

**EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ADMITTED UNDER  
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION SCHEME IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES, UGANDA  
A Case of Two Public Universities**

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**A RESEARCH DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL  
NEEDS STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION  
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## **DECLARATION**

I Areikin Catherine, declare that the research reported in this dissertation, except where I have indicated otherwise, is my original work. My dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other University. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then: Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced. Where I have quoted the exact words of other authors, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks or indents and referenced.

**AREIKIN CATHERINE**

Signature ..... Date.....

## **APPROVAL**

This is to acknowledge that this research dissertation entitled “Experiences of students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action scheme in public universities, Uganda: A case of Kyambogo and Makerere university” is submitted with approval of the undersigned research supervisors.

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## **DEDICATION**

This piece of work is dedicated to all Students with disability who have got the chance to participate in this study. May you remain with the spirit and encourage other people with disability to attain this level of education.

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## **ACROYNMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AAU:	Addis Ababa University
BDU:	Bahiridar University
BTVET:	The Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training
DFID:	Department for International Development
DHET:	Department of Higher Education and Training
DPOs:	Disabled Persons Organizations
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
FOTIM:	Foundation of Tertiary Institutions of the Northern Metropolis
GOU:	Government of Uganda
HEFCE:	Higher Education Funding Council for England
KYU:	Kyambogo University
MGLSD:	Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development
MUK:	Makerere University
NUDIPU:	National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda
PWDA:	Persons with Disabilities Act
PWDs:	Persons with Disabilities
UBOs:	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UNCRPD:	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UPE:	Universal Primary Education
USE:	Universal Secondary Education

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action scheme in public universities, Uganda: A case of Makerere and Kyambogo public universities. The experiences were those that related to all processes that students interacted with from admission to staff attitudes. The objectives of the study were; experiences of students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action, challenges faced by students with disabilities and supportive mechanisms in place to enhance their access to learning and participation. A qualitative research paradigm was preferred in which a case study was used. Focus group discussions were used to gather data. The study participants were twenty-one (21), all of which were purposely selected. Categories of students with disabilities comprised those with visual, hearing, physical impairment and other conditions/ unseen disabilities. A number of experiences and challenges were identified. Main challenges were on financial constraints, accessing the physical environment of some university buildings, lack of disability friendly facilities, shortage of technological devices and not being well versed in utilizing the technological devices, failure to modify study materials, attitudinal barriers, university administration, communication barrier and examination writing challenges. Focusing on details of challenges faced, shows that students had limited access to support services because of financial constraints. Students with physical impairments were finding it difficult to reach the administrative Offices as there were no lifts and the offices could only be reached by stairs. Both staff members and students needed more staff development on accessing information technologically and change of attitudes. The institutions and students lacked technological equipment such as computers and other hardware and software to have a sound backup system. Study materials were only partially modified for the visually impaired. The study also gave a conclusion and recommends that a lot more needs to be done in assisting students with varied forms of disability. Therefore, the study recommended among others; increment of the enrollment of students with disabilities under the scheme, Institutionalization of affirmative action, strengthening and operationalising university policies on students with disabilities, implementation of a quota system.



## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Access to education is one of the fundamental human rights. Article 30 of the 1995 constitution posited education as a right, specifying that all persons have a right to education. (Constitution of the Republic of Uganda).

Uganda's commitment to providing education to children with disabilities dates back to a modest start in 1983 when a one-staff section for Special Needs Education was established in the Ministry of Education. In 1987 the government established the 'Kajubi Commission' to review the entire education sector, and its report of 1989 emphasized the need for government to prioritize special needs education a recommendation which was adopted in the 1992 government White Paper on Education. (Abimanyi-Ochom & Mannan, 2014).

Uganda's initial report to the Committee on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD 2010) reports that:

All government programs for promoting education – Universal Primary Education (UPE), Universal Secondary Education (USE) and Business and Vocational Technical Training are all embedded with affirmative action for learners with disabilities. The Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) Act, No. 12 of 2008, promotes equitable access to education and training for all disadvantaged groups, including disabled people. Uganda promotes both inclusive education and special needs education where it is needed and all the 21,000 primary schools in Uganda practice Inclusive Education by admitting learners with special Education needs. (Abimanyi-ochom, & Mannan, 2014).

### **1.1 Background to the study**

Affirmative action (AA) initiatives have been critical in Uganda's journey of achieving equality and non-discrimination in education. These initiatives have played a major role in the determination of the current status of education and have established the extent to which the affirmative action's constitutional; legal and policy provisions have been implemented.

Affirmative action for students with disabilities is derived from both international and national conventions, declarations, laws and policies. These legal and policy frameworks have specific provisions that commit Uganda to take affirmative action in favor of students with disabilities as a historically marginalized social group.

Some of the key international instruments that define affirmative action are;

### **Beijing platform for Action 1995**

Strategic objective B.1 focuses on ensuring equal access to Education. The platform for action specifically requires governments to take actions:

To eliminate discrimination in education at all levels on the basis of gender, language, religion, national origin, age or disability, or any other form of discrimination and, as appropriate consider establishing procedures to address grievances.

### **The Education for all, Dakar 2000**

The Dakar Framework is a collective commitment to action. It affirms the vision of the World Declaration on Education for all (Jomtien 1990), supported by the Universal declaration on human rights and the convention on the rights of the child, specifically goal (ii) of the framework aims to ensure that;

all children, particularly girls, children living in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

### **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006**

Uganda ratified the UNCRPD and its optional protocol on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2008 without reservations, by so doing, Uganda committed itself to accord the same rights to persons with disabilities like all other citizens. The CRPD emphasizes an affirmative approach to inclusion, integration, access in all spheres of life and imposes affirmative action on state parties to create conditions of dignity, inclusion, respect and equality across the spectrum of human experience. Chapter six; article 27(h) promotes policies and programmes, including affirmative action, that encourages employers to recruit persons with disabilities.

The National frameworks for Affirmative action are mainly derived from the following National instruments;

### **The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995**

The constitution goes a long way in accommodating provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities. In article 32, the constitution calls for affirmative action in favour of marginalized groups. Article 32(1) states that:

Notwithstanding anything in this constitution, the state shall take affirmative action in favour of groups marginalized on the basis of gender, age, disability or any other reason created by history, tradition or custom, for the purpose of redressing imbalances which exist against them.

### **The Government White Paper 1992**

The government white paper on education is the basis of official policy on the purposes and programmes of education and continues to be the supreme guidance for the sector. The report has been promoted by government to advance affirmative action under articles 32, 33, 35 and 36 of the constitution. Chapter 9:3(iv) of the report states that;

Parliament shall enact laws to implement affirmative action. The laws should, among others, address the;

Clause (c) The implementation of equal opportunities for all marginalized groups.

Clause (e) the special needs of the disabled including the development of a sign language as part of the official language.

### **The Persons with Disability Act, 2006**

Is a comprehensive legal protection for persons with disabilities in accordance with article 32 and 35 of the constitution; to make provision for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities towards equalization of opportunities and for related matters; (part vi) (33) states that;

“Government shall take affirmative action in favour of persons with disabilities for the purpose of redressing imbalances which exist against them”.

### **1.1.1 Affirmative Action**

Affirmative action refers to a body of policies and procedures designed to eliminate discrimination against marginalized groups including ethnic minorities, and women (Onsongo, 2009). Its main objective is to redress the effects of past discrimination Onsongo (2009), in (Wanyande, 2003, 50). Affirmative action is effected when a deliberate action is taken that gives such groups priority in admissions, appointment and/or nominations to positions of responsibility. However, this priority to the disadvantaged does not mean that the minimum qualifications are ignored. What it means is that if there are two or more qualified people and one of them is a member of the disadvantaged group, then priority is given to that disadvantaged person. Writing about the use of affirmative action in the US, Onsongo in Tierney (1997) identified three forms of affirmative actions: a compensatory procedure to address past injustices; a corrective tool to address present discrimination, and an intervention to promote social equality and diversity in a given society. Affirmative action is assumed to be a temporary measure aimed at enabling members of the disadvantaged group to participate in those areas in which they have been disadvantaged. The assumption is that at some point, when such groups have been empowered, and have acquired what is necessary to enable them to participate and compete with the others, affirmative action will cease.

In Uganda affirmative action has been the most common response to imbalance. The Uganda Constitution, (1995) recognises the need for affirmative action and has many clauses aimed at eliminating discrimination on the basis of gender, age and disability. At the general level of political structures affirmative action programmes in favour of women and other ‘marginalized’ groups (youth, persons with disability, etc.) were instituted as soon as the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took over power in 1986. In the education sector affirmative action has a much longer history. It has been practiced in one form or the other, since girls were formally brought on board in the formal education arena in Uganda (Kwesiga & Ahikire, 2006).

Uganda has institutionalized affirmative action since the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took over the government in 1986. The new constitution of Uganda, promulgated in October 1995, makes various provisions for fair representation of all marginalized groups. Article 32:1 provides for affirmative action in favour of marginalized groups (Republic of Uganda

Constitution,1995). The government has instituted a number of mechanisms to ensure respect for human rights and equal participation of all. A separate Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development has been established. One of its functions is to empower communities, particularly marginalized groups to realise and harness their potential for sustainable and gender responsive development (Republic of Uganda, 1996, Ministry of Gender and Community Development Plan, 2).

### **1.1.2 Admission of Persons with Disabilities**

The government of Uganda has over the years been implementing various affirmative action strategies to increase access to education at various levels. In 1992, an appeal was made by the blind students in Iganga to Makerere University to give them special consideration after they had passed their A' level exams, but could not rise enough points for merit admission (Ajuna, 2011). Following the university's move to admit blind students, the government of Uganda appreciated the gesture and accepted to provide more assistance to disabled students who had passed their A' level through provision of teaching materials and funding the helpers of blind students. The scheme was launched in 1995 following the recommendations of the government in the Education White Paper of 1992 and the information that was submitted to the Ministry of Education by Makerere University for action. The scheme was also in line with the Uganda's Constitutional Principle of Affirmative Action in favour of marginalized groups. It is against this background that the policy of affirmative action for disabled students came into force (Ajuna, 2011)

However, this policy was only limited to the admission of disabled students as there was no comprehensive policy on the education of disabled students. For example, there was no policy to support disabled students with provision of equipment they need for education, no policy to ensure that all university buildings are compliant with those who use wheel chairs, no provision for the deaf, no proper communication for the blind as most of the information was put on notice boards. There was also no deliberate attempt made to fight stigmatization of disabled students by the university community which may make them unable to interact freely with other students.

Consequently, Affirmative action for People with disabilities was put at 4.0 points below the cut-off points of courses applied for. The allocation of 4.0 points to students with disabilities, like the 1.5 scheme, was a result of the general representation trend at the national level. People with disabilities have representation in the national parliament and in local governments. In addition, PWDs have lobbied to gain entry into the public decision-making arenas, including educational institutions. For instance, as the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (2001) was being amended in 2003, PWDs managed to get slots on councils of public universities. It is in this context that Makerere University established the scheme in 1992, although it only picked up momentum in the 1995–1996 academic year (Kwesiga & Ahikire, 2006).

Under the scheme the priority order when considering applications from PWDs was in the following order: blind, deaf, low vision, hard of hearing, candidates with mobility appliance, and candidates with physical disabilities. Later these categories were expanded to include albinos and people with chronic medical problems such as sickle cell anaemia and asthma. No quota or capacity limitations were set. Candidates applied for courses they felt they could manage as long as they qualified for the particular course (with not more than 4.0 points below the cut-off point).

As an affirmative action programme this scheme was important in opening up access for these categories of students. However, one would have expected that admission of PWDs would over time breed other spill-over benefits for students, such as ensuring more user-friendly physical facilities. Although at one time some faculties (such as Social Sciences) had a small fund, apparently drawn from locally generated funds, to assist such students, the overall university environment did not change to increase access for PWDs once admitted. Access to many lecture halls and other facilities remained the same, predicated on the ‘able’. There was also a case of a lame student who had to drop out of medicine at the third year because the instructors demanded so. According to one deputy registrar the student progressed well until she reached the stage for clinicals, and the lectures were of the view that clinicals and crutches could not go together. This example demonstrates a larger limitation of interventions from above. In this case Affirmative action for the disabled ensured entry but did little to ensure equitable and quality access within the system (Kwesiga & Ahikire, 2006).

It is noted that Makerere University introduced affirmative action informally in 1996. A Working Paper for the Review of Admission of candidates with disabilities on Government Sponsorship) by Makerere Senate Admissions Board, 2007/2008. Later the Universities and Tertiary Institutions Act (UATIAAct), 2001 introduced it to all public universities. This paved way for admission of students with different disabilities, historically the blind and the deaf and more recently the little people, deaf-blind and albinos (Ssengoba, 2014).

In 1997 Makerere passed new admission guidelines, and from the desk review information got from the executive Director for National Union of disabled persons of Uganda, Mr. Edison Ngirabakunzi, he states that since 1997, government has been providing affirmative action, where slots of 64 students with disabilities are sponsored at Public universities annually under the disability scheme which translate to 1,280 as per 2017 and these slots are distributed among the six current public universities in Uganda.

Of the 4.000 students admitted on government sponsorship to public universities every year about 64 are special needs students. They are admitted by the public universities joint admissions board (PUJAB) at Makerere and then distributed (Mwesigwa, 2013). This number represents 1.6 percent of the four thousand (4000) slots available for government sponsorship annually in public universities.

With an estimated 12.5 percent of Uganda's' population having at least one form of disability as per the 2014 population and housing census, (UBOS, 2014) Population and census Report, there is need for increasing on the number of students joining public universities under the disability scheme. It's only students who wish to join public universities through advanced level examinations that are able to take advantage of this provision on affirmative action (Emong, 2014).

The joint Admission form has provisions for students to indicate whether they have a disability and specify the nature of the disability. They are further required to attach photographs showing the level of disability and medical reports as evidence of having a disability. Prospective students with disabilities who are considered for admission through this scheme are prioritized according

to impairments as already mentioned. The philosophy behind the prioritization is that some of the impairments are more limiting than others (Emong, 2014).

At the time of admission, a special needs desk and sensitized staff is created to aid the assessment and registration of students with disabilities to ascertain if they meet the criteria of admission. (Desk review information from National Union of Persons with disabilities in Uganda (NUDIPU). It is at this stage that appropriate help for these students are identified and allocated depending on the assessed need and effort is made to meet their welfare.

This policy was later used by Makerere University as the then only university in the country and applied to government admissions as the only (direct entry scheme) for students with disabilities to the university for any course of their choice as long as they met the entry requirements. The policy was later used in admissions for the other public universities and to date universities admit students with disabilities on the basis of this government scheme. It is on this note that Kyambogo University also admits students with disabilities.

In spite of this positive move, students with disabilities have not been contented with the scheme. A one such example is a post graduate academic research study that was conducted by Ajuna Patrick at Makerere University in 2009 accessed on-line and published in the new vision of Nov 24th, 2011, which revealed that in spite of government sponsorship of disabled students under the affirmative action policy, the number of students with disabilities at the university was far lower than expected. One of the major reasons for this state of affairs was that there was lack of sensitization and awareness campaigns to the public about the availability of such an opportunity for students with disabilities. This was due to the fact that some people still considered disability as inability and hence, some people with disabilities were kept away from the public. The lucky ones who accessed the information and got admitted some of them did not complete their courses because of many challenges ranging from stigmatization, lack of proper communication to the blind, the deaf, competition for seats with able students in lecture rooms, to lack of enough money to buy some material things they need for their education, which are more expensive than the tuition paid by the government yet such things were not covered by the policy. For example, Braille - a device used by blind students for writing can go up to 1.5 million shillings and they are imported.



According to Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Section 5 of Uganda's Persons with Disability Act, 2006, and Article 35 of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda among others, people with disabilities just like others, have a right to education and they call for appropriate measures to enable them realize their full potential.

Also, Article 3 (d) of the World Declaration for Higher Education (1998), and the government of Uganda Education White Paper (1992) calls for active facilitation of students with disabilities in accessing and continuing with their education in order to enable them cope with the demands of studying. Basing on the above information, we cannot afford to continue neglecting persons with disabilities because;

World Health Organization (WHO) statistics reveals that persons with disabilities make up to approximately 10 percent of the total population of Uganda. Such a population is too big to be neglected. (Ajuna Patrick (2011).

There is an urgent need to formulate policies that make the environment in educational institutions user- friendly to students with disabilities as provided for in the World Declaration for Higher Education in the Twenty First Century, (1998) and the Uganda Government White Paper on Education (1992), which highlights the need to actively facilitate the students with disabilities in accessing and continuing with education.

However, at the time of Emong's study (2014), students with disabilities were increasingly being admitted into institutions of higher education through different admission avenues. Students with disabilities and other special needs could access higher education on merit through the advanced level (high school) results commonly referred to as direct entry, the mature age entry scheme, the diploma/certificate scheme and the 64 slots government provides for admission of persons with disabilities (PwDs) to public universities on affirmative action. Admitted students were also expected to receive a range of support services and systems to facilitate their academic and social inclusion.

The outcome of Emong's 2014 study, indicated however that more students with disabilities still experienced limited access to the academic programme of their first choice, office premises of

the staff who should attend to their needs, information, auxiliary aids or systems and support services. These limitations in the provisions are an obvious lack of reasonable accommodation necessary to enable students with disabilities and other special needs to manage learning and participation in different activities during their time in higher education.

These scenarios point out that institutions of higher learning have inaccessible educational infrastructure, have not thought of support systems and services to enable students with disabilities to access learning like other students if admitted into the university and are not aware of the implications of the lack of disability inclusion.

Other than admitting students with disabilities through affirmative action by public universities, there is limited evidence of applying equal opportunities measures in institutions of higher learning. These actions contravene the CRPD requirement which obliges states to ensure that institutions of higher learning adopt reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities in all matters and arrangements an institution makes. For students with disabilities, reasonable accommodation implies arrangements necessary for their admissions, teaching, learning and assessment, library, accommodation, disability support provision, participation in sports and recreation. According to Emong (2014), it appears that the overall higher education environment is not changing in response to access requirements for admitted students with disabilities. He argues that institutions of higher learning lack disability policies, provide limited opportunities for admissions of candidates with disabilities, lack support services for students with disabilities and the libraries, accommodation, lectures, mode of delivery and mode of assessment are not easily accessible.

It's against this background that a study was carried out to explore the experiences of students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action scheme in public universities in Uganda

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Affirmative action legislation is not only expected to redress past practices of discrimination but also to redress imbalances of the past education practices.

Higher education in Uganda has undergone changes in respect to modifications in the perceived needs of the society, legislation policies and social attitudes. Consequently, the student pool has changed considerably in higher educational institutions as a result of affirmative action policy and now includes a significant number of students with disabilities seeking to complete their studies as colleges and universities increase across the country.

But despite the concerted efforts and initiatives by the government to redress the imbalances of the past, the enrollment of students with disabilities to public universities under affirmative action scheme has remained stuck at 64 slots every academic year, yet the number of applicants under the scheme has kept on increasing. For people with disabilities, in addition to entry through affirmative action scheme, user-friendly physical facilities and individualized support services are also required to ensure their equalization of opportunities in the institution. But for more than twenty years (20) years from the commencements of the reforms, not much from the institutions is showing that higher education is equalizing opportunities for persons with disabilities to access learning and participate like every other student. It appears that the overall higher education environment is not changing in response to access requirements for persons with disabilities once admitted. As Kwesiga and Ahikire (2006) particularly point out.. many lecture halls and facilities remain the same, predicted on the 'able' with many disadvantaging effects to students with disabilities in some programmes. The students with disabilities and conditions have faced a number of experiences and challenges, which this study sought to unveil.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of students with disabilities admitted for study programs under affirmative action scheme to public universities.

### **1.4 Research objectives**

The study was guided by the following objectives;

- a) Explore the experiences of students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action scheme in public universities in Uganda.

- b) Establish the major challenges faced by students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action scheme in public universities in Uganda.
- c) Identify the supportive mechanisms in place to enable access to learning and participation for students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action.

#### **1.4.1 Research questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions;

- a) What are the experiences of students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action scheme in public universities in Uganda?
- b) What are the major challenges faced by students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action scheme in public universities in Uganda?
- c) What are the supportive mechanisms in place to enable access to learning and participation for students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action scheme?

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The study aimed at highlighting the major experiences students with disabilities are encountering in pursuance of their university education under affirmative action in public universities. It was hoped that the study may shed light on the effectiveness of the affirmative action policy and give direction to future policy initiatives. The information gathered may also be vital to policy makers, stakeholders, donors, service providers, administrators and civil society organizations and the general public in the provision of intervention strategies to address the plight of students with disabilities by putting forward appropriate policies for the implementation of affirmative action. To the academicians; the findings may serve as a basis for more similar research in future for other researchers who might carry out a study in a related field. The study will also enable the researcher fulfill the partial requirements for the award of a masters degree in Special Needs Education of Kyambogo University.

## **1.6 Scope of the study**

The study was conducted at Kyambogo and Makerere Universities located in Kampala Uganda's capital city. The study was based on three objectives. The first Objective was to; explore the experiences of students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action in terms of admission, environmental situation, support services and staff attitudes etc. Objective two was to; establish the major challenges faced by students with disabilities; and Objective three was to; Identify the supportive mechanisms in place to enhance the learning and participation of students with disabilities.

The research was conducted between October 2017 to November 2018.

## **1.7 Delimitations**

The research focused on the experiences of students with disabilities admitted for study programs to public universities under affirmative action. Uganda has approximately seven public universities, but due to limited time for the research and financial implications, the area of study was limited to two public universities i.e. Makerere university and Kyambogo university in order to make it easy to collect data within the stipulated research period.

### **1.7.1 Limitations**

Experiences of students with disabilities admitted for study programmes under affirmative action scheme in public universities in Uganda were chosen as the focus of the study. Affirmative action deals with the problem of equal opportunities in several areas such as higher education, employment, promotion etc. given that the author's personal interest is mainly in university education and that the thesis has a limited length, the discussion focused on higher education affirmative action policy. And of the targeted groups of the policy, only students with disabilities were covered.

## **1.8 Theoretical framework**

The study was guided by the Natural rights theory of John Locke et al, in UK Essays (2017), and social model of disabilities by Oliver (1990). Natural rights theory refers to the natural rights that are perceived as inherent and original rights of human nature, which equally belong to all men

without exception, and which are possessed solely because of their human conditions. They are here to stem from a concept of natural law, whatever definition may be attributed to them.

Hart, (2017) in distorted times once asserted that “if there are any moral rights at all, it follows that there is at least one natural right, the equal right of all men to be free.” And the proposition that all men have natural rights or rights as human beings.

