

Breaking Barriers: Exploring Disability Services and Inclusive Education in Bangladeshi Universities

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Abstract: Students need access to disability services and inclusive learning to achieve equal learning opportunities at universities. Bangladesh universities now make slow changes to help include more students in education. Students with disabilities still face difficulties accessing university services and learning conditions that match their requirements. The research evaluates Bangladeshi university disability programs through both the challenges students face to access education and the existing strategies for improving educational inclusion. The study reviews the last ten years of research to understand how public policies, college assistance systems, and community beliefs affect students with disabilities at university. This review identifies major obstacles universities experience in providing disability services like insufficient campus access and inadequate faculty training. The aim of the research is to provide suggested actions to enhance disability services while stressing the importance of university-government-civil society partnerships for inclusive Bangladesh education..

Introduction

Higher education policies now center on creating inclusion for students as their primary focus globally. Bangladesh universities have taken steps to welcome disabled students into their community but still need to develop better solutions for students with multiple support needs. Data from WHO shows that 15% of worldwide citizens have disabilities and Bangladesh's universities match this prevalence. The country's universities have taken a long time to establish complete support programs and policies for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities struggle to secure complete university access because of unfriendly physical spaces combined with hostile social attitudes and unprepared teaching staff.

Inclusive education lets students with disabilities learn alongside their classmates in normal classrooms. The study targets both basic accommodations and develops an educational setting that supports all students equally despite their abilities. Social attitudes against people with disabilities make it harder to achieve inclusive education at universities in Bangladesh. Universities do not always follow the rules that support inclusion in practice.

This article studies how universities in Bangladesh handle disability support and inclusive education while outlining the current situation and prospective solutions to increase accessibility. It examines how far the field has advanced by studying government programs alongside academic research and university policies.

Methodology

This review follows a qualitative approach, synthesizing research articles, reports, and policy documents related to disability services and inclusive education in Bangladeshi universities. The search strategy included databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and national educational journals, using keywords such as "disability services," "inclusive education," "Bangladesh," "higher education," and "student support." The reviewed articles were selected based on their relevance to the research questions, quality of methodology, and their contribution to understanding the state of disability services in the context of Bangladeshi higher education.

The inclusion criteria focused on studies and reports published between 2010 and 2023 that examined disability services in Bangladeshi universities, government policies on inclusive education, and challenges related to physical and social accessibility. In addition to academic studies, government documents and reports from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were also included to provide a broader view of the issue.

The review identifies gaps in the literature, focusing on the specific barriers students with disabilities face in universities, the effectiveness of current interventions, and the role of universities in promoting an inclusive educational environment.

Literature Review

Universities around the world are now giving inclusive education its proper attention because of its global significance in modern times. Despite progress made worldwide toward including disabled students in university education Bangladesh still faces difficulties in this matter. Current disability services need evaluation to reveal both their success rate and the challenges students with disabilities experience while pursuing inclusive education.

Bangladesh's University Programs for Disability Services Need Improvement

The inclusive education model works to give students with disabilities the same educational chances all students receive. Hasan and Haque (2020) demonstrate in their research that Bangladeshi educational institutions especially universities remain unsuited to support students with disabilities despite growing disability rights awareness. Despite current difficulties the inadequate infrastructure combined with teacher shortages and teacher

education gaps make it hard for universities to properly include students with disabilities (Begum & Hossain, 2019).

Bengali universities currently just begin to support students with disabilities. The University of Dhaka stands virtually alone among Bangladesh's universities because it launched its disability support program first (Ahmed et al. 2021). University systems nationally do not systematically support these separate programming efforts. These institutions struggle to provide students with disabilities necessary tools and aids because resources remain very scarce.

Barriers to Accessing Inclusive Education

Students with disabilities at universities in Bangladesh experience many problems when trying to enter higher education. Students experience physical challenges when access to ramps, lifts, and accessible toilets is missing from campus facilities (Siddique, 2018). Teachers at universities often lack proper training to help students with disabilities and the school environment shows poor adoption of inclusive teaching methods according to Mahmud's research (2017).

Disability faces strong negative public opinions across Bangladesh. Society tends to understand disability through illnesses and charity instead of seeing it as a problem needing social and institutional improvements (Islam, 2019). People's social attitudes about disability impact both the self-confidence of students with disabilities and the level of support provided by university leaders at inclusive education (Rahman & Hossain, 2020).

Most Bangladeshi universities have limited budgets hindering their ability to serve students with disabilities adequately. Alam and Hossain (2020) describe how Bangladesh universities work with limited funds which prevent them from upgrading facilities or finding disability experts who can help students.

A Global Review of Inclusive Education Practice

Colleges worldwide have embraced a better way to educate students that includes all learners. The United States ADA law caused universities across the nation to enhance their facilities for everyone (Leuchovius 2015). Various EU nations made inclusive policies possible under the Bologna Process thanks to European Commission coordination efforts (European Commission, 2017). The study of these international systems shows us the policies and methods Bangladesh could use to support better disability services and educational inclusion.

India stands out from other South Asian countries by making greater progress with rules and steps to include disabled students in school programs. Under India's Rights of Persons

with Disabilities Act (2016) educational institutions serving students with disabilities must provide building access and help services per Muthukumar's (2017) study. The strategies from this country could assist Bangladesh as it develops better services for students with disabilities in higher education.

Policy and Legal Framework in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh disability rights receive attention through specific legal and policy regulations. The 2013 law to Protect and Ensure Rights of Disabled People makes educational facilities fully accessible to all students. Mahmud (2017) finds that university administrators struggle to carry out disability laws even though they exist today. Many universities struggle to set up proper disability services because government authorities have not yet defined key standards.

