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Research Article

A Look at Equal Opportunities in the Admission Process in Universities in Lima, Peru

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the findings of a research project examining equal opportunities in the admission process at universities in Lima. The project's primary objective is to describe the various pathways and modalities of admission, as well as the technological and personal accessories used by visually impaired individuals during the admission process. The research was conducted using a qualitative approach, employing a phenomenological cross-sectional, hermeneutical and socio-critical methodology. In addition to bibliographic and documentary research, data were collected through interviews with semi-structured interview guides. These were conducted with students and university graduates with visual impairment. The study population comprised five students and five university graduates and visually impaired professionals. In conclusion, the analysis of the context revealed that there is no admission process modality, nor technology and accessories that serve as support for applicants with this disability, enabling them to autonomously carry out the activities inherent to the admission process.

Keywords: Social inclusion, inclusive cities, open university, admission conditions

INTRODUCTION

The acquisition of new knowledge through diverse experiences has been a driving force throughout history. This pursuit of learning serves a multitude of purposes, including personal development, an enhanced quality of life, and the attainment of a fulfilling life as an active member of society (Pérez et al., 2013). Nevertheless, the reality on the ground in Peru and elsewhere is that equal access to education is not as straightforward as it is often presented to be. This is due to a number of interrelated factors, including economic, social, religious, ethnic, cultural, technological and vulnerability-related considerations. As a result, many entities are slow to react to this situation and do not seek ways to adapt to the needs of new social groups with specific demands for truly inclusive education (Fonseca & García, 2016). In this regard, according to Hernández (2011), before the eighteenth century, the educational community began to express concern about the inclusion of visually impaired individuals. This led to the establishment of the first school for children and adolescents with this disability in Paris, France, in 1784.

A review of the statistical data reveals that in 2013, it was estimated that at least 285 million individuals worldwide were affected by disability vision (DV) (Disability Information Service, 2013) and in 2014, it was estimated that approximately 314 million individuals worldwide were affected by visual impairment, with 45 million of them experiencing blindness (Pan American Health Organization, 2013). As indicated in the WHO's inaugural global vision report (2022), at least 2.2 billion individuals are affected by visual impairment or blindness. Of these, 1 billion cases could have been prevented. Furthermore, the prevalence of distance vision impairment is estimated to be four times higher in low- and middle-income regions than in high-income regions (World Health Organization, 2019). For blind people, the estimates are 38.5 million in 2020 and 114.6 million in 2050 (De Ávila et al., 2023).

According to the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics in Peru, 5.2% of the population (1,575,000 people) is affected by some form of disability. Of this total, 52.1% are women, which equates to 820,731 individuals, while 47.9% are men (754,671), indicating that the proportion of women with disabilities is higher (National Institute of Statistics and Informatics, 2013). It is estimated that 13% of the population is affected by a disability, with half of this number experiencing visual impairment. In light of these considerations, the General Law on Persons with Disabilities (Law 29973) and its associated complementary laws (2012, 2017) delineate the benefits afforded to individuals with disabilities with regard to the admission process to higher educational institutions. Furthermore, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948), Article 26 of the aforementioned document stipulates that higher education must be egalitarian. Furthermore, the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 24, establishes that any individual with a disability must be able to access higher education in an equitable or equal manner and without discrimination. Nevertheless, numerous obstacles impede individuals with DV from pursuing higher education. This necessitates an educational transformation that encompasses admission procedures aligned with the specific needs of this demographic, including the technology they utilize in their daily lives. This approach would foster environments of trust.

In 2001, the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICDDM) was developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) to provide a more comprehensive framework for understanding the diverse spectrum of disabilities. This classification system aims to encompass various aspects and criteria, with the objective of enhancing the quality of life for individuals with disabilities (World Health Organization, 2001).

