



The Praxis of Academic Support for Students with Vision Impairment: Appreciative Support in Higher Education

Retselisitsoe Kitima Kojana ¹  & Kananga Robert Mukuna ² 

¹ National University of Lesotho, Maseru, Lesotho.

² University of Free State, South Africa.

ABSTRACT

Globally, the higher education landscape has experienced a shift in its population composition inspired by the diversity of students with disabilities. This article, in its qualitative approach, through the voices of students with vision impairment and support services officials in two higher education institutions, explored how support services embrace and appreciate such a student community. The purposive and random sampling were combined to select thirteen support services officials and ten students with vision impairment. Appreciative inquiry inspired the structuring of the semi-structured questions for both the narrative interviews and group discussions. Following the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, three themes and six sub-themes were identified from three Appreciative Inquiry questions. From the first question, the orientation process emerged as the first theme. In the second question, Assistive Devices emerged as the second theme. "Towards a better learning environment is the third theme that emerged in the third question. The findings informed that students' orientation is used to acquaint students with the available support services and the campus environment. Higher education institutions are to provide assistive learning devices to ensure students' academic success. Students need to be supported socially to ensure they thrive academically. Support services officials and lecturers should be equipped with skills to support students with vision impairment in creating an enabling learning environment. It is essential to develop guidelines and disability policies to address disability issues in higher education. Support services must appreciate all students as they are to embrace diversity and equity.

Correspondence

Kananga Robert Mukuna
Email:
MukunaKR@ufs.ac.za

Publication History

Received:
21st August, 2024
Accepted:
9th January, 2025
Published online:
10th February, 2025

Keywords: *Academic Support, Appreciative Support, Higher Education Institutions, Students with Vision Impairment.*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions have experienced a fundamental shift in recent years entangled by the composition of the student population globally. This shift is inspired by the increased diversity of students with various disabilities, which have posed multi-faced challenges that demand urgent attention from different stakeholders.¹ Due to the diverse learning needs of each student with a disability and how their overall access to educational activities can be improved, Manitsa and Doikou concede that support is

¹ Maximus Monaheng Sefotho, "Visual Impairment in the Global South," in *Understanding Education for the Visually Impaired*, ed. R. Ferreira and M.M. Sefotho (Cape Town : AOSIS, 2020), 21–45.

vital to their academic success.² The learning needs of such students must be efficiently addressed through relevant support structures that enable them to pursue their educational goals and retain good academic achievement.³ Among them, the students with vision impairment experienced several barriers and setbacks as they ventured to acquire higher education.

While the higher education landscape is drastically changing, support for Students with Vision Impairment (SVI) is essential to maintain and retain them. Most SVI encounter hindrances that may demand support services to respond to their needs in higher education environments.⁴ The role of support services in higher education is to engage with students meaningfully to enhance the in-class and out-of-class experiences and heighten their total learning experiences.⁵ Supporting students with vision impairment is crucial for access to quality education and success in their education journey.⁶ Strydom, Kuh, and Loots maintain that support services must be steadfast to enhance student success by providing academic, social, psychological, and cognitive support, technology, and satisfaction in an enabling learning environment.⁷ Therefore, supporting SVI in meeting their academic demands and success and developing academic skills and strategies for effective learning is imperative.⁸

The core function of higher education institutions is not only to teach or conduct research but also to provide support and create an enabling learning environment for its students. Provision and accessible support services for SVI is an essential aspect that must be considered and provided as such. For academic success, academic support in HEI must provide educational structures with learning activities that enable students' autonomy and class engagement.⁹ The SVI deserves consideration and appropriate support, allowing them to thrive academically in an enabling and inclusive learning environment. The academic, psychological, and social support can improve their autonomy, competence, and self-efficacy, resulting in increased motivation in their learning. The concurrence of researchers in this study is that regardless of the socio-economic background, status, disability, race, or origin, students need academic, psychological, and social support to maintain excellent academic performance and success. Researchers submit that experiences of SVI in Lesotho HEI are relatively under-researched due to the underpinned tenuous assumptions and folklore about disability in our society, as Croft observed in the United Kingdom.¹⁰ For this reason, SVI are positioned within the negative underpinning of academic support in academic institutions. The study, therefore is set to explore the provision of academic support in higher education institutions through the voices of Students with Vision Impairment and student support services officials.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic Support

Academic support services in higher education encompass numerous educational strategies to guide and assist each student in their academic endeavour. The design and purpose of various support strategies is to enhance students' performance in several ways. Researchers concede that academic support is eligible to improve attendance, participation, and engagement, improve academic performance, and boost

² Ifigeneia Manitsa and Maro Doikou, "Social Support for Students with Visual Impairments in Educational Institutions: An Integrative Literature Review," *British Journal of Visual Impairment* 40, no. 1 (2022): 29–47.

³ Mxolisi Walter Ntoyakhe and Musawenkosi Ngibe, "Developing Innovative Support Structures in Higher Education Institutions: A Student Perspective," *Journal of Educational Research and Practice* 10, no. 1 (2020): 104–18.

⁴ Madeleine Bornschlegl and Nerina Jane Caltabiano, "Increasing Accessibility to Academic Support in Higher Education for Diverse Student Cohorts," *Teaching and Learning Inquiry* 10 (2022); Suguru Mizunoya, Sophie Mitra, and Izumi Yamasaki, "Disability and School Attendance in 15 Low-and Middle-Income Countries," *World Development* 104 (2018): 388–403.

⁵ McGlory Speckman and Martin Mandew, *Perspectives on Student Affairs in South Africa* (African Minds, 2014).

⁶ J Habulezi and T N Phasha, "Provision of Learning Support to Learners with Visual Impairment in Botswana: A Case Study," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 69 (2012): 1555–61.

⁷ Francois Strydom, George Kuh, and Sonja Loots, "Student Engagement in South African Higher Education: Taking Stock and Moving Forward," *Engaging Students: Using Evidence to Promote Student Success* 219 (2017).

⁸ Francis Simui et al., "Enablers and Disablers to Academic Success of Students with Visual Impairment: A 10-Year Literature Disclosure, 2007–2017," *British Journal of Visual Impairment* 36, no. 2 (2018): 163–74.

⁹ Ineke Haakma, Marleen J Janssen, and Alexander E M G Minnaert, "Need Support in Students with Visual Impairments: Comparing Teacher and Student Perspectives," in *Frontiers in Education*, vol. 2 (Frontiers Media SA, 2018), 71.

¹⁰ Emma Croft, "Experiences of Visually Impaired and Blind Students in UK Higher Education: An Exploration of Access and Participation," *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* 22, no. 1 (2020): 382–92.

students' socio-emotional skills.¹¹ Some of these strategies may be tailor-made, depending on the needs and experiences of individual students, while others are generally institutionalised, depending on the composition of the student population.¹² Lukianova and Fell indicate that educational strategies for academic support are meant to increase the school's general performance, students' learning and teaching, and the teacher's effectiveness.¹³ As a result, students need support in all aspects of education, including emotional and social demands.¹⁴

Academic support of SVI can be triggered by numerous factors that could demand institutions to improvise essential support strategies to address diverse students' needs and experiences.¹⁵ Academic support enhances students' participation in learning activities, social functioning and personal development, and social interaction, promoting personal independence and self-esteem.¹⁶ However, Ferreira and Sefotho suggest that support of SVI should equitably address internal and external learning obstacles instead of focusing on detecting shortfalls that may require specialised attention.¹⁷ Every student is unique and interacts and learns differently. Therefore, addressing the teaching and learning needs of each student with vision impairment is vital to improving their possibilities for academic success.

