

Critical Elements of the Social Model of Disability: Implications for Students with Disabilities in a South African Institution of Higher Education

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ABSTRACT The social model of disability seeks to ensure that people with disabilities participate on equal basis with others in every sphere of life. Thus for students with disabilities, the model underpins the options available to them in order to maneuver their ways through barriers embedded in institutions of higher education. In South Africa, most educational institutions are barriers in the first place because they have not been purposely built and designed to accommodate students with disabilities. For that matter, students with disabilities have to weigh the nature of their impairments vis-à-vis their participation in educational programmes. Against this background, this paper first looks at what the Social Model of Disability seeks to mean for persons with disabilities. In addition, it critically analyses the elements of the model in the light of the perceived identified barriers that can impact on the functioning of students with disabilities in an institution of higher education in South Africa. Above all, the paper also makes a number of recommendations that will address some of the barriers identified in the model.