In this context, he posits that disability, as defined from a functional perspective, is a limitation, either mental or physical, that impedes one's ability to integrate into the community. This, in turn, gives rise to obstacles that he perceives as a reflection of his own disabilities. This complex interplay between individual and social factors underscores the challenges inherent in adapting to the social sphere. In regard to this matter, Porto (2022) The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development identifies goal number four as the guarantee of equal opportunities for all types of people as part of their inherent rights. Consequently, it is incumbent upon states to prioritize the promotion of inclusion in an equitable manner, with quality and equal opportunities for all people, regardless of any disability.

With regard to the admission processes that facilitate access for individuals with disabilities (DV) to higher education institutions, there is currently no formal, structured process or specific modality developed for this vulnerable population. Applicants may access the admission process via a variety of modalities, including interviews, standard cognitive examinations with readers, or free admission. However, there is currently no adequate process in place for this population in Peru or globally.

According to Makransky et al. (2017), it is recommended that the admission process should focus not only on cognitive tests to certify the entry of these people, but also on the regular administration of short interviews to assess other abilities, such as self-motivation, self-efficacy and critical thinking. Hoare and Johnston (2011) report that, in England, a significant number of educational institutions have initiated measures to enhance accessibility to higher education for students hailing from regions with limited opportunities. This has been achieved through the implementation of comprehensive participatory programs.

In Chile, there is no unified special admission system for individuals with disabilities that governs all higher education institutions. The existing special admission systems exhibit considerable variability in their criteria for application, with some also imposing restrictions on access quotas for specific degrees. This creates significant obstacles for this group in terms of achieving equitable access. Furthermore, the application process for the special admission system at some institutions is not clearly delineated on their institutional portals (Rodríguez & Valenzuela, 2019).

In light of the fact that the admission process represents a crucial gateway for individuals with disabilities (DV) to pursue higher education, it is imperative that it encompasses a range of modalities and technologies that enable their autonomy. These should facilitate selection methods capable of identifying the full spectrum of competencies exhibited by students, thereby enhancing their prospects for professional success and reducing discrimination based on a multitude of factors, including disability.

The use of virtual technological tools as a support mechanism within the admission process for individuals with disabilities (DV) represents a technological arm that facilitates communication between this vulnerable

population and their environment. Nevertheless, it is also acknowledged that the availability and accessibility of these resources are not yet universal. It is therefore necessary to enhance the way e-learning is presented, through appropriate collaboration and investment in the utilization of ICTs as an inclusive instrument. It is crucial to emphasize the significance of access in the contemporary academic context, particularly in light of the considerable number of individuals with disabilities. It is imperative to develop technology with specific characteristics that facilitate the optimal development of these individuals. It is therefore evident that technology in general must be taken into account when considering access to the university admission process for individuals with this issue affecting their autonomy. In relation to access to higher education for individuals with disabilities, it has been observed that in many instances, appropriate strategies are not implemented to facilitate their participation in this level of education. Espinoza et al. (2012) have highlighted this issue. However, when access policies for students with disabilities are in place and effectively implemented, it has been demonstrated that despite the legal framework that safeguards their educational rights, the majority of them remain excluded from this level of education (Noemi & Laura, 2020).

It is not sufficient to provide access to education for people with visual disabilities through the mere establishment of a legal apparatus; the adoption of technology is also of paramount importance. Furthermore, it is evident that these individuals are capable of handling information and communication technologies (ICTs) independently. Nevertheless, a considerable number of individuals are confronted with technology that is not tailored to their specific needs. Moreover, many institutions and organizations fail to consider the requirements of these individuals. It is widely acknowledged that information and communication technologies (ICTs) enhance the quality of life and facilitate more efficient and convenient living, provided that they are employed correctly and developed further to reach a wider audience (Escandell et al., 2014).

Ultimately, an analysis of the standard admission process in universities reveals that these individuals face limitations in terms of both access and the availability of support programs. A significant challenge lies in the lack of consistent criteria across different entities, coupled with a lack of standardization in the application process (Rodríguez & Valenzuela, 2019).

