Knowledge Café – “Program Supports” Table

Notes of Submissions from Participants

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Recorded & Transcribed by Piotr Majkowski

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1. The problem of increasing automation of services was identified. It was felt that real people should be helping people, rather than computerized approaches. This problem was noted throughout various processes throughout disability systems. The consequences of this shift were identified as potential research areas.
2. Program and service funding is being reduced. Can service quality be maintained in face of this? Does more funding mean better programs? Do we get what we pay for?
3. It was noted that services sometimes feature othering language, inaccessible communication processes, and have little sensitivity to invisible disabilities. How do we move away from this and towards respect?
4. Services aught to be navigable. This includes the language that they use, the technology, and the programs themselves.
5. What is adequacy? What is appropriateness? We often discuss these two concepts however what exactly are they? Are they different from person to person? How do we avoid constructing adequacy as the “lowest common denominator?” How do we incorporate context in the concept of adequacy?
6. How do we build programs that are appropriate to individuals? Are rigid structures or discretionary decisions better for adjudicating need? What should the balance be between substantive/real justice vs. formal/equal justice?
7. Efforts should be undertaken to map the disability system. One method of doing so could be to examine the trajectories of persons dealing with disabilities starting at the point of disability. Such trajectories could be obtained by looking retrospectively at people who have been dealing with disabilities for a long time. This could be beneficial at determining how disability systems have influenced various social outcomes, like poverty.
8. How do we deal with chronic under-employment for persons with disabilities? We should conceptualize under-employment not only as insufficient access to work, hours, or insufficient pay, but also employment in the wrong field. This discussion referred to the presentation made the previous day about the Tim Horton’s employee.
9. Vocational Rehabilitation services should be evaluated. Are persons with disabilities being retrained into jobs that are appropriate for them? Are retrained workers actually getting work?
10. How do we make programs and services “Human Centred” vs. “Technology Centred?”
11. How can we build choice into programs? Can program clients make self referrals? Can clients select the programs that they want to take part in?
12. Do programs achieve the stated goals that they have?
    1. There is a history of mistrust with service agencies – feeling that they do no strive to achieve the goals that they set for themselves
    2. It is felt that the current system punishes workers
    3. How do we build back trust in the system?
13. Stronger data sources are necessary
    1. Accurate ways of measuring levels of under-employment
    2. Better understandings of work disengagement
    3. Better user statistics and outcome data are needed for programs which serve persons with disabilities
14. More attention must be paid to people that have been disproportionately affected by under-employment, particularly aboriginal persons and suburban and rural residents
    1. attention should be paid to historical traumas, and how these are recreated by disability systems
    2. intersectionality should be used as a framework for understanding the complexity of these needs
    3. services are rarely designed with enough attention to the needs of various populations. Example: complicated forms for clients of mental health services
15. Jobs previously done by blind individuals are being made redundant by new technologies
16. Navigability and system mapping research could be informed by institutional ethnography
17. There is a need to document positive examples of disability programs and share these successes

Comments obtained after knowledge café session during plenary discussion:

1. It will be important for us to understand what newly produced statistical information actually means. “…to study the study of statistics…”
2. We must ask ourselves if we have sufficient community partners present here. Decisions about future research should be undertaken with community partners present.
3. The activities of CRWDP to date should be evaluated. From this, we should determine how to proceed.