Within the changing landscape of student diversity in higher education, student support services are essential to enhance student experiences and maintain and improve retention. Students with disabilities encounter multi-faced challenges that may demand academic support in their institutions.¹⁸ Thousands of eligible persons with vision impairment are unable to enroll in higher education institutions or drop out prematurely due to long-standing difficulties of inaccessible educational materials,¹⁹ inconsistencies in the non-discrimination admission policy of higher education institutions,²⁰ attitudes of individuals who interact with SVI,²¹ and inappropriate accommodations.²² Enrolling in higher education is about the challenges students encounter and multiple social experiences that encourage belonging and inclusion.²³ In their quest to ensure academic success for students with vision impairment, HEIs are responsible for improvising mechanisms for supporting such students. The Lesotho Higher Education Policy ordered that students with disabilities and vision impairment must be supported as they progress in their academic endeavours.²⁴

Much research in Lesotho on vision impairment focuses on learners' challenges, inclusion, and experiences in primary and secondary schools.²⁵ However, few studies focus on students with disabilities

¹¹ Nthama Matsie and Sindiswa Stofile, "Daily Lived Experiences of Visually Impaired Learners at a Mainstream School in Lesotho," *International Journal of Studies in Psychology* 1, no. 3 (2021): 1–9.

¹² Nabi Bux Jumani, Abdul Jabbar Bhatti, and Samina Malik, "Student Support in Higher Education: Lessons Learnt and Challenges Ahead," *International Journal of Technology and Educational Marketing (IJTEM)* 3, no. 1 (2013): 77–88.

¹³ Natalia Aleksandrovna Lukianova and Elena Vladimirovna Fell, "Support for Students with Disabilities in the UK Universities," in *SHS Web of Conferences. Vol. 28: Research Paradigms Transformation in Social Sciences (RPTSS 2015).—Les Ulis, 2016.*, vol. 282015 (EDP Sciences, 2016), 1066.

¹⁴ Paseka Andrew Mosia, "Access to Higher Education for Students with Disabilities in Lesotho" (University of South Africa, 2017).

¹⁵ Sefotho, "Visual Impairment in the Global South"; Manitsa and Doikou, "Social Support for Students with Visual Impairments in Educational Institutions: An Integrative Literature Review"; Ntoyakhe and Ngibe, "Developing Innovative Support Structures in Higher Education Institutions: A Student Perspective."

¹⁶ Manitsa and Doikou, "Social Support for Students with Visual Impairments in Educational Institutions: An Integrative Literature Review."

¹⁷ Sefotho, "Visual Impairment in the Global South."

¹⁸ Bornschlegel and Caltabiano, "Increasing Accessibility to Academic Support in Higher Education for Diverse Student Cohorts"; Mizunoya, Mitra, and Yamasaki, "Disability and School Attendance in 15 Low-and Middle-Income Countries."

¹⁹ Khadga Niraula, "Exploring Experiences of Visually Impaired Youths in Tertiary Education.," *International Journal on Social and Education Sciences* 6, no. 2 (2024): 239–52.

²⁰ Nareadi Phasha and Paseka A Mosia, "Access to Curriculum for Students with Disabilities at Higher Education Institutions: How Does the National University of Lesotho Fare?," *African Journal of Disability* 6, no. 1 (2017): 1–13.

²¹ Daniel Bishop and Daniel J A Rhind, "Barriers and Enablers for Visually Impaired Students at a UK Higher Education Institution," *British Journal of Visual Impairment* 29, no. 3 (2011): 177–95.

²² Hervens Jeannis et al., "Barriers and Facilitators to Students with Physical Disabilities' Participation in Academic Laboratory Spaces," *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology*, 2020.

²³ Croft, "Experiences of Visually Impaired and Blind Students in UK Higher Education: An Exploration of Access and Participation."

²⁴ Ministry of Education and Training, *Higher Education Policy* (Maseru: Government Printing, 2013).

²⁵ Setseetso Matobako and Loyiso C Jita, "How Visually Impaired Learners Construct Opportunities To Learn Mathematics?," *Armenian Journal of Special Education* 6, no. 1 (2022): 65–80; Matsie and Stofile, "Daily Lived Experiences of Visually Impaired Learners at a Mainstream School in Lesotho"; Mamochana A Ramatea and Fumane P Khanare, "Improving The Well-Being of Learners with Visual Impairments in Rural Lesotho Schools: An Asset-Based Approach," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being* 16, no. 1 (2021): 1890341; Malehlanye Ralejoe, "Teachers' Views on Inclusive Education for Secondary School Visually Impaired

in higher education.²⁶ Despite various forms of support offered to SVI, there is a shortage of studies that discuss the academic support for SVI and how institutions of higher education appreciate and embrace them to attain good academic performance. To date, no prior research studies have examined the effects of support services on the academic success of students with vision impairment. Croft confirms that the learning experiences of students with vision impairment in higher education are under-researched in the broader literature.²⁷ The fact remains that sophisticated, substantive, and thoroughly reviewed literature is a ritual researchers should embark on. Against this brief background, the present study intends to address the literature gap on how students with vision impairment are appreciatively supported to thrive academically.

Vision impairment at a glance

Vision is considered a sense that plays a critical role in every stage and facet of our lives. Vitale, Cotch, and Sperduto illustrate that vision is an important aspect and indicator of health and quality of life.²⁸ Undoubtedly, vision impairment affects the quality of life of individuals and their families.²⁹ This form of impairment has proven socio-economic consequences on people's lives. Good vision forms a pivotal part of an independent, healthy, and well-functioning person. Persons with or without vision impairment deserve equal opportunity to embrace education and employment opportunities and to enjoy a satisfying quality of life. Rokach, Berman, and Rose state that persons with vision impairment normally experience difficulty in performing manual activities, and they are confined to emotional isolation, alienation, frustration, and loneliness.³⁰ Although vision impairment disrupts peoples' engagement with their social world, it should not be a condition that causes difficulties for individuals to perform their daily activities like studying, walking, playing, cooking, and driving.

Academic institutions are mandated to support students with vision impairment through various support services to enhance students' success and provide quality education.³¹ To understand and establish the educational needs of SVI, El-Zraigat and Alshammari concede that support services ought to understand their experiences, challenges, and needs and what modifications and accommodations can be made.³² Matshediso concedes that insufficient information regarding the availability and use of educational support services may affect the academic performance and success of students with vision impairment.³³ Not only are support services obliged, but lecturers and other key personnel need information and training to appreciate, embrace, and create an enabling learning environment for such students.

