

# **Suggestions for Improving the Country's Master Plan for the Disabled People with Life-Sustaining Limitations**

*Ceren Karaatmaca*

Near East University, Educational Sciences Institute, Faculty of Business Administration

Yakınođu Blv, Lefkoşa, North Cyprus

Phone: +90 392 223 64 64

ceren.karaatmaca@gmail.com

*Zehra Altınay*

Near East University, Educational Sciences Institute, Societal Research and Development Center

Yakınođu Blv, Lefkoşa, North Cyprus

Phone: +90 392 223 64 64

zehra.altinaygazi@neu.edu.tr

*Fahriye Altınay*

Near East University, Educational Sciences Institute, Societal Research and Development Center

Yakınođu Blv, Lefkoşa, North Cyprus

Phone: +90 392 223 64 64

fahriye.altinay@neu.edu.tr

## **Abstract**

Individuals who are restricted in some movements, senses or functions for physical or mental reasons constitute a group of the society. In North Cyprus, these individuals and/or their families are directly or indirectly confronted with various problems in society. Today this phenomena can be perceived in areas like education, health, transportation accomodation, technology, informatics, social security, etc. The developmental level of a country is directly related to the efforts to solve the mentioned problems. The main aim of this study is to examine a conceptual framework for suggestions to increase the quality of services for the disabled in this context as well as putting forward action plans for the process of development and necessary changes. In this respect, all the studies done in the workshops after 2013 in North Cyprus to improve the services provided for the disabled with life-sustaining limitations are summarized and reported. In addition, the guidance in designing a detailed framework for the protection of the rights of the disabled and the suggestion of action plans to carry out their responsibilities are provided. Consequently, this study suggests the framework for participant planning process to support necessary developments.

**Keywords:** Disability; Master Plan; Planning; Service; Quality.

## **1. Introduction**

The mission of the suggestions to raise the quality of services provided for the disabled in North Cyprus is to encourage the disabled, to defend individual rights, increase their life standards, and to courage them becoming an active member of the community they live in. In the light of this mission, it is of utmost importance to offer suggestions to specify visions in the fields of barrier-free information technology, health, tourism, education, media, and law and to activate the created action plans (Aksal, A., 2016; Altınay, Dagli, Altınay, 2017). When working on the suggestions and conceptual framework , the main target is to create a real and permanent change, to adapt a unifying approach, and encourage variety. In this respect, the suggestions are presented under the headings of "Services for the Mentally and Speech Disabled and Hearing- Impaired individuals", "Barrier-Free Concepts" , "Collaboration Among the Institutions". After the framework of the results of the related workshops, the control charts and action plans for the suggestions are put in order (Altınay, Ossiannilsson, Kalaç, Başarı, Aktepebaşı, Altınay, 2016; Olya, Altınay, Altınay, Altınay, 2017). Finally, when the action plans built according to the above mentioned outcome headings are

analyzed, the topics “Arranging Necessary Meetings to Specify the Main Strategy”, “Action Plans for Identifying The Disabled”, “Action Plans for the work with the Families”, “Action Plans for Changing the public view about the disabled”, “Action Plans for Barrier-Free Education”, Actions Plans for Accessible Milieu, Transportation, and Structural Standards”, and “Action Plans for Barrier-Free Technology and the Application of Informatics” come forward.

## **2. Background**

Some people are born with disabilities, and others are deprived of their physical abilities with the result of an event that develops later. The deprivation of some of their physical abilities should never mean being disabled in life or being ignored. This is not a malevolence or a deficiency, but one of the realities of human life (Sarıkaya, 2011).

Disability is a condition that does not distinguish race, language and religion from the rest of the world. Since prenatal diagnostic techniques do not develop much in underdeveloped or developing countries, birth-related physical or mental obstacles are often encountered. In developed countries, the widespread use of diagnostic techniques that allow for preliminary detection has dramatically reduced the number of disabled children in the world. However, the prolongation of life expectancy in these countries leads to a number of obstacles resulting from old age (Çaha, 2016).

