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## **THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: ARIEL UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE**

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**Abstract.** *In recent years, the number of students diagnosed with disabilities who are attending into Higher Education has increased dramatically. Members of the largest group of students with disabilities have learning disabilities. Students with disabilities are often overlooked or misunderstood. Understanding the implications of disabilities, preparing to teach students with diverse characteristics, and learning to accommodate students with disabilities are essential for faculty and staff to provide academic and career opportunities for these students that are equivalent to those provided to their nondisabled peers.*

**Keywords:** *disabilities, brain disability, academia*

**Introduction.** For students with disabilities, a big factor in their successful transition from high school to postsecondary education is accurate knowledge about their civil rights. Sometimes students may be faced with differences between the rights and responsibilities in the postsecondary education setting [2].

These students must be able to meet the academic standards of the school in spite of their disabilities if they are provided reasonable accommodations. Accommodations which are a "fundamental alteration" of a program or which would impose an "undue" financial or administrative burden are not required.

To receive accommodations students with disabilities must disclose their disabilities and take the initiative in requesting accommodations. They must also, often at their own expense, document their disability. Accommodations aim to give students with disabilities an equal opportunity for all the benefits of higher education. Accommodations tailored to the needs of the individual student can include an extended time for timed examinations, special parking spaces, and large print software [2].

Faculty attitudes and the academic culture are the major barriers to the successful implementation of accommodations for students with disabilities. Faculty are often ignorant about their responsibilities and about how to relate to students with disabilities. Faculty resent being told what to do by low-level administrators in the disability services offices and not being able to review or question the legitimacy of a student's disability or the accommodation that is prescribed.

A public committee examined the implementation of the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities Act (2005), and found that institutes for higher education in Israel still do not meet the requirements of the law for inclusion of people with disabilities into the community [1]. According to the research of American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (<http://brookdaleheb.jdc.org.il/Uploads/PublicationsFiles/Jan-2013-Shiluv-HEB-REP.pdf>) about 54% of people with disabilities in Israel have no Matriculation Certificate and 71% have no academic degree. It is acknowledged that the higher the level of education of disabled people is, the better their chances to integrate into society in general, and into employment in particular. Among its recommendations, the committee appealed for action to expand accessibility to academic institutes and to support programs for students [15]. The National Insurance Institute allocated resources to make academic institutions accessible for people with disabilities [19]; funds were provided for making physical adjustments in buildings and adding computers, assistive technology, and other adapted learning equipment, in addition to scholarships for students [10]. It is assumed that these actions resulted in increased number

of students with disabilities entering higher education in Israel. Today 55 academic institutes are with 17,500 students with disabilities per year. Ariel University was able to fulfill their vision - academic excellence alongside with contribution to the community, meeting the needs of students with disabilities. As part of the office of the Dean of students of the University, under the umbrella of the Center for the Support of Students, new initiatives were introduced to help the disabled students in coping with both academic and physical limitations. The collaboration with the Faculty of Health Sciences opened the gates to special communities, introducing innovative programs for students with special needs such as students with visual and hearing impairments or mental disabilities. The supreme manifestation of this collaboration is a unique program for students on the autistic spectrum.

### WHAT IS A DISABILITY?

A disability is a condition or function judged to be significantly impaired relative to the usual standard of an individual or group. The term is used to refer to individual functioning, including physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, intellectual impairment mental illness, and various types of chronic disease.

Disability is conceptualized as being a multidimensional experience for the person involved. There may be effects on organs or body parts and there may be effects on a person's participation in areas of life. Correspondingly, three dimensions of disability are recognized in ICF: body structure and function (and impairment thereof), activity (and activity restrictions) and participation (and participation restrictions). The classification also recognizes the role of physical and social environmental factors in affecting disability outcomes [17].