METHODOLOGY

Many universities globally adopt policies to enroll students with support needs, and they must understand support structures, practices, and norms. This study, therefore, aimed to establish SVI's perceptions and

Learners: An Example from Lesotho," *Journal of Education (University of KwaZulu-Natal)*, no. 76 (2019): 128–42; Mahlape Tseeke, "Teachers' Perceived Self-Efficacy in Responding to the Needs of Learners with Visual Impairment in Lesotho," *South African Journal of Education* 41, no. 2 (2021): S1–12; Paseka Andrew Mosia, "Threats to Inclusive Education in Lesotho: An Overview of Policy and Implementation Challenges," *Africa Education Review* 11, no. 3 (2014): 292–310; P Eriamiatoe, "Realising Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in Lesotho," *Pretoria, RSA: University of Pretoria*, 2013; Lits'episo Matlosa and Thope Matobo, "The Education System in Lesotho: Social Inclusion and Exclusion of Visually Impaired and Hearing-Impaired Persons in the Institutions of Higher Learning," 2007.

²⁶ Matlosa and Matobo, "The Education System in Lesotho: Social Inclusion and Exclusion of Visually Impaired and Hearing-Impaired Persons in the Institutions of Higher Learning." Paseka Andrew Mosia and Tlakale Nareadi Phasha, "Student Experience and Quality of Tertiary Education for Students with Disabilities in Lesotho," *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* 8, no. 1 (2020): 13–28.

²⁷ Croft, "Experiences of Visually Impaired and Blind Students in UK Higher Education: An Exploration of Access and Participation."

²⁸ Susan Vitale, Mary Frances Cotch, and Robert D Sperduto, "Prevalence of Visual Impairment in the United States," *Jama* 295, no. 18 (2006): 2158–63.

²⁹ Soraya Ghaderi et al., "The Prevalence and Causes of Visual Impairment in Seven-year-old Children," *Clinical and Experimental Optometry* 101, no. 3 (2018): 380–85.

³⁰ Ami Rokach, David Berman, and Alison Rose, "Loneliness of the Blind and the Visually Impaired," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): 641711.

³¹ Mosia and Phasha, "Student Experience and Quality of Tertiary Education for Students with Disabilities in Lesotho."

³² Ibrahim El-Zraigat and Mubarak Alshammari, "Educating Students With Visual Disability in the State of Kuwait: Literature Review and Recommendations," n.d.

³³ Knowledge Rajohane Matshediso, "Experiences of Disabled Students in South Africa: Extending the Thinking behind Disability Support," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 24, no. 5 (2010): 730–44.

experiences regarding available support services at one college and a university in Lesotho. Also, the study sought to explore the form of support services available in such institutions. The qualitative appreciative inquiry approach was used to understand and describe experiences and perceptions of SVI. As a research design in this study, appreciative inquiry thus enabled participants to see afresh, instigate thoughts and actions, further develop the best of "what is" in higher education institutions, and create a better future for SVI.³⁴ A one-day appreciative inquiry discussion group was held, and multiple appreciative inquiry questions were used to guide the discussion. In-depth interview questions were used, and open-ended questions were customised depending on each participant's situation to allow the interviewer to develop a rapport with them. Student Support Services members were also interviewed in the process. Appreciative questions were as follows; "What provisions are made by support services to ensure the academic success of SVI? What support is available for visually impaired students in higher education institutions? What strategies are in place to improve the provision of support to VIS? These questions were uttered to allow participants to reflect on the best practices adopted by support services and strategies that informed comprehensive support for SVI.

Appreciative Inquiry

David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastava authored Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as an approach to increase value and recognise the best in people and their organisations. AI also discovers and affirms past and present strengths, systematically explores, studies successes and potentials, and perceives things that give life to our systems.³⁵ AI stems from the social constructionist theory and through the perspectives of positive organisational scholars and organisational development. Cooperrider and Whitney illustrate that AI was authored as an approach to inquiry to assist in generating new ideas and models in organisations.³⁶ AI is grounded in social constructionism theory, which fortifies that we live in worlds of meanings and social organisations imagined and made by humans.³⁷ Cooperider and Srivastava concede that organisations are socially constructed realities shaped by the forms of inquiries and effectiveness of approaches used in educational research by focusing on strengths to capacitate members of such organisations.³⁸ AI is regarded by Eow et al. as a theory that is guided by beliefs, principles, and models that value how human systems work and embrace humanity.³⁹

As a point of philosophical departure, Cooperrider and Srivastava developed five principles that served as building blocks for all appreciative inquiry craftsmanship. From the social constructionist orientation, AI is viewed as a way of making meaning through social processes about others,⁴⁰ valuing and recognising the best in people and the world around them, affirming the past strengths, successes, and potentials, and perceiving things that give life such as health, vitality and excellence to the living system.⁴¹ Additionally, AI increases individuals' and organizations' value, prize, esteem, and honour,⁴² and assumes every person has unique talents and can sometimes do something right.⁴³

³⁴ Gervase R Bushe, "Appreciative Inquiry: Theory and Critique," in *The Routledge Companion to Organizational Change* (Routledge, 2012), 87–103; Diana Whitney and David Cooperrider, *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change* (ReadHowYouWant. com, 2011).

³⁵ Yee Leng Eow, Wan Ali Wan Zah, and Baki ROSELAN, "Appreciative Learning Approach: A New Pedagogical Option," in *International Conference On Computers In Education*, 2010.

³⁶ David L Cooperrider and Diana Whitney, "A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry," in *Handbook of Organizational Behavior, Revised and Expanded* (Routledge, 2000), 633–52.

³⁷ Jane Magruder Watkins and Bernard Mohr, "Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination," *Organization Development Journal* 19, no. 3 (2001): 92.

³⁸ David L. Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva, "A Contemporary Commentary on Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life," *Adv Appreciative Inq* 1 (1987): 129–69.

³⁹ Eow, Zah, and ROSELAN, "Appreciative Learning Approach: A New Pedagogical Option."

⁴⁰ Kristin Bodiford and Celiane Camargo-Borges, "Bridging Research and Practice: Illustrations from Appreciative Inquiry in Doctoral Research," *AI Practitioner* 16, no. 3 (2014): 9–12.

⁴¹ Cooperrider and Whitney, "A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry."

⁴² Abdurahman Ahmed Endris, "Effects of Extensive Reading on EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension and Attitudes," *International Journal of Research in English Education* 3, no. 4 (2018): 1–11.

⁴³ Dipane Hlalele and Nontokozi Mashiya, "Understanding Women Teacher Transnational Migration: A Narrative Inquiry from Southern Africa," *SAGE Open* 9, no. 3 (2019): 2158244019865366.

AI principles guide the practice and investigate the dynamics discovered in social organisations.⁴⁴ In this study, these principles are intended to bring about strategies that can improve the support of VISs in HEIs.

