

Expert or lay perspective ?

Challenges in constructing disability as a concept in
Norwegian welfare provisions

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Introduction

- Norwegian Sociologist –
- Background: Disability As A Contested Concept
 - Not given what type of “objective (=biological?) facts is included in the concept
 - Not given what type of “subjective” facts (=experiences?) are included in the concept
- Post doc project Conceptual Analysis And Definitions Of Disability- Administrative Categorisations
- Financed through Norwegian Research Council
- Part of a bigger project on ”Disability, Politics and daily life”

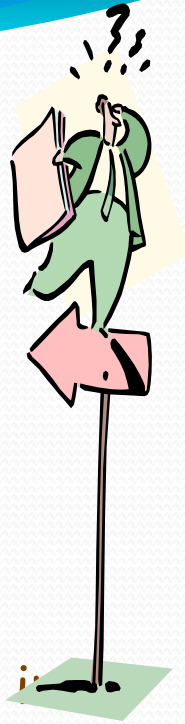
The research question



- The research question of the project I am working on concern these questions:
- *Which approaches to disability appear administratively when welfare rights and services are defined?*
- *Appear any changes in approach to disability in the Norwegian welfare state today?*

The aim

- Clarify
- *Assessments made about what is disability, what is it not in welfare provisions?*
 - Is personal experiences of inadequacy or disabling barriers taken into account to define disability?
 - Must personal experience be certified to get access to welfare benefits
 - What type of assessment procedures and investigations is done to make statements about disabilities





Modern challenges

- Norway as a type of modern welfare state struggle with how to design welfare provision for disability as a marginalised group
- New demands put the welfare state
 - Less bureaucracy, more efficiency and flexibility
 - More sensitive and humble welfare administrators towards claimant
 - NAV – a new welfare reform: united and co-operated service programs

An illustration of this- Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV)

- The purpose:

“Should play a broad participatory role in the world of work and society, and contributes to the financial security of the individual.

This depends on close interaction with the user, working life and local authorities, and a sharper focus on people with special needs in relation to the labour market and others in a challenging life situation.”

according to their website:

<http://www.nav.no/page?id=805312737>



Welfare for people with disability

- By principle, modern welfare state
 - should overshadow inequality in ability
 - of payment or resources
 - by giving access or provide equality in needs (according to Bauman 1998)
- Additionally provide for opportunity structures for people with disability
 - Prevent bad standards/practice in society
 - Recognise and bring status – democracy, accessibility
 - Bring well-being, when and where possible



Inclusive policy

- From normalisation as principle
- Towards policy for inclusion and participation
 - General means
 - Principle of universal social rights
 - Focus compensate negative consequences of disability
 - From Equality/sameness principle /principle of redistributions to human rights- self-directed help and tailor-made provisions



Inclusive policy continues..



Framing disability as a relative phenomenon
The relative model 3 ways to “bridge a disability gap”

- 1) Improve individual incapacities, lack of resources etc. trough rehabilitation, training and education
- 2) Changing surroundings, modifying demands and barriers
- 3) Combine of such measures

New constructs of disability ?

- EU and their work for
 - Sustainable and employment-friendly for workers, regardless of disability (age, race etc.)
 - Equal opportunity _FETD (2000)
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [A/RES/61/106]
- Does these have an impact on how welfare provisions and programs are designed for people with disabilities???



Trend: a need to "objectify" disability

- Disability needs to be 'objectified' in order for welfare provisions to accessible
 - Objective criteria of shortcomings
 - Determine degree of capacity
 - Determined by experience of exclusion, shortcomings
 - Citizenship-
 - fully ?
 - A touch ?
 - Partly?
- Find criteria and indicators to clarify and "objectify" disability using
 - Outsider or
 - Insider perspective



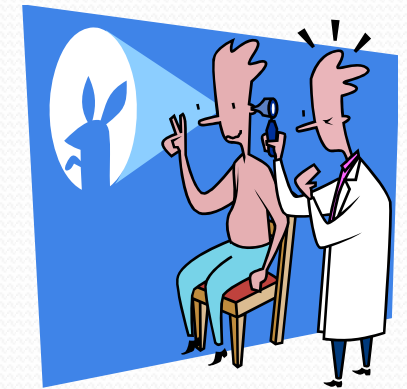
The expert "route"



- Typical outsider perspective to objectify disability
- Expert panels making statements or 'certifications'
- Disability stated by criteria of
 - Personal impediments
 - Incapacities,
 - Long- lasting disturbance of bodily or mental development or diseases.
 - Experts provide information to the disability concept by giving details, examinations, prognosis etc
- Determine a permanent illness, injury or blemish

The lay "route" or perspective

- Typical insider perspective to objectify disability
- User experience of disabilities
- Disadvantages, limitations
 - Lack of ability
 - Lack of experience
 - Lack of possibility
- Need for accommodation services
- Problems of upholding conditions considered
 - To be common (Housing, transport, family, life)
 - Disability is clear to define and determine
 - Classic sign of need or inconvenience
 - Experts are coming into picture in second hand, not first hand



Conclusion

- 1) Definitions and procedures of assessment can “construct” disabled persons as more or less able and competent to judge their own situation and choose way to improve it.
- Definitions and procedures of assessment creates different opportunities structures or actions possibilities for people with disabilities, and thus for agency/welfare strategies



Conclusion II

- A definition of disability in the expert assessment process relies to a great extent on assembling expert panels, professions and bureaucracies to make an opinion. These are also given the authority to decide if and to what extent self-definitions of disability should be influential for determining good or bad welfare.
- These agencies make plans and procedures that may include competence of personal experience, but not necessarily. A person with disability will need to co-operate with public agencies to receive provisions and no own insight and competence about disabilities and social rights is needed



Conclusion III

- Definitions and procedures of disability in a self-assessment process dependent less on expert panels and welfare bureaucracies, but do require a lot of competence and insight about own situation and legal rights of the person with disability. He or she will be expected to classify not only own needs, but also capacities, limitations and abilities.
- The persons themselves need to know if and how they can utilize disability provisions and welfare services, and several measures are strongly regulated. Ability to be self-managing personal welfare is needed and also expanded knowledge about rights to service or cash-programs and complains procedures

Thank you!

- For your attention!

