The Provision of Support Services for Students with Disabilities in the Selected Higher Education Institutions of Amhara Regional State-Ethiopia

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Abstract
This study was conducted in universities found in Amhara regional state. There are 7 public universities in the region. The study focused on all students with sensory (visual & hearing) and physical disability who were attending their education in the selected universities. One university was selected from each generation. The participants of this study were students with disabilities, teachers and students without disabilities, special needs directorates, library and students service coordinators (dormitory and cafeteria). Four methods of data collection instruments were used to obtain rich information and for the purpose of triangulation. The result showed that most students with disabilities did not obtain disability specific academic supports services from teachers. In addition, most students with disabilities obtained different support services from students without disabilities and administrators. The physical environment including the roads, campus and buildings are inaccessible for students with disabilities. It is recommended that universities should employee special needs education professionals in order to decide the students' eligibility and provide different support services for students with severe disabilities.
Keywords: Support services, Students with disabilities, Higher education institution

1. Introduction

All students have the right to learn together and deserve the best in life. That is all students' whether they are disabled or not have the right to education in an appropriate ways as they are the future citizens of the country. They have the right to live in a world where they have hope and opportunity. They need special services without which they cannot fully develop their potential. Students should not be discriminated, excluded or sent away because of their disability (Dash, 2009).

In the training practice of higher education, specific attention should be given to prepare all teachers to exercise their autonomy and apply their skills in adapting curricula and instruction to meet students' needs as well as to collaborate with specialists and co-operate with parents. Realizing the goal of successful education of students with disabilities is not the task of the ministries of education and universities alone *(*Gaam, 2013**).** It needs the co-operation different stakeholders and voluntary organizations as well as the support of the public-at-large. The different support services are as academic, administrative, community, parental and peer support (Marian University, 2007). Furthermore, UN (1983) elaborated that persons with disabilities should live independently and participate fully in all life situation, in order to ensure persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical and social environment, to transportation, to adaptation and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in all areas and levels of schooling.

Giremore, Bose & Hart, (2001) on the other hand described that most universities in the world were not conducive to students with special needs. Compared to high school, students with disabilities often experience a reduced level of disability services and accommodation in postsecondary education (higher education). Students often have to initiate and coordinate their own support services on campus with the help of faculties, librarians, counselors, teaching assistants, and other staff members (Hatch, 2003). The absence of assistance in paper work and eligibility requirements that often lead to failure in accessing basic needed disability services (Acosta, 2001). Furthermore, university communities in higher education may lack disability specific information and often fail to communicate ways of assisting students with disabilities.

There are no statistics to show the number of students with disabilities in higher education institutions in most countries in Africa and considering human rights and equality in education, accessibility to higher education for persons with disabilities is still far in many countries in Africa (Kochung, 2011). This may be caused by negative attitudes, isolated policies and practices, and inaccessible physical and social environment in higher education. Tirussew & Ellena, (2000) found out that higher education has been used in many African countries to reinforce discrimination and isolation in access and success in education as it has remained an agent of exclusion for the vulnerable members of society. Students who are different are seen in a negative context and same as inequality. In this case inequality in higher education is regarded as normal and continues to exist.

Accordingly, very few students with disabilities receive higher education in Ethiopia. As long as, higher

education was the preserve of privileged minority, the absence of students with disabilities was little noticed. The main obstacles to learning in Ethiopia are lack of information about diversity, rigid and poor curriculum, inaccessible learning environment, inadequate services, and inadequate assessment procedures, inaccessible building and infrastructure (Jung, 2003; Johnson, 2006). As a result, schools, universities and teachers find it difficult to accommodate students with special educational needs, and compel them to adapt to the school, instead of adapting to the need of the students (MOE, 2006). As many parts of the world including Ethiopia, this is still the case and where institutions of higher education purport to provide equal access, students with disabilities still face discriminatory policies and practices. To alleviate these problems in higher education institutions, the government of Ethiopia incorporated the provision of support services to students with disabilities in the two consecutive proclamations of higher education institutions which is launched in the year 2003 and 2009 respectively. (Getachew and Belay, 2012).   These proclamations are

1. The Higher Education Proclamation No.351/2003. In this proclamation, there is a commence to protect the right of person with special needs. In this proclamation N0. 351/2003 in its 3rd article (special support) sub article one proclaimed

> *Admission criteria or manner of acceptance set for female students, students with disabilities, students who have been completed with high school education in developing region may be different from others. They shall during their stay in the institution, special support and assistance services from the institutions.*