At this mentioned point, disability rights’ inclusion as the focus of public policy and equitable utilization of public services is a fairly new process for the disabled people in Turkey (Çaha, 2016). In many countries this process started with the World War II. In the years 1940 and 1950, disabled welfare was considered as medical model, and disabled people were considered as patients to be improved (Shakespeare, 2006). The disability has been seen as an individual / physical problem and the care and decisions of the disabled people have been left to the social security units by the determination of the family and / or medical institution or medical specialists taking care of it. In 1970, in United States, Canada, England, disabled organizations have started to raise their voices and have drawn attention to the process of struggle with discrimination. Thus, recognition of the disabled has become a political battleground identity (Oliver, 1990). These requests were concluded on 9 December 1975 by the United Nations General Assembly signing the "Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities". This 13-item paper is an international historical document that sets out the rights of people with disabilities to live in society and participate as collective and productive individuals, as well as their obligation to society's disabled people (Shakespeare, 2006).

In the 1980s, with the understanding of full participation and equality, the United Nations declared "Ten Years of World Disability" (1981). In the 1990s, the idea that disability is the responsibility of the state as a social security risk, the right has brought together the concept of social approach. Disability has been redefined and expressed as the loss or limitation of opportunities to play a role in the normal life of the community on an equal footing with the disability of the disabled individual due to the obstacles of biological (physical limb loss and disability) and historical-social (stigma, discrimination and exclusion). Especially in the European Union countries, institutionalization processes for disabilities have gained speed and policies and practices for improving the public sphere with the physical-spatial arrangements for the disabled have come to the forefront. In 2005, the Law on the Amendment of the Decree Law No. 5378 on Disabled Persons and Certain Laws and Decrees was issued in the European Union harmonization process (Çağlar, 2009a; 2009b; OZİDA, 2010a). Thus, for the first time, disability has been recognized as an independent social policy area and a public responsibility. The social services and areas of benefit for the disabled and their families have been adopted within the framework of citizenship rights and social model (Akdoğan et al., 2010, Seyyar, 2011, Özgökçeler, 2011). Handicap Act 5378 and the Disability Convention, signed by EU and government of Turkey in 2007 included education, health, employment, politics, justice, leisure activities, participation in social life and accessibility. In 2014, the "needy" duties in Article 30 of Law No. 6518, which was the first regulation on disability in the context of social assistance and which was given to the caregivers of severely handicapped persons, was abolished in line with the EU and defined as "needy". In this way, the concept of disability has

been introduced with a view that includes a rights-based approach, incorporating a social model into the field of social security (Gül, Cantürk, & Gül, 2016).

In this respect, in Turkey The Ministry of Family and Social Policy recently initiated the National Disability Rights Strategy Document and Action Plan (2019-2023) project in order to make increasing awareness of disabled people more systematic and traceable. This mentioned action plan will be used to encourage and ensure the full and equal use of disability for all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is aimed to monitor and implement the legal and institutional implementation requirements for the protection and development of the rights of the disabled. The plan will also be a map of the state to provide a holistic approach to ensuring that disabled people can use their potential at the highest level and participate effectively in social life (Teday, 2018).

At this point when the situation of disabled people with life -sustaining limitations in North Cyprus is examined it is seen that although the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was made part of the North Cyprus local law in 2010, the legal definitions have not yet been fully harmonized with this convention (Polili, 2012). When the assessment of the rights of persons with disabilities in North Cyprus and the International Covenant are checked some major points like right of accesibility is observed. Even if the North Cyprus Constitution does not make a direct regulation on the right of accessibility everyone within the framework shall have the right to take part in cultural life. According to Constitution, “The state is responsible to provide for the establishment of the institutions and organizations necessary for disabled people’s assistance to provide collective harmonization with their education, rehabilitation, employment and social life” (Polili, 2012).

Although there are positive regulations regarding the right of people with disabilities to access the legislation enacted in recent years almost no changes were made to the basic legislation. In the same way, sufficient legal arrangements have not been made in the fields of communication and information processing. Since the necessary amendments to the old law have not been made sufficiently, disabled people did not reach fully their accessibility rights (Polili, 2012).

