

A Literature Review of How Cognitive Disability Is Represented in Higher Education Research in the African Academy

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Abstract : The conversation about diversity in the African academy focuses on the need for an international and ethnically diverse population of scholars and students. Operationalising the concept of cognitive diversity offers us an opportunity to broaden our conception of who can know and who can proclaim knowledge by availing new understandings of what knowledge is and how it is made. Limited attention is paid to the value of diversity generated by cognitive disabilities in the African academy. The inclusion of persons with minds labelled disabled in African academia requires an epistemology of disability to reform the still dominant notion of the expert and scholar as an able-bodied and hyper-rational in African academia. This review wants to explore how cognitive disabilities have been represented in higher education research in Africa or has the African academy reinforced ignorance by promoting an able-bodied academia. The review aims to tackle its exploratory objective by using Malcom Tights framework. The main questions this paper would focus on are: (I)What are the major disability themes and concerns discussed in the disability-related articles? (II)What are the major methods or methodologies used to address the topic in the papers? (III)What are the levels of analysis the papers focus on? (IV)How do higher education researchers define and represent cognitive disabilities in higher education research in Africa? To answer the exploratory questions that are aimed at mapping the disability-related higher education research landscape, Malcolm Tights' framework is seen as most appropriate. In addition to a thematic categorization, that shall be made after reviewing of published empirical studies on disability in African higher education from the period 2010 - 2017. A synthesis of the findings and implications of African disability studies relating to students with cognitive disabilities in the African Academy will be provided using the categories suggested by Tight as a benchmark. Data for the proposed work shall be taken from well-reputed higher education journals between 2010 and 2017.Using the keyword 'Disability' in the titles, abstracts and keywords section of journal articles, a selection of disability-focused higher education articles shall be compiled for analysis regarding cognitive disability. It has to be noted as a limitation that the word Disability might not be sufficient to investigate the topic for there can be many more specific disabilities concerns the researchers would discuss. Therefore, the paper is only intended to give a bird's eye view of cognitive disability in higher education research and therefore is not comprehensive. The paper is expected to shed some light for me, as a beginning researcher, and other researchers like myself as to what has been the focus of higher education researchers about cognitive disability in the African academy. Keywords: Cognitive diversity, cognitive disability, disability, higher education.

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