

Accessing tertiary education: expectations and realities for students experiencing disabilities

S. Hettiarachchi, Lasanthi Daskon-Attanayake, Mahishi
Ranaweera, Dilini Walisundara

Abstract

Although the right to higher education is ensured within the Education acts of Sri Lanka, in practice, the challenges faced by persons with disabilities within the university system puts into question this assumed prerogative. Anecdotally, the provision of special recording devices has enabled students with particular disabilities such as a visual impairment to better access the curriculum, while others such as students experiencing hearing difficulties or dyslexia may have inadequate support. This study aimed to identify the barriers and facilitators to accessing higher education within two universities: the University of Kelaniya and the University of Sri Jayawardenepura. It sought to gather information via individual semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The data was analysed qualitatively using the key principles of *Framework Analysis* (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). The implications of the findings for policy and practice are briefly discussed.