POLICY AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: MATTERS ON STUDENT AFFAIRS

[1]Harlida Abdul Wahab & [2]Rozita Arshad
[1]Pusat Pengajian Undang-undang, Universiti Utara Malaysia
[2]Pusat Pengajian Kerajaan, Universiti Utara Malaysia

[1]Corresponding author: harlida@uum.edu.my

ABSTRACT

The inclusivity of students with disabilities into the mainstream education is getting more attention when all institutions of higher learning, public and private, are expected to implement the disability inclusion policy. Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) has been supporting the potential of students with disabilities by offering academic programmes. This study examines the policy regarding inclusivity for people/students with disabilities and services provided. Using a qualitative approach, the primary data were obtained through the interviews with the officer of Student Affairs Department (HEP) and three disabled students. Responses were recorded, transcribed and analysed using thematic approach. HEP was selected since the Department involves with students affairs and provides services for students with disabilities. A focus group discussion was held with the three students, taking different programmes, and having different type of impairments. The study found that: (a) UUM has adopted the PWD Guideline by the Ministry of Education; (b) UUM supports the

inclusivity education when students with disabilities are offered to enrol into the academic programmes; and (c) services offered for students with disabilities are limited. It is recommended for the institution to have a written disability policy that suitable with the surrounding and environment of the campus and education. At the same time, its true implementation is essential along with the application of the social model in materialising the inclusivity concept.

Keywords: Barriers, inclusivity, disabilities, institution of higher learning, policy, services.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusivity is a concept that involve everyone so that no one can be excluded or marginalised on the grounds of gender, race, or even disabilities. Inclusivity relates to the concept of equality, equal opportunity and non-discrimination thus associates with human rights making the right to education proclaimed a fundamental human right under Article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights 1948. Since then the right to education has been recognised by a number of international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 and even being incorporated in the states constitutions. The Federal Constitution of Malaysia enshrines the right to education for every citizen through Article 12. Appearing as a legal framework for all issues related to the lives of persons with disabilities (PWD), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) incorporates inclusive education together with the supports needed as part of the rights (Hayes & Bulat, 2017). A global phenomenon sees persons and children with disabilities experiencing different forms of exclusion depending on their disability, domicile, and culture or class to which they belong (UNICEF, 2013). Therefore, while barriers or impediments that obstruct the ability of PWD should be eradicated, inclusivity must be sustained. Malaysia demonstrates the commitment towards promoting PWD rights when ratifying the CRPD, and enacting special legislation, the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008. Additionally, the National Policy for Disabled Persons has long aspired towards the human rights values of self-respect, dignity and freedom to enable PWD to live independently, be inclusive and part of the society (Social Welfare Department, 2016).

As a social institution, institutions of higher learning (IHL) play important roles to enable all social categories including PWD to acquire education (Stumbo, Lindahl-Lewis & Blegen, 2008). Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) as a public academic provider supports inclusive education when offers places and academic programmes for students with disabilities (SWD). This study aims to examine the policy and services offered by Student Affairs Department of UUM to SWD, in supporting inclusivity concept at tertiary level. This article is divided into parts of Introduction, literature review that explains the concept of inclusivity, methodology, results, discussion and conclusion.

INCLUSIVITY: CONCEPT AND POLICY

Inclusivity refers to the practice of providing equal opportunities and equal access to everyone regardless of their gender, race or even those with physical or mental disabilities. The word 'inclusion' in the context of disability has been commonly used in association with the words education, school and society, for example, inclusive schools or inclusive society. Inclusive education is recognised as a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012). Interpretation of inclusive education is various as it involves many contexts. Hornby (2015; 235) sees inclusive education "to be a multi-dimensional concept that includes the celebration and valuing of difference and diversity, consideration of human rights, social justice and equity issues, as well as of a social model of disability and a socio-political model of education". Imaniah and Fitria (2018; 1) consider inclusive education "a process that involves the transformation of schools and other centres of learning to cater for all children – including boys and girls, students from ethnic and linguistic minorities, rural populations, those with disabilities and difficulties in learning and to provide learning opportunities for all youth and adults as well". Even UNICEF (2017) regards "inclusion" as "education environments that adapt the design and physical structures, teaching methods, and curriculum as well as the culture, policy and practice of education environments so that they are accessible to all students without discrimination". Therefore, inclusive education is central to the achievement of high quality education for all learners for the development of more inclusive societies (Miles & Singal, 2008).

