Questions to Consider in Policy Development for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities

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Abstract

This study summarizes an analysis of institutional policies for students with disabilities at 47 Canadian universities. The university policies *were categorized in a topology according to their stage of completion which ranged from senate or board approved to nonexistent. Based upon a content analysis, the study revealed over 50 typical items included in disability policies across the country. From this review, a set of 11 variables was developed as a framework for higher education disability policy development and comparison.*

During the past two decades, *Canadian* universities have been challenged to respond to the diverse needs of students. Accommodations and service provisions for students with disabilities are an integral aspect of this changing environment. Notable initiatives and research impacting on Canada in this area include (a) increasing numbers of students with disabilities participating in higher education and impact of federal and provincial legislation and human rights codes amendments (Wilchesky, 1986), (b) creation of the National Educational Association for Disabled Students in 1986, (c) creation of campus specialized offices or coordinators for students with disabilities, (d) Canadian research on accessibility (Hill, 1992), hard of hearing and late deafened persons (Warick, 1992), students' perception of policy and faculty accommodations (Hill, 1994; Hill, 1996), (e) recommendation for the establishment of a national network of service providers in Canada(Drover, Emmrys, McMillan, & Wilson, 1993), (f) creation of the Canadian Special Interest Group of Disability Service Providers in *AHEAD* in the early 1980s, and the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS) in 1996 called the Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-Secondary Education (CADSPPE), (g) research on learning disabilities (Cox & Klas, 1996), psychiatric disabilities (Weiner & Wiener, 1996), academic adjustment (Fichten, Goodrick, Amsel, & Libman, 1989; Fichten, Goodrick, Tagalakis, Amsel, & Libman, 1990), (h) litigation regarding service provision (*Howard v. University of British Columbia* [March 3, 1993]) and guidelines for professional standards, (Jarrow, 1997; Madaus, 1997; Price, 1997; Shaw, 1997; Shaw, Madaus, & McGuire 1997), (i) the development of guidelines in 1997 for documentation of a learning disability in

adolescents and adults by the Association on research on Canadian disability policy development (Cox & Walsh, 1997).

Within this backdrop, institutions of higher education have developed comprehensive approaches for service provision for students with disabilities, The essence of this challenge is aptly described below:

Universities are urged to develop written policies to ensure equal access by qualified students with disabilities to postsecondary programs and to enable students to participate fully in the educational experiences offered by the university in a manner that will not jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the programs offered by the institution. Similarly, the policies developed must not be too lenient so that students with disabilities, accepted into institutions, are placed at risk for failure (Hill, 1994, p.12).

With the increasing participation of students with disabilities in university, several questions have been brought to the fore regarding course or degree modifications for students. Canadian universities have been responding to this challenge through the creation of institutional policies. For instance, in 1992, 8 of the 27 Canadian institutions surveyed "had written policies that dealt with issues regarding students with disabilities on campus, while another 15% were in the process of drafting such regulations" (Hill, 1994, p. 9). In a follow-up study two years later, the number of reported policies increased to 14 out of 21 institutions surveyed. Despite the increase in the number of policies, 60 % of students surveyed indicated their lack of awareness of these written policies (Hill, 1994).

In 1997, the need for professional standards has been the current focus of disability service providers. "It is clear at this time in our development as a profession, we need to establish professional standards for the delivery of service to students with disabilities..." (Jarrow, 1997, p. 6). Interestingly, the first item in the *AHEAD* standards for professional practice is the development of program policies and procedures (Shaw, McGuire, & Madaus, 1997); and a guiding principle in the *AHEAD* Code of Ethics is "postsecondary disability service providers are actively engaged in supporting and clarifying institutional, state, provincial, and federal laws, policies, and procedures applicable to the service delivery to students with disabilities..." (Price, 1997, p. 39).

