

THE CHALLENGES OF ADVANCING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: THE CASE OF SOMALIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION

^a Abdulkadir Mohamed Abdullahi

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Higher education in emerging countries, particularly in Africa, has been observed as a privilege for those with the ability. Disabled persons cannot access it. Only 2% of disabled people in developing countries have access to inclusive education, impeding their growth. Somalia's disability rate is unknown due to its long history of violence and healthcare breakdown. It may exceed the UN's 15% worldwide standard. However, this paper will explain the challenges of advancing inclusive education (Colleges and Universities) in the case of Somalia's higher education.

Methodology: This study uses secondary literature to examine how higher education supports inclusive education in Africa, with a focus on Somalia.

Findings: This study indicated that barriers inside and outside institutions prohibit disabled students from attending higher education.

Limitation: Lack of appropriate disability legislation, financial support, a narrowly defined set of legibility criteria, pessimistic attitudes, discriminative practices, and inaccessible locations are such barriers.

Recommendation: To overcome these obstacles and make higher education accessible to Somali students with disabilities, an inclusive education strategy may be the best course of action.

Original Value: By conducting a comprehensive study, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing a detailed understanding of the specific obstacles hindering inclusive education in Somalia.

Keywords: higher education, inclusive education, disability, universities, Africa, Somalia.

Received: 24/04/2023

Accepted: 18/07/2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55908/sdgs.v1i12.422>

^a Master in Sustainable Development Practice, Faculty of Economics, SIMAD University,
E-mail: abdukadir095@simad.edu.so, ORCID: 0000-0002-3076-498x



OS DESAFIOS DE PROMOVER A EDUCAÇÃO INCLUSIVA: O CASO DO ENSINO SUPERIOR NA SOMÁLIA.

RESUMO

Propósito: O ensino superior em países emergentes, particularmente na África, tem sido observado como um privilégio para aqueles com habilidades. As pessoas portadoras de deficiência não podem ter acesso a essa informação. Apenas 2% das pessoas com deficiência nos países em desenvolvimento têm acesso a uma educação inclusiva, o que impede o seu crescimento. A taxa de deficiência da Somália é desconhecida devido ao seu longo histórico de violência e colapso do sistema de saúde. Pode ultrapassar os 15% da norma mundial das Nações Unidas. No entanto, este documento explicará os desafios do avanço da educação inclusiva (faculdades e universidades) no caso do ensino superior da Somália.

Metodologia: Este estudo usa a literatura secundária para examinar como o ensino superior apoia a educação inclusiva na África, com foco na Somália.

Constatações: Este estudo indicou que as barreiras dentro e fora das instituições proíbem os estudantes com deficiência de frequentar o ensino superior.

Limitação: a falta de legislação adequada em matéria de deficiência, o apoio financeiro, um conjunto de critérios de legibilidade rigorosamente definidos, atitudes pessimistas, práticas discriminatórias e locais inacessíveis são essas barreiras.

Recomendação: Para superar esses obstáculos e tornar o ensino superior acessível aos estudantes somalis com deficiência, uma estratégia de educação inclusiva pode ser o melhor curso de ação.

Valor Original: Ao realizar um estudo abrangente, esta pesquisa contribui para o corpo existente de conhecimento, fornecendo uma compreensão detalhada dos obstáculos específicos que dificultam a educação inclusiva na Somália.

Keywords: ensino superior, educação inclusiva, deficiência, universidades, África, Somália.

1 INTRODUCTION

Human rights are fundamental rights that every person has as a gift from God, whose existence cannot be questioned (Mappong et al., 2023). The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights preserved education as a fundamental human right. It was also included in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable Development is that which meets the needs of the present without undermining the ability of future generations to fulfill their own needs (Abdulkadir et al., 2022). It promotes the development of the learning, skills, and practices required for a sustainable planet, which ensures a sustainable environment, inclusive society, and economic prosperity. Inclusive education is a statement that reflects everyone's fundamental right to access education and not be excluded. Many people have no access to this right because of many barriers. Still, critical international documents and academic studies have explained in more detail what it means to the aims of inclusive education.



The aim of inclusive education can be described as eliminating the historical discrimination within and outside of educational institutions through the formulation and implementation of legislation to improve the inclusion of all students independent of their differences (Kochung, 2011). Progressively, it is acknowledged that international development must show a human rights framework and promote inclusive education for all in its funding and policy guidelines (Stubbs, 2008)

Furthermore, inclusive education is viewed as a fundamental human right that must be made available to everyone, regardless of gender, age, race, or socioeconomic status, and various international declarations also back it. These include the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the UN Declaration on Education for All (1990), the UN Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993), and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). These international agreements and documents have played significant roles in many countries worldwide when formulating new rules and strategies for inclusive education.

