposive sampling

According to Alvi (2016), in purposive sampling, not every accessible person is selected for the study sample; only those who are available and willing are incorporated in the sample, provided they meet the eligibility criteria. The researcher used this technique with the students, who met the criteria, while being alert for homogeneity among those, who were approached. The students with learning disabilities were identified with the assistance of the OSD, who were responsible for the support and welfare of students with disabilities. The OSD and the researcher directed emails to the students with learning disabilities to alert them of the intention of the researcher, as well as the significance of the study. The students who met the eligibility criteria were asked whether they were interested to participate in the study. In addition, they were advised that the decision to participate in the study was voluntary, and their consent could be communicated directly to the researcher. This was done to ensure that the
students, who were not overwhelmed by their disability statuses, were the ones who would participate in the study.

Purposive sampling involves detecting and choosing individuals, or groups, who are knowledgeable about the phenomenon under study (Cresswell, Klaasen, Plano Clark, and Smith 2011, cited in Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan and Hoagwood, 2015). Therefore, the researcher was concerned with interviewing people, who were experiencing the same phenomenon, and the purposive sampling technique guaranteed this outcome. The proposed strategy of purposive sampling had some challenges, as some of the participants were reluctant to participate in the study, while others were willing initially, but withdrew later. Subsequently, the researcher managed to recruit the three key informants, as well as only four learner participants, using this sampling technique, and consequently, decided to use another non-probability sampling technique, the snowballing technique, to recruit more participants.

3.2.3.2. Snowball sampling

Alvi (2016) asserts that in snowball sampling, a single component of the population is approached and asked to refer the researcher to the other elements of the population. The researcher had initially proposed the exclusive use of purposive sampling; however, during the sampling phase need arose to reassess. The participants proved difficult to recruit for this current study; however, the researcher managed to engage four participants for the interviews, which proved to be useful. Towards the conclusion of the interview sessions with the four participants, the researcher asked whether they would know of anyone else, who would be interested in participating in the study. The researcher cautioned, however, that the prospective subjects would have to meet the eligibility criteria. The students, therefore, approached other students with learning disabilities to participate in this current study.

The snowballing technique was used as a complimentary strategy, because of the difficulties experienced. The two techniques complemented one another. Subsequently, the prospective participants met with the researcher, who informed them of the aims and objectives of the research. When they agreed to participate,
they were asked to sign the consent form, after carefully reading it, to confirm that they were willing to be involved in the research process. This approach also had its challenges, as a few of the initial four participants were not eager to divulge information on other prospective participants. In contrast, some did provide the information, but the prospective participants were not willing to participate. However, the researcher managed to select another five participants, using this technique. The final sample, therefore, was 9 students and three key informants from the OSD office.

3.2.4. Eligibility criteria

Salkind (2010) define eligibility as inclusion criteria, an established set of predefined characteristics used to classify participants who will be incorporated in a research study. In addition, inclusion criteria, along with exclusion criteria, create the selection or eligibility criteria employed to rule in, or out, the target population for a research study (Salkind, 2010). For the purposes of this current study, the eligibility criteria dictated that the students:

- Should be enrolled at UWC;
- Should be studying at UWC during the time of the research;
- Should be registered with the OSD.

While the key informants:

- Should be working among students with disabilities on a daily basis. This criterion worked really well, as it eliminated the possibility of interviewing participants, who had not worked among students with learning disabilities, and was timesaving, as well.

3.2.5. Data collection

To collect data, a social scientist could use various data collection instruments. Kothari (2004) states that the data collection is important, as, when dealing with any real life problem, it often occurs that the information on hand is insufficient, and it becomes essential to gather more suitable data. The researcher chose to use the in-depth interviews as the primary source of data collection.
However, during the data collection process the researcher decided to employ another data gathering instrument, deemed relevant and justifiable to use in the inquiry.

According to Blandford (2013), semi-structured interviews fall between these opposites, in that numerous questions will be premeditated, but the lines of questioning will be followed during the interview, to explore thought-provoking and unanticipated avenues that emerge. In addition, Van Teijlingen (2014) asserts that question wording can be altered and explanations provided; unsuitable questions for a certain interviewee can be left out, or others included. This technique was employed successfully, during data gathering, as it allowed the researcher to direct the interview towards some of the questions that would not have been answered satisfactorily.

3.2.6. Data collection tools

3.2.6.1. Face-to-face Interviews

Some of the nine learner-participants, for various reasons, were unable to attend, or stay, to complete the face-to-face (f2f) interviews. The researcher was only able to conduct three interviews, eventually, and therefore, decided to use the email interviewing method of data collection (De Vos et al., 2011), with the remaining learner-participants, who could not make it to the interviews. The researcher drafted a questionnaire, similar to the face-to-face interview guide, for the participants in the email interviewing process. This decision to use the email interview method came about after discussions with the manager of the Office for Students with Disabilities and the study supervisor. This approach was successful, as the researcher managed to gather valuable information from students, in this manner. Firstly, the researcher discusses f2f interviews, and thereafter, the email interviews.

The researcher managed to follow-up with probing questions and prompts (verbal and non-verbal), to obtain a deeper understanding and description of the participants’ experiences. Questions like, “Could you please explain what you mean by that?” were used to encourage the participants to explain what they had disclosed.
The researcher maintained good eye contact throughout the interviews. The line of questioning during the interviews were flexible, to allow for issues that may emerge during the interviews. The interviews were conducted on a one-on-one, face-to-face basis, to focus on the individual’s experience, as well as gather the emotions and thoughts of different responses, in different times. The interviews were conducted at the venue provided for by the OSD, which was the room that the students would rest in, when they were not be feeling well, as well as the computer laboratory. These venues were suitable for the interviews, because they were not occupied during the times of the interviews, and had a peaceful atmosphere. This was done to ensure that the research participants were comfortable in the process. The interviews lasted for about 20-45 minutes, on average. The interviews were conducted behind closed doors (to limit the number of disturbances), as well as in a secluded area, with a limited amount of traffic by other students, in order to put the participants at ease. The idea to interview the students at the Office for Students with Disabilities was conducive, as the students spent much of their time on campus there. The key informants were also interviewed in their own offices. However, the challenge the researcher confronted with the interviews, was that some participants were unable to attend (even though appointments were made to accommodate them), other arrived, but could not stay because they had to rush off to their next lecture, or appointment (again, even though appointments were made to accommodate them).

3.2.6.1.1. Recording of the interviews

The interviews were recorded for the complete duration. The permission to use the audiotape recorder was sought before the interviews commenced. All the participants consented to its use. The use of the recorder enabled the researcher to focus on the participant, and not be scribbling notes, when the participants would be speaking about their experiences. The audiotape recorder was placed in between the researcher and the participant, in order to record the full conversation.
3.2.6.2. Email interviews

The researcher offered the students, who could not participate in the face-to-face interviews, the option of email interviewing. The researcher also realized that these participants would be more comfortable with responding by email, than they would have been with face-to-face interviews, as they would have an opportunity to think about their answers, before responding. A semi-structured questionnaire, similar to the interview guide, was drafted for the email interviews, with four sections (Biography, Lecture room, University infrastructure and Examinations), so that the same information would be captured. This was done with the assistance of the Office for Students with Disabilities, which proved to be rather useful, as the students were comfortable with it. The questions were emailed to the students (one section at a time). On receiving their responses, some follow up questions/probes were brought into play, until data saturation was reached. The questions included the following:

3.2.6. Pilot study

Pilot studies are used in two ways in social science inquiry (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). They could be feasibility studies, which are ‘lesser scale versions’; or trial runs, performed in preparation of the major study (Polit, Beck and Hungler, 2001, cited in Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). Before commencing with the main research project, the researcher approached one of the key informants, and administered the interview guide and email questionnaire, to determine their feasibility in this current study, as well as whether the questions would yield the desired outcomes. The pilot study interview was conducted over 32 minutes in the key informant’s office. The outcome of the pilot study was that the interview schedule had to be edited, to ensure that it would yield the desired results for the topic under study. The pilot study alerted the researcher of some questions that needed to be added to the schedule and some that needed to be omitted.

3.2.7. Data analysis

According to Creswell (2009), in general, data analysis is the commitment is to make sense out of the gathered text and image data. In addition, it includes unravelling the data (like detaching the layers of an onion), as well as piecing it together (Creswell, 2009). The process of data analysis, therefore, was duly performed, the data were
listened to and transcribed, the transcriptions were read multiple times, different themes and topics emerged, and when required, the process was repeated. While listening to the audiotape recordings and feedback, the researcher became aware of various themes and sub-themes that were emerging in the discussions. The data analysis was done manually. The researcher made use of Tesch’s 8 steps approach to data analysis and also Creswell’s approach, it was used as follows.

3.2.7.1 Tesch’s approach

Tesch (1990) suggested some 8 ways that would be useful in analyzing qualitative data. The following ways were adhered to by the researcher during the data analysis process. The 8 steps by Tesch (1990) include the following:

1. The researcher took time to read through all the transcripts to come up with the whole idea behind the responses.
2. The researcher went through document by document and jotted down the thought that emerged from the discussion on the margin.
3. After repeating the process of reading through the transcripts, the researcher made a list of the topics that emerged from the responses.
4. The researcher categorized similar topics together.
5. The researcher went on to categorized similar topics as codes and he wrote them down next to the appropriate sections in the transcriptions. Relationships within the data were established through the use of lines.
6. The researcher identified the most appropriate wording for the provided topics and turned them into categories.
7. The topics that were similar to each other were then regrouped. They were given abbreviations and later organized into alphabetical format.
8. The researcher also recoded the existing data to see if new themes would emerge or if some could be combined. (Tesch, 1990)

On the other hand, the researcher went on to look at other strategies of data analysis in an attempt to come up with the best results of analyzed data. Data analysis procedure by Creswell (2009) was also used in the study to analyze data. Data analysis, however, comprises a diversity of detailed procedures and approaches (Richmond, 2006). Richmond (2006) asserts that data analysis is a way of reviewing, cleansing,
transforming, and displaying facts, with the objective of determining useful information and advising conclusions. In this current study, the interviews that were audiotape recorded by the researcher were transcribed into words on paper. Thereafter, the researcher read the transcribed information to determine the storyline, and assess the different views and arguments that were emerging from the interviews. In addition, the researcher assessed the information for credibility, as well as to ensure that the information is useful to the context.

During the analysis process, the researcher started to code the information into various categories, under similar themes or codes, while some themes that were emerging were also identified. According to Stuckey (2015), coding is a method used in the analysis of qualitative inquiry, which takes time and creativity. Stuckey (2015) further explains that three phases will help enable this process, namely: 1) Reading through the records and generating a story line; 2) Classifying the information into codes; and 3) Using notes for clarification and interpretation. Notes were made in the process, to ensure that the researcher clarified and interpreted the various issues. Subsequently, the researcher made descriptions of the issues that were emerging in the coding process, to ensure that the themes from the data could be constructed. The researcher used these themes to create narratives for the research.

Creswell (2014) asserts that the following stage in the data analysis process involves an outline of how the explanation and themes will be represented in the qualitative investigation. This process was accomplished by using quotations, perspectives from different individuals, as well as discussions of some interconnected themes. The final stage in the data collection process, according to Creswell (2009), was making interpretations, or drawing meanings from the data. Subsequently, the researcher made judgments regarding the perceived real issues in the experiences of the students with learning disabilities, in relation to the research questions. This was achieved through the researchers own interpretation of the data, as well as a cross-section with the review of literature.

The analysis of the email interviews was performed concurrently with the semi-structures, one-on-one, face-to-face interviews. Sutton and Austin (2015) defined coding as the identification of themes, matters, resemblances, and variances that are
exposed through the participants’ accounts and deduced by the researcher. These authors further argue that the process of coding enables the researcher to initiate an understanding of the world from each participant’s viewpoint (Sutton and Austin, 2015). The researcher divided the data into abstract, which are also called codes, and categorized the codes into groups and sub-groups. Finally, the researcher established the overall themes that emerged from the collected data.