Principles	Viewpoint	Fact
Constructionist Principle	“Words create worlds.”	<i>Organisations create realities through conversations and interaction. Organisations are socially constructed, and co-constructed realities emerge through interaction and conversations. Through positive questions about support services in HEIs, students and support services staff will be engaged in the inquiry process about the desirable future of their institution.</i>
Simultaneity Principle	“Inquiry is change”	<i>Participants must spend considerable time and effort identifying the inquiry and focusing on critical issues that need special consideration in support of SVI.</i>
Poetic Principle	“What we focus on grows”	<i>Organisations and groups are “open books”. A story of any social organisation can be authored or co-created by members of that particular organisation. SVI and support services staff can study and discuss any topic that affects them. Individual stories are continually a product of the narration by individual members of organisations and how they interact with each other.</i>
Anticipatory Principle	“Image inspires action”	<i>The image of a social organisation is a powerful tool in mobilizing the behaviours of its members. What SVI and support services staff believe and envision can be accomplished and possibly constantly be shaped by their conversations about it.</i>
Positive Principle	“Positive questions lead to positive change”	<i>Higher education communities must focus on the positive elements (positive attitude, positive emotions, serenity, amusement, positive approach, hope, aspirations, and sheer joy) that already exist in a given situation, appreciating and building on them. AI builds and expands positive aspects of support services in HEIs to allow for integrity and positive initiatives that focus on the true, the good, bettering, and possibilities for VISs.</i>

Generally speaking, AI recognises each individual as a human being, sharing similar needs and wants, requiring support to be loved, appreciated, celebrated, and accepted.⁴⁵ The art and practice of asking appreciative inquiry questions was a positive and strengthening strategy rather than making a list of things that do not work for SVI. This includes things that worked in the past, are presently working, and would likely work in the future.⁴⁶

Data Collection and Participants

The Qualitative Appreciative Inquiry data collection instruments were individual narrative interviews and group discussions. In a three-hour group discussion, ten (10) SVI from two HEIs participated by narrating their views and experiences about support services and strategies they think can be useful to improve the provision of support in their respective institutions. In a group discussion, SVI reflected on their narratives about academic support in their institutions. On day two, seven college support services staff members were interviewed to share their views about support of SVI. On day three, six university student support services staff members were also interviewed on the same questions. All participants were requested to audio record the group discussion and interview proceedings. After the students' group

⁴⁴ Mary Doveston and Marian Keenaghan, “Growing Talent for Inclusion: Using an Appreciative Inquiry Approach into Investigating Classroom Dynamics,” *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* 6, no. 3 (2006): 153–65.

⁴⁵ Brenda Alston-Mills, “Using Appreciative Inquiry to Promote Diversity in Higher Education,” *Journal of Diversity Management (Online)* 6, no. 3 (2011): 1.

⁴⁶ Gervase R Bushe and Aniq F Kassam, “When Is Appreciative Inquiry Transformational? A Meta-Case Analysis,” *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 41, no. 2 (2005): 161–81.

discussion, the findings were presented to the whole group, and a consensus was reached. The authors were determined to deploy AI due to its relevance as a collaborative process that can engage SVI to discover the best in themselves and to narrate and express their views about inhibiting factors and perceptions about support services in their institutions.⁴⁷ The support services are probed to discover what needs to be improved and changed and the potentials and possibilities within the appropriate support of SVI.

Table one: Profile of students with vision impairment

No.	Names	Gender	Form of vision impairment	Faculty	Year of Study
1	Mohlanka	M	Blind	Social sciences	3
2	Molepe	M	Short-sighted	Humanities	4
3	Nare	M	Short-sighted	Education	1
4	Fifi	F	Blind	Social sciences	4
5	Jappie	M	Short-sighted	Social sciences	4
6	Mohale	M	Short-sighted	Social sciences	4
7	Dan	M	Blind	Humanities	2
8	Hlomla	M	Blind	Humanities	2
9	Lekaota	M	Short-sighted	Education	1
10	Thandiwe	F	Blind	Social sciences	2

Table two: Support services available in each institution

No.:		Support services	No.:	U N I V E R S I T Y	Support services
1	C O L L E G E	Health centre	1		Disability unit
2		Disability unit	2		Library
3		Student affairs	3		Health centre
4		Library	4		Counselling
5		Computer lab	5		Student affairs
			6		Students welfare office

Research Procedure

The study received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Free State, Faculty of Education. Before gathering the discussion groups for SVI, braille consent forms were issued for them to read and sign with their thumbs. The participating support services staff were also issued consent forms to read and sign.

Triangulation

Group discussions and in-depth interviews were used to enhance the collaboration and application of research findings.⁴⁸ Triangulation is viewed by Gilbert and Stoneman as a strategy to reduce bias to obtain and verify information from various sources and through various research approaches.⁴⁹ Korstjens and Moser regard triangulation as a tactic for handling data from different sources.⁵⁰ The authors assume

⁴⁷ David Giles and Susie Kung, "Using Appreciative Inquiry to Explore the Professional Practice of a Lecturer in Higher Education: Moving towards Life-Centric Practice," *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 50, no. 2 (2010): 308–22.

⁴⁸ Thomas P Dirth and Nyla R Branscombe, "Disability Models Affect Disability Policy Support through Awareness of Structural Discrimination," *Journal of Social Issues* 73, no. 2 (2017): 413–42; Vicent Naano Anney, "Ensuring the Quality of the Findings of Qualitative Research: Looking at Trustworthiness Criteria," 2014.

⁴⁹ Nigel Gilbert and Paul Stoneman, *Researching Social Life* (Sage, 2015).

⁵⁰ Irene Korstjens and Albine Moser, "Series: Practical Guidance to Qualitative Research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and Publishing," *European Journal of General Practice* 24, no. 1 (2018): 120–24.

interviewing support services officials and gathering students with impairment in group discussions could bring a diversity of investigations and strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings.

Data Analysis

The study adopted an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the analytical approach and interpretation of the results. Data analysis was conducted based on the principles of IPA because it focuses on the participants' lived experiences and determines how they make sense of their personal experiences.⁵¹ Pietkiewicz and Smith view IPA as a systematic and attentive approach reflecting the participant's lived experiences.⁵² In this study, IPA thus allowed the researchers to describe and explore SVI's perceptions and experiences towards support services using defined themes and sub-themes that emerged from gathered data.

In the data analysis process, inclusion and exclusion criteria were engaged to ensure that findings relate to the research questions and to set the pre-defined characteristics that can identify eligible participants to be included or excluded in the study. Inclusion criteria designate the conditions that qualify a subject to be included in the study, while exclusion criteria designate the conditions that disqualify a subject from a study.⁵³ Only students with vision impairment and members of various student support services students offering direct support were subjected to participate.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The findings are procedurally presented according to the three appreciative inquiry questions that inspire this publication. Student group and student support services officials adopted similar appreciative inquiry questions.

Question 1: *What provisions are made by support services to ensure the academic success of SVI?*

Question 2: *What support is available for visually impaired students in higher education institutions?*

Question 3: *What strategies can be utilised to improve the provision of support to VIS?*

Provisions of support services in ensuring the academic success of SVI

Orientation process

The mainstream orientation is conducted at the beginning of each academic year and led by the Department of Student Affairs in both institutions to familiarise VIS with the learning environment and mobility around the campus, which is conducted by disability units. During the mainstream orientation, various departments, faculties, and sections present their services and mandates to support the student community. The following verbatim from an SVI confirm this finding;

"I learned about the support services during the orientation, which was held at the beginning of the academic year" (Lekaota)

To ensure that SVI is familiar with various support services and classrooms around the campus, disability unit officers also inform them about the state of support in the university. Although students are offered orientation, they are treated like other students with vision. The disability officer offers VISs mobility orientation to their residents, who move around the campus, in the lecture rooms, and in locations where they may receive different support they may require.

⁵¹ Claire Wagner, Barbara Kawulich, and Mark Garner, "A Mixed Research Synthesis of Literature on Teaching Qualitative Research Methods," *Sage Open* 9, no. 3 (2019): 2158244019861488.