When it is perceived generally, disability is a major issue facing global health policy. It is estimated that one billion people around the world experience some significant degree of disability with 80 % of those living in low and middle-income countries(WHO,2011). Figures from the Global Burden of Disease study indicate that Years lived with Disabilities (YLDs) increased from 537.6 million in 1990 to 764.8 million in 2013 with musculoskeletal, mental, and substance use disorders, neurological disorders, and chronic respiratory diseases being the main drivers of this increase (Lancet, 2015). As a result, health strategies aiming at promoting the human rights, independence and social inclusion of people with disabilities have become increasingly prominent in national and international policy agendas.

### **3. Method**

This is a qualitative study, which focuses on the studies done in the workshops after 2013 in North Cyprus to improve the services provided for the disabled with life-sustaining limitations to collect data and document them. The data analysis is conducted with the analysis of the documents (Yıldırım, Simsek, 2013). Themes are done regarding on the focus of the research (Miles, Huberman, 1994).

### **4. Findings**

When the workshops and studies are considered, some basic suggestions come about. The headings related to this issue are dealt with in entries:

#### **A. Suggestions resulting from the workshops**

##### *1. Services for the Mentally and Speech Disabled and Hearing-Impaired Individuals*

The following suggestions to improve the quality of the services provided for the mentally and speech disabled and hearing- impaired are taken up in workshops:

- a) New Program Developments: Developing programs to support teaching the mentally disabled individuals.
- b) Sign Language Education: A widespread education of sign language in State and Public sectors to facilitate living for the disabled and make them understood by the community.

### *2. Barrier-Free Concepts*

When “Barrier-Free Concept” for the disabled people with the life sustaining limitations is considered, the suggestions in workshops and studies can be summarized as follows:

- a) Barrier-free media: The role of the Media in raising more awareness should be to ensure equality and a wide range of participation without deciphering and compassion. Ans also Social projects should be done in the Faculties of Communication.
- b) Barrier-free environment, tourism, and health issues: The environment should be perceived as a means to protect the humans and to live and enjoy life. Therefore, environmental projects should be developed. Additionally the disabled individuals should be considered as potentials and barrier- free tourism activities should be increased. On the other hand, the physical infrastructure and construction should be in line with the law so as to facilitate the lives of the disabled and there should be more collaboration among associations and public organizations.
- c) Barrier-free education: Disabled awareness should be integrated in every phase of education and seminars should be organized. On the top of that, experts from the Ministries should contribute to the studies and all the involved for a free society should collaborate. Most importantly, this issue should be considered when working on the quality of higher education and be integrated into the plans for vision, mission, and activities. In the education area, also the barrier-free campus criterion should be adapted in the applications of higher education. On this respect, researches should be done and projects should be developed to provide the opportunity for the genius individuals to learn. Additionally in Post-graduate and Ph.D programs in Education faculties studies comprising of societal responsibilities should be taken into consideration and they should be presented as projects to the related Ministries. Also research and development activities in Special Education centers should be considered. Widely results of the workshops show also that there should be widespread Family education programs and families should be provided with Distance Education and consultancy services.

### *3. Collaboration Among the Institutions*

The following suggestions can be made in the light of the previous studies in terms of projects serving the needs of the disabled successfully. In this respect, the most important suggestion is to share sample projects and successful studies. Below are the additional suggestions for collaboration among institutions:

- Convenient barrier -free accomodation should be put in service. It should be in the plans of each institution.
- Programs responding to the needs of the visually impaired should be adapted at every phase of life. And in this respect, it is a clear general conclusion that the rights for the visually impaired should be taken into consideration in North Cyprus.
- Arrangements should be made to eradicate barriers in hospitals as well as in all institutions for physical and social conditions.
- Arts is a great tool to be used as a attention collector in the social media and is an equality area for a success performance.

