

Perceptions and Implications on Blindness at an Open Distance Learning Institution in South Africa

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ABSTRACT The purpose of the study was to project the academic community's perceptions of students with blindness with an aim of promoting access to Education for All. Framed by the theories of social construction and critical disability theory, this qualitative study uses the case study approach. Data were collected through life stories and telephonic interviews and analyzed through thematic analysis. The study revealed that the academic community is inappropriately prepared to deal with students with blindness; the community discriminates students with blindness from certain career paths and also has stereotypical overtures about students with blindness. The recommendations made include: more research on perceptions, attitudes and knowledge of the academics on issues of teaching the students with blindness; training and retraining on teaching students with blindness including the use of current and applicable technologies to facilitate learning; constant exposure and sensitization of the academic community on how to deal with students with blindness; creation of awareness on the implications of negative implications and regular student-centred research on how the students with blindness experience learning in an Open and Distance Learning setting.