Intervention Strategies Espoused by Universities to Narrow Achievement Gap of Students with Different Cultural Capitals

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ABSTRACT The concept of cultural capital has received widespread attention all around the world. One of the main strengths of the theory of cultural capital is that it does to some extent focus on how structures and institutions play a part in producing inequality. The reproduction of these inequalities is argued by Bourdieu to be facilitated in schools. This article reports on how the two universities under study have formulated migrating interventions aimed at narrowing achievement gap of students with different cultural capitals. Using a desktop and content analysis approaches, the article reports on intervention strategies such as Foundation programmes, Peer Assisted Learning (PAL), Academic literacy programmes among others and show how they have been implemented in the participating institutions. The article concludes that retention of students from diverse backgrounds is assisted by innovative curricula and support services which reflect the needs and interests of those students.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural capital is a sociological concept that has gained widespread popularity since it was first articulated by Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu and Passeron first used the term in studies on cultural and social reproduction (Sullivan 2002). In this work they attempted to explain differences in children's outcomes in France during the 1960s. Cultural and social reproduction theorists concern themselves on how the education system is controlled and manipulated by the dominant groups in society in order to further their own interests (Myrberg and Rosen 2006). This thinking rests on the initial premise that mainstream education is not neutral and neither does it serve the interests of all members of society (Wright 2009). The crux of this argument is that educational systems are shaped and thus operate in terms of the values, culture, beliefs and interests of the dominant groups in society. It is this dominant culture that is referred to as cultural capital. Since cultural capital is not evenly distributed throughout the class structure, this often gives rise to class differences in educational attainments (Zahn 2005; Reagan 2009). For Bourdieu, capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange, and the term is extended 'to all the goods material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation and cultural capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange that includes the accumulated cultural knowledge that confers power and status (Harker 1990; Kingston 2001).

The term cultural capital refers to non-financial social assets; they may be educational or intellectual, which might promote social mobility beyond economic means (Dumais 2002). Other authors view cultural capital as the advantages that one is given due to the environment they grow up in and the attitudes of parents. This includes such things as having a computer in the house, or having parents who value the importance of education (Loehlin 2004; Muthen and Muthen 2001; Brinton and Yamamoto 2005). This goes to say that for children in poverty, there would be a lack of cultural capital which explains why those growing up in poverty have limited opportunities compared to those who grow up in middle class families. In this study, the concept "cultural capital" will be viewed as forms of knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that an individual has, which gives the particular individual a higher status in society. It is assumed that parents provide their children with cultural capital by transmitting the attitudes and knowledge needed to succeed in the current educational system. This assertion is supported by Yang (2003) who postulates that cultural capital in families and more specific, the educational level of parents, has during the last decades been proved as the most important dimension of socio-economic influence on school performance in many countries.

Bourdieu (2002) has described the transmission of cultural capital as a long-lasting process that starts in the early childhood. The notion of cultural capital and its transmission over generations is central in the present analysis. It is a theory that makes it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from different social classes by relating academic success to the distribution of cultural capital. Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction offers a paradigm of class analysis argued to be capable of explaining persistent inequalities in educational stratification. This mechanism, believed to perpetuate and reproduce structured social inequalities in society, is based on the effective transmission of family-based parental endowments to the off springs (Tzanakis 2011). He further argues that parents endow their children with physical, human, social and especially cultural capital whose transmissions create inequalities in children's educational and occupational attainment. Bourdieu argues that schools and teachers aid and abet this family-based reproduction process by rewarding possession of elite cultural capital in students and by setting up elitist standards biased in favour of upper and middle class children while excluding those from lower classes.

In Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction, cultural capital refers to transmissible parental cultural codes and practices capable of securing a return to their holders (Sullivan 2007). Cultural capital embodies the sum total of investments in aesthetic codes, practices and dispositions transmitted to children through the process of family socialisation, or in Bourdieu s term, *habitus* (Goldthorpe 2007; Tzanakis 2011). Habitus as an important form of cultural inheritance, reflects class position or the actors' location in a variety of fields and is geared to the perpetuation of structures of dominance (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Tzanakis 2011)**.** Because family habitus varies by class, only middle-class or elite cultural resources can become cultural *capital* valued in society. Knowledge and possession of "highbrow" culture is argued by Bourdieu to be unequally distributed according to social class and education, to be institutionalised as legitimate, and to confer distinction and privilege to those who possess and deploy it. Along with economic, social and human capitals, such cultural capital actively reproduces social inequalities (Hatcher 1998; Bennett 2006).

