

Sven Degenhardt | Amrollah Ebrahimi
Hamid Nasiri Dehsorkhi | Joachim Schroeder

Dialogues on Disability and Inclusion between Isfahan and Hamburg

First results gained in a research project
within the DAAD program
“Higher Education Dialogue with the Islamic world“

Funding Notes

*Funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)
with funds provided by German Federal Foreign Office
(Auswärtiges Amt).*

Content

I. **Project Presentation**

1 Fact Sheets

2 Dialogues on Disability and Inclusion between Isfahan and Hamburg: frame work, content, structure and objectives of the tree-years project (Amrollah Ebrahimi, Joachim Schroeder)

II. **International Discussions**

3 Disability Inclusion in a Global World: Moving towards Disability Inclusive Development – Development Cooperation before and after the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Veronika Hilber)

4 Agenda 2030 and UN CRPD as the basis for a worldwide and diverse discussion on inclusion and disability – ideas from Ladakh and Isfahan (Nele Schell)

5 A Cross-Cultural Cooperation and Research Project on Special Education between the Universities of Oldenburg in Germany and Dohuk in Northern Iraq (2013-2018) (Monika Ortmann, Sönke Thies)

III. **Experiences and Research: Isfahan**

6 Epidemiology of disability in Isfahan (Sayed Mohsen Hosseini)

7 Physical Activity in People with Intellectual Disability (Hamzeh Baharlouei, Javid Mostamand)

8 Family conflicts and disability (Mostafa Arab-Varnousfaderani, Kowsar Arab-Varnousfaderani,

Maryam Ashrafi)

9 Faculty development regarding disability (Nikoo Yamani, Habibollah Rezaei)

10 The Attitude of Isfahan People to Disabilities: A Pilot Study (Hamid Nasiri Dehsorkhi, Saeid Nasiri, Sedigheh Sadrameli, Batoul Amini Zarbian)

11 Feasibility of using mathematical and physical principles in evaluation the disabled-specific orthoses: A scientific report (Mohammad Hossein Ebrahimi, Ali Mohammadi)

IV. Experiences and Research: Hamburg

12 Accessibility to Education and Therapy for Juvenile Refugees with Disabilities in Hamburg (Frauke Meyer)

13 Depression among asylum seekers in Germany (Negin Shah Hosseini)

14 Trauma in Mentally Disabled People (Farid Mosharaf Dehkordi)

15 Supporting educational and coping processes in hospital schools of child and adolescent psychiatric units (Tobias Hensel)

16 Inclusive School without Barriers (InklusoB) – A service centre at Universität Hamburg (Marie-Luise Schütt, Manfred Steger)

17 Basic education for people with disabilities in Hamburg GRUND:BILDUNG research project: 2012-2015 (Uta Wagner)

18 Accessibility in public space and public buildings – an observation protocol for research and teaching at universities (Sven Degenhardt, Marie Geldmacher, Valentin Keller, Torben Scholz)

Alternative text for images

Authors

I Project Presentation

1 Fact Sheets

Dialogues on Disability and Inclusion between Isfahan and Hamburg

Facts

Partner country: Iran

University in Germany: Faculty of Education, Universität Hamburg

Project managers:

Prof. Dr. Joachim Schroeder

Prof. Dr. Sven Degenhardt

Partner University: Isfahan University of Medical Sciences

Project managers:

Dr. Amrollah Ebrahimi

Hamid Nasiri Dehsorkhi



Isfahan University of Medical Sciences

DAAD

Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service



Universität Hamburg

DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG

Project focus

What challenges do both cities and universities face if all aspects of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) must be taken into account in public spaces, educational and rehabilitation facilities, and access to academic teaching at the universities?

Project

- Empirical studies on the living situations and requirements to support people with disabilities in both cities and universities
- Joint meetings in Isfahan and Hamburg
- Joint workshops on barrier-free universities (Hamburg, Isfahan)
- Networking with experts working with people with disabilities in Hamburg and Isfahan

Target groups

Students, doctoral students and teachers at both universities as well as rehabilitation and educational experts working with people with disabilities in Isfahan and Hamburg

Planned long-term effects

- Create barrier-free structures for students with disabilities in terms of access, curriculum and teaching at both universities
- Set up two networks between the universities and local experts that will be continued beyond the project period
- Establish teaching formats that support practice-oriented teaching and learning for students and doctoral students; identify architectural, visual, acoustic, media and educational barriers in the cities and universities; develop suggestions for improvements