This theory emphasizes and recognizes that the inherent dignity of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace. Also, the theory emphasizes and declares that human rights are universal; to be enjoyed by all people, no matter who they are and where they live. This theory advocates for the removal of barriers to allow non – discrimination and participation in all aspects of life, it seeks for equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination and concerted citizen action to uphold them. Therefore, the focus of the study was to examine whether students with disabilities admitted for under affirmative action scheme enjoy these human rights as stipulated by the theory.

### **Social model**

Oliver (1990), notes that disablement is not a problem located in the individual, but an institution problem, shaped by economic, political and ideological forces. It's society which disables persons with disability. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairment by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. To use Michael Oliver's words, hence disability according to the social model is all the things that impose restrictions on persons with disabilities ranging from individual prejudice to institutional discrimination, from inaccessible buildings to unusable transport systems and so on.

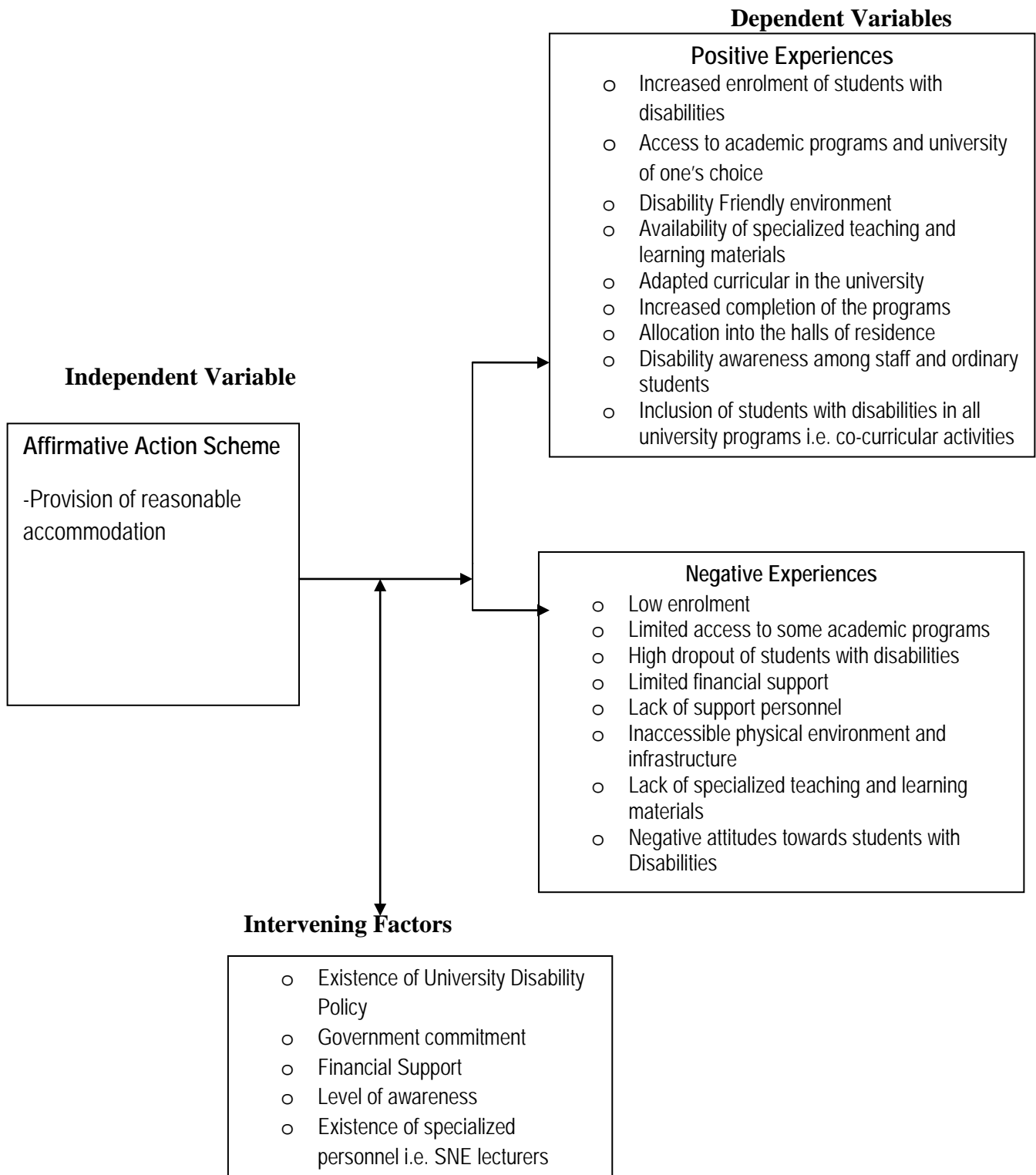
This new paradigm involves nothing more or less fundamental than a switch away from focusing on the physical limitations of particular individuals to the way the physical and social environments impose limitations upon certain groups or categories of people. Disability in this case study is thus understood as a form of social oppression generated by barriers. (Dis) ableism and exclusion from social life.

Perceived strength of the social model is that it is socially and politically located in the persons with disabilities' movements and activism for social change. It also puts disabled people in control of their lives. Furthermore, the social model is regarded as accessible, as it's based on

using people's experiences of exclusion of disablement to enable them to make correction between removal of barriers and fight for equality with greater justice in society as a whole. This is why Beresford (2015), describes the understanding of the social model as ' a light bulb moment for persons with disabilities.

In the context of the study; University policies and plans were looked at in-depth to see whether they stipulate specific provisions to; provide an accommodative environment for students with disabilities; reasonable accommodations for individuals learning requirements; required support to facilitate their effective education. The attitudes of administrators and staff were also scrutinized.

**1.9 Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework**





From the illustration above, the variables interact in a way that the experiences of students with disabilities are dependent on the nature of affirmative action as the independent variable, and the ideal is that when affirmative action is considered, there must be reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities to learn and participate in their environment. The indicators of reasonable accommodation are for example, modifications /adaptations of things like the environment, curriculum, infrastructure, time, materials, teaching methods, communication etc.

Positive implementation of affirmative action therefore leads to positive experiences of students with disabilities such as:

- Increased enrolment of students with disabilities
- Access to academic programs and university of one's choice
- Disability Friendly environment
- Availability of specialized teaching and learning materials
- Adapted curricular in the university
- Increased completion of the programs
- Allocation into the halls of residence
- Disability awareness among staff and ordinary students
- Inclusion of students with disabilities in all university programs i.e. co-curricular activities
- Provision of financial and personal support services

On the other hand, poor implementation of the requirements of affirmative action leads to negative experiences of students with disabilities such as;

- Low enrolment
- Limited access to some academic programs
- High dropout of students with disabilities
- Lack of university tuition
- Inaccessible physical environment and infrastructure
- Lack of specialized teaching and learning materials
- Negative attitudes towards students with disabilities by staff and students
- Poor welfare for students with disabilities

- Unavailability of support personnel etc.

However, we may advocate for the realization of affirmative action, but we may succeed or fail because of some other factors that also have to be taken care of that may influence or affect the realization or implementation of affirmative action i.e.

There must be finances to modify the physical environment by providing ramps, buy specialized learning materials, train and sensitize staff on disability issues among others.

Availability of the university disability policy in place to guide the implementers on how or what to do to ensure that affirmative action becomes a reality.

The level of awareness – if the staff, administrators and ordinary students are aware of the concerns of pwds, then it can easily succeed because discrimination towards students with disabilities will cease.

Government commitment - if government prioritizes affirmative action in its developmental plans, then it can become a reality.

Existence of special personnel- if lectures and staff are trained to handle students with disabilities, then all the learning needs of these students will be taken into account.etc.

### **1.10 Definition of operating terms:**

Terms used in this study have the following meaning:

**A public university:** as per the universities and other tertiary institutions act (2001) refers to a university established by the minister with the approval of parliament under section 22 and maintained out of public funds.

**University:** means any institution, school, institute or center of higher education, other than a tertiary institution, one of which is the provision of post-secondary education offering courses leading to the award of certificates, diplomas and degrees and conducting research and publication.

**Disability:** as per the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities refers to a social construct resulting from the interaction between a person's impairment, attitudinal and environmental barriers.

**Disability Unit:** means the Unit established at university to promote the integration of students with disabilities at the university and who assists on a daily basis to address their respective learning and reasonable accommodation needs.

**Impairment:** means a physical, sensory, mental, emotional or cognitive condition resulting from an injury, illness, trauma and/or congenital factors that is permanent, long term or recurring and which causes or is likely to cause a loss or difference of physiological or psychological functioning which will be determined on a case by case basis. The impairment can be visible or invisible. The impairment impacts substantively on the way the student accesses the learning experience and may require reasonable accommodation measures to be put in place.

**Persons with disabilities:** as per the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments and/or chronic conditions which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

**Policy:** refers to the university policy document and all procedures and guidelines issued in terms of its provisions, and those that may be issued in future.

**Reasonable accommodation:** means any modification or adjustment to the environment that will enable a student with a disability to have access to or to participate or advance in academia. These measures ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy equal opportunities and are equitably represented in the student community to the extent that it does not cause the University unjustifiable hardship.

**Students with disabilities:** for purposes of this policy refers to any person with impairment (as defined) who is suitably qualified and who experiences restricted access to. Or progression in the learning experience due to their impairment and/or barriers and/or a combination thereof.

Disability, as a consequence of impairment as well as environmental and attitudinal barriers, substantially limits a student from equal participation in the learning environment.

**Admissions:**

The University welcomes suitably qualified students with disabilities and will admit them using the criteria of admission under affirmative action scheme for students with disabilities.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the review of literature regarding the experiences of students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action scheme. This was based on the research questions / objectives formulated in chapter one. Sources of information included policy papers, journals, research dissertations, textbooks and websites.

### **2.1 Experiences of students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action to public universities.**

Admission according to Emong (2014), refers to acceptance to enroll on a programme of study either through government sponsorship or private sponsorship.

#### **2.1.1 Admission to public universities:**

The Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, 2001, provides for admission to a public university, all qualified citizens of Uganda without discrimination, with consideration of affirmative action in favour of marginalized groups based on gender, disability and disadvantaged groups. (Section 28). Section 24(2) (b) of the Act requires public universities to provide higher education to all persons, including persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities can apply for any course of study of their choice at university

In fulfillment of this provision; a research report for enhancing public financing for persons with disabilities in higher institutions of learning dated July 2016 established that Makerere and Kyambogo Universities have stand-alone policies on students with disabilities, though adopted in 2014 which commit to admitting students with disabilities to any courses of their choice as long as they meet the requirements for the course. <http://www.csbag.org/--/public-funding-for-persons-with-disabilities-in-higher-institutions-of-learning> (Accessed on Nov 10<sup>th</sup> 2017). The findings of this study also confirmed the existence of these policies in both universities, which state that:

Students with disabilities shall be admitted without any discrimination to courses of their preference whether in-service or pre-service, on meeting the entry

requirements in accordance with established entry schemes and in consideration of their suitability for the programme.

But despite these provisions this study found out that students still experience limited access to the academic programmes of their choice.

A study by Emong (2014), also found out that universities rarely consider admitting students with disabilities to specific programmes of their choices, especially purely science based or medicine disciplines. As noted by one of the officials responsible for admissions:

A person should be capable of physically doing a practical. One should be able to physically see and hear what is being examined during a practical. Thus, because of those conditions it is not advisable for a person with physical disability, visual impairment or hearing impairment to be enrolled for those courses as such a candidate cannot pass practical examinations.

The opinion above depicts the understanding of disability by the official interviewed and its implications on the way disability inclusion in academic programmes in higher education is interpreted and can be attained. The opinion therefore merits analysis in relation to the meaning of disability.

If the opinion of the official above connotes disability to be a limitation or incapacity to perform - a view that implies that impairment and a disability are the same, a medical / individual model understanding of disability (Emong and Eron 2014 in Barnes and Mercer, 2010: 30-33) - then such a view potentially leads to exclusive discrimination of candidates with disabilities in some academic programmes. If the opinion considers disability as a result of barriers erected against students with impairments - a view that implies impairment and disability are distinct, a social model understanding of disability (As cited in; Oliver, 2009) - then it calls for provisions of measures to eliminate barriers to participation by students with disabilities who qualify to join higher education.

Similar findings were pointed out from a research report for enhancing public funding for pwds in higher institutions of learning (2016) which established that most times, the students with disabilities are allocated courses that are not necessarily their choices. This concern was mostly registered at Kyambogo University, that most students with disabilities are allocated courses in the Faculty of Special Needs and Rehabilitation when it not their preferred choices. A discussion with the administrators attributed this to the rigorous needs in some of the courses that might not

be suitable for students with disabilities based on the assessments made. For example, in one of the public universities, a staff in the office of the Dean of students explained that the university has limited enrolment of students with disabilities into the Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery course because most of them have impairments that make them unsuitable to handle rigors of the course like ward rounds and handling patients and that the students on the programme use the university hospital whose facilities (like no walkways and narrow doors ) would for example make it difficult for a student with disability using a wheel chair to move around.

Emong and Eron (2016), also found out that, students with disabilities were increasingly being admitted into institutions of higher learning through different admission avenues. They state that, students with disabilities and other special needs can access higher education on merit through the advanced level (high school) results commonly referred to as direct entry, the mature entry scheme, the diploma/certificate scheme and the 64 slots government provides for admission of persons with disabilities (PWDs) to public universities on Affirmative action which is the focus of the study. They also indicated however that more students with disabilities experienced limited access to the academic programme of their first choice; they attribute these limitations in the provisions as an obvious lack of reasonable accommodation necessary to enable students with disabilities and other special needs to manage learning and participation in different activities during their time in higher education.

They stressed that the argument for a university not to accept a student with disability when it does not have the required facilities would appear logically acceptable and realistic. Whereas the actions by the universities to fail or refuse to admit qualified candidates with disability amounts to direct discrimination of students with disabilities and contravenes section 6(2a) of the Uganda Persons with Disabilities Act (2006), and the spirit within the international human rights law. These scenarios point out those institutions of higher learning have inaccessible educational infrastructure, have not thought of support systems and services to enable students with disabilities to access learning like other students if admitted into the university and are not aware of the implications of lack of disability inclusion.

A study in Ethiopia by Yared, (2008) on entrance for students with disabilities in the universities of Addis Ababa and Bahirdar Universities established that there was no specific admission procedure or restriction for students with disabilities, though both referred to assisting students with disabilities in choosing an appropriate course. In addition, Addis Ababa University referred to the policy of affirmative action in the form of modified entrance criteria and preferential treatment in the choice of subjects. Modified entrance criteria in Addis Ababa entailed exemption from certain subjects i.e. the blind students were not required to have passed mathematics in their school leaving certificate. Similarly, preferential treatment is cited in Addis Ababa in such a way that students with disabilities are assigned to the department of their first choice provided that they meet the minimum requirements. Bahirdar University also implements the preferential treatment procedure to some extent in assigning departments for students with disabilities.

In conformity to the above, a study by Chiparaushe, Mapako, and Makaru (2011), in the University of Zimbabwe established that majority of students with disabilities are enrolled in the social sciences department. No students were enrolled in programs such as natural sciences; medicine and veterinary sciences; probably, this was due to lack of orientation to different faculties that they could be enrolled in, prior to their registration in the faculty of Arts and social sciences where they seemed to be dominant. They point out that, equally possible, could be that the students lacked fine motor dexterity in handling objects of different structure, for instance in medicine students are expected to perform a lot of practical work with military precision; similarly, programs such as electrical engineering may pose a threat to their physical wellbeing, hence , the trend of avoiding such programs which seem to be risky and opting for safer ones, such as those found in arts and social sciences which basically need anyone who can debate. The study also established that there was a possibility that their existed lack of skilled personnel to teach students with disabilities in such areas as evidenced by the lectures' failure to understand and write Braille. The author views such scenarios as connoting disability to be a limitation or incapacity to perform which leads to discrimination of candidates with disabilities in some academic programmes and calls for measures to eliminate barriers to participation of students with disabilities who qualify to join university as advocated by the social model of disability.



Esther Kyozira, the manager for Disability and Human Rights programme at the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU), applauds the achievements so far, but also talks about the empty half of the glass. The Act, for instance, does not define a special needs student, with bonafide disabled students sometimes being left out. An albino, for instance, is not regarded as a PWD by most institutions “Unless he/she has another disability like being visually impaired, they (albinos) can’t be admitted. It is also just recent that they started accepting little people among the disabled.”. Also, people with mental disability can never be admitted on the affirmative action basis. Universities claim that the mentally disabled can later become a problem to the university. “It is ironical that when such students go there on private sponsorship, they are admitted,” Kyozira says. (Accessed on line from the observer January 22<sup>nd</sup> 2013). I concur with the above findings because for long people have misinterpreted disability with only physical challenges. “Disability goes beyond what we can see in relation with the international convention. It goes a long way to include things we cannot see such as sickle cells, asthma among others”

### **2.1.2 Support services for students with disabilities**

Students with disabilities and special needs require assistance particular to their respective disabilities and needs to enable them fully participate in the learning and general life while at university. These include devices like hearing aids, tricycles for the persons with physical disabilities, typewriters, Braille machines and white canes for persons with visual impairment and personal guides and sign language interpreters among others. Students admitted under affirmative action scheme are therefore expected to receive a range of support services and systems to facilitate their academic and social inclusion in the university.

Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) calls for state parties to recognize the rights of Persons with disabilities to education at all levels, and an Inclusive Education system that enables development of human potential, and a sense of dignity without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. This among others requires that member states’ education systems provide reasonable accommodation for individuals learning requirements; Persons with disabilities receive the required support to facilitate their learning skills for the full and equal participation in education including learning Braille; peer support and

mentoring, alternative script formats to communication, learning of sign language, employing teachers and professionals qualified in sign language and Braille.

Given this obligation enshrined by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A mini research report for enhancing public funding for persons with disabilities in higher institutions of learning July (2016) ([www.csbag.org/--/](http://www.csbag.org/--/)) established that, Makerere and Kyambogo universities policies committed to providing support and learning aids to students with disabilities based on individual assessment of need. some of the support provided to students with disability was mainly personal assistance related support such as sighted guides for the blind, sign language interpreters for the deaf, helpers for those with physical disabilities and funds to purchase disability related devices, such as wheelchairs and Braille material. The reviewed policies also stipulate that the responsibility for providing financial assistance for students with disabilities for purposes of acquiring the particular needs they possess rests with the students' respective funders (government or private agency). Kyambogo University however commits to providing financial assistance to privately sponsored students as well; there is also commitment to creating a vote in the budget for students with disabilities.

It was established from the same report that the Universities; conduct Medical Checks/Review before admitting students under the Disability Scheme for purposes of ensuring that the deserving students are admitted on this scheme. This information is also used by the relevant University administration to late cater for the selected students with disabilities. On an annual basis, usually in the First semester, the students on the Disability Scheme undergo an assessment, conducted by University Administration together with experts contracted from government departments to determine the level of need for each student with disability. Following this assessment, the Universities provide direct financial assistance to the students with disability, ranging from Uganda shillings 50,000 to Uganda shillings 600,000. This money is channeled directly to the respective students' bank accounts by electronic funds transfer. It is this money that the students use to meet some of their scholastic materials. This funding has been available for students with disability at Makerere and Kyambogo Universities since the early 2000s. Indeed, this study established that this funding is still available to students with disabilities as per the focus group discussions and the money is

still channeled directly to the students' bank account after undergoing the disability assessment to establish the students' needs. The students however, expressed dissatisfaction with the delayed disbursement of the funds, and the little funding allocated to them after assessment vis-à-vis their perceived needs and the level of inflation in the economy more especially at Kyambogo where students reported that the pay seems not to be increasing as they reported to continue receiving between 100,000- 500,000 UGX. However, there is some contention at Makerere as students are paid between 1.2- 1.4 million annually.

There was also concern about the competence of the Assessment Committees. As one student at Makerere University reported:

The assessors are not trained to assess especially the unseen disabilities. Also, there are usually so many students requiring assessment yet the assessors are few.

The Universities employ personal guides and helpers for students with disabilities to enable them have access to a barrier free physical environment at the University premises. The University pays these guides a monthly salary plus meals, and accommodation. This was indeed confirmed through the focus group discussions with the students with disability at the Universities visited. There was however concern that it is only the students with a visual / sight, disability that enjoy this privilege yet there are other disability cases that would need this kind of support. During the time of this study, this privilege was no longer enjoyed by only those with a visual impairment but also those with physical and hearing disabilities. There were also concerns of little pay for these personal guides which affect their effectiveness in doing their assigned responsibilities as well as non-uniformity of the pay across the Public Universities. Indeed, one student at Makerere University commented thus:

The Uganda shillings 70,000 which our guides are paid per month is very little compared to Kyambogo University where the pay is Uganda shillings 300,000 per month.

This difference in payment was attributed to the fact that at Makerere University, guides are provided with meals and accommodation yet at Kyambogo University, they receive only meals and no accommodation. Students also reported perpetual delay by the University Administration

to release the pay for the guides, a process that is usually done in a lump sum towards end of a Semester which demoralises the guides; and the scenarios where the respective students with disability are not involved in selecting their own guides. This study found out that Kyambogo still pays the guides better than Makerere though Makerere still provides meals and accommodation to the guides whereas at Kyambogo it was reported that the guides no longer receive even meals although it continues to pay the guides better than Makerere. Concerns of late pay still persist though students are now responsible for selecting their own guides/interpreters.

When it comes to the learning environment, the universities tried to provide some students with the relevant learning materials especially the visually disabled who are provided with Braille materials, large format prints, and other equipment like special typewriters. However, some of these devices were reportedly not in good working condition as expressed in the following students' comments "Sometimes it breaks down and you need to repair it" and, they are old and no longer work well. We need new ones".

It was noted that students with other impairments related to hearing, physical / motor, and biological hardly received any assistive devices to support their learning needs. ([www.wcsbag.org](http://www.wcsbag.org)). However, at the time of this study assistive some devices were availed to all students with disabilities upon assessment of their learning needs.

Below is an extract of the dilemma that students with disability experience at university;

Rashid Ssozi, 30, was admitted to Makerere University in 2006 to do a bachelor's degree in Mass Communication, he hoped to find a conducive environment for a special needs' student. But Ssozi, who is visually impaired, did the three-year course in five years – not that he is dull, but because the environment at Makerere University was simply not favourable for a disabled student. It reached a time when he didn't have a guide; no one could work for just Shs 30, 000 a month, [the money given to a guide for special needs student].

On another occasion, Ssozi says, he had to redo an economics paper because a guide misread for him the exams time table. He came late for the paper and when he labored to explain to the lecturers what had happened, they told him to try another year.

Every academic year, Ssozi received Shs 350, 000 to buy materials like Braille paper, talking calculators, Perkins Braille, among others. But he says the money was not enough. A realm of paper Braille, for instance, cost about Shs 25, 000 then. He needed about 10 a semester, meaning paper took up 70 percent of the facilitation money.