Children exposed to elite culture at home are advantaged in schools. As argued by (Bennett and Silver 2006), there is a close relationship between the dominant culture (cultural capital) and the school culture. This gives middle class students a definite advantage when it comes to learning in schools because such students possess the key to unlock the message transmitted in the classroom.

It therefore follows that success in education is directly related to the amount of cultural capital that students bring to school. This point is further highlighted by Wright (2009) who asserts that middle class students have higher success rates in education than lower class students because middle-class sub-culture is closer to the dominant culture, which is perpetuated in schools. Teachers covertly and unconsciously recognise and reward this advantage thus excluding other children who lack such cultural capital. According to Tzanakis (2011), this pedagogic action, which is recognised as meritocratic and legitimate by the school system, subjects working class or minority pupils to a form of "symbolic violence" forcing them into a competitive mechanism that rewards only dominant cultural capital. Utilising and promoting such arbitrary criteria of assessment, it is argued that teachers introduce bias in their grading of student educational performance by actually rewarding elite culture-related competences rather than scholastic performance. This way, schools reproduce particular forms of intergenerational social mobility and stratified outcomes (Bennett and Silver 2006; Tzanakis 2011).

CULTURAL CAPITAL VS ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Lareau (1987) suggests that students who lack middle-class cultural capital and have limited parental involvement are likely to have lower academic achievement than their better resourced peers. Other researchers suggest that academic achievement is more closely tied to socio-economic status and have tried to pinpoint why (Noble and Davies 2009; Wright 2009). For example, being raised in a low-income family often means having fewer educational resources in addition to limited access to health care and nutrition which could contribute to lower academic performance.

Cultural and Environmental Factors

The culture and environment in which children are raised may play a role in the achievement gap (Write 2009). There is a fair amount of support for

the idea that minorities begin their educational careers at a disadvantage due to cultural differences. However, poverty often acts as a confounding factor and differences that are assumed to arise from racial/cultural factors may be socio-economically driven (Tzanakis 2011). Many children who are poor, regardless of race, come from homes that lack stability, continuity of care, adequate nutrition, and medical care creating a level of environmental stress that can affect the young child's development (Moschovaki 1999; Stanovich 2000). As a result, these children enter school with decreased word knowledge that can affect their language skills, influence their experience with books, and create different perceptions and expectations in the classroom context (Sullivan 2002).

Structural and Institutional Factors

In general, minority students are more likely to come from low-income households, meaning minority students are more likely to attend poorly funded schools based on the districting patterns within the school system. Schools in lower-income districts tend to employ less-qualified teachers and have fewer educational resources (Sullivan 2007). Research shows that teacher effectiveness is the most important in-school factor affecting student learning (Yang 2003).

Theoretical Framework

Conflict Theory

Conflict theories posit that schools often perpetuate class, racial and gender inequalities as some groups seek to maintain their privileged position at the expense of others. According to Ballentine (2002), conflict theorists argue that access to quality education is closely related to social class. In terms of this argument, education thus acts as a vehicle for reproducing existing class relationships. In support, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) postulate that the school legitimates and reinforces the social elites by engaging in specific practices that uphold the patterns of behaviour and attitudes of the dominant class. Students from diverse class backgrounds come to school with differing amounts of cultural capital that include values, beliefs, attitudes and competences in language and culture (Balentine 2002; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). The implication of this theory

is that capital, be it cultural, economic or social is a resource from which people draw in order to advance or maintain their status in society. The cultural capital theory is thus a theory that is subsumed under the conflict theory.

The Social and Cultural Ecology of the Universities Under Study

The two universities under study are situated in deprived rural areas serving predominantly black students of low socio-economic status. One is a merged university comprising two previously disadvantaged tecknikons and a historically disadvantaged university from the so-called homeland/Bantustan areas. The other university, though not merged, is also predominantly rural and is also located in a former homeland area. The term homeland refers to a territory that was set aside for black inhabitants of South Africa through apartheid policy. Homelands or Bantustans were organised on the basis of ethnic and linguistic groupings defined by white ethnographers (Akoojee and Nkomo 2007).

