

Formulation of Policies that Promote Disability Inclusion in the University of Kelaniya: Attitudinal Barriers and Possible Remedies.

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It is important that inclusion of students with disabilities (SWDs) is ensured in higher educational institutes; disability inclusion policies are crucial in this regard. However, the University of Kelaniya (UOK) lacks a policy of inclusion. Even the policy and other related documents that exist seem to be rather limited as they are not extended to curriculum formation, teaching and assessment designing.

In this context, this research intends to identify the attitudinal barriers that hinder the formation of policies that promote the inclusion of SWDs in UOK and to suggest remedial measures for them. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with six participants chosen according to stratified purposeful sampling which involves identifying several key groups and interviewing representatives from them to engage with a reasonable cross-section of the community subjected to study; the participants include policy formulators, policy implementors, policy recipients of UOK and a specialist in the field. Interviews are conducted physically and virtually. Interview questions are built around the following themes: interviewee's definition of 'disability', interviewee's understanding of inclusion policies, attitudinal barriers towards policy formulation the interviewee identifies and remedial measures for them. Thematic analysis and textual analysis are used to analyze the data. The theoretical framework incorporates the Minority group model of disability by Hahn (1982), the non-decision-making theory by McCalla-Chen (2002), the stigma theory by Link and Phelan (2000) and the Universal design approach.

Attitudes relating to paternalism, charity approach to disability, ableism and stigma seem to pose challenges to the formulation of inclusion-related policies. An attitudinal shift may remedy this situation and raising awareness and educating the university community are instrumental in this regard.

It can be recommended that teach-yourself leaflets, awareness-raising workshops, educational seminars and stigma reduction programs can be used to address these attitudinal barriers. Such measures may facilitate the attitudinal shift required, gradually enabling an efficient and effective process of inclusion policy formulation.

Keywords: inclusion, students with disabilities, policy, University of Kelaniya, attitudinal barriers