2. The Ethiopian Higher Education Proclamation No. 650/2009 in its article sub article 1-4 proclaimed

> *Institution shall make to the extent possible their facilities and programs should be amendable to use with relative ease by physically challenged students. In addition,   the document described that to the extent situations and resources permits relocate classes, develop alternative testing procedures and provide different educational auxiliary aids in the interest of students with physically challenged. Furthermore, building design, campus physical landscape, computers and other infrastructure of the institution shall take in to account the interest of physically challenged students and students with physically challenges get to the extent necessary and feasible academic assistance including tutorial sessions, exam time extensions and deadline extension.*

Even if, the government of Ethiopia launched these two consecutive proclamations to assure the provision of support services for students with disabilities in higher education institution, the development of special needs education is very slow (Yared, 2008). Hence, research plays a pivotal role to examine the support services provided for students with disabilities in Ethiopian higher education institutions.

Secular higher education in Ethiopia is only a phenomenon of the 21st century. It was initiated at the founding of the University College of Addis Ababa in 1950. However, recently the government of Ethiopia has given due attention to the sector. Accordingly, the provision of support service is of a paramount importance to the success of education of students with disabilities. Therefore, students with disabilities should obtain different support services from the institution in order to scale up their social and academic capabilities (Yared, 2008). In order to ensure this at all labels, external and internal services are made available to students with disabilities.

That is, teachers adopt innovative practices when they teaching students with disabilities. Participatory teaching, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, co-teaching or team teachings are some of the practices which are useful for such students. The peers should help a student having special needs in learning and offering remedial tutoring, accepting in participating in group work, pointing location if required. The peers (students without disabilities) should also offer general assistance like helping a locomotors impaired child in carrying his/ her material and .guiding (Yared, 2008; Dash, 2009). Administrative support is another important measure implementing for students with disabilities. Thus, students' academic and social achievement and skills become increase if students with disabilities obtained these support services from the institution.

As a result, assessing the provision of support services for students with disabilities, and its challenges are valuable to design an effective and successful support strategy in order to address the diverse needs of all students with special needs in higher education institution. Despite a number of researches were carried out in relation to assessing the condition of support services in lower grades, scant attention is given on the condition of the provision of support services in Ethiopian higher education institutions. Therefore, studying the actual support services provided for students with disabilities in universities is worthwhile for realizing their right of students to get support services and equalization between students with and without disabilities that our country is giving top most priority today. This initiated the researcher to conduct a research on the area of assessing the provision of support services for students with disabilities in the context of higher institution.

To this end; the researcher formulated the following leading questions:

1. Do students with disabilities have got academic and peers specific support services from higher education institutions?
2. Are the physical environment of higher education institutions accessible to students with disabilities?

3. What challenges universities faced in order to provide support services for students with disabilities?

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

Qualitative case study design is used for this study. Hence, the study is based on a qualitative design approach which helps in showing the finer details of an issue and is more descriptive in its nature (Mertens 1998). According to Denzin & Lincolne (2001 as cited in Gaam, 2013), a qualitative approach is designed to provide a rich, contextualized picture of a phenomenon and it is a trend, this particular approach was chosen to carry out this study. Additionally, qualitative approach allow for in-depth exploration of the topic of the study in order to improve it (Devatak, Clazar & Vogrine 2010 as cited in Yared, 2008). This design is also widely applicable especially on research that is conducted on special needs (Hartley, 2003). Thus, this research was conducted through in depth examination of the provision of support services for students with disabilities.

2.2 Study Site

The study was conducted in higher education institutions found in Amhara regional state. There are 7 public universities in the region. These universities are divided as first (Bahir Dar and Gondar), second (Wollo, Debre Markos and Debre Berhan) and third (Debre Tabor and Woldia) generation. Therefore, this research were carried out on the sampled universities of each generation.

2.3 Inclusion Criteria

This study includes all regular students with sensory (visual & hearing) and physical disabilities who have been attending their education in different universities. That is., the study included only students with visible and/or severe disability and those students who were easily accessible to the researchers.

2.4 Exclusion Criteria

This study excluded those students with disabilities who were inaccessible to the researcher (summer, extension and evening) that were attending their education in the universities. In addition, the study also excluded students with invisible disabilities (learning disability and communication disorder etc...)

2.5 Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were students with severe disabilities; students without disabilities and teachers, special needs directorate, library directorate, student's service coordinators (cafeteria and dormitory).