⁵² Igor Pietkiewicz and Jonathan A Smith, "A Practical Guide to Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in Qualitative Research Psychology," *Psychological Journal* 20, no. 1 (2014): 7–14.

⁵³ Franz Porzsolt et al., "Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria and the Problem of Describing Homogeneity of Study Populations in Clinical Trials," *BMJ Evidence-Based Medicine* 24, no. 3 (2019): 92–94.

“Students with VI have a network from high school, and I know most of them; however, when they arrive here, the disability office welcomes them. We treat them like other students although we must orientate them on campus mobility” (Disability Officer 2).

Reflection and researchers’ review

SVI, who participated in a group discussion, agreed that a lot of information about support services was articulated during the orientation sessions. Orientation is regarded as a formal structure or programme of activities organised to introduce and support freshers with "positive experiences" of HEIs.⁵⁴ It can be concluded that both institutions conduct mainstream orientation at the beginning of each academic year. The purpose of this event is, among others, to familiarize students with the higher education environment and orient them about support services and non-academic and academic life. SVIs are familiarised with their surroundings through mobility by disability officers. The mobility and orientation are conducted to promote the level of independence and self-confidence, to enable students to make new adjustments to the new environment, and to familiarise students with the regulations and rules of the institution.⁵⁵

Assistive devices

SVI mentioned the assistive devices they used inside the lecture room for studying or mobility in the learning environment. Blind students normally use white canes for mobility around the campus or accompanied by their peers. While partially impaired students walk around the campus without using any assistive devices. Mohale, a partially blind student, occasionally uses a white cane for mobility.

“I sometimes use a white cane, but not always” (Mohale).

Students with partial vision impairment use spectacles, screen readers, and magnifying glasses for studying and reading. However, blind students also need assistive devices to make their studying easier.

"I am using a screen reader, object detector, and my devices have a narrator, I download them, I don't buy them, they are free; for mobility, I normally use a white cane" (Mohlanka)

Students are assisted in downloading JAWS computer software suitable for studying and reading. SVI at the college are provided with audio recorders as assistive learning devices to use in the classroom to record the lecturers’ presentations. SVI at the university uses their mobile phones or audio recorders to record lecturers’ presentations.

Reflections and researchers’ review

Depending on the type of vision impairment, various assistive devices are available for students. Blind students are dependent on white cane for their mobility. Partially impaired students either occasionally use a white cane for walking or prefer to walk without it. For studying, assistive learning devices are available in the disability units. Academically, assistive devices increase students' participation, achievement, independence, and ability to improve the performance of SVI. A well-fitted disability unit with desktops, magnifying glasses, scanners, and screen readers is accessible by SVI at the college. At the university, nine students with vision impairment use three desktops assembled in the disability unit. Few students have laptops with JAWS installed on them. Some students use their mobile phones for studying. However, some lecturers do not favour using audio recorders during class presentations, despite these assistive devices being tools of empowerment that alleviate the burden of disability to enhance inclusion and a sense of belonging in higher education.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Annsilla Nyar, “How to Improve University Orientation: Seven Good Practice Strategies for South Africa,” *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* 8, no. 2 (2020): 123–35.

⁵⁵ Amela Teskeredžić, “The Significance of Orientation of Blind Pupils to Their Body in Regard to Mobility and Space Orientation,” *Journal Human Research in Rehabilitation* 8, no. 1 (2018): 10–16.

⁵⁶ Aoife McNicholl et al., “The Impact of Assistive Technology Use for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education: A Systematic Review,” *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology* 16, no. 2 (2021): 130–43.

Available support for visually impaired students in higher education institutions

Both institutions have support services that serve the student community at large. Support services are categorised into academic and welfare support services. The academic support services encompass direct support towards students' academic performance and success. Welfare support entails the social well-being of students outside the classroom.

Academic support

Lecturers normally submit prepared notes to Disability Unit officers to transcribe them into Braille. The university disability officer ensures that SVI receives learning material on time and in an accessible format.

"Disability unit convert student learning materials to be accessible on Braille, and also to enlarge printed work and to print it." (Rele)

Mama, the college disability unit officer, ensures that learning material for SVI is transcribed into Braille.

"I am more focused on students with vision impairment. I normally consult with their lecturers about class notes, tests, and examination papers that must be transcribed into Braille. This confirms that we assist students with their daily learning problems".

Besides, both institutions provide library services as direct academic support to the student community. Library services are provided and accessed by every registered student regardless of their ability or disability status. Students can access learning materials as deemed necessary. Mamkhulu, the librarian, briefly mentioned how they provide library support to the student community:

"We provide and support learning and teaching material to students who may require them for their studies as well as to guide students on the appropriate books and articles to use for their research.".

Consequently, due to poor services, SVI does not use the library because it does not cater to their learning needs. Librarians do not have skills in reading or transcribed braille. The libraries have no audio-recorded learning material, braille-transcribed books, or assistive technology devices. SVI preferred to use the disability units for reading due to available desktops installed with JAWS.

Welfare support

Several issues were identified to establish how SVI is supported in non-academic activities in both institutions. Presumably, welfare support services influence students' academic success in HEIs. Several welfare support structures are in place to address multi-faceted challenges faced by students via different processes. The Department of Student Affairs, which drives the strategic objective of the university, is mandated to oversee students' psychological, social, and academic lives. Mookameli submitted that her office is required to create an enabling learning environment;

"This office ensures that the learning environment inside and outside the classroom is enabling by providing psychological and social support, accessible health services, sports and recreation, to guide student governance at the university."

Nonetheless, several students with vision impairment have lodged grievances to the Office of Student Affairs, but they never received assistance as expected. Students complained about small rooms, security, theft, and poor WI-FI connectivity in their rooms and the disability unit. Molepe claimed;

"At our residence, about seven laptops were stolen within a few consecutive months; we were told to report the incident to the DSA, and they didn't help with anything. However, we're accused that it is due to our carelessness."

The findings from the college student affairs official revealed that their department is responsible for ensuring that the campus infrastructure is accessible and useable by the student community. Following their role and status in the institutions, the DSA liaises with other departments to ensure that students are academically, socially, and psychologically supported.

Reflections and researchers' review

The two institutions have established various support services to enhance student well-being and academic success during their higher education journey. The lecturers, library services, computer labs, and disability offices offer academic support for SVI. Both institutions have non-academic support services with similarities and differences, but their primary objective is to support students outside the classroom for good in-classroom performance and success. Although non-academic support services play a significant role in student's performance and success in higher education, the findings reveal that these services have been traditionally less regarded as concomitant and are undervalued due to their non-academic nature.⁵⁷ The student group discussion has revealed disastrous academic and non-academic experiences for SVI at the university. However, college students showed satisfaction and gratitude for the accommodation, security, and effort made by the DSA to create an enabling learning environment. This was confirmed by the positive attitude, approach, and appreciation most of the college community showed. Bushe and Kassam suggest that rather than list things that do not work in their institutions, SVI must concentrate on the support that works for them, what has worked in the past, and what would likely work for their academic success.⁵⁸

Strategies for improving the provision of support to VIS

Towards a better learning environment

Subsequently, support services officials and SVI tabled their perceptions and recommendations on how the student support services can effectively support SVI. This entails the training of support services officials and the administration of disability issues in HEIs.