3.3. Trustworthiness

According to Shenton (2004), many naturalistic researchers, nevertheless, preferred to use different expressions to move themselves away from the positivist paradigm. In addition, Guba (1981, cited in Shenton, 2004) suggests four standards that should be considered by qualitative investigators in search of a reliable study, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

1. Credibility

According to Shenton (2004) credibility involves the process done to ensure that the results of a qualitative research are believable. As a way to guarantee credibility in this current study, the researcher followed the techniques of data collection and data analysis of previous projects. The researcher visited the OSD to gather insight about students with learning disabilities at UWC, before this current research study. Shenton (2004) advises that an initial understanding of the culture of the contributing organisations be developed, in advance of the first data gathering discussion. The participants were also given the opportunity to refuse, or agree, to participate in this project. According to Shenton (2004), a participant’s consent is requested to ensure that the data collection meetings include only those, who are sincerely willing to participate, and ready to, voluntarily, offer relevant and rich data. This current research process was scrutinized by the researcher’s peers for their feedback and constructive criticism.

2. Transferability

In positivist work, the concern is often about demonstrating whether the findings of the study at hand could be useful to a broader population (Shenton, 2004). The findings of the study might be useful in relation to studies in similar settings. This
task of ensuring that the findings would be transferable to a wider population was overwhelming. This current research process encountered some enforced deviations, from being an exclusive f2f interviews data collection process, to being obliged to include the email interviewing aspect. In addition, the sampling process was supposed to be purposive; however, circumstances dictated that snowball sampling be added. Therefore, the researcher has mixed feelings about whether the research could be transferred to a larger population, or that the methods used in this current study, could be transferred to another setting, to yield similar results. The transferability of the research may be problematic, as the researcher used many techniques during the data collection process, due to challenges in recruiting participants for the research.

3. Dependability

Shenton (2004) proposes that, in order to address dependability more directly, the procedures in the research process ought to be recounted, in detail, thereby allowing other researchers to replicate the study, if required, to gain the same results. In this current study, therefore, the research design and its implementation were thoroughly clarified in the planning phase, as well as the execution of every phase of the research. The details of what happened during data gathering phase, was also provided, as part of the research dependability process.

4. Confirmability

Shenton (2004) states that, steps need be taken to ensure that, as far as possible, the study’s conclusions are the consequence of the experiences and ideas of the informants/participants, instead of the characteristics and inclinations of the researcher. The researcher outlined, in the methodology, the reasons for choosing an exploratory descriptive design for this current research. This study was the first of its nature at the university under scrutiny, and, in addition, the researcher wanted to attach meaning to the experiences of the students with learning disabilities at this university. The researcher transcribed the data and presented it to the supervisor to check for any biases. The supervisor agreed with the outcome of the transcriptions. The researcher also practiced member checking by referring the data back to the participants to check for the accuracy, and whether the transcriptions resonated with their experiences.
3.4. Reflexivity

Through reflexivity, researchers recognize changes brought about in themselves, because of the research process, as well as the ways in which these changes influenced the research process (Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas and Caricativo, 2017). This refers to the researcher conducting self-reflection, and establishing how it will influence the research process. The researcher is a male student of African origin, a Zimbabwean national, who lives in Hout Bay, and has to commute on a daily basis, to be on campus. The researcher’s bias included not having practiced in the field, among people with learning disabilities, previously, which would have influenced the researcher’s understanding of their daily interactions. In addition, the researcher has not practiced as a full time social worker in the field. The researcher’s only experience in the social work, and related fields, is the experience attained during fieldwork placements, as well as volunteer work. The researcher managed to use some interviewing techniques, learnt during these placements, in the interviewing process this current study. The researcher used empathy, as a way to avoid showing emotional reactions to the participants’ responses (Turner, 2010). The researcher would nod the head occasionally, to assure the participants that their responses were being heard. The researcher also used probe questions and reflections, to ensure that the participants were contented with what they had disclosed and that they had completed their responses to a question. When required, the researcher endeavoured to encourage the participant to clarify remarks that may not have been clear enough.

The data collection process presented many challenges. Some of the participants were reserved in their responses. Of the nine participants, six were more comfortable with email interviewing, which is a drawn out process, while three proved to have no problem responding in the one-on-one interviews. This could be attributed to the delicate nature of the disability under study. However, the key informants were open to speak about their concerns, which led to triangulation data.
3.5. Ethics statement

The researcher followed the ethics consideration granted by the UWC. The UWC HSSREC approved the ethics, and methodology of this current study (Registration Number hs17/1/52 – Appendix 1). Creswell (2009) highlights that the researcher should not place participants at risk, and respect vulnerable populations. This was upheld in the research process, as the researcher first requested (and was granted) permission from the UWC, before conducting the research study. The researcher also attained the aforementioned ethics form, which outlined the procedure to be followed in the data collection.

All the participants received and signed a consent form (Appendix 5), after the research study’s aims, objectives and purpose were thoroughly explained to them. The consent form contained the personal information of the researcher, the purpose of the research, the benefits of participation, the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, as well as the participants’ right to refuse participation, or to withdraw during the process, without prejudice, before their responses in the study could be recorded (Bhatacherjee, 2012). The consent form also allowed the participants to sign and acknowledge that they had agreed to participate in the study. Finally, the consent form also contained contact information of individuals they could contact, if any matters arose, or incidents transpired.

Gatekeepers

According to Wanat (2008), gatekeepers award official access, but reserve support, if they assume that studies will threaten them, or their university. The research was conducted in the Office for Students with Disabilities; therefore, there was no need to request permission from those in charge. However, the researcher did request permission from the manager of the centre, for access to the centre and the participants. The researcher was also provided with a place to conduct the interviews within the premises of the centre, after discussions with the responsible authorities.

Anonymity

The researcher ensured that the anonymity of the participants was maintained in the research. The researcher ensured this by not using the identities of the participants in the study. Additionally, participants with defaming traits or behaviours, such as drug users, would be affected if their characteristics were revealed, in conjunction with reports of their objectionable behaviour (Kaiser, 2009).
Confidentiality
The issue of confidentiality was addressed during the data collection and analysis phases, by using pseudonyms. Therefore, any information could not be traced back to the participants. The researcher ensures that the identity of the participants, the programme they were involved in, and the years they had been studying at university, were not published in the research report. The information was protected in a safe place for record keeping.

On the issue of anonymity, the researcher guaranteed that the participants’ identities would not publicised during the research process. This was done by omitting all information of the participants, regarding the programme, the amount of years at university, as well as whether or not they were residents. The researcher conducted the interviews in the OSD, as a way of safeguarding the students, who opted to participate the interview process. Lastly, Bhatacherjee (2012: p. 138) asserts, “anonymity implies that the researcher or readers of the final research report or paper cannot identify a given response with a specific respondent”.

3.6. Conclusion
The researcher employed the descriptive-exploratory design methodology for this current study. The design allowed the researcher to explore and describe the experiences of students with learning disabilities, to present an account of their experiences at UWC. The design proved to be useful, as the desired goals were achieved. The sample comprised students with learning disabilities at UWC, at the time that the research was conducted. The sampling techniques that were used, eventually, were the non-probability sampling techniques of purposive sampling and snowball sampling, because the population was small, and the sample had to be homogenous.

The data collection process was concluded through one-on-one, semi-structured interviews, as well as email interviews, which occurred because some the respondents were reluctant to participate in f2f interviews, but were willing to supply their responses via email.

The data analysis was done manually; therefore, no software for data analysis was used in analyzing the data. The researcher transcribed the interview data, and identified codes, which, subsequently, were grouped into themes and sub-themes. The same technique was used for the data analysis of the email interviews.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter comprises the findings of the data obtained from six individual f2f interviews and six email interviews. The interviews were conducted with the three key informants and
nine students with learning disabilities. Their experiences are discussed and analyzed in this section of this current research study. The findings are introduced, in relation to the research objectives, which are:

- To explore and describe the experiences of the students with learning disabilities in accessing inclusive education in all faculties at the University of Western Cape.
- To explore and describe possible solutions to inclusive education for students with learning disabilities in all faculties at the University of Western Cape.

The discussions that emerge will be a reflection of the experiences of students with learning disabilities, as well as their expectations about accessibility of tertiary education at UWC. The findings will be guided by the Social Inclusion Theory, which forms the basis of this current research project.

4.2. Participants for the study

The researcher used pseudonyms as a way of ensuring that the identities of the students will not be publicised. The pseudonyms are assigned to both the key informants and the students. The researcher also provides an outline of the students’ demographics, to inform the reader of their origins. The key informants are presented first, followed by the students in this section of the research.

4.2.1. Key informants

Ms Dengu (pseudonym)

This participant is a female staff member, who has been employed by the university for 10 years, and has been working among the students with learning disabilities for the duration. Her duties in the university’s OSD included, liaising with lecturers and students, the provision of various accommodations, examinations and tests, among other things, which are highlighted in the presentation of the findings. This participant also worked alongside other staff members with similar duties.

Ms Chuma (pseudonym)

Ms Chuma and a partner were responsible for the establishment of the OSD. She champions the rights of the students with disabilities, as well as their welfare in the
Ms Chingwa (pseudonym)

This participant is a female staff member, who has been working in the OSD for almost 16 years. She ensures that the students’ needs are met, consistently. Her duties cover assisting students with accessible material and assistive devices. She also arranges the venues where the students with disabilities write their tests during the semester, and examinations, during the examination period.

4.2.2. Students with learning disabilities

Tinashe (pseudonym)

Tinashe is a male student, who first registered at university in 2016, immediately after completing his matric year at the high school, at which he was enrolled. Tinashe grew up without realizing that he had a learning disability, until a schoolteacher advised his parents to consult a specialist, as he was exhibiting symptoms of a learning disability. The specialist diagnosed the student with a learning disability, and consequently, the student was transferred to a special school. Tinashe advises that he enrolled at university after attending a special school for most of his primary and secondary education. He adds that the special school only had 2 classes per grade, and 19 students per class, on average, which is quite small. The student disclosed that he spent 9 years of his life in a special school. In the special school, someone always ensured that everything was functioning properly, and that he is concentrating in class. This participant commutes daily to attend lectures.

Siyabonga (pseudonym)

Siyabonga is a 23-year-old male, who has a background in a mainstream school. Siyabonga enrolled at university in 2016. He disclosed that his experience at school had been a combination of good and bad. Siyabonga was diagnosed with a learning disability since grade 1. He discovered that he had a learning disability when the
schoolteacher advised his parents to consult a psychiatrist, because he had difficulties with concentrating in class. The student does not use university accommodation, and commutes daily to and from university.

**Pierre** (pseudonym)

Pierre disclosed that he enrolled at university in 2015. He had become aware of his learning disability at a very young age. The teacher advised the parents to consult a specialist, who would conduct assessments to determine the learning disability. However, he shared that he was enrolled in a mainstream school before coming to university. Although he had been enrolled at the university for three years already, he was still taking some modules of the second year level. The student does not live in the university residence, and he commutes to campus on a daily basis.

**Wonder** (pseudonym)

This student is a 24-year-old male, who has been enrolled at UWC for 4 years, yet currently, is still taking some modules of the second year level, because of an illness that saw him leave university, to return at a later stage. The student indicates that he only became aware of his learning disability, later in life, at high school, between the ages 16 and 17 years. Subsequently, he was transferred to a private school, from a public school. This student also resides off-campus.

**Kenzo** (pseudonym)

This participant is a 23-year-old male, who has been enrolled at university for 3 years. He also discovered that he had a learning disability when he was young. The student completed matric in 2014, at a mainstream school. This student lived at his parents’ home, and not in the university residence.

**Tawanda** (pseudonym)

Tawanda is a 21-year-old male student. He completed his matric in 2015, at a mainstream boys’ high school. Tawanda has been enrolled at university for 2 years. He discovered that he had a learning disability during the later stage of his primary school education, in Grade 7. Tawanda lives at home with his parents and daily travels to university with his dad.
Rudo (pseudonym)

Rudo is a 22-year-old student who completed her matric in 2013. She discovered her learning disability later in life, in grade 10. She is currently at second year level at university.

