

# **Inclusive Higher Education for Students with Disabilities in Taiwan**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper was intended to present the current status of inclusive higher education for students with disabilities in Taiwan. Literature review, documentary analysis, and field observation were used to collect the needed information.

The history for educating students with disabilities in higher education institutions in Taiwan has almost been forty years. Various measures were employed to meet the special needs of students with disabilities in pursuing higher education. Two college admission tracks are available now for senior high graduates with disabilities. One of them is the general track from which students with disabilities just follow the same channel for regular students. Another track is based on the Further Education Guidance Measures for Students with Physical and Mental Disabilities after Compulsory Education. The Financial Assistance Guidelines for College Students with Physical and Mental Disabilities is the most important guidance instrument from which the Ministry of Education could give financial assistance to public and private universities and colleges in providing needed supports for students with physical and mental disabilities. The Ministry of Education has set up a formula, based on the number of students with disabilities and their severity, to assess the financial needs of universities and colleges. The financial assistance includes current and capital expenses. In addition, the Ministry of Education also provides scholarship, tuition and fees supports directly to students with disabilities.

A guidance program for students with disabilities set up by Nanhua University was presented as an exemplary model for inclusive higher education in Taiwan. In this program, two full time resource room counselors are employed to coordinate and serve the guidance program for students with disabilities in this university. The director of Student Counseling Center is in charge of this guidance program. All teachers offering courses to the students with disabilities are consulted to provide needed supports to these students. In order to provide specific support, an Individualized Guidance Plan (IGP) is developed for each student with disability in the university. In addition to the individualized guidance, some extra-curricular activities and field trips are also organized for students with disabilities to enhance their social interaction and integration.

**Key Words:** Inclusive higher education : Students with disabilities

## **Introduction**

The history for educating students with disabilities in higher education institutions in Taiwan has almost been forty years. Since 1963, the government has made great efforts to include students with disabilities in higher education. Various measures were employed to fulfill the needs of students with disabilities for learning in colleges and universities. Of these actual strategies, some special admission approaches and guidance programs seem to create favorable conditions for these students to further their education.

The first special admission measure was the Examination-free Admission System to Colleges for Blind and Deaf Students established in 1963. This special admission program was revised for twice in 1968 and 1984, and became the Admission Screening System to Colleges for Blind and Deaf Students as well as the Admission Screening Regulation to Colleges for Students with Visual and Hearing Impairments. Finally, an all inclusive special admission measure called the Further Education Guidance Measures for Students with Physical and Mental Disabilities after Compulsory Education was stipulated in 2002 (Ministry of Education, 2002a). Also in 2002, the Ministry of Education presented the Financial Assistance Guidelines for College Students with Physical and Mental Disabilities in order to create conducive learning opportunities for these students (Ministry of Education, 2002b).

The purpose of this paper was intended to present the current status of inclusive higher education for students with disabilities in Taiwan. Literature review, documentary analysis, and field observation were used to collect the needed information. The latest college admission tracks and guidance programs for Students with physical and mental disabilities as well as an exemplary model will be introduced in this paper.

## **The College Admission Tracks**

Two college admission tracks are available now for senior high graduates with disabilities. One of them is the general track from which students with disabilities just follow the same channel for regular students. The general admission track to

universities and junior colleges is obtained on a competitive basis. The selection method most widely employed is the Scholastic Achievement Test and the nationwide Joint Entrance Examination, while credentials submitted by senior high schools are also taken into account.

Another track, the more important one, is based on the Further Education Guidance Measures for Students with Physical and Mental Disabilities after Compulsory Education. According to the Measures, the Ministry of Education must sponsor a college admission screening for students with physical and mental disabilities or, if necessary, designate a higher education institution to do so every year. Students themselves, or their surrogates, or the schools from which they graduate could apply for this admission screening. In addition, any organization responsible for admission screening or examination should provide appropriate services needed for students with physical and mental disabilities.

For the purpose of the above-mentioned admission screening, a college admission-screening manual for students with physical and mental disabilities is publicized. This manual at least comprises of the following information (National Tainan Teachers College, 2003):

1. The names of departments of universities and colleges which intend to enroll students with disabilities.
2. The numbers of students wanted.
3. The subjects of screening tests.
4. The criteria for admission.

Derived from the college admission-screening manual for 2003, Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 demonstrate the expected enrolment statistics of students with visual impairment, hearing impairment, cerebral palsy, autism, and other disabilities.

Table 1  
Expected Statistics of Students with Visual Impairment in Universities and Colleges

	Public	Private	Total
No. of Schools	13	21	34
No. of Departments	35	71	106
No. of Students	47	113	160

Table 2

Expected Statistics of Students with Hearing Impairment in Universities and Colleges

	Public	Private	Total
No. of Schools	22	54	76
No. of Departments	67	218	285
No. of Students	92	357	449

Table 3

Expected Statistics of Students with Cerebral Palsy in Universities and Colleges

	Public	Private	Total
No. of Schools	21	39	60
No. of Departments	46	172	218
No. of Students	48	215	263

Table 4

Expected Statistics of Students with Autism in Universities and Colleges

	Public	Private	Total
No. of Schools	3	20	23
No. of Departments	4	48	52
No. of Students	5	95	100

Table 5

Expected Statistics of Students with Other Disabilities in Universities and Colleges

	Public	Private	Total
No. of Schools	15	42	57
No. of Departments	43	183	226
No. of Students	52	296	348

Two common tests, Chinese and English, must be taken in the admission screening in addition to other subjects based on the requirements of various departments from universities and colleges. Performance tests are also required for the departments of fine arts or music.