Figure 1: examples of barriers and accessibility (For the descriptions, go to "Alternative text for images" page →)

Fields of dialogue

- International dialogue
- Exchange on key terms such as disability, rehabilitation, inclusion, barrier-free, Universal Design, etc.
- Methodological issues within inclusion research in the fields of education, rehabilitation and therapy
- Exchange on the ongoing research projects at both universities
- Community dialogue
- Foster cooperation between the universities and the work with people with disabilities in both cities

Networking in the fields of supply, education and psychosocial support (Isfahan) and with local schools (Hamburg) with regard to people with severe disabilities

- Institutional dialogue

Further development of curricula and teaching formats to foster inclusion
Additional training offers for teachers at both universities

Discussions on opportunities for “barrier-free universities”

Surveys

- Facts and data on people with disabilities in Isfahan and Hamburg
- Attitudes of students and teachers to people with disabilities
- Types of barriers to access and participation in studies at both universities

Support for young researchers

- Several relevant dissertations are currently being prepared in Hamburg (disability and migration, international comparison of attitudes, Universal Design)
- Two Doctoral students from Isfahan have already completed short study visits to Hamburg
- Several master's students at both universities will be prepared for doctoral studies
- Study trips will enable students to consider international aspects of working with people with disabilities

2 Dialogues on Disability and Inclusion between Isfahan and Hamburg: frame work, content, structure and objectives of the tree-years project

(Amrollah Ebrahimi, Joachim Schroeder)

Inclusion as a challenge for academic education

In line with the fundamental human rights, the United Nations General Assembly adopted in 2006 the “United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” (abbreviated as UN Convention here), which is signed by Iran and Germany. Disability is part of everyday life, and it has been estimated that 11% to 25% of the world’s population have a disability (WHO 2011). Disabled people suffer more from medical, psychological and social problems and benefit less from job, educational and welfare opportunities. The UN Convention focuses on people with disabilities as individuals who are capable of making decisions for their lives based on their free consent, respecting their individual skills and talents and reaffirming that they must enjoy all human rights and freedoms. Depicting the different aspects and facets of freedom and social rights, it covers all areas of social life, starting from the right to life, to aspects such as education, schooling, work, employment, health, living, mobility, privacy, access to information and participation in political, public and cultural life as well as leisure and sports.

The scientists of the Universities in Isfahan and Hamburg involved in the project here want to continue and deepen their dialogue on the social and cultural challenges as well as on the education- and curriculum-related issues in

putting the UN Convention into practice in both cities. The dialogue between the Iranian and German scientists has among its main objectives, based on scientific discourse and educational exchange, the discussion of individual action paths, the current status and the requirements for translating the UN Convention into effective practice in both the Cities and the Universities of Isfahan and Hamburg:

- Universities may be autonomous bodies, but they are also part of the respective *urban or rural culture*. The scientists from Isfahan and Hamburg involved in this project deal with aspects such as support, counseling, education, assistance and rehabilitation for people with disabilities. At both universities it has to be continuously critically examined whether empirical data on the problems and needs of people with disabilities living in Isfahan and Hamburg is precise enough. Furthermore, it is necessary to ask again and again how the universities can contribute to making the two cities barrier-free and inclusive.
- Like all *social institutions*, universities have to critically reflect upon whether they have successfully managed to put the UN Convention into practice or whether there is still room for improvement: What attitude do students and instructors have toward people with disabilities and toward different disabilities? What organizational, architectonic/structural or technical modifications at the universities are required to enhance accessibility to higher education for students with disabilities? In what way can the topic of inclusion be embedded in teaching?

Previous dialogues and existing cooperation

An international congress held at the University of Isfahan, Iran, in 2007, with participation of some German scientists,

has brought about fruitful discussions of the scientific board on the project “Developing the Field of Psychosomatic Medicine in Iran” and, in the course of the project, the idea of scientific and cultural exchange was born. Dr. Dehkordi (University of Marburg) took the lead in organizing the contact with the University in Isfahan and regularly travels to Iran to foster, maintain and develop this contact. Prof. Dr. Schroeder (University of Hamburg) visited with Dr. Dehkordi the universities in Sari, Isfahan und Shahr-e Kord in the course of a lecture tour in October 2012. In various discussions and workshops, possibilities for cooperation in research, teachers’ training and support and advisory services were examined.