Capacitate and training of officials

To appropriately support SVI and understand their academic needs, students and various members of the academic and non-academic support services must be equipped with skills to approach them as such. Some students and student support services officials believe training and awareness are necessary. This is based on the concerns and recommendations from SVI and support services staff on improving students' support. The comment made by one participating student in the group, Mohlanka, illustrates that;

"I wish our officials or lecturers could receive training at least annually to enhance their skills about the latest technologies and teaching for persons with disabilities. I wish the college management could invite an expert in disability issues to address freshers and support staff about persons with disabilities and how they can interact with them or behave towards them".

To improve the efficiency and support of VISs in HEIs, some SVI and student support services officials undertake that training and awareness are necessary. Students suggest that critical sections such as disability units and library services must be offered training on modern technologies. Mookameli, the director of student affairs, sees support services officials need to upgrade their skills, including support for students with disabilities.

"We have just recommended to the institution's Rector that there should be staff training. This will allow staff members to be creative enough to engage with students even without funds. Also,

⁵⁷ Yasmine Dominguez-Whitehead, "Non-Academic Support Services and University Student Experiences: Adopting an Organizational Theory Perspective," *Studies in Higher Education* 43, no. 9 (2018): 1692–1706.

⁵⁸ Bushe and Kassam, "When Is Appreciative Inquiry Transformational? A Meta-Case Analysis."

from a human perspective, we should be able to create good relationships with them. I believe staff training will be ideal to support students".

Administering disability

The dynamics of managing and addressing disability issues in both institutions are influenced by the approaches used for students with disabilities and the support programmes in place. The availability of support programmes appropriately guides institutions in supporting SVI. Disability unit officers revealed no policies, guidelines, or models in either institution. The welfare officer and Special Education officer illustrate that no models or policies guide the disability issues in their institution.

"We don't have any policy; this means we also don't have any model. We provide support when a need arises. (Welfare officer)

"College does not have any policy or guidelines as yet. Even as a department, we're not even there to understand the disabilities available in our institution and what form of intervention, support, or approach. We have not determined that as yet". (Special Needs education officer)

Reflections and researchers' review

Multi-faceted barriers encountered by VISs in education institutions are due to a lack of teacher training on disability issues.⁵⁹ Teacher training is crucial because supporting the VISs requires technical knowledge to execute such support. Disability officers struggle to operate Braille embossers and understand how to use JAWS and other technological assistive devices. To respond to the barriers and stressors of supporting students, scholars concede that training is an essential strategy to provide appropriate support for students with disabilities.⁶⁰ Asamoah et al. recommend adequately training educators to support SVI when using assistive learning devices.⁶¹ The two institutions have no policy, guidelines, or legal framework to manage disability issues. As a result, SVI encountered discrimination in accessing learning material, assistive devices, and support from the library. Administration of disability issues can be smoothly administered when equity, inclusion, social justice, and academic success for SVI are observed.⁶² It is empirical for institutions to have a disability model and policy to promote advocacy and awareness of structural discrimination and to combat the marginalisation of students with disabilities in public domains.⁶³

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure the praxis of appreciative support, several recommendations for research and practice were made in alignment with the findings and researchers' reflections on this study. Participating students and support services officials agree that there is a need for change and improvement toward support of SVI, which must be initiated from the admission process. Effective and successful learning of SVI cannot be completed without using assistive technology devices. The disability units and library services cannot complement support of SVI without accessibility and availability of assistive technology devices. Students with vision impairment need computers, magnifiers, audiobooks, braille note-takers, screen readers, and optical characters to enable education opportunities similar to those of their peers without vision impairment. Similar students also recommended that institutions provide JAWS, Windows Eyes, and Voice Over for their academic support.

⁵⁹ Lydia Agesa, "Challenges Faced by Learners with Visual Impairments in Inclusive Setting in Trans-Nzoia County," *Journal of Education and Practice* 5, no. 29 (2014): 185–92.

⁶⁰ K. J. Johnson-Jones, "Educating Students with Visual Impairments in the General Education Setting" (The University of Southern Mississippi, 2017); Lorna Holtman, Jennifer Martin, and Robert Mukuna, "Factors Influencing the In-Service Programmes: Case Study of Teachers with Learner-Centred Strategies in Blue Watersi Setting," *South African Journal of Education* 38, no. 3 (August 31, 2018): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v38n3a1429..>

⁶¹ Edward Asamoah et al., "Inclusive Education: Perception of Visually Impaired Students, Students without Disability, and Teachers in Ghana," *Sage Open* 8, no. 4 (2018): 2158244018807791.

⁶² Jamil Salmi and Anna D'Addio, "Policies for Achieving Inclusion in Higher Education," *Policy Reviews in Higher Education* 5, no. 1 (2021): 47–72.

⁶³ Dirth and Branscombe, "Disability Models Affect Disability Policy Support through Awareness of Structural Discrimination."

There is a need to capacitate support services staff with the skills and knowledge to approach and support SVI. Acquired skills can enable them to address academic and non-academic barriers encountered by SVI. Knowledge about disability issues could promote awareness of the need to provide accessibility to learning aids and support for SVI. Capacitating support services staff with skills is essential not only in understanding disability issues but also in the use of assistive technology devices to support SVI. To warrant that SVI and students with disabilities are well accommodated and supported, guidelines and disability policies must be enacted by both institutions. The disability policy could be a strategic approach to enhance support of SVI while it bound institutions to provide appropriate academic and non-academic support and assistive learning aids.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Practically, further evidence is required to understand the relationship between the usage of support services and the academic success of SVI. Although the challenges are widely understood and perceptions are well known, a few SVI are utilising the support services. When comparing the number of SVIs in the general student population, it is concluded that SVIs underutilise academic support services. As revealed by most students, higher education institutions would need to be innovative in reaching out to the student population with vision impairment. Student concerns are justified when considering the unavailability of skills, learning aids, and assistive technology devices crucial to SVI's academic success. A problem for higher education institutions is their desire to inject funds supporting SVI. The SVI are most unlikely to receive support that enhances their academic success if no finances are allocated for their psychosocial.⁶⁴ Higher education institutions may arrange for short- and long-term interventions in their effort to appreciate SVI. There are several ways in which institutions could build support services that embrace and appreciate students with disabilities, even the visually impaired.