Unfortunately, the legal frameworks and policies for implementing those international resolutions in Somalia are not functioning because the country is recovering from two decades of civil war. Inclusive education is not realized in the education system of Somalia because of the barriers outside the institutions and those within. Barriers limiting a student's full participation include negative cultural attitudes, discriminatory practices against disabled children, and inaccessible environments. Children with disabilities are sometimes denied admission to schools due to false assumptions. For instance, due to misunderstanding and anxiety about the causes of epilepsy, children with seizure disorders may be excluded from school (Ali et al., 2014). However, the inclusive education system is crucial in overcoming these obstacles so that students with disabilities and those currently barred from accessing higher education based on race, ethnicity, health, linguistics, and culture can do so (Kochung, 2011). Through secondary literature, this paper will explain the challenges of advancing inclusive education (Colleges and Universities) in the case of Somalia's higher education.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Human rights are fundamental rights that cannot be contested. Inclusive education is crucial for promoting social justice, equity, and holistic development. It benefits



students, educational institutions, and society. Sociopolitical and historical factors, policy and legislative framework, institutional practices, socioeconomic and cultural factors, stakeholder engagement, and international comparisons and best practices can help advance inclusive education in Somalia. By addressing gender disparities, cultural norms, and addressing stakeholder engagement, inclusive education can be more effective and beneficial for all students.

3 METHODS OF LITERATURE REVIEW

We examined online databases for papers that discussed how higher education has advanced inclusive education in Africa, notably in Somalia. We looked for more references by searching reference lists from pertinent reports, literature reviews, and all identified relevant publications. Additionally, relevant publications were hand-searched in the following international journals: *African Journal of Disability*; *International Journal of Inclusive Education*; *European Journal of Special Needs Education*; *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*; *Journal of Somali Studies*; *The Occupational Therapy Journal of Research*; *Epilepsy & Behavior*; *Disability & Society* and *European Journal of Psychology of Education*.

During our search, we came across many journal articles, conference papers, and other types of works, which we assessed to determine which ones should be prioritized for inclusion in this paper's literature review. The most relevant papers and those that best address the current concerns about the role of higher education in promoting inclusive education have been compiled after a thorough reading process. We did not include any publications that were not pertinent to our current research or ones that were published before 1990.

Overall, the study of the literature selected about higher education's role in inclusive education discovered two major thematic areas: barriers to promoting inclusive education in higher education, and inclusive education in Africa, notably Somalia. The literature on these topics is examined and addressed in the section that follows. Conclusions as well as recommendations for additional field study are offered after this.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Many researchers have argued that higher education should be more inclusive, and that colleges and universities should be responsible for meeting the requirements of



all students (Moriña, 2017). Indeed, inclusivity in higher education symbolizes a quality campus (Moriña, 2017). On the other hand, it is crucial to remember that every single country and school has its inclusion perspective; therefore, there is no one international type of inclusive education. The meaning of inclusion is culturally and socially determined and depends on the political values and processes of the state for its enactment (Engelbrecht, 2006). In recent years many European countries like Spain have made such advances in disability policies at the universities; although efforts to adopt inclusion in higher education and the increasing number of students with special education needs at higher education are clear signs of progress, there are serious barriers still existing to the implementation of inclusive participation in learning (Molina et al., 2016).

Several studies, such as Borland & James (1999), identified the most frequent barriers students with disabilities encounter in higher education. Researchers found that there are three types of barriers that prevent students with disabilities from obtaining an education (1) Physical access barriers (infrastructures and spaces); (2) Curricular access barriers (methodology, content); and (3) Attitudinal barriers. Gitlow (2001) identifies the third barrier as the most relevant as it comes first and hence may have a direct relation to the other two barrier types. Attitudinal barriers are also seeming the most difficult to eliminate. Higher education in developed countries is experiencing a lack of resources, but this cannot be compared to the circumstances of extreme poverty in developing countries, where lack of income means a lack of basic human needs; lack of food and shelter, lack of electricity and clean water and education facilities (Stubbs et al. 2008).

Improving the quality of education in developed countries has advanced by two key arrangements: a) school effectiveness, which is about analyzing what makes an effective school; b) school improvement, which looks at how schools can progress and change (Stubbs et al. 2008). According to Engelbrecht (2006), despite a more equitable distribution of resources throughout the schools, the school system still needs to be revised in South Africa. Lack of resources and institutional capacity (both in administrative procedures and inappropriately trained teachers) limit implementation of new education strategies. Hence, developing a significant ability to support the transformation of education has become an enormous challenge.



4.1 INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

Scholars have defined inclusive education in various ways depending on the setting in which they study the topic. Kochung (2011), explains that the goal of inclusive education is to change the way that schools are run in order to better serve kids with special needs. In support of the above definition, Wiles & Bondi (2011) rather than bringing in students without support services, he argue that inclusion means keeping special needs students in normal education classrooms and making support services available to them. According to Uchem & Ngwa (2014) due to the fact that inclusive education is a dynamic, organic, cultural, and context-specific process, there is no set framework in place. Since the introduction of the idea of inclusive education, most developed nations have struggled to effectively include not only students with special needs and disabilities but also kids from racial and ethnic minorities, kids from politically or geographically marginalized groups, kids from lower socioeconomic groups, and kids from lower socioeconomic groups in the context of their societies (Motala & Piphoo, 2000).

