

Chapter 6

The Sustainable Development of Persons With Disabilities in Developing Countries Through Open and Distance Education

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ABSTRACT

The United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities has provided a strong impetus to the full and effective involvement of persons with disabilities in society and development with equal access to opportunities to contribute to an equal footing with others in social and economic progress. . However, developing nations are yet to achieve the goal of full participation and equalization of opportunities for sustainable development of persons with disabilities. The special education system or inclusive education being a part of education system, needs to examine the feasibility of open and distance learning to provide opportunity to maximum number of persons with disabilities irrespective of their physical, sensory and psychological diversity, to make them a part of mainstream society. The Guidelines on Open and Distance developed for Persons with Disabilities, published by UNESCO will also be very effective in general and developing countries in particular.

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INTRODUCTION

Persons with Disabilities are among the most economically impoverished, politically marginalized and least visible members of their respective society as well as country. Their contribution is least recognized in the development agenda of the society as well as country. But the fact is that, these marginalized groups constitute approximately 10% of the global population. The adoption of the world Programme for Action related to Persons with Disabilities in 1982 laid the foundation for a new approach to disability, with the goal of full participation and equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. Therefore, their potential are equally important in the national development, provided they are given equal opportunity and full participation to prove their ability. The outcome document of United Nations Conference on Sustainable development has highlighted the linkages between sustainable development and active participation of persons with disabilities. The United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities has provided a strong impetus to the full and effective involvement of persons with disabilities in society and development with equal access to opportunities to contribute to an equal footing with others in social and economic progress.

Though, this has been achieved to a great extent by the developed nations, by enacting legislation and changing the approach towards persons with disabilities from charity based to right based and making accessible environment available to them to ensure their sustainable growth and development. However, developing nations are yet to achieve the goal of full participation and equalization of opportunities for sustainable development of persons with disabilities. These developing nations are required to assess and address the associated issues, which greatly influence the development of marginalized group in general and persons with disabilities in particular. These associated issues include social development, health, economic and educational development. All these issues contribute to the sustainable development. The person with disabilities needs these issues to be dealt simultaneously for their equal participation in the country's development agenda as well as the sustainable growth and development.

SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The social development includes the acceptance of persons with disabilities; recognise their needs and perceive their abilities. These are vital for the developing nations, since strong social stigma is attached with the disability, which can only be removed by including the persons with disabilities in mainstream society and protecting them for becoming victim of social exclusion and marginalization. The

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