Chapter 10
Library Services and Facilities to Differently Abled Students in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The provision of resources and services for the differently abled users in higher education libraries has been a challenge worldwide. In some parts of the world, libraries have made impressive progress and have continued to adopt new modalities to addressing this matter while in other parts the picture remains lamentable to the extent where such endeavours are non-existent despite the call to inclusive services that has been sounding for decades in all human activities. Drawing from literature in library and information services (LIS), this chapter seeks to outline resources and services for persons with disabilities that can be used as a standard for higher education libraries.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions have a critical role in providing equitable education to all for a sustainable future regardless of the different abilities people possess. Having an opportunity to attain higher education entails that individual learning and competition has been attained, resulting in professionals who are prepared for future challenges and decision making (Cortese, 2003). People who are differently abled are usually victims of poor access to higher education due to lack of facilities that can support their learning process. Therefore, inability to provide equal access to education as a result of different abilities can lead to an unsustainable future for all. This chapter is aimed at highlighting some services and facilities that can support the differently abled in higher education with reference to the library services that are offered in Universities.

The library in this context becomes the central point of reference due to its supportive role of promoting the University's core business of learning, teaching and research. As such, the fundamental facilities that the library puts in place for researchers, lecturers and students to conduct their research, teaching and learning will have a positive and negative implication in the provision of higher education to all library users. The chapter will therefore outline and examine the various categories of disabilities and identify the appropriate facilities that should be rendered for such disabilities to support and enhance teaching and learning in higher institutions. This is done in line with the existing literature available globally after which issues and controversies regarding the provision of these facilities will be raised. The discrepancies will help in outlining some recommendations that may be appropriate in establishing standard services and facilities for the differently abled students in higher education.

This chapter will explore the current trends regarding the provision of appropriate services and facilities that higher education institutions should provide to the differently abled. The trends will help in providing insights on the recommendations that will be offered on the services and facilities required for the differently abled in higher institutions.

BACKGROUND

Higher education is a critical arena for young disabled people who are caught up in the construction of an adult identity as well as in obtaining higher level qualifications which have a major impact on future labour market opportunities. Access to the services that can open up the new horizons in one's future cannot be overstated. However, not much attention with regards to special facilities have been put in place

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