Inclusivity shall be followed with policy. Most often, the policies act as guided documents for procedure standardisation, enabling implementation and keeping up with many changes. Policy is meant to reduce injustice, and address the needs and interests (Brown et al., 2010). As policy is an administrative rule and guidance, more often than not, it lacks enforceability. Despite this, policy should benefit to provide answers when the law is unclear and a mere expectation is that, the policy should be respected.

While inclusivity concept is accepted extensively, its implementation, facilities and services is another concern. But, notwithstanding the laws that promote the right to education, the commitments must be harmonised with the education planning where relevant policies that describe components should be included, along with the strategies or plans (Hayes & Bulat, 2017). Fleming and others (2017) reveal that physical barriers for handicapped students at college or university include the lack of elevators and ramps in multi-level buildings, inaccessible washrooms, heavy doors, and inappropriate transportation in the campus. Students with disabilities (SWD) also did not received relevant support services concerning specific disabilities in accessing the libraries, classrooms, administrative and academic buildings in their universities. Lewis (2018) pointed out that pull doors are challenging for certain disability to open on their own. These were further supported by Ahmad (2016) who observed that SWD at higher educational institutions continue to encounter physical barriers such as inaccessible washroom, heavy doors and multi-level buildings and those with specific disabilities do not have relevant support services. When support services are not much helpful, Zambrano (2016) urges peer students' support that can help to increase the disabled students persistence to excel in their academic achievement. In his study, students with visual impairments viewed that pairing with non-disabled students has helped her to be more actively engaged in class. Inclusion and social change really matter. Failure to understand the needs of PWD may ruin the concept. Thus, a social model of disability becomes essential. The model attempts to change ingrained attitudes and remove social barriers by focusing on society being the cause of the problems which disable the individual (Bunbury, 2019), thus promoting inclusion and social change (Shakespeare & Watson, 2002). When people know about disabilities, they have more positive attitude; the more frequent having contact with PWD can also be influential to their attitudes (Wang et al., 2021).

In Malaysia, there was no clear policy for SWD at the institution of higher learning (IHL) until recently. Jelas and Ali (2012) say, in Malaysia context, the inclusion policy shows some constrains, barriers and problems that associated with the interpretation and implementation at community and school levels when translated into practice. Yusof et al. (2020) indicate that universities need to play active roles to eliminate barriers to PWD, in particular by providing services, access, organising logistics, creating awareness, ensuring disabled-friendly facilities and developing specific policies to address issues concerning disabilities. The findings of a study by Ismail et al. (2021) also indicate a need for improvements to facilities at public universities. Chin (2020) further sees the introduction of Malaysia's *Zero Reject* policy as a shift towards a wider inclusive educational environment, a departure from a mere inclusive education policy. Jelas and Ali (2012) even argue on the effectiveness of the inclusive education policy, in particular when the Education Act 1996 implicitly state compulsory education for all students, regardless of sex, residential locality, economic and social background without explicitly state about SWD. At tertiary level, the Ministry of Education Malaysia encourages each IHL, public and private, to implement inclusive policy for SWD and to set up PWD Service Unit beginning the session of 2019/2020 (Sinar Harian, 2019). Furthermore, a policy named "Guideline for the Implementation of Disability Inclusion Policy at IHL" (*Garispanduan Pelaksanaan Dasar Inklusif Orang Kurang Upaya di Institusi Pendidikan Tinggi*) (hereinafter referred as PWD Guideline) was introduced. The policy implementation is to ensure that the facilities and support system for education will be continually executed for the disabled students who are offered to pursue their study at the IHL in the country.

