



Inclusive Education Policy and Its Influence on Academic Participation of Students with Disabilities in Selected Public Universities in Kenya

David Njuguna Karanja; Isabella Musyoka-Kamere; Violet Wawire

Department of Educational Foundations, Kenyatta University, Kenya

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Abstract

Although tangible evidence is indicative that most institutions of higher learning endorse the concept of inclusive education, as is demonstrated by the existence of inclusive education policies formulated at the institutional level, there is need to ensure that the policies are indeed effective and fully implemented in order to realize the goal of academic participation for all. Informed by low admission rates of students with disabilities in public universities in Kenya, a study was initiated to examine the effectiveness of existing inclusive education policies in higher learning institutions as relates to admission and academic participation of students with disabilities. The study was guided by the Social Model of Disability theory and advanced a descriptive research design to collect in-depth information on the substance and implementation of inclusive education policies in two public universities in Kenya. Kenyatta University (KU) and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) were purposively selected for this study owing to their longer establishment as institutions of higher learning in Kenya. The study identified lecturers, students with disabilities and administrators involved with student admission and disability coordination as the respondents. The sample size in the respective universities was constituted as follows: 30% of the lectures teaching in programmes with registered students with disabilities; 30% of the enrolled population of students with disabilities; Registrar academics, in charge of student admission; and the Coordinator of the disability. Data collection instruments used included interviews, questionnaires, observation, focus group discussions and document analysis. The data collected was analyzed thematically, guided by the objectives of the study, using different inferential and descriptive statistics at different stages of analysis. Narratives and verbatim prose were used in presenting part of the qualitative data. The study found that both KU and JKUAT have comprehensive disability policy documents, aligned to the concept of inclusive education. KU has made commendable strides in implementing its policy, though not fully achieved. However, JKUAT policy remains largely nonoperational. Based on the findings, it is recommended that more support is needed to facilitate and strengthen the capacity of higher learning institutions to fully operationalize their inclusive education policies, and thereby promote learning and academic participation of students with disabilities.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education Policy; Public Universities; Academic Participation; Students with Disabilities*

Background

The International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health (ICF), which is the framework for health and disability for the World Health Organisation (WHO), defines disability as an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. These are part of a broader classification scheme covering three main domains, namely: functioning and structure; activities and participation; and environmental factors (ICF, 2016). The ICF is an important reference when developing interventions and tools such as social policy and curriculum design, with a view to alleviating exclusion.

Today, inclusive education has been embraced as an important antidote against social exclusion, focusing on inclusion policies and strategies that will ensure meaningful academic access and participation for students with disabilities. According to UNESCO, inclusive education is a process intended to respond to the diversity of students with disabilities by increasing their participation and reducing exclusion within and from education, (UNESCO, 2008). The success of inclusive education is dependent on government commitment to the concept of inclusion through adaptation of national policies and laws (Hayes, 2017). In the USA, for example, before the enactment of the monumental Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) of 1975, only one in five students with disabilities had enrolled in public learning institutions. However, upon the passage of the Act required that all learners should be educated in the “least restrictive environment”, which defines set-ups where students with disabilities are provisioned for, through a range of modifications and adaptations, to learn together with those without disabilities (Dudley, 2014). This Act significantly increased the academic participation of children with disabilities and opportunity to develop to their fullest potential.

Despite the efforts made to enhance the engagement of students with disabilities in education activities across the world, their enrolment and participation, particularly in institutions of higher learning, remains relatively low. In the world arena, it is estimated that out of nearly 115 million school-going students with disabilities, less than 40 million, or 35% of the total number, have been included in institutions of higher learning. In the African continent, it is only 1% of the students with disabilities that have been included in institutions of higher learning, of which the majority tend to drop out before completing their first year (UNESCO, 2004). In Kenya, the representation of students with disabilities in institution of higher learning is a mere 0.175% the total university enrolment (Wawire, 2008). While there is documentary evidence of studies done on the general enrolment of students with disabilities and barriers of inclusion in education, very limited studies have been done with emphasis on their inclusion in higher learning institutions and especially within an inclusive education context. It is also notable that when policies on disability are not implemented, students with disabilities are discriminated against and cannot learn and acquire skills for self-reliance and productive work, which is good for self the society at large.

Therefore, the onus of this study was to assess the merit of Institutional Inclusive Education Policies (IIEPs) as relates to higher learning institutions in Kenya, and establish whether their nexus may be contributing to the low academic participation of students with disabilities in Kenya’s public universities.