Ssozi is one of the special needs students that are admitted at universities and other tertiary institutions on the affirmative action ticket every year. Written by Alon Mwesiga (Accessed online in the Observer feature of Jan 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013).

Article 24, 2(b) of the Universities and other Tertiary institutions Act (2001) says every person with disability should be given an opportunity of acquiring higher education but this seems not to be the case.

A study in the University of Zimbabwe by Chiparaushe et al, (2011), shows that support services were provided to students with disabilities. Universities have special facilities in place to cater for students with disabilities such as modules and exams in Braille and special room conditions as facilities in place to cater for students with disabilities. In addition, most students with disabilities find their learning materials recorded on compact discs and audio cassettes. Findings from this study established that in both universities, no student reported having their materials recorded on compact discs or audio cassettes though students with visual impairment acknowledged taking exams in Braille and special room conditions during exams.

At the time of Emong's study, (2014), public universities were providing for support services to students with disabilities, but only to those funded by the government. In addition, funds were also provided to students to purchase disability related devices, such as wheelchairs and Braille materials. The mode of providing this support was reported to differ in the public institutions. For example, in MUK the university provided students with disabilities with funds to employ personal assistant related support services whereas at KYU, the university employed for them with their recommendation. He notes that; the variance could arise from the lack of institutional disability policy, the silence in the Persons with Disability Act (2006), lack of guidelines by the National Council for Higher Education on the required support students with disabilities and special needs in higher education should benefit from and lack of supervision on the support provided by each institution. Indeed, this was confirmed by the findings of this study that both universities continue to provide both personal and financial support to students with students. The variance in the payment has now been regularized because both universities now employ personal assistants upon the students' recommendation and pay them directly.

His study also found out that; in both universities, the disability support services were under the jurisdictions of the office of the Dean of students. In that respect, the universities considered this support to be largely a welfare support. This was in accordance with the functions and powers vested onto the office of the Dean of Students, which was ‘The welfare of students.

Regarding the policy on provision of this support. Emong’s research also found that none of the universities had a written (formal) policy on this, it was at the discretion of the Dean of students to make the final decision on what support to provide based on the existing understanding of supporting students with disabilities. As stated by one institution of higher learning:

This university has no written policy on provision of support to students with disabilities. The current practice is based on the minutes of the University Council Meetings on the welfare of students with disabilities adopted at least 8 years ago.

One of the wardens in one public university clarified “because of the absence of such a policy, the external auditors have queried the basis of the payments to students with disabilities”.

Additionally, none of the university’ had clear criterion of supporting students with disabilities such as asthma, sickle cells anemia, albinism and mental health. On this matter one warden explained:

Generally, the needs of those students are not clear to the warden. It’s at the discretion of the warden to determine what financial support to provide, but again in the absence or unclarity of the policy on that, there is nothing much the warden can do rather than sympathizing at the situation.

Regarding the policy on the provision of support services this study established through a discussion with one of the wardens who reported that the university now has a written policy for this support and all students with disabilities are supported provided the student appears for the assessment of his/her needs. Findings from the focus group discussion with students also reported that the support is still under the jurisdiction of the office of the Dean of students.

Arguably, if the said Acts had these provisions, then both public and private institutions of higher learning would be compelled to comply with the requirements. Without a policy on supporting students with disabilities, the support provided would be at the discretion of the officers of the institutions or any existing understanding for the support to these students. The

implication is that the support was largely dependent on the good will of staff rather than on institutional policy. Literature available indicates that prevailing practices regarding disability in institutions of higher education are entrenched in medical rather than social frameworks (Emong and Eron (2016) (As cited in; (Collins & O'Mahony, 2001, Borland & James, 1999, Riddell, 1998, Reindal, 1995). Such individualised perspective and tendency makes support services and systems limited, making staff favour one impairment at the expense of the others, students fearing to be singled out and discriminated against or for students to negotiate their needs and services with individual staff. The implication is making the extent to which this support is provided inadequate. As expressed by one leader of students with disabilities;

The monetary value of the basic requirements for a blind student to effectively study exceeds far much the financial support he/she receives from the university. A blind student receives during the first year of his/her studies, 1,400,000/= Uganda Shillings (UGX) equivalent to \$389 Dollars. He/she is expected to buy; a Perkins machine which is 2,000,000/= UGX, \$ 555 Dollars, a carton of Braille paper at 94,000/= UGX, \$ 26 Dollars, Jaws computer software which is 2,300,000/= UGX, \$ 639 Dollars and a laptop computer which is at least 1,200,000/= UGX \$ 333. For the student of limited mobility using a wheel chair, the cost of a new wheelchair is 400,000/= UGX \$ 111 and the university provides him/her 200,000/= UGX \$ 55. (Emong 2014)

The same study indicates that in one university, the plight of students who are deaf going without an interpreter attracted the intervention of one lecturer. The lecturer threatened to take legal action against the university over what he termed as 'a gross violation of the rights of students with disabilities to education'. The lecturer noted:

It came to my attention that a privately sponsored student was attending lectures without the services of a sign language interpreter. The university does not see it as its obligation to provide disability related support services to privately sponsored students. But the student had no money to employ the sign language interpreter and attending lectures without the sign interpreter was a disadvantage to him. I felt bad about this situation so I informed the university that I will secede from the university and take the university to court over violation of rights of the deaf students. That is when the university employed a sign language interpreter for the deaf student.

Considering the cost of paying for an interpreter in addition to the tuition and recognising that an interpreter is the ear of the deaf student, the cost should be borne by the university in line with the requirement for reasonable accommodation. Thus, this study suggests that institutional policy needs to take into consideration provisions that are accommodative to students with

disabilities taking cognisance of their right to education as enshrined in the international and national legislative documents.

Regarding students' accommodation and general welfare both Makerere and Kyambogo university policies stipulate commitment to provide accommodation in the halls of residence at university for all government sponsored persons with disabilities as well as the privately sponsored ones who express the need and can afford to pay for the service. Specific accommodative arrangements are stipulated in the policies including reserving rooms in the ground floor or first floor, rooms near washrooms and dining rooms for persons with disabilities to enable their easy access to meals, places of convenience and the rooms of accommodation. [www.csbag.org](http://www.csbag.org) (2016). Indeed, this study established that students with disabilities are accommodated in the ground floor/ first floor though some complained that the rooms are in poor conditions since they are near the wash rooms.

The report also found out that; Tuition, Accommodation and Meals was provided throughout a student's course of study from the general package offered by Government for all the sponsored students, including those with disabilities and special needs. Indeed, all the students acknowledged receiving this package.

At Makerere University, accommodation and meals for government-sponsored students was given in kind at Halls of Residence or in terms of Food and Living out Allowance to enable the students' access to the services out of campus. However, it was established as a matter of Policy, all the students admitted under the disability scheme at Makerere University were accommodated and provided meals from the university's halls of residence. There were indications in all the Universities that special provisions in terms of room allocation were made in University Halls of Residence for the students with disabilities and special needs to be accommodated in easily accessible rooms, for example, ground floor rooms in case of storied residence halls or rooms near places of convenience. [www, csbag](http://www.csbag.org). (2016).

The students interviewed at University expressed concern that in most cases the washrooms and toilets are usually dirty, and are used by all students, which creates a problem for some disabled students who use them in terms of health risks and difficulty in reaching the facilities therein.



Some students at Makerere University also expressed concern that the consideration of room allocation for students with disability and special needs is only available after their first year of study since on admission, allocation lists for room accommodation place them with other students without regard to their special needs. As one student at Makerere University said:

Special room allocation is done for continuing students and not for freshers. While another student commented that one can get a special appropriate room after a long tiresome process.

Congestion in the university's halls of residence was also evident. Rooms were shared by at least 5(five) students. The toilet and washing facilities because of a large number of students were always dirty. Whereas this was a general challenge to all students, students with disabilities faced an additional challenge of inaccessibility of the halls, many have storied buildings, and none of them had a lift. To reduce access problems at these halls, students with mobility problems or visual impairment were accommodated on the ground floors. The other categories of disabled students are accommodated on any floor. In Kyambogo University a student with severe mobility problems was considered for occupancy of a single room together with a full-time helper. These voices point to cases of the universities not considering the special needs of some of these students at the point of admission based on their disclosure in their application forms or lack of self-confidence on the part of the students to proactively articulate their special needs to the concerned offices at the time of joining the University, for consideration.

### **2.1.3 Physical accessibility to facilities and study spaces**

Access to physical facilities describes how students reach to and benefit from library facilities and services, lectures, mode of delivery, and mode of assessment.

Having physical facilities and study spaces that are accessible to students with disabilities and special needs in public universities is a fulfillment of sections 19 and 20 of the PWDs Act, 2006. These provisions require among others that suitable exits, entrances, staircases, rails, ramps, elevators and lifts, and pathways to parking areas be created for persons with disabilities.

Section 19 makes a responsibility of all organs in public and private institutions to provide exits and entrances to toilets for PWDs, with universal designs. The toilets should have wide doors

and ramps, should not be having slippery floors and should not be so raised to enable easy access by PWDs especially those with physical disabilities, who use wheel chairs.

Relatedly, section 20 provides that buildings of public use should be accessible for persons with disabilities through easy to find entrances, safe and well dimensioned staircases and rails, ramps, elevators and lifts and accessible pathways and parking areas.

The universities have shown commitment to having their buildings meet the required standards of easy access by all university students including PWDs. (NUWUDO, 2016). However, “The law and Africana sections of the Makerere library were located on the upper floors of the library. This made it difficult to climb up to get primary references leaving students with disabilities end up depending on photocopied notes. Others usually went to the library once a week on the weekend”. In some universities students’ study from level three yet they are students with disabilities. Just like in the other universities, this is because most of these buildings are old and have not been modified to create rails, ramps and pathways for easy access by Pwds and no special facilities like reading rooms, and toilets have been created for them. The administrators attributed this to limitations in funds and structural requirements of the old structures. (NUWODU, 2016)

A study by Chiparaushe et al, (2011) in the University of Zimbabwe revealed that state institutions were easily accessible to students with disabilities since they were designed with students with disabilities in mind. However, the offices of Vice-Chancellor, Provisional Vice-Chancellor and other administrators such as the universities of Zimbabwe and National university of Science and Technology (NUST) were not accessible to students who used wheel chairs.

In conformity data from Emong’s (2014) study indicated that physical accessibility was an overall impediment in all institutions. Other than the recently constructed buildings, all the old buildings which were the bulk of lecture rooms in institutions of higher learning were to some extent inaccessible to people with mobility difficulties and other disabilities. The libraries had limited books and other publications. Because of the limited materials, restrictions were imposed on borrowing some of the library materials. There was acknowledgement of underdeveloped

technological infrastructure, including internet services, in these institutions, which made access to online materials very much limited. Participants argued that access to online academic resources in all universities was still being developed.

The same study also indicated that all students with disabilities found the libraries inaccessible in one way or another. For example, students with visual impairments found the materials in the libraries uniquely inaccessible. First, the restrictions on borrowing books posed greater challenges to blind students than other students, especially for books which were on the reserve selves. A blind student referring to this book had to Braille the material within the library, which was also an inconvenience to other library users arising from the condition that there must be silence in the library and the noise the brailing machine makes. A student with visual impairment recounted an experience:

I am not allowed to borrow a book and told to read in the library. Not even my guide is allowed in the library because she is not a student. I am told the library is a quiet place and being read to by the guide is making noise to other readers. There is completely no consideration to my needs and yet am expected to perform at the same pace to other students.

Second, the modifications undertaken in some libraries such as the provision of ramps targeted mainly people with physical disabilities. No consideration was made to other impairments save to a limited extent, the Faculty of Special Needs and Rehabilitation library of Kyambogo University. The “exceptional library” belongs to the specialized faculty in Uganda which offers a wide range of courses on special needs and rehabilitation, it has a long history on this. Its library is both physically accessible and had some equipment for visual impairment, it had a CCTV reader for users of low vision, a Braille printer, a voice synthesizer and a computer lab with 10 computers equipped with the JAWS programme. Other than that, it had limited on-line publications. Universities find it hard to ensure accessible library services just like the case of accommodation facilities. This is blamed on lack of resources as a constraint to provide for the necessary modifications. This was revealed by an interview with one of the senior librarian of one public university.

The library developed a comprehensive plan to address accessibility needs of the blind and students with physical disability. However, the funding proposal to that effect was not given positive consideration by the donors.

Emong also noted that towards the end of 2008, this university's main library acquired a Braille embosser but due to lack of staff with the skill to run the machine and limited resources to maintain it, according to the students with disability, the machine was not utilized. Modifications could be done if students with disabilities were involved in decision making and proposing how such modifications can be made. The lack of involvement and accommodation in decision making is consistent with Emong & Eron in Naami's (2015) study and World Health Organisation Report on Disability (2011).

Thirdly, neither the institutions' main libraries nor the departmental libraries had accessible publications such as brailled books and periodicals, audio recorded publications in tapes, CDs or accessible online journals. Data indicated that institutions recognise their obligation to provide equal library access to all library users and blame the failure of provision on lack of resources. Although, this claim could be true it is possible to argue that the institutions may be lacking priority to disability inclusion.

-None of the halls of the university's compounds had smooth roads and pavements and neither do they have now, it's only Makerere that has made an effort to make its roads and pavements smooth. They are filled with ditches or potholes. In one public university in a bid to ease movement by students with disabilities within the campuses, the association of the disabled students, lodged a request to the university to allow public motorcycles popularly known as boda-bodas to operate in the compound. These services were not allowed inside the university and if carrying a disabled person, it would be allowed entry informally. Although allowing boda-bodas to operate within the university would ease mobility of disabled students from one point to another, it would be costly in the long run unless the university pays for this or alternately buys motorcycles for this purpose.

During the time of this study and from the focus group discussion with the students, boda-bodas are still not allowed into the university premises but at Kyambogo they would be allowed informally if carrying a student with disability, a positive development has also been realized in

Kyambogo university in that the university has bought scooter vans popularly known as Tuk-Tuk to transport students with disabilities between lecture rooms during lectures but, at the moment they are grounded due to lack of tyres. No transport initiative was recorded at Makerere.

A student Med Ssengooba gave an account of his personal experience:

His personal experience in Makerere stretched almost 15 years, first as a law student between 2001 and 2005 – and as an advocate for the rights of students with disabilities- and currently as a representative of the Disability Rights Fund.

As a student, it was next to impossible to access basic university facilities that any other law student could freely access. The faculty did not have a single wheelchair-accessible toilet, and he's not sure they have one yet. Two of the four years of law school were taught in lecture theaters which had over 10 stairs.

The discomfort in being carried up and down on a daily basis was no help to any student in a wheelchair, like him, to focus on their studies. In his fourth year, he decided to enter the class in the morning and leave in the evening – without going out for lunch or for bathroom breaks throughout the day. The library was not only far, but also inaccessible. He went to the library on weekends – with a huge workload to cover.

He was fortunate enough to have a taste of the implications of lack of accessibility and support services to students with disabilities. he did his masters at Washington College of Law in the United States, here, he could access the library online from his room, could get textbooks in soft copies, and had a special office designated to address issues of students with disabilities. When you look at the two transcripts from Makerere University (bachelor's degree) and Washington College of Law (Master's degree), you can hardly believe that this was the same student. The difference lies in the support that he received or did not receive at the respective universities. Of course, not so much has changed at Makerere University in the 10 years since he graduated. In some cases, services seem to have deteriorated even further.

The new university policies, therefore, are a fulfillment of Uganda's commitment to respect, promote and fulfill the right to education for all. Uganda ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2008, in addition to a series of international and regional treaties. Such treaties obligate the state to ensure that PWDs study in the same environment as any other student, commonly known as inclusive education. The state is also expected to ensure availability of teachers who understand the needs of a learner with a disability, appliances like wheelchairs, crutches, white canes, and hearing aids. The CRPD notes that lack of money should not be a justification for the state and other stakeholders not to work towards and providing

educational needs of PWDs. Makerere University is, of course, not the only inaccessible institution in Uganda. His experience at the Law Development Center, where he pursued his Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice (2007-2008), was not any better.

Universities must now turn to the more difficult task – implementation of their Disability Policies. Other stakeholders, including government departments in the education and disability sector, development partners, UN agencies, disabled peoples' organisations and PWDs themselves, all have a role to play to ensure that these policies are implemented.

He hopes that by the time he enrolls for his PhD at Makerere, there will be no more barriers. Most importantly, he hopes that children with disabilities, once they reach university level, will meet a fully-accommodating environment. (The writer is a person with a disability, a rights advocate and the Program Officer for Africa for the Disability Rights Fund).

#### **2.1.4 Physical accessibility to lectures.**

Physical accessibility to the lecture rooms poses a big challenge to students with disabilities in Uganda universities. This challenge is compounded by the changing of lecture rooms whenever there is a change of class. Sometimes the distances the students have to cover are rather long as these universities have vast campuses.

Findings from Emong and Eron (2016) pointed out that, most storied buildings have never been modified. As narrated by a student with physical disability:

Fellow students are more aware of our disabilities and are prepared to help than the lecturers. A lecturer finds you struggling to climb the stairs and just passes by you and does not even show concern. When lecturer reaches the lecture room, he/she begins lecturing without bothering to wait for you to reach.

Another student with physical disability states:

This semester I have missed 4 lectures because each time I went late, I felt it embarrassing and inconveniencing calling down my colleagues to carry me up. A class coordinator raised my concern to the head of the department during the first semester but to this end of the year, no response has been received.

Section 26 of the Persons with Disabilities Act (2006) places a duty on the provider of a facility to make adjustments or to provide an alternative method of making the facility available to Pwds in cases where a physical feature such as one arising from the design or construction of a building or access to premises makes it impossible for Pwds to use that facility. While this does not require a provider to do anything which would fundamentally alter the nature of the service provided, the trade, profession or business, it is the inaccessibility that creates exclusion.

### **2.1.5 Access to lectures, mode of delivery and assessment**

NUWODU (2016), had a discussion with the staff during the study of enhancing financing for Pwds in public universities which revealed that a number of approaches had been applied by the staff to support students with disabilities access learning. The common approach was giving extra time to students with disabilities in coursework and exams. Others reported that they encouraged other students to assist disabled students in any possible way in accessing lectures. Other approaches depend on the requirements of a student with disability. Despite universities adopting the practice of allowing the students with disabilities extra time during exams and tests it seems not to be a uniform practice by all lectures, but this is done at the invigilator's discretion. And it's often after a hard struggle and others do not add extra time as required by the rules of exams.

A similar study by Chiparaushe et al (2011), in the University of Zimbabwe revealed that lecturers give special treatment to blind students by giving them extra time for assignments, projects, tests and exams. No special treatment was given when marking assignments/exams. These students are treated like any other student. By demonstrating the above, the lecturers portrayed that they were professionals who should not be sympathetic nor develop negative attitudes towards students with disabilities. This could suggest that the lecturers had been given induction on how to handle students with disabilities since being sympathetic as a vice that could curtail their psychological and educational wellbeing.

On learning and in assessment, Emong and Eron (2016) pointed out that most institutions lacked the facilities to support students with disabilities and other special needs. Students with disability experienced difficulty in accessing lectures, though with variations, the mode of delivery is such

a big constraint to students with visual impairment or a student with hearing impairment compared to a student with physical disability. Dictation of notes was more favoured by the blind than the deaf. The challenge expressed by the deaf in the mode of delivering lectures was that, lecturers both talk and write on the chalkboard at the same time. For example, lecture handouts which are mostly preferred by students with hearing impairment and students with physical disabilities were not easily available. For those lecturers who provide no Braille copies other accessible format were provided. Students with visual impairments felt lecture handouts can be a double cost in terms of time and money. Students with visual impairment have to Braille the handouts by themselves. Brailing requires a proficient reader which, most often, their guides are not, and as a result student with visual impairments rely on other students to read for them the print notes as they braille. An experience of a visually impaired student shows that:

One lecturer gave out notes for his module covering the whole semester, which was 300 pages. To transcribe that hand-out into Braille; means producing almost 1000 Braille papers of the notes. This requires a lot of time to do it and over relying on other students.

While hearing students can get information informally from friends, students with hearing impairment need an interpreter or visual / print notices. Late posting and inaccessible notices limit information access of particularly deaf students. While dictation of notes is more favoured by the students with visual impairments, it is a great impediment for students with hearing impairment. The challenge arises when the lecturer talks and writes on the board at the same time. In this a way, a deaf student would have to balance between looking at the interpreter and the written work. There is often a lag in time which is not considered. To those who use a hearing aid, it may not be beneficial either. From the experiences of one student with hearing impairment:

The hearing aid is useless. It captures every sound in the hall. I have failed to determine a suitable position for myself to sit in the lecture halls, in order to hear lectures properly. Every side I try I cannot properly hear the lectures. The worst part is, even the height of a lecturer sometimes makes it difficult for me to hear the lecture. More so I do not even copy notes as most of the time lecturers dictate notes. I rely on photocopying notes from other students. In that respect, I spend a lot of money in photocopying.

Another student with hearing impairment stated:



I feel the lecturers have not understood our constraints. I don't get information through dictation. In one of the assessment tests, the lecturer made corrections verbally as such I did not get the corrections. The other was when another lecturer gave us course work of 2 numbers. The verbal instructions were, "one number was to be done as a test; the other number was a take home course work." Because it was verbal instructions, I did not hear it, as a result I did both numbers as a test. In some lectures, when I beg for pardon, the response is "I do not repeat."

Section 21 of the Pwds Act lays a duty on the responsible government authority to promote the rights of persons with disabilities to access information through the development and use of sign language, tactile and sign language interpreters, in all public institutions and at public functions, and brailing of public information, such as government documents, government newspapers and other publications. Although the Act is silent on providing relevant information like government documents electronically to those who cannot read Braille, the demand is an international obligation that Uganda is a signatory to.

They continue to say that; a similar challenge extends to examination as most examinations are mostly in print and institutions find it challenging transcribing brailed work into print for marking which causes delay for blind students. The setting of questions also takes limited consideration for the varying special needs of students.

According to a student with visual impairment;

He was surprised when he approached the head of department to complain about delayed results only to learn that the names of blind students were among the list of those who did not do the exams and who were not regular attendants of lectures. This is because sometimes such lists pass in class and they do not notice.

For example, for those doing courses involving practicals, like sign language in community based `rehabilitation (CBR), they were exempted from attempting practical questions but no alternative questions were provided. This alone leaves them with limited scope for choosing questions to answer as compared with the non-disabled students, thus one student with visual impaired recounts:

In one semester, I was forced to do only questions in section 1 as most questions in section 2 were practical. I felt the examinations were hard for me and that my former secondary school was better in understanding my disability as it was brailing examinations for me. This university finds it challenging to transcribe

brailled work into print as a result; blind students do exams for the second semester when they have not known the results for the first semester examination including course work results. Examinations are not brailled. During examination they are asked to Braille paper before doing it.