Supported by the DAAD, Dr. Dehkordi and Prof. Dr. Schroeder visited the Faculty of Medical Sciences and Health Services and the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Isfahan for one week in December 2013. As part of the program, the Faculty of Rehabilitation and the Institute of Special Needs Education of the Faculty of Education were also visited for discussion, and so were various institutions providing psychological and educational assistance to children and adolescents with a disability in Isfahan and nearby Shahr-e Kord. Apart from presentation and lecture activities, topics for possible common research and teaching projects were determined together with Dr. Ebrahimi and Mr Arab during the stay. Also, a “Memorandum of Understanding between Isfahan University of Medical Sciences (IUMS) and the University of Hamburg (UHH)” was signed (December 2013/February 2014).

From 15th to 19th September 2014, funded by the DAAD, ten members of Isfahan University participated in a study visit held at the Institute for Special Needs Education, University of Hamburg. The focus was on the scientific discussion of methods and examples of interdisciplinary research in the field of disabilities. Dr. Dehkordi, Prof. Dr.

Schroeder, Christoph Henriksen and Prof. Dr. Degenhardt participated in the workshops, giving an overview of international research in fields of disability work and of educational support programs for families of adults with mental disabilities as well as of research on attitudes toward people with disabilities in Germany, China and Egypt, and of research on inclusive school development (theoretical and methodological principles). Field visits were organized to an inclusive day care center, the “Educational Center for Blind and Partially Sighted People” and to the institutions of the association “Living with Disabilities Hamburg”.

Again with the support of the DAAD, Prof. Dr. Degenhardt, Dr. Dehkordi, Christoph Henriksen and Prof. Dr. Schroeder visited Isfahan from 8th to 12th February 2016. Together with the Iranian colleagues, quite different institutions for the disabled were inspected there: a residential facility for adults with severe disabilities, a family-oriented, district-embedded institution providing early intervention services for blind and visually impaired children and a regional center for the medical and psychosocial treatment of children and adolescents with disability, in which many (IUMS) students do their internship.

Reflecting upon the two study visits in Hamburg (2014) and Isfahan (2016), many similarities as to existing problems and concepts could be found, but also significant differences. The Hamburg team, for instance, has relatively well-established contacts with local organizations working for the disabled, conducts evaluations in the different institutions, provides support or further training and participates in different local networks. Likewise, the team in Isfahan actively promotes interdisciplinary cooperation within the university, aiming at bringing together all faculties relevant to the topic of disability and inclusion. The Hamburg team was particularly impressed by the Medical Education Research Center, which supports the different

faculties in the further development of teaching in terms of curriculum design.

As an interim conclusion, both teams agreed on the fact that the exchange so far has been very informative, led to fruitful results and a first overview of the different urban and academic contexts and brought about common research questions. Both groups want to intensify their exchange, with more thematically focused activities, to involve students and doctoral candidates of both universities in this exchange and to collaborate not only via conferences and workshops but also through common seminars or lecture courses. The group is convinced that the topics associated with the UN Convention – dealing with disability in different social contexts, attitudes toward people with disabilities and toward different forms of disability, disability in the context of religion and culture, gender or migration, higher education policy instruments and didactic concepts to enhance accessibility/inclusion at universities – are ideally suited for the thematic structuring of a productive intercultural higher education dialogue.

The concept of Inclusion from a philosophical perspective

Some scientists are defining Inclusion as a philosophy, in which learners, families, teachers, and members of the community work together to create schools and other social institutions based on admission, sense of belonging and collective sense (Salend 2001). Inclusive education is about creating schools, classes, training programs and activities for empowering students with different learning disabilities to make participation together (Adedoyin & Okere 2017). Theoretically, inclusion is created in schools to provide a collaborative, supportive, and educational environment for teachers. Therefore, teachers serve all students at each level of their ability and reconcile their programs according to their needs. In these respectful environments, learning

opportunities are provided for different people (ibid.). Inclusion requires a broad vision and competences for all teachers in the education system.

Salend (2001) highlighted four important principles in which the framework and philosophy of inclusion are based. In order to have a better understanding of the theoretical foundations and the philosophy of inclusion, we will have a brief overview of these principles.

Principle I: Diversity-effective inclusion provides an educational system in which all students beside each other in a normal environment have an equal opportunity to learn and practice regardless of different learning abilities, racial, linguistic, economic status, gender, the style of learning, previous cultural backgrounds, religion, family structure, and gender orientation.