METHODOLOGY

This study looks at the policy and services provided to PWD, in particular matters regarding student affairs at Department of Student Affairs (HEP), UUM. Using a qualitative method, the primary data were gathered through the interviews with the officer and SWD of UUM. The researcher selects HEP because the department deals with student affairs, from the registrations, accommodations, recreations, and other students activities that are unconnected with academic matters. Furthermore, SWD affairs are directly under HEP. The

interviews were held with an officer with the presence of another staff from the same department. Currently, there is no official data regarding the number of SWD whom enrolled in and graduated from UUM. An unofficial record while undertaking the study found there were 18 SWD in both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The interview with SWD was held in the form of focus group discussion when they were called up, explained about the study, and set the date for the interview. Five students had initially agreed but only three turned up on the date, while other SWD were either unreacheable, had class/ other matters, or reluctant to be interviewed. Using a semi-structured interview, all respondents were distributed with questions so they were able to prepare and expect the questions during the interview. The interviews were recorded and the data from the transcriptions were analysed using a thematic approach.

Regarding the policy, the study involved two objectives: firstly, to identify the availability of policy at HEP/UUM; and secondly, to examine its implementation through the services offered. Among the questions are, what services are offerred, its implementation and problems, and complaints, if any. It is to note that, not all type of services are considered but those related and within the jurisdiction of HEP such as transport and accommodation facilities. To be specific, the questions were about: (a) the availability of the policy and its application in the department; and (b) the services and their implementation (whether supportive the inclusivity policy).

For SWD, all three students were questioned about their opinions regarding the services, which is related to (b) only. Before the interview, all respondents were informed about the confidentiality of personal data where all of them agreed to cooperate and share their opinions without mentioning their details in the report. It is to note that the words "students", "students with disabilities", "SWD" or "disabled students" are referring and used interchangeably with the "persons with disabilities" or "PWD" as the subject matter of this study. The researcher did not scrutinise the content of the policy but examine its availability and implementation through the services offered to SWD.

RESULTS

The result from the study is presented in three sub-headings: (a) Demography – this part covers all respondents; (b) Policy – this

reflects the responses of the officer; and (c) Services – the results cover responses of both officers and students in terms of services provided which includes accommodation and transportation. Academic facilities, lectures, classroom are not inclusive for they are academic-related matters and within the jurisdiction of the academic department. Some responses however are still related to facilities.

Demography

In terms of the demography of respondents, the officer from HEP is one who directly in-charges of student affairs and welfare. He has been dealing with SWD and in the position for two years. The three student-respondents are a combination of undergraduate and postgraduate. They have different type of impairments; one with a weak leg, one with weak left hand, and another has a vision problem. All of them mentioned that they are able to move around by themselves and do not require any special assistance. This was consistent with responses of the officer who mentioned that, so far, UUM has yet to receive any "serious" type of disabilities because all SWD can walk, able to move around and can take care of themselves without assistance from others. In verbatim, the officer says:

> *"We also be grateful because we didn't have any serious and chronic disabled students, therefore nowadays I think we already provided the appropriate necessity for them". "We didn't have any serious or chronic disabled students, they still can walk and can survive without help from others."*

These response tells that SWD in UUM are those with "minor" type of disabilities where they generally can manage themselves.

Policy

When questioned about a written disability policy that available specifically for his department HEP, the officer admits there was no written policy regarding disability. For that reason, the officer believes that all facilities and services offered by HEP are based on necessities. He says:

> *"So far, we manage the disabled students only based on the necessities that they need. If there any disabled students need something such as hearing aid, then we*

will provide it. We already bought some assistive tools for the disabled student based on what they needed. For example, for students who have problem in terms of walking, then we provide van, and we also plan to provide tricycle bike exclusively for them, but still in the application".

He believes that, although UUM does not have special policy regarding disability, UUM always ready to give support and full cooperation if there are any issues or facilities involving SWD. The support and cooperation indicate the readiness and understanding of the institution towards handling the SWD. He quoted an example of one masters student who is wheel-chaired (the only wheel-chaired student at that time) and they managed to accommodate him in a proper accommodation, friendly environment with suitable assistance.

