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Problems Facing Students with Physical Disabilities in Higher Learning Institutions in Tanzania

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Abstract: The study examined problems facing students with physical disabilities in higher learning institutions in Tanzania. Specific objectives of the study included; to examine the infrastructure situation at higher learning institutions to determine whether the situation support students with physical disabilities to study and live comfortably, and also, to examine academic problems facing students with physical disabilities in higher learning institutions. The study employed questionnaires and documentary reviews to collect data. The study sample included 12 physically disabled students, five (5) heads of institutions, 25 academic staff and 100 students without disabilities, making the total of 142 respondents. Descriptive data analysis was employed. It was revealed that majority of higher learning institutions had poor and inaccessible infrastructures for physically disabled students. Teaching approaches were not inclusive to physically disabled students. The study recommended that government and other stakeholders should take special considerations and actions in order to accommodate students with physical disabilities in higher learning institutions.

Keywords: *Physical Disability, Higher Learning Institution, Higher Level Education, Infrastructure*

1.0 Introduction

Education is an important aspect of life for every person regardless of his or her age, sex, race, economic status, as well as physical ability or disability. People with physical disabilities are usually perceived by societies as disadvantaged group (Block, 1992), hence, they are in a position of missing several economic, political and social benefits including the right to access equitable and quality education. This is in line with Mcleod (2014) who revealed that, students with physical disabilities experience personal limitations in school environments that affect their social, psychological and academic aspects that may likely affect their academic performances at schools. Some of the limitations can be alleviated with parental, community and government support.

People with physical disabilities in developing countries have experienced narrow chances to enjoy school practices and environments due to minimal priorities given by educational providers to students with physical disabilities. Areas such as curriculum, teaching and learning materials, infrastructures, special programmes such as sports and games and environmental issues to the large extent, exclude students with physical disabilities (Possi, 2006). According to Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report 2010, reaching the marginalized children with disabilities remains one of the main problems leading to wide exclusion of the group from quality and equitable education (Macleod, 2014).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), the total population of the world is seven billion. About 15 percent of the population lives with a disability. Globally, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), "people with physical disabilities are among the most marginalized groups in the world. People with disabilities have poorer health outcomes, lower education achievements, less economic participation and higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities" (WHO, 2011).

Regardless of existing challenges, the disabled, particularly the physically disabled persons, hold the right to quality and equitable primary, secondary and higher level education. Since the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights was released in 1948, there have been legislations on providing education for all children. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which entered into force in 2008 and which was endorsed in UK in 2009, declared that state parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability. Persons with disabilities also can access education on an equal basis with others in communities where they live (DFID, 2012).

Many countries have also ratified progressive laws that secure the rights of people with disabilities to education specifically higher level education and in other major areas of life. In the United States for example, the government has ensured services for students with disabilities through Public Law 93-112, Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990) and the ADA American Act (2008). This is also the same with many other countries around the world. Inspite of the considerations of laws, policies and plans to persons with disabilities in educational context, its implementation to the larger extent, determined by governments and stakeholders' priorities. Govinder (2009) argued that in developing countries, many out of school children are specifically those with disabilities. The situation is contributed by poor budgets in financial years allocated to finance education to the disabled.

In many Sub-Saharan African countries, being disabled at least doubles the chance of having never attended school (UNESCO, 2010), and those who do start school are at increased risk of dropping out (Filmer, 2005). The problem is worse in higher levels of education. In Sub-Saharan Africa, it has been reported that access for disabled students to higher education or particular programmes can be formally blocked (Karangwa, 2008) or informally advised against. This is the world's largest minority and 80 percent of persons with disabilities are believed to live in developing countries (UN ENABLE, 2010). Brossard and Foko, (2007) revealed that student from the lowest socio-economic background with disability in Sub-Saharan Africa has 15 less chance of attending higher level education than one from the highest background. This implies that there are particularly strong relationship between poverty and disability in Sub-Saharan Africa and Tanzania in particular. Disabled people in Africa are among the poorest of the poor as a consequence of their exclusion from school benefits.