2.6 Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The target population of this study were all students with disabilities found in the sample universities. So, Gondar is selected from 1st generation, Wollo from 2nd generation and Debre Tabor from the third generation universities. Even if, the government of Ethiopia proclaimed higher education proclamations (i.e. admission criteria or manner of acceptance for students with disabilities, may be different from others) and practiced this proclamation, still the number of students with disabilities receive higher institution is very low. Due to this reason, all students with severe disabilities in the selected sample universities were the informants of the study (interview and focus group discussion). They were selected by using purposive sampling technique. Student's directorate (1 from each university) and one (library, cafeteria, and dormitory) coordinator from each university (total of 9 participants) were also selected as the informants of the study. All these samples were selected by using purposive sampling technique. This is because, the researcher believed that these informants had better information and exposure about the provision of support services for students with disabilities. In addition, teachers of students with disability were also the participant of the study. They were selected using convenience sampling technique. Whereas, the students' peers were selected by using snowball sampling technique. Students with disability for Focus group discussion (FGD) were selected using purposive sampling. Therefore, seven participants from each university who had better information about the support services given for students with special needs were involved in the discussion.

2.7 Data Gathering Tools

To gather authentic, genuine and accurate information about the provision of support services from students with disabilities, their teachers, students without disabilities, special needs & library and students service coordinators (cafeteria and dormitory), four methods of data collection instruments were used to get rich information and for the purpose of triangulation. These include interview, observation, focus group discussion (FGD) and document review.

2.8 Methods of Data Analysis

The data collected through different instruments like interview, observation, document review and FGD were analyzed qualitatively. Following the data collection through all verified instruments, analysis were made step by step. In order to make appropriate analysis, the collected data was at first presented in meaningful, organized and related manners so that the researcher could easily figure out the findings from each instrument to make the appropriate triangulation. Before the data analysis, the information that were gathered from the above sources were classified and organized by themes. In each theme, adequate and detail, narration were provided. That is, data interpretation involved triangulation and confirmative from different sources. Thus, the researcher were used cross case data analysis method. After these, conclusion were made and possible recommendations were forwarded.

2.9 Ethical Consideration

Disability research more than any other kind of research always requires ethical consideration at the forefront. Accordingly, the investigator has considered a number of measures to make his level best in keeping ethical issues in all stages of the study. Before gathering data from students with disabilities, students without disabilities, teachers, directorates, the researcher were asked permission from the universities and the above informants. Furthermore; the participants were told to them the significance and the purpose of the study. Regarding the consent, the researcher informed them that they can withdraw from participating in the research at any time and in any circumstance if they do not feel comfort. Moreover, tape recording was made with their due consent and knowledge. That is, all information were gathered based on their consent.

The researcher were also promised to the participants that the information collected was used for only research purpose and confidentiality was kept. Pseudonyms were used instead of using real names during the data analysis. This is very important to make ethical considerations to gather better information from participants.

3. Result

3.1 Background Information of Informants

The total number of students with disabilities who have been attending their education in the sampled universities; the background of students with severe disabilities; students without disabilities; teachers, special needs directorate, library coordinators and students' service coordinators (cafeteria and dormitory) participated in the interview or/ and FGD are presented below.

Table 1: The total number of students with disabilities who have been attending their education in the sampled university

No.	University	No. of students with Disabilities	Types of Disability											
			Visual			Hearing			Physical			Unidentified		
			M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1	Debre Tabor(DTU)	51	6	2	8	-	1	1	14	18	32	3	7	10
2	Gondar (GU)	104	16	16	32	-	-	-	45	27	72	-	-	-
3	Wollo (WU)	57	8	2	10	1	1	2	28	17	45	-	-	-
Total		**212**	**30**	**20**	**50**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**84**	**62**	**149**	**3**	**7**	**10**

As it is depicted from the above table, the total number of students with different disabilities who have been attending their education in the sampled universities were 212. Of these, the larger number (104) constituted Gondar University (GC, Tewodros, Maraki, Fasil and Tseda campuses). This figure included both students with mild and severe disabilities. Among these, students with mild disabilities have been benefited from the preexisting regular educational approaches and the natural environmental conditions without any modification. Due to this reason, the investigator selected those students who have severe disabilities that needs educational and environmental modification as an informant of the study (for interview and FGD.)