Garikai (pseudonym)

Garikai is a 20-year-old male student who, enrolled at university in 2017. He completed matric in 2016, at a mainstream school, and is at first level at university. He discovered his learning disability when he was in primary school. The disability was identified by a teacher, who advised his parents to seek the help from a professional.

Tendai (pseudonym)

Tendai became aware of his learning disability in grade one. He is an over-20-year-old male student who completed his matric in 2015. He was enrolled in a special needs school before entering university, and is currently at second year level at university.

4.3. Demographics

The students (in f2f and email interviews) were asked questions pertaining to their age, sex, their level of university education, as well as whether they lived in the residential facilities of the university or not. The demographic in the research revealed that the participants were mostly living off campus, as well as that some of the participants had been at university for more years than their level of education required.

Table of demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of school attended</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study mainly comprised male students; however, the researcher would not want to speculate what the reason for this could be. The results suggest that the majority of the participants were students of colour, while most participants emanated from the mainstream type of schools.

Due to the fact that the research attracted a particular group of respondents that is most male would also have had an impact on the findings of the study. Also another point to note is that there was no participant of an African (black) racial grouping that took part in the study which would obviously have an impact on the final outcome of the study.

4.4. Main themes and sub-themes

In this current study, the researcher interviewed students, who acknowledged that they had a learning disability, as well as three key informants. For the sake of this research study, a student with a learning disability is an individual who has a neurological problem that interferes with the basic skills of learning math, reading and writing. The university under scrutiny, caters for some conditions of learning disabilities, which may not be considered learning disabilities in other settings; therefore, these individuals were considered for this current study. The data was obtained using semi-structured in-depth interviews and email interviews, was were transcribed and analyzed, according to the Tesch (1990) framework for qualitative data analysis. The research aims and research questions influenced the emergence of the themes and sub-themes in the findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1. Influences of schools on learning disabilities at university.</td>
<td>1.1. Assessment at school.</td>
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<td>1.2. Coping strategies around assessment at school.</td>
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<td>1.3. School experience: mainstream versus special.</td>
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<td>1.4. School versus university experience of learning disabilities.</td>
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<td>2. The university interventions to ensure inclusivity for students with learning disabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2. Recorders: mixed responses.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.3. Examinations and tests.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4.4.1. Main theme 1: Influences of schools on learning disabilities at university

This theme explores how the primary and secondary education of students with learning disabilities influence their tertiary education. At the start of the learner interviews, they were asked how they discovered that they had a learning disability, which coping strategies they used, and how this influenced their experience of tertiary education. Most of the students replied that a teacher advised them (the child and parents) to consult a specialist. The students with learning disabilities revealed that their experiences and coping capacities estrategies were influenced by the services and resources, which were available and accessible to them, and most likely influenced their performance at university. The following sub-themes emerged from this main theme: Assessment at school; Coping strategies around assessment at school; School experience: mainstream versus special; and School versus university experience of learning disabilities.

4.4.1.1. Sub-theme 1.1: Assessment at school

All the students that participated in this current study reported that they had been assessed with a learning disability, while at school. The assessments of the students with learning disabilities varied, regarding the times that they were assessed. When the assessments were done also affected how the students experienced the assessment. However, they did not quite explain what their experiences were. The following are the responses from Tinashe, Siyabonga, Wonder and Tawanda:

“\textit{I was in grade 1 or 2, I think it is one of the teachers, she said to my mother that u had to go and get tested. I was a lot more energetic when I was smaller, so they would be teaching and I would be busy}”
talking my mouth off distracting other children. I went to hospital... and got tested. They said is should be put on retilin and so. At that time, I did not really understand. They said I had attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) and I did not really understand what it meant so at the end of the day what I only knew was I had to take a tablet every morning. I did not feel any different because it was part of my life, I had known it for so long and it has never bothered me because at the time I was too young to understand.” (Tinashe)

“I was told when I was young, I think when I started going to school, I think when I was in grade 2. My mum took me to a psychologist... she was a specialist in children and she could pick up that I had attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD). I was picked up when I was between 6 and 7 years and since then I started taking medication and increased prescription when I grew older. I did not really know what it meant, I struggled with it for years, they did not quite explain what it is, so I could not really identify. I did not know what to think about it until much later when I consulted my psychologist. She gave me papers to explain some aspects of ADHD and what it is like. I really did not know what it meant until up to grade 12, my parents tried but they could not explain to me what it actually meant.” (Siyabonga)

“I was quite young when they first found out. I was 16 or 17 years of age; now I am 24. What happened was, I had small fits. I would pass out during when I got into unfavorable conditions. It started happening in high school and then they told me to go and find out what was happening so I went to a doctor and they then said I had epilepsy. When they looked at my history, they said I had epilepsy when I was a baby. Later on I started developing headaches and changes in my character, sometimes it was difficult for me to focus and I lash out. They looked at my mood swings and different symptoms I had they realized I also had a type of bipolar. At first, I had to seek private counselling because I had a very unique case
where I had 2 conflicting things that were affecting my well-being.”
(Wonder)

“Before I was sad but now I accept who I am. I am not like other people, I just thank God.” (Tawanda)

According to the above extracts, the student became aware of their disability, while enrolled in the school system. A teacher identified their need of an assessment and informed their parents, except for Wonder who had experienced “small fits” when he was in school. Although most of the students became aware of their learning disabilities in a similar way, they encountered different experiences thereafter.

Regarding the assessment of learning disabilities, Shaywitz (1998, cited in Lange and Thompson, 2006) highlights some interesting points that help to explain what the students expressed about their learning disabilities, when enrolled at schools. This author postulates that the assessment of learning disabilities is often advised when children begin to display academic difficulties at school, and the usual age that children are subjected to learning disabilities assessments is at 9 years of age. However, in 2015, two percent of three-to-four-year-olds, seven percent of five-to eleven-year-olds, and ten percent of twelve-to-seventeen-year-olds had been assessed as having a learning disability (Data Bank, 2016: p. 5). The majority of students, diagnosed with learning disabilities, had been subjected to assessments, while still in the school system.

In a study conducted in the United States of America, the Discrepancy Model is the method used for this process of identification (Armendariz and Jung, 2016). Under the Discrepancy Model, the aim is to establish an inconsistency in intellectual or cognitive ability, as well as academic achievement. According to Restori, Katz and Lee (2009), this is done through a comparison between ability and achievement, which might be misleading at times. There is a fear that some students would be diagnosed with a learning disability, when they actually do not have one, or some may not be diagnosed, when they actually do have learning disabilities. Though this is the most popular way of identifying a learning
disability, Restori et al. (2009) assert that, the use of the Discrepancy Model, has made quick identification and intervention of children with suspected, specific, learning disabilities, challenging. This implies that, the idea of waiting for the students to enroll into an institution of learning first, as a way of identifying a learning disability, is a problem in itself. Additionally, this model represents a ‘wait-to-fail’ method, which results in the loss of a valued instructional period that would most likely make a substantial difference to a considerable number of the children affected (Fletcher, Lyon, Barnes, Stuebing, Francis, Olson, Shaywitz and Shaywitz, 2004; Gresham, 2002; Torgeson, Alexander, Wagner, Rashotte, Voeller and Conway, 2001, all cited in Restori et al., 2009). Although this is not the primary emphasis of this current study, it is valuable information to shed light on the experiences of students with learning disabilities. Consequently, it appears that much needs to be done to facilitate early identification, which, in turn, would trigger early intervention.

In light of this evidence, it could be argued that the approach being used to identify learning disabilities is more reactive than proactive. It makes no sense to wait until an individual enrolls in the education environment, to determine that they have a learning disability, when they would have had it since birth. It could be argued that the system is failing the students and their families, as early identification would facilitate early intervention, which would certainly influence the students’ experiences at university.

4.4.1.2. Sub-theme 1.2: Coping strategies around assessment at school

The assessment of learning disabilities triggers change in someone’s life. For the majority of the students, many things had to change; from being on medication, to changing schools, specifically, special schools, as ways of ensuring that the coping capacities of the students are enhanced. The researcher provides examples of the disclosures that the majority of the students (Siyabonga, Pierre, Tendai, Kenzo, Garikai and Rudo) made, regarding their coping strategies in these situations. The following excerpts refer:

“I have lived in a household with this kind of stuff and I always knew about it... My brother has autism so it is not new, they are aware and
so much aware of the fact that one child has ADHD and the other one has autism. I have lived in a household with this kind of stuff and I always knew about it so I was never, it always has been a part of my life and I have not thought of it as strange or weird.” (Siyabonga)

“There was not any disability unit in the mainstream school. We could do our homework and we can go for consultation.” (Pierre)

“It was a bit better because I know what help to get” (Tendai)

“Go to the hospital for help with my disability” (Kenzo)

“Through paying careful attention to my lessons and constant repetition of my work.” (Garikai)

“retilin and lots of family and friends support and understanding” (Rudo)

One similarity between Siyabonga, Pierre, Tendai, Kenzo, Garikai and Rudo, was that they were all enrolled in a mainstream school. They highlighted their coping mechanisms. Rudo went on medication, while family and friends played a major role in her coping. Garikai had to put more effort into his work, in order to cope. Kenzo had to attend hospital as his way of enhancing his coping capacities. Tendai acknowledges that becoming aware of his learning disability was a good thing, as he then knew what needed to be done to get help. Pierre mentioned going for consultation, even though there was no disability unit at the mainstream school. Siyabonga’s experience was quite different, as he disclosed that his brother also has a learning disability, and therefore, it was not strange to him to have one, as well.

However, Tinashe relates his experience, as follows:

“As I grew older I switched schools to a special school. In the special school everybody else was also on medication, they had some ailment that the school was catering to.” (Tinashe)
Tinashe switched to a special school after becoming aware that he had a learning disability. He was very calm when he related his experiences at the special school, which indicated that he accepted the choice that was made for him, at the time. Tinashe adds that everyone at the special school was on medication (which might imply that he could identify with them). Finally, Tinashe stated that they had some ailment, for which the school was making provision. This probably made him feel comfortable at the special school, as some of the students had the same routine.

There are various contentions about the best way to instruct students with learning disabilities, between the two school choices (special and mainstream). Pottas (2005) posits that the difference between the two choices implied that some children might possibly not cope in the conventional education system, because of their individual disabilities. However, this author argued in favour of mainstream education. In addition, Ghergut (2012) propounds that inclusion in the school setting, refers to raising and educating children, with or without special education needs, in similar premises, under similar conditions, with the ultimate objective of full involvement in school and extra curricula activities. However, it is not only about the education systems being available, but also about the teaching techniques that would be employed, which ultimately, would yield results for the students with learning disabilities.

In the next section, the researcher explores how the different systems of education affect the students with learning disabilities, when they enter tertiary education. Burke and Harrison (2009) discuss the importance of understanding the principles of anti-oppressive practice, as understanding these philosophies, facilitates an essential transformation in the correlation between the assessment of a situation, and the type of the action that is vital to change the prevailing state of affairs.

Wonder and Tawanda articulated that their experiences were not good, after the realization that they had a learning disability as they explained below:

“Coping in the beginning was difficult because when people find out that you are differently abled they treat you in a certain way. They
treat you with kid-gloves, they are careful around you and they look at you like you are strange. Some people do not understand what it is like to have a disability because they never interacted with people with disabilities. So they treat you very differently and it is not nice being treated differently." (Wonder)

“Very bad, I could not focus or learn in the class. I was labelled a failure.” (Tawanda)

For Wonder and Tawanda, the realization that they had a learning disability was overwhelming for them. As highlighted by Wonder, the stigma, as well as the discrimination, affected his studies. Wonder and Tawanda tried to adjust to their conditions; however, the treatment they received from other students and people around them, was challenging, and did not help. Wonder and Tinashe continued their education in a mainstream school setting, which affected their experiences and coping capabilities. The labelling that Tawanda refers to, affected his focus to learn, while Wonder laments that people treat and view people with disabilities as strange. This labelling would probably filter through to the university setting, which could affect their experience there.

