Inclusion of Disability in University Training Courses

A training module to mainstream disability in graduate and post-graduate courses

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⚠ All appendices to be found on the accompanying CD.

1. Cultural Transformation Towards Persons with Disabilities

In the last decades the world has witnessed deep cultural and political transformations. In particular, Human Rights culture, born at the end of World War II with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN in 1948, progressively became a new paradigm on which to build again the relationships among human beings. Particular attention to market globalization processes and communications has raised the need to base the guardianship of all people's rights and the condition of ECOSOC development on this new paradigm.

Within this deep transformation on the guardianship of Human Rights, which has seen put on the agenda the rights of previously excluded sections of the population, like women, children, migrants, people of different ethnicities and races around the world, the global movement of persons with disability was able to highlight the violation of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to obtain the approval and entry into force of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[1]. The UN Convention has recognized a new cultural approach to the analysis of the condition of persons with disabilities. This cultural approach was no longer based on a medical model, which saw persons with disabilities as sick and handicapped to whom social protection and care was due rather on a social model of disability, based on human rights. The social model, bringing out human differences in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, culture, language and physical, psychological and social conditions highlights that the condition of disability does not derive from subjective qualities of persons, but rather from the relationship between persons' characteristics and the modalities through which society organizes access and use of goods and services. Therefore, a person has a disability not because moves with a wheel chair, understands through lip reading or walks with a guide dog, but because buildings have stairs, because prejudicially, one thinks that communication is only possible orally and that orientation is possibly only by sight. The recognition that persons with disabilities are holders of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as further enriched the disability model, including it in a framework of respect of human rights.

The result of this Copernican Revolution has been an increased awareness that persons with disabilities are discriminated against, do not enjoy equal opportunities and are subject to continuous violation of their human rights. In developing countries, it emerged that persons with disabilities were excluded, considered to be unproductive and useless, or were subjected to discrimination that arose when society forgot about them. In fact, in a society where information technology makes buses, trains, ships accessible – think of vocal synthesizer for a computer or a speech translated on a display, in which persons with disabilities are enabled to attend regular schools and make a productive job – different treatment has no justification. Segregation in institutions or special classes,[2] a website without WAI accessibility,[3] each bus not appropriately adapted for persons with a reduced

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1   The UN Convention was approved by the General Assembly on 13 December 2006 and entered into force on 3 May 2008.

2   In the EU 25, a recent study calculated that about 500,000 persons with disabilities are segregated in 2,500 big institutions (visit www.autismeurope.org); in 2003 about 56 per cent of children with disabilities in the EU were attending special schools (please see European Agency for European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, www.european-agency.org).

3   Web Access Initiative gathers international norms for web accessibility.

mobility, hearing and visual impairments violates their human rights.

This new approach to disability is now sanctioned by numerous documents of international and European institutions[4] and has become the cultural base of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In coming years, this Convention will become the legal instrument for the universal protection of human rights of 650 million persons with disabilities living on our planet and the basis for all intervention addressed to them.

In fact, the world movement for the emancipation of persons with disabilities has developed a global approach as it widens and enriches the individualist concept of human rights, traditionally centered on inalienable rights of single individuals, towards a vision asserting the responsibilities of societies to guarantee the social inclusion of all their citizens. The protection of their human rights thus links to the respect of individual freedoms on one hand, and to inclusive social and cultural construction on the other, where prejudices and obstacles are removed, and each person can live a life where personal characteristics are 'subject to social stigma, juridicial discrimination and practical challenges'

Thus a new cultural and political field of action has opened up, investing in society on the whole to include human diversity within a society (a central issue, for instance, in the confrontation between western and Arab world) and within economic and social development (e.g. poverty). Even the specific theme of the reformulation of cultural and social visions of disability then becomes a paradigmatic example by comparison with the myths and ideologies which became accepted truths built on long standing practices of segregation and exclusion, which are no longer actionable. Then, the social world to be re-constructed must be grounded on a Universal Design approach for creating habitats, goods and services that encompass the inclusion of all human characteristics, offer equal opportunity conditions for all citizens and the elimination of all forms discrimination. It is an extraordinary contribution that incorporates human rights in both the private and social spheres, assigning responsibility to actions and attitudes to persons and institutions.

Centuries of segregation and exclusion have impoverished persons with disabilities who face obstacles and prejudices in all aspects of life and communication; at the same time, society itself lost out in terms of its knowledge of and abilities regarding persons with disabilities, impoverishing itself in its solutions and support modalities towards the full participation of its members in community life. The role of education in the disability field becomes key in building inclusive and participative societies in which everyone can express themselves and exchange capacities and competencies and to build fruitful relationships.