Principle II: Individual Needs-effective Inclusion: Inclusion involves sensitivity to needs and the acceptance of the needs of individuals due to their individual differences. In the inclusive classes, all students are considered valuable and have a capacity to learn and participate in social life.

Principle III: Reflective Practice-effective Inclusion: Inclusion requires reflective educators to regularly refine their attitudes, practices, and classroom management practices, and continually adapt to the needs of students.

Principle IV: Collaboration-effective Inclusion: Inclusion requires collective effort. This effort includes collaboration between educators, other professionals, students, families and community agencies to provide services and support that students can learn in normal classes.

According to these principles, people work in a collaborative and reflexive way and share resources, responsibilities, decisions, and support of the interests of students. Inclusion and providing equal opportunities for the living of the

disabled is a vital, human and fundamental right. The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* has been an important political step, which the two countries, Germany and Iran, have signed and are bound to implement. Obviously, the implementation of parts of our work as faculty members in the University requires research and intercultural dialogue. Through scientific work, and intercultural and inter-academic dialogues, barriers to the inclusion and realization of the rights of persons with disabilities and the achievement of equal opportunities in life can be identified.

A review of research literature and political documents shows that some steps have been taken in this regard. Among them, the Stinson Center in the United States conducted an Iranian-American Intercultural Dialogue on Disability Rights in the context of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and reported by Allen Moore & Sarah Kornblit entitled "Advancing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: A US-Iran Dialogue on Law, Policy, and Advocacy." The report states that one of the problems faced by disabled people in the Iranian society is stigmatization and the lack of adequate knowledge of the material, emotional and social needs of people with disabilities from the community and governments is mentioned (Moore & Kornblit 2011).

With regard to the pros and cons of inclusion, many studies have been done. For instance, a comprehensive review study by Alquraini & Gut (2012) can be mentioned. In this overview of literature, which deals with the necessary steps to be taken to inclusion around the world, the effective work required to inclusion around the world has been mentioned. Its focus, which lies on the Critical Inclusion Components, has succeeded in providing stakeholders with engagement that can effectively engage students in inclusive schools (ibid.).

Related to Iran, research has also been carried out on facilities and accessibility for disabled people in urban buildings and academic environments. For example, in the one research, Bayat Bodaghi & Zainab (2012) studied twelve buildings of urban libraries and universities in Iran in terms of how to make and access disabled people (ramps, entrance, interior design, ambient space, parking areas, etc.). In this study, the viewpoint of the disabled as well as the view of the architect engineer was taken. The viewpoints of disabled people and engineers were similar. In the case of ramps and interior design of buildings, according to architects, 53.8% of libraries lacked ramps, and 63% lacked an exterior space suitable for disabled people. The view of the disabled user showed that there were more obstacles than engineers said (ibid.).

The prevalence of disability in the world and in Iran

Disability is a global phenomenon that is accompanied by economic and social costs that are imposed on the individual, the family, the community and the system of treatment and rehabilitation. Based on new definitions of disability by the WHO and ICF criteria, disability is the result of people's interaction with injuries, environmental barriers and attitudes that prevent their active and appropriate participation in the community based on equal opportunity with others (WHO 2012).

According to the Global Burden of Diseases (GBD), about 975 million (19.4%) of people over 15 with disabilities and 190 million people in the world (3.8%) live with severe disability (WHO 2007). According to the 2011 census in Iran, the prevalence of disabled people is 13 per 10,000 people with the highest incidence was related to physical handicap 80, mental disability 44, hearing 13, and vision 13 per 10,000 people (Soltani et al. 2015).

Because of different sources and methodologies for estimating disabilities in the world, various data are

available from its prevalence. For example, according to the WHO report, Disability estimation based on GBD, Surveys and WHO study, in the whole world, including developed, developing and underdeveloped countries, are 15%, 7%, and 16%, respectively (WHO 2011).

Given the increasing prevalence of the number of people with disabilities worldwide, it is necessary to formulate intercultural proposals for addressing the situation of the disabled, particularly in Iran, and realizing their rights. On the other hand, the Universal Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities encourages signatories to fulfill the conditions for improving the quality of life of the disabled, which requires international scientific interactions.

For these reasons and based on provided opportunities this academic project between Isfahan University of Medical Sciences and University of Hamburg were designed entitled “Dialogues on Disability and Inclusion between Isfahan and Hamburg”.