In Tanzania, data show that in 2011 only 0.35 percent of all children enrolled in primary schools were children with disabilities. In secondary schools, 0.3 percent of boys and 0.25 percent of girls have disabilities (UNICEF, 2012). These percentages are extremely low when compared with the estimated 7.8 percent of the population with disabilities in Tanzania and indicate that most children with disabilities are not enrolled (ibid). This small number of disabled students

enrolled in primary and secondary schools predicts very low enrollment rates at higher learning institutions in Tanzania.

The major challenge among physical disabled students to access education particularly in primary and secondary school levels in Tanzania is lack of accessible infrastructure (The Kesho Trust, 2013). This involves unsupportive classrooms, laboratories, libraries, washrooms, dining halls, and sports and games' spaces. Lack of physical and social accesses for disabled people in primary and secondary educational institutions is a major barrier to creating a pool of appropriately qualified students to enter higher education on equal basis (Croft, 2010). This attributes of education system among developing countries including Tanzania, combined with lack of accessible infrastructure prevents a good number of disabled students from entering higher level education.

Basing on this argument, little is still known on the infrastructural, and academic situations in higher learning institutions in Tanzania, whether it support students with physical disabilities to learn comfortably. This study is geared to address such knowledge gap. The physically disabled students in lower and middle education levels are also encountered with the problem of overcrowded classrooms, lack of seats, standing spaces and poor acoustics as revealed by Chataika (2010). The study by Firmer (2005) showed that more than sixty percent (60%) of students with physical disabilities studied under unpleasant learning environment performed poorly in their studies due to the difficulties they faced. The difficulties they encountered included, among others, long walking distances, limited access to learning materials and climbing building stairs. The conditions stated above constitute major obstacles for many physically disabled students to get access and registration to formal education systems in colleges and universities. Besides, if the situation remains the same in higher learning institutions, students particularly physically disabled will not be able to acquire quality and equitable education. This study intends to examine this situation at higher education levels particularly in Tanzania since it is less known.

The unfavorable learning environments for the physically disabled students in higher learning institutions particularly in Tanzania may increase the number of illiterates and unskilled citizens and youth who are not groomed for production and service provision. Such people become dependents on others for their daily basic needs. Others engage in dangerous offenses as they seek for their earnings (Nakpodia, 2010). To date, very little has been done to examine the infrastructural situation in higher learning institutions in Tanzania to determine whether the situation accommodates students with physical disabilities to study and live comfortably. Also, since physically disabled students are entitled with the right to get quality and equitable education at all levels, the academic problems facing them at higher learning institutions are less known. It is from the researchers' consideration of the situation explored above that the interest for this study was triggered. This study intends to explore the problems facing students with physical disabilities in higher learning institutions in Tanzania with the aim of unearthing better solutions against problems encountered by the physically disabled students and recommends appropriate strategies for the problem.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed survey research design whereby quantitative approach was employed in data collection and analysis. Quantitative approach was used to examine infrastructural and academic situations that students with physical disabilities encountered in higher learning institutions in Morogoro Urban District, Tanzania.

2.2 Area of the Study

The area of the study was Morogoro Urban District, Tanzania. Morogoro Urban District has been purposively selected because it is at the centre and strategically is located at the junction point of major roads from Dodoma and Iringa to Dar es Salaam and Arusha regions. It also contains many higher learning institutions that accommodate a good number of students with diverse needs from different corners of the country who were relevant and representable units for the study.

2.3 Population, Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

The target population for this study included all higher learning institutions in Morogoro Urban District including its unit of study, as well as all physically disabled students in higher learning institutions. By 2017, Morogoro Urban District had a total of five higher learning institutions. For the purpose of this study, data were collected from all five (5) purposeful chosen higher learning institutions located in this District, Tanzania. Sample size for the study was 12 physically disabled students in all sampled higher learning institutions in the District. A list of names of physically disabled students was prepared from the admission registers that were available at admission offices. Physically disabled students who were currently admitted and study at higher learning institutions in Morogoro Urban District were directly involved as respondents whereby their number depended on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. In this study, the sample of five (5) heads of institutions was also involved in the study depending on the number of higher education institution sample. The study sample also included 25 tutors/lectures, five from each sampled higher learning institution, as well as 100 students without disabilities on which, 20 students were selected from each sampled higher learning institution. The general sample size of the study was 142 respondents.

