Disability policy in Canada: Then and now...

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Mary Ann McColl, PhD, MTS

AIMS

1. To describe the trajectory of disability policy in Canada, including current state and recent developments;
2. To explore current disability policy as a reflection of Canadian culture and values;
3. To open a discussion reflecting on how we have ended up where we are in Canada and the US.

1. History of disability policy in Canada
   - < 1980 Minimal explicit disability policy
   - 1996 – 2005 Provincial Push
   - 2006 – 2014 Federal Monitoring
   - > 2015 Federal Leadership

2. Disability policy as a reflection of Canadian culture
   - 3 aims of disability policy
     o Access
     o Support
     o Equity (Bickenbach, 1996)
   - 37 federal statutes explicitly addressing disability
     o 21 aimed at support
     o 10 aimed at access
     o 6 aimed at equity
   - Canadian culture
     o 34% On-side; 28% Young bystanders; 22% Older detached; 15% Indifferent (Angus-Reid, 2015)
     o Is there a disability community? (Ville et al., 2003; Prince, 2006)

3. Where are we today?
   - On the verge of new federal accessibility legislation
   - Expressed intention to sign Optional Protocol of UNCRPD
   - Robust HR legislation, but disappointing impact on equity
   - Low spending / benefits /eligibility (OECD, 2010)
   - People with disabilities still significantly disadvantaged in employment, income, education
   - Intersectionality with poverty, gender, ethnicity, indigeneity

• Need for macro social indicator of social inclusion, barrier removal – e.g., Time Use Dissimilarity Index.

The Time Use Dissimilarity Index is calculated using data derived from the General Social Survey (GSS; Statistics Canada, 2011) and the American Time Use Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). The Index provides a population-based indicator of differences in daily activities. It shows that disabled Americans are 16% dissimilar from non-disabled Americans in their time use, whereas disabled Canadians are only 10% dissimilar from their non-disabled counterparts. Disabled Americans spend significantly more time sleeping, using TVs/computers, and in unreported activity than their non-disabled counterparts, and less time in paid work and social leisure than disabled Canadians (Wilson & McColl, in press).

References

About the CDPA:
The Canadian Disability Policy Alliance (CDPA) is a national collaboration of disability researchers, advocates, and policy-makers, aimed at creating and mobilizing knowledge to enhance disability policy in Canada. The Alliance has been funded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council since 2009. Through the co-creation and dissemination of new knowledge about disability policy, we seek to realize a vision of Canada as a place where people with disabilities enjoy full participation and citizenship, supported by a coherent framework of legislation, regulation and programs. (www.disabilitypolicyalliance.ca)

About the author:
Mary Ann McColl, PhD, MTS, is a Professor in Rehabilitation Science and Public Health Science at Queen’s University. She is also Academic Lead of the Canadian Disability Policy Alliance, and Associate Director of the Centre for Health Services & Policy Research at Queen’s. (mccollm@queensu.ca)