Organization and academic content of the project

The project is conducted by the Faculty of Medicine/Psychosomatic Research Center at the Isfahan University of Medical Sciences (IUMS) and the Faculty of Education/Institute of Special Needs Education at the University of Hamburg (UHH). It was approved for funding by the DAAD in March 2017. The project deals with the question of how both universities can enhance their curriculum and teaching method as well as their organizational and architectural structures to better meet the special needs of students and instructors with disabilities and of how both institutions can be modified in general terms as to be fully accessible to all people. At the same time, close cooperation between the universities and their community/their respective urban environment and providers of further education and training as well as the development of networks aim at raising awareness on the

topic of inclusion within their urban and rural contexts. Moreover, with one research component the project also provides empirical data on the life situations of people with disabilities in Isfahan and Hamburg. The project involves a number of postdoctoral and doctoral researchers, and master's degree students in Hamburg and Isfahan – more than half of them young women – and supports their academic development.

Content, working packages and time frame for the project

| Facets of dialogue | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|--|---|---|---|
| International dialogues | | | |
| IUMS/UHH | Colloquium I: Disability and inclusion in a global world (May; Hamburg) | Field trip I: Disability and inclusion in rural areas (May; Hamburg) | Future workshop I: Is there a future for inclusion? (May; Hamburg) |
| | Colloquium II: Disability and inclusion in a global world (October; Isfahan) | Field trip II: Disability and inclusion in rural areas (October; Isfahan) | Future workshop II: Is there a future for inclusion? (October; Isfahan) |
| | Colloquium-related publication | Joint article | Recommendations |
| Municipal dialogues | | | |
| IUMS | Two network meetings (planning for 2018/2019) | Various activities (e.g. further training, support offers) | Various activities (e.g. further training, support offers) |
| UHH | Two network meetings (planning for 2018/2019) | Various activities (e.g. further training, support offers) | Various activities (e.g. further training, support offers) |
| IUMS/UHH | Exchange during the meetings | Exchange during the meetings | Exchange during the meetings |
| Institutional dialogues(and Project IV) | | | |
| IUMS | Phase I: Development of an educational program (Project IV) | Phase II: Development of an educational program (Project IV) | Phase III: Development of an educational program (Project IV) |
| UHH | A workshop each: Barrier-free university in Hamburg (May) and Isfahan (October) | A workshop each: Barrier-free university in Hamburg (May) and Isfahan (October) | A workshop each: Barrier-free university in Hamburg (May) and Isfahan (October) |
| Project I | | | |
| IUMS | Conducting the sub-study 1a in Isfahan | Conducting the sub-study 1b in Isfahan | Final report Articles |
| Project II | | | |
| IUMS/UHH | Joint method workshop (May; | First evaluation workshop (May; | Final evaluation workshop (May; |

| | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|---|
| | Hamburg) Empirical study/data collection in Hamburg and Isfahan | Hamburg) Continuation of the empirical study in Hamburg and Isfahan | Hamburg or Isfahan) Joint article |
| Project III | | | |
| IUMS/UHH | Joint method work- shop (May; Hamburg) Empirical study/data collection in Hamburg and Isfahan | First evaluation workshop (May; Hamburg) Continuation of the empirical study in Hamburg and Isfahan | Final evaluation workshop (May; Hamburg) Photo documentation Checklist |

Facets of dialogue and forms of dialogues

In the course of the first project application, the project teams focused very much on providing a common understanding of the term “dialogue” and on identifying different levels of the common higher education dialogue. The project intends to strengthen three facets or areas of dialogue: (1) the *International dialogue* between the two universities, (2) the *Municipal dialogue* between the individual university and its urban or rural environment as well as (3) the *Institutional dialogue* for putting the UN Convention into practice in the respective university context.

1. **The International dialogue** means mutual discussion of central concepts such as disability, rehabilitation, inclusion, accessibility, universal design etc. in different local, social and cultural contexts. This includes methodological problems of inclusion research in the areas of education, rehabilitation and therapy as well as an exchange of information on related research projects conducted at the two universities. The international dialogues are to focus on the development of a common transcultural and interdisciplinary discussion on the

rehabilitation and inclusion of people with disabilities as the basis for the enhancement of academic education at both universities.