However, Stubbs (2008) observed that although policy adaptation for inclusion in Africa had made significant progress, there had been little progress made in terms of implementation due to the interference of unfavorable attitudes, traditional beliefs, cultural practices, and occasionally a lack of political will from politicians. Some applicants to higher education are turned down on the basis that those who are different in terms of handicap, ethnicity or race, culture, dialect, or rurality don't value individual differences. Universities have been found to be some of the most discriminatory institutions, both in terms of access for some students - as in the case of students with disabilities - and in terms of supporting their continuity in higher education so they do not leave their educational career before receiving a degree (Herreras, 2002). Prior to 1993, higher education in Africa was primarily unavailable to people with severe disabilities, and any modifications provided relied on the collaboration of the faculty, staff, and students. (Leicester & Lovell, 1994; Riddell et al., 2005).

Statistics on the number of disabled students enrolled in higher education institutions are unavailable in most African nations, and many of these nations still struggle economically regarding human rights, inclusive education, and accessibility to higher education for people with disabilities (Kiyaga & Moores, 2003). This circumstance may be attributed to unfavorable attitudes, discriminatory laws and practices, and an



inhospitable climate in the higher education system. Through the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the World Declaration on EFA (1990), The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993), and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, several African countries have made political declarations and commitments.

However, most of these nations lack the legal structures and administrative procedures necessary to carry out these declarations. Therefore, it is unsurprising that inclusive education is still a concept in most African nations and that where attempts have been made, most have not progressed past the pilot stage. According to the World Bank (2018), girls with disabilities are less likely to finish primary school than girls without disabilities by 10 percentage points. For boys, the gap between those with disabilities and those without is 13 points. The study is based on data from censuses in 11 African countries. There are also big gaps in the number of people who finish high school, and kids with challenges are likelier to never go to school.

4.2 BARRIERS TO INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

The biggest challenge to implementing inclusive education is a policy issue. Even though UNESCO's World Conference on Special Needs Education (1994) recognized the need for educational reforms in schools, the objective of inclusive education cannot be attained without significant policy changes at universities and middle institutions. Universities must venture outside the ivory tower and work with local communities to provide accessible housing and other services for students with disabilities.

Human rights laws that have been passed in African nations only exist on paper and are hardly ever put into practice in most of those nations. In addition, most of these policies lack definite objectives and guiding principles, making them challenging to implement. Due to the challenges of implementing human rights legislation, there is little interest in developing a policy on higher education for those with disabilities. Higher education institutions are unable to invest in the removal of barriers due to a lack of policy, as shown by the low number of lectures featuring expertise in special needs education, the low number of lectures with training in special needs education, and the low awareness of education for students with disabilities. The presence of disabled students in secondary schools but their absence from universities and middle colleges suggests problems with universities and colleges (Pather, 2019).



The lack of interest in developing disability education policies may be due to poor attitude, ignorance, professional protectionism of segregated education, and disability-related resistance towards inclusive education. Additionally, it can be challenging to embrace the policy on education and disabilities when there is only an unsupported notion that it is expensive (Badat, 2010). However, certain African nations, including South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, and Zambia, have laws governing people with disabilities (Kochung, 2011). On the other hand, higher education institutions such as universities and colleges are ill-prepared to accept students with disabilities and lack inclusive education policies. No transitional programs are in place to help students with impairments transfer from high school to college. When students with disabilities migrate from primary to secondary school, there needs to be a tight transitional mechanism in place. Once enrolled, these students should also be represented in student organizations and university administration so that their issues may be taken seriously (Branker, 2009).

In addition, negative attitudes and misconceptions have begun to be reflected in research conducted on inclusive education (Beyene & Tizazu, 2010). Most university teachers are not knowledgeable in teaching strategies for students with disabilities. There are prejudices against including specific kinds of disabilities, such as those with intellectual impairments, in institutes of higher learning where inclusion is practiced (Gitlow, 2001). Higher education institutions must contend with the high expense of higher education in countries with poor economies. Even in strong economies, there is a lack of commitment to providing financial aid to students with disabilities (Vincent & Chiwandire, 2019). The majority of the world's estimated 150 million people with disabilities reside in poor nations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East, but less than 2% of them receive any kind of rehabilitation services. Individual African countries must pledge to assist those from poor backgrounds by lowering direct education costs to individual households and making loans and grants available to people in need (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002). They should encourage community participation to maximize resources and guarantee adequate, effective, and long-term resource allocation to education for disadvantaged kids.

Students who enroll in higher education typically come from high school systems that offer normal or special education. High school programs that cater to students with impairments are ready for these students. Most special education (primary and secondary) have braille specialists, interpreters, and sign language teachers. In contrast, higher



education institutions are not equipped to provide captioning and sign language interpreters at campus events for the deaf or the blind or to adapt textbooks to electric forms for certain groups of students (Auma Obura, 2021). While using the software, students can speak via a microphone, and the computer receives their commands and texts. This helps students who struggle with reading or writing by providing speech recognition technology (voice input) for those who may need it due to a motor or visual handicap that prevents them from using a standard keyboard. Students encounter specific obstacles before and after enrollment in higher education, regardless of whether they get standard or special education services (Auma Obura, 2021)

According to many studies, including Gilson & Dymond, (2012) and Kochung (2011), Before enrolling in higher education, students confront a number of obstacles, including:

- Social Exclusion and Stigmatization by the society
- The environments in which higher education institutions are located do not accommodate people with disabilities, and the community facilities they are required to use are likewise inaccessible.
- Higher education institutions have strict, rigid admission requirements for vulnerable students who want to enroll. Such requirements include high grades in secondary education, financial capability, and more.
- Most vulnerable students planning to pursue higher education come from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Even if students fulfill all standards for entrance to higher education, they encounter some obstacles. These institutional obstacles include.