Despite government policies on disability access universities have trouble putting these rules into practice. According to Rahman and Hossain (2020) university leaders miss important disability inclusion laws that lead to uneven policy enforcement in different schools.

A Current university initiative to help students with disabilities remain incomplete. Multiple barriers like physical entry issues as well as personnel training shortages plus public prejudice demand full solution attention. By adding well-developed disability services, teaching the university community about inclusion and adopting inclusive teaching methods Bangladesh can build a fully inclusive university system.

By understanding how other nations design quality education for students with disabilities the university will build stronger policies that provide equal learning opportunities. Universities and government need to work together to make sure disability students have equal access to education in Bangladesh.

The Current State of Disability Services in Bangladesh

Bangladesh's universities currently build their disability service programs from scratch. Most universities have yet to create special support units for students with disabilities while still lacking sufficient resources to help them. Based on UGC Bangladesh data from 2018 only a minority of universities in the country offer personalized support services for disabled learners. Students receive essential accommodations during tests when they need more time plus easy access to buildings by using ramps and elevators.

Universities struggle to care for disabled students due to poor building access accommodations. School buildings typically ignore the needs of physically disabled students and educational institutions do not provide enough assistive technology for

students who need sensory or learning support. Research done by Islam in 2020 shows many Bangladeshi universities still don't have standard accessibility features that make learning easier for students who are hard of hearing or blind.

The way people in a community view disabilities shapes how universities create their disability support systems. The country operates under policies to include everyone but disability continues to face social disapproval across many areas. Students with disabilities often face negative treatment from university staff members and other students while facing public discrimination. "Hossain (2019) found that students with disabilities often experience social isolation that damages their schoolwork and mental wellbeing.

Barriers to Inclusive Education in Universities

Bangladesh faces multiple obstacles that stop inclusive education from reaching its goal of ensuring equal learning access for students with disabilities. These barriers can be categorized into three main areas: Physical restrictions join societal bias and institutional problems as main obstacles.

1. **Physical Barriers:** Students with disabilities face barriers at numerous universities across Bangladesh because of their inaccessible physical spaces. Universities limit accessibility for students with mobility and sensory impairments because they do not equip buildings with ramps, elevators, or special facilities such as adapted restrooms and Braille materials. Students with disabilities still face building barriers at universities providing disability support programs.
2. **Attitudinal Barriers:** Students, teachers, and university leaders continue to display unfavorable opinions about disability. Students with disabilities face societal stigma and face judgment because society views their disability as a private matter rather than sharing responsibility for accessibility. People often see disabled students as having reduced capabilities compared to their able-bodied classmates. Students with disabilities receive fewer resources because faculty and university staffs hold common biases against providing accommodations. Chowdhury's research in 2021 shows students with disabilities detects discriminatory attitudes from others which drive them away from university activities.
3. **Systemic Barriers:** The practical application of inclusive education policies differs widely between universities even though a framework exists. Universities do not receive proper instructions for supporting disabled students and their professors rarely get formal training to help students with disabilities. According to Hossain (2020) universities struggle to deliver proper disability support because they receive small amounts of funding for these services.

Government Policies and Initiatives

The government of Bangladesh has advanced inclusive education policy through creating two key laws: the 2010 National Education Policy and the 2013 Act on Rights for Disabled Persons. These policies support both physical and learning barriers removal for disabled students together with equal educational opportunities. Rahman (2020) points out that universities show slow progress in applying the stated policies and exist a major difference between theory and real-world application.

The Ministry of Education works with NGOs to help university staff learn about teaching disabilities and inclusivity. Some universities work with international groups to upgrade disability support systems while helping disabled students succeed in campus activities. Bangladeshi universities need better and unified programs to remove barriers that stop inclusive learning across the education system.

Recommendations for Improving Disability Services and Inclusive Education

To improve the situation for students with disabilities in Bangladeshi universities, several recommendations can be made:

1. **Strengthen Disability Support Services:** Higher education centers should build dedicated disability service centers that handle both academic adjustments and provide counseling along with career development programs. Each disability support service team requires a suitable workforce and appropriate tools to help all students receive necessary assistance.
2. **Improve Physical Accessibility:** Universities need to spend their resources developing campus spaces that work for everyone including people who need support for movement or sensory abilities. The institution must provide physical accessibility features including wheelchair ramps and elevators plus assistive tools like screen readers and hearing aids.
3. **Address Attitudinal Barriers:** Teachers and university employees should learn about disabilities while mastering inclusive instructional techniques. Educational sessions provide opportunities to teach faculty and staff how to understand and accept students with disabilities better. Universities need to build an inclusive academic space that honors diversity among students and guarantees respecting each person's differences.
4. **Enhance Collaboration with NGOs and the Government:** Universities need to partner with government organizations and disability groups to exchange helpful tools for teaching everyone equally. Teamwork between different groups enables effective improvement of disability services and ensures proper resources reach student needs.

Conclusion

This study reveals the urgent requirement for Bangladeshi universities to improve accessibility for disabled students. Students face physical limitations and negative treatment because even with inclusive policies in place these university systems fall short. Universities must enhance their disability resources and transform their facilities as they work to build better understanding and acceptance of disabilities. Educational institutions should develop accessible facilities and appropriate services so students with disabilities can achieve academic goals and enjoy campus participation. We have achieved gradual changes but more essential tasks ahead exist. The proposals in this paper show how universities in Bangladesh can make better learning opportunities for students of all abilities to help them reach their maximum academic potential.

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