In light of the aforementioned considerations, the objective of this study is to delineate the admission process for visually impaired applicants to two private universities in Lima, encompassing the various admission modalities, the diverse technologies and personal accessories utilized during the university admission process for visually impaired individuals.

In this study, the term "visually impaired" is used to describe an individual with a general impairment of projection through the retina, which results in the inability to see, either in total or partial degree. This impairment affects the individual's ability to perform daily activities in their social environment, leading to limitations in their quality of life and ability to engage in activities they wish to perform (González et al., 2013). The term "disability vision" (DV) is used to describe a range of vision-related impairments that affect an individual's ability to perform daily activities and exercise tasks that require a sense of sight. These impairments can range from low vision, which affects an individual's ability to perceive light, the size, shape, and color of objects, to severe vision problems such as total blindness. Impairments in the sense of sight also limit an individual's ability to perceive the details of objects and their movements. (Oviedo et al., 2019). Likewise, individuals with DV can be considered to be those who suffer from acuity and visual field, which is manifested in the partial or total decrease of vision, being a limitation to visually perceive their environment (Rojas et al., 2015).

It is crucial to delineate the term "disability" as encompassing both deficiencies and limitations in the ability to perform a given task, as well as those factors that impede adequate social involvement. In regard to deficiencies, these are defined as issues that have a detrimental impact on the body's functions. Restrictions in roles are defined as problems in performing a task, whereas limitations are understood to encompass a lack of ability to participate in social contexts. In this context, an individual with blindness is defined as an individual who is unable to perceive the world through both eyes, despite the use of assistive devices. Their visual acuity is classified as 1/10 on the Wecker scale.

METHOD

The study was conducted using the qualitative paradigm as a foundation, with subjectivity considered. This approach considers the human person ontologically as a being endowed with feelings, beliefs, emotions and values that

configure them as a totality (Martínez, 2006), This approach allows the common characteristics found in the results to be described from the perspective of the evaluated, thus exploring reality (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018).

To supplement this approach, the phenomenological method will be employed, as it is designed to elicit the experiences of subjects from their own consciousness. This method aims to ascertain the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of the student, classified with respect to a given phenomenon (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018; Martínez, 2006) and what is the nature, sense, meaning, singularity, or particularity of how it is given to its experience (Van Manen, 2016). This allows to know the experiences of the participants in the admission process, from the information to the modalities of the admission exam in which they participated, lived and felt by them.

The technique employed was the interview, conducted using a semi-structured interview script comprising 12 questions. This was facilitated through digital tools, specifically the Zoom platform. In order to analyze the information provided and obtained, content analysis was employed. The data resulting from the interviews were subjected to processes of categorization, structuring and triangulation of the informants. The software employed was Atlas.ti 2018 version 8. The subjects were selected on a voluntary basis (Hernández-Sampieri et al., 2014), Ten subjects were selected for the study, all of whom had visual impairment. The group comprised three students currently enrolled at the university, three graduates and four graduates who, for ethical reasons, have been given pseudonyms. The informants were designated as follows: (1) Lily, (2) Magnolia, (3) Rosa, (4) Carnation, (5) Lily, (6) Geranium, (7) Orchid, (8) Hydrangea, (9) Petunia, and (10) Tulip. In order to be included in the sample, individuals had to meet the following criteria: they had to be diagnosed with DV, and they had to be either current students or alumni of two private universities situated within the broader university context in Lima.

A documentary analysis was also employed as a corresponding technique with the objective of identifying the characteristics of the modalities of admission to the university, which encompass the different profiles of applicants, as well as those of individuals with visual disabilities (DV). The objective of the documentary analysis is to identify the various admission modalities and the characteristics of the university under study that are related to applicants with visual disabilities. In this regard, the websites of the universities, their internal documents, and publicly available brochures were subjected to analysis.

The study was developed based on two a priori categories: the modalities of admission of visually impaired people and the technologies and accessories that are used in the admission process. As illustrated in the subsequent table, the subsequent subcategories are also presented.