- Strict curricula and testing procedures
- Insufficient use of effective teaching techniques
- Teacher's sense of inadequacy in teaching students with disabilities
- Rote and memorization-based instruction
- Coaching and tuition for students who can afford it

Despite these obstacles, there have been several attempts to practice inclusive education in different African nations (Pather & Nxumalo, 2013). In South Africa, an inclusive education project run by Cape had a pilot program in the Eastern province's Buffalo city region (Stofile, 2008). In Sierra Leone, the Kabala Community-based Project and the Orang Inclusive Education Project in Kenya have succeeded (Chavuta et al., 2006;



Trani et al., 2011). Since 2007, Leonard Cheshire has worked in Uganda with the Uganda Inclusive Education Project (Trani et al., 2011). After the inclusive education pilot program in 2003, enrollment in regular schools has increased in Ivory Coast (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002). The majority of these instances of inclusive education occur in the early grades (Kochung, 2011). On the other hand, in many other African nations, including Somalia, the availability and access to inclusive education for students with disabilities are very limited. Persons with disabilities in Somalia, where war has been continuous since 1991, suffer enormous obstacles to being identified, getting access to resources, and feeling respected in their community. This applies to children and women who have disabilities (Tomlinson, 2014). In Somalia, those with disabilities are marginalized in all humanitarian endeavors and are denied access to economic, social, and cultural rights (Manku, 2018). In Somali society, people with disabilities have been noted to be marginalized and at risk. This is a result of the numerous social, environmental, and institutional challenges they encounter as well as the fragmented efforts made to incorporate them.

A generalization of the situation in Africa may not be appropriate because inclusive education experiences there can have a variety of characteristics. Given that a sizable percentage of children in Africa are still not in school and those who do enroll cannot complete their basic or secondary education, inclusion in higher education requires a different strategy. The UNESCO Salamanca Statement on Education called for the UNESCO norm to be that all disabled children are to be included in education (Unesco, 1994).

4.3 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOMALIA CONTEXT

According to the Somalia Ministry of Education (2017), inclusive education is a system that gives all learners access to free and mandatory basic education and secondary education of real quality, as well as the chance to continue learning and training throughout their lives. This helps them improve themselves and makes Somalia more culturally, socially, and internationally competitive. On the other hand, MoECHE, (2017) indicates that students with special needs have visual, motor, or hearing impairments; experience trauma due to conflict; or have early developmental delays due to sickness or malnutrition. Additionally, they include marginalized people, people with disabilities, pastoral nomad children, girls, and people who have been harmed by emergencies. Article



1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines people with disabilities as having persistent physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, when coupled with other factors, may prevent them from fully and fairly participating in society (Baart & Taaka, 2017).

Given Somalia's history of protracted conflict and the complete breakdown of its national healthcare infrastructure, its disability rate is unclear. However, it is likely far higher than the UN's general benchmark of 15% in a given community. Somalis have a narrow definition of disability, according to which only physically incapable individuals are considered disabled. In contrast, those with persistent mental illness, psychosocial difficulties, or intellectual disabilities are not (University, 2020). Creating, funding, and delivering educational programs for persons with disabilities (PWDs) are very expensive and technically challenging. This is the fundamental reason why disabled children and adults are denied educational chances in poor countries (Hayes & Bulat, 2017). Global awareness of disability has considerably increased in recent decades because of UN-led initiatives. For instance, Articles 7 and 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) demand that governments offer inclusive, accessible education for children with disabilities and adult learning opportunities.

As an alternative, Sustainable Development Goal 4 directs nations to "encourage opportunities for lifelong learning for all [and] provide inclusive and equitable quality education." According to the Survey of Secondary Education in Somaliland 2008, 2009, Somalia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1978 and the Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees in 2005, respectively. The right to education is protected by Article 30 of the Federal Republic of Somalia's 2012 Provisional Constitution, but only for Somali citizens. According to Article 11 of The Federal Republic of Somalia's Provisional Constitution from 2012, "All citizens shall have equal rights and obligations before the law, regardless of sex, religion, social or economic standing, political viewpoint, clan, disability, occupation, birth, or dialect." The Somalia government has also adopted The UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 1994).

The federal government of Somalia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on October 2, 2018 (House of the People Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2010). Ratification paperwork has been prepared and sent to the President for his or her signature after receiving approval from the House of the



People's Foreign Relations Committee. While the CRPD was being ratified, the federal government also created a bill to create a Somalia National Disability Agency. Both houses of Parliament approved this legislation on December 31, 2018, and President Farmajo then officially signed it into law (Grimes et al., 2023). The Somalia Disability Bill has also begun to be developed by the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development. People with disabilities have equal legal protections under the provisional federal Constitution, which also forbids state discrimination against them (Sida, 2014)). Basic education for all is now a global aim because of these commitments, and these goals cannot be met without including students with disabilities.

