

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION OF THE DISABLED: PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

(Presentation according to the research done under
the guidance of professor Ingrida Baranauskiene)

Faculty of Social Welfare and Disability Studies
Siauliai University, Lithuania

- While answering many questions and theoretically and empirically evaluating specificity of common human relations in general, as well as peculiarities of expression of related factors with the disability (change of attitudes, assessment of competencies, necessity of dialogue and mediation) and various models for vocational training, the research aims to reason the change of characteristics of vocational rehabilitation of the disabled and to design a model implementation of which would essentially enable striving for more complete and higher quality activities (working-professional, social, etc.) in social structures by jointly implementing main provisions of humanism and meeting the society pragmatism principles of the competitive market.

Activities as the determinant of personality formation and active functioning in the socium

- One of the most popular theories of professional development worked out by Super formulates the following main positions:
- 1) people are characterized by their abilities, interests and personality traits;
- 2) every person is suitable to many professions, and a profession is suitable to a number of individuals;
- 3) depending on time and experience, both objective and subjective conditions for professional development change, and this predetermines a multiple choice of professions;
- 4) professional development encompasses several consistent stages and phases;
- 5) peculiarities of this development are determined by social- economical level of parents, individual features, professional abilities, etc.;

- 6) it is possible to manage development in various stages by stimulating, influencing interests and abilities of an individual and maintaining one's striving "to try" the real world and development of the conception of one's Self;
- 7) professional development is partially predetermined by development and implementation of the conception of Myself;
- 8) interaction of the conception of Myself and reality takes place while trying and "re-playing" professional roles, while consulting a specialist on choosing a profession or in the real world;
- 9) satisfaction with work depends on adequate possibilities of an individual for implementation of own abilities, interests, personal traits, etc. in professional situations.

- By thorough investigation of the problem, i.e. interaction between the determinants of social systems and the choice of professional activities by a person, it is stated that development of a personality should not be viewed from deterministic positions, while acknowledging significance of the social status and professional activities;
- First of all, it's must adequately regard multiple influence of various parameters and components of the social structure;
- Secondly, it's necessary to understand performance of global, complex systems, it gives results through neighboring structures and reciprocal relations.
- According to the specialists, exactly these results directly impact individual experience; moreover, it is necessary to assume when, how and in which way phenomena of macro-social and neighboring micro-social environment influence a personality.

- By evaluating the aspects of diversity of the social environment (socio- cultural, economical, psychological, etc.), both scientists and politicians underline complexity of the process of vocational rehabilitation, as well as the need for its integrity; they single out four components of the process of vocational rehabilitation:

- 1) competent professional counseling;
- 2) modern and qualified vocational training;
- 3) assistance in employment;
- 4) support to a disabled person and an employer at a work place.

- An important component in this chain is prognostication of possibilities of mastery of the profession. However, evaluation of labor market demands, creation and development of work places, formation of the team for provision of professional and counseling services, etc. should be admitted.
- Flexibility of the designed structure should be evaluated as well because, while hierarchically and formally applying established structural forms, it is complicated to evaluate and use the potential of different groups of the disabled.

Depending on the character and degree of disability, professional possibilities of the disabled are limited; while striving to become suitable for professional activities, a disabled person should do the following on the rational and emotional level:

- To adequately understand and be aware of own real professional possibilities (their limitedness);
- To minimize own professional needs and interests and to adjust them to real professional possibilities;
- To re-arrange own values, beliefs, attitudes and subjective evaluations of life quality in general according to real professional and living possibilities;
- To correct and develop potential of one's personality, while striving to extend the boundaries of professional possibilities;
- To develop skills of resistance, tolerant reaction and proper behavior towards negative stereotype evaluations by the healthy.

- After assessing a number of scientists' points of view towards essence of social competency and its structural formations, at least three directions of explanation of the competency exist:
 - 1) competency as personal attribute;
 - 2) competency as certain activities, actions, behavior;
 - 3) competency as an outcome of behavior.

Analysis of scientific literature reveals five models that exist in practice of vocational rehabilitation of the disabled: those of

- **PROFESSIONAL INCLUSION**, (characterized by rendering an especially narrow professional qualification and by paying little attention to general cultural education).
- **PROFESSIONAL COMPETITIVENESS**, (despite all its advantages, can be evaluated as a striving because it is quite complicated for a disabled person to compete in the present-day labor market; that is why this model would only get closer to the “ideal”, if the disabled were actively assisted in work places, by providing them with real support).
- **PROFESSIONAL SEGREGATION**, (should be generally evaluated as isolating a disabled person (except the cases when vocational training of such a type is considered as a start position). On the other hand, it should be admitted that, in the most complicated cases, even in economically strong countries, it is regarded as the only way out. Isolation is sought to be compensated by living quality and maintenance of human dignity).