Table1. *Study categories and subcategories*

Category	**Subcategory**
Admission modalities for people with DV	Regular Exam Modality
	Interview modality
	Free admission modality
Technologies and accessories used in the admission process for people with DV	Accessories
	Software

Note: own elaboration

The data collection process was conducted in accordance with the principles of informed consent, as outlined in the ethical guidelines for research. A schedule was devised whereby each participant was to be interviewed via Zoom over a period of two weeks, with a two-hour interval between interviews. Concurrently, the audio of the interviews was recorded with a Google sound recorder for subsequent transcription purposes. To process the information obtained from the interviews and the documentary review, the Atlas.ti program was employed, which facilitates the integration and comparison of interview data. Subsequently, data triangulation was employed through the use of organizational matrices in order to ascertain common themes across all interviews conducted. It should be noted that the terminology employed by the study participants was retained.

In conclusion, with regard to ethical considerations, the participants were assured confidentiality and anonymity, and they provided their informed consent orally and in writing.

Results

The analysis of the results, based on data obtained from interviews with five students and five university graduates of the university under investigation, as well as a documentary review of the various channels of information available to the applicant, considered the following a priori categories.

Modalities of admission of visually impaired persons

The university offers a variety of admission modalities to applicants with diverse profiles and aspirations, aligned with the diverse range of academic and professional careers it offers. Three analytical approaches have been established to determine the applicability of the admission examination to applicants with disabilities.

Ordinary exam modality. It is important to note that the admission process for individuals with DV who wish to take an ordinary exam has been confirmed through interviews. However, it has been observed that these individuals were not adequately informed about the admission process at the university. This indicates that they were unaware of the necessity to take an ordinary admission exam and the specific conditions that apply to it. "When I inquired about the specifics of the examination, they were unable to provide a detailed account" (Informant 3 – Rosa).

In certain instances, the interviewees indicated that they were required to inquire about the possibility of bringing accessories, such as a laptop, to the admission examination. The university's response to this inquiry was that such items were not necessary, *"I asked them several times what the exam would be like and they told me that there was going to be a person who would read me the questions and I would give them the answers so that they could mark the option, they were not going to allow me to bring my computer but I could take my talking calculator" (Informant (1)- Lily). "I asked her if her computer had a reader like the JAWS and they told me no, she was worried about what classes would be like if she entered, Uhmmm "(Informant (1)- Lirio).* All indications were that the university would provide the elements of support. However, when they encountered the admission examination and observed a representative of the university accompanied by a reader whose function was to dictate the questions for the applicant to answer, both for the number test and for the letter test, they experienced a sense of surprise and anxiety. In response, they resorted to utilizing the few accessories or personal devices that they had brought with them *"it was that tedious, that stressful, it was a pretty hard experience" (informant (2)-Magnolia); "she dictated the question to you and you had to dictate the answer to her, she was verbalizing you" (informant (10), Tulip)." "Asking the student what they need for the admission exam is essential and one goes a little calmer, because entering into that uncertainty of how the exam is going to be and how it will be carried out is like a little that feeds your anxiety and more when you are going to take the admission exam" (informant (5), Lily).*

It is noteworthy that applicants with visual impairments were permitted to take the standard examination with the assistance of specialized equipment, including a talking calculator, braille punch, note keychain, and Abaco *"to give my admission exam, I only remember that I did not know what to bring, I remember that I took sheets, an Abacus, also just in case I took a talking calculator, I took my punch, my tablet and nothing, they let me use all the possible tools to be able to take the exam" (informant (5), Azucena).* A review of the publicly available information from the university revealed an absence of data pertaining to this admission modality for applicants with visual disabilities. This is despite the presence of extensive information for a diverse range of applicant profiles involved in the admissions process.