Literature Review

Inclusive Education (IE) is a process that embraces the diverse academic needs of all learners, including those with special needs, to increase their participation in learning. The history of IE has been constructed and reconstructed through numerous discussions about education of Special Needs Children, which later expanded to other marginalized groups. Most notably, in 1994, over 300 participants, including 92 governments and 25 international organizations, met in Salamanca, Spain, with the sole purpose of deliberating the objectives and the operating framework of education of Students with disabilities. This culminated in what is now popularly known as the Salamanca statement, which is

responsible for the birth of inclusive education by linguistically shifting the term ‘integration’ to ‘inclusion’ as a global description of addressing the educational needs of students with disabilities.

According to Ferguson (2008), the principles of inclusion, as applied to education, advocate the essence for collaboratively negotiated inclusive but differentiated approaches to placement, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment for students with disabilities. This would ultimately, not only reduce exclusion from and within education institutions but also within the macro and micro society (UNESCO, 2010). The process, therefore, entails formulation of Institutional Inclusive Education Policies (IIEP) that can lead to calibrating or modifying the learning environment to include content, pedagogical approaches, structures, and learning strategies; guided by the belief that education in regular education institutions can be responsive to the learners’ educational needs, including those with disabilities, by enhancing their academic participation.

Inclusive education has gained prominence in the policy circles of governments’ the world over and has captured the thoughts and speech of global education actors Molbaek (2018). This relatively new education paradigm is geared towards reducing exclusion within education circles by addressing and responding to the divergent needs of all learners, so as to enhance their academic participation within education institutions (UNESCO, 2010). Through various international protocols, countries have committed themselves to embed inclusive education in their education strategic plans supported through formulation of inclusive policies and law. Different countries and regions have realized different levels of success in the implementation of inclusive learning in institutions of higher learning.

Across Europe, there has been a marked expansion in higher education participation, with a growing emphasis on the inclusion of previously under-represented groups, including disabled students and those from disadvantaged background (Riddell, 2016). But even so, much needs to be done as a continuous process to overcome emerging challenges that could easily reverse the gains. In the United Kingdom where significant efforts have been made to including students with disabilities in higher education programmes, qualitative studies have highlighted the difficulties which the students continue to experience, particularly those with mental health difficulties and those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds (Riddell et al., 2005 and Fuller et al., 2009).

In the United States of America prior to 1975, there was insignificant attention towards meeting the educational needs of students with disabilities within a general environment. Studies showed that only one in every five students with disabilities was admitted and educated in public learning institutions. The assumption was that their inclusion into regular education programs would overwhelm the regular teachers to a point of negatively impacting the learning of their non-disabled peers (Osgood’s, 2005). It was not until the requirement for all learners to be educated in the “least restricted environment” that many students with disabilities started joining inclusive schools alongside their non-disabled peers. Currently, reports indicate that students with disabilities in America spend up to 80% of their academic time in regular education settings at all levels (Dudley, 2014). This is largely made possible by the formulation of sound inclusive policies that have been buttressed with supportive legislation. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended through Public Law -114-95 and enacted in December 2015, is a good example. Section 504 of the Act prohibits discrimination against any applicant with disabilities in the admission process, by stating that “No otherwise qualified individual with handicaps in the United States shall, solely by reason of her or his handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance”. This opened opportunity for any handicapped person, meeting the requisite academic and technical standards, to participate in the education program of choice.

In Africa, current studies indicate that there is a higher relative population of students with disabilities attending elementary and secondary school level than that found in higher learning institutions. This is attributed to the fact that, at the lower education cycles, the needs of special learners

with disabilities tend to be better addressed. Olakulehin (2010) notes that, the education of learners with special needs at elementary and secondary level does not automatically guarantee them transition to university education. Wolanin and Steel (2004) observe that this may be as a result of high cost of university education. This exclusion and apparent apathy has resulted in stunting inclusive education development across Africa. In Egypt, for example, the number of the actual students with disabilities enrolled into higher learning institutions is unknown (Lord, 2017). This is despite of Egypt's ratification of many international statutes and protocols on disability, such as the endorsement of the Committee of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The Egyptian constitution of 2014 is also explicit on the rights of persons with disabilities in nine specific areas, providing a strong foundation for advancing disability rights (Constitution of Egypt 2014). According to Lord (2018) one of the shortcomings found in the legal framework is the lack of a clearly prescribed and resource-supported legislative path from secondary school into higher education for students with disabilities.