In the present study, various types of institutional policies for students with disabilities at 47 Canadian universities were analyzed to ascertain the different variables included in disability policies. A second objective was to create a framework for the further development and analysis of disability policies.

Methodology

Sample

The sample was comprised of 4-year public Canadian universities (n = 51). The mail list of the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) 1994 was used.

This list includes 51 of the 88 universities in Canada, who are active in the provision of disability services for postsecondary students. The impetus for this study was to generate information to create an institutional policy for students with disabilities at a mid-sized Canadian university. A national sample was sought to capture the diversity and similarity of disability policies at Canadian universities.

Data Gathering

Research regarding the development of institutional policies for students with disabilities at Canadian universities began in August 1994. A letter was mailed to all universities included on the NEADS mailing list (n = 51). The contact person at each institution (usually the coordinator of services for students with disabilities) was asked to indicate whether or not a policy existed on their campus. Based upon the initial survey, (n = 21), a questionnaire was designed and mailed to the campus coordinator of services for students with disabilities or the chief student affairs officer at 51 Canadian universities in December 1994. In an effort to increase the response rate (n = 40), nonrespondents were contacted by telephone, e-mail, or mailed another copy of the questionnaire (n = 11). To ensure that the data gathered was current information, all 51 universities were contacted again either by phone or e-mail between November 1996 and October 1997 for final updates. Only one institution did not respond, and three institutions were merged with other universities for a total of 47 out of 48 responding to the survey. In addition, preliminary results were shared with the disability service providers at the annual conference of the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS) in June 1997. At that time, additional feedback was solicited on questions to consider for comprehensive policy development in this area (Cox & Walsh, 1997).

Instrumentation

The five-part questionnaire contained a series of forced choice questions (e.g., Yes/No) and open-ended, short-answer questions on institutional policies for students with disabilities. Part I asked whether the university had a policy concerning accommodations for students with disabilities. If the answer was "Yes" respondents were asked to indicate when it was approved, if it was senate approved, and whether it had been necessary to amend the policy. Part 2 asked whether the university was following a "working policy (i.e., a policy not approved by senate). Likewise, institutions who responded in the affirmative were asked to indicate when the policy was developed, if it had been amended, and whether they anticipated submitting the policy to senate for approval in the near future. In Canada, senate approval would indicate policy consultation with faculty. Part 3 queried whether or not universities without policies were considering development of same. In part 4, universities with policies were invited to elaborate whether their policies had been challenged by faculty, staff, students, or the public. Part 5 requested additional information regarding disability policy development and a copy of their policy or related materials.

Results

Six Categories of Policy Classifications

The results of the analysis of disability policies provided insight into two major areas: (a) a topology of policies, and (b) a framework for policy development and analysis. Six categories of policies were created based upon the survey results: (a) senate approved policy; (b) board of governor approved policy; (c) senate and board of governor approved policy; (d) currently drafting policy; (e) working policy (i.e., those which are not approved by the senate or board of governors, but are in place nonetheless); and (f) no reported policy. The word "policy" will be used generically to denote all six types of policies. As revealed in Table 1, a majority of policies have been approved by the senate; and only a few institutions are without a policy. It is of interest to note that the most recent Canadian policy at the University of Victoria was approved by both senate and the board of governors (June 23, 1997).

In summary, this analysis revealed that most institutional policies apply to all students; however, some policies apply only to undergraduates (e.g., University of Guelph) or specific disabilities such as learning disabilities (e.g., Mount Allison, Bishop's, Dalhousie universities). The latter institution is unique in this respect, because it also has a general policy for students with disabilities. Working policies appear to be similar in context to senate and board of governor approved policies and tended to base their policy mandate upon institutional mission statements (e.g., Brock University and the University of Waterloo). Another typical feature of policies is that institutions referenced other universities as the models used to create their institutional policies (e.g., Bishop's University cited both the Trent University and McGill University models.