With regard to the psychotechnical evaluation plus interview modality, the university offers this option to applicants who are in the fifth year of secondary school, individuals over the age of 30, and those from higher institutes in Peru and abroad. This modality is designed to assess motivation, personal development, and organizational capacity, among other aspects. Additionally, applicants over the age of 30 may be asked to present achievements they have attained throughout their lives. A psychotechnical evaluation is conducted, which includes abstract and numerical verbal reasoning, as well as aptitude potential. The interviewees indicated that none had participated in this modality, nor had they been informed of it.

Interview modality. On the other hand, in the interview modality, the interviewees indicated that they only asked her general and personal issues such as, *"can you move alone", "where do you prefer the classrooms on the first or second floor" "why did you choose the career", "what are you going to specialize in" (informant (3), Rosa), "what*

would you like to work on" "Do you feel comfortable at university" (informant (8), Hortensia), considering that the questions were not in accordance with what should be asked for an admission exam. However, they compared other applicants without disabilities, they asked them about career issues to follow, leaving them with a bad taste and feeling like people who could not answer at a university level "it *would have been more interesting if I also gave myself like the others not only in this case, the computerized or virtual exam with a screen reader where I could answer alone"* (Informant (3), Rosa). *"I saw that they were doing an interview, let's say that they applied a battery of psychological tests to all the students, but they never did that to me, they only did an interview to me, I consider that the evaluation should be the same for all students"* (informant (4) Clavel), *"I consider that they should have applied the exams to me the same as to the others, I don't see why they really didn't, I felt bad"* (informant (7), Orquídea).

It is important to note that the findings of the documentary review of the university indicate that this modality is a meeting between a representative of the university and the applicant, during which the knowledge, competencies and skills required to be a university student are evaluated. This modality is applied to applicants in the third year of the student program, students with a weighted average greater than 15 in the third and fourth years, the first five positions from first to fifth in high school, children of diplomats and officials of international organizations with diplomatic rank, the International Baccalaureate, second profession and by agreements established between the university and various institutions.

However, it has been demonstrated that the aforementioned process is not adhered to with regard to applicants with visual disabilities, as the manner in which this modality would be applied to visually impaired individuals has yet to be developed. This illustrates that the university is unable to provide a satisfactory response to an applicant of this nature: *"I took an exam on the computer with the NVDA software, that screen reader was reading the questions to me and I was answering"* (informant (3), Rosa)

Free admission modality. In its official documents, the university defines the free admission modality as a meeting between a representative of the university and an applicant for a university vacancy. The purpose of this meeting is to evaluate the applicant's aptitude, entry requirements and eligibility for enrollment as a university student. This modality is intended for applicants who have completed their studies between the first and fifth place of the promotion, including qualified athletes and transfers from other universities. The interviewees stated that the university did not offer them this admission modality via any of its information channels.

It can thus be observed that the number of applicants who gained admission through the ordinary examination modality was six, while the psychotechnical test plus interview modality yielded four admissions, based on the ten interviewees.

These findings are inconsistent with the information provided in the university's official documents. The document does not specify any modality for applicants with disabilities, despite the existence of highly detailed modalities for different profiles of applicants. Conversely, the interviewees have stated that when requesting information on how to apply to the university, interactions with the reporting staff lack sufficient information for people with visual disabilities. This has resulted in feelings of exclusion and a perception of the university as non-inclusive. Furthermore, the responses provided by the interviewees are inconsistent with the information officially provided by the university through its various information channels, both physical and virtual. This discrepancy gives rise to feelings of discomfort and anxiety among applicants.

Technologies and accessories used in the admission process for visually impaired people.

The official and public documents provided by the university to applicants do not specify any information regarding the use of accessories or personal devices that may be used as a form of protocol during the admission process for applicants with visual disabilities.

In contrast, the interview conducted with students and graduates with visual impairment at the university where the research was carried out revealed that a range of assistive devices are commonly used by visually impaired individuals in their personal, family, academic, and professional lives. These include laptops, personal computers, tablets, touchscreen phones with screen readers, talking calculators, canes for navigation, special glasses for person recognition, glasses with built-in readers, accessories that identify colors, talking clocks, braille keychains, and punches and Abacos.