Services

Officer-Respondent

HEP has one division that deals with matters regarding students' welfare, called Students Support and Services Division (SSSD). In terms of welfare of SWD, this unit will channel the students for financial support from the Ministry of Education, with a total of RM5,000 a year. Among the services are registration of disabilities, matters regarding tuition fees, as well as financial entitlement of RM300/month. What SWD need to do is to visit HEP, and do the application by filling out the forms. All will be assisted by the officers. According to the respondent, HEP will announce this from time to time. The officer said:

> *"Especially during the early semester, or when new registration of students, we will contact the identified and registered disabled students to come to HEP so that they are advised to fill out the form for incentives application from the Ministry. We administer, facilitate and record them."*

HEP provides a PWD van for SWD who need additional transportation from Student Accommodation (INASIS) to class. The van will be made available based on application. Wheelchairs are made available

to those required, either with permanent or temporary disability. According to the respondent, all the services provided are made available and informed through the website of HEP.

The officer also shared that they have set up a special unit to manage SWD called "Team Sekretariat Prihatin Siswa (TSPS)" (*Students Care Secretariat Team*). TSPS is also a platform that offers voluntary service to other able-bodied students to assist SWD or help anything that relates to SWD welfare. SWD also can channel their issues and get help form TSPS. He mentioned:

> *"I didn't have any big challenges in dealing with the disabled students in UUM. ...we already established a secretariat that called as 'Team Sekretariat Prihatin Siswa' that is voluntary to help and assist about the students' welfare, and this secretariat really help a lot in dealing with the disabled students".*

When asked about any complaints received from SWD regarding their services, the officer responded that so far the department did not receive any complaints. No complaint means no problems thus he assumes SWD are satisfied with the service. To him, this is an indication that the department in particular, or UUM in general, have given full cooperation and support in handling matters involving SWD.

> *"...I think that I didn't have any problem with them and (they are) easy to handle. We didn't have any serious or chronic disabled students; they still can walk and can survive without assistance from others. ...Regarding the facilities, I think UUM gives full cooperation and this make us easier to handle the students and didn't have any complicated issues".*

According to the officer, UUM has different facilities and support services to SWD which to him are satisfying. Despite this, he anticipates that UUM will strategize for long-term plan to improve the facilities and services in the future.

> *"This time I think we already provided all the appropriate facilities and services accordingly to the necessity.*

However, if we look for the future, I think we still need to improve our facilities. This is due to the uncertainty problems that we cannot predict what will come in the future. We also have recommended a Centre for the students with disabilities to be set up although this is still at its infant stage. We also be grateful because we didn't have any serious and chronic disabled students, therefore nowadays I think we already provided the appropriate necessity for them".

Student-respondents

In response to the incentives and financial assistance administered by HEP, all students agreed that they really help them throughout the study because all are from low or middle-income family. In terms of other services, Student 1, with a dysfunctional left hand, responded that he did not have any major problems in using facilities at UUM, probably because "his disability was not serious". However, he did mention about toilet which to him, toilet for the disabled is limited. He added that, although he could still use a normal toilet, the door is heavy and dangerous for him with a single-handed.

"For the facilities, I didn't have any problems because I only have a problem with my hand, I not like the one who used a wheelchair that have a problem to go anywhere".

"I still can use the normal toilet, but sometimes the toilet door is heavy and risk. It's difficult for me when I want to open the door with my left hand. Overall I think UUM still didn't provide enough toilet for disabled".

Another problem that he pointed out was about the doorknobs. The rounded doorknobs has caused him, a single-handed, to struggle to open the door especially when another hand is used to hold books or beg.

"If possible, I hope UUM don't use a round doorknob, sometimes when I hold books or beg with my right hand, I cannot open it. I have a problem with my left hand, it cannot hold weight thing and only can hold it with my right hand. Therefore, if using a round doorknob, I

> *cannot open it, if use another type, I still can afford to open it with my elbow."*

Student 2 revealed that he faced not much problems with the facilities not because they are good but because he used to manage himself and refused to depend on others. To him, the satisfaction was because of his ability and capability to manage things independently. In his words:

> *"Only 18 students who are disabled in UUM that means we are a minority, most of them are independent. Therefore, I can state that I satisfied because already manage independently".*

His dissatisfaction is understood when he highlighted about the building of HEP, the department that conducting the affairs of students, but does not have pave way or ramp for wheel-chaired users. He questioned, if HEP that governs the student affairs does not have suitable facilities in their own building, how are they going to manage all SWD in UUM?