- **VOCATIONAL TRAINING**, (meets the criteria for vocational rehabilitation most of all. We would evaluate it as being the most incomplete, requiring changes. This model lacks close relations with employers, the situation of labor market is insufficiently realistically evaluated, usually, interests of an institution as an organization win against those of a disabled person. However, few examples show that this model has some space for improvement).
- **PROFESSIONAL CAREER PROJECT**, (is very attractive by its existential, humanistic philosophy and is attributed with an individual relation with a disabled, by regarding one's life perspective in general. However, success of this model especially depends on professionalism, personal attitudes of executives (mediators), other subjective factors. A long process from vocational consulting to success in labor market, involvement of a number of institutions make management and control more complicated. It should be admitted that this model requires much economical expenditure; that is why this model is being implemented in the institutions presented in cases if project financial allocation is provided, next to other models of vocational rehabilitation process.

- **Main question of the research:** do traditions of mediation in the situation of participation of the disabled in the labor market exist in Lithuania?
- **Requirement for participants:**
- mild intellectual disorders (30 persons; besides the mild intellectual disorder, another disability, e.g. complex visual or movement disorders, etc.).
- the graduates of Lithuanian vocational rehabilitation centers and schools;
- successfully gained professional qualifications and working for at least five years.

- While choosing a specialty, a disabled person faced the following mediation needs and directions occurred:
- Direction towards pre-vocational training;
- Professional information;
- Professional counseling while adjusting particular wishes and real possibilities;
- Professional orientation;
- Strengthening of motivation for work;
- Search for opportunities to overcome difficulties caused by determination of geographical environment;
- Social support during the period of selection of a profession;
- Rational supportive influence.

- The following directions of mediation were estimated during the period of vocational training:
- Assistance;
- Attending assistance during the process of vocational training;
- Psychological support in the process of vocational training.

- It is not enough for a disabled person to find a job; the period of employment is very important, too.
- When talking to disabled jobless people, usually they say that they have had a job, worked for several days; however, they had to cease working due to health condition.

- Analysis of professional adjustment highlighted the following directions of mediation:
- Psychological support;
- Assistance;
- Attending support;
- Strengthening of the value of a disabled in the labor market and value of the process of vocational rehabilitation;
- Optimization of partnership in the process of professional adjustment;
- Use of a success example.

- As it was mentioned, the successfully working disabled were surveyed; that's why it is likely that the results of co-workers' and employers' survey would not emphasize the need in mediation; also, it would be difficult to estimate purposefulness of mediation.
- This assumption was proved by the results of an exploratory research. All the employers were glad and proud of having employed the disabled. During the other exploratory research, the success criteria of the disabled was estimated from the point of view of employers. The results suggest that this way was insufficiently informative, as well.

- The employers praised personal traits and competency of the disabled. On the other hand, majority of the disabled, especially the visually impaired, have achieved high careers, it was not their first employment place or they have been working there for a long time and some of them performed creative works.
- Both the disabled and employers have already forgotten the period of adjustment.

- According the results we can state that the direction of mediation is emphasis on positive personal traits helping a person to anchor at work. There are two reasons for “unfavorable” assessment:
 - 1) lack of general abilities and
 - 2) lack of practical abilities.
- On the base of the research results, the following directions of mediation were estimated: development of general abilities of the disabled; mediation while “strengthening” practical skills.

- Purposefulness of mediation encompasses the following: work of an individual mediator with co-workers, while explaining peculiarities of a disability, possibilities of a disabled person, one's positive traits, while striving to “demonstrate” the value of a disabled person.
- The group “Suggestions” is joint in one category — “the demand for specialists of a broader profile”.

This category is related with the lack of practical skills and proves that purposefulness of mediation lies in mediation while “strengthening” practical skills.