In Ghana, Alisha (2019) observes that, the country's inclusive education policy is anchored on a value system which holds that all persons who attend any educational institution are entitled to equitable access to quality teaching and learning that promotes academic participation. But while the available statistics exhibit an upward trajectory in increased access to education, the bulk of students with disabilities remain out school and most will never have the opportunity to advance to higher education.

Closer home in Uganda, the country has embraced inclusive education and evidently committed to bringing about disability inclusion at different cycles of education. However, a research in Uganda by Emong and Eron (2016) showed that despite of the country's robust disability friendly framework, exclusion and discrimination of students with disabilities in institutions of higher education remains common. Most higher institutions of learning fail or refuse to admit students with disabilities because of their inability to accommodate them, which contravenes section 6(2a) of the Uganda Persons with Disabilities Act (2006) and other global protocols in which Uganda is a signatory.

The study by Emong and Eron (2016) however failed to establish whether institutions of higher learning have adapted the country's national inclusive policies and guidelines in support of academic participation for all. Secondly, it did not establish whether data on students with disabilities was collected to help in planning, so as to strengthen collaboration between Disabled Peoples Organizations (DPO's) and institutions of higher learning by establishing and strengthening disability support centres.

In the Kenyan context, the Persons with Disability Act (PDA) (2003), Section 18, article (1) criminalizes discrimination in admission of students to learning institutions on the basis of one's disability. But as Kochung (2011) notes, the admission criteria to higher education institutions are complex, inflexible and stringent, for vulnerable students intending to be enrolled. Mukwana, et al., (2016), note that the enrolment of students with disabilities is comparatively very low when compared to the overall university level enrolment. This scenario is a clear indication that there is no deliberate structure in place to encourage and increase the enrolment of this cadre of students. These sentiments are corroborated by Wawire, Elarabi and Mwanzi (2010). The researchers looked at the participation of students with disabilities in learning activities in Kenyan universities and established that it is very low, translating to below 0.4% of the total number enrolled student population. The burden to get admission, to get the appropriate services, and to navigate through higher education has also been left to the learners. Mwiria, Wawire, Ouma, and Njuguna (2007) indicated that as a result of financial constraint, teaching facilities and physical infrastructure of public universities are most wanting, affecting the admission of learners with disabilities.

However, the formulation of the disability policy framework in higher education in 2009 is one of the milestones the government of Kenya has achieved in enhancing inclusive learning environment and effective access to the University content for students with disabilities (). The focus of this policy was to identify and increase participation of students with disabilities in education and training, and enable

persons with disability to meaningfully participate in national socio-economic development. The policy expects higher education institutions to have specialized facilities, assistive devices and technology.

However, Mugo, Oranga, and Singhal (2010) have criticized the Persons with Disability Act for adopting the charity model in addressing education instead of addressing educational issues from a human rights perspective. The Act provides that the government has the responsibility to provide financial assistance to students with disabilities in form of fees subsidies, loans programs and other necessary support. Although the right to admission in institutions of higher learning is firmly articulated in section 18 (1), the Act does not address the situation where such an individual was unable to meet costs of education, particularly due to extra expenses occasioned by having an impairment (Mugo et al., 2010). Moreover, although there is an entitlement on admission, there lacks directives to compel the universities to provide support to students with disabilities once enrolled in these institutions. Much as the Kenyan law has explicitly pronounced itself on the right to education for all, there is need to explore how this can be actualized through formulation of inclusive policies that would ease the admission and academic participation of students with disabilities in public universities.

Many of the studies conducted have concentrated on institutional systemic barriers affecting a particular category of students with disabilities and focused on basic institutions of learning. This study intended to address the policy gap in order to ensure that all students, irrespective of their disability, can be admitted and participate fully academically in institutions of higher learning.

Methodology

In this study, the researcher was looking at institutional inclusive education policies and academic participation of students with disabilities and employed both qualitative and quantitative techniques. A descriptive research design was used, that involved both qualitative and quantitative techniques in gathering data.

The target population encompassed: 178 students with disabilities undergraduate 3rd and 4th year students with divergent special needs enrolled in selected universities in various degree programs both regular and self-sponsored 155 in KU and 23 in JKUAT; 164 lecturers [140 in KU and 24 in JKUAT drawn from departments where students with disabilities were enrolled,]; Registrars and University coordinators of disability offices from the respective universities and who are involved in helping in the formulation and implementation of inclusive education policies within the universities.