> *"I understand that geographical of UUM is hilly. I cannot beg everything, but I see the new building of HEP didn't have a way for the wheelchairs, then which way the person who used the wheelchairs want to go if they wish to go to HEP? This means the building is not complete. Even though HEP is in charge of disabled students, they cannot provide the facilities for their own responsibility under their building".*

Student 3 responded that he satisfies with overall services by HEP and UUM. With a weak leg, he considers himself as having no serious disability problem, therefore facilities is not a major issue. He uttered:

> *"I see in UUM we didn't have any serious disabled student, therefore I think the facilities are okay, just problem for the disabled who used a wheelchair, but if you ask about me, it's okay".*

About the transportation, student 1 used to take bus and so far has no problem and satisfy with the services provided. However, he

occasionally has difficulties while taking the bus during the peak time. With many crowd on the same bus, he faced problems because he got to hold books, bag and other things with his one hand and at the same time, has to handle the situation in the bus while it is moving.

> *"Transportation is okay, I didn't have any problem with it, just go in the bus and sit, it's really okay. However, it's a normal problem when the bus is too crowded and I didn't have place to sit. Actually, the problem occurs when I hold many things because I only can use a single hand".*

Student 2 nevertheless complained about the bus service. According to him, UUM used to provide a van to transport SWD but did not function well.

> *"I used bus as a transportation to the class, before this we have our own disabled transportation, but now it's not functioning anymore. I don't know why. Maybe because it always late and always busy then they stop it services. It's a van that equip with a space for the wheelchairs, but now I didn't know where it go."*

For student 3, transportation services is not a problem because "*I used my own transport*". Even so, he was wondering about other wheel-chaired users, if any. He gave example of the College of Business (COB – one of the colleges in UUM) which does not have lift thus will cause difficulties to wheel-chaired students; also in case of they need to use the bus.

> *"I didn't see any problem in UUM, maybe in COB, that building didn't have a lift and all the stairs. For me it's okay and I didn't have a problem with it, but if someone who are using a wheelchair, it will be a problem, like if he wants to go somewhere by bus, but still I didn't find someone who are using wheelchairs in UUM".*

About the accommodation, student 2 satisfies with what is provided for him at INASIS TM (one of Student Accommodations). However, he questioned about some other accommodation that is far from the cafeteria, hilly and too many stairways which cause difficulty to some SWD.

> *"I stay in TM (one of Student Accommodations), from my first degree until Master I stay there. I applied there because it comfortable and familiar to me. I have a vision problem, therefore I need the place that I already familiar, that I already know where the place that I can go to eat, and so on. At Petronas (Student Accommodation) it's not a very strategic place to put all the disabled students there. This is because it's far away from it café, even though it's near the Mall and classes but the place is hilly area and have many stairway".*

Student 3 satisfies with the facilities at Student Accommodation and UUM. He mentioned:

> *"For the facilities, all okay. I stay in Maybank (Student Accommodation) and the facilities is okay, toilet okay. The library also okay, I see in UUM we didn't have any serious disabled student, therefore I think the facilities are okay, just problem for the disabled who used a wheelchair, but if you ask about me, it's okay".*

On the issue of accommodation, Student 1 requires HEP to specify and provide a list of PWD-friendly café as a guide for SWD. He shared his experience when he went to buy food that he needed to queue long with many other students. With a single hand, he had to queue up twice; to buy food and to buy drink at different time, as he could not hold food and drink altogether. He wished that SWD are provided with 'fast lane' so that they don't have to queue up with other able-bodied students.

> *"If possible, ...If UUM can provide some list of the places that need to give a privilege and priority to the disabled people. When I am going to eat for instance, I cannot hold things together, I only can hold one by one. At Yasmeen, I need to queue to buy food, and then come back again to queue to buy a drink. We are disabled people than we are bit slow, disabled to disabled people will understand this situation".*

Student 2 also shared his friend's experience, a wheel-chaired user, about the issuance of student sticker. According to him, SWD had to undergo the procedure similar to other able-bodied students. He said:

13

> *"Another problem is about the sticker, before this my friend who are using wheelchair… wants to apply a sticker, but he needs to apply like normal students, when going to the HEP, then he got scolded by the HEP. This is not so friendly."*

When concluded on the overall service of UUM, Student 1 stated that he has good relations with most people in UUM including lecturers and friends. HEP also helped him a lot.