This study employed purposive sampling technique to gather higher learning institutions, students with physical disabilities, heads of higher learning institutions, lectures/tutors as well as students without disabilities from higher learning institutions. This sampling method was employed since at higher learning institutions, students and lecturers specializing in different programmes of studies had varied schedules to attend at colleges and classes, hence, purposive sampling technique was assumed appropriate for that nature.

2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

The study employed documentary review and questionnaire techniques to collect data. Documentary review technique was used to trace the infrastructural situation in the sampled higher learning institutions for the purpose of examining the extent to which they support students with physical disabilities. In this study, a list of all types of infrastructures needed to support students with physical disability in higher learning institutions was prepared for the purpose of analysing their conditions and accessibility to physically disabled students. On the other hand, the study employed questionnaire technique to find out academic problems that physically disabled students encountered in higher learning institutions.

The validation of the instruments was done by seeking expert's opinion that went through the documentary review guide and questionnaires and made recommendations for improving the clarity of the instruments. Pilot testing was also conducted to ten participants from Morogoro Teachers College in Morogoro Municipality. Pilot testing helped researchers to identify ambiguities and unclear questions for necessary corrections. The reliability of the instrument was determined by the results of the pilot testing where sources for response errors in the instrument were identified and corrected. Descriptive analysis was employed to analyse data, where by, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for window software package version 16 was employed to run frequencies to determine the percentage of responses for various items.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Physically disabled students' characteristics

The study collected information on gender, levels and programmes of study for the students with physical disabilities who were the key respondents, as the study wanted to explore problems that they encountered at higher learning institutions. Physically disabled students by gender, level and programme of study is shown in Table 1. Regarding the gender of these students involved in the study, two-thirds (66.7%) were males while females constituted the remaining one-thirds. In other words, male physically disabled students got bigger access to higher learning institutions comparing to female. In the aspect of level and programme of study, more than half (58.3%) of all physically disabled students involved in the study pursued bachelor's degree programme while one-thirds of all respondents studied non-degree programmes. It was only one student with physical disability who pursued master's degree.

Table 1: Physically disabled students by gender, level and programme of study

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Level of study	Frequency	Percent
Males	8	66.7	Non degree programs	4	33.3
Females	4	33.3	Bachelor degree	7	58.3
Total	12	100.0	Master degree	1	8.3
			Total	**12**	**100.0**

Source: Field Data

3.2 Infrastructure Situations at Higher Learning Institutions

The study examined infrastructures' situations in the contexts of availability, accessibility and condition in all sampled higher learning institutions to determine whether the situations support students with physical disabilities to study and live comfortably. In the aspect of availability, out of all infrastructures at five sampled higher learning institutions, including classrooms, dormitories, ICT laboratories/libraries, language/science laboratories, dining halls, administrative offices, wash rooms and play grounds, about the average of 40% was available but highly inadequate. Also, the averageof 35% of all infrastructures were available but inadequate while only 15% of all infrastructures were available and adequate. About 10% of infrastructural facilities at sampled higher learning institutions were totally not available as shown in Table 2.

Infrastructure accessibility which was a very sensitive aspect that affected the lives of the physically disabled students directly was also examined. Out of five higher learning institutions

involved in the study, majority of their infrastructures (85%) were accessible with difficulty to students with physical disabilities.