As society plays a large part in the way students cope with the changes they will have to make, after the assessment, Allman (2013) argues that people feel pressure from society, which often triggers a reaction from them. In addition, Gumplowitz (1963, also cited in Allman (2013: p. 1) maintains that, “we live in the state and in society; we belong to a social circle which jostles against its members and is jostled with them; we feel the social pressure from all sides and we react against it with all our might; we experience a restraint to our free activities and we struggle to remove it; we require the services of other [people] which we cannot do without; we pursue our own interests and struggle for the interests of other social groups which are also our interests”.

4.4.1.3. Sub-theme 1.3: School experience: mainstream versus special

According to Howell (2006), for students with disabilities, inequalities in tertiary education start with inequalities that have shaped the entire education system in South Africa. The South African education system has played a major role in
determining the road that students must take in pursuit of their basic education, up to tertiary education. The researcher, therefore, provides a cross-section of the diverse levels of education for students with disabilities, in an endeavour to reveal how the aspect of inclusion/exclusion could be the driving force behind the equality/inequality experienced by students with learning disabilities. In addition, the researcher provides an explanation of how their experiences in high school could affect their accessibility to tertiary education for different students.

Wonder and Tinashe stated the following:

“*My first school was a public school but when we realized I have special needs I had to go to a private school. It was smaller so I could get my attention. They spent more time with you and because of its smaller groups, the teacher can interact with the student*…” (Wonder).

The student also took time to mirror on the shortcomings of the mainstream school that he was enrolled in before.

“*Unfortunately, the drawback of having a public schooling is that there is a large number of students. Because it is so many students everyone is treated as a number and you have to try and keep up.*” (Wonder)

“I did not feel any different because it was a natural part of my life…I grew older and switched schools to a special school so everyone else was also on medication, they had some ailment that the school was catering to.” (Tinashe)

“… someone always trying to run after you, helping me cope with like when you struggle to pay attention in class or making sure you sitting straight or if you failing to take your medication.” (Tinashe)

Wonder and Tinashe reported that, when they realized that they had learning disabilities, they had to enroll at a special school. They stated that, at the special school, they received special attention, which they did not receive at their
mainstream school. According to Wonder, the mainstream school’s limitation was treating all students the same, implying that the teachers did not pay special attention to the slow students. Tinashe concurred and highlighted that, in the special school, the staff paid attention to every small detail, such as making the student sit-up straight in class, which did not happen in the mainstream school. The students felt very happy and grateful for their experiences in the special school.

The experiences of Tinashe and Wonder may concur with what Howell (2006) and the Qudwa Global Teachers’ Forum (2016) referred to as, the limitations of school staff and personnel to educate students with learning disabilities. According to the Qudwa Global Teachers’ Forum (2016), school principals reported that the lack of teachers with special needs training was one of the top three barriers to the instructional quality for these students. Considering this evidence, Wonder would have struggled to cope at the mainstream school, particularly, if the teachers were not capacitated to support him. Even though there is a drive towards inclusive education, the argument of Howell (2006) that the concern is not about enrolling students with disabilities into the education system, but about assisting them to access the required resources. Emphasis should be placed on making the schools more accommodating to the students with learning disabilities, as a way of achieving inclusive education.

According to Howell (2006), the Department of Education has identified that the limited, more advantaged students with disabilities, who are able to attend special schools, are experiencing other difficulties, characteristic of a distinct, marginal system. In some institutions, the set of courses are incompatible with the preparation of students for the world of work, as only a few special schools offer instruction up to matriculation (Howell, 2006). In a study, conducted by the Department of Education (1998, cited in Watermeyer, 2006), it was determined that some of the special schools are failing to produce competent students, who would thrive in tertiary education, as well as the work environment. However, the responses provided in this current research seem to disagree. The participants, who have had experiences, in both the mainstream and the special education
system, actually articulated that they appreciated their special education settings more.

Conversely, other students, namely, Rudo, Siyabonga, Pierre, and Tendai, were enrolled in the mainstream education systems. The following quotations describe their experiences in the mainstream education system:

“... I moved to Cape Town, completely different story. I did not know anyone, did not have any friends... I came off very friendly but it was weird because I thought let me put my best foot forward, let me just be nice... I did not like it that I was very much ignored.”

“It got worse, I got my teachers recommend. It was an incident when I accidentally broke a toy or piece of ornament... she (the owner) called me out. I think it was really, really over the top but they recommend I go and see the therapist.” (Siyabonga)

“There was not any disability unit in the mainstream school. I was actually a bit scared because like all my friends know I had a disability... some of them will say okay you have a disability we not going to be your friends or you just see that.” (Pierre)

Tendai stated that his high school experience was “difficult”, while for Rudo, the experience was “challenging but exciting too.” There was excitement on the one hand, and challenges on the other. Siyabonga clearly explained his experience in the mainstream school, as well as how he had to change schools, at some point, during his high school career. Siyabonga expressed his dislike for the new school because the other students ignored him. In addition, he had to consult a specialist, in order to cope in the mainstream school. Pierre also shared the same sentiments on the aspect of exclusion in the mainstream school. Siyabonga and Pierre, both, were of the opinion that the other students disliked them, probably because of their disability.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), legislation was passed to prevent harm and safeguard the rights of vulnerable
groups of people, including the people living with disabilities. The emergence of the Education White Paper, as well as the White Paper on the Rights of People with Disabilities, resulted, to address these injustices (RSA DoE, 1996; 2001; Republic of South Africa [RSA], The Presidency, 1997). However, despite the advocating of other research studies and legislation, the actual experiences of the students on the ground were very different. Robo (2014) highlights that an inclusive system of education benefits all students, without any discrimination directed at any individual or group.

In South Africa, the drive towards inclusive education has been advocated. Steps have been taken towards the realization of inclusive education, including structural changes; however, negative attitudes and the lack of resources are still affecting the full realization of inclusive education (Du Plessis, 2013). Bornman and Rose (2010, cited in Donohue and Bornman, 2014) reiterate that there is an overall absence of support and resources, as well as predominant negative attitudes towards disability, resulting in the wide-ranging confusion about inclusion in South African institutions. Pierre outlines the drawbacks of mainstream education by expressing that the school did not have a disability unit. Pierre and Siyabonga also emphasized how negative attitudes could affect the realization of inclusive education.

However, other issues also may affect access to inclusive education. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) seems to complicate matters for the students to access inclusive education in South Africa, as it highlights that, everybody has the right to education in the official language of the person’s choice, in public schooling institutions, where that education is reasonably practicable. This is going to prove problematic because of the many diverse ethnic and linguistic groups in South Africa, along with the country’s apartheid past, and widespread poverty. In addition, the South African society has numerous contrasting notions, about, not only the requirements of children with disabilities, but also the best practices and principles, in terms of how they ought to be educated (Hodgson and Khumalo, 2016). Considering these statements, it is clear that, for inclusion to be fully realised in South Africa, there is a long way to go in its multi-cultural society. It could be argued that, in a nation with 12 official
languages, as well as the various cultural differences, it is difficult to reach inclusion for students with learning disabilities, who originate from various cultural backgrounds.

According to Alkahtani and Kheirallah (2016), the education of the students with learning disabilities have been taken into consideration, on a global scale. In addition, Alkahtani and Kheirallah (2016) report that, in the United States and Canada, the Individualized Education Plan was created, while in the United Kingdom, a similar document, an individual education system, was developed, and in Saudi Arabia, a paper known as Individual Education Programme, was introduced. The Individualized Education Plan is an official document prepared by a group of specialists, to institute a guide, or plan of action, for educators and specialists, who assist students with disabilities in their learning course (Kowalski, 2005, cited in Van Munster, Lieberman, Samalot-Rivera and Houston-Wilson, 2014). To support the initiative, there are also many laws that work hand in hand, as Van Munster et al. (2014) add that, in the United States, a number of laws and declarations exist, to establish the responsibility of this document, which goes along with the students, throughout their school career and the transition period.

The same cannot be alleged in South Africa, as there is scant discourse regarding the individualized education of students with learning disabilities. The focus, in this part of the world, is on making schools more inclusive; however, if structures are not adjusted to respond to the individual requirements of the students with disabilities, their plight will never change (Donohue and Bornman, 2014). Additionally, there is insufficient information on how the students will be instructed, once they enter the education systems. Consequently, educating the students becomes a challenge, when the process is unclear, and any monitoring and evaluation of services are absent (Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaull and Armstrong, 2011).

In America, a clear outline exists of the objectives they want to achieve, as well as how to get there (Alkahtani and Kheirallah, 2016). However, this might not be true for South Africa, where much, it appears, is being discussed regarding the
education students with learning disabilities, in all-encompassing environments, but not much is being done, in terms of policies and the practices around learning disabilities. It can be argued that a great deal needs to be accomplished, if inclusive education is to be realised (Murungi, 2015).

With the system failing in its response to the requirements of students with learning disabilities, enrolling into higher education would be a huge mountain for them to climb. The practice of schooling students with learning disabilities is leaving many stones unturned. Despite managing to identify the learning disabilities, the mainstream schools do not appear to understand how to assist students with learning disabilities, relative to the practices elsewhere. In addition, the legislation appears to be failing the students, as there is no basis for reflection on what the best practices for learning disabilities are. It appears that mainstream schools are using a teach-as-you-learn approach. However, there are educators, who are specialist in teaching students with special needs, but they are too few (McGregor et al., 2016).

4.4.1.4. Sub-theme 1.4: School versus university experience of learning disabilities

In their responses, most of the students used their experiences in high school, as the reflection point for their experiences in tertiary education. The students from the special schools, as well as those from mainstream schools, have various opinions about how the university, currently, is responding to their needs. Considering the literature above, it appears that various forms of intervention have addressed inclusive education, which influenced how students access their education elsewhere. The researcher presents the responses of some students, namely, Siyabonga, Wonder and Pierre, regarding their high school versus university experiences.

“I enjoyed my early high school because of my friends. I was not really happy about the work. When I moved here, I did not like it because I had no friends so I started slacking in my work. But now I like the work and the people. So my university life is much better, I am enjoying this. I am happy than I have ever been. Much better than my
primary school and early high school... They help me by providing opportunities... a place where I could study, its quiet, they provide me with extra time in their location where I can study and write examinations and tests. I have access to the internet, I do not have to wait in the lines to have access to information” (Siyabonga).

“In schools, they do not really cater to the differently abled because most students who go to schools do not or are not aware of their differences. So schools do not really cater for that, because of me, the school had to learn to adapt, adjust and change to suit other students. Here in the university, they have a disability unit, they have people, they have counselors. So there are people who look out for you, they are aware there are different people out there with different needs.” (Wonder)

Pierre also shares a similar view as that held by the other student, “there (the school) was actually nice in a way. But here in the disability unit, they go an extra mile, at the school they just did say that okay you now in grade 8 you need to know how to boost yourself, you in the world now. So anything happens its our fault, so if we get a police record it is our fault, they cannot scrape it or anything like that. We are like adults that now our duty to think now. You want education you go for it, you do not want education, you can do your own stuff.” (Pierre)

There are similarities in the responses provided by Pierre, Wonder and Siyabonga. All three agree that the University, under scrutiny, is doing much more for them, compared to the schools, they were enrolled at, prior to entering university. The students appreciate the role that the OSD fulfils, and are grateful for the opportunities that the university is providing for them, as compared to what they received in the high school. Pierre clearly states that, at University, the OSD go the extra mile for the students, while Siyabonga enthuses about the resources that are at their disposal. These responses distinctly describe the experiences of the students with learning disabilities at the university, under study.
However, Robo (2014) defines a socially inclusive society as one where all individuals feel appreciated, they experience respect for their diverse needs, and have their necessities met; therefore, they can live in dignity. The students expressed that they were satisfied with the services offered by the OSD. This is largely attributed to the fact that the OSD is the mediator between the students with learning disabilities and the university. On the other hand, it is the place where the students with learning disabilities spend much of their time studying.