*"I use several personal devices; my computer, my cell phone, the guide stick and reading glasses" (*Informat(1), Lirio*). "I use computers, screen readers, JAWS, NVDA and for the cell phone I use screen readers that come with the Android device that is Talk back and they are quite familiar and pleasant when it comes to being autonomous in what are the new technologies" (*Informant (2), Magnolia*). To achieve autonomy, we need some tools to support us in daily life, both the cane, the computer, the tablet, the cell phone and the reading lens" (*informant (3), Rosa*). "I use the talking clock, the talking calculator, the power strip that is for writing Braille, the punch and the ABACO" (informant (5), Azucena). Another informant told us (*informant (10) Tulipán*), "my cell phone and the apps that identify and help in different aspects of daily life."*

Accessories. The interviewees stated that it is of utmost importance to use an accessory or a combination of them during the admission process, which allows them to maintain their autonomy when taking the exam. (Informant (1), Lily*), said "I read, review, complete and review again". Some of the expressions of the interviewees were the following, "the cell phone is important to be able to use some apps for recognizing figures or colors, for example, for mathematics" (*informant (1), Lirio*), "the braille keychain allows us to make small notes to provide a final answer" (*informant (2), Magnolia*), "headphones to maintain privacy since the environments are shared with other applicants" (*Informant (2) Magnolia*). "oh, it would be excellent with reading glasses, (*informant (1), Lily*); " the computer or tablet, reading glasses, calculators, speakers, which makes it easier for us to take the exam autonomously and not depend on a person who is copying what we are answering, that makes us nervous and it seems that they do not know all the facilities in accessories and programs that are available for people with visual disabilities" (*informant (3), Rosa*); "I believe that the university in Peru is not clear about how they should take our exams" (*informant (8), Rosa*). "What* we need *is a common computer and a connection to the screen reader and obviously headphones"* (informant (4), Clavel*). "That the accessories to the questions that one can use, I think it would be essential to ask the student" (*informant (5), Azucena*).*

It is evident that nine of the ten interviewees lacked the requisite support of accessories or personal devices, such as computers or laptops, to complete the task at hand. In the case of the single interviewee who did develop their examination using software on a computer, this was done using a third-party software package.

Software. In regard to the use of software in the admission process, the interviewees emphasized the necessity for software that enables them to exercise autonomy throughout the admission process. They cited various software options, including NVDA, Tally, JAWS and others. It is this author's opinion that the examination should be conducted in a more accessible manner with the use of a computer and screen reader, whereby the questions are read aloud and the answers are entered, thus avoiding any potential complications (informant (2), Magnolia); "*it would have been very useful because it allows us to be autonomous and at the same time we can read the questions with peace of mind and answer properly, especially in mathematics it would have helped us more if the questions had been prepared for the system, for example OCR which is an optical character recognition that transforms the image into text*", (Informant (1), Lily). Likewise, Informant (2) Clavel indicated the following, "*Oops, very much, because especially in what involves multiple-choice questions, which are the classic questions of an admission exam, I would have loved to have been able to return again and again and again to the question, to see syllable by syllable because sometimes a syllable, a comma, a point makes you change the answer, so it would have been quite favorable to have adequate software."*

In contrast, the interviewees asserted that the provision of reading glasses, a mobile phone and other accessories would have been beneficial during the admissions process, as it would have enabled them to conduct the examination in a more independent, secure and less anxious manner. This would have allowed them to participate in the assessment under the same conditions as other applicants without disabilities, thereby ensuring that they were not required to rely on a reader to interpret the questions. Furthermore, they highlighted instances where they were not fully understood, necessitating repeated questioning "*The reading glasses, the PCs prepared with readers, the talking calculators, the cell phone, all that would serve in the admission process and make us independent like the other applicants and we would not need a person who is reading the question to us and sometimes you do not understand what they say and you have to ask again (*Informant (1), Lily*).*

