

# Chapter 2

## Navigating Disability in Moroccan Higher Education: Challenges, Practices, and Pathways to Inclusion

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The Moroccan higher education (HE) system demonstrates limited experience in managing disability and often lacks awareness of contemporary inclusive practices. Efforts to align with best practices in inclusive education have been hindered by a fundamental misunderstanding of the complexities surrounding disability. Despite initiatives aimed at accommodating individual needs, many public universities in Morocco still lack sufficient support services for students with disabilities, leaving the aspiration to position these institutions as leaders in effective legislation and support largely unfulfilled. This chapter critically examines the experiences of students with disabilities in Moroccan HE from both pedagogical and administrative perspectives, providing a comprehensive overview of disability issues, reviewing relevant literature, and comparing Moroccan practices with those of other African HE systems. It identifies current challenges, highlights effective practices, and concludes with targeted recommendations for enhancing disability support services and advancing inclusive education within Moroccan higher education institutions (HEIs).*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In recent decades, disability in HE has emerged as a significant subject of debate, attracting increasing attention from both researchers and educators. It remains a central issue in academic discourse, closely linked to the principle of equal opportunity in education. One of the primary objectives of HEIs is to ensure that all students—irrespective of physical ability—have equitable access to knowledge. The success of this objective depends largely on the implementation of effective legislation, inclusive curricula, and comprehensive support services across institutional levels. However, within the Moroccan context, efforts to address disability management in HE are still in their nascent stages, with progress remaining modest and limited.

Interest in disability management in HE is shaped by several factors, including legislation, advances in teaching methodologies, and the implications of prior research. These factors drive numerous countries to progress towards a more inclusive HE system. Nevertheless, students with developmental and learning disabilities continue to face challenges upon entering HE (Evans et al., 2017; Hong, 2015). Researchers and human rights advocates have concentrated on studying the barriers encountered by students with disabilities in HE, motivated by a desire to alleviate these challenges, expand access to universities, and combat the negative perceptions of disability within academic contexts. As noted by Evans et al. (2017, p. 251), “... an ableist environment is laden with assumptions about what is normal or desirable, and these assumptions disadvantage disabled students.” Viewing these students as a minority, the lack of necessary accommodations can render them socially and academically vulnerable, overly dependent, and their achievements frequently undervalued or overlooked.

## **BACKGROUND**

The issue of disability in HE often signifies concerns regarding exclusion and the lack of equal opportunities among students. Therefore, developing strategies that account for the needs of students with disabilities has become a major concern for policymakers globally (Reynolds & Janzen, 2007). This issue is of particular importance in HE, given the role of such institutions in enhancing employability prospects for graduates. Attaining a university degree represents an added value for students with disabilities, affirming their dignity and enabling them to assume a vital role in society. In a developing country like Morocco, access to HE for students with disabilities is uncommon. This phenomenon can be attributed to several factors, including the absence of infrastructural facilities within HEIs, prevailing

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