

Disability: The impact of disability on individuals

NID Training Disability Diary

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Introduction

The population of a multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual country like South Africa has a variety of values, traditions, beliefs and cultural practices. Members of the population live in many different environments. Different belief systems and cultural mores give rise to different attitudes and practices relating to disability and persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities, themselves, are diverse in gender, age, socioeconomic status, sexuality, ethnicity, and cultural heritage.

Discussion

The measurement of disability is complex and not regarded as totally reliable (Maart, Amosun & Jelsma, 2019). Suffice it to say that there is a high incidence of disability in South Africa across all sectors of the population.

The context in which persons with disabilities live has a great impact on their experiences and the extent of their disability. The attitudes of the community and the opportunities afforded to them influence their access to rehabilitation, education and employment. Their health is also affected by the environment because access to health care, safe water and sanitation, nutrition, poverty, living and working conditions, even climate, all influence the quality of the lives of persons with disabilities.

Many cultural beliefs have an impact on the treatment of persons with disabilities. In some communities, disability is seen as a result of witchcraft, or punishment on the parents for previous wrongs. Sacrificial rituals or prayer is often seen as a way to cure or help persons with disabilities (Masasa, Irwin-Carruthers & Faure, 2005). As a result of many of these beliefs, persons with disabilities are hidden away from the general community and are excluded from everyday activities. Such negative attitudes and behaviours have an adverse effect on persons with disabilities, leading to stigmatisation and low self-esteem (WHO & WB, 2011).

Apart from having to deal with their actual disabilities and societal attitudes, persons with disabilities do not always have access to education, thus, their chances of

being employed are low and poverty often results. In addition, they often do not receive the disability-related services that they require (Maart et al., 2019).

Conclusion

It is important to raise awareness and challenge negative attitudes to persons with disabilities. In the words of Steven Hawkins (2011) '... we have a moral duty to remove the barriers to participation, .. we can no longer overlook the hundreds of millions of people with disabilities who are denied access to health, rehabilitation, support, education and employment, and never get the chance to shine'.

It is the responsibility of educators, employers and the general community to help persons with disabilities to shine.

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