4.4 THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN SOMALIA

The UN Trusteeship ordered the Italian colonial authority in Southern Somalia to educate and equip a new generation of people to meet the country's political, economic, and social demands within ten years, which marked the beginning of the Somali higher education system in the early 1950s (Cassanelli & Abdikadir, 2007).). In order to provide advanced semi-professional training to Somali high school graduates, a number of institutions were established, including the School of Politics and Administration (1950), the Higher Institute of Economics and Law (1954), the School of Islamic Studies, the Scuola Magistrale, and the University Institute (Eno et al., 2015).

Following its independence in 1960, the regions of the nation ruled by the UK (British Somaliland) and Italy (Italian Somalia) were merged. A referendum in which a new constitution and the new Republic got 90% of the vote vindicated this endeavor to combine the two territories. Despite this optimistic start, racial, political, and tribal issues reappeared very fast. The country's government were overthrown on October 21 in a coup orchestrated by Mohamed Siad Barre and left-leaning military personnel. From the non-violent takeover until 1991, a military regime dominated by Marxist-Leninist ideology existed. The Somali National University (SNU), founded in 1970 by Siad Barre with eleven faculties (law, economics, agriculture, education, veterinary medicine, medicine, industrial chemistry, geology, languages, journalism, and engineering), later expanded to thirteen, began as the University Institute. About 800 teachers and 7,500 students were also enrolled (Cassanelli & Abdikadir, 2007). It was Somalia's main university for about 20 years and gave birth to many of the country's top leaders in politics and administration.



However, the education system crumbled after 1991 when violence between government forces and opposition groups grew more intense, despite community groups, businesspeople, Somalis living abroad, NGOs, and religious institutions doing all they could to support schools and colleges (Aynte, 2013). Years of war and violence have had a significant negative influence on the human capital of the nation. Since the civil war began in 1991, some estimates place the death toll at close to 500,000. Overall, several studies stated that it is unknown how many universities are present in Somalia (Pellini et al., 2020a). There could be more than 100 universities in the country. In comparison to Kenya (58), Tanzania (47), and Ethiopia (36), Somalia looks to have more universities (Rajab, 2018). According to Mursal et al., (2016), roughly 40 universities in Mogadishu alone exist. Somalia's only fully public higher education institution is Somali National University (SNU) (Ochanda, 2016). All other schools are private or private with not-for-profit status, meaning that enrolling students must pay tuition.

In Somalia, the higher education system is poorly governed (Aynte, 2013). Pellini et al., (2020), claim that neither the federal government nor local authorities have much control over how universities conduct their daily business. Twenty of the 44 universities that participated in the study survey conducted by HIPS (2013), said that they managed their operations independently "without receiving any policy guidance or orientation from the local administrative authorities in the areas in which they operate." (Pellini et al., 2020). Despite its weaknesses, the governance system does exist and is developing. The federal educational system is governed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education (MoECHE). In order to support high education and training standards for all inhabitants, it must coordinate educational administration, offer general direction, and make sure a functional system is in place. Aspects of administration and financial management, strategy and planning, quality assurance, public and private education, examination, and certification are addressed by each of the ministry's six departments (and sixteen sub-departments) (Ministry of Education, 2017)

4.5 BARRIERS TO INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOMALIA

In Somalia, people with disabilities experience a wide range of difficulties that increase the negative consequences of their physical or mental impairment on their lives and leave them entirely impoverished. They live in a grim reality that includes extreme poverty, unfavorable stereotypes, discrimination, and a lack of institutional structures that



uphold laws and government policies requiring PWDs to attend school, though there is a shortage of accommodating schools and qualified teachers, a lack of public awareness of their suffering, and inattention on the part of donors and aid organizations in Somalia. PWDs remain the poorest of the poor, and they often do not have access to higher educational opportunities. The first batch of around 30 blind students took part in the Somali national secondary exams in 2019 for the first time in decades.

According to Manku, (2018), the children are unable to attend school due to a lack of facilities and resources, including special education teachers, learning materials that are suited for students with disabilities, school fees, accessible transportation, and short travel distances. Other issues include the notion that some impaired youngsters wouldn't be able to study because of their incapacity. There is also concern that disabled children would be mistreated and that their right to an education will be disregarded.

In Somalia, there are a lot of boys and girls with various physical, psychological, and social problems. The rights of children with impairments are still not well known. Most community attitudes about children with disabilities are still unfavorable and unsupportive of the children's welfare ((Tomlinson, 2014). Similarly, there are still many gaps in knowledge regarding how to support kids with disabilities. In Somalia, prejudice against young people with impairments is still pervasive. The community offers few options for the children, their parents, and their support people in terms of redress. As a result, it is still difficult for children with impairments to exercise their rights across Somalia (Manku, 2018).