2. **The Municipal dialogue** tries to strengthen the existing cooperation of the two universities with different local organizations and institutions working for the disabled. Networking activities between university and city focus thematically on care, education and psychosocial support for people with severe disabilities. The University of Isfahan intends to intensify work with an already existing loose network of out-of-school institutions, and the University of Hamburg seeks to cooperate more closely with local schools, since in Hamburg children and adolescents with severe disabilities are hardly taken into account as yet when it comes to inclusion.
3. **The Institutional dialogue** focuses on deepening the discussion on disability and inclusion at the two universities and on the further development of the curriculum and of teaching formats. For this, the University of Isfahan requires empirical data that will be collected in the course of three minor research projects and will form the basis for the development and implementation of a university training program on the topic of inclusion for teaching staff. The University of Hamburg, in turn, will continue to move the project of a “Barrier-free University” forward. Moreover, it also aims to promote regular dialogue – previously non-existent – within the university on the topic of inclusion, migration and transnationalism.

For the sake of clarity, the three facets of dialogue are illustrated separately here; in practice, though, they will be addressed simultaneously, with possible overlaps and interrelations. The teams from Hamburg and Isfahan have

different functions within the three areas of dialogue: critical, yet constructive discussion partner in the international dialogue, critical, yet constructive source of impetus “from the outside” in the respective local networks, initiator of common training/research seminars and innovator in terms of curriculum development in the respective university context.

Research-based teaching and learning

In order to empirically support the dialogues, data is to be collected in studies following the principle of research-based learning. In general, the aim of these cross-cultural research studies is to analyze and assess the physical, psychological, social and cultural aspects of the life of people with disabilities in the two cities, based on various methods and instruments as well as on discussion and experience gained in international research. The procedure for each part is explained in the following.

1. Development of an epidemiological study of people with disabilities and of a study on the prevalence of psychosomatic symptoms in the city of Isfahan: The intention of the two studies is a data-based approximation to the number and characteristics (age, sex, civil and social status etc.) of persons with disabilities living in the city of Isfahan. For Hamburg, this data is already available. Until now the corresponding statistics for Isfahan have not been analyzed and systematized. Special attention will be paid to psychosomatic symptoms, because this phenomenon is reported as very common in the day care centers.
2. Some studies will investigate particularly relevant “barriers” to the full integration and participation of persons with disabilities in society: Studies will examine public attitudes toward disabilities in the two cities,

because research shows that attitudes have a big impact on promoting inclusion in society.

3. Other studies will describe different kinds of physical and architectonic barriers which make it difficult for persons with disabilities to get free access to the different public spheres (streets, public transport, schools, universities, playgrounds) in Isfahan and Hamburg. How barrier-free are the playgrounds in the city? What kind of understanding of disability do students have who want to become teachers or social workers? What sort of support do parents of a child with disabilities wish for? How accessible are the universities and the study courses for people with disabilities?

These studies will provide a detailed quantitative overview of the situation of persons with disabilities in Isfahan and Hamburg. Qualitatively derived data will moreover lead to valuable insights as to the life situations of persons with disabilities, the forms of exclusion and the public attitudes toward this group of people in both cities. Thus, these empirical studies form the basis for developing and testing awareness programs for the teaching staff at the two universities. As already mentioned one of the main goals of this cooperative project is the joint organization, testing and evaluation of teaching/learning settings (seminars, workshops, and teaching projects) in order to sustainably and efficiently implement the different facets of the UN Convention in the academic education of students at both universities.

A close combination of research and university teaching throughout the whole project is the guiding didactic principle here. Junior academics, in particular, are given the opportunity to engage in this. In interdisciplinary and cooperative seminars and methodological workshops, students are to be prepared by the university teachers involved here for empirical questions. Moreover, in special

workshops and student projects, the students will be involved in the data collection process early on and encouraged to do their own research on the life situations and needs of people with disabilities in the city. Titles and objectives of the research projects

Project I: Disability epidemiology and prevalence of psychosomatic symptoms in Isfahan

Sub-study (1a): Investigating the disability epidemiology in Isfahan

Sub-study (1b): Investigating the prevalence of psychosomatic symptoms in people with disabilities

Project II: Disability and inclusion as social and cultural phenomena: Comparative analysis of public attitudes toward disability in Hamburg and Isfahan

Project III: Inclusion and urban culture: Determining architectonic/structural barriers for people with disabilities in the public sphere in the city of Isfahan and Hamburg

Project IV: Developing an educational program concerning the needs of the disabled for the students of rehabilitation

The whole objectives and the goals of these research projects that expected to reach are:

- To determine the difficulties and problems faced by disabled in Isfahan and Hamburg
- To assess and determine the disabled people life barriers and how to overcome those problems
- To recognize the barriers of disabled individuals to access to education and facilities and how to solve

those issues.