The researcher used stratified, purposive and simple random techniques. Stratified sampling technique was used to group students with disabilities into 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students. Students in the 3rd and 4th year were then selected for the study because they were the ones who had stayed in the university longer than the 1st and 2nd year students and were therefore more exposed to various university programmes which made them to be more knowledgeable and resourceful for this study (Creswell, 2014). After stratifying 3rd and the 4th year students simple random sampling was used to select the study sample using lottery method.

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the Registrar Academics and the Coordinators of the disability offices. Simple random sampling was also used to select the lecturers who answered the study questions. The lecturers were sampled randomly using randomly assigned numbers from those departments in which students with disabilities have registered as follows: 10 or 30% lecturers were randomly sampled from the department of educational foundations, 8 or 30% of lecturers from the department of early childhood and Special Needs Education, 5 or 30% lecturers from the department of Music and Dance, 6 or 30% of lecturers from the department of Econometrics and Statistics, 6 of 30% of lecturers from the department of hospitality and tourism management, 5 or 30% of lecturers from the department of Philosophy and religious studies. Also 5 or 30% of lecturers were selected from the

department of business and 4 or 30% from the Department of Electrical Engineering in JKUAT where students with disabilities had registered in some courses. The lecturers were also stratified according to gender [Male and Female] and from each gender, simple random sampling was used to select study informants using rotary method. In lottery method, some sample groups may be more represented than the others; hence as the researcher sampled departments that teach students with disabilities, it was likely that some would not be represented.

The two universities were selected to allow for comparative analysis of data. Selection of the universities was done purposely. In this case, heterogeneous purposive sampling was done to provide a diverse range of cases (students with disabilities) relevant to this study.

Table 1: Sampling frame

Institution	Population type	Total population by Gender		Sample size	Percentage
KU	3 rd and 4 th year students with disabilities	Male	75	23	30%
		Female	80	24	30%
	Lecturers	Male	78	23	30%
		Female	62	19	30%
	Registrars	Male	1	1	100%
	Coordinators of disability programme	Male	1	1	100%
JKUAT	3 rd and 4 th year students with disabilities	Male	16	5	30%
		Female	7	2	30%
	Lecturers	Male	14	4	30%
		Female	10	3	30%
	Registrars	Female	1	1	100%
	Coordinators of disability programme	Male	1	1	100%

Collection of data was done using observations, interview schedule, questionnaires and focused group discussion. In this study, observation was carried within and outside the lecture halls. This entailed all the interactive situations and activities. In the lecture halls the main focus was on the teaching and learning process and specifically on the pedagogical methods, assessment methods and how the students participated in class. Outside the lecture halls, focus was on the physical facilities ranging from architectural designs of the buildings to assess their disability friendliness like the presence of ramps and rails to ease mobility, availability and usage of assistive equipment's and the nature of the furniture in the lecture halls.

Questionnaires were developed and transcribed into Braille (where necessary for students with visual impairment) or large print as is applicable for the students with low vision. The questionnaires contained open-ended and close-ended items. The open-ended items allowed the respondents to elucidate their views and opinion's while the closed-ended items produced objective answers.

Interviewing was used as a primary method of data collection. The study employed the semi-structured interview format. Data from the interviews was tape recorded with the permission of the informants and notes included where necessary. The specific questions asked by the researcher were audio-recorded and supplementary note captured to record the responses.

Data from the interviews was tape recorded with the permission of the informants and also notes captured where necessary. The specific questions asked by the researcher were audio-recorded and supplementary note captured to record the responses.

Focus groups discussions allowed the researcher to gain multiple perspectives and unfiltered feedback from a large group of participants unlike interviews and questionnaires. The ensuing interactive discussion allowed for an in-depth discussion into the area being investigated by a researcher.

This study also used various documents and publications on institutional inclusive education policies. The focus was on identifying the inclusiveness of the students with disabilities content in different documents.

In this study, the following reports were analysed;

1. The policy framework for university education.
2. The Person with Disability Act.
3. Kenyatta University Disability Policy and Procedures.
4. University of Nairobi Disability policy
5. Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture Disability mainstreaming policy.
6. The constitution of Kenya 2010.
7. Commission for higher education university standards and guidelines 2014.
8. Kenyatta University Vision and Mission Statement.
9. Jomo Kenyatta University Vision and Mission Statement
10. Kenyatta University Act.
11. Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology Act No. 8 of 1994

These documents were of great importance to the study since they contained important insights that illuminate and guide the universities on how to effectively implement meaningful Institutional IE. The documents were analysed to examine what the guidelines said about education for students with disabilities in HE institutions which include public universities. The information emanating from the documents assisted the researcher to support the findings from the field.

