

Employment of Persons with Disabilities in Georgia: Challenges and Perspectives

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Abstract : After ratification of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) by the Parliament of Georgia in 2013, ensuring equal access to education and employment for people with disabilities has become one of the priorities of the government. The current research has analyzed the attitudes of people with disabilities, employers and society towards various challenges that employment of persons with disabilities faces in Georgia. The study has been carried out in the capital city and three towns in West and East Georgia. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods have been used. Employers' attitudes have been studied by analyzing research data from six focus groups and 12 in-depth interviews. Views of persons with disabilities have been analyzed relied on data from eight focus groups and 14 in-depth interviews. The quantitative study covered 490 surveyed respondents from four cities in Georgia. The research was carried out with the employees of companies selected based on the Simple Random Sample; in each company, based on the size of the company 7-10 employees were surveyed. A survey was conducted using a specially developed structured questionnaire. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS (21.0). The research was carried out during June-August 2015. The research data shows that both qualitative and quantitative research participants view employment of persons with disabilities positively; however persons with severe intellectual disabilities and mental problems are viewed as less workable and desired at workplaces. The respondents support the idea of employment of persons with disabilities at an open labour market; at the same time idea of a development of sheltered workshops is also supported. The vast majority of research participants believe that employers should be rather encouraged to hire persons with disabilities than force them to do so. For employers it is important to have the state assistance in adjusting working place to the needs of employee with disabilities. Some tax benefits for employers having employees with disabilities also are seen as encouraging employment of persons with disabilities. Both employers and persons with disabilities believe that development of job coaching will help persons with disabilities to find and maintain a job at the open market. Majority of survey respondents think that the main reasons discouraging employment of persons with disabilities in Georgia are: poor socioeconomic background and high level of unemployment in the country, absence of related state programs and existed stigma towards persons with disabilities within the society. To conclude it can be said that both employers and persons with disabilities expect initiative from the government - development of the programs and services focusing on employment of persons with disabilities that will be rather encouraging and supporting than punishing and forcing. Relied on survey data it can be said that people have positive attitudes to see persons with disabilities at workplaces, educational institutions and public places. This creates a good background for extensive and consistent work towards social inclusion of persons with disabilities in Georgia.

Keywords : supported employment, job coaching, employment of persons with disabilities in Georgia, social inclusion

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