Disabilities can affect people in different ways, even when one person has the same type of disability as another person. Some disabilities may be hidden, known as invisible disability. There are many types of disabilities, such as those that affect a person's:

- **Vision disability.** There are hundreds of thousands of people that suffer from minor to various serious vision disability or impairments. These injuries can also result into some serious problems or diseases like blindness and ocular trauma, to name a few. Some of the common vision impairment includes scratched cornea, scratches on the sclera, diabetes related eye conditions, dry eyes and corneal graft.
- **Hearing disability.** Hearing disabilities includes people that are completely or partially deaf, (Deaf is the politically correct term for a person with hearing impairment). People who are partially deaf can often use hearing aids to assist their hearing. Deafness can be evident at birth or occur later in life from several biologic causes, for example Meningitis can damage the auditory nerve or the cochlea. Deaf people use sign language as a means of

communication. Hundreds of sign languages are in use around the world. In linguistic terms, sign languages are as rich and complex as any oral language, despite the common misconception that they are not "real languages".

- **Psychological disability.** Affective Disorders: disorders of mood or feeling states either short or long term.
- **Brain disability.** A disability in the brain occurs due to a brain injury. The magnitude of the brain injury can range from mild, moderate and severe.
- **Mobility and Physical Impairments.** This category of disability includes people with varying types of physical disabilities including: Disability in mobility can be either an in-born or acquired with age problem. It could also be the effect of a disease. People who have a broken bone also fall into this category of disability.
- **Learning disability (LD).** Cognitive Disabilities are kind of impairment present in people who are suffering from dyslexia and various other learning difficulties and includes speech disorders like ADHD, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, auditory processing deficit, visual processing deficit. Students with LD are the largest group of students with disabilities (about 40 percent of the freshmen with disabilities). The number of people with LD has increased by a factor of ten since 1976, and students with LD constitute about one in 25 undergraduate students. More dependent college students with LD are in the highest income quartile than any other disability category. Some suspect that it is the result of affluent parents buying fake LD diagnoses to gain an educational advantage for their children. While widespread, there is no evidence to support this suspicion. LD is also an "invisible" disability that is not readily apparent to lay observers. Thus, students with LD bear a special burden of proof to establish their special needs. LD is also a relatively new phenomenon. Thus, students with LD are a large, rapidly growing and new group of students with disabilities whose disability is "invisible" and who are disproportionately from affluent families. Therefore, faculty and administrator resistance and skepticism is compounded [17].

As the number of individuals being diagnosed with disabilities has increased, so have the understanding and utilization of academic and technological strategies for accommodation. There are a number of things instructors can do while planning a course to make it more accessible to all students, including with disabilities.

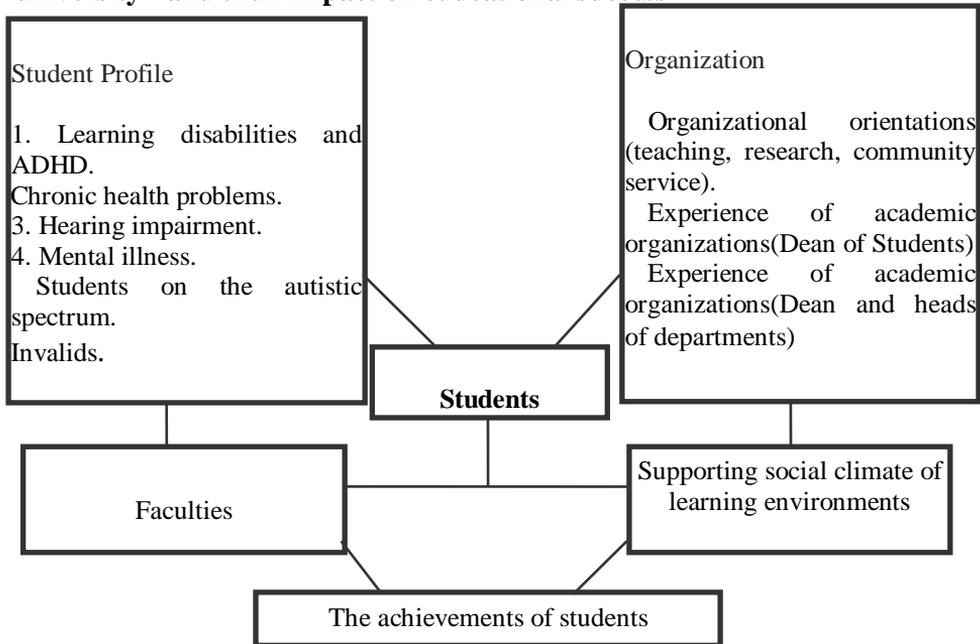
Many people with disability have multiple disabilities. Sometimes we think that we know what disabilities is, but according to research, 25% knows what the needs are of those students with disabilities and 85% of people want to know more about disabilities [3]. We think that inclusive education can benefit students with disabilities and society at large. Therefore, our focus on the social aspect of learning constitutes an integral part of the social climate and is found to have significant weight in successful learning [13]. Learning together in

