

Analysis of Challenges and Practical Strategies for Universal Design Application in the Public Transport System in Nairobi City- Kenya

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Abstract

In recent years, many governments have introduced the concept of Universal Design (UD) in their transportation planning systems. At the global level, the application of Universal Design application in countries such as USA, China, Norway, Ireland and Japan continue to grow. However, in Africa, accessibility to the built environment and public transport systems is still a major challenge including Kenya. While steps have been undertaken through legislative initiatives calling for implementation of accessible transit systems, finding solutions and standards that can be adapted for local use is still a work in progress and thus a priority area for research. In Nairobi City, for example, efforts at improving accessibility are visible but they seem more of after-thoughts rather than beforehand and purposeful. This paper explores challenges and practical strategies that can be adopted to bring Universal Design into the mainstream of urban planning and implementation into the public transport system in Nairobi City. The study is an effort to help policy makers and professionals in the in public transportation in Nairobi City to clearly understand the recommendation and the importance of Universal Design principles, and promoting quality in accessibility in transport sector and other environments. The study employed exploratory and descriptive research designs and utilized mixed methods, both qualitative and quantitative techniques. It involved quantitative surveys of passengers (public transport users), supplemented by interviews with legislators, policy makers, professionals and Persons with Disabilities. The study also targeted policy makers within National and County Government concerned with city planning and transport sector in Nairobi County.

The study targeted key informants and thus employed purposive sampling technique. As ample of 100 participants was considered.

Data collection techniques included: observation and participation, case studies, survey using questionnaires (with appropriate rating and ranking scales), workshop/focus group discussions, interviews (structured and semi-structured); and review of available literature.

Data were analyzed through quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Keywords: Universal Design, Collaborative systems approach, Transportation systems, People with disabilities, Planning, Accessibility, Social inclusion, Barriers, Awareness, Public transportation, Nairobi City, Urban planning.

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