> *"Alhamdulillah, I have good relations with most of them, HEP under welfare unit have helped me a lot. …They support such as fund, offer us to make a business in UUM, they really helpful".*

Student 3 added that, "*HEP also always invited me to come therefore I think there are okay".* While Student 2, although satisfied with the facilities, underlined the problems that he faced were related to human behaviours. He said:

> *"I want to say that overall I satisfied with the facilities, but the problem is the human factor, disabled students sometimes is very sensitive. Therefore that the thing that make us didn't satisfy. Some of the staff that understand is okay, but there also some that didn't understand".*

DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTION

The study reveals that a written policy regarding disability or inclusivity is absent saved for the one adopted from the Ministry. Despite this, the deficiency of the policy is not indicative to a "close-door policy" to the disabled. Yet, UUM has acknowledged the inclusivity policy when open the opportunity and accept SWD to enrol in the academic programmes. Previously, even in the absence of the policy, HEP has proactively set up a special unit to give services to SWD, which should be considered an achievement. Nevertheless, in the absence of the policy, management and works on matters regarding disability at HEP were based on the necessities or on case by case basis. This was made clear when the respondent-officer said, if "*disabled students need something such as hearing aid, then we will provide it. We already*

bought some assistive tools for the disabled student based on what they needed". While HEP functions to provide services and assistance for SWD, they need to be proactive and cannot just wait for SWD to request or make complaints.

To achieve inclusive education, PWD Guideline proposes the IHL to devise a comprehensive strategic planning and practical action plan. They can be an establishment of a Disability Services Unit to create dedicated service and support, to administer and coordinate needs of SWD. To ensure attention and reduce administrative bureaucracy, the Unit is encouraged to be placed under the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor or its equivalent rather than being placed under the Student Affairs Welfare Unit. In UUM, the management and Unit for SWD welfare through SSSD, is placed under HEP, which is directly under the purview of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Students Affairs.

PWD Guideline also underlines physical environment as essential because it becomes a major obstacle, hinders movement and limits activities of SWD. In the absence of the disabled-friendly infrastructure, the movement of wheelchair users or the blind will become more difficult. In supporting this, HEP has strived to give the best services to SWD by providing van as alternative transportation to SWD. Despite providing suitable services and facilities, ensuring its implementation should be an indicator to inclusivity concept. Regarding the PWD van, it will defeat the purpose if SWD face difficulties to use it. This is identified from a response of student-respondent who criticised the disabled transportation which according to him, "*now it's not functioning anymore*", probably because "*it always late*", or "*always busy*". It seemed that only Student 2 has experience with PWD van while the other two respondents have no necessities because one uses his own transport, and the other takes bus. On this account, HEP as a service provider has to be vigilant with services provided to ensure good and effective implementation of this short-term assisstance for the SWD.

As far as "Students Care Secretariat Team" unit is concerned, this short-term plan and platform should be applauded. It must be publicised to many other volunteers to come in and give hand to the SWD. Similar to PWD van, the functionings and effectiveness of this approach should be assessed from time to time, especially from the views of SWD.

There were also contradictions between responses of the officer and students. The officer did not see any problem with the facilities because "*no complaint so far*" thus "assuming" them to be "*appropriate*" especially when UUM "*didn't have any serious or chronic disabled students and they still can walk and can survive without assistance from others*". On the other hand, students seemed to "accept" and "tolerate" for the reasons that their impairment were "*not serious and critical*", being "*independen*t", and they "*can manage themselves*". These responses of students are clear indication of dissatisfaction with the services and facilities provided. They even voiced out their concern about the wheelchair users. This concern shows that, the facilities and services are limited and not inclusive in all areas, thus may leave barriers and cause difficultites to other types of disabilities. In other words, the services failed to reflect the social disability model that sees problem in the building or weakness in the system. The barriers are from the perspective of the society, in particular, the officer who did not recognise the impediments that make life harder for the disabled.