Howell (2006) argues that the shortage of suitable and adequate provision for students with disabilities could affect access to tertiary education for people with disabilities. In addition, Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000, cited in Wang, 2009) assert that the idea behind inclusion originated in the comprehensive agenda of human rights, which clearly emphasises that segregation of any form, is ethically inappropriate. In addition, the UNCRPD (2006) Article 4-32 clearly outlines the privileges of people living with disabilities, and the responsibilities of state parties (countries that ratified the treaty) towards them. Even though South Africa is a signatory of such a document, there is still a long way to go, if the state is going to meet the needs of all students with disabilities. At UWC, the welfare of these students seems to be placed solely on the OSD, which appears to be successful with the students, as well as for their academic careers. The majority of the services available to students with disabilities are at the OSD; however, the students spend most of their times in the lecture rooms, which do not have the same facilities which are the personal computers (to use in the lecture room) and enlarged font (should be available during the lectures), and raises concern.

4.4.2. Main theme 2: University interventions to ensure inclusivity for students with learning disabilities

The delivery of education for students with disabilities has always been on the agenda, and the development of an inclusive education system can be traced back to the nation’s founding document, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, Act No. 108 of 1996). Therefore, the aspect of inclusive education is currently being incorporated into the plans of the policy makers, as well as educational institutions.
As a way of achieving inclusive education for all students, tertiary institutions have established disability units. According to the FOTIM (2011), the roles of the disability units include policy improvement; awareness raising; auditing physical accessibility and assisting when access issues arise; provision and maintenance of assistive devices and equipment; dedicated LAN and Computer Room for usage by students with disabilities, among other roles. In another study, Mutanga (2017) explains that disability units make some of the facilities, required by students with disabilities in tertiary education, available. Additionally, in the same study, Mutanga (2017) observed that students with disabilities appreciate the services they can access at the Disability Units. The following sub-themes emerged from this main theme: Specific format and claro reader; Recorders: mixed responses; and Examinations and tests.

4.4.2.1. Sub-theme 2.1: Specific format and claro reader

The majority of the students outlined that they used claro reader, *a voice-reading programme*, in their studies. According to Mutanga (2017), the role of assistive devices is to ensure that injustices are not maintained, as the role of assistive technologies is vital in the formation of inclusive environment. Therefore, the assistive technologies are evaluated according to the role they fulfil in ensuring that the students with learning disabilities are accessing higher education. The claro reader is one of the assistive technologies that the UWC is using to ensure that tertiary education is accessible to the students. The majority of the students make use of the claro reader. Pierre expressed the following, which was supported by Ms Dengu:

“Ms. Chuma and her staff will get the material (what you want and what you need). They will make copies for you. I use a laptop and I use claro technology.” (Pierre)

“We have different programmes that also assist them when that have a disability. These include the claro reader, it reads back to you.”

(Ms Dengu)

Though the majority of the students admitted to using claro reader in their studies, Pierre’s and Ms Dengu’s responses were the most comprehensive. The access to the claro reader is facilitated by the OSD, which ensures that the staff members
are trained in accessible software. In addition, Ms Dengu explained the role that the office fulfills, in terms of enabling students to access material through the claro software. The software is computer programmable, and is useful, as it reads the text that students would be viewing on the screen. This helps the student to learn the pronunciation of the terms, as well as the spelling thereof, simultaneously.

In a study conducted by Draffan, Evans and Blenkhorn (2007), most of students received a recording device, text to speech software, and concept mapping tools, in addition to a standard computer system. The scholars disclosed that the use of assistive technology could increase academic self-confidence among students with dyslexia (Fullarton and Duquette, 2016). The use of technology is cutting-edge, as well as good for the students to excel in their studies. This is quite remarkable of the university to capacitate the students with such innovative technology. Therefore, the use and access to assistive technology, contributes towards ensuring that inclusive tertiary education is expedited by the university. However, the technologies may also pose a problem to the students, who may be emerging from an environment where everything was done for them, for instance, the special school. This may cultivate a culture of lethargy in the student, and the devices that are supposed to assist them, would actually be frustrating them. In contrast, for students emerging from a mainstream government school, it would be regarded as a great initiative, especially after they had learnt how to use it. However, some students may be confused by the technology, which will limit their accessibility of tertiary education (Moist, 2013).

Therefore, it would seem that the university and the students depend on technology, predominantly. This is largely attributed to the fact that the OSD focuses on improving the coping capacities on an individual basis. This is the reason why, emphasis is placed on making the students more competent in using assistive devices and technology to complete their university tasks and write examinations. In addition, Mutanga (2007) argues that these studies reveal a need to be vigilant, and to question the structures designed to assist students with disabilities constantly, as they could create disadvantages for the very people they are intended to support. If the universities are not vigilant, the assistive devices
could result in being the only means, through which students with disabilities learn at university, as the lecture room would be failing to meet their demands.

4.4.2.2. Sub-theme 2.2: Recorders: mixed responses

Most of the participants in this current study disclosed that they had access to a recorder during their studies; however, some students were not using them. According to Mangrum and Strichart (1998, cited in Raskind and Higgins, 1998), portable audiocassette recorders have been endorsed by a number of experts, as compensatory support for tertiary students with learning disabilities. Although the study seems outdated, it is clear that the use of recorders in tertiary education is not a new phenomenon, since it has been in use since the 1990s. Consequently, the UWC uses the same approach to enable the students to access tertiary education.

Kenzo, Tawanda, Tendai, Garikai and Tinashe voiced their perceptions about the use of recorders for their studies, as the following extracts indicate:

“It helps me” (Kenzo)

“I must still take one out next semester” (Tawanda)

“It helps to review the work as I cannot make notes” (Tendai)

“It helps me to hear a lecture again” (Garikai)

“So for me, I cannot write fast enough to take notes or type, I have tried so I got a recorder from the disability unit so I record my lectures and then at home during the weekends... I just go through each lecture and start writing notes.” (Tinashe)

Kenzo, Tendai, Garikai and Tinashe indicated that the recorder was helpful for them during the note taking. The reasons why a recorder is used, might be varied, and depended on how they were used. The main reason for using a recorder is, it is useful for note taking, which is why, in the responses, the words lecture and notes are used. Tawanda expressed that he would obtain one in the next semester; therefore, at present he did not have one, although he had used one previously.
To confirm these remarks, the key informants also noted that recorders were important in making tertiary education accessible at university, to the students with learning disabilities. Ms Chuma expressed the following:

“…obviously, a student with a learning disability have got a difficulty writing down things they hear. This is because the link between what you hear and what you spell is very difficult. For these students, we have small recorders, which they take to the classroom and record the lectures, so that they can listen to the lectures again. They can write notes for themselves, and they will know what they are writing…”

The key informant’s response was useful in clarifying the role that the recorder fulfils, or is supposed to fulfil at university. The key informant carefully used the phrase, the link between what you hear and what you spell is very difficult, probably because the students with learning disabilities have difficulties communicating what they hear, to what they write down, during note-taking. In these situations, recorders are useful, as they enable the students to gain access to an unedited version of the lecture presentation. Ms Chuma added that, subsequently, the students would write their own notes, which they understood.

Fullarton and Duquette (2016) highlight that, while accommodations are critical for many post-secondary students with learning disabilities, having access to assistive technology is also important. Regardless of the role of recorders, the key informant provided some interesting facts about students with learning disabilities and their access to recorders during the semesters. Judging by the response, the key informant was aware that students with learning disabilities have difficulties with note taking in the lecture room. It appeared that the key informants were aware of the challenges of using the recorder; however, this may require additional research. Unlike the Individualized Education Plan, adopted in the USA, as well as other countries in the North, where the focus is placed on the student’s development, on an individual level, the OSD could be using a one-size-fits-all approach, to support students with disabilities.
4.4.2.3. Sub-theme 2.3: Examinations and tests

Unless the inconsistencies in understanding the requirements of students with disabilities are addressed, and universities are prepared and capacitated to accommodate to these requirements, laws and policies cannot create, or have not created, a tertiary education environment that caters for the educational needs of students with disabilities (Fuller, Bradley and Healey, 2004, cited in Fuller, Healey, Bradley and Hall, 2005). These remarks highlight that there is need to ensure that the higher education institutions focus on treating the students with learning disabilities individually, and not as a group, because they are a diverse population of people, who manifest various attributes, which should be addressed as such. At UWC, measures were implemented to make examinations accessible for students with learning disabilities, as the following responses from the students suggest:

“I get allocated extra time in the examination and test. For mathematics (calculations) I have to write it out, its actually not mathematics. It is easy to write mathematics, but for actual English (factual) examinations like management and something like that I can type those out.” (Tinashe)

“I need extra time because I have never finished stuff because of my stress and the bathroom.” (Kenzo)

“The reason we write here is that we happen to get extra time” (Wonder)

“The only assistance I get is the extra time.” (Siyabonga)

Extra time is allocated to the students with disabilities, which enables them to complete their examinations comfortably. As indicated in the responses above, Kenzo needed the extra time, as he becomes stressed and has to use the bathroom facilities more often. Usually, the extra time is recommended by the specialist who conducts their assessments. The rewarding of extra time at university is not a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather an individualized approach, which is in accordance with the recommendations of the specialist’s report.
In a study conducted by Heiman and Precel (2003), the findings revealed that many students with learning disabilities were concerned about the inadequate time allocated during examinations, and tried to complete theirs faster, while others struggled to concentrate. The students with learning disabilities at UWC experience similar difficulties; therefore, the awarding of extra time is only way of enabling students to perform to the best of their abilities. In another study, many students with disabilities used testing accommodations as an attempt to play a part in statewide measures of student achievement (Lazarus, Thurlow, Lail, Eisenbraun and Kato, 2006, cited in Cawthon and Online Research Lab., 2008). However, the emphasis at UWC is not on simplifying the complexity of the examination, as highlighted by Gerber (2002), but rather on only awarding extra time.

The key informants confirmed the awarding of extra time to the students through the following responses:

“Let us say one with dyslexia in one category might only require 10 minutes per hour while the next person with the same disability but the symptoms are more severe and struggle a bit more will get more extra time.” (Ms Chingwa)

“They will have different accommodations, some will get 10 minutes because they can cope with that and some will get 15 minutes, that is the most time that a person with a disability gets.” (Ms. Dengu)

The idea of awarding extra time was not up to the university to decide. It was based on the feedback and recommendations of the specialists, who assessed the students, to determining whether the students needed extra time, as well as how much. The extra time that an individual was entitled to, was based on the severity of the disability, as highlighted by Ms Chingwa. Consequently, the students with learning disabilities should be able to cope with the examinations that they would be taking, as confirmed by Ms Dengu.
Margalit, Efrati and Danino (2002, cited in Givon and Court, 2009) state that, as a way of deriving the most benefit from these accommodations, there is a need to listen carefully to the opinions of the students themselves, in order to learn about their desires, difficulties and needs. The university has instituted many improvements in terms of the examinations, which is commendable, as an appropriate testing environment is created for the students; however, a question still arises, regarding the knowledge to be used in the examination. The university has a clearly defined strategy on the delivery of examinations and tests; however, the same does not apply in the lecture room. The reality is that the actual learning takes place in the lecture room. Therefore, even though the examination is written in an appropriate environment, if the students do not understand what is being asked of them, they will not succeed. Some traits of inclusive education are visible, but there appears to be a long way to go, for a fully inclusive environment at UWC.

4.4.3. Main theme 3: University infrastructure. Is it inclusive?

The university infrastructure refers to the building and other resources that are at the disposal of the students with learning disabilities. In this instance, the word infrastructure also includes the lecturers, as they are a very important resource at the university. They are at the core of the teaching and learning, which occurs at the university. Therefore, the relationship between the students and the lecturers is of utmost importance, in determining accessibility and inclusion of the students with learning disabilities at UWC, as most of the student’s university learning times are spent with the lecturers. The following sub-theme emerged from this main theme: Relationship with lecturers: satisfactory or unsatisfactory?