Another student with visual impairment describes the following experience with his type writer during exams:

In one exam, I did not know that the machine had adjusted its ribbon and was no longer producing words. I realized it when I needed additional typing paper, when invigilator informed me that I had sheets of paper which are not yet used. No, I said, I have typed on all of them. The invigilator replies, there is nothing written on them. Then I realised that the machine had a problem.

One student with physical disability had the following experience in a test:

In one semester, a test was administered in a room in the second floor. So, I asked the invigilator whether I could do the test in the ground floor which she accepted. I sat in the room waiting for 2 hours, she was not coming. Then eventually I saw her walking away with scripts in her hand. I reminded her, have been waiting--- she replies, I forgot about it. However, I did the test but after everyone else had done it.

Section 20 of the PwDA requires all public buildings to be accessible to all sections of the public and places a duty on the owners of public buildings to ensure this. The public buildings should have an accessible entrance, accessible pathways and accessible elevators. They should also have accessible toilets for diverse disabilities, and well-dimensioned staircases and ramps for people with mobility difficulty or in wheelchairs. The PwDA requires that adequate railing should be provided around stairs, ramps and raised platforms. Multi-storied buildings must have well-dimensioned elevators for convenient use by people with disabilities. The elevators should have embossed numerals on selector buttons and arrival signals to cater for visually impaired and deaf passengers simultaneously. The law also demands that 'where it is difficult or unfeasible to install a ramp or an elevator to an existing building the owner of building shall provide platform lifts to provide accessibility'.

Section 27 of the Act specifies also that it shall be the duty of the providers of services to provide auxiliary aids or services where it enables or facilitates Pwds to make use of a service. Such

services include sign language interpreters, sighted guides, wheelchair guides, readers and transcribers.

Although the experiences of students with disabilities in higher education depict generally their exclusion in the institutions, there were positive efforts to help the situation, which need to be enhanced. First, there was willingness among some staff to promote disability inclusion. Second, there were some internal initiatives to support students with disabilities at faculty level in the universities. However, such support was mainly ‘reasonable accommodation’ and appeared to be dependent on the good will of the individual lecturers and not structurally framed within a formal policy.

## **2.2 Challenges which are faced by students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action scheme in public universities.**

Students with disabilities often face additional challenges in their educational environments. These students face both physical and attitudinal barriers within the university environment. This section presents a review of literature about the status of students with disabilities in university education.

### **2.2.1 Physical access challenges**

Mutanga (2016), in his study established that one of the greatest challenges faced by students with disabilities through higher education is physical access. He pointed out that; Tugli, Zungu, Goon & Anyanwu (2013) assessed the perceptions of students with disabilities concerning access and support at the University of Venda. Students affirmed that the physical environment constituted a great barrier to their learning, and more than a half maintained that the physical environment made them vulnerable or unsafe. Tugli et al (2013) conclude that increased access and support services are needed at university to allow equal participation in social and academic life. In another study, Mutanga in Ntombela & Soobrayen, (2013) explored the nature of access challenges faced by students with visual impairment at the Edgewood campus of the University of Kwazulu- Natal. Findings show that although access has improved for students with disabilities at university, there are still systematic barriers that limit the participation of students with visual impairment in the academic programs. Some of these challenges emanate from

understaffing at the disability unit, which negatively affects support supervision. Other challenges relate to the curriculum. E.g. placement of students with visual impairment who are enrolled for education courses at schools where there are no auxiliary teacher aids. They conclude that improved access requires partnership between government and higher education institutions to monitor and support systematic transformation.

On a positive note Mutanga (2016) as cited in Fitchett (2015) reports that a particular South African higher education institution has started to build new structures for persons with disabilities in mind. Despite this development, students with disabilities who were interviewed report that the new buildings are still problematic because there is too much space between the sitting areas, the podium and the board. Similarly, Phukubye and Ngoepe's study (2016) concluded that even though a purpose- built library service unit for students with disabilities that complies with international best practice was established, students with disabilities were not satisfied with the library services they received, as very little material has been transcribed into accessible formats. Furthermore, only one librarian was assigned to manage and run the library services for all students with disabilities.

Just like Buthelezi's (2014) study on the challenges faced by students with disabilities at a technical and vocational education and training (FVET) college in Kwazulu Natal, they found that students with disabilities living with a physical disability experienced accessibility constraints. These challenges were around physical access in the form of accessing the library and parking spaces.

An earlier study by Hosinsky et al (2003), to establish the ease of accessibility to students who use wheelchairs at a university in South Africa, found out that two buildings were fully accessible, while three were completely inaccessible. Inaccessible toilets were the most common problem. Wheelchair users consistently had to travel further and for longer distances between lecture theatres in all the faculties studied. These students were unable to reach their lectures within the time allocated by the university. They concluded that the inaccessibility of the buildings limits the full integration of students who use wheel chairs into campus life. He goes on to say that, what is remarkable is that nearly twenty years after Hosinsky et al's (2003) study, the challenges of physical access still persist in south Africa higher education, and those that

make it into higher education have to struggle with physical access (Hosinsky et al,2003; Engelbretch and De Boor 2014; Mutanga and Walker 2015) and attitudinal problems of the peer and staff (Howell 2005); there is no full participation for students with disabilities in south Africa higher education .Lourens 2015; lowers, McKinney and Swartz 2016). This is despite the fact that it has been a decade since South Africa signed and ratified the CRPD. As a result of these challenges, it is evident that access to higher education does not guarantee that students with disabilities can access education and success once they arrive at university.

Still on inaccessibility, Jane Mutasa et al, (2013) study, pointed out the inaccessibility of the regional offices of the Harare and Bulawayo centers which are not accessed by lifts and students have to use the stairway to reach the third floor of where offices are located. Most students including the regular ones find this issue a big challenge. Sometimes programme coordinators and student advisors leave office to go down stairs to give service to students needing support.

A survey of challenges, opportunities, and threats faced by students with disabilities in post-independence era in Zimbabwe by Chiparaushe, Mapako& Makarau (2011), established the following accessibility challenges faced by students with disabilities;

Inaccessibility of buildings for example lecture theatres or rooms, halls of residence, toilets and tubs thereby disadvantaging greatly those students who are physically challenged.

Offices of the vice chancellor and Registrar in majority of state universities are not accessible to students in wheel chairs.

Students with visual impairment face mobility challenges as information of changes in the environment like digging of trenches is not communicated to them, further cars parked in undesignated areas, obstacles such as chairs left on their path, open doors in corridors present everyday challenges in their mobility hence the need for able student's sensitization programmes.

Students with visual impairment also had challenges accessing information pasted on notice boards in print.

For students with albinism their main concern was inability to read lecture notes on chalkboards during lectures and also failure to read notices boards due to their short-sightedness.

A similar study by Yared (2008) found out that, students with disabilities at Addis Ababa University and Bahirdar University were not able to access lecture halls, laboratories, libraries and so on. It was reported that full access was unavailable in all kinds of buildings in the Universities. Students with disabilities have a problem in accessing the larger portion of the physical environment in the University. Especially, the problem is more difficult for Students with disabilities, when examinations, lectures or other academic events are conducted in the upper floor of the buildings. Because, almost all the buildings in Addis Ababa do not have elevators or any other means which facilitate disabled students' ability to access the buildings. In the dormitories, the students are accommodated in the ground floor to avoid climbing stairs. But sometimes when the rooms are full the students may also be assigned in the upper floors. On the other hand, the informants from Bahirdar University repeatedly stressed the point that the University is new and consideration for students with disabilities is at a very minimal stage. Further, it was stated that almost all the buildings at the University except some old ground floor buildings are not easy to be accessed by students with disabilities. A student with disability may be assigned a lecture or an examination at the top floor of the buildings. So, the students mostly seek other's help to access the buildings.”

The researcher therefore concurs with Emong (2014), that the overall higher education environment is not changing in response to access requirements for admitted students with disabilities. Institutions of higher learning lack disability policies, lack support services for students with disabilities and the libraries, accommodation, lectures, mode of delivery, and mode of assessment are not easily accessible. Although Affirmative action opened ways for students with disabilities to access education, little has been done to incorporate the aspect of disability inclusion and reasonable accommodation. Other than admitting students, there is little evidence of applying equal opportunity measures. These actions contravene the CRPD requirement which

requires states to ensure that institutions of higher learning adopt reasonable accommodation for Pwds in all matters and arrangements an institution makes for students with disabilities.

### **2.2.2 Lack of modification of study materials**

Mutanga (2016) pointed out that students with disabilities faced assignment and exam writing challenges due to lack of reasonable accommodations. Students with low vision enlisted the services of a scribe to write while the student dictated for them. Healey (2004) advised that since students with disabilities encounter more obstacles than majority of students, there is need to be mindful when designing assessment packages.

Similarly, Teresa Tinklin et al, (2004), in her study pointed out that, depending on the particular impairment, most students experienced barriers to accessing their education relating to the physical environment or teaching / learning (or both) at some point during their studies. Some students found that adjustments to teaching practice were difficult to obtain. Even where students had received formal agreements to provide reasonable adjustments as required by law such as handouts in advance of lectures, they often found themselves in the difficult position of repeatedly having to ask for these, to no avail.

The following broad findings emerged from the students' case studies by Healey et al, 2006; 2008) and Fuller et al (2004a, 2004b)

The majority of adjustments were formulaic, e.g., provision of laptop, lecture notes and extra time in exams for students with a diagnosis of dyslexia,

Particularly in some disciplines, e.g. geography, there was evidence of a willingness to make adjustments to pedagogy to accommodate different students' needs e.g. the use of 'virtual' field trips for students with physical impairment.

Students had to engage in multiple negotiations with different lecturers to ensure that agreements or reasonable adjustments are understood by all.

The findings of this study are consistent with these findings as participants under the visual impairment category affirmed that many times the study materials were not disability friendly.

The research feels it's important to allow accommodations for students with disabilities so that the student's disability does not impact on demonstration of their true knowledge, skills and abilities as measured by the assessment.

### **2.2.3 limited facilities for students with disabilities**

Students with disabilities require specialized equipment for their full participation in learning and social inclusion in the environment. For instance, students with hearing impairment require hearing aids and other modern devices that make it easier for communication. Students with visual impairment need specialized computers to cater for their reading needs i.e. a computer with an inbuilt voice for reading texts and magnifiers that enlarge print. Students with physical disability need computer for writing more especially those with cerebral palsy as their manual dexterity is weak.

Chiparaushe et al' study (2011) established that there was a shortage of equipment and materials for example Perkins Braille machines, Pac-mates, tape recorders, brailed text books or reading materials for students with visual impairment; the majority of students with disabilities fall under the visual impairment. It has been noted that assistance required by students with disabilities often includes funding or equipment, scanners and computers with voice synthesizers in libraries, flexible systems libraries, information networks, disabled parking and access and exam arrangements which take into account the needs of students with disabilities (Holloway, 2001). It's therefore imperative that students with disabilities are provided with the necessary facilities to enhance their learning and participation.

### **2.2.4 Evaluation Systems and Deadlines**

A study by Zambrano (2016) stressed that, Students with disabilities struggle to meet the deadlines of evaluation processes. Many of them take a longer period of time to engage in a task and to produce a good assignment. In multiple times, students with disability could not comply with the timelines and ended in probation. One student with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder narrates;

I got a B+ and a D+. And they gave me a warning like “okay, this is just a warning, next time; you're put on academic probation” much as I tried to do my best, I just couldn't.



They put me on academic probation twice. He tried to overcome his situation by using medication, counselling, and additional support. However, Brooklyn still failed to meet course requirements and was placed on academic probation, again.

Poor evaluation systems, rigid standards that do not recognize a student's disability and its impact on education are frustrating for students.

Shane a student with a learning disability who also works as an assistant for other students with disabilities is frustrated about workload and lack of accessibility.

I think all the pressures of having to get stuff turned in at one time, assignments that need to be submitted in certain places, or certain activities you have to do outside the classroom... probably just the workload, I think it should be reduced somewhat for students that have disabilities.

I know that they have to keep the academic standard high, but my concern is that a lot of students practically can't even do their own homework, they can't even write. Or if they are deaf or if they are blind, I think some of those standards could be relaxed for them specifically. The frustration that students with disabilities experience stems from the institution's lack of understanding of the challenges that having a disability entails. Diversifying standards and goals for students with disabilities is essential because not all students have the same abilities and conditions to meet deadlines.

### **2.2.5 Social Hostilities and Discrimination (negative attitudes)**

Not all students experience extreme social hostilities, Zambrano (2016), gave an account of Robin's troubling moment;

Robin is a student with a mobility disorder who had a negative experience in one of his classes at the Geology Department. His experience was an example of a hostile environment and discrimination at Tule University. He was broadcasted as a student who was problematic because of his request for alternative ways to engage in learning activities, particularly fieldtrips. Out-of-class activities were a requirement for that class; however, it was difficult for Robin to access those activities due to his mobility disorder.

In one of the fieldtrips, Robin asked his peers to video tape the areas where he was not able to access during the field trip. He expected to be able to view the videos in order to complete a report on the out-of-class activity. When he went to the trips; they didn't try to get him go to those areas that he couldn't walk. So, he asked them, 'do videotapes so he can get to see it.' Because the report was on those locations that he couldn't go. So, he

took like five-second videos and it wasn't enough. And they didn't let him save it. he had to just look at it, write his report and never got any grade of what he got in that report.

Robin was denied the opportunity to get involved in the fieldtrip in a meaningful way because the instructor did not provide a feasible alternative for him. When he attempted to discuss the issue with the instructor, the response he obtained was negative. Since the instructor was not sensitive to Robin's particular needs, students in the class showed a similar attitude. Robin's classmates started to act in a hostile way towards him because the instructor led them to believe that Robin was making extreme requests for the class to be modified to serve his needs exclusively.

After that incident, the students started being very violent to him. He got so depressed. He was scared. Peers in class adopted the behaviour of the professor and treated Robin as an outcast. The disregard for Robin's access to the curriculum that was promoted by the professor reinforced the threats peers gave to Robin. Robin's strenuous circumstance led him to depression and anxiety due to a hostile environment. As a result of the environment in which Robin had to study, he experienced an academic decline which ended with a failed class. Robin experienced hostility inside and outside the classroom by peers and faculty in his department. He was failing classes and studying under stress and ill conditions.

Robin advocated for himself and was denied access to administration to formally make a complaint. The department was not sensitive to Robin's needs. When he explained his concerns and discrimination he was experiencing, his request was not validated. Instead, he was advised to change his major. The implications of discrimination for Robin led him to seek support from past professors, counselling, and medication.

While this study has only one experience of clear discrimination, Robin's case is significant because it demonstrates the strains a student can experience in higher education and the lack of awareness and sensitivity that people are capable of exhibiting. Robin's discrimination started in one class due to an out-of-class activity which caused other professors and peers to accept the discrimination as an appropriate response to Robin. Later, the discrimination grew by Robin experiencing personal threats from peers. As a response, Robin sought counsel from prior professors and advisors only to find that he his needs were neither acknowledged nor validated. This led Robin to have an additional crisis of depression and anxiety. Students with disabilities, who are exposed to hostility and discrimination, are particularly vulnerable to be hurt academically, socially, and emotionally. Students with disabilities already experience significant levels of stress; they do not need additional burden that make their university life challenging. A disability adds extra responsibilities and challenges to students. Some challenges are unique to students with disabilities such as the diagnosis processes, meeting

with the disability resource services (DRS) representatives, and disclosing to each lecturer at the beginning of each class in order to have accommodations. I think that with the academic pressures that are put on students as it is, I think there's a lack of concern for students who have disabilities. I think that there's a lot of potential that could be looked at for increasing awareness. From my personal experience, being a student with disability, it is not easy trying to get through all the hurdles. So, from my perspective if we look at all the obstacles that these students have to face, it's like twice or three times as worse for students who have disabilities.' So, it's like its additional pressure, its additional stress, and I wish there could be some more accommodations in terms of alleviating a lot of the stressful factors for the students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who experience a hostile environment in a higher education institution are in extreme danger of losing the opportunity to develop their educational careers and define their goals.

## **2.3 Specific supportive mechanisms in place**

### **2.3.1 Policy issues**

Chipraushe et al, (2011) highlighted that, it's essential to have written policies that ensure that students with disabilities receive the same high-quality education as their peers. These policies should address issues of admission, documentation of a disability, accommodations and curriculum modifications. It's important that students be made aware of the existence of an appeal process which is set forth in writing; students should have easy access to all written policies and procedures including appeal process. Such documents should be available in a variety of formats, in appropriate campus literature and through available technology, such as website, that all students can access.

To address the challenges of people with disabilities, Uganda has signed and ratified all major human rights conventions and key principles are reflected in the 1995 constitution, Persistent lobby and advocacy to government resulted into enactment of affirmative action and policies in favor of PWDs. Furthermore, the Uganda constitution (1995) recognizes the rights of pwds and the need for affirmative action to address imbalances against pwds. The persons with disability

Act entered into force in 2006, ensuring legal protection and equal opportunities for persons with disability, stating rights-based approach to disability.

In line with these statutory requirements A Research Report on Enhancing Public Funding for persons with disabilities in higher institutions of learning (2016) established that both universities under study have specific policies on students with disabilities. A review of these policies indicates that they are comprehensive enough to cover most of the important provisions to enable the Universities' provision of inclusive education in conformity with the CRPD. It was also found out that a number of students interviewed were not aware about the existence of the approved policies of PWDs at their respective Universities. This was partly attributed to limited sensitization and awareness creation about the approved policies. And whereas these policies existed at the two Universities, their full implementation was still lacking due to limited funding and limitations in structural adjustments. A case in point is the modifications for previously constructed buildings for easy accessibility which are a costly venture to the Universities given their meagre funding.

This is supported by findings of an Economic and Social Research Council funded research project, which aimed to investigate the impact of multiple policy innovation on the participation and experiences of disabled students in higher education in Scotland and England between 2001 and 2004 conducted by Teresa, Sheila, Alastair 2004), which established that; Despite the demands faced by institutions, there were definite signs of progress in provision for disabled students. Where institutions did not fully meet the criteria established as 'base-level provision' for disabled students, as specified by the Higher Education Funding Councils for England and Wales (HEFCE/W, 1999), significant numbers reported partially meeting them. These criteria constitute a minimum level of provision and include, for example, having adequate staffing, ensuring the needs of disabled people are considered in the design and refurbishment of the physical environment and having an institution-wide policy and procedure covering examinations and assessments, which addresses the needs of disabled students. Few institutions could claim to be 'prepared in advance' for disabled students (as required by the disability Act) but there were signs of movement away from a completely ad hoc reactive approach to the needs

of individual students. This study established that students with disabilities had been written into policies on admissions, estates and buildings and some strategic plans and most institutions had definite written plans for further development. This calls for Public universities to develop policies to address concerns and needs of students with disabilities and implement them. Other stakeholders, including government departments in the education and disability sector, development partners, DPOs and PWDs themselves all have a role to play to ensure that these policies are implemented, so that children with disabilities, once they reach university level will meet a fully accommodating environment.

### **2.3.2 The role of the disability units**

The main objective of disability units is to promote and support the equal participation of students with disabilities in the learning environments. They provide a number of services including computer facilities, accessible materials and notes, sign language interpreters, assistive devices, organisation of additional time for exams /tests and counseling.

Mutanga (2016) clarifies that disability units provide some of the services required by students with disabilities in higher education. These include provision of study materials in accessible formats (e.g. Braille or large print; extra time during assessments; and availability of sign language interpreters. (As cited in; FOTIM 2011; Matshedisho 2010; Naidoo 2010). Students with disabilities value the services they receive at the disability units. For example, Matshedisho (2010) reported that 28 percent of students with disabilities in his study felt comfortable and welcomed during their transition into the university as a result of the support given by the disability units. In instances where disability units did not play a part in providing services, students felt unwelcome at their universities.

In conformity to the above, Yared, (2008). In his study on the Ethiopian case established that; Addis Ababa University has a special disability service and career development center. The center renders special provision ranging from minor adjustments to the general counseling services to a comprehensive collection of services. Specifically, students with visual and physical impairments get financial and material support. These include providing technical support for blind students plus computer and laboratory training. The center has established a

pool of equipment, where students can borrow hearing aids, brail equipment, wheelchair, and tape recorder, white cane and so on. On the top of this, the center offers help in preparing literature and study paper for Students with disabilities. The center transcribes scripts in to Braille, prepare them on diskettes, read them on to cassettes and produce enlarged photocopies. On the other hand, Bahirdar University has general student guidance and counseling office. The services offered by the office include rendering psychological support and information provision. There is no any kind of official special provision for students with disabilities. The office is open for all kinds of students regardless of race, gender, or disability. Each student in the University is entitled to use all available provisions on the basis of equality. Though the case universities of the study didn't have established disability units, resource rooms were reported to serve some of these purposes. The researcher believes that students with disabilities enroll in higher education with unique challenges. These units are therefore important because they assist students with different types of disabilities to succeed in all academic programmes for them to contribute equally to the university's academic legacy. Institutions therefore need to reflect on their mission and the empowerment of the disability community and, ultimately, lead students with disabilities to a timely degree achievement.

### **2.3.3 Staff Development/Training**

Emma Poland (2017) stresses that staff training across the institution is very important in shifting the culture as it raises awareness, provides practical information, guidance and support, and encourages action. Staff training also ensures a shared understanding and commitment, and indicates an investment on the behalf of the institution.

Yared (2008) in his study on the Ethiopian case reported that there has not been significant preparation of staffs to assist in responding to the needs of students with disabilities. Staff members at Addis Ababa University are encouraged to participate in some periodic seminars and conferences on disability issues organized by local and international non-governmental organizations. While at Bahirdar University, there was not any kind of staff related activity in relation to students with disabilities. However, the informants mentioned that there are plans to formulate policy for students with disabilities and to introduce training in the process of accommodating students with disabilities for the staffs and faculties at both Universities.

This study feels that; Institutions should offer a range of training that is voluntary, focused on general disability awareness or on supporting specific conditions. Training can be directed to certain staff groups rather than all (academic staff, library and those teaching support roles. A first step to promote academic and social support is to create disability awareness throughout campus. Awareness involves people at the university acquiring knowledge about the characteristics, challenges, strategies and motivators that each type of disability involves. A greater understanding of the experiences of students with disabilities will increase effectiveness of the support that the institutions and individuals can provide.

#### **2.3.4 The role of lecturers**

South Africa literature also reports on students with disabilities perceptions of the conduct of lectures. Some students perceive that lecturers lack of disability awareness results in failing to make necessary provisions (Mutanga 2016 as cited in; Matshediso 2010; Haywood 2014).