Similarly, informant 5, Azucena, asserts that the numerical component of the admission examination is challenging for individuals with visual impairments due to the lack of accessible software that would facilitate autonomy and alleviate anxiety *"For the numerical part of the exam it is considered even more difficult to work with a reader*

because there is no space to be able to perform the exercises; some interviewees did it mentally, others supported themselves with talking calculators, with Braille, but anxiety won them over as time continued to run"

It is important to highlight what was stated by the interviewees regarding the anxiety, nervousness and insecurity that is manifested during the admission process, due to the fact that they do not have a defined process by the university, "*you do not know what is coming*" (informant (8), Hortensia), details of the admission process are not specified, such as whether or not it is going to use software, accessories or personal devices as a support protocol in taking the exam.

The interviewees stated that universities should have different options for the admission exam process from the use of Braille, computers with screen readers or support accessories, which would make the university inclusive since it would allow the visually impaired applicant to fully develop like any university applicant. *"to achieve autonomy we need some tools to support ourselves such as screen glasses and prevent you from having anguish or fear of this knowledge"* (Informant (3), Rosa).

Most of the interviewees stated that no software was used, except for one participant who indicated that she had been provided with a computer with a JAWS reader to take her exam and that it was very important to ask the applicant with disabilities the needs in tools that would be required to take the exam on an equal footing with the other applicants. *"That the accessories or the questions that one can use, I think it would be essential to ask the student*" (Informant (5), Azucena).

Once the observation record was applied, the following was observed: With regard to the admission modalities, it has been observed that the universities in question employ a range of modalities for the admission process, including ordinary admission and specific admission processes for athletes, those who have achieved the highest grades, and so forth. However, the admission process for people with visual disabilities lacks the requisite design elements to facilitate their full development when accessing higher education for the first time. At this juncture, the manner in which the examination will be conducted is randomly assessed, progressing from an ordinary modality, wherein an individual is assigned to pose the questions, and the applicant indicates the answer, until the applicant is permitted to utilize fundamental tools utilized by individuals with visual impairments. According to the evaluator, the applicant may take the exam via dictation, a personal interview, or by using a computer. It has been observed that no special modality has been designed for individuals with visual disabilities.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the university under study has not designed a specific admission modality for individuals with visual disabilities. Consequently, the ordinary admission exam is developed in a way that allows applicants with visual impairments to take the exam in different ways or forms. This demonstrates that the university does not have a standardized process for applicants from this vulnerable population. In this way, as Sánchez et al. argue, it is important to implement policies that allow students with DV to have the same level of accessibility to enjoy full participation in higher education. This can be achieved by developing inclusive practices in the physical, social and attitudinal environment that facilitate training, performance and participation. This assertion can be extended to applicants with visual impairments. Similarly, as Rodríguez and Valenzuela (2019) argue, it is essential to establish unified state policies that facilitate a single special admission system for students with disabilities, eliminating restrictions on access to certain careers or degrees that perpetuate inequality.

With regard to the admission modality via interview, no process, norm, or procedure was identified that would enable applicants with visual impairments to participate in an interview under this modality. Instead, they are confronted with an interview structure that is tailored to this scenario, which is inherently anxiety-inducing. The interview questions are primarily personal and general in nature, focusing on the applicant's disability rather than their competencies as a university candidate. This further underscores the absence of established procedures or norms within this admission modality. Consequently, it becomes challenging for applicants with visual impairments to navigate this process (Duarte et al., 2019), access to university education for people with visual disabilities, by not providing them with material and regulatory tools that make it possible for visual impairment not to be a limitation for interaction. Finally, the university does not contemplate applicants with visual disabilities in the free admission modality. Likewise, applicants with visual impairment had not contemplated it either.

