

Editorial: The Land of Unequal Opportunities...

Once upon a time a tortoise and a hare had an argument about who was faster. They decided to settle the argument with a race. They agreed on a route and started off the race. The hare shot ahead and ran briskly for some time. Then seeing that he was far ahead of the tortoise, he thought he'd sit under a tree for some time and relax before continuing the race. He sat under the tree and soon fell asleep. The tortoise plodding on overtook him and soon finished the race, emerging as the undisputed champ. The hare woke up and realised that he'd lost the race. The moral of the story is that the steady and determined one wins the race.

Today's version of this narrative would introduce several new elements: there would have to be a judge; there would have to be prizes, first as well as second and certainly, there would be a book of rules. And the book of rules would make the judge's decision final; it would not, in fact, provide for hares and tortoises to race together; and the highest award would be reserved for the swift, while the admirable tortoise would receive scant consolation.

Now in the language of fables are written some of the first philosophic certainties of men. The fable makes use of a simple animal alphabet to spell out the plainest truths. In the tale I have recounted, we discover in the hare the insolence of superiority. The foolish hare, presuming upon his natural talents and having the utmost contempt for his adversary, loses the race through over-security. On the other hand, in the constant even pace of the tortoise is found the benefit of patience and diligence.

That perseverance can triumph over natural advantage is the moral of the story. I am convinced that, in the life of a person with a disability, no single quality, no trait necessary to overcome difficulties, is of greater importance than perseverance.

I first heard the above fable and lessons for the world in which we live – the land of unequal opportunities – in the mid-eighties of the last century during a powerful speech of by Dr William Rowland during the national (South African) year of the disabled, as it was called then. I hope that the young(er) readers of this journal will forgive me for sharing this old story, because it has a purpose. Forty years later, I am increasingly asking myself if the world has changed and especially if the world has become a better place. And yes, I admit and have to admit that the world has changed – and in many ways has become a better place

for many people including many people with disabilities. Watch the exciting TED sessions of the late Dr Hans Rosling and you will realise that on many fronts the world has become a better place. Something we tend to easily forget when we live in our own 'bubble' in affluent and democratic societies where the rights paradigm becomes a façade at times for spoiled individuals who always want more and who are never satisfied. The great improvements in public health, education, economic development may not be seen however, by those living in low-and middle-income countries and in countries where one doesn't dare to refer to 'rights'. This in particular could be the case for those who continue to live in poverty or those who are continually being stigmatised and excluded from mainstream developments.

Most articles that are published in this journal refer to the lives of people with disabilities and their families who live in low-and middle-income countries and in countries where people suffer under dictatorship. I hope that everyone who is reading and contributing to this journal realises this. If you do, you may increasingly start appreciating the fact that many of the contributors write because they have a mission. They cannot sit still but want to share the often small but valuable contributions which should lead to a better and more inclusive society with you and me. I therefore would like to thank all those who contribute their research studies, experiences and at time reflections with you and me. This journal would not exist if people were not taking the time to – at times meticulously – study important subjects, write down results of studies being done and hope that their work will contribute to new insights, better practices and if lucky, even new policies and developments. I also would like to thank all those reviewers who critically review articles (and some have done so for years); provide – critical – feedback but all to ensure that the quality of manuscripts will improve; flaws in studies be identified; and offer valuable suggestions to authors. These reviewers do this for free; they don't get a penny for it nor do they get formal and public acknowledgment for the excellent work they are doing on a voluntary basis. Without them this journal would not be there! I am calling upon you and especially the experienced readers and authors to register yourself as reviewer; something which simply can be done at the homepage of www.dcidj.org

As editor-in-chief I wish to challenge you, however, beyond the question of becoming a reviewer. I want to request you to write and submit articles that lead to debate. We cannot permit ourselves to be satisfied with high(er) impact rates of

the journal as long as the lessons from your publications are not being debated or in fact are not leading to a debate that will influence decision- and policymakers. There is a dearth of - at times excellent - quality of articles being published but I am concerned about its application in the field. The DCID journal is not meant to be a journal for academics per se but the fact that the journal is supported with public funds means that we have a responsibility and an obligation to make sure that the journal is meaningful to society and its transformation into a society that is more egalitarian and inclusive of all. During the coming months, discussions will take place with various editorial board members about the future of the journal. We will discuss at first in a small group ideas and ways to make the above become reality and we obviously will involve you as readers and contributors in these developments as well. In the meantime, I will invite you to write to me and share your ideas and concerns.

Wishing you well in your work and stay healthy in these challenging times of Covid-19!

Huib Cornielje
Editor-in-Chief
DCID Journal