Data obtained was analysed qualitatively and quantitatively guided by research objectives. The questionnaires contained both closed and open-ended questions. The closed questions were analysed quantitatively. Coding was done using the values provided in the questionnaires to measure the extent of agreement or disagreements with items.

The statistical package for social science (SPSS 24.0) was used to ensure the uniqueness which has quintessential features to sufficiently address the data needs in this study. Descriptive statistics representing various research items were generated in frequencies and percentages in response to all items in the questionnaire. The open-ended questions were thematically coded and thematic patterns were analysed.

Data from the interviews, FGDs, and observation were first transcribed where necessary then thematically analysed and emerging patterns highlighted. First the researcher read the documents and then re-read them to familiarize with the data. Major themes were identified and then the sub-themes were created. Once this was done, codes were assigned to the sub-themes. All the quantitative data gathered were further analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 24.0) and summarized using descriptive statistics specifically frequencies, means, percentages. Tables and figures were used to present the results of the findings.

Analysis and Discussion

The study undertook to compare and contrast various policy documents that guide educational theory and practice in public universities in Kenya. The Constitution of Kenya, which is the supreme law

of Kenya, clearly gives universities institutional authority and power to formulate disability friendly policies to cater for educational needs of students with disabilities. Cap 54 (1) observes that a person with any disability is entitled to:

Access educational institutions and facilities for persons with disabilities that are integrated into the society to the extent compatible with the interests of the person; reasonable access to all places, public transport and information;

These can be customized through institutional inclusive educational policies, guidelines and practices in admission criteria, curriculum and pedagogical adaptations, psychosocial support and welfare services, assistive equipment's, mobility, facilities and general infrastructure among others that are needed by students with disabilities.

On admission, KU is comparatively one of the leading higher education institutions in Kenya that admits students with disabilities from across Kenya and a host of other international countries. This is in tandem with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology policy framework for university education (MoE, 2012) which states that universities should attain equity in university education and enrolment that reflects national diversity. The policy document further states that:

The Government will increase enrolment of students with special needs through appropriate out-reach programs targeting them and/or through pre-entry programs. The Government will continue to support the marginalized and the poor to ensure broader participation in priority programs.

The study analysis noted that KU has a disability policy that stipulates various provisions regarding admission of students with disabilities. It noted that, in the preamble, Kenyatta University Disability policy and a procedure says:

KU is committed to the principle of equal opportunity for all in line with her Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan 2005-2015. She has distinguished herself as a higher learning institution that admits one of the largest numbers of students with disabilities. To enable the university, fulfill its mission, there is need to continue enhancing an inclusive and supportive environment which is sustainable and meets the needs of students, staff and visitors to the University. The aim is to provide an environment where there is equality of opportunity and where Persons with Disabilities (PWD) can enjoy a quality experience while studying, working or visiting the University. This is the purview within which the Disability Policy is formulated.

Kenyatta University established a Directorate of Disability Services (DODS) in May 2010 to adequately handle issues affecting students with disabilities. KU disability policy has been formulated in line with the persons with disability Act 2003 and the constitution of Kenya (2010) among, other statutes. The policy further says that:

As a University, we are committed to ensuring that students with disabilities within our jurisdiction are taken care of. We believe that excellence will be achieved through bringing out the full potential of every individual. Kenyatta University Strategic and Vision Plan 2005-2015 has committed itself to enhancing access for students with disabilities to information, buildings, education and any other utilities accessible to persons without disabilities. Having relevant legislation is important not only because it affords students with disabilities legal rights, but it also creates an environment for openness about Disability-related matters. Such openness is critical to the management of disability stigma.

The DODS vision is ‘To Mainstream Disability in all operations of the University’. Its mission is to ensure the full and effective participation of students and staff with disabilities through formulation and implementation of Disability Policies as well as provision of disability friendly services.

The KU Disability policy clearly states that the responsibility of Kenyatta University management is to ensure that the institution, its Schools, Campuses and agents are compliant with the Disability Policy. The policy document further observes that the Policy shall be reviewed after every four (4) years to incorporate new developments within the University, thus 2017.

The analysis of KU disability policy noted that that the document contains inclusive admission policy for students with disabilities. This is notable because the policy states that:

Applicants with disabilities will be evaluated for admission using the same academic criteria as all other applicants for the same courses. However, support requirements for applicant with disabilities will be addressed separately. The admissions shall work within the affirmative action policy advocated by the government when assessing applications to join university’s programs. Such affirmative action would mean admitting students with disabilities with one grade lower. The student’s registration form shall require students with disabilities to declare any disabilities that they might have.