The background information of students with severe disabilities who were attended in the study

The total number of students with severe disabilities who were participated in interview and FGD from the sampled universities were 29 (9 from DTU, 10 GU and 10 WU). Of these, the lion share constituted male students (22 in number). These students are found in different faculties and departments. Furthermore, most students who have been attending their education in the sampled higher education institutions were students with physical disability and followed students with visual impairment. Besides, students with severe hearing impairment did not get the opportunity to entered higher education institutions. In addition, students with visual impairment were interested to attend their higher education in the social science streams, whereas, students with physical disabilities were from different departments and faculties. Mild students with disabilities were not included in the interview and FGD.

Table 2: The background information of interviewed teachers who were participated in the study

NO.	Name	Sex	University	Subject they taught	No. of service in years	Bach in which they taught
1	Mare	M	DTU	Special needs	13	1
2	Desta	M	DTU	Amharic	12	1
3	Yayehsew	M	DTU	Amharic	4	1
4	Tase	M	DTU	Special needs	3	1
5	Agumas	M	GU	Management	5	3
6	Tamiru	M	GU	El. Engineering	4	5
7	Bayehun	M	GU	Social work	4	2
8	Senit	F	GU	Law	3	1
9	Kasaye	M	GU	Management	2	3
10	Marta	F	WU	Law	2	All batch
11	Gedefaw	M	WU	Amharic	3	2
12	Endeshaw	M	WU	Psychology	4	1
13	Shashe	F	WU	Special needs	7	1

Note: These names are pseudonyms

The above table indicates teachers who participated in the interview were from the different streams in which students with disabilities were found. In addition, most teachers who have been teaching students with different disabilities have two and above years of experiences. This long teaching experience helps the participants to provide genuine and real information about the conditions of support services in general and students with disabilities in particular.

Table 3: The background information of special need directorates who were participated in the interview

NO	Name	Sex	Educational Background	University	Experience(in years)	Position
1	Case 1	F	BA in Sociology	DTU	6	Special needs directorate
2	Case 2	M	MA in English	DTU	5	Students Service directorate
3	Case 3	F	MA in Law	GU	5	Special Needs Directorate
4	Case 4	M	MA	GU	2	Student service ass. Directorate
5	Case 5	F	MA in special needs	WU	7	Special needs Coordinator
6	Case 6	F	MA in Law	WU	1	Special needs directorate

Note that names used to represent the directorates are pseudonyms

As tried to indicate in the above table, most directorates have 2 and above years of experiences in serving students with and without disabilities in the sampled universities. This long work experiences help the directors to provide reliable, detail and genuine information about the support services rendered for students with disabilities. As it is also indicated from the above table, most participants were females.

Table 5: The background information of library and students service coordinators

NO.	Name	Sex	University	Service (in years)	Position
1	Amsal	F	DTU	11	Library coordinator
2	Taye	M	DTU	7	Dormitory coordinator
3	Biymot	M	DTU	6.3	Cafeteria coordinator
4	Samson	M	GU	5	Library Coordinator
5	Kasech	F	GU	4	Dormitory coordinator
6	Yaze	M	GU	10	Cafeteria Coordinator
7	Asamenew	M	WU	14	Dormitory coordinator
8	Momina	F	WU	3	Library coordinator
9	Sosi	F	WU	5	Cafeteria Coordinator

Note: All these names are pseudonyms

All these interviewed informants were taken from the three sampled universities. They have been 3 and above years of working experiences in serving students with and without disabilities in different working centers (Library, cafeteria and dormitory) of the sampled universities.

The background information of students without disabilities (their peers) that were attended in the interview

Students without disabilities were selected for interview from different streams in which children with different disabilities found. These students knew their disabled peers in every aspects of their lives and movements. For

instance, some of them were support providers with recognized fees by the university; some were note readers and some were also classmates. This close relations that they had help them to give detail, genuine, valuable and reliable information about the provision of support services for students with disabilities inside and outside the classroom.

3.2 Support services provided for Students with Disabilities
A.   Academic Support Services
The researcher asked the informants about the situations of academic support services provided by teachers for students with disabilities in higher education institutions. Most respondents forwarded that there was no special academic support services provided for these students. That is, no adapted curriculum alignment and innovative practices were made; no special tutorial given; no modification made in the contents and assessment strategies. In addition, teachers did not modify exam and class schedules peculiarly for students with disabilities.