This cultural transformation of the condition of persons with disabilities as been elaborated upon quite rapidly; from 1971 when the UN approved the first resolution on persons with mental retardation to 2006 when the Convention was approved, only 35 years have passed! In many ways, this transformation did not reach the academic world, and so there has arisen the need to develop training modules to introduce the new vision of persons with disabilities in university trainings.

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4   Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 20 1993 (Res 48/96); the Madrid Declaration (March 2002) which was at the base for the 2003 European Year of persons with disabilities.

2. Development cooperation and persons with disabilities

There are about 650 million persons with disabilities in the world, 82 percent of whom live in developing countries; 98 per cent do not have access to rehabilitation services or appropriate basic services; more than 85 per cent of all persons with disabilities are unemployed, and only 2 per cent of children with disabilities have had access to formal education.

Disability is both a cause and an effect of poverty, as persons with disability are subject to discrimination and a lack of equal opportunities, which causes limited social participation and marks a daily violation of their human rights. They lack resources in the form of access to basic rights and goods. Not only does society impoverish such persons, but it also becomes impoverished itself in its lack of capacities and solutions towards respecting their human rights. Society's negative vision lands persons with disabilities with a strong social stigma, with consequences in all aspects of economic, cultural, political and social life.

In terms of economic growth, persons with disabilities are relegated to a welfare system, which covers primarily sanitary, and care intervention; rarely does this intervention ever support participation. In the field of economic growth, persons with disabilities are considered to be unproductive and unable, a negative force on society. In cases of conflict, natural and humanitarian emergencies, and situations of risk, persons with disabilities are the first to suffer the terrible consequences, when inattention to their condition can be fatal. For these reasons, persons with disabilities are the most discriminated against, the most excluded of the excluded and the poorest of the poor.

The attention that the international community has given to the condition of persons with disabilities is increasing, starting in 1981 with the UN Year of Persons with Disabilities, followed by the Decade of Persons with Disabilities (1982–91); then came the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for persons with disabilities (1993), all culminating in the approval of the UN Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities (2006). The UNCRPD has inserted in article 11 situations of risk, and in article 32, development cooperation, introducing new approaches in methodologies and contents of projects. During the World Summit on the Millennium Development Goals in New York (2005), particular attention has been devoted to this theme within paragraph 129 of the final document[5].

In the few years since, there has been discussion at international level of problems with the use of international funds for development cooperation not respecting the rights pf persons with disabilities. Development cooperation activities do not take persons with disabilities into account; recent research showed that in EU countries, two to five per cent of funds are dedicated to disability-specific projects. In addition, projects funded by national and international agencies do not mainstream disability in ordinary activities, guaranteeing accessibility and equal opportunities. DPOs (Disabled Peoples' Organization) and some development NGOs took this theme as an objective within their activities, and it has been put on the agenda for governments, agencies and international donors. The EU Commission has also recognized this 'twin-track approach' in the Guidelines on Disability

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5   'We recognize the need of persons with disabilities to have granted the full enjoyment of their rights without discrimination. We also reaffirm the need to finalize the draft of a comprehensive Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.' Outcome document of the UN 2005 World Summit, paragraph 129. (http://www.un.org/summit2005/Draft_Outcome130905.pdf)

and Development Cooperation[6]. A recent EU Parliamentary resolution commits the Commission to be more active on this point and to take appropriate measures to implement the Guidelines.[7] The approval of the UN Convention marked a turning point in the attention devoted to the rights of persons with disabilities and to development cooperation polities. Article 32 of the UNCRPD introduces new principles in activities linked to development cooperation.[8] In particular, by recognizing the role of DPOs in development cooperation activities based on the 'nothing about us without us' principle, Article 32 foresees that international cooperation

- include persons with disabilities and guarantee accessibility to interventions, including international development programs;

- facilitate and support capacity-building through exchange and information sharing, experiences, training programs and good practices;

- facilitate cooperation in research and access to scientific and technical knowledge;

- provide appropriate measures technical and economic assistance and facilitating access to and sharing of accessible technology and assistance through technology transfer.

Article 11 of the UN Convention commits Member States to guarantee the 'protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters'.[9]   Finally, on the whole, the Convention orientates development cooperation activities for persons with disabilities away from a humanitarian, charitable assistance approach, and towards a vision based on human rights.