Eleven Categories of Variables in Disability

The policies surveyed were analyzed to provide insight into the commonalities and differences among the policies (a = 47). Based upon a content analysis of each policy, over 50 items were identified. These items were further organized into I I key variables: (a) definition of disability, (b) undue hardship, (c) legal and procedural considerations, (d) admissions, (e) documentation, (f) alternative academic accommodations, (g) academic integrity, (h) service accommodations, (i) experts and advisory committees, 0) review mechanism, and (k) appeals mechanism. Typical items identified under each variable are highlighted in Table 2.

Each of the variables in this disability policy analysis framework is presented below. Included are data from the four categories of disability policies (i.e., working, senate approved, board of governor approved, and senate and board of governor approved (11 = 35) in Canadian universities). The currently drafted and nonapproved policies were omitted.

1. *Definition of disability.* One-third or 13 of 35 universities define the word "disability" in their policy. Substantial variation was observed in the definitions for disability used at

these institutions. The impact of creating varying definitions and protocols with institutions predicate the type of services for which an individual will receive consideration. For instance, The University of Victoria also describes the "otherwise" qualified student as "any person with a disability who is registered as a student at the University and who can meet the essential requirements of the task (e.g., completion of a program of studies), when his or her disability is reasonably accommodated, in spite of his/her disability." In comparison, both the University of Regina and Trent University chose to use the term "special needs" rather than "disability." Disability definitions run from general to specific, with some universities defining specific categories of disabilities for service provision. For instance, the policies of Brandon University and the University of Toronto also include provisions for students with temporary conditions. In addition, differences exist within institutions along the lines of undergraduate or graduate students and within various departments. McMaster University is one such example with three specific foci undergraduate students, graduate students, and various departmental policies for students with disabilities.

Four of 13 institutions have drafted policies that relate to specific disability groups. For example, Mount Allison University's policy provides academic and nonacademic accommodations for students with learning disabilities. The university's response indicated, however, that it also provides accommodations to students with other disabilities. Likewise, Dalhousie has a separate senate approved policy for students with learning disabilities, supplementary to its policy for students with disabilities, and Queen's University noted they are drafting a policy on physical accessibility (B. Roberts, personal communication, December 9, 1996). Bishop's University, out of concern for accommodating "hidden disabilities" fairly and adequately, has developed a policy on accommodations for students with learning disabilities. Similarly, the University of Manitoba's policy includes general guidelines for students with hearing impairments and reference to a fund to provide supplementary assistance for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

2. *Undue hardship.* The provision of adaptive technology, interpreters, exam supervisors, psycho-educational testing, as well as structural modifications to buildings, are typical expenses institutions identified as requiring financial resources. Some of these expenditures are covered by students through the Provincial Territorial Governments Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (VRDP) Programs, the Government of Canada Student Loans Program, and personal resources. Most of the remaining costs are often negotiated individually between the student and the institution.

The concept of "undue hardship" and reference to service provision within "reasonable cost" is cited in almost one-half (n = 17) of the policies. This factor identifies the extent to which service provision impacts upon the human and financial resources of the institution and the right of the institution to approve and set limits on the access to these resources. The range of policy choices relative to finances range from undue hardship, (e.g., University of Toronto), reasonable costs (e.g., University of Victoria), to no-limit services (e.g., University of Guelph). For example, the University of Toronto's policy states: "Costs will amount to undue hardship if they are (1) quantifiable; (2) shown to be

related to the accommodation; (3) (a) so substantial that they would alter the essential nature of the enterprise; or (b) so substantial that they would substantially affect the viability of the enterprise." Likewise, the University of Victoria's policy states:

Undue hardship must be decided on the circumstances of each case, but would likely be supported: (a) when accommodation alternatives would result either in lowering academic standards or requiring substantial alteration of essential course or program requirements, or (b) where there is risk to public safety or a substantial risk of personal injury to the student with a disability, or (c) when financial cost is such that the operations of the university and/or its programs would be fundamentally diminished, or a program or service would cease to exist due to the financial burden of the accommodation. (University of Victoria, 1997)