Furthermore, most students without disabilities in the interview and students with different disabilities during FGD disclosed that most teachers usually uses the same types of educational approach (teaching strategies, activities, assessment techniques, Medias and seating strategies) for all students without differentiating them. Similarly, special needs directorate in all of the sampled university confirmed that students with disabilities were the most vulnerable members of the society in the higher education institutions. This is due to the fact that most teachers did not have knowledge and skills about how to assist them in the actual classroom situations. They further explained, if some teachers knew how to address the diverse needs of students with special needs in their class room, they were not interested to apply it in every situation of their instructions to solve the real educational and social problems of students with disabilities. The reason is that they had negative attitude to students with disabilities. This data is also supported by the response given by one student during the FGD. He replied

እንዳንተ ላለ ተማሪ እኮ የዩኒቨርስቲ አመቹ አይደለም ፡ የዩኒቨርስቲ መግባት አልነበረብህም ፡ ያክንያቱም የዩንቨርስቲ ያለወየመኧ ማስተማ ሂደት ማት ለተሳናቸውተማዎች አመቹ አይደለም ፡ ለጤ ኛዎችም አመቹ አይደለምእንኳንስ ለአንተ ፡ በተጪጪ ዝም የዩኒቨርስቲ ላይ በእናንተ መፃ የ ሰለጠ ባለሙ ና ማሪ ያል የ ለም ፡ ይህ በመ ዯ ኧ ም የ ተ ነ ሳ በ መ ደ በ ኛ ማ ህ ሩ ጉ ዳ ት ያ ለ ባ ቸ ወ ን ተ ማ ዎ ች ለ ማ ዝ ተ ጪ ጪ ሄ ጫ ይ ፈ ፕ ሪ ል ፡ ፡ (Higher education institution is not appropriate for a student like you. You were not entered university, because the teaching-learning approach in the university is not conducive for visually impaired students. The available educational approach in this university is difficult even for 'normal' students and again it is too difficult for you. In addition, there is no specially trained professionals and materials in your specific disability category).

Photo 1: Focus group discussion (FGD) with students with disabilities

The researcher asked the participants if students with disabilities have got adopted books, notes, scholarship for top scoring students and other materials. Almost all respondents disclosed that students with disabilities were not obtained adopted books & notes. They further explained that some departments provided photocopy services for these groups of students with disabilities. However, teachers were not used adaptive and new technology in the classroom to facilitate the teaching leaning process. Informants at Gondar University however mentioned that the university provided scholarship in this year for 20 students with disabilities in different departments in collaboration with Queen University of Canada. In addition, school of Law at Wollo University made an agreement with braille language translators to transcribe all the necessary educational materials of the department (modules and books) in to braille for students with visual impairment found in their own department.

However, some teachers during the interview mentioned that teachers used different educational approaches including modify contents and assessment techniques to address the diverse needs of students in their classroom.

B. Peer Support Services

The data gathered through different informants about the support services provided for students with disabilities by students without disabilities are presented below

Box 1: The support services provided by students without disabilities (their peers)

✓ Reading for visually impaired students(GU and WU)
✓ Caring materials(GU)
✓ Approach positively (all universities)
✓ Creating a well coming environment (DTU and GU)
✓ Guiding such as mobility and orientation services (all universities)
✓ Caring positively(all universities)
✓ Giving tutorial (DTU)
✓ Note taking (all universities)
✓ Provide materials(All universities)
✓ Assisting during group work (all universities)
✓ Participate in disability club/association(DTU)
✓ Carrying their material (All universities)
✓ Giving sanitation services(All universities)
✓ Guiding (all universities)

The researcher asked the participants to describe the support services provided for students with disabilities in higher education institutions by students with without disabilities. For this question, student Tare replied

> I couldn't stay till now in this university without my peer's intensive support. It is possible to say students without disabilities assess me in all situations. They are my readers, medical personals, guiders, counselors and teachers. The administrators sometimes provide some types of support services for report purposes. This kind of service is not persistent throughout the semester and year. However, the assistance services provided by my peers are not for show but because of having deep aspiration to assist me.

In addition, students without disabilities also reported that they provided guiding (orientation and mobility) caring food from the cafeteria, buying goods from the shop and pushing their wheelchairs, caring materials and giving sanitation services for students with different types of severe disabilities. They further explained that in order to provide support services by officials, it go through different bureaucratic structure of the university. In this case, these groups of students did not get immediate support services. However, the support services provided by their peers did not require to pass all these levels of the organizational structure of the university. If student needs immediate assistance services, the only person reaching immediately and involved besides them throughout the time was their peers. Therefore, assistive services provided by their peers are unreserved and intensive.