However, the lack of a mechanism for access to higher education for visually impaired applicants is worrying, since as indicated by the García et al. (2016), the mechanisms of access to this type of education are the procedures that determine how individuals can be admitted to a higher education institution. These mechanisms aim to ensure that individuals with diverse skills and abilities can access training in an academic program that is relevant, equitable and inclusive. Academic merit is an essential element that is evaluated as part of the conditions of access.

Consequently, according to Morresi (2014), the implementation of a university access mechanism would require the implementation of a set of tools and processes employed by higher education institutions to facilitate the provision of educational services to their students. These processes are designed to enable citizens to integrate into an educational community, wherein they can pursue their aspirations for professional training, and address their cognitive and practical needs to enhance their performance within a given labor market. It is evident that this would yield considerable benefits for this vulnerable population, given that students with disabilities are currently excluded from the labor market. Consequently, they contribute minimally to social and individual development, despite having a legal and regulatory framework that supports this vulnerable population in accessing higher education.

With regard to the utilization of assistive devices and equipment to facilitate the admission process for visually impaired applicants, the university does not provide, either in its official documentation or in the information provided to applicants via its various service channels, any information regarding the devices or personal accessories that visually impaired applicants may employ to undertake their admission examination in any given modality. Furthermore, the research findings indicate that applicants are not provided with any accessories or devices, including laptops or fixed computers, to take their admission examinations when they access an admission modality. In some cases, applicants wear certain accessories, such as reading glasses, talking calculators, or Braille punches, as an aid during the evaluation or interview process.

With regard to the utilization of specialized software for individuals with disabilities, it is notable that the university does not employ such software in any modality of admission examinations. This lack of accessibility hinders the autonomy and autonomy of visually impaired applicants, who may experience heightened anxiety due to a lack of familiarity with the evaluation process. This is in accordance with Luque et al. (2018). It is argued that this is part of the concept of inclusive education and social responsibility. This implies the incorporation of measures that facilitate viable alternatives for the training of those people who have limitations in their ability to use their sense of sight. In this way, access to higher education for those people who are visually impaired implies the provision of technological resources that facilitate their integration into the educational process. This also includes the implementation of didactic strategies for their inclusion in class development and the reduction of barriers that limit learning.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it can be stated that the admission process for visually impaired applicants is lacking in information provided to applicants about the conditions, accessories, devices and technology to be used during the process. Similarly, it is evident that the interviews were based on general and personal issues without a structured framework that would merit an admission process. Students and graduates of the University of Study highlighted the significance of utilizing assistive devices or accessories, such as laptops, PCs, mobile phones, talking calculators, readers, and others, in conjunction with specialized software, such as JAWS or other similar software, to ensure autonomy during the examination process and to mitigate the potential for anxiety, nervousness, and insecurity due to a lack of familiarity with the examination format. This would also facilitate equal participation with other applicants.

It is therefore important to consider the admission process for visually impaired applicants in order to provide appropriate support and inclusion. This should include a specific admission modality for applicants with visual impairment that includes the use of accessories or personal devices and specialized software, in order to facilitate equal participation in the admission process.

Furthermore, when admission procedures are conducted for applicants with visual disabilities, a number of factors must be taken into account that influence access and stability within the university environment. These include technological, inclusion, economic, family environment and the ability to access university offers (Cabrera and Burkum, 2000; Films in 2001; Kisilevsky and Veleda, 2002; Miranda & Otero, 2004).

It is important to consider the role of the higher education institution, teachers, administrative and support staff in eliminating or minimizing the barriers to the inclusion of visually impaired people in higher education (Medrano, 2009; Salinas et al., 2013; Villafañe et al., 2016).

It should be noted that, as this research is a case study, the results cannot be generalized. Nevertheless, it offers a contribution to future research or different study designs in relation to the subject, particularly with regard to the scenario of vulnerable populations, diversity, inclusion, and the application of technologies and procedures that facilitate the admission processes for applicants with visual disabilities.

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