

Chapter 4

Implementation and Qualification of Braille Music Transcription Services at Universities

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents an outline of characteristics that qualify a transcription service of musical notation in Braille at universities, which is a demand of blind students who attend music programs in higher education. A study on the technologies involved in the process of transcribing musical works will be reported and its results are discussed in a way that supports the proposition of this service. The service proposed in this chapter not only is devised to produce the material, but also to promote training activities, to develop partnerships with libraries and institutions, and to offer academic support to students with disabilities. It is assumed that the inclusion of people with disabilities in higher education implicates the offer of equal conditions of access and permanence. In addition, it is considered that technology, particularly assistive technology, can facilitate and enhance learning in higher education institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

The inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education requires universities to offer adequate conditions for their entry and stay in the universities' student body. These students need to have autonomy in the fulfillment of their academic activities in equal measure with the other students.

Universities guarantee this inclusion and the maintenance of students by providing means which bring accessibility to physical spaces, to communication, to information technology as well as to all curricula and program content of the courses. These conditions of access also imply a paradigm change in universities, which requires subjective transformations in people's attitudes towards inclusion, pointed out by Masini and Bason (2005). In a study conducted by Masini and Bason (2005), testimonials were collected from students with disabilities enrolled in higher education institutions, and, through the analysis of the data from a phenomenological perspective, were identified both aspects that facilitated and aspects that prevented their inclusion in universities. In their testimonials, students converged on pointing out the "lack of acceptance by the community" and the "social prejudice" as obstacles to inclusion, which corroborates the idea that attitudinal barriers are prevalent among the factors that obstruct this process.

Fernandes et al. (2016) also collected testimonials from students with disabilities enrolled in a university in Portugal. In their statements, they also mentioned some aspects of interpersonal relationships as factors that hindered inclusion, especially actions of inflexibility of teachers who are not always open to adjust their teaching and assessment methods. They also pointed out the need for specialized and qualified academic support services at universities; likewise, there is the need for adequacy of the universities' spaces and facilities so they may become more accessible environments and channels of information about academic routines and activities.

The studies that bring testimonies from students with disabilities are relevant to create subsidies and to point out ways for inclusion, especially as they give voice to these students and place them as protagonists and active participants in this process.

Countries vary in terms of laws and conditions that grant access to higher education for people with disabilities. Lissi (2013) reports differences in that regard between the United States, Europe and Latin America. The Red Interuniversitaria Latinoamericana y del Caribe sobre Discapacidad y Derechos Humanos presents a bulletin that describes initiatives for inclusion in higher education in Latin America. What is evident is that although existing laws facilitate inclusion, they do not guarantee it.

The "Rehabilitation Act" in the United States prohibits any discrimination against people with disabilities in institutions that have received federal contributions. However, the understanding is that this is not enough to guarantee inclusion and

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