In addition, during an interview with the disability KU coordinator, it was revealed that during admission, students with disabilities are asked to fill a detailed form capturing the nature of disability and the assistive devices that the learner would require in the course of pursuing education. Since the social life of students with disabilities affects academic performance, the DODs work in concerted efforts with accommodation department and make arrangements of allowing those with multiple disabilities to have assistants to aid them as they go their daily academic activities. This finding reaffirms the clarity of KU policy to various students with disabilities. This is quite informative to various students who intend to pursue various programs in KU.

The policy further states that there are only three instances in which an applicant with a disability who meets the university entry criteria might be rejected:

i. Overriding health and safety hazards which cannot reasonably be overcome; ii. When barriers caused by professional requirements and/or by regulations of professional bodies preclude membership by people with specific disabilities; iii. Essential reasonable adjustments cannot be made to the course content and the course’s structure of delivery or to be the provision of suitable staff of facilities e.g. deaf/blind. The University shall regularly review Admissions Criteria to ensure that they do not create unnecessary barriers for students with disabilities.

These findings indicate that KU policy has clear guidelines in service delivery to cater for different students with disabilities.

Regarding pre-entry advice the policy states that:

Prospective students with disabilities will be supplied with information about support services available for their needs while on campus. For those who require more confidential discussions, a private interview can be arranged on request.

This finding indicates that there is openness and transparency in providing services to students with disabilities, which shows that the students with disabilities will be better empowered and informed so as to enhance their performance in KU programs.

Regarding context, the policy is anchored on international instruments that eliminate all forms of discrimination against students with disabilities. This includes using pejorative words, gestures or caricatures that demean scandalize or embarrass a person with a disability. In that regard the policy states:

Encourage positive, informed and unprejudiced attitudes towards PWD through educational and staff development programs. Continue to take all reasonable steps to eliminate and remedy cases of discrimination; Provide access to facilities, resources and support including Reasonable Adjustments as appropriate; continue to implement improved information technology for PWD.

This finding indicates that KU disability policy is in tandem with other good practices and conventions regarding students with disabilities. The policy is progressive and sustainable. On the scope the policy states that:

This policy applies to all university students, staff and other stakeholders.

This finding indicates that KU disability is broad based and inclusive in intention, so as to provide requisite services to all students with disabilities. The policy is participatory. On goals and objectives, the policy says:

This Disability Policy provides a framework for facilitating disability mainstreaming. The aim is to identify and remove barriers which hinder the full participation of students with disabilities in University life and enable them to access as fully as possible all educational, employment, social and leisure opportunities.

This finding suggests that the university has clear goals and objectives regarding disability services to be provided in the university. In addition, opportunities for full participation of students with disabilities will be provided and guaranteed in the spirit of inclusivity.

About implementation the policy says:

The university shall offer support through university appointed Disability Advisers (DA) who will be available as the first point of contact for students with disabilities or potential student who has a disability. The University is committed to developing an inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities. The University shall encourage students to disclose any disabilities or medical conditions to ensure that appropriate support is arranged for them in a timely fashion. This might include access, examination and study arrangements. All information disclosed shall be treated as confidential and cannot be disclosed to third parties without an individuals' explicit consent.

On the other hand, JKUAT admission policy is embedded in the university statutes. From documentary analysis on admission the study revealed JKUAT Act stipulates that:

Admission to the University as a candidate for degree, diploma, certificate or other awards shall be open to all persons as being qualified by the academic board in accordance with this order and the Act without distinction of race, ethnicity, place of origin or residence or other local connections, political opinion, colour, creed, physical ability or gender and no barrier based on any such distinction shall be imposed upon, any person as a condition of their becoming or continuing to be, a professor, lecturer, graduate or student of the university or of their holding any office therein nor shall any preference be given to or advantage withheld from any person on the ground of any such distinction.

Regarding JKU admission and academic participation of students with disabilities in university programs, the JKUAT-DMP states that the specific objectives are:

- a) To encourage enrolment and/or employment of students with disabilities in all University programs;
- b) To foster equity among students with disabilities in all University programs;
- c) To encourage disability responsive pedagogy;
- d) To encourage identification and expression of needs of students with disabilities;
- e) To promote the participation of students with disabilities in decision-making, problem solving and management of University programs.