In order to achieve these main goals divided in specific objectives as follow:

- Determining the prevalence of disability in Isfahan in terms of demographic variables and kinds of disability
- Determining the signs and complaints of psychosomatics in disabled persons in Isfahan and comparing them with Hamburg
- Determining the mental health status of disabled persons in Isfahan and comparing the findings with Hamburg
- Determining the signs of stress and trauma in disabled persons in Isfahan city and comparing them with Hamburg
- Determining the people's attitude toward the disabled in terms of their job, education, age, gender, financial and social status, religious beliefs
- Determining the people's attitudes in terms of having or not having a disabled person in their house
- Determining architectonic/structural barriers for people with disabilities in the public sphere in Isfahan
- Analyzing the accessibility of the University of Isfahan and possible ways of overcoming barriers (roadmap)
- Needs assessment for the empowerment program of students in relation to disabled people
- Determining the educational needs of students by means of a questionnaire and via interviews
- Determining the ideas of instructors in rehabilitation majors and other related fields such as psychology, social sciences, social work in relation to educational needs of students
- Determining the ideas of graduates majoring in rehabilitation concerning educational needs of students

- Determining the ideas of disabled people in relation to educational needs of students and also their hidden needs and sufferings Determining the aims and syllabus using focus group
- Determining the educational methods and also assessment methods in rehabilitation periods, using workshops, seminars and student projects
- Determining the students' attitude and awareness before and after the implementation of the empowerment program

International Conferences: Disability and Inclusion in a global world

As outlined, two conferences on the topic of “Disability and Inclusion in a global world” were held in 2017. Isfahan and Hamburg are multicultural and multiethnic cities and as such they are also a mirror image of the Iranian or German society. For Hamburg, for instance, it is important to learn more about different cultural and social perspectives on disability and inclusion, not least in order to promote the necessary – due to immigration – intercultural opening in the field of disability work in the city. For Isfahan it may be stimulating to talk to migrants who have been living in Hamburg for a long time and to discuss their needs, hardships and their experiences with institutions working for the disabled in Hamburg.

The three-day congress in Hamburg (1-3 July 2017) was attended by 44 people in addition to the two project groups. From Iran there were two researchers from the University of Yazd, one colleague from the University of Shiraz as well as one representative of the Iranian Society of Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy. Also the Vice President of IUMS attended the conference. Through the DAAD we had learned of a similar project carried out by the University of Oldenburg (Prof. Ortman) in cooperation with the University of Duhok in Iraq and had got in contact with that

project. The two members of that project from Oldenburg as well as two visiting researchers from Iraq, who happened to be in Oldenburg, joined the conference. It was agreed to broaden the exchange. For the keynote, the Christoffel-Blindenmission Deutschland e.V. could be won. Furthermore, a number of German institutions attended the conference, among them Lebenshilfe Hamburg, Alsterdorf Stiftung Hamburg, Nikolauspfllege Stuttgart, Abesa Hamburg and FLUCHTort Hamburg.

The three-day congress in Isfahan (23-26 September 2017) has been attended by about 60 participants in addition to the two project groups. Apart from several Iranian researchers, students as well as experts working for the disabled in Isfahan have registered for the conference. It should be pointed out here that the Mayor of Isfahan could be won as speaker, which is particularly remarkable as it means an important step for the municipal dialogue in the city. Following this, two courses had been jointly organized: In a methodological workshop students from Hamburg and Isfahan have been instructed on how to plan, conduct and interpret small research projects on different barriers at the universities as well as in the urban public space. In a second workshop a questionnaire developed by the University of Hamburg for determining students' attitudes toward people with disabilities has been adapted for use in the context of Isfahan, and problems in data collection and interpretation will be examined with the research group.

Since the both 2017's conferences and the related study visits and workshops have yielded interesting presentations and discussions with scientists and students as well as with representatives of religious groups, migrant and other organizations on historical, religious and philosophical perspectives on disability, on the change in attitudes due to migration, globalization etc., we decided to publish the contributions in this conference reader.