Social Model of disability and inequalities: what issues?

Key points for discussion as follows.

1. The development of a social model of disability and impairment
   - The social model is a model of disability separated from impairment
   - Impairment is predominantly socially caused (accidental injury, war, malnutrition etc) as disability is socially caused
   - Poverty, including relative poverty, is the primary factor linking disability and impairment.
2. There is a need to address the weakening of the disabled people's movement (locally, regionally, nationally and internationally) including lack of resources, particularly finance.
   - The disabled people's movement represents the democratic collective voice of disabled people and has been fundamental to the development of the social model of disability, challenging the individual/medical model, struggles against discrimination, the establishment of human rights and anti-discriminatory legislation, and the fight for independent living and full participatory citizenship.
   - The problems for the movement are evident as all levels, including the demise of some Centres for Independent Living.
   - There seem to be numerous factors including divisions within the movement and links with large-scale charities.
   - Lack of finance is a central problem, perhaps particularly compared with the extensive financing of traditional large-scale charities.
3. The say that disabled people have in any policy-making which has implications for their lives
   - There is clear evidence of the lack of involvement of disabled people in policy decision-making, particularly the involvement of the disabled people's movement as the democratic collective voice of disabled people.
   - I was involved in the EDAMAT project as the UK researcher. The following provides a basic summary.

The European Disability Action Mainstream Assessment Tool (EDAMAT) addresses the mainstreaming of disability issues across the policy-making process and in the implementation of policy in order to counteract the marginalization of the needs and rights of disabled people and their treatment as a 'special' case.

This presents fundamental challenges to policy-making in realising the importance of the principle of Design For All and its correlative, that is the recognition that 'one size does not fit all'. This means that while issues related to disabled people should be mainstreamed to the maximum extent possible, regard should be given to the fact that disabled people, because of their individual needs, may at times require exemptions within certain laws and policies, or provision for services that are tailored to meet these needs.

It is the product of an EU funded research project and the work of an international team of researchers and representatives from six countries: Portugal, Spain, Greece, Malta, Ireland and the UK. It was developed through research and work with disabled persons, family members of disabled persons who cannot represent themselves, representatives of organisations of disabled people and policy makers over a two year period.

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09 September 2010