## **B. Results, Control Charts and Action Plans for the Suggestions**

All activities facilitating life for the disabled in every stage of life and also integrating them into technology and information to contribute positively to their lives should be taken as the main theme and be planned accordingly. However, all these activities should be carried out in coordination after various researches and investigations during the process. All shortages need to be re-defined and all the areas in which to put them into practice should be carefully specified in detail. Technology seminars and conferences should be organized to meet technological needs of the disabled in Cyprus and all the educationalists, engineers, social scientists, and others involved should work together to make a sufficient plan. At this point, the issues to be considered should not only be in the field of education and social fields, but also in the fields of health, tourism, travelling, entertainment, and in all other stages of life.

The following items can be adapted to the above mentioned outcomes and control- charts and action plans can be suggested:

- Action Plans for Identifying The Disabled

The first step of the suggested process is to identify the disabled people and clear the definition issues of who are the actual disabled people. The control-chart to identify the disabled to benefit from the services to be provided can be designed. As a beneficial start for all the possible projects and processes, the disabled people in TRNC (Turkish Republic of North Cyprus) should be identified, documented in e-book and an inventory should be formed to be put all into a collective data base. Meanwhile the meetings should be held, priorily, with the Ministries, Municipalities, and Mukhtars (Heads of Villages).

- Action Plans for the work with the Families

The family is one of the most important context for the living conditions of disabled people . In this respect, following action-plan can be practised to exercise the suggestions related to the disabled and their families. Firstly a pilot study with three families from every disabled group can be organized. Additionally, the results obtained from the education sessions can be reported and presented primarily to the Ministry of Education and other organizations and institutions involved. The workshops involving the families could be run to clarify and cover the issues.

- Action Plans for Changing the public view about the disabled

Unfortunately, the public view of the disabled people could be vacous and the following action-plan can be considered to change the views of the community and the State institutions about the disabled. Firstly, all the staff of the State and organizations can be educated in this issue. Consequently, sample studies can be done with the Media and be shared with the involved organizations and instutions (the State bodies, Public organizations etc.)

- Action Plans for Barrier-Free Education

The basic aims and principles at every level and stage of barrier-free education have been presented in the booklet by the Higher Education Workshop (National Ministry of Education-NME, 2015). In addition to this, the action-plan below can be followed:

- 1) The committees working on the curriculum and course books should support the application to raise disabled awareness and sensitivity.
- 2) Facilitating school-life for the disabled is another action plan for barrier -free education. In order to achieve this, basically the families should be informed through written and visual programs supported by the media providing informative and educational adverts about educating the disabled and campaigns should be made in the virtual environment to reach bigger crowds of people.
- 3) Meanwhile, in order to provide education for every disabled, regardles the type of handicap,

teachers should be trained in this subject at institutions where such programs exist. Such programs should be supported to carry out the applied projects and contribute to the public in this respect.

- Actions Plans for Accessible Milieu, Transportation, and Structural Standards

In order to raise the quality of services in an accessible milieu, transportation, and structural standards, the following action-plan can be considered:

- 1) The pilot-study demands suggested by the disabled associations and organizations can be put into practice. At this point, it is believed that a collaborative attempt by the Ministry of Transportation and Public Works and the Turkish Municipality of Lefkoşa will be beneficial in finding solutions.
- 2) Studies should be done in legal regulations to raise awareness of the disabled in public transportation to facilitate travelling for the young and elderly disabled individuals.
- 3) Courses and seminars should be given to the private transportation sectors to serve the needs of the disabled at every level and in quality at universities or State institutions.
- 4) In order to provide such transportation services, various technological supports and tools are necessary. To adapt this technology to the transportation sector, all the involved and the ones dealing with technology should come together to raise new ideas and products.
- 5) Legal regulations for physical criterion and conditions should be referred to for the new places to be opened for the use of the State and private public sectors.

- Action Plans for Barrier-Free Technology and the Application of Informatics

Besides proper physical conditions indoors and outdoors for the disabled to move around without any worries, technological support should be provided. In order to improve this rough draft, proceeding together with technology is of crucial importance for the local disabled as well as disabled tourists visiting our country and the foreign students studying at our universities. In facilitating life through technology integrated and implemented projects have crucial roles in saving energy and integrating technology in life. In this respect, this draft supported with technology will make every stage of life easier for the disabled. Today, barrier-free IT applications play a big role in raising the quality of services for the disabled.