4.4.3.1. Sub-theme 3.1: Relationship with lecturers: satisfactory or unsatisfactory?

It is crucial that the students with learning disabilities have a healthy relationship with the resource systems that they require at the university. The relationships of the students with their lecturers are rather different, some were of the opinion that they needed to inform their lecturers of their disability, while others considered that there was no need, unless they were experiencing some challenges. Pierre and Tinashe explained in the following extracts:
“A lot of my lecturers are helpful, not most of them. It is just up to the student to gather the courage to build a repertoire with the lecturer with you to make sure that if you do not understand anything or that if you need help here and there.” (Tinashe)

“They are all helpful in a way because they will say okay like maybe for a tutor. They will say not that tutor; we will give you this tutor. They will take their phone, you will see they take their phone, they will phone whoever is in charge of the tutoring. They will say okay move this student, they do not say your name or surname (when they cannot find your student number then your surname). Then they will say this student will join this group. And some lectures will say okay I will give you more extra work, they will say this chapter you are struggling we will give you extra work… for me so far all my lecturers are helpful. There is no one that I will say I had an issue of not helping.” (Pierre)

Tinashe and Pierre suggested that most of their lecturers were helpful. Tinashe outlined that the onus was on the student to inform the lecturers of their disability. Pierre, however, stated that some of his lecturers were helpful in determining the best tutor for the student. For Tinashe and Pierre, the idea of informing the lecturer of their disability was very useful, as the lecturer, therefore, would be aware of their disability, and respond to their needs. In addition, Pierre stated that he had never experienced a problem with any of his lecturers for not helping him.

In contrast, some students were of the opinion that there was no need to inform the lecturer of their disability, until problems arose. Wonder and Siyabonga commented as follows:

“If I am struggling, then I will go to the lecturer and tell him that I need to be excused or just leave and I try to explain to the lecturer later. If I am sick and I need to write an essay, I will just let the lecturers aware through email. But during the actual lecture, I have no problem because there is really no need to tell them unless it affects my education.” (Wonder)
“I am doing well, in the lecture room, my condition is not well known to a lot of people. Only my close friends know I have ADHD. So I do not tell my lecturers know because it is a private thing, but I am very open and engaged in classroom discussions.” (Siyabonga)

Wonder and Siyabonga were of the opinion that there was only need to inform the lecturer of their disability, when they were sick, or not feeling comfortable. For Wonder, when he was struggling or sick, he would decide whether to inform the lecturer of the problem. Wonder considered that he did not have any problem during the lecture; therefore, there was no need to disclose his disability, unless it affected his education. Siyabonga considered a disability, a private issue that had to remain undisclosed, and only divulged it to his close friends. It would appear that the students’ decision to inform the lecturer of their disability could be denial of their disability for fear of rejection or stigmatization (Lisle, 2011).

Despite the differences about the students’ relationships with the lecturers, Ms Dengu, a key informant, shares her thoughts on the matter in the following extract:

“We encourage the students to be open as well, but we also inform the lecturers if the students are needing specific accommodations.”

(Ms Dengu)

There is no correct way of disclosing disability, which is largely attributed to the history of the students, regarding disclosure in the past (Stanley, Ridley, Harris, Manthorpe and Hurst, 2007). According to Wonder, she experienced many incidents of stigma and discrimination, as per the following extract:

“When people find out that you are differently abled, they treat you in a certain way, they treat you with gloves, they are careful around you and they look at you like you are strange. Some people do not understand what it is like to have a disability because they have never interacted with people with disabilities. So they treat you very differently and it is not nice being treated differently” (Wonder)
Unlike the others, Pierre was of the opinion that the lecturers should be informed, regardless of his experiences with friends, as per the following extract:

“It is not the lecturer’s duty to find out, students think that the lecturers must know you have a disability. On the system it does not show you have a disability. The student (on the records) do not have a name just a student number. Now the student thinks it shows that you have a disability and when it comes to examinations, the student comes out and say I have a disability (to the lecturers) how come you did not know.” (Pierre)

Other studies reveal that the challenges are with the system, as scholars reported that many faculty members had limited involvement with students with learning disabilities, and were not necessarily aware that specific accommodations were suitable, as well as what their role was in making these accommodations (Sultana, 2013; Barazandeh, 2005; Scott et al., 2002). Ms Dengu expressed the following:

“There are a lot of cases when they (lecturers) do not necessarily understand what the student needs are and sometimes they question their needs. They question whether or not the students qualify as a person with a learning disability because of their specific type of disability.” (Ms. Dengu)

According to this finding, in an environment where the lecturer does not understand the dynamics of learning disabilities, it is a challenge to have students’ needs met, whether they disclose or not.

4.4.4. Main theme 4: Challenges and solutions for the future at university

This theme is focussed on the challenges that were highlighted by the participants in the course of the research. The participants also outlined their ideas about solutions to the challenges that they are experiencing at the university. Therefore, the researcher decided to create a separate heading for the following two sub-themes that also emerged during the data analysis process: Different challenges of students with learning disabilities, as well as how they influence inclusion; and, suggestions for the future to ensure inclusivity.
4.4.4.1. **Sub-theme 4.1: Different challenges of students with learning disabilities, as well as how they influence inclusion.**

The students with learning disabilities access tertiary education in diverse ways, which influence what they would regard as challenges. Four students expressed the following about their challenges:

“I get extremely anxious very quickly and the stress causes me to... it is almost like a mental block. You trying to get to what you need to know and you know, you know it and your mind is in such a state that cannot get there.” (Tinashe)

“I have a few fits every now and then because, in certain lecture halls, they do not have air-conditioning and extreme heat can affect my epilepsy and can trigger episodes.” (Wonder)

“The amount of work is a lot for me” (Garikai)

“…tutor is not helpful” (Tawanda)

Tinashe stated that he becomes very anxious and stressed at times. Wonder explained the cause of his challenge, which he attributes to the lack of air conditioning in some lecture halls. Garikai was concerned about the amount of work assigned to him at the University. Tawanda indicated that the tutor was not helpful. The students with learning disabilities are affected by different problems, which influence their experience of tertiary education. Judging by their responses, no challenge is too small, or too big; however, they are challenges that most students with disabilities experience at university.

Additionally, students with learning disabilities also face challenges in other settings, apart from UWC. Obiozor, Onu and Ugwoebu (2010) argue that, apart from coping with the trauma of a disability, which may be mild, moderate, severe, or profound, the students may also be challenged in accessing and meeting the expenses of several accommodations and services, while accessing a higher education institution. This is not exactly the same as the challenges disclosed by the students in this current study, in response to the interviews.
However, Obiozor et al. (2010) aver that the nonexistence of important facilities and services could limit independence, geographical mobility, and employment prospects upon graduation, specifically, when such students do not drop out. Therefore, students with learning disabilities do not only face challenges in accessing tertiary education at UWC, but each one has specific challenges that s/he encounters, in pursuit of higher education.

Judging by the responses received from the participants in this current study, their challenges may not be attributed to the university entirely. For example, the amount of work being too much for the student might imply that the student may be reluctant to put in more hours of studying to be up to speed with the demanding workload. Tawanda’s experience could be improved, if the university improved the relationships between the students and the resource systems that are accessible to them.

Ramakuela and Maluleke (2011, cited in Tugli et al., 2013) assert that the integration of students with disabilities into tertiary education institutions presents a number of physical, social and attitudinal obstacles, at various stages of their education. In addition, Tugli et al. (2013) highlight that, for students with disabilities in tertiary educational institutions, the lack of essential support services could socially and educationally exclude them, and cause them to become overly dependent. All these challenges limit the full involvement of students with learning disabilities, in the day-to-day activities at university. Therefore, one could argue that the university is failing to meet the requirements of the students with learning disabilities, and thereby, excluding them from performing to their full potential. However, the issue is further complicated, when students do not disclose their disability.

4.4.4.2. Sub-theme 4.2: Suggestions for the future to ensure inclusivity

As part of the research objectives, it was expected that the researcher propose possible solutions to some of the problems that emerged from the study. The participants (students and key informants) were given the opportunity to provide suggestions for future developments at the university. There were however different opinions on what needs to be implemented into the university if
inclusive education is to be fully realized. As a result of this, the researcher, has categorized the suggestions under different headings to outline the different possible solutions that the respondents came up with. The following are their suggestions:

4.4.4.2.1. Sub-theme 4.2.1. Suggestions for the Office for Students with Disabilities

There are some respondents who felt that emphasis should be placed on improving the OSD if inclusive education is to be realized. The respondents highlighted the need to increase staff and improve the space that can be accessed by the students with disabilities in the university.

“For learning disabilities is access to a learning disability specialist that can do the assessments for students with learning disabilities at campus. And realizes someone is not doing well. There should be someone to assess the students and see if he or she has a learning disability ad that person will then work out an individualized one on one study plan for that student. If that student works out a study plan, then that student will come let us say once a week or twice a week to give feedback and then if possible the specialist will be able to increase the difficulty of the questionnaire or decrease. So that is what I would like to see specifically for the students with learning disabilities.” (Ms Chuma)

“We have those desires to expand the unit but we do not have, we have to basically write proposals saying we need more staff. There is a lot of things. We wish for the same things. It is not always easy to say, you wish for something whatever but it is not easy for it to happen. So you get to that stage where you wait and see what comes our way. What is available so we can expand.” (Ms Dengu)

“what I would say is get the disability unit its own level, get extra staff members.” (Pierre)
“Increasing that amount of staff at the disability unit. The number of students grow but the number of staff does not grow with it. We do need more human support at the moment. It is very difficult, it is not up to us, we have made proposals, we have sent requests, we have done all the legwork when it comes to this but the waiting for feedback is always very long. We have liked having bigger staff and a bigger venue, a bigger lab, more assistive devices, more space, easier access to our students. So we would like that and that is all in the plan and the works but the planning is always hard.” (Ms Dengu)

“It is just that the venue is specifically for us but unfortunately they (students without disabilities) slip through sometimes because Ms. Dengu and Ms. Chuma may be busy sometimes and someone walks in and use a computer or they have a friend who is part of the unit and they ask the friend to print staff for them. I do not like that I think the unit is for us and I do not think it should be open for everyone.” (Siyabonga)

The responses provided by the students indicate that there is still a long way to go for their individual needs to be satisfied. Pierre, Ms. Chuma, Ms. Chingwa and Ms. Dengu suggested that the university expand the staff capacity, to cater for the growing population of the students with learning disabilities. They feel that there is too much workload for the staff that is stationed at the OSD. However, Siyabonga was of the opinion that the OSD should be out of bounds for students who are not registered there.

4.4.4.2.2. Sub-theme 4.2.2. Suggestions for the whole university

There are however some respondents who felt that there is need to also improve some aspects of the university which are independent from the OSD. These are their responses below

“I would really like, I do not know if it is possible but like put air conditioners in the lecture halls cause when summer comes then it gets very hot. It is difficult for me to pay attention to what is going on

http://etd.uwc.ac.za/
in the lecture. If I get overheated I can have a fit now I would like an air conditioner besides that I am fine.” (Wonder)

“Better technology, communication and admin.” (Rudo)

“I would like to have more classes to improve” (Tawanda)

“Having more access for students with disabilities” (Kenzo)

“It would be nice if the university would make videos of the lectures available on Ikamva. That would mean less students will show up to the lectures. If they could work it in a way, let us say you could need help with lecture when they know you have a learning disability.” (Tinashe)

Tinashe, Wonder, Siyabonga, Rudo, Kenzo and Tawanda expressed the need for individual support. Tinashe, Wonder, Rudo and Kenzo were advocating for additional access to technology at the university, ranging from air conditioning to live (televised) or video-recorded lectures. The suggestions are all personal, but they respond to a specific problem affecting a certain student.

