

Disability Equality in the Majority World

**Steve Russell
University of Canterbury**

NADP

- ◆ The National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) is in the early stages of discussing the potential role of the organisation in furthering disability equality in the majority world, with a focus on post compulsory education.

NADP

- ◆ "As concerned citizens of the world, what can an organisation like NADP do to promote disability equality in post compulsory education in the majority world?"

Majority World

- ◆ The term 'majority world' is used in preference to third world (Grech 2009).
- ◆ The majority of the world's wealth is concentrated in the minority world.
- ◆ The impact of globalisation and a history of colonisation of majority world countries by the minority world has done much to maintain this position (Grech 2009, Priestley 2001).

Majority World

- ◆ Eighty percent of disabled people inhabit the majority world.
- ◆ A vast body of literature articulates a relationship between disability, poverty, poor health care, the effects of preventable disease, and war.

Geographic divide?

- ◆ A narrow definition of the majority world which is entirely geographically based is problematic.
- ◆ Levels of wealth per citizen are not consistent within countries - China or India developing super powers have massive discrepancies in wealth within their vast populations (Davies et al 2007).

Geographic divide?

- ◆ The assumption that membership of economic organisations such as the EU is a guarantee of disability equality is also clearly erroneous.
- ◆ The social safety nets which are part of life for some citizens are way beyond the experience of others (Krosnar 2003, Phillips 2009, and Van Ginneken 2003).

Geographic divide?

- ◆ Obama's proposed health care reforms expose the inequality USA (Stephen 2010).
- ◆ 'The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Person's with Disabilities' (2007) may help to bridge the boundary between Minority and Majority worlds

The Rights of Person's with Disabilities

- ◆ International benchmarks for the human rights of disabled people are set out within the convention.
- ◆ Education is inevitably identified - an inevitable emphasis on schools, and a focus on inclusion within community provision

The Rights of Person's with Disabilities

- ◆ Ratification requires a nation to furnish the UN with an action plan which aims to further disability equality.
- ◆ Active involvement of disabled people in implementation, monitoring and reporting is a key principle.

Millennium Development Goals

- ◆ Identify universal primary education as a development target (www.un.org/disabilities).
- ◆ Disabled children are, in the main, excluded from education in the majority world, as are the rural poor.
- ◆ Girls are vulnerable to exclusion therefore disabled girls are least likely to be attending school. (Priestley 2001)

Millennium Development Goals

- ◆ Secondary schooling is clearly out of reach for many global citizens without impairments.
- ◆ Those with impairments face additional hurdles, especially when poverty and being female are added to the equation.

Question?

- ◆ Is there a role for tertiary education disability organisations when in the majority world, for some, any education is post compulsory?
- ◆ Can we shift our aims in order to “prime the pump” and begin to see students with impairments coming through to secondary and eventually tertiary?

NADP

- ◆ A minority world based organisation of disability practitioners operating mainly in UK universities.
- ◆ Main resource are its 700 members
- ◆ Mat Fraser is President of NADP. Mat's considerable expertise and profile as a well known, writer, comedian, performer and international disability activist.

Dangers

- ◆ Assumed homogeneity and imposition.
- ◆ The 'othering' (Foucault 1973, Haller et al 2006, Oliver 2000, Richards 2008) in relation to minority majority world discourse (Grech 2009, Meekosha 2009, Yeo and Moore 2003).
- ◆ Lose sight of disability equality is not necessarily a reality in the Minority world.

Dangers

- ◆ The Social Model (Oliver 2009) ethos of NADP would prohibit topics such as 'a cure for autism'.
- ◆ In the majority world, preventable disease , poor health care, dirty water and similar realities are known to lead to impairment (Priestley 2001, Yeo and Moore 2003).

Dangers

- ◆ Grech (2009) cautions against exporting the values of western Critical Disability Studies discourse with scant consideration of local contexts.
- ◆ Higher education is a distant idea in places where primary schooling is aspirational.

Question

- ◆ Is it better to do nothing at all?
- ◆ Given the reality of the virtually impossibility of an organisation like NADP engaging in emancipatory research in order to find out from those with an insider perspective what it is that we should do, isn't it incredibly patronising to even have the discussion?

Emerging Ideas

- ◆ Presentations at international conferences have stimulated debate about majority world concerns.
- ◆ Partnerships are beginning to be forged - all be it mainly by minority world contributors at this stage.
- ◆ The development of a mentoring scheme and networks for exchange of ideas.

Emerging Ideas

- ◆ NADP has links in South Africa through the philanthropic activity of a company supplying assistive technology.
- ◆ Board members have links to Rwanda and Indonesia.
- ◆ Academics in Critical Disability Studies have been instrumental in developing international collaborations.

Emerging Ideas

- ◆ Waiving of membership fees
- ◆ Electricity supply - solar laptops
- ◆ Special interest groups (SIGs) have formed

So what next . . . ?

- ◆ UN Convention
- ◆ The MDG's
- ◆ The global recession
- ◆ 'Nothing About Us without Us'