Although homelands were subsidised by the national government, they were not considered as part of the Republic of South Africa proper (Turton 2010). The creation of the homelands was a major administrative device used by the apartheid government to keep blacks out of the South African political system, as well as keeping them generally marginalised with very little employment opportunities being available (Turton 2010). Further, the allocation of individuals to specific homelands was often done arbitrarily with many individuals being assigned to homelands in which they did not originate.

With the demise of apartheid in South Africa in 1994, the homelands were dismantled and their territories were reincorporated into the Republic of South Africa (Akoojee and Nkomo 2007). However, the two universities inherited serious disadvantages and challenges from the apartheid system in general and the homelands policy in particular and these have been perpetuated to this day. For instance, the hallmark of the two universities is that to this day, they still serve African students from mainly deprived and poor backgrounds. Thus, the history of the universities, coupled with their geographical location remains the major handicap in their bid to attract and enrol students from a wider socio-economic base (Badat 2005). Consequently, the bulky of the student body from

the two universities originate from disadvantaged rural high schools. Furthermore, parents of such students, the majority of which are living in poverty, are illiterate and are living in disintegrated families (Maruyama 1998; Cele 2004; Zahn 2005).

The low socio-economic status of families that provide students to the two universities is clearly evidenced by the large number of students who apply for financial support from government in the form of National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) loans and the large number of students who dropout on account of failure to raise the required study fees.

In terms of staffing, the two universities are usually manned by poorly qualified academics since their poor financial resource bases seriously curtail their capacity to attract and retain the best academic talent (Akoojee and Nkomo 2007). The ultimate effect is that most students attending these universities are not adequately equipped with the requisite skills and competencies that are needed to succeed in higher education. In terms of Bourdiue's cultural capital theory, students who attend such universities are not endowed with the appropriate cultural capital that is deemed critical for success in higher education studies. The level of unpreparedness and under-preparedness that most of these students bring to their studies is so high that in the absence of effective integrated student support programmes, many of them will find it extremely difficult to succeed in their studies. This study, therefore, sought to examine the various intervention strategies employed by the two universities to mediate the effect of poor cultural capital possessed by students.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this study were generated through a review of literature, the analysis of university student admission records as well as documents on strategies for assisting under-prepared students. Admission records provided key information relating to the student background and socio-economic standing. University documents on student programmes were subjected to content analysis and the following emerged as the major strategies for mediating students with learning challenges.
- Foundation programmes
- Academic literacy programmes
- Peer Assisted Learning Programme (PAL)
- Writing Centre Programme

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

It emerged from the documents analysed that both universities mostly serve an economically disadvantaged and rural market with a historically disadvantaged schooling system. Over recent years there has been rapid student enrolment which demonstrates the strength of demand from this market. However, this growth puts pressure on infrastructure and resources, institutional capacity and students support services which consequently have a negative impact on throughput rates. This situation is exacerbated by students' financial difficulties and under-preparedness for tertiary education.

The majority of the students in the two universities under study are first in their families to attend university. They lack confidence in themselves, believe they have insufficient knowledge of the system and feel the higher education is a mystery. Such students need time and specialised support to adjust to the demands of higher education. If this fails to happen, they are in danger of dropping out. Retention of such students who are from diverse backgrounds is assisted by innovative curricula and support services which reflect the needs and interests of those students. This article therefore brings to the fore some of the strategies designed by the universities under study to mitigate the negative impact of negative cultural capital on the learning of the students.

Foundational Programmes

This programme is offered by both universities under study. Foundational provision focuses on basic concepts, content and learning approaches to foster advanced learning. As McKellar (2006) articulates, Foundational provision is the offering of modules, courses or other curricular elements that are intended to equip under-prepared students with academic foundation that will enable them to successfully complete a higher education qualification. Information accessed from one of the universities under study indicates the following as aims of Foundational provision:
- Provide under-prepared students who have been identified as having the potential to succeed in degree studies
- Increase the retention/throughput rate of under-prepared students

⬥ Develop curricula that provide under-prepared students with the proper academic development in an integrated manner that will enable the required knowledge and skills to be learned in the context where they are applied

· Promote life-long learning and "well-rounded" students who not only have a sound knowledge and a creative enquiring mind but who also have a range of literacy and professional skills, for example, presentation skills, report writing skills and research skills that are invaluable in the work environment (Cele 2004; Scott 2008).