Institutions, such as Saint Mary's, indicate a role for government resources, whereas the University of Guelph views financial considerations as an institutional responsibility. The former states, "it is to be understood by all in and outside the university that resources for support are finite and resources are dependent in large part upon the willingness of government to provide requisite support systems." Whereas the University of Guelph states "fiscal constraint, real though it may be, cannot be used to limit access to specific programs or courses by students with disabilities. The University must address, and be prepared to meet where necessary, the economic demands that the accommodation of students with disabilities may require."

3. *Legal and procedural considerations.* The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and/ or the provincial Human Rights Code is cited in 24 policies. Institutions, such as McGill, reference the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons and the Quebec Human Rights Commission when defining a disability and quotes the Charter of Student Rights in the statement that "every student has the right to equal treatment by the university." The most recent Canadian policy, which was adopted by the University of Victoria on June 23, 1997, also cites the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (SBC 1992, c. 61) as well as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and its provincial Human Rights Code. The University of Guelph's policy is unique in its stated commitment to go beyond the minimal legal requirements of the Human Rights Iegislation and is similar to the University of Victoria and Athabasca University in referring to their respective Provincial Individual Rights Protection Act. In addition to legislative documents, institutional mission statements were cited in policies at institutions such as Saint Mary's University, t h e University of Windsor, the University of Waterloo, and Brock University.

4. *Admissions.* A majority of institutions (*n* = 35) cited a distinct section in their policy on admissions, which identified items relative to recruitment, pre-admission, needs assessment mechanisms, and admission to specific programs. Policies at Universite Laval, Universite de Montreal, and the Universite du Quebec capture the breadth of service provision provided to the student prior to admission and follow the CRPUQ3 guidelines. Also, McGill University indicates that the level of support services needed by an applicant with a disability is not a factor in the admission decision. Similarly, St.

Francis Xavier University's policy states: "Students with disabilities who are judged academically qualified should be admitted except for the most compelling reasons." In comparison, students with learning disabilities who apply to Mount Allison university must include an assessment from the high school made within the previous year, detailing the type of learning disability, the techniques used to compensate for it, and the special requirements or considerations requested of the university. Likewise, the University of Regina outlines the self-identification procedure for students upon application to the university.

The policies at Queen's University, the University of Guelph, and the University of Alberta, for example, include statements which encourage Students with disabilities to apply for admission. For instance, the University of Alberta references its tradition of encouraging academically qualified persons with disabilities to seek admission to its institution. St. Francis Xavier University's policy also includes a special admissions clause which is used to adjudicate application from students with disabilities who do not meet the admission requirements.

Self-identification of students with disabilities is requested at different times in the admission process. For example, St. Francis Xavier University, the University of Victoria, and Memorial University of Newfoundland invite students to self-identify on the application for admission. Whereas, St. Thomas University and Dalhousie University invite students, in the offer of admission, to contact the designated staff member to discuss their special learning needs.

5. *Documentation.* Nineteen (a = 35) of the institutional policies indicated that students with disabilities must self-identify in order to receive accommodations and services. Self-identification protocol often occurs simultaneously with documenting the disability to receive accommodations. Policies note that it is in the student's interest to self-identify early, so that services can be allocated appropriately and effectively. Self-identification to a coordinating center or university administrator is usually sufficient; but in other cases, students must also self-identify to each professor before accommodations are provided. The policies (R = 35) referenced coordinating centres or offices or a designated individual as the liaison between the student and the institution in the provision of services such as elevator keys, computers, or adaptive equipment. For example, at St. Thomas University and the University of Prince Edward Island, students were advised to contact the student affairs office.