In the absence of a comprehensive education law, the federal and state higher education systems are managed by ad hoc policies and multi-year strategic plans that include educational objectives, key activities, and financial requirements (Pellini et al., 2020). However, due to the limited public financial resources available at the federal and state levels, they rely on outside funding and aid to bridge budget gaps, therefore putting the plans into action mostly depends on money from international organizations and development partners. An example is the \$344.2 million government budget for 2019, of which \$154.4 million (or 44.8%) is scheduled to come from donors on a bilateral and multilateral basis (Pellini et al., 2020). \$16 million, or roughly 4.6% of the government budget, was allotted to MoECHE for the entire educational system. A significant portion of the budget for higher education—\$3.4 million of the aforementioned total, or 21%—is allocated to the Somali National University (SNU) in Mogadishu's rehabilitation,



leaving very little money for other public and private universities' rehabilitation and instruction, funding for research, and, for instance, providing scholarships for underprivileged students (Pellini et al., 2020).

Besides the institutional capacity and financial issues mentioned above, a significant obstacle to inclusive education in Somalia is the absence of inclusion policies. There are no policy guidelines on the criteria for admitting vulnerable students to higher education institutions or on the academic and financial support provided to them once they are enrolled. The curriculum, staff-to-student ratio, language used, exam processes, and grade transfer criteria would all be covered by such policies. Despite these obstacles, Somalia is implementing policies to make inclusive education successful. To fulfil their responsibility to implement higher education policy, national organisations such as MoECHE and the subordinate authorities from the six member states of the federation (Somaliland, Southwest, Puntland, Jubaland, Hirshabelle, and Galmudug) must ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, receive technical and financial assistance. The universities and colleges must offer accessible course materials, guarantee that all facilities and materials are accessible, promote flexible teaching techniques, help during tests, and give students more time to finish their coursework. Additionally, kids will require help regularly with things like translating words into sign language, taking notes for them, and assisting them to get past physical obstacles.

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Higher education plays a crucial role in advancing inclusive education, not just in Somalia but across the world. Inclusive education refers to a system of education that caters to the needs of all students, including those with disabilities and special needs. The goal is to create an inclusive environment where every student feels valued and can achieve their full potential. In Somalia, the role of higher education in advancing inclusive education cannot be overstated. With the country's history of conflict and instability, there is a significant need for education systems that cater to the needs of all students, regardless of their backgrounds. One of the ways that higher education institutions can advance inclusive education in Somalia is by providing teacher training programs that equip educators with the necessary skills to teach in inclusive classrooms. This includes training on how to identify and address the diverse needs of students, how to use different teaching strategies, and how to create a positive learning environment for all students.



Additionally, higher education institutions can play a role in developing and implementing policies that promote inclusive education in Somalia. This includes policies that provide equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their backgrounds, and that support the development of inclusive curricula that cater to the needs of all learners. Another way that higher education can advance inclusive education in Somalia is by conducting research that highlights the importance of inclusive education and its impact on student learning outcomes. This research can then inform policy and practice, leading to the development of more effective strategies for promoting inclusive education in the country.

Higher education plays a crucial role in advancing inclusive education, particularly in Somalia, where there are significant challenges to providing quality education to all. Inclusive education aims to ensure that all learners, including those with disabilities, special educational needs, and from diverse cultural backgrounds, receive quality education. One of the key challenges in Somalia is the limited access to quality education for marginalized groups, such as children with disabilities, girls, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Higher education can play a vital role in addressing this challenge by training teachers and educators to provide inclusive education that meets the needs of all learners.

Another challenge in Somalia is the lack of resources, including funding and infrastructure, to support inclusive education. Higher education institutions can play a significant role in addressing this challenge by conducting research and developing innovative strategies to improve access to education for marginalized groups. In addition, higher education can contribute to promoting inclusive education by fostering collaboration between education stakeholders, including government, civil society organizations, and communities. This collaboration can lead to the development of policies and programs that support inclusive education and address the needs of marginalized learners.

Overall, higher education has a vital role to play in advancing inclusive education in Somalia. By providing teacher training, developing policies, conducting research, and promoting inclusive curricula, higher education institutions can help create a more inclusive education system that supports the needs of all students, including those with disabilities and special needs. The role of higher education in advancing inclusive education in Somalia is critical. Higher education institutions can not contribute to



addressing the challenges of limited access to quality education, lack of resources, and cultural diversity by training teachers and educators, conducting research, fostering collaboration, and promoting intercultural dialogue.

Somalia has very little national and municipal support for people with disabilities. According to Somalia's Constitution, people with disabilities are entitled to the same rights as others and are protected from discrimination. The Somalia National Disability Council represents people with disabilities in Somalia at the national level within the Somalian Federal Government. The Disability Council, however, is dormant and has reportedly not received any funds since 2015 (Tomlinson, 2018). There are currently no ongoing state initiatives to assist PWDs or children with special needs in their educational pursuits. Local NGOs and certain private companies, primarily in Mogadishu, have developed small programs without a state role, offering segregated philanthropic educational opportunities, primarily for those with hearing and visual disabilities. Two small schools for visually impaired children and one for the deaf exist in Mogadishu and there is a school for the blind in Garowe, but their services are insufficient and can only accommodate a small number of students. There are no Somali versions yet, so they use Braille and sign language in Arabic and English.