Table 2: Infrastructure availability at higher learning institutions in Morogoro municipality

Infrastructure	Available and adequate		Available but inadequate		Available but highly inadequate		Not available	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Classrooms	1	20	3	60	1	20	0	0
Dormitories	1	20	1	20	2	40	1	20
ICT lab	0	0	2	40	3	60	0	0
Language lab	1	20	3	60	0	0	1	20
Dining halls	0	0	1	20	3	60	1	20
Administrative offices	3	60	1	20	1	20	0	0
Washrooms	0	0	2	40	3	60	0	0
Play grounds	0	0	1	20	3	60	1	20
Total Average	6	15	14	35	16	40	4	10

F = Frequency, % = Percent
Source: Field Data

It was only 7.5% of all infrastructures that were easily accessible while the same rate of 7.5% of all infrastructures from five higher learning institutions were not accessible at all for students with physical disabilities. More detailed findings on infrastructure accessibility are revealed in Table 3.

Table 3: Infrastructure accessibility at higher learning institutions in Morogoro municipality

Infrastructure	Easily accessible		Accessible with difficulty		Not accessible	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Classrooms	1	20	4	80	0	0
Dormitories	0	0	5	100	0	0
ICT lab	1	20	4	80	0	0
Language lab	0	0	4	80	1	20
Dining halls	0	0	4	80	1	20
Administrative offices	1	20	4	80	0	0
Washrooms	0	0	5	100	0	0
Play grounds	0	0	4	80	1	20
Total Average	3	7.5	34	85	3	7.5

F = Frequency, % = Percent
Source: Field Data

Basing on infrastructures' conditions in areas of classrooms, dormitories, ICT labs/libraries, language/science laboratories, administrative offices, wash rooms and play grounds as shown in Table 4, 35% of total average infrastructures had good condition. The same 35% of all infrastructures had average condition while 25% had very poor infrastructure condition. It was only 5% of all infrastructures had very good conditions suitable for physically disabled students.

Table 4: Infrastructure conditions at higher learning institutions in Morogoro municipality

Infrastructure	Condition							
	Very good		Good		Average		Poor	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Classrooms	1	20	1	20	2	20	1	20
Dormitories	0	0	2	40	2	20	1	20
ICT lab	0	0	3	60	2	20	0	0
Language lab	0	0	2	40	2	20	1	20
Dining halls	0	0	0	0	4	80	1	20
Administrative offices	1	20	4	80	0	0	0	0
Washrooms	0	0	1	20	1	20	3	60
Play grounds	0	0	1	20	1	20	3	60
Total Average	2	5	14	35	14	35	10	25

F = Frequency, % = Percent
Source: Field Data

3.3 Academic Problems Facing Physically Disabled Students in Higher Learning Institutions

The study examined whether the teaching and learning materials including books and computers were accessible to physically disabled students in higher learning institutions. Hence, it was revealed that, 59% of all teaching and learning materials were accessible with difficulty while 25% of them were not accessible at all. It was only 16% of teaching and learning materials were easily accessible by students who encountered physical problems as shown in Table 5. Qualities of teaching and learning materials were also examined to reveal whether they were effective and efficient to accommodate all users including students with physical disabilities. As revealed in Table 5, about 50% of teaching and learning materials had average quality and 33% were of poor quality, while only 17% of teaching and learning materials were of good quality.

Table 5: Accessibility and quality of teaching and learning materials to physically disabled students

Accessibility of T/L materials	F	%	Quality of T/L materials	F	%
Easily accessible	23	16	Good	24	17
Accessible with difficulty	83	59	Average	71	50
Not accessible	36	25	Poor	47	33
Total	142	100.0	Total	142	100.0

F = Frequency, % = Percent
Source: Field Data

The study intended to seek whether the teaching and learning methods/approaches employed by teachers were inclusive thus consider physically disabled students and those without disabilities as equal. About 67% of respondents argued that teaching and learning methods or approaches employed by teachers were not inclusive, while 33% revealed that teaching and learning methods or approaches employed by teachers were inclusive and extended equal treatment to both disabled and the rest of the students equally as revealed in Table 6.