After a student self-identifies, documentation which is requested by the institution often refers to a medical or psychoeducational verification of the disability by a recognized professional. The University of Victoria, for example, stipulates the following in its policy:

the documentation should outline the nature of the disability, along with a detailed explanation of the functional impact of the disability on the pursuit of post-secondary education. When possible, the documentation should give explicit recommendations for remedial and/or coping strategies that will assist the student in his or her pursuit of a

program or post-secondary education. A diagnosis alone (e.g., "visually impaired" "hearing impaired," or "learning disability") is not sufficient to support a request for an accommodation (University of Victoria, 1997).

From a review of the policies received, it was noted that neither of the policies included guidelines for updating documentation. However, as noted previously, Mount Allison's policy requests current documentation for admission. Other institutions, such as Laurentian, build in a proviso that, "the University may require additional assessments or documentation which may include psychological testing." Also, the University of Western Ontario's policy states that "in the absence of appropriate documentation, arrangements must be made, through the University, for the assessment of the disability." At Bishop's University, with the student's consent, the student counseling service provides information to the Dean of the student's division, who, in turn, with the student's consent, copies it to the respective faculty members. The Blundon Centre for students with disabilities at Memorial University of Newfoundland operates in a similar fashion, with the student being responsible for providing information to his or her professors. Similarly, Dalhousie University requires current documentation (within three years) of the condition from a registered psychologist for the special admissions process for students with learning, disabilities.

Advocacy and confidentiality were identified as issues related to documentation. In policies, such as Dalhousie's, it states that students with disabilities are "expected to undertake a reasonable measure of self -advocacy." Simon Fraser University's policy highlights the confidentiality issue by stating that documentation "will not be released to anyone outside of the Center, including instructors . . . The Services Coordinator will create a letter for each instructor describing the specific accommodations requested. The most direct statement in the policy review regarding confidentiality is by the University of Victoria which states "any personal information will be handled in accordance with principles of this Act (i.e., the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, SBC 1992, c. 6 1). A breech of confidentiality will not be tolerated."

6. *Alternative academic accommodations.* A review of the policies revealed the diversity of academic accommodations and procedures for meeting these accommodations. Examples of alternative academic accommodations relative to evaluation often include extended time, special seating, the provision of visual language interpreters, change of test format (e.g., multiple choice to essay), the use of adaptive technology, and the provision of alternative formats such as Braille or large print. Key items affiliated with this category include evaluation, individuality, time frames for requesting accommodations, course substitutions or waivers, implementation procedures, and responsibilities for providing accommodations or services. Some institutions, such as Carleton, reinforce that accommodations have to be flexible and made on an individual basis. In contrast, the University of New Brunswick specifies a time and a half maximum limit for writing tests and exams; and institutions, like the University of Western Ontario, include specific deadlines for requesting accommodations.

Policies of the universities of Toronto, Laurentian, Dalhousie, Victoria, McMaster, and Saskatchewan, for example, allow for wavers or course substitutions for students with particular disabilities. Laurentian, for example, defines adaptations to courses, programs and activities as "modifications made with the approval of the appropriate body within the university, which would provide students who have special needs with equitable opportunities to meet academic standards (e.g., A student with a mobility impairment might satisfy the requirements for the Physical Education Program without participating in physical activities)." Similarly, Dalhousie's policy for students with learning disabilities states that accommodations typically can include modification to program requirements (e.g., class substitutions).

A fairly common process for students to receive accommodation would include a student self-identifying to his or her professor, or to an office, officer, or director of a centre for students with disabilities and providing documentation of his or her disability. This documentation is often used to determine appropriate accommodations and to ensure sufficient notice of these arrangements to allow for alternative testing, or support services, such as note takers or interpreters, in a timely manner.