groups inevitably creates interactions and a sense of cohesion [5]. Social relations that develop in learning groups constitute an important part of learning, as social interactions affect the quality of the interaction in the total learning process and its results. Social relations in study groups may improve interactions between group members and thus enhance the effectiveness of the collaboration [7]. Good social relations allow for an effective learning dialogue, successful conflict management, and increased involvement of group members in discussions [10].

### **INTEGRATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN ARIEL UNIVERSITY**

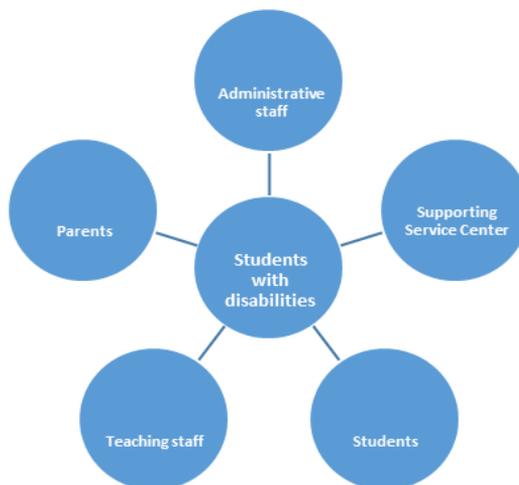
From the range of aspects that describe a person’s personality, we focused on variables that are relevant for development in general and for academic success in particular. Together we have created a model of direct and indirect connections with output variables in studies and pedagogic training. To be more specific, a coordination and special condition between organization, teaching staff, personal factors of students, and special and supporting social climate (Figure 1) this is a way for academic achievements and pedagogic training.

**Figure 1: Model describing the relationship between the "profile" of students, field of studies (Faculty) and academic and social climate of the university - and their impact on educational success**



We believe correct coordination and collaboration of the all participants is the way to help to such students (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Coordination model of all participants into learning process of students with disabilities**



For example, in our university we have students with visual and hearing impairment, students with learning disabilities and ADHD, with chronic health problems, physical accessibility, mental illnesses and students on the autistic spectrum (Tab. 1).

**Tab. 1: The number of students with disabilities that are studying in the University Ariel**

<b>Disabilities</b>	<b>Number of student</b>
Learning disabilities and ADHD	2070
Chronic health problems	165
Hear impairment	33
Invalids	36
Mental illness	31
Students on the autistic spectrum	35
<b>Total number</b>	<b>2370</b>

**The model intervention for students with disabilities according to next stages:**

- Stage 1- helps in choosing direction in education;
- Stage 2 – helps in university admissions;
- Stage 3 -helps before starting studies;
- Stage 4 – helps to start in university;
- Stage 5 - helps during studying.

We are working on the full integration for those students in their studying process. Those students have supporting, customized training, an active social life, and helps developing social skills and independence.