These small schools lack the funding necessary to purchase instructional materials like screen readers for the blind or magnifiers for children who are partially sighted. They also lack the technical expertise to manage students with complex demands and various disabilities. Nevertheless, they have made significant advancements in student education. About 30 of the first batch's blind students took the 2019 national secondary exams and performed very well, a major victory for the students and their teachers in the fight against societal stereotypes about people with disabilities. However, the small school graduates of disabled students in Somalia have no easy access and support for enrolling in higher education because higher education institutions such as universities and colleges are unprepared to accept students with disabilities and lack inclusive education policies. No transitional programs are in place to help students with impairments transfer from high school to college or university. When students with disabilities migrate from secondary schools, there are no financial, technical, or other transitional mechanisms to enroll in higher education in Somalia.

Finally, the university's promise to provide access to students with disabilities is insufficient. It is necessary to change university policies and procedures to provide



inclusive education. This will ensure that all students may engage completely and that everyone can benefit from high-quality teaching and learning. Universities are unaware that they discriminate against students with emotional, ethnic, sensory, or mental problems. Higher education institutions should pay more attention to and respond to the many conditions that students face. Higher education has a duty to be inclusive and redesign its curricula such that, among other things, note-takers, sign language interpreters, supporting aids and services, academic flexibility accommodations, and assistive technologies are all included. Universities that offer professional courses should carefully incorporate information on the needs of society's most vulnerable citizens. Higher education policies should consider the diversity of students who are enrolled in or seek admission to such programs, and those formulating such policies should involve individuals with disabilities in planning, enactment, and evaluation.

6 RECOMMENDATION

Based on the challenges facing inclusive education in Somalia, the following recommendations can be made regarding the role of higher education in advancing inclusive education:

1. **Develop Inclusive Education Curriculum:** Higher education institutions in Somalia should develop an inclusive education curriculum that prepares educators to meet the needs of all learners, including those with disabilities, special educational needs, and from diverse cultural backgrounds. The curriculum should include training in adaptive teaching methods, assistive technologies, and inclusive classroom management.
2. **Conduct Research and Develop Innovative Strategies:** Higher education institutions in Somalia should conduct research and develop innovative strategies to improve access to quality education for marginalized learners. This could include developing mobile learning platforms, distance learning programs, and community-based education initiatives.
3. **Foster Collaboration:** Higher education institutions should foster collaboration between education stakeholders, including government, civil society organizations, and communities, to develop policies and programs that support inclusive education and address the needs of marginalized learners.



4. **Promote Cultural Diversity and Tolerance:** Higher education institutions should promote intercultural dialogue and understanding, which can contribute to reducing discrimination and promoting social cohesion. This could include organizing cultural exchange programs, promoting multiculturalism in curriculum development, and promoting cultural diversity in campus life.

5. **Establish Centers of Excellence:** Higher education institutions should establish centers of excellence for inclusive education that serve as hubs for research, training, and innovation in inclusive education. These centers could provide technical assistance, training, and resources to educators and other education stakeholders in Somalia.

By implementing these recommendations, higher education institutions in Somalia can play a vital role in advancing inclusive education, addressing the challenges facing marginalized learners, and promoting social cohesion and cultural diversity in the country.



REFERENCES

- Abdulkadir, A., Saidu, A., Abdullahi, A., & Abdulkadir, F. (2022). The Challenges of Sustainable Development in Nigeria Amidst the Global Pandemic (COVID-19). *Journal of Law and Sustainable Development*, 10(1), e0206–e0206.
- Ali, D. B., Tomek, M., & Lisk, D. R. (2014). The effects of epilepsy on child education in Sierra Leone. *Epilepsy & Behavior*, 37, 236–240.
- Auma Obura, G. (2021). UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office Sign Language for Deaf Children's Education and Guidance on its Use in Accessible Digital Teaching & Learning Materials.
- Aynte, A. (2013). The State of Higher Education in Somalia: privatization, rapid growth and the need for regulation. Retrieved on September, 20, 2016.
- Baart, J., & Taaka, F. (2017). Barriers to healthcare services for people with disabilities in developing countries: A literature review. *Disability, CBR & Inclusive Development*, 28(4), 26–40.
- Badat, S. (2010). The challenges of transformation in higher education and training institutions in South Africa. *Development Bank of Southern Africa*, 8(1), 1–37.
- Beyene, G., & Tizazu, Y. (2010). Attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education in Ethiopia. *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Sciences*, 6(1).
- BORLAND, J., & JAMES, S. U. E. (1999). The Learning Experience of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education. A case study of a UK university. *Disability & Society*, 14(1), 85–101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599926398>
- Branker, C. (2009). Deserving design: The new generation of student veterans. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 22(1), 59–66.
- Cassanelli, L., & Abdikadir, F. S. (2007). Somalia: Education in transition. *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*.
- Chavuta, A. H. P., Kimuli, E., & Ogot, O. (2006). Community-based rehabilitation as part of inclusive education and development. *CBR as Part of Community Development: A Poverty Reduction Strategy*. London, University College London, Centre for International Child Health, 54–63.
- Disability Rights in Somalia The situation of persons with disabilities. (2014).
- Eleweke, C. J., & Rodda, M. (2002). The challenge of enhancing inclusive education in developing countries. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 6(2), 113–126.
- Engelbrecht, P. (2006). The implementation of inclusive education in South Africa after ten years of democracy. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 21, 253–264.



