


Chapter 11


Examining Students' Satisfaction With and Perception of Inclusion in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This mixed methods study examined the perceptions of college students with disabilities (SWDs) on inclusive teaching and learning approaches, social inclusion, and satisfaction. It also explored differences in perceptions of satisfaction regarding the availability of support and the quality of learning among students with and without disabilities. In phase one, two questionnaires were used on 162 female college students (26 and 136 with and without disabilities, respectively). Eight SWDs were randomly selected for unstructured interviews in phase two. Quantitative data analysis showed that the students had positive perceptions regarding inclusion at

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their university and were satisfied with the support and services provided. However, interviews indicated that the students were not entirely satisfied with some aspects of their inclusion. From these findings, the researchers recommend that the university be more conscious of SWDs and provide non-discriminatory support and services to cater to different abilities.

INTRODUCTION

In 2006, the interest of the United Arab Emirates' (UAE's) policymakers in the inclusion of students with disabilities (SWDs) in general education classrooms peaked. A federal law to protect the educational rights of SWDs was enacted in 2009 and was subsequently ratified. The history of inclusive learning, particularly in higher education (HE), dates back to 1973 when the United States of America (USA) mandated similar laws under Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, 2004). The passage of these two laws marked turning points in the history of inclusive learning in HE as the former provided SWDs with the right to education and the latter enabled them to pursue HE. Following in the footsteps of the USA, Australia and the United Kingdom (UK) passed their own laws in the form of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) of 1992 and DDA of 1995, respectively, both of which prohibit discrimination in employment, education, services, and transport with respect to individuals with disabilities. Canada and continental European countries have since adopted similar policies that are inclusive of SWDs in HE (Konur, 2006). Several Arab countries have recently embraced inclusive education (IE), admitting SWDs to general schools and to HE. For example, in Article 4, Section (B) of the 2007 Rights for Persons with Disabilities in Jordan, SWDs have the right to pursue their studies in HE institutions.

The growth of IE over the years has resulted in increasing numbers of SWDs studying in colleges and universities worldwide. The National Center for Education Statistics has reported that the number of SWDs in HE in the USA increased by 8% between 1978 and 2003. It is estimated that 8%–14% of students in postsecondary institutions in the USA and the UK are disabled (Sachs & Schreuer, 2011). However, despite the revolution in legislative policies of equal educational access and employment for individuals with disabilities worldwide, it is still necessary to support SWDs in HE (Barnes, 2007).

According to research, SWDs are more likely to drop out of HE institutions (Dutta & Kundu, 2009). This can be attributed to several factors, including lack of support, negative attitudes, social isolation, and inadequate accessibility in HE institutions (Johnson, 2006; Mpofu & Wilson, 2004). Therefore, it is crucial to seek insights

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