CONCLUSION

The journey and success of each student in higher education are notably portrayed by the support and skills of support services officials, and the reception received in various departments. The availability of support programmes, assistive technology devices, and skillful personnel can positively influence SVI's lifetime-changing experiences. Appreciatively supporting SVI allows stakeholders in HEIs to identify strategies and programs that may guide such institutions to embrace diversity and celebrate inclusion and restraint, focusing on what does not work. Nonetheless, appreciative support must be rooted in successful stories, positive thinking, searching for what works, and realistically using prior knowledge to pursue the best in students with vision impairment. The support offered, available assistive devices, effective management of disability issues, enacting legal frameworks, and competence of support services on disability support create an enabling learning environment accessible for full human development.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agesa, Lydia. "Challenges Faced by Learners with Visual Impairments in Inclusive Setting in Trans-Nzoia County." *Journal of Education and Practice* 5, no. 29 (2014): 185–92.
- Alston-Mills, Brenda. "Using Appreciative Inquiry to Promote Diversity in Higher Education." *Journal of Diversity Management (Online)* 6, no. 3 (2011): 1.
- Anney, Vicent Naano. "Ensuring the Quality of the Findings of Qualitative Research: Looking at Trustworthiness Criteria," 2014.
- Asamoah, Edward, Kwadwo Ofori-Dua, Ebenezer Cudjoe, Alhassan Abdullah, and Joy Ato Nyarko. "Inclusive Education: Perception of Visually Impaired Students, Students without Disability, and Teachers in Ghana." *Sage Open* 8, no. 4 (2018): 2158244018807791.
- Bishop, Daniel, and Daniel J A Rhind. "Barriers and Enablers for Visually Impaired Students at a UK Higher Education Institution." *British Journal of Visual Impairment* 29, no. 3 (2011): 177–95.
- Bodiford, Kristin, and Celiane Camargo-Borges. "Bridging Research and Practice: Illustrations from Appreciative Inquiry in Doctoral Research." *AI Practitioner* 16, no. 3 (2014): 9–12.
- Bornschlegl, Madeleine, and Nerina Jane Caltabiano. "Increasing Accessibility to Academic Support in

⁶⁴ Mosia and Phasha, "Student Experience and Quality of Tertiary Education for Students with Disabilities in Lesotho."

- Higher Education for Diverse Student Cohorts.” *Teaching and Learning Inquiry* 10 (2022).
- Bushe, Gervase R. “Appreciative Inquiry: Theory and Critique.” In *The Routledge Companion to Organizational Change*, 87–103. Routledge, 2012.
- Bushe, Gervase R, and Aniq F Kassam. “When Is Appreciative Inquiry Transformational? A Meta-Case Analysis.” *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 41, no. 2 (2005): 161–81.
- Cooperrider, D. L., and Suresh Srivastva. “A Contemporary Commentary on Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life.” *Adv Appreciative Inq* 1 (1987): 129–69.
- Cooperrider, David L, and Diana Whitney. “A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry.” In *Handbook of Organizational Behavior, Revised and Expanded*, 633–52. Routledge, 2000.
- Croft, Emma. “Experiences of Visually Impaired and Blind Students in UK Higher Education: An Exploration of Access and Participation.” *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* 22, no. 1 (2020): 382–92.
- Dirth, Thomas P, and Nyla R Branscombe. “Disability Models Affect Disability Policy Support through Awareness of Structural Discrimination.” *Journal of Social Issues* 73, no.2(2017):413–42.
- Dominguez-Whitehead, Yasmine. “Non-Academic Support Services and University Student Experiences: Adopting an Organizational Theory Perspective.” *Studies in Higher Education* 43, no. 9 (2018): 1692–1706.
- Doveston, Mary, and Marian Keenaghan. “Growing Talent for Inclusion: Using an Appreciative Inquiry Approach into Investigating Classroom Dynamics.” *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* 6, no. 3 (2006): 153–65.
- El-Zraigat, Ibrahim, and Mubarak Alshammari. “Educating Students With Visual Disability in the State of Kuwait: Literature Review and Recommendations,” n.d.
- Endris, Abdurahman Ahmed. “Effects of Extensive Reading on EFL Learners’ Reading Comprehension and Attitudes.” *International Journal of Research in English Education* 3, no. 4 (2018): 1–11.
- Eow, Yee Leng, Wan Ali Wan Zah, and Baki ROSELAN. “Appreciative Learning Approach: A New Pedagogical Option.” In *International Conference On Computers In Education*, 2010.
- Eriamiatoe, P. “Realising Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in Lesotho.” *Pretoria, RSA: University of Pretoria*, 2013.
- Ghaderi, Soraya, Hassan Hashemi, Ebrahim Jafarzadehpur, Abbasali Yekta, Hadi Ostadimoghaddam, Ali Mirzajani, and Mehdi Khabazkhoob. “The Prevalence and Causes of Visual Impairment in Seven-year-old Children.” *Clinical and Experimental Optometry* 101, no. 3 (2018): 380–85.
- Gilbert, Nigel, and Paul Stoneman. *Researching Social Life*. Sage, 2015.
- Giles, David, and Susie Kung. “Using Appreciative Inquiry to Explore the Professional Practice of a Lecturer in Higher Education: Moving towards Life-Centric Practice.” *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 50, no. 2 (2010): 308–22.
- Haakma, Ineke, Marleen J Janssen, and Alexander E M G Minnaert. “Need Support in Students with Visual Impairments: Comparing Teacher and Student Perspectives.” In *Frontiers in Education*, 2:71. Frontiers Media SA, 2018.
- Habulezi, J, and T N Phasha. “Provision of Learning Support to Learners with Visual Impairment in Botswana: A Case Study.” *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 69 (2012): 1555–61.
- Hlalele, Dipane, and Nontokozo Mashiya. “Understanding Women Teacher Transnational Migration: A Narrative Inquiry from Southern Africa.” *SAGE Open* 9, no. 3 (2019): 2158244019865366.
- Holtman, Lorna, Jennifer Martin, and Robert Mukuna. “Factors Influencing the In-Service Programmes: Case Study of Teachers with Learner-Centred Strategies in Blue Watersi Setting.” *South African Journal of Education* 38, no. 3 (August 31, 2018): 1–14.
<https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v38n3a1429>.
- Jeannis, Hervens, Mary Goldberg, Katherine Seelman, Mark Schmeler, and Rory A Cooper. “Barriers and Facilitators to Students with Physical Disabilities’ Participation in Academic Laboratory Spaces.” *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology*, 2020.
- Johnson-Jones, K. J. “Educating Students with Visual Impairments in the General Education Setting .” *The University of Southern Mississippi*, 2017.

