

Who represents “disabled people”? an analysis of the governmental disability committee and its implications for the political participation of disabled people in Taiwan

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Abstrak

Participation in the public sector is an important element of disabled people’s political rights. This paper explores the composition and practices of governmental disability-related advisory committees in Taiwan’s central and local governments. We used documentary analysis, focus groups, and in-depth interviews in our research, finding that the percentage of disabled people in governmental disability-related advisory committees is very low; usually there are only one or two disabled committee members, in most instances with physical disabilities. Furthermore, there are no transparent criteria for the selection of disabled committee members. Accessibility and support are also rarely taken into account in these committees. In Taipei’s new direct election system, the Taipei city government has increased the number of disabled committee members and broadened coverage of different types of disabilities. However, many disabled persons still question the practices of direct election. Finally, this paper suggests that to further promote the civic participation of disabled persons in public policy, the government should increase the number of disabled people in governmental disability-related advisory committees, ensure a democratic selection mechanism, empower disabled people’s organizations, and provide accessibility and support for the participation of disabled people in public policies. A democratic, diverse, and accessible governmental committee will further support and protect the rights of persons with disabilities.