Attitudinal barrier does matter. This can be seen from the comments of respondent who said his friend was scolded by the staff, which he considered as "not so friendly". This was again repeated when he blamed "*human factor*" to be the barrier instead of the facilities. At the same time, he admitted that PWD is very sensitive, thus in turn expect others to understand them.

Saved for the written policy, UUM is supportive towards inclusive education and keen to do improvement. This is clear when the officer mentioned about the future planning of setting up a Centre for SWD and providing tricycle bike, and probably many other to come, thus showing "*UUM has given full cooperation*" and support towards SWD and inclusivity concept. At the same time, when the University is ready to provide suitable services and facilities, the disabled should also be expected to come forward and share their problems, needs and necessities so that proper actions can be taken. For this purpose, a survey or dialogue session can be held from time to time between HEP and SWD. Give a platform for the students so that they are able to express their opinion and share their experiences regarding services involving disabilities. All suggestions and comments will then be taken into consideration for further action in the future, especially to improve the facilities and services provided. Without this dialogue

session, HEP may not realise of the SWD necessities and problems. As one student pointed out about the doorknobs, where such "simple" thing is actually a "big" issue to certain impairments, but this has never been highlighted or even came across minds of able-bodied persons. Another simple action such as implementing "fast lane" at café or service counter does make big impact to the SWD. Proper policy and dialogue sessions will fix the uncertainties on issues involving SWD. Therefore, a platform or channel where issues and complaints involving disability matters is crucial thus need to be addressed by the service provider. Meeting and discussion with this group of students can solve many problems and meet the expectations for further improvement.

Furthermore, it is strongly recommended that UUM has its written policy, that tailor-made, suitable with its surrounding and environment. Currently, the adopted PWD Guideline should be made available and communicated to all departments in UUM. Another point to ponder is that, different disabilities need different approaches of services and facilities. Therefore, providing a standard facilities or called universal standards, that are user-friendly and barriers-free to everyone, whether permanent or temporary disability, is expected.

It is to note that, the limitation of the study could be in terms of the number of student-respondents and the department involved. We believe that, if higher number of student-respondents take part in this study, more issues can be higlighted because when the disabilities vary, we can expect different thoughts, expectations, problems and experiences involved. Further study that involve institutions with and without policy can be undertaken to scrutinise the policy influence on the services offered.

CONCLUSION

In the absence of its special written policy regarding disability and inclusivity, the adoption of PWD Guideline is timely. Notwithstanding this, UUM has done great when undertaking and practising inclusion policy that is evidenced from the SWD's enrolment to the academic programmes. HEP functions to administer and facilitate students through its services and facilities. The study therefore concludes that inclusive education must be enhanced with good support through

effective services and implementation. Effective services can be materialised when one looks the barriers through the lens of PWD and on the basis of social model. Based on the responses, the students generally dissatisfy with the services and facilities. This is reflected when all claimed that they satisfy because their impairments are not so serious. Presumably, their answers would be different if they have chronic or serious type of disability, such as wheelchair user, as repeated several times. Hence, although there are still lot more to do, as long as UUM holds up the social model and provides a proper platform to hear any issues involving SWD, the gap will be gradually close and the barriers are inticipated to be eliminated. Moreover, since the rights of PWD at tertiary level can be heightened through the implementation of the disability policy, it is recommended for the University to have their own policy so that any specific issues can be properly addressed according to its environment and suitability as well as to improve any deficiencies and barriers to support and enhance the well-being of students with disabilities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

REFERENCES

Ahmad, W. (2016). Higher education for persons with disabilities in India challenges and concerns. *Journal of Disability Management and Rehabilitation*, *2*(1), 1-3. https://www. researchgate.net/publication/325619759_Higher_Education_ for_Persons_with_Disabilities_in_India_Challenges_and_ Concerns

Brown, G., Bemmels, B., & Barclay, L. J. (2010). The importance of policy in perceptions of organizational justice. *Human Relations*. *63*(10), 1587-1609. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726710362273

Bunbury, S. (2019). Unconscious bias and the medical model: How the social model may hold the key to transformative thinking about disability discrimination. *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law*. *19*(1). https://doi. org/10.1177/1358229118820742

Chin, M. (2020). The Zero Reject policy: A way forward for inclusive education in Malaysia? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1846800

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. (2012). *The inclusive education in action project*. https://www.european-agency.org/agencyprojects/iea.