According to Ras (2008), the aspect of inclusion is, including the students with disabilities with non-disabled students, in every area of education, from the same classroom, as well as the same social activities and support groups. This is a basic requirement for inclusive education; however, Wang (2009: p. 156) warns that, providing a variety of needs in a single class, could be demanding for some teachers. In addition, Jenkinson (1997, cited in Wang 2009) cautions that where sufficient resource staff were available, effective integration could be threatened by poor coordination of resources and classroom teaching, or by an over-dependence on an inexperienced teacher assistant. This is worrisome for future developers, as no one really knows how many improvements are sufficient for a lecture room or the university.
4.5. Summary of the findings

The process of interviewing in this research covered the assessments of the students with learning disabilities, their educational background, their experiences at the university, as well as their interaction with the resources of the university. During the data analysis process, four themes emerged, as well as 10 sub-themes. In this chapter, the researcher discussed the themes and sub-themes, in detail. Subsequently, the chapter is concluded with a short summary of the main findings of the study, elaborated on in Chapter 5.

The experiences of students with learning disabilities in tertiary education were varied, due to their psychological assessments and the coping strategies that they implemented. Some of their experiences shaped how they came to accept the university, as well as how they performed. However, some of the students’ experiences were shaped by the type of school; they were enrolled in, during high school.

The role of social exclusion and the anti-oppressive practice of social work affected the views and the experiences of the students, as well as their guardians, in making decisions and taking measures to access education. The students with learning disabilities faced challenges regarding stigma and discrimination, as well as access to education; however, they managed to excel amid these drawbacks. Most students with learning disabilities indicated that the university was more accessible to them, compared with their high school education experiences. They added that they felt very comfortable at the OSD.

The accessibility of students with learning disabilities is also enhanced by the accommodations that they are entitled at the university. These accommodations come in the form of electronic, as well as structural, and while some are available throughout the semester, some are only granted during examination times, such as the extra time.

The students with learning disabilities concluded the findings by stating their different views on how they perceived tertiary education. Both negative and positive perceptions were expressed by them. These findings highlight how some of the participants have to access tertiary education.
The experiences of students with learning disabilities at the university are enhanced by the use of assistive technologies, as well as the relationships that they foster. However, even though the students without disabilities, as well as the university endeavoured to make the university a better place, the students still faced challenges in accessing tertiary education at UWC.

In conclusion, the attainment of inclusive education requires considerable cooperation between the students and the university. The experiences of the students with learning disabilities either improved, or deteriorated, when they arrived at the university as highlighted in the findings of the research.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This current study was the researcher’s attempt to explore the participants’ experiences at the UWC. In comparison with previous research, and some assumptions, it is believed that people with invisible disabilities are the most disadvantaged of all the students with learning disabilities. In this chapter, therefore, the researcher presents the conclusions and the
recommendations that emerged from this current study, which aimed to explore and describe the experiences of the students with learning disabilities, in all faculties at UWC.

The researcher provides a summary of the research aims and objectives, as well as a brief outline of the research methodology. Additionally, the conclusion presents a summary of the literature review, and an analysis of the main research themes that emerged. The researcher also discusses the research limitations, as well as possible recommendations and suggestions for the future students, OSD and UWC.

5.2. Summary of the aims and objectives of the study

The aims of this research study were:

- To explore and describe the experiences of students with learning disabilities in accessing inclusive education in all faculties at the UWC; and
- To find strategic interventions to improve their circumstances.

The objectives were:

- To explore and describe the experiences of the students with learning disabilities in accessing inclusive education in all faculties at the UWC.
- To explore and describe possible solutions to inclusive education for students with learning disabilities in all faculties at the UWC.

A qualitative study approach was used to meet the research objectives.

The findings of this current study revealed that the students with learning disabilities are affected by their assessments. The assessments added many challenges to the lives of the students with learning disabilities, as they affected the students’ access to tertiary education at university. The findings also revealed that the university has implemented measures to improve access tertiary education, for students with learning disabilities. These measures included the OSD, as well as other assistive devices, to assist and support students with learning disabilities to manage their tasks at university. However, it is debatable whether the assistive devices are responding to the students’ needs, as anticipated.
Therefore, students with learning disabilities, to some extent, have access to tertiary education, especially university. However, some areas at university, namely, the lecturers, tutors, as well as other students’ attitudes are not attuned to students with learning disabilities. Consequently, although much has been done, the institution is still not completely inclusive to the students with learning disabilities.

5.3. Overview of the main themes

The four main themes that emerged from this study, as well as the 10 sub-themes, are listed below, followed by a summary of the findings for each major theme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1. Influences of schools on learning disabilities at university. | 1.1. Assessment at school.  
1.2. Coping strategies around assessment at school.  
1.3. School experience: mainstream versus special.  
1.4. School versus university experience of learning disabilities. |
| 2. The university interventions to ensure inclusivity for students with learning disabilities. | 2.1. Specific format and claro reader.  
2.2. Recorders: mixed responses.  
2.3. Examinations and tests. |
| 4. Challenges and solutions for the future at university. | 4.1. Different challenges of students with learning disabilities, and how they influence inclusion.  
4.2. Suggestions for the future to ensure inclusivity. |

5.3.1. Main theme 1: Influences of school on learning disabilities at university

Most of the students discovered that they had a learning disability, when they entered the education system. In most cases, the teacher was the person who advised the parents to consult a specialist. The students’ educational experiences, after their diagnoses, therefore, were shaped by the services and resources that were accessible to them. Some students were put on medication, others had to change their educational environments to a special school, while the rest remained in the mainstream school system. These measures would affect their later experiences at tertiary education level.
The majority of the students, who were enrolled in the mainstream school system, indicated that their experiences were unpleasant. The schools were not equipped to respond to their needs. In addition, the students with disabilities had to deal with exclusionary attitudes, as stigmatisation and discrimination, by the other students, predominated. Not only were the students with disabilities affected by these experiences at that time, when they entered tertiary education, they were still subjected to similar experiences. Therefore, they considered that, by disclosing their disability status, they would be exposing themselves to the challenges they had endured previously. Consequently, some of the students opted to refrain from disclosing their disabilities, instead of requesting assistance, when needed.

In contrast, the students from the special schools expressed how positive their experiences were at the special schools. This was largely due to the fact that they could identify with other students at these schools. The students from both, the special schools and mainstream schools, compared their high school experiences, to their experiences at university, which were their basis of determining whether they are comfortable, or not, at university. The majority of the students from the mainstream schools were appreciative at university, as more assistive resources were available to them at university, as opposed to mainstream schools.

However, it would appear that the students with learning disabilities are still experiencing difficulties at university. Some students from the special schools stated that they preferred their experiences at the special school, by suggesting that they were more accepted at those schools. In contrast, the students from the mainstream schools reported that their experiences were more positive at university, because of the resources available to them through the OSD; despite the fact that the institution may yet be falling short in meeting the needs of the students with learning disabilities.

5.3.2. Main theme 2: The university interventions to ensure inclusivity for students with learning disabilities

The majority of the participants in this current study acknowledged the use of the claro reader, which is reading software that assists the students to understand what they are reading. The software allows the students to access valuable course material, in their
own time, which indicates that the intervention is inclusive. Only two participants confessed to not using this service.

Another resource is the recorder, which was also accessed by many students with learning disabilities. Unlike the claro reader, a recorder is an audio-recording device, used to record the lectures, to be replayed, as required, at a later stage. According to the findings, the use of a recorder was probably in part exclusive, and inclusive. On the one hand, it helps the student to listen to the lecture, as many times over, for a better understanding; on the other hand, due to challenges with noise in the lecture hall, some detailed information could be lost.

The university has also implemented some structural adjustments to the manner in which examinations are written by the students with learning disabilities. A recent regulation allows the students extra time, according the amount of time stipulated by their specialists. The extra time was granted to all the students, who participated in this current study, and were pleased with this process.

Regarding inclusivity, the main examinations are catered for; however, there is concern when the students are writing lesser tests, as the OSD is not always consulted regarding this assessment.

5.3.3. Main theme 3: University infrastructure: Is it inclusive.

There were mixed responses from the participants regarding this theme. Some of the students considered it beneficial to advise the lecturers of their disabilities, while others did not, unless they were experiencing real problems. These attitudes were shaped by the students’ previous experiences, either at mainstream or special schools, which influenced their willingness to share information with the lecturers at university; however, the students with disabilities are encouraged to disclose.

The key informants at OSD presented the argument that the lecturers should be aware of students’ disabilities, in order for them to adapt their lectures, accordingly. Leaving lecturers uninformed, complicates the students’ circumstances, when they try to access accommodations, for example, extra time during examinations. It is crucial, therefore,
for all parties (students, lecturers and support staff) to work together, to make inclusive education a reality.

5.3.4. Main theme 4: Challenges and solutions for the future university

The students with learning disabilities, as other students, also encounter challenges in their academic lives. These challenges vary, from structural, to personal, as well as social. Some of the challenges include the accessibility of students with learning disabilities to the university, as it appears to limit their own potential. It could be argued that, if the students believe that they are not performing to their full potential, the university is not inclusive enough. The OSD, apparently, is under-resourced, according to key informants; however, they are doing their utmost to assist the students with learning disabilities.

In addition, the students suggested possible solutions to their challenges, such as expanding the OSD, as well as the access to technological advancements. Their solutions also ranged from the personal, to proposed changes in the way the university addresses issues of disabilities in the main. All the contributions from the participants were offered in anticipation that the university under scrutiny, would be a more accessible institution of higher learning for everyone seeking access to tertiary education in an inclusive atmosphere.

5.4. Limitations of the study

The following limitations were acknowledged from the study:

- Population sample

  A limitation of this current study is that it is not a complete representation of all the students with disabilities at the university. Though the sample was homogenous, it only included Caucasian and students of Mixed race. There was no representation of African black students, and only one female was involved in the study. The other limitation was that the views of the lecturers, on accessibility of tertiary education to students with learning disabilities, were excluded.

- Lack of available data

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Initially the sample comprised between 10 and 15 students, who were to be interviewed; however, due to the lack of interest and availability of the students, the study was only limited to nine participants. Regarding the nine responses, three were face-to-face interviews, and the rest opted for email interviewing. However, reliable data were obtained from the available participants.

- **Scant previous studies on the topic**

  The experiences of students with learning disabilities in tertiary education are not fully-researched. However, the researcher used existing literature on disabilities in tertiary education and inclusive education as a basis for this current research.

### 5.5. Meeting the research objectives

The study objectives were met in the research process. This is so because the respondents managed to share on their experiences (challenges and opportunities) in the university. the study respondents outline how they experienced the university and they also came up with ways and strategies that might work in the future to improve the students’ experiences in tertiary education. In light of this it is evidence that the research objectives were met.

### 5.6. Recommendations and suggestions

Based on the findings and the limitations of the study, the researcher has compiled the following recommendations and suggestions. These include recommendations for, 1) the students; 2) the university; and 3) future research on accessibility to tertiary education for students with learning disabilities.

#### 5.6.1. Recommendations for students

The researcher recommends that students with learning disabilities fulfil their role at university. The onus is on them to build a working relationship with the lecturers, as well as make full use of the services that are at their disposal. The students are also encouraged to disclose their disability to the lecturers, privately, so that they are not ‘othered’ in the lecture hall. Apart from the services provided by the OSD, the students should be innovative in devising new strategies to assist them at university.
5.6.2. Recommendations for university

- The university needs to extend the support for students with learning disabilities to other settings at university, and not only the OSD. Emphasis should be placed on a holistic attitude towards addressing the issues of students with learning disabilities, as the students, lecturers and the OSD must work together.
- The university must also increase the capacity of the OSD, not only in the size of the office, but also the staff. Currently, it is too limited to respond to the needs of all the students with disabilities at university.
- The training of staff and lecturers regarding disability related issues should be made a priority.
- Professionals, who are equipped with the knowledge of students with learning disabilities, should be employed to help with strategies of inclusivity.

5.6.3. Recommendations for future research

This study explored and described the accessibility of students with learning disabilities to tertiary education, which is considered an area of scant research. It is recommended that the accessibility of tertiary education to students with learning disabilities should be explored further in future studies from multiple perspectives. In addition, it is recommended that the population be expanded to a larger sample and geographical location, which would add greater significance to this body of this research. It would also be of greater value, if the research sample would include a more diverse racial group, to gain better perspectives on the impact of race and culture on the ease of access to tertiary education for the students with learning disabilities in tertiary education.