In the same token, case 3 reminded the support services given by their peers as follows

> All responsible bodies in the university have been providing support services for students with disabilities as they could. Of these, the lion share support has been given by students without disabilities. They know their problems in details and providing immediate support more than others.

The researcher asked the participants if students without disabilities participated in disability club/association. They responded that students without disabilities were the member of the disability club. They further elaborated during the discussion that the disability club by itself was established by volunteer students without disability students (Debre Tabor University). These students also have been supporting the club by providing materials and contributing ideas for the betterment of the club. By the same token, the members of the club were collecting different materials such as cloth, pen, exercises books, shoes, etc. from university community for assisting needy and children with disabled outside the campus.

During the interview and FGD held with students with and without disabilities, the researchers come across that some students with disabilities were not obtained support services from their peers. This is because, they hadn't interest to get supports from their peers. They explained in detail that they did not still accept their disability. They thought that they are self-sufficient and capable to do all types of university's deeds. In addition to this, some disabled students were not interested to get support services from students without disabilities.

3.3 Accessibility of the physical Environment

The researcher asked the informants about the accessibility of the physical environment including the roads and buildings for students with disabilities. The participants responded that the roads and buildings in all the sampled universities were not conducive for wheelchair, cane and crunch users. It means, the buildings and the roads in

the university campus were not constructed by considering students with disabilities. One of the participants at Gondar University described the campus environment as follows

Although, the main road of the university in all campus are asphalt, the small pathways lead from the main rods to the cafeteria, dormitory, library, classroom and lounge are not accessible. More over the natural environment of Gondar University particularly Maraki and GC campus are ups and downs. Lab rooms and different offices are also found above the 2nd floor of the buildings. In addition, all buildings of the university do not have ramps and elevators..

Data obtained during the observation also confirmed that there were inaccessible buildings, toilet, washing and shower rooms. Not only these services found outside and far apart from the buildings, they are also not sanitized and their roads are not labels. In the same token, Kitaw during the interview described that the toilet and shower rooms were not constructed with special design by considering students with disabilities. These rooms had a slippery characters. And this kind of features are not conducive for those students whose lower limbs are impaired. Moreover, these rooms were commonly used for all students found in the buildings. This means, students with disabilities did not have special & separate toilet and shower rooms. Due to this reason, they are not clean. However, there were some accessible building; specially designed toilet and shower rooms at Gondar University. The buildings in which students with disabilities lived have ramps, In addition, the buildings found near to the main asphalted roads. Students with disabilities were placed in the ground floor of the buildings. In these buildings, there were specially constructed toilet and shower rooms.

Concerning the accessibilities of library, cafeteria, classroom and lounges for students with disabilities, the participant described that these service giving centers were inaccessible for these groups of students. The roads, the furniture and eating utensils such as forks and spoons were not adaptive and appropriate for students with physically disabled. The researcher during the observation also assured that sting chairs in all service giving centers were inaccessible for students with disabilities. Special needs directorate during the interview mentioned that universities did not have specially designed chairs and tables. This is because, the number and the voice of students with disabilities were very low. Regarding the proximity/ accessible of their dormitories in relation to classroom, library and cafeteria, the respondents disclosed that students with disabilities were placed and assigned in to the nearer buildings and dormitories.

Mare during the FGD remarked that his dormitory was found nearer to the classroom and cafeteria. Data obtained during the observation also confirmed that students were placed in those buildings and dormitories which are nearer to the classroom, library, cafeteria, lounge and the main roads (especially in GU and DTU). In addition, their classrooms were found in the accessible ground floor of the buildings except the laboratory room. Most laboratory rooms are found in 1st, 2nd or 3rd floors of the buildings. All these levels are inaccessible for these groups of students.

3.4 Challenges

Information obtained through different data gathering tools pointed out pertinent challenges that hinder the provision of support services for students with disabilities in higher education institutions. For instance, case 1 and 3 pinpointed that lack of budget to run the different programs of students with special needs in general and students with disabilities in particular were the major obstacles that impedes the provision of support services. They further explained that to accommodate the necessary educational materials, adaptive devices, sanitary equipment and employee professionals, it requires a large amount of budget. Due to this reason, the university did not afford to fulfill all these necessary materials and professionals as a result of lack of budget. Kitaw during the discussion for instance disclosed

When we asked the university to buy laundry machine for students with severally impaired, they said budget is not allotted. If we also asked to buy Dictaphone for students with visually impaired, they said there is no budget. Again when we asked to pay fees for readers for students with visually impaired, they said no budget. If we ask them to construct ramp and bridge, they said also no budget.

