THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY: EUROPE AND THE MAJORITY WORLD

Edited by
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The Disability Press
Leeds
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The Disability Press

The Disability Press aims to provide an alternative outlet for work in the field of ‘disability studies’. It draws inspiration from the work of all those countless disabled individuals and their allies who have, over the years, struggled to place ‘disability’ on to the political agenda. The establishment of The Disability Press is a testament to the growing recognition of ‘disability’ as an equal opportunities and human rights issue within the social sciences and more widely in society.

The Centre for Disability Studies at the University of Leeds has provided funding for this volume. We also wish to record our thanks to the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds for its continuing support.

Colin Barnes and Geof Mercer
Acknowledgements

This is the third volume that we have edited based on contributions to a seminar series on ‘Implementing the Social Model of Disability: from Theory to Practice’ organised by the Centre for Disability Studies (CDS) at the University of Leeds. The first and second volumes, Implementing the Social Model of Disability: Theory and Research and Disability Policy and Practice: Applying the Social Model were published in 2004 by The Disability Press.

We wish to thank the Economic and Social Research Council for a grant to help with this series, and also to the participants and particularly those presenting papers at the fifth and sixth seminars on which this volume is based.

Once again, we want to record our special debt to Marie Ross for her expert support and skills in preparing the collection for publication and more specifically in producing the Index.
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The social model of disability is a way of viewing the world which says that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. Mik Scarlet (Broadcaster and journalist): I'm disabled by the world around me and if the world was more accessible, I would be less disabled and then I would just be left with my "impairment" i.e. what doesn't work. It's not that my legs don't work that disabling me. It's the fact that if I'm on a flat surface, I can wheel around fine, I'm wonderfully happy. It's only when I come up to a flight of stairs. Alice Maynard (Chair 2008-2014, Scope): As a wheelchair user, you have a slightly easier job of explaining the social model. Whereas if you

In the majority of the non-industrialised world, the incidence of disability is particularly high. War, famine, disasters all contribute to injury, impairment and disability. The social model of disability emphasises the perspective that disability is created through structural barriers and is thus created by society while individual, medical models have viewed disability as something inherent in the person. The CRPD states For example, 17 per cent of Europe’s general population and about 15 per cent of the working population suffer from a disability or chronic illness. People with disabilities are reported to have twice the rate for non-participation in the labour market as compared to persons without disabilities. Disability is thus part of a human condition. In the vast majority of cases disability is believed to be a result of social, economic or political factors, accident or armed conflict. Currently, there might be more factors present that contribute to the incidence of impairments, including environmental pollution, HIV/AIDS and drug abuse. This understanding of disability is referred to as the Social Model. It focuses on eliminating the barriers, promoting positive attitudes and making sure that laws and policies support the exercise of full participation and non-discrimination. The medical model does still prevail in many countries today and the social model is not universally accepted or applied. The Social Model of Disability: Europe and the Majority World contains thirteen chapters on the application of social model inspired thinking outside of the British context. The contributors include established figures and newcomers to the field. They raise a range of important issues and concerns central to theorising and applying social model insights in “developed” and “majority world” countries. The collection explores the relevance of debates within disability studies about the form and character of social exclusion of disabled people and associated policy responses. This book will be of particular interest to academics, researchers, disabled people, professionals and policy makers with an interest in disability issues and the on-going struggle for a more equitable and just society. Proponents of the social model use the distinction between impairment and disability to reduce disabilities to a single social dimension’s social oppression. They downplay the role of biological and mental conditions in the lives of disabled people. Consequences of denying biological and mental realities involving disabilities are discussed. People will benefit most by recognizing both the biological and the social dimensions of disabilities. Discover the world's research. 17+ million members. 135+ million publications.