

## CONTENTS

### Participation of Students With Disabilities at Higher Education Policy and Practices

*Melissa Ng Lee Yen Abdullah &  
Clarene Tan  
pp. 1-3*

### Potential Tools for Blended Learning in Mathematics Courses

*Chong Chee Jiun  
pp. 4-5*

### Integrated Marketing Communication: Where Does It Stand in the Malaysian Institutions of Higher Education?

*Siti Aishah Chu Abdullah  
pp. 6-9*

### Transformation of Malaysia's Higher Education System: Malaysia Education Blueprint (2015-2025)

*Malini Ganapathy  
pp. 10-11*

## Participation of Students With Disabilities in Higher Education: Policy and Practices

*Melissa Ng Lee Yen Abdullah, School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia  
Clarene Tan, National Higher Education Research Institute, Universiti Sains Malaysia*

### Equity Policy and Practices

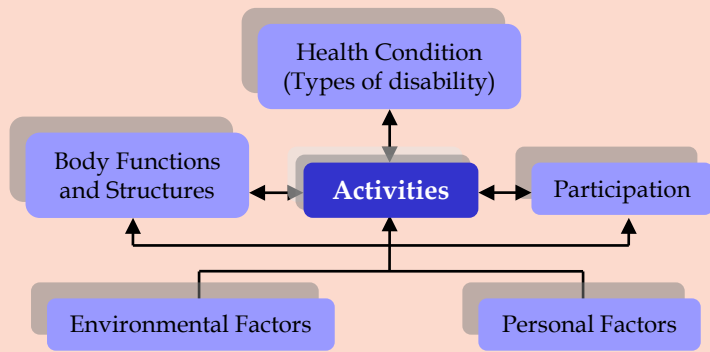
Equity, in general refers to fairness or justice. The promotion of equity through policies and practices requires the individuals' or groups' needs and circumstances to be taken into account (Matear, 2006). Access to higher education should not be taken out of the context of equity (Asian Development Bank, 2012). Policy on equitable access, therefore, seeks to provide students with disabilities with greater opportunities to access tertiary education, which is driven by a sense of justice and fairness. Students with disabilities are still underrepresented in higher education at most countries, particularly in developing countries. Based on the policy and practices in developed countries, this paper aims to reflect on the provision of equitable higher education for students with disabilities at a selected developing country.

Studies have shown that students with disabilities face challenges during admission, have lower academic performance and are more at-risks of dropping out from higher education (Bauman, Bustillos, Bensimon, Brown, & Bartee, 2005; Dutta, Scguri-Geist, & Kundu, 2009; Foreman, Dempsey, Robinson & Manning, 2001). The low enrolment and high dropout rates among students with disabilities at higher education are equity issues that called for the attention of policymakers and institutional stakeholders (Foreman et al., 2001). To promote equity in higher education, most developed countries have set clear goals to increase the share of the population with higher education and/or broaden access to higher education for individuals that are underrepresented because of socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, disability or location (International Association of Universities, 2008). In Australia, for instance, equity has informed participation policy in Australian higher education since early 1990s. The Australian Government has designated students with disabilities as one of the six equity groups that were underrepresented in higher education. At the policy level, there has been strong interest in widening and increasing participation resulting in unprecedented levels of funding (Gale & Parker, 2013). Universities have also taken up the challenge to support students with disabilities throughout their university life cycle. The participation rate of students with disabilities in Australian universities has increased steadily for the past two decades and it has exceeded the estimated population reference point of 4.0% (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2014).

### Meeting the Students' Needs through Ecological Framework

Disability policy in many developed countries is underpinned by an ecological framework. Ecological framework defines disability through the interconnection of person and environment, and a contextual experience of

disability (Ebersold & Evans, 2003). The International Classification of Functional Disability and Health (ICF) is perceived as a specific model within the Ecological Model (WHO, 2001) that provides a framework for articulating the way in which disability can be managed by higher education institutions and education system (Figure 1).



**FIGURE 1** Interactions between the components of ICF (WHO, 2001: 18)

The ICF framework provides guidelines on how disability is managed at the micro (service delivery) and macro (funding models and data collection) levels. As illustrated in Figure 1, disability is multidimensional and interactive. All components of disability are important and any one may interact with another. Environmental factors which include institutional policies, system and services must be taken into consideration as they affect the participation and successful outcomes of students with disabilities throughout their university life cycle. In line with the Ecological Framework, a whole-of-Institution approach that takes into account both personal and environmental factors is commonly implemented in developed countries. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL), inclusive curriculum, the provision of supporting services as well as infrastructure (Table 1) are initiatives taken to meet the needs of students with disabilities at the higher education sector.