Eno, M. A., Eno, O. A., & Mweseli, M. N. W. (2015). The revival of higher education in Somalia: prospects and challenges. *Journal of Somali Studies: Research on Somalia and the Greater Horn of African Countries*, 2(1_2), 9–45.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF SOMALIA MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND HIGHER EDUCATION Education Sector Strategic Plan 2018-2020. (2017).

Gilson, C. L., & Dymond, S. K. (2012). Barriers impacting students with disabilities at a Hong Kong university. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 25(2), 103–118.

Gitlow, L. (2001). Occupational therapy faculty attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in their educational programs. *The Occupational Therapy Journal of Research*, 21(2), 115–131.

Grimes, P., Dela, A., Diana, C., Soliman, M., Lester, J., Kaisa, N., Sol, L., Sophia, C., Vocales, I., Foster, R., Brigitte, C., Desiree, R., Cheona, B., & Guevarra, G. (2023). Mapping of the progress towards disability inclusive education in Eastern and Southern African countries, good practices and recommendations.

Hayes, A. M., & Bulat, J. (2017). *Disabilities Inclusive Education Systems and Policies Guide for Low- and Middle-Income Countries*. <https://doi.org/10.3768/rtipress.2017.op.0043.1707>

Herreras, E. B. (2002). Attention to diversity in higher education. *Profesorado, Revista de Currículum y Formación Del Profesorado*, 6(1), 11.

Kiyaga, N. B., & Moores, D. F. (2003). Deafness in sub-Saharan Africa. In *American Annals of the Deaf* (Vol. 148, Issue 1, pp. 18–24). Gallaudet University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1353/aad.2003.0004>

Kochung, E. J. (2011). Role of higher education in promoting inclusive education: Kenyan perspective. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 2(3), 144–149.

Leicester, M., & Lovell, T. (1994). Equal opportunities and university practice; race, gender and disability: a comparative perspective. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 18(2), 43–51.

Manku, K. (2018). *Supporting Persons with Disabilities in Somalia*.

Mappong, Z., Yusran, A., & Takwin, M. (2023). Full Day School: Review in Human Rights Perspective. *Journal of Law and Sustainable Development*, 11(1).

Molina, V. M., Perera Rodríguez, V. H., Melero Aguilar, N., Cotán Fernández, A., & Moriña, A. (2016). The role of lecturers and inclusive education. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 16, 1046–1049.



- Moriña, A. (2017). La educación inclusiva en la educación superior: desafíos y oportunidades. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 32(1), 3–17.
- Motala, S., & Piphoo, R. (2000). Education transformation and quality: The South African experience. Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society, San Antonio, Texas.
- Mursal, F. A., Odowa, A., & Mosely, J. (2016). Research and knowledge systems in Somalia and Somaliland. Oxford: INASP.
- Ochanda, R. M. (2016). Analysis of Re-Integration Impact for Children Leaving Institutional Care (Care-Leavers) in Kenya. Available at SSRN 2802533.
- Pather, S. (2019). Confronting inclusive education in Africa since Salamanca. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(7–8), 782–795.
- Pather, S., & Nxumalo, C. P. (2013). Challenging understandings of inclusive education policy development in Southern Africa through comparative reflection. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 17(4), 420–434.
- Pellini, A., Abdi, D. I., Salah, G., Ali, H. Y., Quintin, K. L., Hassan, M. A., Said, S., Khan, A., & Laws, E. (2020a). Research in Somalia: opportunities for cooperation. ODI Report.
- Pellini, A., Abdi, D. I., Salah, G., Ali, H. Y., Quintin, K. L., Hassan, M. A., Said, S., Khan, A., & Laws, E. (2020b). Research in Somalia: opportunities for cooperation. ODI Report.
- Riddell, S., Tinklin, T., & Wilson, A. (2005). Disabled students in higher education: Perspectives on widening access and changing policy. Routledge.
- Stofile, S. Y. (2008). Factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education policy: A case study in one province in South Africa.
- Stubbs, S., & Education, I. (2008). Where there are few resources. Ingrid Lewis Updated and Revised Version.–September.
- Tomlinson, S. (2014). The politics of race, class and special education: The selected works of Sally Tomlinson. Routledge.
- Trani, J.-F., Kett, M., Bakhshi, P., & Bailey, N. (2011). Disability, vulnerability and citizenship: To what extent is education a protective mechanism for children with disabilities in countries affected by conflict? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15(10), 1187–1203.
- Uchem, R. N., & Ngwa, E. S. (2014). *Journal of Education and Practice* www.iiste.org ISSN. In Online) (Vol. 5, Issue 36). www.iiste.org
- Unesco. (1994). The Salamanca Statement and Framework for action on special needs education: Adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education; Access and Quality. Salamanca, Spain, 7-10 June 1994. Unesco.



Abdullahi, A. M. (2023). The Challenges of Advancing Inclusive Education: The Case of Somalia's Higher Education

Vincent, L., & Chiwandire, D. (2019). Funding and inclusion in higher education institutions for students with disabilities. *African Journal of Disability*, 8(1), 1–12.

Wiles, J. W., & Bondi, J. (2011). *Curriculum development: A guide to practice*. Prentice Hall.