

Removing Barriers in Assessment and Feedback for Blind Students in Open Distance Learning

Authors : Sindile Ngubane-Mokiwa

Abstract : This paper addresses two questions: (1) what barriers do the blind students face with assessment and feedback in open distance learning contexts? And (2) How can these barriers be removed? The paper focuses on the distance education through which most students with disabilities elevate their chances of accessing higher education. Lack of genuine inclusion is also evident in the challenges the blind students face during the assessment. These barriers are experienced at both formative and summative stages. The insights in this paper emanate from a case study that was carried out through qualitative approaches. The data was collected through in-depth interview, life stories, and telephonic interviews. The paper provides a review of local, continental and international views on how best assessment barriers can be removed. A group of five blind students, comprising of two honours students, two master's students and one doctoral student participated in this study. The data analysis was done through thematic analysis. The findings revealed that (a) feedback to the assignment is often inaccessible; (b) the software used is incompatible; (c) learning and assessment are designed in exclusionary approaches; (d) assessment facilities are not conducive; and (e) lack of proactive innovative assessment strategies. The article concludes by recommending ways in which barriers to assessment can be removed. These include addressing inclusive assessment and feedback strategies in professional development initiatives.

Keywords : assessment design, barriers, disabilities, blind students, feedback, universal design for learning

Conference Title : ICSEMSP 2017 : International Conference on Special Education, Models, Standards and Practices

Conference Location : Boston, United States

Conference Dates : April 24-25, 2017