- Jumani, Nabi Bux, Abdul Jabbar Bhatti, and Samina Malik. "Student Support in Higher Education: Lessons Learnt and Challenges Ahead." *International Journal of Technology and Educational Marketing (IJTEM)* 3, no. 1 (2013): 77–88.
- Korstjens, Irene, and Albine Moser. "Series: Practical Guidance to Qualitative Research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and Publishing." *European Journal of General Practice* 24, no. 1 (2018): 120–24.
- Lukianova, Natalia Aleksandrovna, and Elena Vladimirovna Fell. "Support for Students with Disabilities in the UK Universities." In *SHS Web of Conferences. Vol. 28: Research Paradigms Transformation in Social Sciences (RPTSS 2015).—Les Ulis, 2016.*, 282015:1066. EDP Sciences, 2016.
- Manitsa, Ifigeneia, and Maro Doikou. "Social Support for Students with Visual Impairments in Educational Institutions: An Integrative Literature Review." *British Journal of Visual Impairment* 40, no. 1 (2022): 29–47.
- Matlosa, Lits'episo, and Thope Matobo. "The Education System in Lesotho: Social Inclusion and Exclusion of Visually Impaired and Hearing-Impaired Persons in the Institutions of Higher Learning," 2007.
- Matobako, Setseetso, and Loyiso C Jita. "How Visually Impaired Learners Construct Opportunities To Learn Mathematics?" *Armenian Journal of Special Education* 6, no. 1 (2022): 65–80.
- Matshediso, Knowledge Rajohane. "Experiences of Disabled Students in South Africa: Extending the Thinking behind Disability Support." *South African Journal of Higher Education* 24, no. 5 (2010): 730–44.
- Matsie, Nthama, and Sindiswa Stofile. "Daily Lived Experiences of Visually Impaired Learners at a Mainstream School in Lesotho." *International Journal of Studies in Psychology* 1, no. 3 (2021): 1–9.
- McNicholl, Aoife, Hannah Casey, Deirdre Desmond, and Pamela Gallagher. "The Impact of Assistive Technology Use for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education: A Systematic Review." *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology* 16, no. 2 (2021): 130–43.
- Ministry of Education and Training. *Higher Education Policy*. Maseru: Government Printing, 2013.
- Mizunoya, Suguru, Sophie Mitra, and Izumi Yamasaki. "Disability and School Attendance in 15 Low- and Middle-Income Countries." *World Development* 104 (2018): 388–403.
- Mosia, Paseka Andrew. "Access to Higher Education for Students with Disabilities in Lesotho." University of South Africa, 2017.
- . "Threats to Inclusive Education in Lesotho: An Overview of Policy and Implementation Challenges." *Africa Education Review* 11, no. 3 (2014): 292–310.
- Mosia, Paseka Andrew, and Tlakale Nareadi Phasha. "Student Experience and Quality of Tertiary Education for Students with Disabilities in Lesotho." *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* 8, no. 1 (2020): 13–28.
- Niraula, Khadga. "Exploring Experiences of Visually Impaired Youths in Tertiary Education." *International Journal on Social and Education Sciences* 6, no. 2 (2024): 239–52.
- Ntoyakhe, Mxolisi Walter, and Musawenkosi Ngibe. "Developing Innovative Support Structures in Higher Education Institutions: A Student Perspective." *Journal of Educational Research and Practice* 10, no. 1 (2020): 104–18.
- Nyar, Annsilla. "How to Improve University Orientation: Seven Good Practice Strategies for South Africa." *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* 8, no. 2 (2020): 123–35.
- Phasha, Nareadi, and Paseka A Mosia. "Access to Curriculum for Students with Disabilities at Higher Education Institutions: How Does the National University of Lesotho Fare?" *African Journal of Disability* 6, no. 1 (2017): 1–13.
- Pietkiewicz, Igor, and Jonathan A Smith. "A Practical Guide to Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in Qualitative Research Psychology." *Psychological Journal* 20, no. 1 (2014): 7–14.
- Porzolt, Franz, Felicitas Wiedemann, Susanne Isabel Becker, and C J Rhoads. "Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria and the Problem of Describing Homogeneity of Study Populations in Clinical Trials." *BMJ Evidence-Based Medicine* 24, no. 3 (2019): 92–94.
- Ralejoe, Malehlanye. "Teachers' Views on Inclusive Education for Secondary School Visually Impaired Learners: An Example from Lesotho." *Journal of Education (University of KwaZulu-*

Natal), no. 76 (2019): 128–42.

- Ramatea, Mamochana A, and Fumane P Khanare. “Improving The Well-Being of Learners with Visual Impairments in Rural Lesotho Schools: An Asset-Based Approach.” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being* 16, no. 1 (2021): 1890341.
- Rokach, Ami, David Berman, and Alison Rose. “Loneliness of the Blind and the Visually Impaired.” *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): 641711.
- Salmi, Jamil, and Anna D’Addio. “Policies for Achieving Inclusion in Higher Education.” *Policy Reviews in Higher Education* 5, no. 1 (2021): 47–72.
- Sefotho, Maximus Monaheng. “Visual Impairment in the Global South.” In *Understanding Education for the Visually Impaired*, edited by R. Ferreira and M.M. Sefotho, 21–45. Cape Town : AOSIS, 2020.
- Simui, Francis, Sophie Kasonde-Ngandu, Austin M Cheyeka, John Simwinga, and Daniel Ndhlovu. “Enablers and Disablers to Academic Success of Students with Visual Impairment: A 10-Year Literature Disclosure, 2007–2017.” *British Journal of Visual Impairment* 36, no. 2 (2018): 163–74.
- Speckman, McGlory, and Martin Mandew. *Perspectives on Student Affairs in South Africa*. African Minds, 2014.
- Strydom, Francois, George Kuh, and Sonja Loots. “Student Engagement in South African Higher Education: Taking Stock and Moving Forward.” *Engaging Students: Using Evidence to Promote Student Success* 219 (2017).
- Teskeredžić, Amela. “The Significance of Orientation of Blind Pupils to Their Body in Regard to Mobility and Space Orientation.” *Journal Human Research in Rehabilitation* 8, no. 1 (2018): 10–16.
- Tseeke, Mahlape. “Teachers’ Perceived Self-Efficacy in Responding to the Needs of Learners with Visual Impairment in Lesotho.” *South African Journal of Education* 41, no. 2 (2021): S1–12.
- Vitale, Susan, Mary Frances Cotch, and Robert D Sperduto. “Prevalence of Visual Impairment in the United States.” *Jama* 295, no. 18 (2006): 2158–63.
- Wagner, Claire, Barbara Kawulich, and Mark Garner. “A Mixed Research Synthesis of Literature on Teaching Qualitative Research Methods.” *Sage Open* 9, no. 3 (2019): 2158244019861488.
- Watkins, Jane Magruder, and Bernard Mohr. “Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination.” *Organization Development Journal* 19, no. 3 (2001): 92.
- Whitney, Diana, and David Cooperrider. *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change*. ReadHowYouWant. com, 2011.

ABOUT AUTHORS

Retselisitsoe Kitima Kojana (PhD) is a lecturer and programme coordinator at the Department of Adult Education, Institute of Extra Mural Studies of the National University of Lesotho. My research interests are educational philosophy, inclusive education, open and distance education, and the psychology of adult learning.

Dr. Kananga Robert Mukuna is currently a Senior Lecturer at the University of Free State, Faculty of Education, Educational Psychology, Department of Educational Foundations, South Africa. He is the International Journal of Studies in Psychology initiator. He was a postdoc fellow, Ph.D. and Masters holder in Educational Psychology from the University of the Western Cape. He completed his Honours degree in Industrial Psychology from the University of Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He serves as a Special Interest Group leader for the Psychosocialities of Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Education, UFS. He is passionate about research, focusing on Psychological Assessment, Psychosocial Factors, Rural Education, Inclusive Education, Multiculturalism, Educational Psychology, and Community Psychology. He is an NRF Funding holder. He is an academic champion of the International collaboration Engagement between the University of the Free State and the Ludwigsburg University of Education (Germany). He was a postdoc fellow, Ph.D. and Masters holder in Educational Psychology from the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. He completed his Honours degree in Industrial Psychology from the University of Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He

serves as a Special Interest Group leader for the Psychosocialities of Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Education, UFS. He is passionate about research, focusing on Psychological Assessment, Psychosocial Factors, Rural Education, Inclusive Education, Multiculturalism, Educational Psychology, and Community Psychology. He is an NRF Funding holder. He is an academic champion of the International collaboration Engagement between the University of the Free State and the Ludwigsburg University of Education (Germany).