The responsibility for the arrangements appear to generally fall equally on the student, professor, and coordinating centre. The accommodation of students with disabilities can involve several members of the university community. For example, at the University of Alberta, the "provision of a supportive physical, academic and social environment is the responsibility of the entire university." Policies at the University of New Brunswick and Queen's University specify that fellow students are expected to provide reasonable accommodation to meet the needs of students with disabilities, such as wearing an assistive listening device during class. In addition, at the University of Western Ontario, "the decision about requests for accommodation rests with the faculty offering the accommodation," whereas at Simon Fraser University, "instructors and department representatives are under no obligation to deal with requests which are not endorsed by the Centre (for students with disabilities)."

7. *Academic integrity.* Most of the policies in the study directly cite academic integrity (*n* = 35). Memorial University of Newfoundland's handbook on disability awareness for students, faculty, and service providers states:

It is commonly felt that unless all students are evaluated in exactly the same manner, an element of unfairness exists. Students with disabilities, however, may require modifications in the evaluation process in order to accurately demonstrate their achievement of course objectives (Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1997, p. 116).

The tension point commonly identified is achieving a balance between minimizing the impact of the disability on the student's performance and assuring equal opportunity to demonstrate content mastery without compromising academic standards.

The University of Toronto addresses two very important questions relative to integrity when accommodating students with disabilities: (a) How do we know that a request for

accommodation is legitimate, and (b) how do we know that a proposed accommodation is appropriate? In both instances, it is recommended that common sense should prevail in most cases. In other cases, (e.g., if there is an ongoing condition or an invisible disability) either the Office of Special Services will provide a recommendation or an appropriate professional will be asked to certify that the requested accommodations is appropriate. Similarly, the University of Guelph's policy states:

Program committees will have to unambiguously spell out the specific requirements as they relate to the academic goals and performance levels required for graduation ... Unless all sectors of the University can do this, their positions will be vulnerable, particularly if their decisions are challenged within the University itself or in a court of law.

8. *Service accommodations.* Table 3 highlights the types of service accommodations cited in the disability policies and includes examples of how they are typically manifested in services. Academic advising, notetakers, and physical accessibility were the most frequently mentioned variables; and employment equity, food services, library, safety, sports and leisure, remediation, convocation, and transportation were the least noted. The University of Regina's policy is unique in that it contains a section entitled "Limitations." It states that "although the University will attempt to assist off-campus students to the greatest extent possible, it cannot guarantee that such assistance will be available." Furthermore, it states "not all classes offered by the Faculty of Fine Arts at the College Avenue Campus are wheelchair accessible." In comparison, the University of Victoria's policy applies to "all self-identified full-time or part-time students registered in credit or non-credit courses in both on or off-campus programs..."

9. *Experts and advisory committees.* Another variable common in some institutional policies was the inclusion of experts and advisory committees in the area of policy development, service provision, advocacy, and education. Advisory committees on disabilities tend to report to either student affairs and services and/or the president. These committees are generally comprised of students, faculty, and staff from affiliated service areas. Memorial University of Newfoundland also extends membership to disability-related community organizations (e.g., the Canadian National Institute for the Blind).

Saint Mary's Presidential Advisory Committee includes two faculty members appointed by Senate, three students appointed by the Student Representative Council in consultation with the centre for students with disabilities, the director of the Centre for Students with Disabilities, the director of Student Services, the director of the Physical Plant, one member of the Board of Governors (preferably an alumni member), and one staff member appointed by the chief librarian. Similarly, St. Francis Xavier University's Committee for Students with Disabilities includes the chief student affairs officer, the contact person for students with disabilities, the admissions officer, the assistant to the deans of arts and science, two students with disabilities currently registered at the university (to be appointed by the president of the students' union), one member of the health and counseling staff, one arts faculty member and one science faculty member

elected by Senate. Saint Mary's differs from St. Francis Xavier in that the later has the discretion to add other committee members.

10. *Review mechanism.* Review mechanism have been included in policies to ensure that the ideas, needs, and viewpoints presented at the time of policy development are meeting the current needs of students as well as institutional and legislative mandates. Including such a review mechanism, makes provision for policy changes or challenges. Some policies specify periods for regular review, such as the annual review noted at the University of Saskatchewan.

