

## Higher Education and Students with Disabilities in Azerbaijan

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**Abstract :** Azerbaijan is a developing country that tries to keep its own culture and traditions. At the same time tries to get benefit from the experience and knowledge of the developed countries. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan got its independence and currently, implements various programs and policy initiatives to the development of different fields, such as an education, human rights, etc. Disability related issues are also in the main priority list of the country. During the Soviet Union, children with disabilities studied in the special schools, which called boarding schools. They were isolated from the society and most of them were not able to get their higher education. As the result of this kind of tendency, they were in dependence on their parents, relatives and especially the government, as there were several kind of pensions provided by the government depending on the level of disability. Although Azerbaijan maintain different programs, the remnants of the Soviet period still exists. This paper investigates the current situation in Azerbaijan concerning the higher education of people with disabilities. Qualitative and quantitative research methods used in this paper. As a qualitative method a literature review was done on what the term “disability” is and what kind of education rights possess people with disabilities in Azerbaijan. A detailed research also was done on legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan concerning the education rights of people with disabilities in Azerbaijan. As a quantitative method, questionnaire was used. The questionnaires were sent to the 8 Azerbaijani Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) which are located in different regions of Azerbaijan in order to assess and evaluate the situation concerning the students with disabilities. The main aims of these questionnaires were to find out how many students with disabilities study in Higher Education Institutions in 8 HEIs and what kind of obstacles and challenges Institutions face concerning the education of students with disabilities. The researches provided for the project brought up the results that people with disabilities possess all rights concerning the education rights legally. However in the practice they face various types of obstacles and challenges. The number of students with disabilities in HEIs in Azerbaijan is significantly low. There are several kind of reasons that affect the number of students with disabilities in HEIs. As was mentioned before the remnants of the Soviet period exists in Azerbaijan and children with disabilities get their education in boarding schools and in most cases, these boarding schools give education till the 9th class, but to enter the University, pupils have to finish 11 classes in Azerbaijan. As a result, pupils with disabilities automatically disqualify to enter the university. The paper comes into conclusion that to eliminate the isolation of pupils with disabilities from HEIs, the government should pay more attention to the special schools for the pupils with disabilities, the boarding schools should be cancelled and etc. By the applying these kind of changes the rights of people with disabilities will be provided not only theoretically but also practically.

**Keywords :** Azerbaijan, disability, students with disabilities, boarding schools

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