Table 6: Inclusiveness of teaching and learning methods

Are T/L methods inclusive?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	47	33
No	95	67
Total	142	100.0

Source: Field Data

4.0 Discussion

4.1 Physically disabled students' gender, levels and programme of study

Since the study aimed at examining problems encountered by students with physical disabilities in higher learning institutions, the information about gender, levels and programmes of studies among them was gathered. This intended to explore experiences among physically disabled students across their varied positions and disparities. In the aspect of gender, it was found that, two-thirds of physically disabled students enrolled in the study area were males while females were few in number. This result indicates that female physically disabled students have had fewer and limited chances to join higher level education. Many disabled girls and women particularly in developing countries experience lot of difficulties and barriers across their educational journeys which hinder them to reach to higher level education. This includes among others, socio-cultural values like early marriages, parents' preference to educate sons, wrong social perception of educating female disabled children as well as poverty. As in line with Hyera (2001), these challenges facilitated minimal chances for female disabled students to join higher level education as many of them drops out of school before reaching their academic goals.

Majority of physically disabled students in the study area were undergraduate degree students. Other higher levels of education such as masters and non-degree programmes occupied very few students with physical disabilities. However, there was no PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) student with physical disability. The right to education as has been declared clearly in DFID (2012) gave the chance to every person regardless of his or her condition to get access to education. This associated directly with creating conducive environment for students with physical disabilities to study smoothly and reaching higher education levels as much as they are able. However, the study noticed that many physically disabled students desired to reach higher level education, but they encountered limitations including poor infrastructure conditions in most of institutions as well as poor support they get from government, institutions and society at large. This was also revealed by Engelbrecht and De Beer (2014), that students living with a physical disability experienced accessibility constraints in libraries, classrooms, laboratories and washrooms in educational institutions which affected enrolment rate.

4.2 Infrastructure Situations

Infrastructure availability at higher learning institutions was addressed by this study. According to the study findings, essential infrastructural facilities were largely seemed to be available but highly inadequate, while very few higher learning institutions had available and adequate

infrastructural facilities necessary for physically disabled students. Facilities which were closely associated with academic issues and knowledge acquisition such as ICT, language and science laboratories were very inadequate comparing to number of enrolled students. This made the sense that students including physically disabled students shared learning resources in inappropriate ratio such as one computer for five up to ten students. Also, by considering their physical condition, students with physical disabilities are obligated to depend and seek assistance to their fellow students in using competed facilities such as computers. The situation as in line with Chataika (2010), leads to incompetence and poor academic performance. As the impact discussed, higher learning institutions are therefore called upon to ensure all necessary learning infrastructures are available to service all students including those with disabilities.

For the aspect of infrastructure accessibility, physically disabled students at higher learning institutions also encountered challenge. Many areas around college and universities such as classrooms, dormitories, ICT, language and science labs, dining halls, administrative offices, wash rooms as well as playgrounds were accessible with difficulties for the physically disabled students. Regardless of their right to get education equally to "normal" students (DFID, 2012), the physically disabled students have not been considered by higher educational institutions whereby many infrastructures have got barriers such as stairs, narrow paths, higher tables in laboratories and classrooms, unsupportive toilets and bathrooms which are not friendly to them. Physically disabled students who were using wheel chairs and clutches encountered difficult to reach some areas due to the nature of infrastructure which were inhospitable to them. As supported by Filmer (2005) students who start schools, colleges and universities in uninviting environments are at increased risk of dropping out. All learning institutions are therefore must keep well their infrastructures, such as putting slopes, lumps and lifts in higher buildings so that all students in spite of their conditions could move and make the use of all environments that are comparable to their needs easily.