The Support Services Center for student with disabilities includes:

- ☒ Guidance, support and training for program participants and mentors;
- ☒ Social and academic mentoring;
- ☒ Learning support to provide tools for effective learning;
- ☒ Learning conditions and testing;
- ☒ Mediation between university staff and students;
- ☒ Support and psychological care for the staff;
- ☒ Skills workshops dealing with independent functioning;
- ☒ System of social support and activity
- ☒ Contact with enterprise directors in the community, with funding agencies, job-placement and integration.

In our University we have special training programs for all participants of the learning process. All training programs are built on a balance systems and needs (Tab. 2).

**Tab 2: Training programs of Ariel University**

<b>Program name</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Number of session</b>
Training program for students and mentors	Positive interaction between students and mentors. Direction of work together. Academic tutoring and job search	73
Training program for Staff	Explanation of the needs of students with disabilities and strategies to work with	53
Training program for mentors	Support, providing the tools to deal with different situations	12
Program social activities	To create a pleasant atmosphere and rallying students	36

The model developed to create social group to be cohesive and active, which in addition to circles of support for learning and guarantees students' success in participating in University life and in general.

Professional and experienced staff gives a variety of responses individually and in a group basing on educational level, economic, social and personal attention to each student, and in particular supports school and in particular support school to be accessible for students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities and their parents reported that the program is very successful and it helps in personal development, helps to develop social skills and the whole learning success in general as well as gives a sense of independence, self-worth and self-confidence. The success of the program is based on professional staff, caring, wonderful students, tutors, parents' support and collaboration of academic departments' faculty and staff on campus.

The program continues to expand and develop. We will also continue working in the direction of organization-wide modeling and systematic placement of graduates and their integration into employment in the positions that are appropriate to their qualifications, education and abilities. This will consequently lead to enable independent living in the community.

**Conclusions.** Academia and its missions have undergone a series of revolutionary changes over the centuries of its existence. Despite these changes, community service is the mission that has remained an integral part of the landscape of higher education. Although sometimes marginalized, the community service mission continues to beat in the heart of higher education today, and exists, not as an independent strand, but as an integral part of academic activities. One of the functions of Higher Education is to be responsible for the needs of society, to use full potential for developing and supporting the social needs of a population, especially for students with disabilities. University of Ariel takes on a leading role in developing direction for the inclusion of students with disabilities into Higher Education in Israel. Today we have full programs to for develop and support those students. After eight years of work, we now know how students with disabilities can achieve success in Higher Education institutions. We should continue working and developing this work in a different direction.

We notice that for the past seven years the number of students with disabilities has increased. Most of them are with spectrum autism, but the program also suits for students with other disabilities. The amount of those students gave us the opportunity to assist with successful employment of students with disabilities.

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**ACADEMIC READING: COMPULSORY?  
ON COMPULSORY READING FOR ACADEMIC COURSES -  
COURSES OF ACTION, ALTERNATIVES, AND GOAL  
ACHIEVEMENT**

***Abstract.** Reading occupies a central place in human life, and provides foundations for understanding one's world, as well as tools that help one in the world. Reading is identified as a method for acquiring new information, and reading abilities are expected to develop and improve over time. From a young age, children learn to read and write and are encouraged, both at home and in educational settings, to enjoy reading. Encouraging reading from a young age develops reading habits and the child's ability to better understand the surrounding world as an intellectual. In our technological era there is a sense of change that has also affected reading; schoolchildren and academic students prefer to play with technological instruments in their free time rather than read a book. Some see this as a change for the worse, but it also has its benefits. Following the technological change, new learning channels have emerged, both at school and in higher education, such as online learning, electronic books, virtual lessons, and so on. The current study investigated reading among students at the various departments of Ariel University, focusing on the question of whether students read the study material required for their courses and whether they use computers or paper. Despite the overall technological transformation, students in most departments prefer paper and books to use of computers for their studies.*

**Keywords:** *academic reading, electronic books, technology*