



## Overcoming the barriers of distance-based higher education

Students with quadriplegia should be supported to improve self-determination in order to participate successfully at distance education universities.

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For people living with quadriplegia, or tetraplegia, access to higher education is like hiking in a dangerous mountain with many risks.

Despite the risks, people with quadriplegia aspire to have qualifications in higher education and earn a decent living. However, due to inaccessible environments and lack of support in most face-to-face universities, studying through distance education is usually their only option.

Dealing with assignments, negotiating assessment accommodations and also taking care of their condition require the effective manipulation of self-determination.

“In distance education, some student’s lecturers may not even be aware of their condition due to physical separation between students and lecturers in these institutions,” says Israel Mkhuma.

Key findings from the research conducted by Mkhuma between 2016 and 2022 has identified self-determination as one of the main driving force behind the success of these students in distance education universities.

Supporting these students in improving self-determination provides a tool to empower them to negotiate environments where one might never have thought such



*Disabled students need to be supported in gaining self-determination to be successful in distance-based higher education.*

students exist.

“It helps them to repossess control over their lives,” says Mkhuma.

Without the necessary self-determination, students are

overdependent on others, and they are likely to be less successful in the distance-based higher education environment.