



International Conference on Disability Policy and Inclusive Education: "Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Education: Implications for Vietnam"

02 February 2015

by Dieu Linh

On 20 January, 2015, the Graduate Academy of Social Sciences, in collaboration with the Institute on Disability and Public Policy (IDPP), organized the International Workshop on disability policy and inclusive education: "*Rights of persons with disabilities and education: Implications for Vietnam*". This was an international scientific conference that provided research content and discussion aimed at understanding the policies on the rights of persons with disabilities, including special focus on the educational rights of persons with disabilities. The workshop also highlighted important events of the country following Vietnam's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on November 28, 2014.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is one of the important international treaties of the United Nations' human rights. The Convention refers to the legitimate rights of people with disabilities as well as the obligation of Member States to protect and promote the implementation of these rights. Currently, Vietnam has about 7 million people with disabilities, and ratifying the Convention actually makes sense as it provides an important legal basis to reaffirm the government's commitment to protect and enforce the rights of people with disabilities in Vietnam. The Graduate Academy of Social Sciences is one of the only educational institutions in Vietnam that offers postgraduate training, research and policy advice on Social Sciences. Therefore, the Academy has connected with the Institute on Disability and Public Policy (IDPP) at American University (USA) to organize a scientific conference to share experiences on the rights of Persons with Disabilities, which focuses on the field of education.

The IDPP is a research institute that academically prepares transformative disability policy leaders and serves as a collaborative "think tank" on disability policy for the

ASEAN region through a network of 20 leading universities and 4 outreach partners, with long-term support from The Nippon Foundation.

In his opening remarks, Prof. Dr. **Vo Khanh Vinh**, Deputy Chairman of Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences and Director of the Graduate Academy of Social Sciences, asserted:

"The State of Vietnam has made important strides to support education for vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities. To contribute to the support and promote the participation of people with disabilities in social activities without any obstacles, these interdisciplinary seminars and workshops invite international scientists, policy advisors, managers ... to learn, connect and share best practices in inclusive educational programs and social services (...) The significance of these seminars should be promoted, and their beneficiaries (persons with disabilities) should also attend and be involved... "

The Graduate Academy of Social Sciences and IDPP invited scholars and research faculty, managers, ministry officials, research institutes, disabled persons organizations (DPOs), and supporting agencies from across the nation and abroad to participate. Some notable attendees included: the Vietnam Department of Social Protection; Center for Evaluating the Effectiveness of Education; Institute for Science and Education of Vietnam; Nguyen Dinh Chieu Secondary School; Hanoi Center for Independent Living; as well as representatives from various blind, deaf, and mobility impaired groups. In addition, the workshop also received a positive response from students within the Faculties of Law, Public Policy, and Social Work at the Graduate Academy of Social Sciences.

One of the highlights of the workshop was a triple-track learning and support session. The session, led by trainers from both Vietnam and the United States, was divided into three main sessions: blind or visually impaired; deaf or hard-of-hearing; or mobility impaired. The session offered participants insight and practical experience in creating inclusive education programs for people with disabilities in all three categories.

The presentations throughout the workshop encouraged discussion and sharing of best practices from its diverse participant body. Ms. Nguyen Thi Huyen, Deputy Chairman of the Blind Association from the Ha Dong district, shared her work on supporting children with multiple disabilities and discussed the need to propagate and educate the community about the different types of disabilities that exist in local communities. She also emphasized the importance of helping parents understand the problems of people with disabilities while helping them create inclusive and nurturing environments for their children.

The International Conference on Disability Policy and Inclusive Education: "Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Education: Implications for Vietnam" was a great success and continued to strengthen the chain of cooperation between the Graduate

Academy of Sciences Social and the Institute on Disability and Public Policy. After this operation, the Academy also plans to seek funding for the development of a joint-research project focused on overall policy for people with disabilities in Vietnam. This is a major step towards achieving a comprehensive and interdisciplinary solution to this problem.