The following suggestions can be considered to support the learning of the disabled:

- 1) Software: Should be improved to support the learning of the disabled.
- 2) Introduction and widespread of web accessibility: Another important action plan on this matter of technology and informatics. Web accessibility is the biggest factor for the disabled to adapt life by using IT systems and technology. Working through low web accessibility or difficult technological conditions makes the process harder for the disabled. Using only the technology will be insufficient. Therefore, programs for easy access should be designed for every age level. In order to widespread web accessibility for every individual, studies should be carried out through seminars and visual and written media.
- 3) Conducting a web accessibility analysis in public institutions: When barrier-free informatics and web accessibility is concerned, the need for a web-accessibility analysis in public institutions web-sites become very important. Today, there are millions of disabled or individuals with handicaps that prevent them from acces to web-sites. When there are accessible web-sites and software, the disabled are more eligible to use the web more effectively or contribute to the web. When developing or redesigning a web-site, accessibility should be assessed in advance and during the process of development. This will help detect and solve problems easily. Simple techniques such as changing the adjustments on a scanner can specify the feasibility of some access instructions.

4) Training the staff working with the disabled:

The following suggestions can be considered in respect:

I. Awareness Training

It is inevitable that the people are aware of the disabled in every stage of life and consider their benefits when making projects, plans and new investments. This awareness should not be limited only by knowing or noticing them. It should be in every field such as, in educational institutions, health, tourism sectors, trade, justice, and in many other fields. The most important factors related to protecting the rights of the disabled nationwide and raising awareness of their existence in public is clearly stated in the “United Nations Charter”. The Charter aims to encourage and provide equal sharing of all kinds of human rights and basic freedom and respect to human dignity. It also points to the common responsibilities of the contracting countries and urges them to ban discrimination and implementing law (Ertürk et al., 2014) Unless awareness exists, it would not be possible to help the disabled in required levels and quality. Firstly, their difficulties in every situation should be noticed and well known, which is the most effective way to notice and understand them. Noticing their difficulties will make us to be closer to them and realize the handicaps we create for them. Only after we become aware of the disabled we can work more effectively and develop projects to provide quality services for them. For this awareness, seminars to inform the others on how to approach the disabled is a must for all State and public organizations.

II. Technology Training for Disabled

In order to integrate the disabled into the community and facilitate every stage of life for them, we should make use of the technology. During this process, besides benefiting from technological developments, we need to update and make improvements fitting into the conditions in North Cyprus. It is important to form a system in every stage of either educational institutions or State organizations and in every stage of private life to introduce them to technology so that they can work on their own more comfortably. The technological equipment or programs should be prepared with the disabled private needs at stake. Thus, life will become easier for them and make them enjoy using technology.

On the other hand, the technology mentioned should not only serve their work –life, but it should be developed to meet their travelling, socialization, health, entertainment etc. purposes as well. Selecting the qualified teachers to train the handicapped is of utmost importance. At this point where the disabled will be introduced to technology, the teachers in the training process should always be at their service. Besides their technological knowledge and skills, the teachers should have innovative ideas and as long as they are with the disabled, they should try together to develop projects for the future.

III. Training in Planning and Implementations

The participation of all the involved in the process of planning and implementation and integration of the disabled into the community is essential. When different ideas and views from different studies are put together, it will contribute to raising new and authentic opinions. While practising these ideas, all the participants should work on strategic plans, which are very crucial for every organization and institution and they should be made carefully so that every individual receives equal services. In these plans Mission and Visions should be identified and the plans should be clarified linked to certain goals.

On the framework of the draft plan to be introduced legal regulations should be done and the municipalities, Ministries and other State organizations should be encouraged to do arrangements to facilitate transportation, communication, and daily life for the disabled. In addition, the private organizations and institutions, too, should be encouraged to renew and develop themselves in the fields of tourism, transportation, education, and health.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Following the main aim of the study which is to examine a conceptual framework to increase the quality of services for the disabled as well as putting forward specific suggestions for the process of development and any necessary changes, the findings from the workshops in North Cyprus held after 2013 related to the disabled people are examined closer. As a result of this mentioned process, a master plan to raise the quality of services for the disabled has been designed. The results generally show that the issues of disabled people in certain areas could be taken into consideration as a start for following up a master plan. In many areas pilot studies are needed for the start of the implementation process.

