Ageing and Disability

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Data

- 323,707 people with disabilities (8%)
- 136,696 >65 years
- Incidence of disability increases with age
- 65 year old 9 times more likely to develop disability than person aged 15-24
- Multiple disabilities
- Of disabled people aged 65 years or over two thirds experience multiple disabilities
## Disability in Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>136,696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blindness, deafness or severe vision or hearing impairment</td>
<td>41,415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition that limits one or more basic physical activities</td>
<td>90,985</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty in learning, remembering or concentrating</td>
<td>41,528</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty in dressing, bathing, getting around inside home</td>
<td>52,985</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty in going outside home</td>
<td>73,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in working at a job or business</td>
<td>77,795</td>
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</tbody>
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Other Estimates

- 149,000 carers (CSO)
- 97,500 households contain carer of older person either within or without (ESRI/O’Shea)
- 89,000 older people require care in the community (Fahey and Murray)
- 31,000 require high or continuous care (Mercer)
- 13,000 of these estimated to be in highest dependency category (O’Shea)
- 20,000 in long-stay care – some of whom are low dependent
Theories of Ageing

- Few theories on ageing with a disability, rather separate theories of ageing and disability
- Influences of biological ageing, psychological ageing and sociological ageing
- Disengagement theory - withdrawal
- Continuity theory - role adaptation - psychological but influenced by social and physical environment
Critical Theories of Ageing

- Relationship between ageing and social forces
- Political economy of ageing emphasises social construction of age
- Influence of power, structures and processes
- Feminist models have pointed to predominance of the male experience/understanding in existing theories- point to dual discrimination- age and gender
Theoretical Underpinnings of Social Model Within Disability

• Nagi’s functional limitation model - incorporated socially defined roles

• Enabling-disabling process models - absence of alignment between capabilities of impaired individual and their physical, social and environmental worlds

• Hahn’s minority group model of disability - social attitudes informed and sanctioned dependency
Social Model of Disability

• Social model focuses on events and circumstances external to the person
• Disability is function of interaction between person and his/her social world
• Impairment need not equate to dependency
• Contrast to the medical model, where focus is on the individual, loss is internalised and problems are endogenised
Disability Movement

- Part of civil rights movement in USA
- First CIL in 1972 in California
- Focus on power, control, autonomy
- Equal status and equal rights
- End to social oppression
- Americans with Disability Act 1990
National Disability Strategy

• NDA pivotal significance in Ireland in the development of more social model
• Disability Act 2005
• Multi-annual investment programme
• Sectoral plans for holistic comprehensive services
• Social conceptualisation of independence and dependence
Rights Based Approach

- Establish legal rights in health, education and welfare
- Full citizenship
- Right to assessment, services statement and services
- Right to redress
- Dissatisfaction remains that current legislation is not fully rights based
- Assessment, but resources do not automatically follow—rather budget constraints model
Ageing-Disability Interface

• Weak cross-over
• Medical models and administrative models predominates in ageing
• Social model not as well developed as in disability sector
• Weak empowerment, little choice for older people
• Resistance among older people to identify with disability cultures and identities
Why Weak Interaction

• Many older people do not suffer disability – identification problem
• Disability in older age natural - no need to politicise
• May be good reason to medicalise age – pain etc
• Disability movement traditionally focused on younger people
• Emphasis on work, unemployment and education
• Ageism
Ageism

• Ageism exacerbates the potential for exclusion that disability presents
• Rationing through delay rather than denial of services
• One of key features of being older with disability in Ireland is waiting
• Older people wait for community-based services and appointments that never come
Final Thoughts

• Disability is experienced personally so services should be person-centred and offer real choice
• Disability and dependence are not the same
• Independence and dependence are largely subjective concepts
• Social conditions, social structures and social relationships all matter for age and disability
• Convergence will enhance capabilities model