The study revealed that infrastructures conditions were conducive in administrative offices and ICT laboratories conceivably because administrative officers and academic staff members spent much of their working time in those environments. In the other side, infrastructures' conditions in areas such as washrooms were worse and unpleasant especially to students with physical disabilities to the extent that their healthy conditions were in danger. In addition to that, the study witnessed washrooms being used by more than eight students, whereby its conditions were very unpleasant and not easily accessible with wheel chairs hence, physically disabled students had to crawl instead. Physically disabled students encountered very hard time in using toilets which were unsupportive, dirty and publicly shared. According to Croft (2010), the disabled students in schools and colleges environments especially in developing countries are less favored by the infrastructure and schooling environment in general. Higher learning institutions as examined by the study must put efforts to address challenges associating with conditions of environments.

4.3 Academic Problems to Physically Disabled Students

Many physically disabled students and other respondents argued that teaching and learning materials were available but were not accessible while others were accessible with difficult by considering physical conditions of students with physical disabilities. This was due to infrastructural barriers such as stairs, unnecessary steps and narrow through paths which they cannot use their wheel chairs and clutches to pass. As revealed similarly by Firmer (2005), the

condition hindered them to reach libraries, language laboratories, science laboratories and ICT labs where most of teaching and learning materials were located. This situation limited the rights of students with physical disabilities to access and utilizes equally study materials and fulfills their academic dreams. However, tutors/lecturers and class representatives may work as a team to find out means through which teaching and learning materials became closer to physically disabled students or institutions to plans to install facilities such as wireless internet in all areas which can be accessible to all able and disabled students for example in lecture rooms, dormitories and dining halls.

In the aspect of the quality of teaching and learning materials, majority of all respondents agreed that the quality of teaching and learning materials ranged from average to good standard. That means teaching and learning materials were appropriate and relevant basing on the respective courses that the students were taking. It was thus right to interpret that the quality of teaching and learning materials were comprehensive enough to favor and suit the needs of students with and those without physical disabilities. However, it is highly important to consider a proper ratio of learning materials with number of students. Possi, (2006) argued that inadequate learning resources to disabled students greatly hinders the overall performance in different aspects including academics. Thus, learning institutions must ensure learning materials are of high quality and adequate. This will enable students specifically those with physical disabilities to acquire knowledge that will transform their lives and community in general.

Inclusiveness of teaching and learning methods or approaches was also the issue of concern in this study. As revealed by study findings, majority of physically disabled students were not accommodated well with the teaching and learning methods/approaches employed by lecturers/tutors. Majority of the respondents argued that many lecturers/tutors do not make consideration to students with special needs except through the effort made by individual himself/herself. However, other few respondents revealed that some tutors/lecturers acknowledged the presence of students with special needs. Consequently, the level of academic performance among students especially those with physical disabilities are comparably low with those students without disabilities probably accelerated by poor teaching methods. As supported by Govinder (2009), these differences in academic performances create the gap among students and mislead the purpose of teaching and learning to acquire the intended knowledge and skills. Tutors/lecturers have to be sensitive and innovative enough to find appropriate teaching methods that suit all students both able and disabled.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

On the basis of study findings, female physically disabled students have low access to higher level education. Majority of students with physical disabilities in higher learning institutions pursued bachelor's degrees programmes. Very few students with physical disabilities reached master's degree level. Good environment is to be created by government and community at large to encourage disabled students especially girls to attain higher level education. Infrastructure facilities at higher learning institutions such as classrooms, dormitories, libraries, ICT, science and language laboratories as well as washrooms were available but highly inadequate to suit the needs of students including those with physical disabilities. Also, majority of infrastructures were accessible with difficulty to the sense that, presence of stairs and narrow paths limited physically disabled student to path with wheel chairs and clutches. In parallel to that, conditions

to some infrastructures such as washrooms were very poor; a situation which threatened health and lives of students especially physically disabled students. Building of enough and quality infrastructure facilities that considers needs of all people in higher learning institutions will enable accommodation of all students regardless of their physical conditions. Teaching and learning materials in majority of higher learning institutions are of average quality and relevance. However, teaching and learning methods and approaches employed by majority of tutors/lecturers were not inclusive to disabled students. Tutor's creativity in employing methods and approaches of teaching will not only favor all students regardless of their needs, but also facilitate clear understanding and mastering of classroom lessons taught.

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