In addition to this, lack of attention given on individual needs of student with disability by different level administrators of the universities and teachers were the major pitfall for providing special support services. Special needs and student service directorate during the interview described that the number of students with severe disabilities who needs special support services in the university were very low. That is, most of the time, the university official gave much emphasis on the majority. Majority voices were get attention quickly than the voices of minority. Students with disabilities have low voice and this voice does not get attention by the administrators.

The negative attitude and lack of knowledge on the part of teachers and some administrators on students with disabilities were the major obstacle that hinder the provision of academic support services. The researcher assured that most teachers in all sampled universities were not voluntary to assist student with disabilities in all academic issues (tutorial, using alternative methods of teaching, assessment strategy, differentiated activities and contents). This is because, first, teachers were not interested to assist students of having diver's educational

needs and problem in their classroom. Second, most teachers did not have knowledge and skills in assisting students with divers educational needs. Moreover, at the time of the interview and the discussion, students with disabilities replied that teachers were not devoted and take additional time to assist students with diverse educational needs. They always used the same types of educational approaches and mode of delivery to all types of students in the class room.

The unavailability of specific policy, rules, regulations and guidelines regarding to the provision of support services were also identified as a major bottleneck that influences the provision of support services for students with disabilities in higher education institution. The informants during the interview disclosed that the ministry of education did not prepare a detail and specific guideline in relation to the allotment of budget, types of support services provided for each disability category and the necessary professional needed in order to assist students with disabilities. During the discussion, the chairperson of the disability club and case 1 in the interview reported that if they asked the needed support services with the required budget, president of the university responded that "in what guideline you asked and how it is processed." Sometimes, they simply allow materials procurement without having a clear policy and guideline for disability uses.

Furthermore, informant teachers during the interview described that needing over treatment by students with severe disabilities were identified as a major challenge that affects the provision of academic and non-academic support service in the university. As they described in detail, some students want to get a very sophisticate and complex support services immediately that were beyond teachers' and university's capacity.

4. Discussion

The result of this study revealed that most students with disabilities did not obtain a special academic support services from teachers. That is, no adapted curriculum alignment and innovative practices made; no special tutorial given; no modification made on the different instructional activities. Previous research findings indicated that differentiation of teaching is basically necessary to help students with disabilities acquire real-life skills and to help them continue their education in harmony with students without disabilities in the same learning environments (Tomlinson, 1999, 2001; Tomlinson, Kaplan, Renzulli, Purcell, Leppien and Burns, 2002). This includes, modifying/ adopting the curriculum to suit to the needs of special needs; flexibility and improving teaching; modifying method of teaching, assessment techniques, activities and schedules. However, the finding of this study showed that teachers did not modify exam and class schedules particularly for students with disabilities. They usually use the same types of educational approach (teaching strategy, activities, assessment techniques, schedules, Medias and seating strategy) for all students without differentiating them.

With regard to the peer support services, the result of the study showed that they provided guiding (mobility & orientation), caring food from the cafeteria, providing tutorial, buying goods from the shops and pushing their wheelchairs, caring materials and giving sanitation services for students with different types of severe disabilities. Research has established that peer support program offer benefits both the students with disabilities and the typical peer involved in the peer support experience (Burns, Storey & Certo, 1999).

The study findings showed that the roads and buildings in all the sampled universities were inaccessible for wheel chair, cane and crunch users. It means, the buildings and the roads in the university campus were not constructed by considering students with disabilities. That is, the small pathway lead from the main road to cafeteria, dormitory, library, classroom and lounge were not conducive. In relation to this, literature pointed out that low enrollment and high dropout rate can be understood as the result of inadequate accessibility of higher education institutions (Foreman et al., 2001; Jung, 2003; Johnson, 2006).

In addition, the main roads of 2nd and 3rd generation universities were inaccessible. The finding also revealed that the buildings do not have ramps and lifts. In relation to this, Simon (2003) explained that the educational setting such as buildings, library collections, facilities, services, recreational centers, organizational hierarchy and everything in built are organized for normal students to the point of excluding students with disabilities. The result of the research also confirmed that library, cafeteria, classroom and lounges services were inaccessible for these students with disabilities. Supporting this, Tirussew & Ellena, (2000) pointed out that the accessible classrooms, dormitories, halls, dining rooms, recreational areas, library, service delivery units , exit passageways in emergency situations are all elements of physical accessibility, however, these basic conditions are not adequately met.   Furthermore, the research finding found out that the roads, the furniture and eating utensils such as forks and spoons were not adaptive and appropriate for students with physically challenged.