When the findings and interpretations are considered it is observed that some focus areas for different type of disabilities and subjects seem to come forward. In this respect when the disability types related to mental, speech and hearing are considered, the educational programs like teaching techniques for mentally disabled individuals and education of sign language in State and Public sectors come to light. Additionally, when “Barrier-Free” concepts are examined, some different areas like the usage of the media, environment, tourism, health and education come forward. When the related areas are detailed stepwise, most important subjects that come out seems to be “the role of the media for awareness”, “social projects in higher education”, “physical infrastructure”, “education in all areas” and “collaboration among institutions”. The action plan can be framed according to these specific areas and pilot studies can be arranged. Furthermore, it is also recommended that these areas could be the subject of focus for the future academic studies in North Cyprus.

As stated, in the light of these findings, control chart and the start up action-plans for the suggestions are structured. Firstly arranging the necessary meetings to specify the main strategy is the important starting point. In this respect as stated before, technology seminars and conferences should be organized to meet technological needs of the disabled in North Cyprus and all the educationalists, engineers, social scientists, and other shareholders involved should work together to make a sufficient plan. Secondly there comes out a need for the identification of the disabled which is not a perfectly clear today. Once that is done, an inventory should be formed to be put into a database. The definition of disability also comes out to be an important issue that should be further taken into consideration. Thirdly, studies related to disabled families arises. Related to family education area, the suggestion that a pilot study with families from every disabled group comes to light. Fourthly the media usage should be examined in detail. The main area could be the awareness and the pilot studies can also be run around media for changing the public view about the disabled. Fifthly, the education comes out to be an important area in all forms. In this respect the National Ministry of Education published a booklet as a result of “Higher Education Workshop” held in 2015 at North Cyprus, but in addition to this booklet action plan can be followed. In the booklet, the scope is identified as the place of informatics in education especially in higher education and its importance, distance education. Also the design issues are discussed for everyone in education. Strategies toward digital (numerical) and disability-free education situation are detailed. As a result some areas coming out on the subject are supporting systems like effective use of lecturers, accessibility to the use of sight and hearing impairments, establish infrastructure for distance education, investing in software, digital literacy, disabled access open web sites and universities without barriers. As mentioned earlier, the additional action plans on education are forming the committees working on the curriculum and facilitating school-life for the disabled. Sixthly, the action plans for accessible milieu, transportation, and structural standards are examined. In this respect again a pilot study is suggested that covers the collaborative attempt by the Ministry of Transportation and Public Works and the Turkish Municipality of Lefkoşa in North Cyprus. Finally the Technology and Information areas are covered widely under the subject barrier-free technology and the application of informatics. The main points that comes forward on this respect are software, web accessibility and trainings on different contexts (Aksal, A., 2016).



Concurrently, another important point coming out in the action-plan for disabled people with life sustaining limitations , is the need to search for ways to market certain sectors to the outside of the country. Having a place in the world market in all areas like education, health and tourism do not only mean to sell something, but also to be recognized academically in universities and community and also to prove that North Cyprus is a place in every sense to live in and be visited. To focus on the needs for disabled people with life sustaining limitations is observed as a necessary area in this respect. Coming up with new values and their applications will be of great benefit for the disabled and will encourage them, with the help of technology, to enjoy life more in education, travelling, health, tourism etc (Akçil, Altınay, Altınay, 2016). Making a name in terms of the facilities for the disabled in the world will not only be a new image for our country, but it will also open a powerful way to a market. In other words, the ideas and products will not only provide better, fast, and quality services, but will also be a model for other countries and be on the agenda. In such an application, the position of our community will scale up and local new ideas will be marketed throughout the world (Altınay, Menemenci, Saner Altınay, 2016).

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