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6   Guidance Note on Disability and Development for EU Delegations and Services, (I/Disability/ Guidance note on disability 030304 – Final D1256), EC DEV/RELEX/AIDCO and DELEGATIONS STAFF BRIEFING NOTE, March 2003.

7   Resolution of January 2006 [P6_TA(2006)0033].

8   Article 32 nternational cooperation

1. States Parties recognize the importance of international cooperation and its promotion, in support of national efforts for the realization of the purpose and objectives of the present Convention, and will undertake appropriate and effective measures in this regard, between and among States and, as appropriate, in partnership with relevant international and regional organizations and civil society, in particular organizations of persons with disabilities. Such measures could include, inter alia: (a) Ensuring that international cooperation, including international development programmes, is inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities; (b) Facilitating and supporting capacity-building, including through the exchange and sharing of information, experiences, training programmes and best practices; (c) Facilitating cooperation in research and access to scientific and technical knowledge; (d) Providing, as appropriate, technical and economic assistance, including by facilitating access to and sharing of accessible and assistive technologies, and through the transfer of technologies. 2. The provisions of this article are without prejudice to the obligations of each State Party to fulfill its obligations under the present Convention.

9   Article 11 Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies States Parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.

3. Universities and Human Rights

The term 'university' derives from the Latin universitatis, which encompasses totality, collegiality, corporation, and community. It is a 'cultural universe', which should diffuse knowledge on human rights, which are universally accepted as a fundamental condition for a democratic society founded on peace. If knowledge is weak, intervention towards creating a society based on human rights and tolerance will be weak.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states in its preamble that:

> every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Moreover, a UNESCO Recommendation cites that:

> The word 'education' implies the entire process of social life by means of which individuals and social groups learn to develop consciously within, and for the benefit of, the national and international communities, the whole of their personal capacities, attitudes, aptitudes and knowledge. This process is not limited to any specific activities. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.[10]

It is necessary that universities and research institutions commit to explaining the ideas and principles at the basis of authoritative interventions by the international community in confronting mass violations of human rights. They shall provide a decisive contribution to the construction of a collective opinio juris on the right to peace, intended as a right of persons and peoples, and the prohibition of war.

Universities do serve as cultural laboratories, meeting places for research, experience and knowledge, but mostly, they are for teaching and education, places where minds are shaped, knowledge is gained, and where students learn how to be a professional and how to manage their futures.

Universities should aim towards information gathering, training and educational experiences that contribute to the growth of responsible men and women who are respectful of the world – the whole world, in its totality and universality.

The sharing of experience, knowledge, information and ability among experts and researchers is useful and necessary to create operative support networks to develop and resolve different problems efficiently and thoroughly, especially in developing countries where communication and information are lacking. The diffusion of good practices is important to preventing positive experiences from remaining isolated, and thus unproductive and sterile.

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10   Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 1974

Universities should promote the training of professionals involved in such dynamics through learning the cultural and technical competencies specific to such sectors; they should facilitate through networking the coordination of interventions and subjects; they should create greater awareness in the community about how to adopt existing resources; develop an important activity of prevention against the stigma of disability; support clear and simple communication towards the academic and the greater world.

In then becomes important that trainings, seminars, conferences, workshops and all instruments used in teaching at university level include the disability issue in regular programs towards an effective study of the subject. There is no need for specific training courses on disability, but rather, because disability is a matter related to all mankind, it should be included in teaching across the disciplines.

Training modules on disability in university training

Within university modules on development cooperation that are designed to train competent professionals, the disability issue is rarely discussed. From this stems the need to insert a training module on disability and cooperation in the field of international studies, which could be used in curricular training (essential for providing basic education for all professions dealing with development cooperation) and for specialized levels (Masters degrees, specialization courses, etc).

Training objectives

The training module, be it curricular or for specialist training, has as its objective to impart to students and academics basic information about including the disability issue in the competencies of a development cooperation professional.

Among many competencies in the field of development cooperation, participants in the training course on disability should, depending on the level of training, acquire a basic knowledge or specialisation on the following:

- International debate on persons with disabilities (UN, international institutions)
- New approach to persons with disabilities based on the human rights approach
- International cooperation, inclusion and participation by persons with disabilities in development and emergency projects
- guidelines on inclusive designing
- instruments and solutions to grant access to and participation in society by persons with disabilities in all essential fields (health, education, employment, mobility, accessibility, leisure, etc).

4. Schedule

Training courses shaped on a specific module on disability and development cooperation should not exceed seven hours per day. Courses for the training of trainers may have a more flexible structure, extending the number of training days.