The finding also identified that classrooms and dormitories were found in the accessible floor of the buildings except the laboratory rooms. In relation to this, English (1993) summarized that all campus residents had specific adaptations done in their dorm facilities. In addition, there were some accessible building; especially designed toilet and shower rooms at Gondar University. This result entails that lack of budget to run the different programs of students with special needs in general and students with disabilities in particular were the major obstacles that impede the provision of support services. In relation to this, Yuen (2003) outlined that the problems which students with disabilities faced in higher education include: discrepancies in service delivery

modules and terminologies; lack of interagency collaboration, and in adequate funding (budget) for resources and staff development. Literature also showed that resources in higher education institutions are often inadequate, leaving disability service units in the position of having to make decisions based up on budgetary considerations rather than upon proven effectiveness (NCSPES, 2000).

In addition, lack of attention given for individual student with disability's need by different level of administrators and teachers are the major pitfall for providing special support services. Besides, the negative attitude and lack of awareness of teachers and some administrators towards students with disabilities were the major obstacle that hinder the provision of academic and non-academic support services. Emphasizing at this point, Jung (2003) and Johnson, (2006) described that the negative attitude of faculty and administrative staff may prevent students with disabilities from disclosing their disabilities and from requesting accommodations.

Furthermore, this findings also pointed out that unavailability of specific policy, rules, regulations and guidelines regarding to the provision of support services were also identified as a major bottleneck that influences the provision of support services. In line with this, UNESCO (1999) research finding showed that higher education institutions in most countries in the world   did not have any policy statement referring to students with disabilities and the provision available for this group of students was very insignificant.

5.   Conclusions

Based on the findings of the research, the researcher has reached the following conclusions

1. Most students with disabilities did not obtain disability specific academic support from teachers. That is, no adapted curriculum alignment and innovative practices made; no special tutorial given; no modification made on the different instructional activities; no adopted books & notes; no exam modification and flexible class schedule peculiarly for students with disabilities. However, one university provided scholarship for students with disabilities in different departments and one university also made an agreement to translate all the necessary educational materials of the department in to Braille language for students with visual impairment.

2. Most students with disabilities have obtained different support services from students without disabilities. They have got guiding, caring food from the cafeteria, providing tutorial, buying goods from the shops and pushing their wheelchairs, caring materials and giving sanitation and counselling services. However, some are not interested to get these services from their peers.

3. Most students without disabilities had a positive attitude and interest to assist students with disabilities even by far better than teachers and administrators. These support services provided by students without disabilities were immediate and persistence than the services provided by others.

4. The physical environment including the roads, campus, service giving centers and buildings were inaccessible for students with disabilities. It means, the buildings and roads in the university campus were not constructed by considering students with disabilities. In addition, the buildings do not have ramps and lifts. However, classrooms and dormitories were relatively found in the accessible floors and areas of the buildings.

5. Lack of budget to run the different programs of students with special needs; low attention given for individual student with disability's needs by different level of administrators and teachers; unavailability of specific policy, rules, regulations and guidelines regarding to the provision of support services and the long bureaucratic structure of the university procurement are identified as the major pitfall that hinders the provision of support services for students with disabilities.

6.   Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following major recommendation were forwarded

1. The universities should give capacity building trainings for teachers about disability education. This leads teachers to develop knowledge and skills in assisting students with disabilities by making instruction more flexible and accommodate for the diver's needs of these students.

2. The university should employee special needs education professionals in order to decide the students' eligibility for different supports and provide sign and Braille language translations for students with sensory disabilities.

3. The support services given by students without disabilities for students with disabilities should be strengthen by teachers and administrators of the universities.

4. The ministry of education should evaluate and comment the accessibility of the university buildings for students with disabilities while it is under construction in relation to the building proclamation of Ethiopia.

5. The university administrators should work more on the physical accessibility of their campuses, buildings and service giving centers. That is, they should reconstruct ramps, lifts, bridges, roads and seating chairs. They should be also supervise the availability of different services for students with disabilities while the university buildings are constructed.

6. The university should develop specific rules, regulations and guidelines that used to guide the provisions of support services for students with different disabilities.

7. Students with disabilities have unique needs and problems. Hence, teachers and administrators should address the special needs of each student with disability rather than giving due emphasis on the mass needs.

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