Fleming, A. R., Oertle, K. M., Plotner, A. J., & Hakun, J. G. (2017). Influence of social factors on student satisfaction among college students with disabilities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 58, 215-228. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2017.0016

Grima-Farrell, C. R., Bain, A., & McDonagh, S. H. (2011). Bridging the research-to-practice gap: A review of the literature focusing on inclusive education. *Australasian Journal of Special Education*, *35*(2), 117–136. https://doi.org/10.1375/ajse.35.2.117.

Hayes, A. M., & Bulat, J. (2017). Disabilities inclusive education systems and policies guide for low- and middle-income countries [Internet]. Research Triangle Park (NC): RTI Press. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK554622/

https://doi.org/10.3768/rtipress.2017.op.0043.1707.

Hornby, G. (2015). Inclusive special education: Development of a new theory for the education of children with special educational needs and disabilities. *British Journal of Special Education*, *42*(3), 234-256. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8578.12101

Imaniah, I., & Fitria, N. (2018). Inclusive education for students with disability. SHS Web of Conferences. *Global Conference on Teaching, Assessment, and Learning in Education (GC-TALE 2017)*. 42, 00039, 1-5. https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20184200039

Ismail, M. F., Abdullah, M. F., & Ghani, N. A. (2021). Provision of Students with Disabilities Facility at Public Universities: A Case Study. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, *10*(2), 839-853.

Jelas, Z. M., & Ali, M. M. (2014). Inclusive education in Malaysia: Policy and practice. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. *18*(10), 991-1003. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2012.693398

Lewis, M. (2018). On improving accessibility: A case for making campus more wheelchair-friendly. The Williams Record. https://williamsrecord.com/1051/opinions/on-improving-accessibility-a-case-for-making-campus-more-wheelchair-friendly/

Miles, S., & Singal, N. (2010). The education for all and inclusive education debate: Conflict, contradiction or opportunity? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *14*(1), 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110802265125

Shakespeare, T., & Watson, N. (2001). The social model of disability: An outdated ideology? *Research in Social Science and Disability*, 2, 9-28. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1479-3547(01)80018-X

Sinar Harian. (2019, September 5). *Semua universiti awam wajib laksana dasar inklusif OKU*. https://www.sinarharian.com.my/article/46644/BERITA/Nasional/Semua-universiti-awam-wajib-laksana-Dasar-Inklusif-OKU

Social Welfare Department. (2016). *Dasar orang kurang upaya*. http://www.jkm.gov.my/

Stumbo, N. J., Lindahl-Lewis, P., & Blegen, A. R. (2008). Two mentorship case studies of high school and university students with disabilities: Milestones and lessons. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, *74*(3), 45-51.

UNICEF. (2013, May). The state of the world's children: Children with disability. http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SWCR2013_ENG_Lo_res_24_Apr_2013.pdf.

UNICEF. (2017). *Inclusive education: Understanding article 24 of the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities*. Switzerland: UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia [Internet]. https://www.unicef.org/eca/sites/unicef.org.eca/files/IE_summary_accessible_220917_0.pdf

Wang, Z., Xu, X., Han, Q., Chen, Y., Jiang, J., & Ni, G. (2021). Factors associated with public attitudes towards persons with disabilities: A systematic review. *BMC Public Health*. 21, 1058. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-11139-3

Yusof, Y., Chan, C. C., Hillaluddin, A. H., Ramli, F. Z. A., & Saad, Z. M. (2020). Improving inclusion of students with disabilities in Malaysian higher education. *Disability & Society*, *35*(7), 1145-1170. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1667304

Zambrano, A. (2016). The experience of student with disabilities in higher education. Dissertation Abstracts International: Section A. *Humanities and Social Sciences*, 77/11(E).