These findings show that DMP has clear targets that aim to support students with disabilities with admission to take up different programs in the university. The findings show that the objectives are fairly comprehensive and inclusive, in terms of diversities and social dynamics involving students with disabilities. In terms of policy statements, the DMP states that JKUAT will:

- a) Ensure enrolment of students with disabilities in various academic programs relevant to their qualifications and abilities;
- b) Ensure non-discriminatory practices in all programs;
- c) Ensure establishment of an adequately equipped resource centre to address the needs of students with disabilities;
- d) Foster capacity building among faculty members in development of a disability responsive pedagogy;
- e) Provide students with disabilities a fair chance to express their needs;
- f) Promote participation of students with disabilities in all activities of the University.

These findings indicate fairly exhaustive policy guidelines regarding admission and academic participation of students with disabilities in various programs in JKUAT. This means JKUAT can become a model institution regarding inclusivity of students with disabilities and in Kenya on full implementation of the DPM.

Further analysis revealed the DMP will apply several strategies to implement the policy. These include:

- a) Create awareness in the university community and the public through public lectures and dissemination of educational information materials;
- b) Enroll students with disabilities in various academic programs through affirmative action;
- c) Ensure that no qualified student is denied enrolment to any academic program due to disability;
- d) Establish a disability resource centre;
- e) Conduct trainings, seminars, and workshops for University community;
- f) Carry out regular needs assessment for all students with disabilities;
- g) To establish and maintain an up to date data base of PWD's;
- h) Ensure employment and active participation of students with disabilities in all activities of the University;
- i) Review programs to mainstream disability.

1. Admission practices

The study sought to establish the admission practices regarding students with disabilities. In a rating on the Likert scale of 1-3, the study sought to establish the feelings of respondents with regard to admission practices, using the statements presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Rating of university admission policies

		Key – A=Agreed; UN=Undecided; D= Disagree						Total			
	Statement regarding university admission policies		Informants	A		UN		D		%	f
				%	f	%	f	%	f		
1.	The admission policy of the university is favorable to all students including those with disabilities	KU	students with disabilities	69	33	21	10	10	5	100	48
			Lects	67	28	33	14	0	0	100	42
		JKUAT	students with disabilities	25	2	25	2	63	5	100	8
			Lects	14	1	14	1	72	5	100	7
2.	There is equal academic participation for all students including those with disabilities	KU	students with disabilities	71	34	15	7	15	7	100	48
			Lects	50	21	33	14	17	7	100	42
		JKUAT	students with disabilities	25	2	13	1	63	5	100	8
			Lects	14	1	14	1	72	5	100	7
3.	Cut-off marks for those students with disabilities should be slightly lowered so as to increase their admission rate.	KU	students with disabilities	92	44	4	2	4	2	100	48
			Lects	83	35	17	0	0	0	100	42
		JKUAT	students with disabilities	63	5	17	1	25	2	100	8
			Lects	43	3	14	1	43	3	100	7
4.	Over the years there has been a significant rise in the number of students with disabilities enrolled in different programmes.	KU	students with disabilities	40	19	10	5	50	24	100	48
			Lects	33	14	17	7	50	21	100	42
		JKUAT	students with disabilities	38	3	13	1	50	4	100	8
			Lects	40	3	20	1	40	3	100	7

The findings in Table 4.1 reveal that lower cut-off points (KU-students with disabilities 92% [44]; KU-Lects 83% [35]), admission policies that favour students with disabilities (KU=students with disabilities 69% [33]; KU-Lects 67% [28]), and promoting equal academic participation for students with disabilities (KU-students with disabilities 71% [34]; KU-Lects 50% [21]) are some of the key issues that were rated high in university admission policies for students with disabilities.

During an interview with KU disability coordinator, the study found that KU has a proper documentation of admission of students with disabilities.

Conversely in JKU the findings in Table 4.2 show lower cut-off points (JKUAT-students with disabilities 63% [5] and JKU-Lects 43% [3]), significant rise in number of students with disabilities (JKUAT-Lects 43% [3], JKU-students with disabilities 38% [2]) and admission policy of the university is favourable to all students including those with disabilities (JKUAT-Lects 43% [3], JKUAT-students with disabilities 25% [2]).

Regarding admissions, KU ninety five percent (40) of KU-Lects and seventy one percent (5) of JKUAT-Lects informants indicated that all students, in spite of their disability, should be admitted in various university programmes and courses. Both KU-Lects (75% [32]) and JKUAT-Lects (71.4% [5])

said that the entry point of students with disabilities should be lowered so as to enhance their admission rate. These findings seem to confirm that lecturers believe that students with disabilities, if given equal opportunity, can compete with other students fairly.