**TABLE 1** A whole-of-institution approach in meeting the needs of students with disabilities

Law & Policy	Student Life Cycle Strategy	Universal Design for Learning & Inclusive Curriculum	Supporting Services and Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laws</li> <li>• Institutional policies</li> <li>• Strategic action plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-university (e.g., come-and-try days/ open days)</li> <li>• During the study period (e.g., orientation and mobility training, support for learning activities, extracurricular activities)</li> <li>• Post-graduation (e.g., preparation for work, alumni arrangements, cooperation with firms for transition)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility and variety in teaching, learning, and assessment</li> <li>• Learning experience of comparable quality for all students</li> <li>• Capacity to adjust course components to meet the needs of students with disabilities without compromising on academic standards</li> <li>• Improved accessibility of course materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability specialist provision (e.g., learning disability specialists, low vision specialists)</li> <li>• Auxiliary aids and services provision (e.g., braille books, large print materials, taking calculator, television enlarger, reader, interpreter, assistive listening devices)</li> <li>• Case-by-case accommodation</li> <li>• Universal design for students with physical disability</li> <li>• University staff support (e.g., tutoring services)</li> </ul>

### Scenario at Developing Countries: From the Lenses of Indonesia

Students with disabilities in developing countries such as Indonesia still experience minimum access at the higher education. Statistics shows that even though the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Indonesia has increased from 14 percent in 2001 to 22 percent in 2009, equitable access to higher education for students with disabilities in Indonesia is a seriously overlooked issue (Steff, Mudzakir, & Andayani, 2010). The country's primary focus is still on basic education. There is an absence of specific regulation and policy to promote

equitable access and to protect the rights of students with disabilities within the higher education system (Stef, Mudzakir, & Andayani, 2010). Accordingly which is due to a lack in funding support funding support, standard operation procedures and systemic approach on the provision of services for students with disabilities at Indonesian universities and colleges (Hidjidakou & Hartas, 2007).

Students with disabilities in Indonesia faced tremendous difficulties to participate at higher education. At the present state, there are extremely limited disability services and support, adapted academic materials

and personal programs for them at the university (Steff, Modzakir & Andayani, 2010). Higher education institutions are still adopting the Medical approach when dealing with students with disabilities, which is contrary to the Ecological approach taken by the developed countries. The Medical approach perceived students with disabilities as having an illness and medical condition. Hence, there is not much that the university could do for these students. Such negative perceptions and attitudes in Indonesia limit the support and accommodations received by students with disabilities throughout their full student life cycle, which make their experiences at campus a big challenge.

**“Studies show that students with disabilities face challenges during admission, have lower academic performance and are more at-risks of dropping out from higher education”.**

## Conclusion

Massification of higher education has taken place in many countries. This phenomenon has been accompanied by a global policy shift, triggered by rising societal concerns for the equity of students with disabilities as this cohort is traditionally underrepresented within the tertiary system. Many developing countries are yet to establish specific policies and practices to promote equitable access and to protect the rights of students with disabilities in higher education. Hence, there is an absence of a systemic and integrated Ecological Approach to support and accommodate the needs of these students. The supporting services provided, if any, are ad hoc and fragmented in nature. Admission systems, in most cases, are still contingent on qualifications and competencies awarded by inflexible education systems, often resulting in the exclusion of marginalised groups such as learners with disabilities.

Legislation and policy must, therefore, be implemented to establish a more equitable and inclusive higher education system. At the institutional level, the commitment of the university to address the special needs of students with disabilities should be clearly stated in its strategic action plan. To promote successful higher education outcomes for learners with disabilities, a Whole-of-Institutional Approach needs to be adopted. The implementation of UDL and the provision of supporting services and infrastructure are among the effective institutional strategies. Higher education institutions also need to take into consideration the full student life cycle (pre-university, during the period of study, and post-graduation) when addressing the needs of students with disabilities. Effective intervention and strategies can then be implemented at different phases of the student life cycle (entry point, during the course of study, and exit point) to aid them making more

successful transition from secondary education to higher education and ultimately, to the workplace.

## References

- Asian Development Bank. (2012). *Access without equity? Finding a better balance in higher education in Asia*. Mandaluyong, Philippines: Author.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2014). *Towards a performance measurement framework for equity in higher education*. Canberra: AIHW.
- Bauman, G. L., Bustillos, L. T., Bensimon, E. M., Brown, M. C., & Bartee, R. D. (2005). *Achieving equitable educational outcomes with all students: The institution's roles and responsibilities*. Washington, DC: Association American College and Universities.
- Dutta, A., Scguri-Geist, C., & Kundu, M. (2009). Coordination of postsecondary transition services for students with disability. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 75(1), 10–17.
- Ebersold, S., & Evans, P. (2003). *Disability in higher education*. Paris: OECD.
- Foreman, P., Dempsey, I., Robinson, G., & Manning, E. (2001). Characteristics, academic, and post-university outcome of students with a disability at the University of Newcastle. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 20(3), 313–325.
- Gale, T., & Parker, S. (2013). *Widening participation in Australian higher education*. Accessed 24 July 2015 from <http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/src/crefi/documents/widening-participation.pdf>
- Hadjikakou, K. & Hartas, D. (2007) Higher education provision for students with disabilities in Cyprus. *Higher Education*, 55(1), 103–19.
- Matear, A. (2006). Barriers to equitable access: Higher education policy and practice in Chile since 1990. *Higher Education Policy*, 19, 31–49. doi:10.1057/palgrave.hep.8300114
- Steff, M., Mudzakir, R., & Andayani. (2010). *Equity and access to tertiary education for students with disabilities in Indonesia*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2001). *The international classification of functioning, disability and health (ICF)*. Geneva: WHO.