- While surveying the employers, statements were distributed into 23 empirical categories. If to compare the statements with the ones of the co-workers, it's obvious, that the employers represented a more active position when expressing their opinion on professional adjustment of individuals with mild intellectual disorders; however, their assessment does not differ much.
- The direction of mediation which was singled out in the survey of the co-workers is proved: emphasis of positive personal traits helping a person to anchor at work. This survey also shows that general abilities are no less important in successful professional adjustment.
- The results of employer survey prove the estimated directions of mediation: development of general abilities of the disabled; mediation while “strengthening” practical skills.

- The group “suggestions” encompasses such various categories as “the need of a mediator”, “positive evaluation of school work results”, “the need of specialists of a broader profile and innovations at school”.

Even though employers do not form the social policy, they feel the need of mediators, as the survey results suggest.

- The direction of mediation — mediation while “strengthening” practical skills — is proved.
- Another direction of mediation revealed by the survey is the following: mediators could appeal to employers while influencing the policy of vocational rehabilitation in the country.

- Content analysis of opinions by co-workers and employers on peculiarities of professional adjustment of the disabled allows evaluating the need in mediators as well as directions of mediation:
- Emphasis of positive personality traits helping to anchor at work;
- Development of general abilities of the disabled;
- Mediation while “strengthening” practical skills of the disabled;
- Individual work of a mediator with co-workers and employers while explaining peculiarities of a disability, possibilities of a disabled person, one’s positive traits, while striving to “demonstrate” the value and revealing the value of the process of vocational rehabilitation;
- Individual work of a mediator with employers in order to reveal the mechanisms for compensation of a disability during the period of professional adjustment;
- Involvement of employers into formation of the occupational policy in the country.

CONCLUSIONS

- Successful participation of the disabled in the labor market is possible only when ensuring the system of vocational rehabilitation to be open, flexible, constantly reacting towards changes in the labor market. The research reveals that success of professional participation of the disabled can be predetermined by personal conception based on the theory of activities and revealed in the project where positive interaction of the following structural components dominates:
 - Active participation of the disabled in the process of vocational rehabilitation;
 - Competent and motivated support of specialists — mediation throughout all the stages of the process of vocational rehabilitation;
 - Institutional accessibility to and flexibility of the system of vocational rehabilitation.

From the aspect of active participation of the disabled in the process of vocational rehabilitation, it was estimated that usually the disabled were invited to participate in the various projects activities, and anchoring in the labor market was not the orientation for their motivation.

Passiveness dominated against activeness. Later, the situation changed: participation in training made the disabled active; they started planning professional career, striving themselves to achieve it.

The research results have proved significance and value of active participation of the disabled in the process of vocational rehabilitation.

- From the aspect of competent and motivated support of specialists — mediation throughout all the stages of the process of vocational rehabilitation, it was estimated that it is insufficient to educate a person, to strengthen one's personal traits, general and special abilities.
- Generalizations of the research prove that only consistent and systemic mediation encompassing many fields, including family assistance, changes of attitudes of employers and co-workers, provide pre- conditions for successful participation of the disabled in the labor market.
- We can state that implementation of all project programmes was related with the process of mediation. Interaction between active participation of the disabled in the process of vocational rehabilitation and mediation is a very strong factor which provides preconditions for successful professional career of the disabled.

- From the aspect of institutional openness of the system of vocational rehabilitation, it that importance to ensure accessibility to the whole system of vocational rehabilitation was estimated: pre-vocational training, vocational training, support in employment and professional adjustment periods.
- The research generalizations proved that flexibility of the system of vocational rehabilitation is predetermined by constant reaction towards changes in the labor market, flexible and modern educational content; making educational conditions closer to those of the labor market; compatibility with systems of vocational rehabilitation of the disabled in other European countries.

- The carried out systematic analysis allowed to formulate the most significant **principles of proceeding of the successful system of vocational rehabilitation as an integral phenomenon:**
- Vocational rehabilitation is inseparable from the ideas of social justice.
- Vocational rehabilitation is a complex system encompassing pre-vocational training (including professional counseling and orientation), professional readiness, support during the periods of employment and professional adjustment (if needed, throughout the whole life).

- Vocational rehabilitation is based on active participation of the disabled, purposeful assistance of specialists — mediation throughout all the stages of the process of vocational rehabilitation, institutional openness and accessibility of the system of vocational rehabilitation.
- Vocational rehabilitation is a continuously undergoing improvement system which is predetermined by both expectations of the disabled and societal demands.
- In the system of vocational rehabilitation, not only results but also the process are valuable.

**Thank You for Your
attention**