2. Challenges faced by students with disabilities while seeking admissions

The study sought to name challenges faced when seeking admission to public universities. The findings are presented in Table 4.1

Table 4.2 Challenges facing students with disabilities when seeking admission to universities

Challenges in admission to public universities	KU				JKUAT			
	Lects		SWDs		Lects		SWDs	
	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F
Inability to pursue some course due to various technicalities involved	50	21	75	36	14	2	38	3
Cut-off points are very high for students with disabilities	33	14	65	31	42	3	38	3
Lack of inclusivity in some public universities	17	7	71	34	14	2	50	4
No challenge	0	0	10	5	0	0	0	0
Scramble of space with regular students	0	0	0	0	42	3	38	3
Access to data base like KUCCPS	0	0	29	14	0	0	0	0
Delay in admitting students with disabilities	0	0	21	10	0	0	13	1

The findings in Table 4.2 indicate that inability to pursue the course of choice due to technicalities arising from disability (KU-students with disabilities 75% [36]; KU-Lects 50% [21]), lack of inclusivity in some public universities for students with disabilities (KU-students with disabilities 71% [34]), and high cut-off points are some of the critical challenges that students with disabilities face in university admission.

Conversely, findings in Table 4.3 suggest that lack on inclusivity emerged as one of the key challenges facing students with disabilities in JKUAT (JKUAT-students with disabilities 57% [4]); Cut-off points are very high for students with disabilities (JKUAT-Lects 43% [3]) and scramble or competition from students without disabilities (JKUAT-Lects 43% [3]).

Interviews with disability coordinators and Registrar Academics in charge of student admissions from both universities established that the disability policies have not been reviewed since their inception. Disability coordinator in JKUAT said that the inclusive policy was dated 2013 and it had never been reviewed. The disability coordinator and registrar academic of students in KU reported that the disability policy in KU was 2014 edition and plans to review it are underway.

The four interviewees confirmed that the policies review dates were not adhered to since, in each case, the review of the policy should have been done after 5 years. The registrar academic of students and the JKUAT coordinator reported that the policy was not implemented due to lack of funds. It is very expensive to implement it fully because of the costly infrastructure required for courses offered in the university. The disability coordinators in KU said the policy has been implemented but a few issues remain due to cost implications.

These findings suggest that both universities need to find ways of funding the implementation of disability policies. This is critical so as to enable students with disabilities to enjoy their right to education like other students. The study went on to explore the feelings of informants regarding challenges facing students with disabilities. The findings are presented in the ensuing section.

3. Solutions to the challenges on admission

The study sought views regarding solutions to the challenges faced during admission to public universities. The findings are given in Table 4.3

Table 4.3 Solutions to challenges facing SWDs on university admissions

Solutions to challenges in admission to public universities	KU				JKU			
	Lects		SWDs		Lects		SWDs	
	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F
Cut-off points for students with disabilities should be slightly lowered in comparison with other students	67	28	90	43	43	3	63	5
Special allocation of slots for students with disabilities	67	28	79	38	28	2	25	2
Manual application for students with disabilities	0	0	21	10	0	0	0	0

The findings in Table 4.3 suggest that the key solutions to challenges facing SWDs on university could be solved through lower cut-off points for SWDs (KU-SWDs 90% [43]; KU-Lects 67% [28]) and special allocation of admission slots (KU-SWDs 79% [38]; KU-Lects 67% [28]) are some of the measures that can be taken to reduce challenges facing admission of SWDs in universities.

In Table 4.3 findings indicate that informants from JKU suggested that cut-off points for students with disabilities should be slightly lowered in comparison with other students (JKUAT-SWDs 63% [5]; JKUAT-Lects 43% [3]) and that there can be special allocation of slots for students with disabilities in university admissions (JKU-SWDs 25% [2]; JKUAT-Lects 28% [2]) respectively.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that in some public universities, there are efforts towards advocacy and awareness measures on inclusive policies through workshops, trainings, and seminars amongst the university constituents. Lack of effective advocacy and awareness strategies has negatively impacted on the dissemination of inclusive education policy.

Lack of a clear admission policy at both universities has a correlation with the limited number of students with disabilities that join various programs in Public Universities. An appropriate adaptation of the University curriculum has not been fully made to respond to the diverse academic needs of all learners with various disabilities. This should be given high priority and buttressed with proper infrastructure adjustment, as an integral component for successful inclusivity and accessibility for all learners.

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