

Towards a Universal Design: A Needs Analysis for an English Curriculum for the Visually Impaired Learners in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Kelaniya

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Inclusive Education was introduced to Sri Lanka in 2003 and enables the inclusion of visually impaired learners in mainstream classes. Thus, it is essential to address the needs of learners with disabilities of all levels to allow them study alongside the learners without disabilities, in language learning classrooms. The Universal Design for Learning is a set of principles that helps design curriculums in which every individual learner involved can benefit. This study aims to provide visually impaired learners of University of Kelaniya with an opportunity to voice their needs when making adjustments to the English for Humanities course curriculum. The study will follow an exploratory research design to identify, explain, and analyse the data. The needs of the tertiary level visually impaired learners will be gathered through needs analysis, which will be conducted as interviews. Seven visually impaired learners, two English as a Second Language teachers of the visually impaired learners, two course coordinators, an expert in the field of education for visually impaired learners will be interviewed. The thematic analysis method will be used to analyse the data of the study. The collected data will be used to explore the needs of the visually impaired learners. Additionally, the findings of the study will propose changes to the learning materials and their alternatives, assignments and other learning facilities related to the English for Humanities curriculum of University of Kelaniya, by following the curriculum designing principles of the Universal Design for Learning framework. The study intends to increase awareness among curriculum designers regarding the needs of the tertiary level visually impaired learners and how they could incorporate the needs of the visually impaired learners when developing an English curriculum.

Key words: English for Humanities curriculum, inclusive education, needs analysis, universal design for learning, visually impaired learners

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