Challenges faced by visually challenged students while using ICT in Kenyan public universities

Kenyan public universities have been admitting students with visual challenge for a long time, yet there has been no time during the period that a study has been undertaken to determine the challenges faced by visually challenged students while using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) services provided in these universities. There is growing interest in developing effective strategies for supporting ICT adoption and implementation in Kenya, particularly in educational sector. Visually challenged students in the Kenyan public universities face various difficulties in accessing the most needed literature in their area of interest in academics. However, the nature of these challenges has neither been investigated fully nor addressed. The visually challenged students in Kenyan public universities are struggling with the problem of accessing information needed for their studies and believe that developing a human computer interaction framework for their use will provide a solution. The study sought to determine the challenges faced by visually challenged students while using ICT application services provided in Kenyan public universities. Descriptive multi-case study was employed. Purposive sampling technique was used where two public universities were selected to provide population size for the respondents. The targeted population involved visually challenged students at Kenyatta and Maseno Universities who numbered 48 and 6 respectively. Key informants were 4 ICT experts; 4 guides of the visually challenged students; 2 senior administrators and 10 lecturers from both universities. Simple random sampling was used to obtain the respondents to form the sample. Data was collected using interview schedules, questionnaire and observation. The study was able to determine challenges faced by visually challenged students while using ICT services provided in Kenyan public universities. The outcome of this study will be able to guide universities management in implementing policies that will help in solving the many challenges faced by visually challenged students in these universities. The output of the research led to the following recommendations; Restructuring of institutional organs serving the visually challenged students (VCS), effective ICT application services for VCS, acquisition of suitable ICT equipment for use by VCS. Findings further revealed VCS had many challenges not known to the universities management.

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