5.7. Conclusion

In this current study, the researcher endeavoured to describe and explore the experiences of the students with learning disabilities. The objectives proved to be truly measurable in the findings of this current study, as they highlighted the experiences of the students with learning disabilities in tertiary education.
The findings of this current study revealed that the students with learning disabilities faced some challenges in accessing tertiary education, namely stigma, discrimination and limited staff support; however, despite these challenges the students with learning disabilities are determined to do well in their studies at UWC

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also defined learning disabilities as a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. [Accessed: 07 June 2018].


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**APPENDICES**
APPENDIX 1: ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR: RESEARCH RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DIVISION

27 February 2017

Mr W Mhona
Social Work
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

Ethics Reference Number: HS17/1/52

Project Title: Accessibility of tertiary education to students with learning disabilities in a selected faculty in the University of the Western Cape.

Approval Period: 03 February 2017 – 03 February 2018

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval. Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

Ms Patricia Jostes
Research Ethics Committee Office
University of the Western Cape

PROVISIONAL REC NUMBER - 130416-019
APPENDIX 2: STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introductions

The researcher introduces himself and allows the participant to do so as well.

Biography

- What level of education are you in?
- When did you complete your matric?
- When did you identify that you had a learning disability?
  - How did you cope with the realization?

Lecture room

- How is your experience in tertiary education?
  - Are you comfortable with the service you receiving?
- How are your experiences in the other levels different from the ones you encountering now?
  - How do you think the experiences could be improved to make tertiary education accessible to you?
- What type of support are you getting in the lecture rooms?
  - In what ways are the students and lecturers helpful to you?
- What challenges are you facing in accessing tertiary education?
  - What strategies are you using to overcome your challenges?
- How are you coping with the tasks and assignments that are assigned to you?

University infrastructure

- What resources are available for you to use in the university?
  - How do you make use of the resources available at your disposal in the institution?
- How helpful is the institution in your pursuit of tertiary education?
  - How is the institution helpful to you in your pursuit of tertiary education?
• What do you think will make tertiary education more accessible to you in this institution?
  - What would you want to have to make your education more accessible?
• Of the resources in your disposal, what would you recommend to make them more accessible? How can that be achieved?

Examinations
• How do you write your examinations?
• What exemptions do you have in the examination room?
• In what way is the university making it comfortable for you to write you examinations?
• What do you think should be incorporated into the curriculum to make sure that you can benefit from being a student in this institution? How do you think that can be achieved?
APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

1. Have you ever acquired any training for working with students with learning disabilities?
   - If so, what type of training do you have in working with students with learning disabilities?

2. What instrument do you use to identify students as having a learning disability?
   - If no instrument how does you identify them?

Lecture room

- How do you ensure that each student with learning disabilities receives the right type of support in the classroom?
  - What ways do you use to make sure that all students benefit in the lecture room

- Are there resources for students with learning disabilities?
  - How do you determine that a student should access them?

- Do you face challenges in educating students with learning disabilities?
  - What are the challenges that you face when educating students with learning disabilities?

- How do these challenges affect the students with learning disabilities learning outcomes?
  - Are there ways in which they can be improved?

- Do you have any strategies to motivate students with disabilities?
  - What approaches do you use to encourage the students with disabilities?

- How do you motivate the students to persevere with assignments and tasks out of the classroom?

- What resources are available for students with learning disabilities in the university?
  - How do you make use of the resources for students with learning disabilities on campus?

Examination time
• What support structures are there for students with learning disabilities during exam time?
  - Can you describe them?
• How do you make sure that the support they get in the lecture rooms continues in the examination rooms?
APPENDIX 4: TRANSCRIPT

Tell me about yourself

I am a student at UWC, I am currently doing my BA degree. I am studying, psychology, English language and communication studies. I am in my second year. My disabilities are epilepsy and bipolar.

How many years have you been in the university?

To be specific I would say for about 4 years actually. During my first attempt, my first attempt was like… unfortunately during my first year I had an epileptic fit which needed me to be hospitalized for a while and then I had to take some time off to recover. I came back and my psychologist told me that it was best if I take it (my education here in university) has to be spaced out. 2 modules per year. I take it longer than most people.

How long is it going to take for you to finish your degree?

It is going to take me four more years so it is 8 years.

How was your experience in high school?

They have different mean for catering to students who have disabilities or what I would like to say differently abled students because disabled could imply that we are not capable to do things that other people can do. Differently abled means we have obstacles and we have certain things we need to accommodate to help us cope at the same speed as others. Everyone learns in their own pace.

When did you identify that you had a disability?

I was quite young when they first found out. I was 16 or 17 now I am 24. What happened was I had small fits, I would pass out during when I got overheated or overstressed. It started happening in high school and they told me to go and find out what was happening. So I went to a doctor and then said I had epilepsy when they looked at my history they said I had epilepsy when I was a baby. Later on I started developing headaches, changes in my character, sometimes it is difficult for me to focus and I lash out. They looked at my mood swings and different symptoms I had they realized that I had a type of bipolar.
How did you feel about your discovery?

At first I had to seek private counselling because I had a very unique case where I had 2 conflicting things that were affecting my wellbeing. And while certain medication helped on of my disabilities, it played up the other disability. So it took a lot of time and effort trying to figure it out. I did not like the idea that I had a disability because it meant that there are certain things that I cannot do that other people can do.

How did you cope with the discovery?

Coping in the beginning was difficult because when people find out that you are differently abled they treat you in a certain way. They treat you with gloves, they are careful around you or they look at you like you are strange. Some people do not understand what it is like to have a disability because they have never interacted with people with disabilities. so they treat you very differently and it is not nice being treated differently.

What type of school did you attend?

My first schools were public schools but when w realized I had special needs I had to go to a private school. Private schools, its smaller so you get your attention. They spend more time with you and because its smaller groups, the teacher can interact with the students. unfortunately, the drawback of having public schooling is that there is a large number of students. because it is so many students everyone is treated as a number and you have to try and keep up. When you have a disability, they make you slower than other people. It is difficult to cope especially when you get a lot of work. That is why in the university I have to take it very slowly because there the pressure is on you to perform and the workload is a lot. So it is not easy.

How is the university different from the school?

In school they do not really cater for differently abled because most students who go to schools do not have or are not aware of their differences. So schools do not really cater for that, because of me, the school had to learn to adapt, adjust and change to suit other students. here in the university, they have a disability unit, they have people, they have counsellors. So there are people who can look out for you, they are aware that there are different people out there with different needs. They had to, before the principal’s office was out of bounds to
everyone except staff members but if I had an epileptic fit it meant that I had to be separated from large groups of people because people do not know how to interact when someone has a fit. Because the principal’s office was so big, they sectioned it off and they allowed for students who had fits or who were passing out to come and they had to get a mattress and bed and so on. So if that person had passed out they can sleep it out. Also they had to look out for medical needs just in case the students have diabetes or they are allergic to something. Because my case was unique, they had to make sure they implement steps to look out for other students.

**How do you cope at home?**

At home we had to make a lot of changes, now there is a system for everything and because I had to take 12 tablets a day. So we had to have certain times were I can do things, I have to eat in a certain way because there is diabetes in the family ad I have to look out for my health now. I live by myself.

**How do you cope in the lecture room?**

In the lecture room, because I do not have physical, mine is mental not physical. I do not have like, a missing leg or anything. It is easy for me to access the lecture hall; however, I do worry for students with wheelchairs. I have no problem with the lectures (the actual lectures where learning takes place) that I am fine with because I can cope.

**Do you have access to any assistive devices?**

Devices no… beside my alarm. No.

**Do you feel the need to tell your lecturers about your disability?**

If I am struggling, then I will go to my lecturer and tell him that I need to be excused or I just leave and I try to explain to the lecturers later. If I am sick and I need to write an essay. I will just let the lecturers aware through email. But during the actual lecture u have no problem because there is really no need to tell them unless it affects my education.
How do you write your examinations?

I write it in the disability unit there are special forms that you have to write, so that they make the lecturers aware that there is a student who is not going to be in the traditional examination hall. The group room is where we write our tests and examinations, you just need to sign a form and they can make the lecturers aware and then the lecturers can send the papers you need for the examinations and tests. The reason we write in smaller venues is that we happen to get extra time.

What challenges do you encounter in your education?

Not really, because I have been here for long, I have learnt to cope. At first I found it difficult to cope because lectures are so far apart and I had to actually move closer to campus because transport is very difficult but otherwise everything is fine. I have a few fits every now and again because I certain lecture halls they do not have air-conditioners and extreme heat can affect my epilepsy and can trigger episodes. So sometimes is the classroom gets more warm I have to leave. Because they do not have air-conditioning.

What would you suggest for the future?

I would really like, I do not know if it is possible but like puts air conditioning in the lecture halls cause when summer comes then it gets very hot. It is difficult for me to focus. The epilepsy and bipolar make it difficult for me to pay attention to what is going in the lecture room. If I get overheated I can have a fit now I would like an air-conditioner besides that I am fine.
APPENDIX 5: CONSENT FORM

Accessibility of tertiary education to students with learning disabilities in all the Faculties at the University of the Western Cape.

The aim of the study is to find out what are the experiences of students with learning disabilities in the selected faculty in their attempt to access tertiary education at the University of the Western Cape.

My name is WALTER MHONA; I am currently undertaking my Masters in Social Work Degree at the University of the Western Cape. You can contact me on the following number and email address respectively:

- 083 458 4818
- Email: 3609430@myuwc.ac.za

The research is going to take place in a Selected Faculty at the University of the Western Cape.

For further information you can contact Doctor Henderson, lecturer at the Department of Social Work of the University of the Western Cape. You can do so by emailing to nhenderson@uwc.ac.za, or calling him on +27 21 959 2843.

A respondent who decides to take part in the study will be interviewed only once, the interviews will be conducted in 20-40 minutes’ sessions. The interviews will be recorded and written down. The research will go a long way to ensure that the experiences of students with learning disabilities will be improved. The recorded data will be disposed of after the research has been completed.

Participants who agree to take part in the study will be expected to take part in interviews, identities of the clients will not be exposed, no information shared will be traced back to the respondent, and the respondent can decide to walk out of the study at any time. Participation in the study is voluntary and the respondents can pull out at any stage of the research process.

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DECLARATION

I…………………………………………………………. (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I consent to take part in the research process and I am aware that I can pull out at any time

..................................................  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE..........................................
APPENDIX 6: TURNITIN CERTIFICATE

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Abstract
People with disabilities do not face the same conversations in their journey through tertiary education as people without disabilities. Studies have shown that learning difficulties are often noticed and not identified at an early stage. The more we can identify early symptoms, the better equipped we are to respond to these challenges, but very essential especially in the relations with learning disabilities. The principal reason behind this is that people with learning disabilities are often excluded from the main educational experiences for different reasons. In the case of learning disabilities, the research policy is more concerned in Challenging the accessibility of tertiary education to people with learning disabilities in all the functions of the University. The research conducted is the above statement as the experience of different learning disabilities and the way to respond to these disabilities in an adequate manner, can predict the policy and practice in an inclusive manner so that learning disabilities can work in an accessible manner. The research methodology is examined by qualitative approaches using an explanatory descriptive design since transformative social work is not available in a comprehensive area and through the self-reported data collection. The research study of way to implement the accessibility to gain knowledge of ways in which University can adapt to the needs of students with learning disabilities.

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APPENDIX 7: EDITORIAL CERTIFICATE

04 October 2018

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Editorial Certificate

This letter serves to prove that the thesis listed below was language edited for proper English, grammar, punctuation, spelling, as well as overall layout and style by myself, publisher/proprietor of Aquarian Publications, a native English speaking editor.

Thesis title
ACCESSIBILITY OF TERTIARY EDUCATION TO STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN ALL THE FACULTIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN CAPE

Author
Walter Mhona

The research content, or the author’s intentions, were not altered in any way during the editing process, however, the author has the authority to accept or reject my suggestions and changes.

Should you have any questions or concerns about this edited document, I can be contacted at the listed telephone and fax numbers or e-mail addresses.

Yours truly,

E.H. Londt
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