Basic training module (101)

The training module for students and academics should include the following topics:

DAY 1

- Human Rights and the UN
- Development cooperation and the national and international institutional frameworks
- UN and its agencies and persons with disabilities
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

DAY 2 Essential concepts on human rights and disability

- cultural framework of reference (from the medical to the social model based on human rights)
- disability
- equal opportunities
- non-discrimination and multi-discrimination
- Universal Design and accessibility
- Independent Living
- social impoverishment and mainstreaming
- participation
- inclusive development

DAY 3 Development cooperation and disability

- Humanitarian approach and the human rights approach
- Poverty and disability
- Situations of risk and disability (Art. 11)
    - The international debate
    - Solutions to include persons with disabilities in emergency interventions in case of natural disasters, humanitarian emergencies, armed conflicts and wars
- Project design including persons with disabilities (Art. 32)
    - Universal Design, accessibility and right to use of interventions
    - Empowerment of PwD, their families and their organizations
    - Respect of the rights enshrined in the UN Convention and the tools for their attainment (inclusive education, employment, health, habilitation and rehabilitation, etc.)

○ Rehabilitating society (Community-Based Rehabilitation) and support towards an inclusive development

○ Educate professions to respect human rights of persons with disabilities

For academics, it is important to insert training hours devoted to pedagogic methodologies and methodologies aimed at supporting learners in their studies ('student-supportive' methodologies).

Important to the issue of elaborating training modules is the consideration the individual experiences of teaching staff. It is desirable to involve teachers with direct experience in the field of human rights, particularly in disability and development cooperation in the NGO and DPO world.

Training methodologies

It is clear that, according to the specialization level of the training on development cooperation, the topics of the training module on disability could be utilized in different manners:

A. covered in each of the single subjects dealt with by curricula training (emergency, project designing, development, etc.) assuring that instruction is given on mainstreaming disability in all fields;

B. be utilized as a specific training module inserted in the curricular training of development cooperation professionals;

C. ind the level of in-depth study appropriate to the level of specialization foreseen in post-university training.

Other than the traditional lecture model, trainings should also use classes structured in a cooperative learning fashion, with practical lessons for students to carry out. Also proven to be useful is work in subgroups, simulations, and teaching instruments based on cooperative activities. It is important to alternate between theoretical and practical learning, possibly drawn from already-implemented good practices.

Given the nature of the training, it would be preferable where possible to engage teaching staff from the associations of persons with disabilities or from the NGOs working in the development cooperation field. In practice, this would allow lessons' contents to be reinforced, changing students' perceptions of competencies and feasible empowerment procedures.

Lessons should take place in an accessible environment (without architectural or communicative barriers in classrooms and in all facilities – toilets, cafeterias, etc. – employing instruments and methodologies accessible to all diverse human abilities) and according to the requirements of students and academic staff, it should guarantee the availability of lectures.[11]

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11   In addition to booklet format, it is essential to take into consideration students' characteristics so as avoid teaching instruments that do not guarantee availability and accessibility to all. For instance, if photographs or images are used in a class with one or more blind student, significant images must be described when used.

Insertion of the training module in university

The insertion of a training module on disability and development cooperation into curricular training and university specializations should be implemented through a number of steps:

- Census of public and private university courses on development cooperation and related issues
- Presentation of the course to universities to verify interests and competencies
- Definition of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the university and the body promoting the inclusion of training modules on disability and development cooperation
- Elaboration of the training module, and how teaching staff should use it:

    A. for students in case of curricular training;

    B. for educating trainers for specialist trainings.
- Promotion of the course in accessible formats
- Production of booklets of the training modules in accessible formats

Evaluation

The impact evaluation of the module on curricular and specialist training in the field of development cooperation can be done through quantitative and qualitative instruments.

Quantitative investigations could examine the number of courses that insert the training module on disability and development (trainings on development cooperation, human rights, economic development, emergency interventions, etc).

Qualitative investigations could examine the ability to mainstream disability by inserting elements contained in the training module within the specialist courses of single topics (emergency, project design, development and inclusion, empowerment of civil society, introduction of the UN Convention in the competent specialist areas, etc).

The best instrument to evaluate the learning level is the formulation of a final paper on a topic of their choice. Such paper would engage the student to develop knowledge gained on the training module, allowing the evaluation of the learning levels.

Alternately, within the final exam, questions pertaining the module on disability could be inserted.

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⚠ All appendices to be found on the accompanying CD.