11. *Appeals mechanism.* Approximately one-third of the policies referenced a mechanism to respond to policy appeals. In the area of service provision, policy challenges appear to focus around fairness to other students, academic standards, and faculty/student responsibilities (e.g., extra time, usage of readers, scribes, or tutors and the usage of equipment during class such as tape recorders or laptop computers). For example, Carleton University's policy outlines the procedure to handle disputes, "Any dispute unresolved by discussion between students and instructors may be appealed by the student and by the instructors to the Chair/Director and/or the Office of the Dean of Faculty." All appeals are channeled through the existing appeal mechanisms and procedures of the university. The University of Western Ontario's policy states that an appeal process is available if a faculty member is unable or unwilling to make accommodations. In this case, students can first approach the chair of the department in which the course is taught, then the Dean of the faculty in which the course is taught, and then to the Senate Review Board (Academic). The University of Guelph also outlines a step-by-step procedure for disagreements regarding accommodations which ends at a final appeal to the Senate Committee on Student Petitions. Another route for appeals is to the Vice President (Academic) via Student Affairs and the dean of the instructor's faculty (University of Regina) or to either the Dean of Student Affairs, the Dean of Faculty, the Dean of Graduate Studies, or the Human Rights Office (University of Windsor). Appeals at York University are addressed through the appointment of a mediator from the University Complaint Centre in the Office of Student Affairs. Both the policies of the University of Guelph and the University of Windsor also recognize the right of students to challenge their position under the Human Rights Code. There are two main limitations of this study: (a) information was collected over a 2-year period and verified for updates between November 1996 and October 1997, and (b) determination and categorization of the variables was based upon the interpretation of information received by telephone, electronic mail, and written replies. This study is not intended to rank policies but, rather, to expose common variables as presented in interpreted replies. It is also understood that information represented in policies may or may not reflect the full extent of services provided on a particular campus. In summary, the review of Canadian disability policies in this study identified six categories of policy and a framework consisting of 11 variables for disability policy development and analysis.

Conclusion

It would be presumptuous for the authors to make specific recommendations for an ideal disability policy due to the great diversity of students as well as the varied campus climates, cultures, organizational missions, leadership, and histories across Canada. What might be appropriate to implement in one institution might not necessarily be suitable in another. As the 11 key variables in this framework reveals, there are many issues to consider in policy development. The proposed policy framework is intended as a guideline for policy development and as a mechanism for analyzing existing disability policies in Canadian universities. This study focused entirely on institutional written policies with over 75% of all the universities in Canada reporting policy development and analysis initiatives. Future research could focus on the application of these policies, such as the perceptions of students, faculty, administrators, and other consumers of campus disability policies relative to (a) the usefulness (ie., ease of use, of institutional policies), (b) whether perceived needs are being met (e.g., in terms of faculty workload, and academic integrity), and (c) the extent to which universities are willing to enforce and modify disability policies to meet the emerging personal requests and legal precedents set in this area.

Endnotes

1. Much of the leadership for policy development for students with disabilities has been initiated by campus centres for students with disabilities, These centres emerged over the last two decades, e. g., the University of Alberta (1980), Saint Mary's University (1985), the University of Guelph (1990), Carleton University (1990), and Memorial University of Newfoundland (1992). It should be noted that many universities, such as Saint Mary's, Carleton, and Memorial, were assisting students with disabilities prior to this on an ad-hoc basis. Typically, centres serve a variety of functions including advocacy; implementing awareness programs, including faculty and staff in servicing; orientation of new students, including conducting student needs assessments, providing a liaison between students and instructors; and developing and implementing special needs policies, procedures, and programs.

2. The National Educational Association of Disabled Students is a Canadian consumer organization, with a mandate to encourage the self-empowerment of post-secondary students with disabilities. NEADS advocates for increased accessibility at all levels so that disabled students may gain equal access to college or university education.