The model (Extended Curriculum Model) that has been designed at one of the participating universities acts as a bridging element whereby faculties enrol under-prepared students over a minimum period of 4 years as opposed to 3 years which will enhance their progress and the throughput/pass rates. The model provides an additional academic year for students to engage with a specific academic discipline. Records viewed revealed that in addition to conventional mainstream courses offered by faculties, students who enrol in the Foundational Provision Programme will also be required to enrol for a Value-addition Course (Academic Practices and Reasoning) which is designed to lend academic support by focusing on the acquisition of writing and reading skills. This model is depicted below:

Extended Curriculum Model

The symbols used in the model below indicate the following:
F=foundation courses R= regular courses
100,101 etc=first level courses
200=second level courses 300=third level courses
A, B, C, D, E=names of courses

In Table 1, the regular first-year curriculum of a three-year undergraduate qualification is extended over two years with a combination of foundational and regular courses:

In this model, the first year of study is purely foundational where students are required to register for APR, ESP, Computer Literacy, Information Literacy and any other 2 courses (from a basket of options) offered by a particular department. These courses will be foundational in nature as they will be extended over 2 academic years instead of 1. However, at second year level, students are introduced to mainstream studies as they are permitted to take 2 regular courses in addition to completing their foundation courses. This model guarantees that these students obtain the necessary academic support during the first two years of study which will improve throughput and retention rates. It is also important to note that foundation courses are credit-bearing. While the foundation programme per se cannot address the enormous challenges resulting from student under-preparedness, it is important to point out that the programme makes significant impact in the learning of the students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Scott 2008).

Academic Literacy Programmes

Academic literacy comprises the norms and values of higher education as manifested in discipline-specific practices. It is best obtained in a valid context in which students have a considerable body of knowledge to work with formative tasks designed exclusively to offer support for students as they struggle with new academic concepts and conventions. McKellar (2006:4) argues, "Academic literacy is either something students already have, or something that those students who are deficient in these skills can learn, in a discrete and preparatory situation".

Research has indicated that a large number of students at tertiary institutions across the world have inadequate language skills which impede their development and success. Particularly disconcerting are results of McKellar (2006) and Bennet and Siver (2006), who offer evidence that the

Table 1: Extended curriculum model

Academic year	Required courses				Credit values in a year		
					Foundation	Regular	Total
Year 1	FA101	FB101	FC101	FD101	0.50	0	0.50
Year 2	FA102	FB102	RE100	RF100	0.25	0.25	0.50
Year 3	RA 200	RB200	RC200		0	1.0	1.0
Year 4	RA300	RB300			0	1.0	1.0
Total credits in curriculum					0.75	2.25	3.0

majority of students entering tertiary education have English language skills below the level of matric second language and therefore do not have sufficient command of English to afford reasonable opportunity to succeed in tertiary education. The alarming matric failure rates and the poor throughput rates in tertiary education are identified as key education problems in the National Plan for Higher Education. Insufficient command of English is identified as a key cause of this state of affairs by many researchers (Sullivan 2007; Wright 2009)

Both universities under study offer academic literacy as a compulsory course for all foundation first year students. It helps learners understand the value of academic, discipline specific and workplace discourse as a special means of communication in the academic and working world. Records reviewed indicated that learners in this course are exposed to the sophisticated forms of accessing, and presenting knowledge that are available in the discipline and academic world. They will be involved in activities that are aimed at developing different and specific forms of literacy and communication skills. These skills differ significantly from those used during school as they will relate to the context of higher education and disciplinary field of study.

Literacies are constructed of many discourses such that they become "ways of being". In this paper the term "discourse" is taken to mean all forms of spoken or written language, and the conventions of a particular academic discipline. The members become participants in a discourse community. Northedge (2003b) argues that the backdrop of implicit assumptions that provides the frame of reference within which academic discourse becomes meaningful could undermine the novice's efforts to participate in and understand the academic discourse. The role of lecturers should be that of a speaker of the specialist discourse through which capacity is provided to disadvantaged students.

