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978-1-107-06406-5 - Disability, Education and Employment in Developing Countries:

From Charity to Investment

Kamal Lamichhane

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Preface

Having been born with visual impairments in the Chitwan District of Nepal, I was deprived of receiving education until I turned 12. I had to experience my brothers, sisters and friends go to school while I remained at home in the dark. It was not that my parents were uncaring; they simply lacked awareness that children with visual impairments could be educated. However, due to the tireless efforts of my parents to find a school, when I turned 12, I got the opportunity to attend a mainstream, integrated school where I studied with my non-disabled friends. At school, most of the time, books were not available in Braille, so I had to rely on the lectures in the classroom. However, I always tried to get support from my friends, which helped me to continue my education, even at university level. I obtained my bachelor's degree in education from the Tribhuvan University of Nepal. Studying in an inclusive educational setting gave me a unique experience of learning and working together with diverse groups, which has ultimately helped me to conceptualize disability from not only theoretical but also from my personal experiences. Facing many ups and downs due to the often prejudiced attitudes towards disability, I have long thought that, over and above functional limitations, the social meaning of disability is conscribed by stereotyped perceptions that exist both in developed and developing countries. This conviction has encouraged me to look at disability issues from different angles, particularly with an investment approach instead of a charity one.

Before coming to Japan for further studies, I often acted as an advocate for the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities in my country, Nepal, through different means and ways. When I joined the University of Tokyo as a doctoral student in 2007, I became more deeply involved in the theory and practice of Disability Studies and began to think of disability issues in a more interdisciplinary way. Prior to joining the University of Tokyo, I received my masters of arts in education with a focus on education for persons with disabilities from the University of Tsukuba.

In short, I must admit that my life has been split into three near-equal stages: a life of darkness; a life filled with brightness and a wonderful life filled with light and opportunity. It is education that has enabled me to view

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the world from three different perspectives: the blind child in isolation; the child extending him or herself through education and the adult living fully in the world. Where I am today is mainly because of the education I have been fortunate to receive and partly because of the negative attitudes that persist in society. The negative attitude towards disability exists all over the world no matter whether the countries are developing or developed. Instead of enjoying the beauty of living with human diversity and considering disability as a subject for investment, society generally believes that people with disabilities cannot benefit from education, cannot participate in labour markets and cannot be contributing members to families, societies and countries. Such behaviour of societies actually encouraged me to seek knowledge and to work positively in bringing about change in the community. Education is the first step to bring about change. However, when considering the case of persons with disabilities, such common knowledge does not hold true in the minds of many. The prevailing belief is, still, that even if persons with disabilities are educated, they are less likely to make use of their education. I wanted to invalidate such assumptions with empirical work, which is, in fact, the main motivation for me to undertake this project. In other words, the importance of shifting the paradigm in disability from charity to investment, exclusion to inclusion and sympathy to rights have motivated me to bring this empirical work to the readers.

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My research work has also benefited from discussions with seminar participants at the various meetings and conferences at which I have presented portions of this research, namely, the Far East and South Asia Meeting of the Econometric Society at the University of Tokyo; the seminar of the Japanese Economic Association's annual meeting at Sensyu University; and the Todai

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Forum seminar at Manchester Metropolitan University in Manchester, UK, all held in 2009, followed by the Pacific Rim International Conference on Disabilities organized by the Center on Disability Studies, the University of Hawaii, 2011 and 2012, and seminar participants of the World Bank in Washington in 2011, Syracuse University in 2011 and Norwegian Social Research Institute (NOVA), Oslo, in 2012.

Similarly, I would like to acknowledge the wonderful research assistance provided by Diana Kartika and Mr Takaki Takeda. Takaki greatly helped with superb research assistance, particularly in econometric analysis for Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 9, whereas Diana reviewed the literature.

Through research, I have worked on the issues addressed in this book for many years. Significant portions of the book build on my doctoral dissertation and peer reviewed journal articles. A major portion of Chapter 6 of this book has been derived from the paper entitled “Disability and returns to the investment in education in a developing country”, published in *Economics of Education Review* with professor Yasuyuki Sawada. Some portions in Chapters 3 and 8 are used by the previously published paper entitled “The nexus between disability, education and employment: Evidence from Nepal” with Mr Tomoo Okubo at *Oxford Development Studies*. Similarly, some of the portions of Chapter 8 are from the paper entitled “Employment Situation and Life Changes for People with Disabilities: Evidence from Nepal”, published in the journal *Disability & Society*. Moreover, a portion of Chapter 10 is derived from a previously published paper entitled “Disability and Barriers to Education: Evidence from Nepal” in the *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*. Besides this journal paper, for the same Chapter, I have written the teaching style considerations made by mainstream subject teachers while teaching students with visual impairments in regular mainstream schools, and this work has not been previously published elsewhere. Moreover, Chapters 3, 6, 8 and 10 are the research done as a part of my doctoral work. Besides some of this previously published research work, I have also introduced entirely new work in Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9 and 11, which was carried out during my work as a research fellow at JICA-RI. The previously published papers used for Chapters 3, 6, 8 and 10 have also been substantially revised and rewritten. Though the publication of this book was supported by the project of JICA-RI, the views expressed in this book are mine, and no endorsement of these views is implied by any of the institutions to which I am currently affiliated.

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Furthermore, for Chapters 3, 6, 8 and 10, I have used the primary data collected by myself in Nepal in 2008.

Since there are too many names to be listed here, I would like to jointly thank all my friends and family members for the valuable advice, warm encouragement, and the unlimited compassion they gave me during this study journey; similarly, I would like to offer my gratitude to all the people who were directly or indirectly involved, and extended a cooperating hand to make this book successful.

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Last but not least, I would like to dedicate this work to my mother, Mrs Goma Lamichhane, who has been waiting so long for this book, and to my father, the late Mr Bhanu Bhakta Lamichhane. My father, despite being illiterate, left no stone unturned when trying to provide education for me, his son. This was no easy task; despite his efforts, I remained illiterate until the age of 12, when a school I could attend was finally found. Through my father's continuous struggle to find a school for me, he brought me forth from the darkness and gave me the brightness of life.