The authors propose the creation of an institutional system that will build the capacity of lecturers to include disability in teaching and research across all faculties, in line with the universities transformation agenda.

This recommendation is supported by Crous (2004), who found that 67 percent of students with disabilities in his study believed that their lectures had limited knowledge of disability issues.

Lack of awareness on the part of the lectures was also highlighted by Mayat and Amosun (2011) in their study, which explored the perceptions of academic staff regarding admission of students with disabilities; they noted that students with disabilities in South Africa are still excluded from certain academic fields, such as engineering and natural sciences. Even though the participating staff expressed willingness to teach students with disabilities, they showed some reservations. One lecturer even wondered whether students with disabilities would be an embarrassment to their non- disabled peers. These perceptions exclude students with disabilities from participating in academic programs they may want to pursue. As cited in; Ngubano-Mokiwa and Khoza (2016) note that students with disabilities are not supported technologically in terms of their learning as a result of lecturers' lack of knowledge, teaching approaches and resources.

Another study on the role of lecturers is Vanjaars Veldt and Ndeya-Ndereya's (2015) study on the learning needs of students with disabilities at a South African university. Some lecturers distanced themselves from the responsibility of providing support to students with disabilities. These lecturers displayed a lack of involvement with the students and tended to refer them to the disability unit. An inclusive learning environment at this university remains elusive. The author argues that although higher education institutions' disability policies are necessary, personal responsibility from lecturers is also essential in bringing inclusive campuses. According to Merchant (1990), the success of a college student with disability depends on a match between teacher and student. The success of the student/ teacher match includes consideration of the teacher's attitude towards students with disabilities which is determined, in part by the teacher's knowledge of disabilities, and experience with teaching students with disabilities. (As cited in; Reed, 1994), (Hart & Williams 1995) contend that the rising number of students with disabilities makes it imperative for teachers to increase their own as well as the non-disabled students' awareness and classroom techniques to achieve the goal.

### **2.3.5 The role of assistive technology**

Using a diverse range of approaches to teaching and assessment to support different learning styles; having course materials available on line; providing lecture notes in advance; providing course materials in a variety of formats; considering inclusion right from the start to embed inclusive learning into module and programme developments and evaluation; and providing access to all students to a wide range of assistive technology.

One form of assistive technology is lecture capture- the audio or video recording of lectures and workshops (Yared, 2008). Other forms include; software for mind-mapping; document reading; document conversion; speech recognition; and note-taking/ recording. The technical equipment available for students with disabilities have been mentioned earlier.

While assistive technology enhances access to learning for students with disabilities, at times it excludes other students. To ensure that they do not perpetuate injustices. The role of assistive technology services is key in the creation of inclusive environments. For example, in their study on the learning experiences of students with visual impairment, Mokiwa Phasha (2012) report



that job access with speech (JAWS) software for students with visual impairment could not read mathematical and scientific signs or graphic materials. Furthermore, multi-digital technologies in form of power point presentations or other visual technology was not helpful for students with visual impairment (Sukhraj-Ely 2008). Similarly, Kajee's (2010) study (of technology based English course that incorporates face- face and on-line modes of delivery at a south African university) reported how the only student with visual impairment in the class often felt powerless and isolated, as a result of pedagogical challenges presented by these technologies. These studies highlight a need to be cautious and to continuously interrogate the systems designed to help students with disabilities, as they have the potential to create disadvantage for the very people they are supposed to help. In the midst of these challenges, there were enabling factors that assisted students with disabilities.

### **2.3.6 Enabling factors**

The positive contributions of the family, friends, non- academic staff, and some academic staff are highlighted. Most students attributed their success to the supportive friends they made during induction, (Matshediso, 2010). With regard to attitudes of academic staff, students had mixed reaction; some reported positive attitudes, while others had bad experiences. The importance of social networks and social relations is highlighted by Roux and Burnett (2010) in their exploratory study involving four students, who were elite sport participants from the university of Johannesburg, some challenges were identified (e.g., visibility of stairs, inaccessible infrastructure and some exclusionary practices in sports).

However, these students were managing through a network of support from family, friends and coaches. Roux and Burnett concluded that the students with disabilities in higher education should be encouraged to participate in decision making to meet their special needs.

In his study on deaf teachers' experiences as students at the university of Witwatersand, Magogwa (2008) found high levels of academic success among deaf students owing to the institutional commitment to deaf education (for example) the availability of interpreting services. These three studies highlight the importance of support from family, friends, academic and non-academic staff in the creation of inclusive higher education. The study therefore feels that the

non-disabled university community needs to be aware of the presence of individuals with disabilities in its environments. Respect and cooperation from university, students and administration can lead to more effective educational experience for students with disabilities. This process might call for consultation and inclusion of students with disabilities in various university programmes, services and activities, and provision of the necessary support services in order to enable students achieve their academic as well as social goal

### **2.3.7 Academic Support:**

Academic learning is the primary activity of universities and is a key focus for support. Yared's (2008) study in Ethiopia found that universities allow students with disabilities extra time for their studies. There is also modification to the examination procedures in both Universities. That means students with disabilities take their exams separately from the normal students. And students with visual impairment are assigned readers during the examinations. Personal assistance was also rendered to the students. Personal assistance can be a very important means of enabling students with disabilities to have a successful university career. This can entail reading and mobility support for blind students, interpreting for students with hearing impairment, and personal care and mobility support for students with physical impairments. Both Universities under study reported some personal support, but from the information given, it seemed to be generally fairly limited. The respondents from the two case institutions also showed that study adjustments for students with disabilities are made in the form of flexible timeframe and examination modification in form of additional time and use of facilitators. Particularly, the students mentioned the availability of modification in the form of papers in large print, and Braille. Students with visual impairment in Kyambogo University have a special examination room. According to the respondents, these amendments are made to help students with disabilities succeed in the educational environment by utilizing their potential in a better capacity. For many students attendance in a classroom teaching is not by itself learning. They rather need to actively participate in the overall process of teaching and learning. Similarly, students with disabilities in order to persist successfully in the teaching learning process, their needs have to be accommodated. Accordingly, in the focus group discussions conducted, the investigator tried to explore the

supports provided for students with disabilities in the course of classroom learning and teaching at university. The findings revealed that Universities offer assistance ranging from assistive technology (media) to some academic assistance. Respondents referred to the availability of adapted texts and materials for students with disabilities. Most often these referred to materials for students with visual impairments, either brailled text or other alternatives.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter outlines and describes the research strategies and data collection procedures selected to explore the experiences of students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action in public universities,

### **3.1 Research design**

The study adopted a qualitative approach and a case study design (Stake, 2010). Freebody (2004), says a qualitative methodology is taken to refer most especially to research that produces descriptive data about people's words or their observable behaviors.

The justification for the choice was that this study sought to do an in-depth investigation on the experiences of students with disabilities admitted for study programs under affirmative action scheme. Given that two universities were studied, a case study design was used.

Yin, (2009), defines a case study research method as;

An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.

In the context of this study, the case study design was chosen to represent the particular universities from which the data was collected. This is important if we are to consider Yin's guidance of the context. The context of this study is deeply embedded in the theoretical and practical understanding of affirmative action from the universities' perspective. A case study design ensures that the problem of an individual unit is understood in its totality through a variety of sources. A descriptive study was therefore employed.

## 3.2 Study Participants and Criteria of Selection

### 3.2.1 Participants

Only students with disabilities were selected. Students were selected based on their years of study (i.e. from 2<sup>nd</sup> to final year of study) and courses they were undertaking. Attention was paid to all common disabilities from faculties of both sciences and humanities, to ensure that views from both academic disciplines are gathered about the research question. The expectation was that in each public university, at least two students with disabilities in each category of the common disabilities in Uganda (i.e. visual, physical hearing) and four from other related disabilities or conditions.

### 3.2.2 Universities selected

Two public universities were selected and are referred to in this dissertation as public university A and public university B respectively. Universities were selected drawing from public universities that have enrolled students with disabilities under affirmative action. Uganda currently has approximately six recognized public universities but due to limited time and funding and the need to obtain in-depth information, there was need to make the sample size small. In this respect two universities were selected as these universities were believed to be the oldest public universities in Uganda and proportionally thought to have more students with disabilities, and therefore would provide good case studies on the experiences of students with disabilities under affirmative action scheme.

**Table 3.1: summary of proposed participants and those who responded from each university.**

Category of participants	Sample size			
	Public university A		Public university B	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Hearing impairment	02	03	02	04
Visual Impairment	02	03	02	04
Physical impairment	02	03	03	02
Other disabilities	04	01	04	02
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>

The key participants in this study were 21 as indicated in Table 3.1. Students with disabilities from the two case universities identified totaled 21. The study had initially targeted 20 students but 21 students participated in the two focus group discussions.

### **3.2.3 Criteria of selection**

Purposive sampling was employed in selecting the universities and respective participants. This means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the problem and central phenomenon in the study. Purposive sampling was used in order to ensure that there was equal representation of gender and disability.

Babbie (2010) describes purposive sampling as;

A type of non- probability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researchers' own judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative. It entails selection of a unit of study based on the knowledge of the population and the purpose of the study.

In that respect, it was useful for the selection of the participants for the focus group discussion.

In particular, critical cases sampling technique was employed to select 02 (two) students with disabilities from each category of the common disability i.e. visual, hearing physical and 04(four) from other conditions /disability. The technique was appropriate because the two students from each category would provide enough information about the general population of students with disabilities from the selected universities (Creswell, 2013). Critical sampling assumes that “if its true for this case, its likely to be true for all other cases”. In this way by choosing samples rich in certain information, we get information about the general population that is the main advantage of purposive sampling. Sometimes we make logical generalisations by taking a handful of special cases because they provide us enough information about the general population.

### **3.3 Data collection methods**

The study followed data collection procedures as planned. Data was collected using both primary and secondary methods. Primary data was collected directly from respondents in the field using focus group discussions. Documentary review was conducted to collect secondary sources.

#### **3.3.1 .Focus Group Discussions (FDG)**

During the focus group discussion, the discussion was guided by the moderator according to the prepared interview guidelines. Two Focus group discussions were formed, one from each target university comprising second year to final year students of all categories of disabilities offering both sciences and humanities courses. Each group comprised between ten (10) to eleven (11) students with disabilities. A focus group question guide was used to collect data from the participants. (This can be accessed in the appendix)

The original plan was to conduct 2 focus group discussions in each of the two universities, each group to comprise 10 students consisting of all categories of disabilities. However, 11 students turned up in public university B. Another factor was that in public university A, only 01(one) student with other disabilities / conditions turned up for the discussion, this may be due to the fact that students with unseen conditions may not be willing to disclose that they have disabilities. Therefore, the only option was to adjust the number of the initial categories as can be seen in the demographic information in the appendix. Also, in public university B 01(one) student with albinism turned up from other conditions. Consequently 2 focus groups were conducted as follows;

In public university A, (10 students attended), students with hearing impairment (3 attended), those with visual impairment (3 attended) and those with physical impairment (3 attended), lastly those with other conditions only (1 attended.)

In public university B, 1 focus group was conducted (21 attended), students with hearing impairment (4 attended), those with visual impairment (4 attended), students with physical impairment (2 attended) and those with other conditions only (1 attended).

### **3.3.2 Documentary review**

In this study reading and review of lots of written material was done and the source of reading material was acknowledged. A review of the university and national existing legal and policy documents, plans, strategies, reports among others that generate factual and qualitative information about the implementation of affirmative action strategies including results was done. The review of existing documents served to crosscheck the viewpoints arising from the participatory FGD.

Some of the reviewed legislation documentation and policies included among others the; constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995; the Pwds act, 2006; the universities and other institution Act, 2001; the universities policies on students with disabilities; strategic plans among others.

### **3.4 Data collection instruments/Tools**

Data collection tools used in the study include: the focus group guide and log- book. (This can be referred to in the appendix section).

#### **3.4.1 Table 3.2: Focus group guide**

(Refer to appendix 4)

#### **3.4.2 Log book**

A log book was used to note down all the proceedings of the discussion. Maykut and Morehouse, (1994) support the use of logbooks for field notes and clarify that; the keen observations and important conversations one had in the field cannot be fully utilized in a rigorous analysis of the data unless they are written down. Similarly, in this study a log book was put in use while conducting interviews and discussions in the research process which were later used for data analysis and reference in the dissertation writing.

### **3.5 Procedure for data collection**

The data collection process started with the planning phase after approval of the research proposal and development and approval of the data collection tools. A letter of introduction was



obtained from the university authorities introducing the researcher to the respondents in the field. Permission was sought from respective authorities and institutions. Informed written consent was sought to collect data from respondents, after which appointments for meetings were scheduled on agreed dates. Preparation to collect data was done and the data collection instruments were piloted to ascertain their reliability and validity and preliminary data analysis done.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations.**

Busingye (2016) in punch (1994), discusses ethical issues which include informed consent, dishonesty, privacy, harm, identification, and confidentiality. Researchers should be aware of such issues in the context of the research project and make sure that they follow the established codes of conduct.

Putting into consideration the ethics in research, the following were observed:

- An introductory letter from the program coordinator to the work place was obtained.
- Consent form, to collect data from participants was sought.
- Gender balance of participants and balancing views from participants according to gender was done.
- Voluntary participation and presentation of problems without influence and interference was ensured.
- Participants were assured that their identities will not be disclosed in the report for purposes of confidentiality. (Ref to all appendix 1)

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

An essential component of ensuring data integrity is the accurate and appropriate analysis of research findings. This study adopted a qualitative approach so did the data analysis process. For the qualitative approach the data analysis took the form of analytic induction, (Sarandakos, 2011, p.351).

Responses were recorded, reviewed, edited, organized, arranged, sorted, categorized, classified and coded so that themes, patterns and relations were identified using thematic analysis. It allowed for flexibility in the researchers' choice of theoretical framework and rich detailed and complex descriptions of the data.

### **3.8 Pilot study**

Pilot studies are usually used as feasibility studies, to ensure that the ideas or methods behind a research study are sound, as well as to "work out the links" in a study protocol before launching a larger study (Stachowaik, 2008). A pilot study to eliminate some of the questions that may not be relevant to the study was carried out on four randomly chosen students with disabilities at Makerere University School of Business Studies (MUBS). This particular university was chosen because it's an annex of one of the case universities under study and it was believed to have enrolled students with disability. Another advantage was its proximity to the researcher. The pilot study was carried out on 6<sup>th</sup> of September and the results of the study were noted.

#### **3.8.1 Results of the pilot study**

A number of questions on the initial focus group discussion were amended. For instance, question number two, initially had some answers which were included under support services/welfare of students with disabilities. Question three was also completely left out because it was realised it was not so valid for the study. The guide which initially had seven questions ended up being downsized to only five.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

### **4.0 Introduction**

This section presents the findings of the study from the focus group discussion. The discussion was conducted with students with disabilities at Makerere and Kyambogo University. First the demographic information of the respondents will be presented. The findings are presented in a descriptive manner moving from quotes of what was said to what each statement means. The most important findings are presented and examples are given using direct quotes from the participants with additional comments. This is done to provide contextual details about each participant's circumstances and helps point to relevant findings. Furthermore, the more comprehensive discussion will be saved for the specific discussion part later on in chapter five. In order to maintain the anonymity of the participants where direct quotes have been used, details that could identify the participants have been changed or omitted. This will for example include names of students and University, as well as other elements that may disclose their identity. The data is presented and analyzed qualitatively in major themes. The major themes are Admission into public universities, Environmental situation for students with disabilities, Access to teaching and learning, Mode of assessment and Exams, Support/ Welfare, Attitudes off staff, challenges, specific supportive mechanisms in place, assessing affirmative action and possible strategies for improvement.

The guiding Questions for the study have been:

- What are the experiences of students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action scheme to public universities?
- What are the challenges faced by students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action scheme to public universities?
- What are the specific supportive mechanisms in place to enable access to learning and participation for students with disabilities?

#### **Table 4.1: demographic information of the participants**

(Refer to appendix 7)

## **4.1 Experiences of students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action in public universities**

This section reveals the opinions of the various categories of students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action. Students revealed both positive and negative experiences grouped under the following themes; admission into public universities, environmental situation for students with disabilities, welfare, and attitudes of staff.

### **4.1.1 Admission into public universities**

The first theme that emerged from the responses of the participants was admission to public universities. The universities and tertiary institutions Act (UTIA) confer an obligation to universities to admit students with disabilities through affirmative action on only public universities. The results of this study established that all the participating public universities admitted students with disabilities through the scheme. It was found that the university would only admit a student with disability on condition that he/she met the requirements of admission. The requirements of which were; two (2) principal passes at 'A' Level, six (6) passes at 'O' Level, and should have filled the PUJAB forms and given prove of disability during assessment. Despite fulfilling these requirements, findings of this study established that students with disabilities continue to encounter both positive and negative admission experiences. I begin by presenting the negative experiences. A participant with visual impairment from public university A, recounted his negative experience, he states;

There are a lot of negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities by the assessment board, either because they don't have disabilities.

I was asked during assessment courses of my choice, which I willingly gave, but unfortunately was not given. I tried appealing, but was rudely told they can't change and may apply on private for a course of my choice. Besides that, I was given a university which was not my preferred choice. In my year of study, we were four students who were given the same course, which lead me to ask myself whether blind students can only be counselors, yet we can be good lawyers, teachers etc. When I reported, I thought the academic registrar would help me change the course but only received a rude response. I wished I had a recorder I would have recorded and published what transpired between me and that registrar. It was a bad experience for me but, I gradually settled down.

This quotation illustrates the negative attitudes that still exist towards pwds, in that, the academic registrar of this particular university never bothered to explain to the student the circumstances in which he was admitted to the course but was only rude to him adding more stress on the student.

A second participant with hearing impairment from the same university recounts his experience, he stated;

When I was applying there was too much bureaucracy involved, was asked many questions to prove I was deaf. The assessment team over asked me questions and sometimes doubted whether I was actually disabled, and kept on tossing me up and down, leading to high costs incurred. Besides there is limited time for applying as the information is given on short notice favoring the urban areas, as the rural miss out?

Another student with hearing impairment from public university B, agreed with the aforementioned experience, she stated that:

She missed to be admitted under affirmative action in her first attempt due to lack of communication. She got information on the last day of interviews and had to wait for the next year to apply again.

These quotations indicate that information for assessment interviews is communicated to students on short notice using social media which is not accessible to all. It also implies that the members of the assessment team are still ignorant about disability, Deafness being an invisible disability makes people doubt and think one is giving false information in order to benefit from the sponsorship, there's need to raise more awareness to the team, only then can they know that there are varying levels of disabilities.

Similarly, a participant with physical disability from the same university recounts the above experience:

I was one of the last students to be admitted in 2017, the university opened around the month of August and I was assured that they would admit me but, was surprised to see my name on a different university list. When I reported, I waited for my admission letter for a full month without success, this applied to all students admitted under affirmative action. On one occasion a lecturer saw me waiting my name without a registration number. I continued waiting and couldn't submit my course works without a registration number. I remember it was around the first week of September that I actually received the admission letter which was rather late and got so worried that I might end up missing my

marks. One lecturer actually told me my marks were misplaced but what helped was that he gave me another course work to do.

This quotation explains some of the hurdles students with disabilities go through to get admitted to public universities under affirmative action which adds additional challenges to the already disabled person coupled with the much academic stuff that one is confronted with in higher institutions of learning, there's need to process the admission letters early to avoid additional stress on the students after they have reported and need to settle down.

However, some positive experiences were recorded. For example, one respondent from public university B stated;

Personally, for me being admitted was easy. When I came for the assessment interviews, was told that only a sizeable number of 64 slots are allocated to all students with disabilities under affirmative action, and more consideration was given to those with severe disability. Being short sighted, I knew my chances for admission were limited and I lost hope for being considered. When I went through, I thanked God because many were left out. My good performance in "A" Level may also have increased my chances for admission. but to my dismay the course I was given wasn't of my choice, I wanted to do social work but was given community psychology, at first I didn't like the course but after being counseled and attending some lectures I gradually started liking the course because I realised that's where I belonged after attending a full semester. All I can say is that admission under affirmative action is fair because it only requires one to get only two principal passes and thereafter one qualifies for a course of admission.

This quotation shows that much as the student was pleased to be admitted, but was disappointed that the course was not of her preference, which implies that students with disability do not get satisfaction from the professions they graduate from, which may negatively impact on their job performance since they are there by fault.

A second participant with hearing impairment from the same university had positive feelings and recounts:

My previous school was inclusive, but had a special needs teacher. We were only two deaf students, so the teacher guided us on how to apply for admission under affirmative action. My combination at "A" level was BAG so was admitted for Agri Business. My interpreter has been there to help me so I don't have any challenges.

This quotation indicates that the above student acknowledged being fortunate enough to be given a course which was in line with her “A” level combinations.

Still on a positive note, a participant with hearing impairment from the same public university states:

I sat for my “A” level in 2015, I applied for admission under affirmative action and was called for assessment, on arrival was told that the PUJAB forms were got from the admission office. I didn’t have the money and they refused to give me the forms, so I missed admission and had to stay home for a full year. The following year I got money and came and applied and was admitted. I was very happy. In my earlier school life, I had no interpreter, but when I was admitted to university, I was introduced to learning through an interpreter and am gradually learning sign language to ease my communication challenges. This has greatly resulted in my improvement in the course to which I own thanks to the scheme.

In this quotation, much as the student was not unfairly treated in the beginning by being denied forms without money but, at the end the student was grateful for being admitted and owned thanks to the scheme for uplifting the lives of disabled persons.

A similar incident was experienced and narrated by a student with visual impairment from the same university narrates:

I missed my first year because, when I came for assessment, my divinity marks were missing. I was told to appeal but it was already late for me to be considered. I waited for the coming year and was lucky to be shortlisted. The list in the newspapers showed that I had been admitted for Education but on arrival to pick the admission letter was shocked to discover that I had been offered social work. This scenario has led me to miss some of my marks which takes me long to trace them since the system shows my name under two courses.

This quotation indicates that students are not given enough time to appeal and this is attributed by participants to short notice communication which gets them not prepared due to lack of awareness on how to access admission under the scheme, besides many students get admission letters with many errors which take long to be corrected, adding an additional burden to the already disabled as they have to move from office to office to correct the abnormalities in the admission.

A student leader from the same University reported that:

There are both positive and negative impacts of affirmative action. Whereas more efforts have taken place to increase the number of students with disabilities accessing higher education, we must look at the admission criteria and how persons with disabilities are treated during assessment in that most or all of the people in the assessment committee are not PWDs. There's need to have more Pwds in the committee who understand disability issues, only then can we have a better assessment committee. More so the method of communicating to eligible candidates is not favourable. i. e they use phones where most PWDs do not have or may not access without help from another significant person and so miss out. The exercise of assessment is so bureaucratic and tedious. Information is not put into writing and yet every different category of disability should be catered for. Besides the environment is also not accessible to some. This calls for equitable access, as many people end up being conned because they don't have someone to help them.