To be taken seriously within the community, students' use of concepts, terms, and modes of argument must be appropriate. To acquire this fluency, they need opportunities to speak and write the discourse in the presence of a competent speaker who can, by responding, help to shape their usage-the lecturer. In my opinion the lecturer, therefore, plays a pivotal role in establishing the concept of academic literacy to disadvantaged students, which involves knowing how to speak and act in an academic discourse. As academic

literacies are seen as discipline specific, they need to be fundamental to the teaching in the extended courses: "Literacies cannot be acquired in a vacuum" (McKellar 2006:4). Therefore, the key lies in a shift in focus from student development to staff development whereby lecturers are equipped with the necessary knowledge to develop students' academic literacies as an integrated part of the curricula themselves, and that academic staff sees this as part of their own responsibility as educators (Moschovaki 1999; McKellar 2006:5; Reagan 2009). It is, in the end, the lecturers themselves who must build into their curricula the opportunities and learning experiences which disadvantaged students need to acquire the discourse.

Language proficiency is an important predictor of the learner's success, although not the only one. In addressing the language proficiency needs of tertiary learners, this programme focuses on the kinds of reading, writing, speaking and listening practices that enable underprepared students to engage efficiently with the demands of academic work for tertiary students. As lecturers will be making academic demands on students, which are different from those that were met at high school, this course seeks to equip underprepared students to understand and apply the key literacy practices of tertiary institutions that are needed in order to succeed. This experience is needed to build a strong foundation from which one can confidently master the additional literacy demands s/he will encounter throughout his/her study.

Peer Assisted Learning (PAL)

PAL is a scheme that encourages students to support each other and to learn co-operatively under the guidance of trained students, called PAL Leaders (Stanovich 2000; Loehlin 2004). Usually this involves second year undergraduate students supporting first year students from the same course although they also use final year students in the same way to support second year students. PAL is supplemental to teaching. Documents reviewed indicated that content for PAL sessions is decided upon by the group rather than the Leader and content for discussion is based on existing course materials - handouts, workbooks, lecture notes, text books and set reading.

These trained student 'PAL Leaders' meet regularly with small groups of students in the year below their level to help them improve their understanding of the subject matter of their

course and develop their study and learning strategies. This helps the students attending to integrate into their department during the first few difficult months of being at university. The character of PAL sessions is one of cooperative and collaborative learning. They are usually timetabled weekly into the curriculum, and centre around an hour of discussion and interaction. It is made explicit from the start that the PAL Leaders are not there to teach, and the students attending should not expect them to. They are there to encourage discussion amongst the group, and to enhance comprehension of lectures already attended, not to impart any new knowledge.

In the 2005/6 evaluation of PAL at Bournemouth first year undergraduate students following courses on which PAL was available, were asked to indicate how PAL had helped them and their responses were as detailed below:

- 59% responded that PAL helped them integrate more quickly into university life
- 82% indicated that PAL helped them get a clearer understanding of course direction and expectations
- 61% said PAL helped them develop their study and learning strategies
- 66% responded that PAL helped them improve their understanding of the subject matter of their course
- 77% thought PAL helped them prepare themselves better for assessed work and examinations (Senechal and LeFevre 2002; Sonnenschein and Munsterman 2002)

The idea of PAL is supported by many authors including Cele (2002), Loehlin (2004), and Zahn (2005) who assert that students themselves are an untapped learning resource, which can be used to enhance curricula in many fields. They further postulate that tutors see PAL as a chance to reinforce their own knowledge, perhaps in an area of particular interest, as well as an opportunity to develop their own teaching and communication skills. Equally, those tutored seem to benefit from these sessions by having a relaxed and less formal learning atmosphere in which to ask questions, and by having a tutor who has recently studied the same material, is aware of problem areas and can provide meaningful feedback and advice on study skills, approaches to learning and content.

Writing Centres (WC)

Both universities under study have established WC's which are run by their Teaching and Learning Centres. The reason for establishing WC's has been to strengthen the English language proficiency and writing skills among disadvantaged South African High school students who enrol into institutions of higher learning. The two universities agreed that the academic writing skills of the majority of their students were a serious cause for concern. This scenario could be traced to historical reasons or the Apartheid legacy. This section seeks to highlight how these two universities' writing centres have formulated migrating interventions aimed at improving students' language proficiency. It goes further to report on programmes such as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) among others and shows how these have positively impacted on student learning opportunities, particularly language proficiency. The WC supports learning among students from diverse backgrounds using an array of local and international (peer) scholars to facilitate learning. Evidence at hand show that most students' writing is replete with both low and higher order concerns. Documents reviewed show how the University Writing centres have addressed these for the benefit of students despite teething problems related to underutilisation of the centre by most students.