## **The College Guidance Programs**

The Financial Assistance Guidelines for College Students with Physical and Mental Disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2002b) is the most important guidance instrument from which the Ministry of Education could give financial assistance to public and private universities and colleges in providing needed supports for students with physical and mental disabilities. According to this regulation, the students with a manual of disability are eligible for this guidance program. The Ministry of Education has set up a formula, based on the number of students with disabilities and their severity, to assess the financial needs of universities and colleges. The financial assistance includes current and capital expenses. The current expense may comprise of the costs related to part-time guidance personnel, assisting students, teaching materials, resource room counselors, teaching allowance for extra hours, student activities, field trip, Braille making, vocational guidance activities, conferencing, etc. The capital expense includes the costs for setting up resource room and administration facilities. The recent seven-year statistics for the college guidance programs are presented in Table 6.

The financial aids to the college guidance programs in Table 6 are only for the above-mentioned guidance and capital expenses. From the statistics in Table 6, the financial aids to the college guidance programs are significantly increasing in recent years. In addition, the Ministry of Education also provides scholarship, tuition and fees support directly to students with disabilities. The data for tuition and fees supports to college students with disabilities by the Ministry of Education from 1999 to 2002 are shown on Table 7.

Table 6  
The Statistics for the College Guidance Programs

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
	Number of Student						
Visual Impairment	113	137	162	214	227	310	307
Hearing Impairment	158	185	248	298	374	479	533
Cerebral Palsy	0	0	0	21	48	73	70
Orthopedic Impairment	415	428	376	502	701	1464	1367
Other Disabilities	29	68	87	118	198	503	491
Total	733	818	873	1153	1548	2829	2768
Financial Aid (USD)	668,725	731,654	954,027	1,293,257	3,23,0841	3,046,653	3,777,699

Source: Division of Special Education, Ministry of Education, 2003.

Table 7  
Tuition and Fees Supports to Students with Disabilities by the Ministry of Education

	Number of Students	Amount of Supports (USD)
1999	27,795	23,270,118
2000	44,560	32,590,824
2001	58,620	42,482,441
2002	70,679	52,378,324

Source: Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, 2003.

## **An Exemplary Model: Nanhua University**

Nanhua University, a private university located in Chiayi County of southern Taiwan, was founded by Fo Guang Shan, a Buddhist group in 1996. It consists of three colleges: humanity, social science, and management. Currently, there are 15 undergraduate programs, 23 Master programs, and one doctoral program in this university. The total student population is about 4,400.

In 2003, 21 students with disabilities enrolled in Nanhua University. The academic levels and categories of disability for this student group were presented on Table 8. Among these 21 students, 11 students enrolled through the competitive track and other 10 students were based on the Further Education Guidance Measures for Students with Physical and Mental Disabilities. The majors of these students are quite diverse such as applied Sociology, applied art and design, electronic commerce management, communication management, information management, aesthetics and art management, literature, Asia-Pacific studies, landscape and architecture, and business management. All of the students with disabilities are integrated with students without disabilities in various study programs.

Table 8

The Statistics for Students with Disabilities in Nanhua University

	Undergraduate	Graduate	Total
Visual Impairment	3	0	3
Hearing Impairment	5	1	6
Orthopedic Impairment	3	2	5
Cerebral Palsy	2	0	2
Speech Disorder	2	0	2
Health Impaired	1	1	2
Emotional Disturbance	1	0	1
Total	17	4	21

### **Organization of Guidance Personnel**

Student Counseling Center of the university is responsible for organizing all resources to provide assistances for these 21 students with disabilities. A grant of



60,524 U.S. dollars was funded by the Ministry of Education in 2003. Two full time resource room counselors are employed to coordinate and serve the guidance program for students with disabilities in this university. The director of Student Counseling Center is in charge of this guidance program. All teachers offering courses to the students with disabilities are consulted to provide needed supports to these students. In addition, some work-study or volunteer students are recruited to provide services such as Braille making, tape recording, mobility and living assistance, learning support, and so on.

### **Components of Guidance Plan**

In order to provide specific support, an Individualized Guidance Plan (IGP) is developed for each student with disability in Nanhua University. The resource room counselors are responsible to assess the needs of students with disabilities in terms of their learning and adjustment. For the development of IGP, the demographic data of a student with disability are collected, his/her learning and adjustment needs are assessed, and the guidance goals and objectives are set up. Specifically speaking, on a written IGP, the following information may be presented:

1. Student identification data.
2. Medical history.
3. Family background.
4. Education history.
5. Learning needs and guidance approaches.
6. Personal and social adjustment needs and support approaches.
7. Barrier-free environment considerations.
8. Assistive technology needed.

The resource room counselors must contact and coordinate all related parties and seek as well as obtain necessary services in order to meet a student's individualized needs. In addition to the individualized guidance, some extra-curricular activities and field trips are also organized for students with disabilities to enhance their social interaction and integration.

### **Review of the Guidance Program**

Two review mechanisms exist in the university. The Individualized Guidance Plan for a student with disability is periodically reviewed and modified every semester. The director of Student Counseling Center and the resource room counselors would

frequently meet and discuss the condition of each student with disability and modify the IGP if necessary. In addition, all teachers, support personnel and students with disabilities would meet at least once a semester to review the guidance program and revise it if needed.

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