This implies credit should be given where it's due, as more time is needed for things to get better, and there's need to continue lobbying universities to improve on the challenges confronting students with disabilities during the admission processes which in the long run may yield some positive results.

#### **4.2 Environmental situation for students with disabilities**

Information was sought on the extent to which students with disabilities had access to study and living environments and what adaptations had been made to facilitate them. Responses are grouped by; General view of accessibility, Access to university compounds, Access to halls of residence, accessibility of the study environment, Access to information, Teaching/learning, Assessment and Exams, and access to meals and are discussed below:

Both universities referred to aspiration or even plans to improve the environment for students with disabilities. However, at the time of this study the environmental condition in both universities is not very suitable for blind and students with physical disabilities as reported under the given sub- themes;



#### **4.1.1 General view of accessibility of buildings at institutions:**

Information was sought on the general view of buildings in the university. It was reported that full access was unavailable in all kinds of building in the universities. An analysis of the findings reveals that the institutions of learning are not accessible for students with disabilities especially those who use wheel chairs, crutches and those with visual impairment. Additionally, they reported that most of the buildings are randomly placed throughout the campuses and the pavements are not good enough to accommodate the movement of students with disabilities. The physical environment is inaccessible without the help of a second person. Furthermore, it was stated that almost all the old buildings at the university except the new ones are not easy to be accessed by students with disabilities. A participant from university B narrates:

At the time the old buildings were constructed, they had no idea that PWDs exist, that explains the reason why most old buildings are not accessible to PWDs. But the new buildings have been constructed with PWDs in mind but unfortunately the small gate at the university is still a challenge to a person on a wheel chair.

The above quotation shows that in recognition of the rights of pwds and the requirements of the national and international legal provisions; universities have started implementing their policies on students with disabilities by ensuring that all the newly constructed buildings within the university compel with the provisions therein. However, there is still more to be done to ensure the buildings meet the accessibility standards.

Another student with physical impairment from university A gave his account;

Some places are accessible, but at NPT building a person with a wheel chair cannot access the faculty. When I go to pick an exam card, my access is hindered because it has three steps and sometimes the place is slippery. The Dean of students' office also isn't accessible and estates department says it will be fixed. Some lectures fix lectures on unplanned rooms. There's also a challenge of accessing toilets so I use for lectures.

This implies that despite students disclosing their challenges to concerned authorities they continue to live on unfulfilled promises.

#### **4.1.2 Access to university compounds:**

Students had varying responses depending on their disability; others found the compounds accessible, whereas others found it fairly accessible, but many students with visual impairment reported finding the compound to be greatly inaccessible. The cause of this is the potholes. The partially sighted said they at least can navigate their environments; however, they faced difficulties in new paths. The informants from University B stated that, the university has a vast compound with smooth roads and pavements almost everywhere but the problem is that they are full of humps almost after every 3 meters in which pose a challenge to students with mobility problems. On the other hand, respondents from university A reported that, the compounds, roads and pavements are filled with pot-holes and trenches and the situation had been exacerbated by a lot of construction work going on which has damaged even the old existing good roads and this makes it difficult for students with mobility challenges to navigate their environment. One such student with visual impairment states:

Sometimes I can be moving alone using the white canes and I find potholes or cars parked on the side of the road that easily hurt me.

Also in order to ease movement by students with disabilities university A provides a van and a Tuk-Tuk to transport students with mobility difficulties but the students complained that sometimes the van is used to transport lectures leaving them waiting for long. University B has no such initiative for transporting students and also no boda-bodas are allowed in the university compounds.

#### **4.1.3 Access to halls of residence:**

All the universities visited meet accommodation needs for students with disabilities. Responses indicate that some students with disabilities feel the halls are fairly accessible, while others experience no access challenges in the halls of residence this is due to the reason that accommodation allocation is done according to one's disability and most are accommodated on the ground floor to avoid climbing stairs, but sometimes when the rooms are full the students may also be assigned in the upper rooms. Although universities offer accommodation to all students with disabilities participants reported that there is still a problem of congestion in the

rooms. Rooms are shared by 4 or more students. This was particularly reported in university A because in university B the student is allocated a single room with his/her guide/ interpreter.

The toilets and wash rooms were also reported not suitable for the physically challenged, and they find it difficult to use them. Besides they are always dirty; this is attributed to the large number of students. Many of the halls are storied with no lifts or ramps. To reduce these access problems, students with mobility problems or those with visual impairment are accommodated on the ground floors. The other categories of disabilities are accommodated on any floor. However, some of these rooms are of poor condition as narrated by a respondent with visual impairment from university B:

At my hall, students with disability are given poor rooms with poor conditions, the room. I was allocated had a pipe which even leaks, the wardens hire out the rooms meant for pwds to normal students at a high fee leaving students with disabilities to use rooms with poor conditions.

Similarly, another female student from the same university recounts:

When I was admitted, I was attached to a hall, where the rooms for students with disabilities are in poor condition in that, they are next to the toilets, the good rooms are all given up for hire to other students.

These quotations imply that much as the policies stipulate that students be provided accommodation in the most accessible rooms participants felt that the wardens discriminated against them when allocating rooms because they felt the good rooms were hired to private students leaving the bad rooms for them.

A respondent with physical impairment from University A recounted his experience as follows:

When I was admitted, I was attached to Kulubya, but because the hall is inaccessible, I transferred to Mandela because the shelters were not accessible for me as the hall was full of steps, Mandela was worse, when the bathrooms get flooded, I always have to move through the water which is dirty. The Block where I reside there are so many trenches that sometimes I try to improvise with stones to help cross the trenches, but the cleaners remove them.”

This illustrates that much as Mandela was accessible the student still faced a problem of having to move in dirty water along the trenches, which shows that universities have not fulfilled their

obligation of ensuring that sanitation facilities within the university are adapted to ease accessibility to students with disabilities.

#### **4.1.4 Access to meals**

Information was sought on whether all students admitted under the scheme received meals from the university dining halls. It was reported that, as a matter of policy all the students admitted under affirmative action formally received meals from the universities halls of residence, but the practice has now changed. Instead of being provided meals by the university, students now receive 4000 Uganda shillings per day channeled directly to the student's mobile money account to be paid to the catering agencies that have been identified by the university to provide catering services. The students interviewed however expressed concern that this money is little and has lowered both the quality and quantity of the food they now receive from the university. Some expressed willingness to receive the money and provide for their own meals elsewhere.

#### **4.1.5 Accessibility of the study environment**

This section describes the extent to which students with disabilities were able to access lecture halls, laboratories, libraries and so on.

This is one of the main challenges to students with disabilities in Uganda's universities. The distances the students have to cover are rather long as universities have vast campuses leaving the students to walk long distances to from lecture rooms to halls of residence and other areas of learning and participation. The participants also reported that students with disabilities have a problem in accessing the larger portion of the study environment in the university. Especially, the problem is more difficult when exams, lectures or other academic events are conducted in the upper floors of the buildings. Because, almost all the buildings do not have elevators or other means which facilitate students with disability ability to access the buildings. However, the participants affirmed that a lecture or any event where a student with disability is involved is conducted on the ground floor as narrated by a respondent of university B;

Most of the lectures are conducted in distant lecture rooms which makes us reach late. C.I.T has six floors and has no ramps. The college of Engineering design art

and technology (CEDAT) is also not accessible to students with mobility challenges.

Similarly, a respondent with physical disability from the same university states;

The distance from my place of residence to Mulago where I study from is far and the university doesn't mind that I have a physical challenge. I get challenged walking for long distances because of my disability and no boda- boda carrying a student with disability is allowed to get inside the compound. Besides Medical school has lecture rooms which don't have lifts and the ones that have are not functioning. We do a lot of practicals and each is given 1 minute but at the end we don't all perform at the same pace.

Another participant from university A agreed with the aforementioned challenges;

Faculty of education has storied buildings with steps. Things are not good for us. I wrote a letter to the dean of students and faculty, but there's no response.

Much as it's a legal provision of the university to endeavor to make suitable adaptations to existing learning facilities where necessary, in order to accommodate people with disabilities, this quotation indicates that it's still a long way before these provisions are fully implemented.

#### **4.1.6 Access to information**

Access to information is one of the focus policy priorities of the national policy on disability in Uganda whose interventions include promoting the use of, sign language, Braille, tactile and other alternative modes of communication. But despite these provisions' findings indicate that blind students expressed their limited access to information and the partially sighted expressed concerns which are; as expressed by one student;

There is non- availability of large print copies of notices, books in Braille and large print. Also, we Lack knowledge on using the computer and internet.

All students with visual impairment agreed they felt left out by the institutions communication system. Notices were written and pasted on notice boards of departments, faculties, administration offices in print. No effort is made to inform students with visual impairment what is on the notices. This at times affected the students to miss on changed times of the programme courses.

#### **4.1.7 Access to teaching and learning:**

Students with disabilities require a conducive learning environment which takes account of the difficulties they experience, for example, modified methods of teaching, facilities such as assistive devices for learning etc. In line with this, findings from the study indicate that, majority of the students revealed that lectures cater for them when they deliver their lectures. They reported that there are things that lectures could do and some that are beyond them. For instance, requesting able-bodied students to reserve front seats for students with disabilities, the lecturers would definitely do. Additionally, ensuring that students with disability have handouts and other materials during the delivery of the lectures, Students with disability also reported being helped by fellow students. This shows that there is some level of awareness of disability needs. However, in spite of the above positive contributions by the concerned lectures, there are other issues that lectures could not attend to during the delivery of lectures.

Blind students expressed experiencing great difficulty, while students with physical disability access lectures with less level of difficulty; but this do not mean that the lecture rooms are physically accessible. To solve the access problems, students reported that, a lecture where a student with mobility difficulty is involved is conducted in the ground floor. It's the mode of delivery of the lectures that is such a big challenge to students with visual impairment and hearing impairment as recounted by the above experiences narrated by students with visual impairment:

- Lectures use projectors, which they can't see because they have low vision and so they depend on other students.
- Lectures give out handouts which are not in large print, they send emails but they receive the emails late.
- Students are very many that they always miss the front seats and end up learning nothing.
- One student with albinism said that one of the lectures rudely told him that he doesn't give soft copies of notes when he requested for them.

-Students with low vision also complained that some lecturers write very small letters on the chalkboard which they can't read, others have bad handwriting.

-During practical papers it's hard for them to access equipment.

These quotations also illustrate that the methods of teaching and materials are not modified to accommodate the learning needs of students with visual impairment.

On a positive note; One respondent with visual recounts:

However, one student had a positive experience with her lectures as narrated;

I have limited challenges with my lectures. Some of my lecturers are so considerate that they sometimes give me soft copies of notes and I put in my personal computer.

The challenge experienced by the deaf in the mode of teaching is that some lecturers talk so fast that when you want to meet them privately, it's hard to access them. The deaf students feel that their needs are not taken into consideration by the lectures.

One of the respondents narrated:

I have five lectures, but two lecturers don't use projectors so I tend to be left behind when they are using handouts.

Similarly, another student narrates:

I have a challenge when the lecture is more of mathematics involving calculations, I'm left behind because the interpreter cannot follow and sign the calculations since it requires one to illustrate.

A student leader with hearing impairment from public university B agreed with the aforementioned challenges and narrates;

I'm a victim of this, as a deaf student it's difficult to access lectures, most students were given courses which weren't of their choices, so at the end they end up accumulating work load, there must be consideration for students with disabilities to access the lectures at all times. Sometimes, lecturers conduct lectures in the evening and yet students with low vision can't see at such awkward

hours and, more so the students are so many. Lectures in my university don't have any experience on hearing impairment and visual impairment. I don't know the reason why most of the exam papers/ exams answer booklets can be transported to another university for transcribing, yet if they did so they would do them from this place. The library should be equipped to encourage students with disability to do research.

Given that the deaf depend on their vision to get information, it becomes extremely hard for them to follow the signs and at the same time observe what a lecturer is illustrating on the chalkboard, besides it's difficult to sign mathematical concepts without illustrating.

#### **4.1.8 Assessment and examinations:**

Information was sought to find out whether assessment and exam processes take into consideration the students' impairment. The common approach here is allowing students with disabilities extra time in course work, tests and exams. There is also modification to the exam procedures in both universities. However, the experiences varied across the universities and also faculties and colleges. Some of this are set out below: Blind students report their exam scripts are not marked in time. According to one such student from university B:

Lecturers and staff have no knowledge of Braille, our examination scripts (papers) are first taken to University A for transcribing before they are brought back for marking. This makes us to get our results late.

A respondent with visual impairment from university A agreed with the aforementioned challenge as narrated:

The Braille machines are faulty, this forced me to use 10 machines and even getting one is a challenge. Our results are also released late since they have to be transcribed first. If we don't fight for them, we get challenges of missing marks.

These quotations imply that students with visual impairment always get their results late since the papers have to be transcribed first before marking, this is due to the fact that universities greatly lack personnel skilled in braille and handling pwds. Even at university A known for its specialization in special needs, this staffs are few and can only provide services in a classroom environment.

Another student of university A lamented:



We do exams in the main hall which doesn't have enough light. When it clocks 7:00 pm, I can hardly see what am writing and, during exams some invigilators don't give me extra time. Lecturers say deaf and students with visual impairment can't be given extra time, it's only for those with mental retardation.

Some students reported that some lecturers just grab the exam papers from students with disability before they have finished. These quotations imply that lecturers are not uniformly applying the provision of allowing PWDs extra time during exam, depending on the need.

Participants from university B also reported that, their guides and interpreters are not allowed inside the examination room as narrated by one deaf respondent from University B;

In some colleges, interpreters and Guides are not allowed inside the examination room with their students, this is more of discrimination because the deaf may miss out communication incase corrections are made and time left is communicated, Besides, the student may want to go for a short call and may need the guide to help or the interpreter to communicate to the invigilator. Most of us are not even given extra time by those lecturers who don't understand us. But even the university hasn't created awareness about the extra time of 45 minutes that should be given to students with disability as prescribed by senate.

This quotation implies that the provisions of extra time and entitlement of using the guide / interpreter during exams is abused. Findings also indicate that sometimes exams are conducted in rooms which are not accessible to the physically challenged in this case the student has to wait for an alternative arrangement as his/her colleagues begin the exams and at the end the students finish late.

#### **4.1.9 Welfare for students with disabilities:**

This section explains the various types of support which are being made for students with disabilities: The participants of the study pointed out personal support as one of the kinds of support provided to students with disabilities at universities. Funds for the support come from the office of the Dean of Students as reported from both universities and are limited to certain groups of students. The form of support is mainly personal assistance related support such as sign language interpreters for the deaf, helpers for those with physical disabilities and guides for the blind; no such support is given to other categories like albinism etc.

In the two public universities, according to the focus group discussion, the mode of providing the support differed. For example, university B was formally providing funds to students to employ the support assistants but both universities now employ personal support assistants for students upon their recommendation of the person of their choice.

There were also concerns in both universities that the payment of the personal assistants was not friendly to the economy which affects their effectiveness in doing their work. Students also mentioned that they find it hard to get people to work for them at such a small fee. University A pays the guides and interpreters better than University B. University A pays the interpreters 15,000 per day (450,000 monthly) and Guides 10,000 per day (300,000 monthly) before taxes, whereas University B pays interpreters 250,000 per month and Guides 120,000 per month but this is usually given as lump sum amount of four month and not taxed.

Concerns also exist of the money taking long to be paid, a process that is done towards the end or beginning of the next semester. Students in University B attribute the delay in the payment to change of the system where the students are no longer allowed to receive the money on behalf of the guide / interpreter. In University A it has always been a norm to delay to pay. Besides this, University B also provides meals and accommodation to the guides and interpreters to reside in the university campus. University A formally used to provide meals but now the system has changed, as the practice has been changed to paying students to provide their meals.

A respondent with hearing impairment from University B narrates:

Interpreters sometimes abandon us because of small pay. Mine requested me to allow him work for only 3 days and I obliged because I had no choice.

Similarly, another student narrated that:

Some interpreters want to be paid at the beginning of the semester, so when I paid him at once, he disappeared leaving me to suffer.

Findings also indicate availability of disability financial assistance for all students who are recognized as disabled students, both government funded and private to enable them purchase devices such as Braille materials, hearing aids, repair wheel chairs and photocopy notes etc. It

was also reported that in both universities students under the disability scheme undergo an assessment to determine their needs thereafter they receive direct funding from the university. At University A, students reported receiving the facilitation as follows;

The deaf receive between 100,000-150,000 annually but private students may get up to 400,000 for paying for interpreting services, since the government ones automatically get interpreters upon their recommendation. Students with visual impairment receive between 230,000- 450,000 but first years get more money. Those with physical impairment get between 100,000-500,000

University B, facilitates the students better and they reported that each student gets between 1.2-1.4 million annually, and is paid once usually in the first semester of the academic year. Students also reported receiving some faculty and internship allowances which also they reported is little and often paid late. However, at University A students mentioned that sometimes they never receive the faculty and internship allowance. Besides the guides and interpreters are no longer facilitated to accompany the students for internship.

In both universities according to the focus group discussion, students with disabilities mentioned that, the financial support is very minimal and inadequate to help students cover even their basic expenses. The extent to which the support is inadequate is expressed by a student with disability of University A:

My course is very demanding in terms of materials. One of the requirements for the course is a laptop which is between one -three million Uganda shillings, but the university gives us government students with hearing impairment only 100,000 per year as facilitation for photocopying notes and thinks that since we have no physical challenges this is all we need. Before assessment one is required to fill a form specifying the kind of academic or non-academic support one requires but many times, we are not given what we request for, this makes us feel the university is not considerate to all our needs.

The student leader from university B had this to say:

Let's give credit where its due, the university has tried to uplift the status score for students with disabilities. The university has been in the forefront in improving the living standards of students with disabilities, promoting awareness; the disability policy was also established. There's always a person allocated who is dedicated in handling the services of students with disability. Most of the students

with disability are idle that they don't want to get involved in the activities of the university. The disabled students are also given some allowance of between 1.2 million – 1.4 million as facilitation to purchase the needed educational materials for learning. The research shouldn't focus on only the negative but also the positive.

There is need to give credit where its due and continue hoping for the best in future as requested by the student leader.

A respondent with albinism has this to say:

Much as we they blame most of them; they do not know what each person with disability is suffering from. So, they need to be sensitized. Persons with albino are usually taken to be normal apart from the skin color and yet we need creams which are very expensive and we can't afford them. We also have low vision and cannot benefit from chalkboard work and information on notices.

From these quotations' participants feel credit should be given where it's due because universities need time to solve this challenge one at a time. Since this is one of the focus areas of students' welfare in University A's strategic plan 2012/2013-2022/23 to enhance students support systems and funds are annually allocated in the annual budget.

#### **4.1.10 Attitudes of the staff**

This section was meant to explore students' opinions about staff attitudes toward them in their different disabilities. Asked if they felt welcome at their institutions, participants were divided about whether they felt welcomed /supported at the institutions with individuals having both positive and negative comments/experiences. The students seem to argue overall that they were not treated differently, specifically because they were students with disabilities. However, some negative attitudes displayed by lecturers and administrators were a course of concern. Some of the issues students mentioned included;

A student of university B complained that:

Most of the Wardens to Halls of residence act as a hindrance to their personal assistants, in that in most cases they doubt their disabilities in that they always spy on them so as to find a loophole on them and later take them to the Disciplinary committee so that they are denied their Guides and Interpreters and at the end they themselves sell of their rooms for their personal gain.

A student from university A complained that some staffs see them as a disaster. They chased him to go to look for the interpreter instead of struggling to lip-read.

Another student narrates:

When I wrote a letter advocating for some services for pwds. As soon as they realised that the letter was for pwds they made me move from office to office until I realised that they were dodging me and I give up the chase.

On a positive note a student with hearing impairment from university B narrated:

I thought I was going to face discrimination, but to my understanding they like us. One accounting lecturer gave a sign I didn't understand but was told through the interpreter that she was surprised to hear me repeat exactly what she told me

## **4.2 Challenges faced by students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action scheme in public universities**

This section describes the challenges faced by students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action scheme in public universities. The study unearthed a number of challenges faced by students with disabilities. The study revealed the following challenges grouped under the following sub-themes;

### **4.2.1 Accessibility barriers**

Participating students highlighted challenges pertaining to physical access within the university environment due to prohibitive infrastructure. Participants also explained that although access has improved for students with disabilities at university, there are still accessibility barriers that limit the participation of students in the academic programs in term of accessing the library, lectures, offices of administrators, narrow doors for students using wheel chairs and inaccessible toilets and washrooms and many others as already mentioned in study objective one. As a result of these barriers students expressed challenges in accessing the physical infrastructure in the university and reaching their lectures on time. Besides there are no permanent seats in the lecture rooms and students with mobility challenges were confronted with the problem of having to constantly look for seats. Students also reported transport challenges, as boda-bodas carrying students with disabilities are denied access to university premises, making students who are physically challenged to walk long distances.

Students from university B also expressed the risks of Insecurity as many are accommodated on the ground floors in poor condition rooms. One student reported being confronted by someone with a spear but was lucky not to be harmed. They also reported being beaten whenever there are strikes as many times they are caught up in class when the strikes take place and cannot run for their safety. Inaccessibility of buildings therefore limits the full integration of students with disabilities into campus life.

#### **4.2.2 Absence of disability friendly study materials**

Depending on the particular impairment, most students experience barriers relating to teaching/learning at some point in their studies as a result of lack of reasonable accommodations. The following findings emerged from this study;

Students with visual impairment reported that there was lack of materials available in accessible formats, their exam papers are also not provided in large print and Braille, more especially at University B but to a small extent at University A as this particular university has a history of Special Needs Education and some of its staff trained in handling students with disabilities. This leads to late release of their results as they have to be transcribed first before marking. This seemed to be a general practice in all universities as reported by the students with sight problems. However, all student affirmed that some lectures gave handouts in advance, but this was still a challenge to those with visual impairment as it requires them to transcribe first before accessing the notes. There is therefore need to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for students with disabilities since they encounter more barriers than the majority of students. Participants also decried that they found the workload too much for them and felt they should be given extra time to accomplish. However, some reported that, when one explained the constraints to the lecturer some understood and gave them extra time to hand in the course work assignments.

#### **4.2.3 Attitudinal barriers**

On attitudes it was revealed that discrimination towards students with disabilities by students, staff and administrators still exist to some extent although there is some level of awareness among students and staff about the rights of students with disabilities. Students expressed

negative attitudes from some of the management team in both universities as students always lived on unfilled promises. They also complained that some invigilators/ lectures do not allow Interpreters inside the examination room, besides some do not give extra time in tests or exams as the universities have not raised enough awareness about this provision. One student states;

A lecturer finds you still writing and just grabs the paper from you.