The authors of this article want to emphasize the point that as long as thinking and writing are regarded as inherently individual, solitary activities, WC's can never be viewed as anything more than pedagogical fix-it shops to help those who, for whatever reason, are unable to think and write on their own. This assertion is supported by Harris (1995) who postulates that a writing centre encourages and facilitates writing emphasis in courses in addition to those in the English department's composition program, it serves as a resource room for writing related materials; it offers opportunities for faculty development through workshops and consultations; and it develops tutors' own writing, interpersonal skills and teaching abilities. He further asserts that writing centres, by offering a haven for students where individual needs are met, are integral to university-wide retention efforts. The same author

underscores the flexibility of writing centres and their ability to work outside of institutionalised programmes as their major attraction to students who may need extra help and support.

The primary business of WC's at the two universities is to provide students the opportunity to work one-to-one with language and writing consultants (LWC). LWC's are senior students who are recruited by WC's so as to assist other students. In doing so, WC's do not duplicate or supplement writing. WC's do not and should not repeat the classroom experience and are not there to compensate for poor teaching or lack of time for overburdened instructors to confer adequately with their students. Instead, they provide another very crucial aspect of what the writers need, tutorial interaction. When meeting with LWC's, students gain dimensions of knowledge about their writing and about themselves that are not possible in a classroom situation (Badat 2005; Reagan 2009).

WC's at the participating universities offer tutorial instruction with the help of trained LWC's. This idea of recruiting senior students to help other students is supported by Harris (1995) who argues that tutorial instruction is very different from traditional classroom learning because it introduces into the educational settings a middle person, the LWC, who inhabits a world somewhere between student and teacher. Because the LWC sits below the teacher on the academic ladder, the LWC can work effectively with students in ways that teachers cannot. Registers found in one of the WC showed that most of the students were flocking the centre with their assignments. It emerged out that on an average, fifty students approach the writing centres for academic support in respect of each university under study. This, in our view, is a clear testimony of the utility of the writing centres as far as the learning of the students is concerned. This view was further corroborated by evaluation reports scrutinised by the authors which indicated high satisfaction rates by students who had visited the centres for assistance. This is supported by Sullivan (2007) who asserts that in the interaction between LWC and student, the LWC picks up clues from watching and listening to the student. LWC's questions can lead students to offer information they didn't know was needed and to clarify their answers through further questioning. He further points that students can offer other useful information they would be less willing to give to teachers. LWC's use talk and questioning and all the cues they can pick up in the face-to-face interaction.

In a study conducted by Harris (1995), students interviewed commented that it was stressful for them to talk about their writing with someone whom they were not free to interact with. Such students viewed themselves as being treated as inferiors, talked down to, demeaned in some way when talking with teachers, but not with LWC's. It is undoubtedly true that some lecturers tend to reinforce the stereotypical authoritarian stance or are not as adept as they might be in using language that their students understand best.

CONCLUSION

Cultural capital in families and more specific, the educational level of parents, has been shown to be one of the most important dimensions of socio-economic influence on school performance in many countries. Many scholars have argued that students' cultural capital has a positive effect on academic performance since such students possess the key to unlock the messages transmitted in the education system thereby experiencing success. At the same time, students from low socio-economic backgrounds lack cultural capital and this acts as an in-built barrier to learning in school. There is, therefore, an urgent imperative for universities to effect adjustments to their teaching practices. This is critical as it will not only improve the learning experiences and retention rates of students from disadvantaged backgrounds but also enhancing their chances of success in higher education. Universities should, therefore, be in the forefront of initiating and implementing inclusive programmes of intervention so as to narrow the achievement gap of students with different cultural capitals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Social networks via mobile phones should be encouraged as they can promote ubiquitous learning. Learning for students should not be confined to a place, and the implication for WRCs and similar support services is that they must ensure that they are accessible in the contexts where learning for their students happens.
- In order to improve throughput rates, universities should put in place structures

responsible for the implementation of integrating information and communication technologies (ICTs) into teaching and learning.

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