3. CRPUQ guidelines state, "the University integrates into the basic training of those studying health sciences, social work, psychology, education, and physical education and development, notions of the better known disabilities and of procedures for intervention with students with disabilities and their families."

Table 1 Classification of Status of Disability Policies in Canadian Universities (n = 47)

	Policies	
Policy classifications	Number	Percent
Senate Approved Policy	23	49
Working Policy*	9	19
No Reported Policy	8	17
Currently Drafting Policy	4	9
Board of Governor Approved Policy	2	4
Senate and Board of Governors Approved Policy	1	2

Note. Includes three universities in Quebec who indicated they follow the CRPUQ (Conference des recteurs et des principaux des universities du Quebec) guidelines.

Table 2 Typical Items Identified in It Categories of Variables of Disability Policies

1. Definition of Disability

- Categories of accommodation (e.g., temporary, graduate, undergraduate, learning disability, hard of hearing, otherwise qualified student)
- Define departmental policies (procedural)

2. Undue Hardship

- Limited resources/Reasonable costs
- Safety

3. Legal & Procedural Considerations

- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Canadian Provincial Human Rights Codes
- Charter of Student Rights
- Institutional Mission Statements
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, SBC 1992, c. 61
- Individual Rights Protection Act

4. Admissions

- Recruitment
- Needs Assessment
- Pre-admissions

- Admission to specific programs after initial admission

5. Documentation

- Self-identification
- Confidentiality
- Advocacy
- Deadlines for requesting services or accommodations
- Established centres or a designated special needs coordinator

6. Alternative Academic Accommodations

- Individuality
- Shared responsibility (e.g., students, faculty, administrators)
- Time frame for requesting services
- Implementation procedures
- Evaluation (e.g., alternative formats, waivers, or course substitutions)

7. Academic Integrity Modifying programs, course requirements, examination procedures, scholarship, or financial assistance requirements without compromising academic standards

8. Service Accommodations

- Convocation
- Parking
- Transportation
- Counseling
- Library
- Sports & leisure
- Note takers
- Physical accessibility
- Remediation
- Readers
- Safety
- Financial
- Scribes * Interpreters
- Employment equity
- Orientation
- Food service
- Academic advising

9. Experts and Advisory Committees

- Membership
- Mandate (e.g., advisory or educational role)

10. Review Mechanism

- Policy review time frame
- Role of special needs office (e.g., policy or education)

11. Appeals Mechanism

- Disagreements
- Advocacy
- Legal and procedural considerations
- Individuality
- Role of student, faculty, administrators
- Special admissions
- Compliance with the university's existing appeal mechanism and procedures

Table 3 Examples of Service Accommodations Cited in Disability Policies by Institution

Type of Service	Sample Characteristics of Service
Academic Advising	Advice regarding course selection and academic program
Convocation	Accessible seating, mobility assistance, F.M. systems, interpreters
Counseling	Personal and career
Employment Equity	University job advertisements reflect employment equity legislation
Financial	Loans, bursaries, work-study opportunities, scholarships, awards, etc; providing information on special financial assistance programs
Note takers	Provision of note-taker/NCR copy paper/or provide course notes
Interpreters	Provision of visual language (e.g., oral or ASL) interpreters
Readers & Scribes	Provision of readers or scribes
Orientation	Orientation programs for new students
Food Service	Specific food allergies or dietary requirements accommodation
Library	Specific services & adaptive technology
Parking	Availability of parking for students with disabilities
Physical Accessibility	Accessibility to buildings, classes, residences, labs; elevator keys
Safety	Specially provided equipment; maintenance of

	elevators, automatic ramps, lifts, & walkways; environmental barriers (e.g., exposure to chemicals and microorganisms)
Sports & Leisure	Promotes sports and leisure for students with disabilities
Remediation	Tutors
Transportation	Accessible transportation on and off campus

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