Another narrates;

.... a lecturer sees you using an interpreter but keeps on crossing in front of you obstructing you from accessing the information. On one occasion a lecturer chased my interpreter from sitting in front of me and told him to sit like other students facing him.

This was mostly reported by students of university B as there exists some level of awareness on disability in university A, so the practice is not rampant there. Students also stressed that they faced discrimination from some students in that many don't want to involve them in their group discussions and co-curricular activities. Students with disability also felt that the fact that they were marginalized /discouraged in pursuing certain courses, and given courses which are were necessarily of their choice, which put them at a disadvantage amounts to selective discrimination.

Students who are exposed to discrimination are therefore particularly prone to be hurt academically, socially, and emotionally, and I wish there could be more sensitization on alleviating a lot of negative attitudes towards students with disabilities.

#### **4.2.4 Financial barrier**

During data collection participants raised a number of challenges they faced as a result of finances. It was revealed that students with disabilities often failed to meet even the minimum basic needs as parents think when admitted on government everything is facilitated for by the government, and so they end up without the everyday basic requirements until they receive the disability facilitation which is also small to maintain one for a full year.

#### **4.2.5 University administration**

The participants of the study reported the inadequate resources in the university due to inadequate funds as a challenge faced by the university administration in its effort to achieve inclusion of students with disabilities. This implies that the university administration has limited funds to purchase what is required to achieve the inclusion of students with disabilities such as; Braille papers, Perkins Braille machines, brailed textbooks, Braille slates, projectors, and many others to be used by students with disabilities and lecturers in teaching, besides they are not facilitated adequately and thus a challenge in as far as achieving their inclusion is concerned.

This was emphasized by one of the students when he stressed that,

Whenever the university administrators are approached to respond to the concerns of students with disabilities especially providing the specialized teaching and learning materials like Braille papers for the blind students, they always complain that they don't have money. Besides it's hard to access them as most times they are not in office.

Participants reported also that these inadequate resources have led them sometimes experiencing Challenges getting qualified and experienced people to work as guides due to an attractive pay, ending up with incompetent guides who can't write good English. This also extends to the interpreters because no professional person can work for a small fee, so at the end the student is faced with an incompetent assistant. They also reported at times, they even fail to get personal assistants.

#### **4.2.6 Communication barrier**

Communication is crucial if one is to access information. Findings from the study indicate that deaf students face language barrier between students and administrators especially when the interpreter is not available or when one has not yet got an interpreter. They also expressed absence of interpreters in hospital and other social places such as church and unplanned activities in the university. Those in the category of visual impairment also expressed limited access to information, since most information is pinned on notice boards without consideration of students with vision problems.



Despite changes in many countries' legislation and the development of programs for students with disabilities, in recognition of the importance of higher education for individuals, families, and society at large, low enrolment and high first-year dropout have been found (Dutta et al., 2009; Mpofu & Wilson, 2004). Low enrolment and high dropout can be understood as the result of inadequate accessibility of higher education institutions, lack of support, adverse social attitudes and social isolation, as well as low financial capacity (Foreman et al., 2001; Jung, 2003; Johnson, 2006; McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001; Mpofu & Wilson, 2004).

#### **4.3 Specific supportive mechanisms in place:**

This section will explain the specific supportive mechanisms that universities have put in place to enhance the learning and participation of students with disabilities in their universities. The term participation has several dimensions: taking part, inclusion, involvement in various life areas, and access to the necessary resources (Moller & Danermark, 2007). This conceptualization means that students' experiences include participation and learning in all aspects of academic institutional life, in and outside the classroom. In addition, according to Pace & Kuh, (1998) students should be encouraged to expand and exercise the knowledge gained in formal learning to interact with students, faculty members, and other people outside the campus. Thus, formal and non-formal learning experiences, on- and off-campus interactions, are part of students' roles.

Mechanisms varied across universities. These were categorized into the following sub- themes, including; university disability policy, technical equipment, office for disability affairs, examination modification, physical infrastructure, participation in leadership, awareness raising, transport and personal assistance.

##### **4.3.1 Technical equipment.**

On technical equipment a room in the main library at university B has been allocated for students with disability to serve as a disability library with well stocked computers with all requirements to aid their full use to students with disabilities.eg computers with JAWS which transcribe written texts into audio formats that can be accessed by the blind. There's also a Braille writer however, students reported that their lecturers do not have any formal training in disability related issues and thus cannot translate the information into Braille. The problem is

being solved by having the Braille notes transcribed at university A. Other technology available include/; magnification lenses, wide screen and speakers. In contrast to this, at University A the technological equipment available include: computers with screen readers such as JAWS and Dolphin pen, close circuit television CCTV for enlarging print, Braille printer but reported not working, hand held magnifier and Perkins Braille, with staff well versed in using the technology and training the students in using it. The staffs also act as helpers to students during exams and transcribe Braille into print for the university. In both universities' students reported that the software for students with visual impairment installed is not enough.

#### **4.3.2 Disability units/offices**

Participants from university B reported that; the university has an office dedicated to disability issues and is available to students with disability 12 hours/5 days a week. On the other hand, University A has; an established resource room for students with disability equipped with computers and staffs to help students with disability that need help in writing their course work or doing their exams. However, this is limited to the faculty of special needs as other faculties do not have staff trained in Braille. University A is also; reported to have recently established a disability center but the center is not yet operational as it has not been equipped in terms of materials and facilities.

The Disability Unit assists students with different types of disabilities to have access to and succeed in all academic programmes and for them to contribute equally to the University's academic legacy. The Disability Unit provides a number of services including computer facilities, accessible material and notes, sign language interpreters, limited assistive devices, organizing of additional time for exams/tests and counseling. The Disability Unit's objective is to promote and support the equal academic participation of students with disabilities in the learning environment

#### **4.3.3 Examination modification:**

Participants from both universities reported; modification to exam procedures in the form of additional time and use of facilitators during exams. Both universities reported; some examination modification particularly in form of large print and Braille for students with visual

impairment; they may also have a special exam room. A student may also be assigned a helper during the exams to read the questions and also note down answers for those who don't know Braille as exactly given by the student or, the student Brailles the answers him/herself. This is being practiced in both universities. The scripts from university B are later transcribed at university B.

#### **4.3.4 Physical infrastructure:**

According to students with disabilities both universities have endeavored to make sure the new buildings are constructed with people with disabilities in mind (i.e. they are accessible) they have ramps and other disability friendly provisions to ease movement of students with disabilities though a lot still needs to be done to see that they meet the universal accessibility design standards

#### **4.3.5 Participation in Leadership**

Participants reported being included in the guild council and their associations legalized. At University A, two slots are allocated to persons with disability to serve as guild representatives in the council, taking into consideration gender balance. This is in contrast to University B, with one slot of Minister In charge disability.

#### **4.3.6 Awareness raising**

It was reported that in an effort to raise awareness, university B has put in place a talking environment around campus to create awareness of the presence of people with disability. On the other hand, no such initiative is seen at University A, but students and staff are always sensitized about the rights of students with disability and other special needs and, the treatment they should be accorded, so that the university environment and its activities do not place them at a disadvantage.

#### **4.3.7 Transport**

Participants at University A reported that, transport is provided to students with disability in form of a vehicle and Tuk-Tuk, but doesn't provide full services because staff is sometimes

transported using it. University B has no such initiative as even boda-bodas are not allowed in the university premises. Though its policy stipulates the provision of appropriate commuter vehicle for transporting students with disabilities, nothing is on the ground yet.

#### **4.3.8 Disability policy**

Participants reported that the universities have slowly activated their disability policies. The University B policy, was evolved in February 2014 and that of University A, in May of the same year. These policies address issues of admission, reasonable accommodations, equality and non-discrimination, inclusion and participation awareness, guidance and support, physical infrastructure, examinations, accommodation, among others though, there is need to strengthen them.

#### **4.3.9 Personal assistance**

As mentioned earlier both universities reported some personal support. This entails reading and mobility support for blind students, interpreting for students with hearing impairment, and personal care and mobility for students with physical disability, but from the information given, it seemed to be generally fairly limited,

Among the supporting factors, studies have shown the importance of faculty's attitudes toward students with disabilities, their awareness of these students' needs, and their knowledge of the reasonable accommodations available. These attitudes influence success or failure of students with disabilities, and affect inclusion in higher education (Rao, 2004). Negative attitudes of faculty and administrative staff may prevent students, especially students with invisible disabilities, from disclosing their disabilities and from requesting accommodations they are entitled to (Jung, 2003; Johnson, 2006).

#### **4.4 Assessing affirmative action**

Students were asked to rate affirmative action, and participants gave varying responses across universities as recorded below:

Respondents reported that to a larger extent affirmative action has achieved its objectives, because;

- ✓ Students have graduated.
- ✓ They are employed in the public/private sector.
- ✓ Most PWDs these days don't experience negative attitudes.

Furthermore, they mentioned that it has succeeded because:

- ✓ Universities Provide facilitation which has helped students purchase learning materials
- ✓ Students with disabilities have been admitted to universities.
- ✓ Some staffs with disabilities have been offered job opportunities especially at university A.
- ✓ It's a means to correct historical injustices and create opportunities of equality. The skills gained can be used for the future. Affirmative action has been rooted into equality and social justice

Participants also mentioned that it has been achieved to a small extent, because;

- ✓ some students are discouraged from applying, because from sources they get they have no mandate to decide courses they want. They just decide for them.

Some respondents said No, because;

- ✓ there is no follow up to find out how students admitted under the scheme are progressing.
- ✓ It has failed to address corruption; committee members want a bribe to be included in the list of successful applicants.
- ✓ No, why we have tried to advocate for certain things but we live on promises.
- ✓ Most lecturers lack sensitization on disability on how to handle students with disabilities in their respective universities.

- ✓ They have failed to eliminate discrimination. i.e. students with disabilities are discriminated in pursuing other courses and given those which are not necessarily of their choice.
- ✓ Resources are limited which have made universities fail to fulfill and implement the provisions of their respective stipulated disability policies
- ✓ After graduation students don't always land on to a safe job as discrimination extends up to the job market.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.0 Discussion of findings**

Numerous findings were generated from the focus group discussions, however, only some aspects have been singled out for discussion based on the guiding questions and purpose of the general study. These aspects are discussed under three major headings: the experiences of students with disabilities; challenges faced by students with disabilities; and supportive mechanisms in place.

### **5.1 Exploring the experiences of students with disabilities admitted under affirmative**

The experiences of students were explored as detailed in chapter four, under the following themes; admission to public universities, environmental situation, welfare and staff attitudes,

#### **5.1.1 Admission to public universities**

Until the 1990's most universities in the world were virtually inaccessible to students with disabilities and staff (Gilmore, Bose & Hart, 2001). Though much has changed over recent years with regard to disability and higher education worldwide, the situation of students with disabilities in Ugandan institutions seems to be still very dire. From the findings presented in chapter four of this study, it is possible to determine that students with disabilities in Ugandan institutions are facing continuous hindrances in their effort to access, persist in and complete their higher education. Disability is understood differently by various institutions and each has Implications on their education systems

Participants of the study reported that whereas more efforts have taken place to increase the number of students with disability to public universities, discrimination as a result of negative attitudes still persist as they reported having limited access to academic programs of their choice. Suffice to note that; the number of sponsored students in public universities under the disability scheme has remained stuck at 64 yet the number of applicants on the scheme has kept increasing, and this are distributed among the current six public universities. Participants also decried that; universities rarely admit them to courses of their choice. This implies that despite students filling

the PUJAB forms and indicating courses of their preference, many still never get the opportunity to access the courses despite both universities having written policies which state that;

Students with disabilities shall be admitted without any discrimination to courses of their preference whether in-service or pre-service, on meeting the entry requirements in accordance with established entry schemes and in consideration of their suitability for the programme.

Despite the revolution in social and legislative policies on provision of equal opportunities for education for pwds, there is still a long way to go (UNCRPD, 2006). Higher education still does not meet the requirements on inclusion of pwds into the community (Admon, 2007; Laron report, 2005). There's need to expand accessibility to institutions of higher education on the policy level and in support programs for students Laron report, 2005. Access to courses of their preference is therefore paramount to students with disabilities if discrimination and negative attitudes are to be eliminated.

### **5.1.2 Environmental barriers**

Participants in the visual and physical category revealed that environmental barriers hinder their full access to learning and participation. They stressed that the environment is not good for students with visual and physical disability.

Sometimes they can be moving alone may be using the white canes and one finds potholes or bricks piled up in one place or cars parked at undesignated areas that can easily hurt them. Also, there are steps to access buildings which make them uncomfortable and sometimes they hurt themselves.

The above quotation indicates that students revealed that many buildings are not accessible by PWDs, and the environment doesn't accommodate PWDs in terms of accessibility and usability. This limits PWDs mobility and participation in activities in university and communities. Participants also reported that: "Many buildings don't have ramps; toilets are not improved to suit users with disabilities. Similarly, toilets having small doors and wheel chairs can't enter. Also, participants reported that long distances due to vast compounds also hinder access to lectures for PWDs which makes them late.



From the above quotation, it is believed that, access to learning is constrained by long distances and associated challenges in use of roads and buildings. Researchers have in the past found environment factors to be a barrier to education of pwds. For example, Govinda (2002), the location of education facilities constrains people from realizing the right to education. For example, physical access to school buildings, long distances to schools determine access to the right to education. Filmer (2008) reported that people normally face difficulty in accessing school because of bad roads and or broken bridges. According to Klasenth (2001), accessibility to education services among people is affected by the nature and form of education provision.

I concur with these findings because Majority of buildings in Uganda are not fully accessible by persons with disabilities (PWDs), a report by Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) has also revealed. Speaking during the launch of the report at the Commission's EOC offices in Bugolobi, research officer Daniel Mbirizi said majority building standards in Uganda do not particularly benefit PWDs.

Most of the old buildings in Kampala do not have specific aspects such as signage, ample parking, ramps, squat toilets with grab bars, and tactile markers to guide people with PWDs and the visually impaired. The commission therefore requires the state and all players in the construction industry to construct buildings and facilities that are easily used by every person especially PWDs.

According to the National Housing and Population Census 2014, 12.4% (about 6.5m) Ugandans are disabled. These calls for public and private institutions to provide suitable entrance and exits for PWDs and universal designs for public toilets. The commission appeals to stakeholders to comply with the legislations, policies and standards for physical accessibility benefits to vulnerable persons or else they risk being prosecuted. "Buildings which do not consider PWDs are considered incomplete", PWDs face challenges in accessing goods and services from public facilities because their architectural designs do not cater for them. The disability fraternity has complained regarding the absence of elevators in public buildings, narrow entrances, lack of ramps and hand rails in storied buildings and narrow corridors. This contributes to their exclusion and marginalization, and this impedes inclusive growth and development as articulated in the NDP II and the realization of the sustainable development goals.

It is imperative that we take into full action the perspectives and concerns of PWDs as they are economically active and can ably contribute to the country's development.

### **5.1.3 Support/Welfare**

The support services manifested in two sub- themes; personal and financial support. The participants of the study pointed out personal support as one of the kinds of support provided to students with disabilities at universities. This entails provision of sign language interpreters for the deaf, sighted guides for the blind and helpers for physically challenged. Financial assistance is also provided to students with disabilities to help them purchase disability friendly facilities/ materials such as Braille Perkins, Braille papers, hearing aids; repair wheelchairs and photocopy notes among others. Despite these provisions, students reported that; the pay for both support assistants and students is minimal to meet even their basic needs. Sanderson (2001) stressed the need for information to be provided in Braille and for interpreters to work alongside students with hearing difficulties. The same author argued that lectures need to be educated into the needs of the disabled students, perhaps through the introduction of a compulsory course for lectures on disability issues. The services of note takers would be an added support as students with hearing impairment face challenges taking notes while wanting to watch the face of the speaker to gather more information in the lectures. In order to meet the students' needs, Honey et al (2005) recommended identifying a named person who would ideally possess in depth knowledge on the subject and be located in the department. Tinto,(2012) stressed that, when students perceive the availability of support in academic and personal areas, they are more likely to succeed in college because they do not feel isolated and can ask for help. I concur with the above literature because support is linked to students' success in higher education and allows students to develop a sense of membership in the community of the institution.

### **5.1.4 Attitudes of the Staff**

All participants agreed that to a certain extent they felt welcome at their institutions of learning. However, they also revealed that negative attitudes still persist among staff members. This was emphasized by one of the students with multiple disabilities when he stressed that;

-When the staffs realize that a letter sent to his/her office is from a pwd they toss you up and down until you give up. This is only one example of the negative attitudes, although others were mentioned earlier in the previous chapter.

Among the supporting factors, studies have shown the importance of faculty's attitudes towards students with disabilities, their awareness of these students' needs, and their knowledge of the reasonable accommodations available. These attitudes influence success or failure of students with disabilities, and affect inclusion in higher education (Rao, 2004). Negative attitudes of faculty and administrative staff may prevent students, especially students with invisible disabilities, from disclosing their disabilities and from requesting accommodations they are entitled to (Jung, 2003; Johnson, 2006).

## **5.2 challenges which are faced by students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action in public universities.**

The report highlights six challenges faced by students with disabilities in universities: accessibility barriers, lack of disability friendly materials, attitudinal barriers, financial barriers, university administration and communication barrier, but only a few will be discussed here. These studies are connected, in that they mostly present the policy and historical developments of higher education and the reasons for continuing challenges, even in the wake of new policy frameworks. Different solutions are suggested, including a national disability policy framework for higher education. These studies emphasize strongly the complex nature of the environment within which disability occurs. As such, national policies ought to make different provisions for institutions of higher learning. One of the areas that have received a lot of attention from researchers is physical access challenges faced by students with disabilities which has already been discussed in the first objective. Mutanga (2016) in Howell & Lazarus (2003) maintain that some of the reasons for continued inclusion challenges for students with disabilities are that inequalities for students with disabilities in higher education are linked to their schooling experiences. In addition, barriers within higher education relate to attitudes to disability, academic curricular, physical environments, teaching and learning support, and allocation and distribution of resources. Howell and Lazarus (2003) further argue that in addressing the challenges of increasing access of participation of students with disabilities, more needs to be done to attend to issues of student diversity and other challenges confronting higher education.

They are clear that increasing student participation should be differentiated from making students fit into an unchanging education system. They state that policies should aim to accommodate a larger and more diverse population. Mutanga in Matshediso (2007) states that one of the challenges of redressing unequal access to higher education for students with disabilities arises out of the challenge of transforming formal rights into real rights. To resolve this, three points are raised: the need to transform policies so that they address ideological impediments to what constitutes reasonable support; formal rights do not automatically make rights real to people; and the need to involve academic staff in decision making processes about support for students with disabilities. Part of dealing with the problem is to have a disability policy for higher education institutions and to prioritize disability as part of redressing social inequalities in higher education.

Just like limited technical facilities participants reported experiencing barriers relating to teaching/ learning at some point in their studies as a result of lack of reasonable accommodations. PWDs need special materials and when they are provided, they are inadequate. PWDs need audiovisual materials, tactile materials such as Perkins Brailers, slates and stylus etc. For people with hearing disability; materials need, rooms with enough light, printed handouts and videos. All these should be in place if learning is to take place.

Similarly, participants agreed that to improve their access to learning and participation, instructional materials must be provided. For example, as one student with visual disability stated:

Instructional materials for people with disabilities should be modernized for instance libraries should be improved by using audio-visual aids for students with visual impairment. Braille papers, and sign language instructional materials like tapes, CDs, tape and video recorders should be readily available and provided to PWDs.

From the above quotation, participants believed that provision of accessible instructional and teaching materials for students with disabilities is educational prospect for PWDs. Participants acknowledged that educational materials will enable PWDs to use computers and learn special skills in the environment other than using traditional methods of teaching like writing on chalk board and lecturers reading notes to students.

Researchers have in the past found that provision of teaching and instructional materials are viable in promoting the right to education for PWDs. For example, Nduhura (2012) in Trani et al, (2010) children with correctable disability should be assured of devices to be appropriately and promptly available, for example eyeglasses, hearing aids and screening. PWDs should have access to educational opportunities matching with personal needs to maximize the optimal functioning in adulthood. Personal change process is important to change attitudes of teaching and learning in a given society (Peters, 2005). I concur with these views because the presence of disability may lead to separation between a teacher and student if modalities for passing information are not created. For example, a student who is blind might not access information from a lecture presented in text instead of Braille, while a student with hearing impairment might fail to comprehend a lecture delivered orally with no sign language support. In turn, either of these students might also fail to express themselves in forms that can be accessed by the lectures.

To students with visual disabilities the course work itself is a barrier and assistance is required in reading and understanding the printed word. A potential barrier expressed by the students involves the negative attitudes of the lecturers in granting extensions and other accommodations to students with disabilities. In some cases, these student's achievement is dependent on the attitudes of the lecturers. The lecturers may be flexible and act as facilitators or they may have a negative attitude, thus presenting another barrier to this group of students if not attended.

### **5.3 Supportive mechanisms in place to enhance access to learning and participation of students with disabilities.**

Students mentioned different supporting mechanisms available to students with disabilities some of which include: Technical equipment, the role disability units/ office of disability affairs, exam modification, physical infrastructure, participation in leadership, awareness raising, transport, disability policy, personal assistance, some of which have been discussed in literature review chapter four.

### **5.3.1 Technical/technological equipment**

Inclusion is providing to all students, including those with severe conditions equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplemental aids and support services... (Hardman, Drew and Egan, 1999, p. 139). It increases participation in learning by removing barriers and emphasizes on access to the curriculum. Noble as the idea might sound, the execution of this task demands high commitment by the service providers in availing the requisite support to the students if meaningful learning and success is to be attained. A basic assumption underlying inclusion is the belief that accommodations and supports must be provided as appropriate as possible to each child's unique needs (Meikamp, 2000 p. 262). Failure to address this requirement will not yield any meaningful benefits in the study endeavor. Its therefore imperative that specialised technical aids be provided to students with disabilities if they are to effectively receive educational services in their learning environment.

### **5.3.2 Disability Policies**

Regularizing education for persons with disabilities starts with instituting acts, policies and practices that promote involvement in the general education curriculum. Legislation is encouraged to provide an "...inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities" (HEFCE, 200: 5). Within its general ordinances of operation, ZOU drew up policy guidelines that direct service provision for students with disabilities. The guideline is a comprehensive paper that covers aims, code of practice, admission procedures, provision of services, curriculum issues, examinations and implementation strategies Experience informs that these pieces of legislation and policies need to be constantly evaluated to ensure they continue being relevant to service provision for the recipients.

### **5.3.3 Modifications**

One of the critical issues that a student-centered institution has to address after enrolling students with disabilities is modifications. A variety of options on adaptations which support the success of each learner needs to be adopted. In order for activities of this nature to succeed there is need for provision of resources. There is no doubt that the faculty and administrative staff of every

higher institution is equipped with innovative tools and resources to conduct student-centered instruction and provide support services (Obiozor, 2010 p.7). Without such accommodations, no significant progress would be attained in the general education. Suk-Hyang, Wehmeyer, Soukup and Palmer (2010), suggest the study material formats that teachers could use as texts, graphics or pictures, digital and multiple audio and video media or performance formats of plays and skits and deliver content using lectures, power point, role play or computer mediated instruction. In education, teachers have to change in administering learning programmes. The teaching content has to accommodate the diverse student needs and expectations. In addition, there are a range of activities that students could be involved in that enhance their learning. Services include, but are not limited to: provision of accommodative testing, note takers, scribes, interpreters, readers, auxiliary aides, adaptive equipment and liaison between students and faculty in classroom accommodations (Obiozor, 2010, p. 10.). Notwithstanding these, other forms of adaptation suggested by Meikamp (2000), are those related to extension of time. This can be in completing assignments or in examination writing. Providing outlines of text chapters and those of lecture notes gives the students a framework of the content to expect. Similarly, issuing students with handouts with illustrations improve understanding. In addition, tape recording lectures for students with visual impairment and allowing the students to see visual material clarify a lot of concealed concepts.

#### **5.3.4 Disability Unit/office for disability affairs**

Disability Units provide some of the services required by students with disabilities in higher education, (refer to the previous chapter). The functions and operations of Disability Units vary across higher education institutions; Disability is defined differently within higher education institutions and students are classified differently. Not all Disability Units cater for all types of impairments. The more established and larger Disability Units lean towards providing services for most impairment needs, while the newer and smaller Disability Units tend to provide services primarily for students with visual or mobility challenges; and it was not necessarily the case that the more established longstanding Disability Units had the best practice in place. Howell (2005), found that; having more financial capacity does not always equate to best practices in responding to the needs of students with disabilities. Financial constraints also affect the operation of

Disability Units, especially for historically black higher education institutions Mutanga 2016 as cited in (FOTIM 2011; Howell 2005; Matshediso 2007a). Lack of resources leads to other Disability Units being understaffed Mutanga 2016 as cited in (Naidoo 2010; Sukhraj-Ely 2008; Tugli et al. 2013), resulting in delays in students receiving study material (Naidoo 2010). It is important to note that it is not always the case that students with disabilities do not receive good services at higher education institutions.

Despite financial challenges, some Students with disabilities' experience disability units at universities make positive contributions to their lives (Howell, 2005). In a study on information-seeking behaviour in blind and visually impaired students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus, Seyama, Morris and Stilwell (2014) revealed that the students included the disability unit staff as an indispensable part of information access.

Despite the positive role of Disability Units towards full inclusion of students with disabilities, they have limitations and challenges. They are not autonomous as they fall under different departments (e.g. student counseling or student affairs) and this restricts them in the services they can provide (FOTIM 2011; Naidoo 2010). In other institutions, there are no disability policies (Maotoana 2014; Mutanga 2015). Others have pointed that the establishment of Disability Units has also kept people with disabilities out of mainstream higher education activities as they are separated from the rest of the student population (DHET 2013; FOTIM 2011). The researcher concurs with these findings because the importance of Disability Units in the lives of students with disabilities cannot be denied. However, caution is needed to avoid stereotyping students with disabilities and alienating them from the rest of the student population, while maintaining the same dominant culture that views people with disabilities as second-class citizens, who must be helped by a Disability Unit to fit into an 'unchanging' higher education system. Disability Units should not be seen as the only way of responding to the needs of students with disabilities. Given the position of Disability Units in relation to the needs of students as shown by the literature, it is important to critically interrogate their role against principles of social justice i.e. their ability to create opportunities for all students to fully participate and succeed in higher education in order for them to reach their goals and fulfill their aspirations.



## 5.4 Conclusions

The purpose of the present study has been to explore the experiences of students with disabilities admitted under affirmative action to public universities. Some key issues which highlight the challenging practices based on the findings of the focus group discussion in the present study are given.

Whilst higher institutions are expanding and increasing, the gross enrolment rates of students with disabilities are still in their old histories. The present study showed that the enrolment of students with disabilities in public institutions remains extremely low. Access to higher education for many students with disabilities in Uganda becomes a distant dream, mainly, due to the absence of admission procedures; lack of support and preparation in the secondary and primary level; and lack of awareness of disability issues by the general higher education community.

The participants mentioned the availability of disability-friendly admissions and assessment procedures. However, these were reported as very fragmented, unstructured and incomprehensive. Likewise, all institutions had limited financial and human resources to respond to the challenges of students with disabilities. Both universities had resource rooms to serve the learning needs of students with disabilities, but it was only University A which was found to have a disability service center with trained support staff: and a Dean of students with responsibility for disability matters. University B had no staffing and structure in place to support the development of provision for students with disabilities. A clear message from the analysis is that public universities have limited provision for students with disabilities.

The students are faced with barriers from the physical environment, limited financial and material support. If students cannot move around the campus or gain access to laboratory, they are effectively denied higher education. As shown by the present Study, the physical or material environment in the Ugandan institution merely provides a context for teaching and learning, and the most potent barriers are those which inhibit the teaching/learning process. Academic support for students with disabilities is for many a

prerequisite for a successful experience of higher education; physical access may be important but personal assistance is what makes the difference between success and failure at learning. This was found minimal in the institutions. Likewise, it was established that Government funding for PWDs in Universities is particularly still very low in the face of increasing numbers of students with disabilities and the expected obligations the universities have in providing access to education for all including persons with disability and special needs. It is a result of this low funding that brings about the universities' failure to implement their well-intentioned policies aimed at creating an inclusive education environment. With limited funding, universities cannot provide the appropriate teaching and learning materials for PWDs, easily accessible lecture rooms, study spaces and other infrastructure among others. As a result, students with disabilities face challenges ranging from inaccessible buildings to lack of reasonable accommodations.

A Strategic Plan of any institution is supposed to indicate its intent and direction over a future period of time. It was however established that the Strategic Plan of University B hardly makes any mention of the issues of Persons with Disability. The one of University A makes. Both Universities have specific policies on persons with disabilities. A review of these policies indicates that they are comprehensive enough to cover most of the important provisions to enable the Universities' provision of inclusive education in conformity with the CRPD. It was also found out that a number of students interviewed were not aware about the existence of the approved policies of PWDs at their respective Universities. This was partly attributed to limited sensitization and awareness creation about the approved policies. And whereas these policies existed at the two Universities, their full implementation was still lacking due to limited funding. The study established that an awareness gap regarding issues of students with disability and how the education environment can become inclusive on the part of all stakeholders including the students with disability themselves, the fellow students, and the university administrators and lecturers. This partly explains the hustles that students go through while at university. Some interviewed students had concerns that university staff lack awareness skills, willingness and ability to handle persons with disability and special needs yet this is critical if the University education environment is to be accommodative and inclusive and provide the needed self-confidence and

esteem for these students to fully participate and benefit from the learning environment at University.

Based on the above findings of the present study, the researcher would like to conclude that public higher institutions in Uganda are currently far from ready to accommodate students with disabilities. This is not to mean that the institutions have no policy and provision that enable students with disabilities to access and persist successfully in their higher education adventure. Additionally, the investigator, by taking the current reality in the institutions, would like to conclude that the situation for students with disabilities in the Ugandan institutions will not improve in a short period of time, unless extraordinary measures are taken by the Government, institutions and other organizations.

## **5.5 Recommendations / Suggestions**

The following recommendations were put forward by the participants and researcher

### **5.5.1 Recommendations**

#### **Need for equality and non-discrimination in allocation of courses**

Participants of the study reported that discrimination in course allocation still persists, as they reported having limited access to academic programs of their choice. The study therefore recommends that; access to courses of their preference is therefore paramount to students with disabilities if discrimination and negative attitudes are to be eliminated, as long as the students meet the minimum entry requirements for the particular course. This can only be achieved if equal opportunities are accorded in course allocation.

#### **Implementation of a quota system**

Universities should also strengthen affirmative action scholarships at universities with emphasis on sciences through implementing a quota system and a suggested minimum and maximum for sciences and humanities. In cases where there are no competing applicants, the maximum for humanities can go up to 100%. This will help eliminate discrimination in science-based courses.

### **Need to expand accessibility to institutions of higher learning on the policy level**

This calls for redressing unequal access to higher education. i.e. the policy on the number of slots allocated for disabled applicants to university should be revised, given that the number of universities has kept on increasing. suffice to note that, the number of sponsored students with disabilities in public universities has remained stuck at 64 every academic year yet, the number of applicants under the scheme has kept on increasing, and this are distributed among the current six public universities. Therefore, many students qualify, but few are considered.

### **Strengthening of support systems**

Universities should strengthen support systems for students with disabilities to enable them access learning and participate like other students if admitted into the university; such as effective security systems, provision of support assistants, and provision of disability friendly facilities among others. i.e.

There is need to review the policy on the payment of support assistants i.e. interpreters and guides to meet the demands of the economy i.e. taxes, rising prices and motivate them to work well so that they can effectively carryout their work.

Need for support assistants be accommodated with their students to reduce the burden of transport and accommodation since they are paid late.

Students also requested the payment of personal assistants be revised back to the old tradition where money was given to the students to pay their assistants to avoid their disappearance after receiving a lump sum payment before the end of the semester.

Security should be beefed up since students with disability are very vulnerable to any type of attack and therefore should be allocated rooms in good condition.

Facilitation of students with disabilities should be increased to meet the needs of the student and changing demands of the economy. Payment should also be at the start of the first semester.

Students suggested rooms of residence be allocated depending on the student's preference and disability.

### **Universities should comply with the accessibility standards**

There is need for universities to comply with their legislations, policies and standards for physical accessibility by improvising on their old structures and facilities through; Construction of ramps, elevators, lifts and other accessibility provisions on all university buildings and environment to ease accessibility and usability by students with disabilities.

### **Strengthening and Operationalization of University Policies on Students with Disabilities**

The Universities should operationalize the policies that they already have, starting with some of those activities that are low cost, given the funding constraints. These activities include awareness creation about the policy and its provisions; installing signage in University premises for observance of traffic and road safety regulations; and others. Other stakeholders, including government departments, in the education and disability sector, developmental partners, DPOs and pwds themselves all have a role to play to ensure that these policies are implemented.

### **Awareness raising and sensitisation**

Universities should provide continued sensitization and training aimed at imparting staff with the needed skills to handle the students with specific educational needs and also change their attitudes towards pwds. If possible, a course unit on Special Needs and Rehabilitation may be introduced in all course units to enable students acquire the needed awareness and appreciation of how issues on disability should be handled in all spheres of society. General sensitisation meetings of both Lectures and students without disability about disability can also be held so as to raise awareness about the presence of students with disabilities and how to accommodate their demands e.g. the provision of extra time to pwds during exams.

### **Increase budget allocation to Pwds in universities**

universities should lobby the government, particularly Parliament, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, and the Ministry of Education and Sports to increase the funding for PWDs in Universities, in line with government's commitments under Section 5(j) of the

PWDs Act and other international obligations which can be used to improve the infrastructure and purchase disability friendly materials and equipment.

### **Relax measures on transport use in the university compounds**

Restrictions on use of boda-bodas in the university should be relaxed, by allowing those carrying students with mobility challenges access to the university compounds. Students in university A recommended that Tuk-Tuk used as a means of transporting students should always be present at a specific place in intervals, so that students can easily access it any time. If possible, the drivers should be given the students' timetable so that they know when the students are available for picking upon their demand.

### **Refurbishment of the disability units**

Universities under study should endeavor to refurbish their disability units and resource rooms to provide study materials for students in accessible formats i.e. audio-visual materials, tactile materials such as Perkins braille, slates, large print, jaws, magnifiers, handouts, videos etc. if learning for students with disabilities is to take place. They should also have in place trained manpower in ICT to train students with disability on how to use the technology more especially that for students with visual impairment. This units can also render psychological support and information provision to help students with disabilities to succeed in all academic achievements and contribute equally to the university's academic legacy.

## **5.5.2 Other Recommendations suggestions**

### **Operationalize Guidelines Regarding Policies on Persons with Disabilities**

Universities should institute a Standardized Index to measure progress by Universities in implementing their policies on disability to establish the extent to which affirmative action strategies for students with disabilities have been implemented in the public universities.

### **Improve capturing of data on students with disabilities in public universities.**

The Universities should capture data on students with Disabilities, disaggregated by Gender and disability; and this should be well articulated in their periodic reports. This is critical if issues of PWDs are to be well- articulated, monitored and advocated for.

### **A national disability framework for higher education**

As such national policies ought to make different provisions for institutions of higher education. Part of dealing with the problem is to have a disability policy for higher education to prioritise disability as part of redressing inequalities in higher education.

### **Institutionalization of affirmative action**

Universities should institute affirmative action at all levels i.e. ordinary level, certificate and diploma, not only at the advanced level of education, because its only students who wish to join public universities through advanced level exams that are able to take advantage of this provision under affirmative action. This will in turn increase on the avenues through which disabled persons can access education under the scheme, hence increase in the enrollment of pwds accessing formal education under the scheme.

### **Implementation of disability quota**

There is need to introduce or set a quota system for competing applicants so as to give uniform allocation to the different categories of disabilities. This helps to avoid one group getting more slots at the expense of others.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO THE DEAN OF STUDENTS MAKERERE UNIVERSITY OF BUSINESS STUDIES



P. O. BOX 1, KAMPALA  
FACULTY OF SPECIAL NEEDS & REHABILITATION  
Tel: 0414-286237/285001/2 Fax: 0414-220464  
DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDIES

15<sup>th</sup> January, 2018

The DEO/DIS/Head teacher/Teacher/Community/Opinion Leader/Church Leader

THE DEAN OF STUDENTS  
MAKERERE UNIVERSITY OF BUSINESS STUDIES

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: INTRODUCTION OF RESEARCH STUDENT ON DATA COLLECTION

This is to introduce the bearer Rev/Dr/Sr/Mr/Mrs/Ms. ARIELIN CATHERINE  
Reg.No: 15/W/15949/GMSN/PE who is a bonafide student of Kyambogo  
University in the Faculty of Special Needs and Rehabilitation, Department of Special  
Needs Studies. As partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the  
Diploma/Degree, he/she is required to undertake a research on the approved area of  
study.

The purpose of this letter is to request you to allow him/her have access to information  
from your office, school or area of operation necessary for the study.

Kyambogo University will be grateful for any assistance rendered to the student.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Okwaput Stackus  
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

OS/aj

Mr. Eric Omaringa  
Please support him  
06/09/18

## APPENDIX 2: INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO THE DEAN OF STUDENTS KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY



P. O. BOX 1, KAMPALA  
FACULTY OF SPECIAL NEEDS & REHABILITATION  
Tel: 0414-286237/285001/2 Fax: 0414-220464  
DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDIES

15<sup>th</sup> January, 2018

The DEO/DIS/Head teacher/Teacher/Community/Opinion Leader/Church Leader

THE DEAN OF STUDENTS  
KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: INTRODUCTION OF RESEARCH STUDENT ON DATA COLLECTION

This is to introduce the bearer Rev/Dr/Sr/Mr/Mrs/Ms ALBIRIN CATHERINE  
Reg.No: 1514/15949/GMCN/PE who is a bonafide student of Kyambogo University in the Faculty of Special Needs and Rehabilitation, Department of Special Needs Studies. As partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Diploma/Degree, he/she is required to undertake a research on the approved area of study.

The purpose of this letter is to request you to allow him/her have access to information from your office, school or area of operation necessary for the study.

Kyambogo University will be grateful for any assistance rendered to the student.

Yours faithfully,

Signature  
Dr. Okwaput Stackus  
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

OS/aj



**APPENDIX 3: INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO THE DEAN OF STUDENTS MAKERERE UNIVERSITY**



15<sup>th</sup> January, 2018

The DEO/DIS/Head teacher/Teacher/Community/Opinion Leader/Church Leader

THE DEAN OF STUDENTS  
MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: INTRODUCTION OF RESEARCH STUDENT ON DATA COLLECTION**

This is to introduce the bearer Rev/D<sup>r</sup>/S<sup>r</sup>/M<sup>r</sup>/M<sup>rs</sup>/M<sup>s</sup> ARGEM CATHERINE  
Reg.No: 151418949/GMN/PE who is a bonafide student of Kyambogo University in the Faculty of Special Needs and Rehabilitation, Department of Special Needs Studies. As partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Diploma/Degree, he/she is required to undertake a research on the approved area of study.

The purpose of this letter is to request you to allow him/her have access to information from your office, school or area of operation necessary for the study.

Kyambogo University will be grateful for any assistance rendered to the student.

Yours faithfully,

Signature  
Dr. Okwaput Stackus  
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

OS/aj

#### **APPENDIX 4: LETTER OF CONSENT**

Dear participant,

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Areikin Catherine for a dissertation that is being done to fulfill requirements for a master's degree in special needs. This is a Qualitative study on the "The experiences of students with disabilities admitted for study programs under affirmative action scheme in public universities" A case of Kyambogo and Makerere university; I hope to learn about the experiences of students admitted under affirmative action, challenges they face in their study programs and specific supportive mechanisms in place to enable their access to learning and participation. If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to take part in a discussion that will be long, and private at your university campus, answering a set of questions.

There are no known risks to your participation in this study. To protect your privacy and guarantee your confidentiality, your real name will not be used anywhere in the analysis, writing, presentation or publication of this study.

It's possible that you will not benefit directly by participating in this study. Others may benefit by increasing knowledge of university experiences which may help others in the future. The information collected will be protected from all in appropriate disclosure under the law. All data will be kept in a secure location. Any information that is obtained in connection to the study that can be linked to you or identify you will be kept confidential. Access to data will be disclosed to the researcher and dissertation chair. There is no cost to you beyond the time and effort required to complete the procedure(s) described above. Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

If you agree to participate, please indicate this decision by signing below. If you have any questions about this research project please contact me on tel. no-----.

Signature-----

Date -----

## **APPENDIX 5: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

### **Background Information**

I am undertaking a study to explore the experiences of students with disabilities admitted for study programs under affirmative action scheme in public universities in Uganda. This scheme has been implemented in public universities since 1997 as an affirmative action strategy for increasing students with disabilities enrollment at the university. This study will review the experiences of students who have benefited from the scheme, challenges they face in their study programs, specific mechanisms in place, achievements and make recommendations for the improvement. As a key stakeholder, kindly take a few minutes to provide input into this exercise. Thank you.

### **Key areas of focus:**

1. Give your experiences in terms; admission; nature of accessibility barriers; teaching and learning; assessment and exams; support services (welfare) and staff attitudes.
2. What challenges have you experienced in your study programs as a result of the implementation of affirmative action strategies?
3. Are there any supportive mechanisms your university has put in place to address those challenges? If yes, please elaborate.
4. Do you think affirmative action has achieved its intended objectives?
5. Suggest any possible solutions for improvement of affirmative action in your university?

## APPENDIX 6: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

### Demographic data

1. Age
2. Gender
3. University
4. Nature of disability
5. Year of study
6. course

RESEARCH AREA	PURPOSE
Admission	To explore the admission experiences of students with disabilities.
Environmental situation	To identify the accessibility barriers faced by students with disabilities. To explore the nature and extent of those barriers.
Teaching and learning	To explore how students with various disabilities are being accommodated in the teaching / learning environment.
Assessment and exams	To find out from the students whether their impairment needs are being considered when designing assessment packages.
Support/ welfare services	To establish the type of support services provided to students with disabilities and their views on the support.
Attitudes of the staff	To explore students' opinions about the attitudes of the staff towards them.
Challenges	To establish the major challenges which are faced by students with disabilities?
Specific supportive mechanisms in place	To find out from the students whether there are any specific mechanisms in their university which enhance their access to learning and participation?
Assessing affirmative action	To explore students' opinions on whether affirmative action has achieved its intended objectives.
Recommendations	To find out students' suggestions for the improvement of affirmative action.



## APPENDIX 7: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

S/N	NAMES (Not real name)	AGE	GENDER	UNIVERSITY	NATURE OF DISABILITY	YEAR OF STUDY AND COURSE
1	Dennis	22	Male	University A	Hearing impairment	3 <sup>rd</sup> (Bachelor of Procurement and Logistics)
2	Caro	23	Female	University A	Physical disability	2 <sup>nd</sup> year (Bachelor of Community Based Rehabilitation)
3	Priscilla	24	Female	University A	Hearing impairment	2 <sup>nd</sup> year (Bachelor of Business Studies with Education)
4	Esther	23	Female	University A	Physical disability	3 <sup>rd</sup> year (Bachelor of Accounting and Finance)
5	Juliet	23	Female	University A	Visual impairment	2 <sup>nd</sup> year (Bachelor of Social Work and Social Administration)
6	Jasper	23	Male	University A	Visual impairment	3 <sup>rd</sup> year (Bachelor of Science with Education)
7	Elvis	24	Male	University A	Visual impairment	3 <sup>rd</sup> year (Bachelor of Guidance and Counseling)
8	Ken	26	Male	University A	Physical disability	3 <sup>rd</sup> year (Bachelor of Accounting and Finance)
9	Audrey	22	Male	University A	Hearing impairment	2 <sup>nd</sup> year Procurement and Logistics
10	Tom	25	Male	University A	Deaf/ Cerebral Palsy	1 <sup>st</sup> year Arts in Social Sciences
11	Rashid	23	Male	University B	Hearing impairment	3rd year (Biomedical Laboratory Technology)
12	Moses	24	Male	University B	Hearing impairment	2 <sup>nd</sup> year (Bs Construction Management)
13	Violet	22	Female	University B	Visual impairment	2 <sup>nd</sup> year (Community Psychology)
14	Eddie	24	Male	University B	Hearing impairment	3 <sup>rd</sup> year (B. of Business Management)
15	Jenifer	22	Female	University B	Hearing impairment	3 <sup>rd</sup> year Agribusiness Management
16	Nancy	23	Female	University B	Physical impairment	3 <sup>rd</sup> Bachelor of Pharmacy
17	Samson	24	Male	University B	Albinism	2 <sup>nd</sup> year (Bachelor of industrial and fine art)
18	Claire	22	Female	University B	Visual impairment	2 <sup>nd</sup> year (B.A Education (Kiswahili and History))
19	Cate	23	Female	University B	Visual impairment	2 <sup>nd</sup> year (Bachelor of social sciences)
20	Deo	24	Male	University B	Visual impairment	3 <sup>rd</sup> year (Social Arts & Administration)
21	Brian	23	Male	University B	Physical impairment	Year 2(Bachelor of Business Administration)