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The Social Integration of Disabled Persons

The Contribution of Education and Employment

This paper is based on the findings of INCLUD-ED – Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe from education (2006–2011), a European Union research project. The main purpose of the project was to map educational strategies that might enhance social cohesion as well as those leading to social exclusion within the European knowledge based community. INCLUD-ED also aimed to provide key elements and lines of action to improve educational and social policy. (European Commission, 2011)
Successful educational actions highlighted by the INCLUD-ED project even today might support schools in becoming learning communities, besides promoting the involvement of families to their children's pathways, and establishing intersectoral integrative actions. (Flecha, 2015)

Introduction

All European countries set up their own systems of education for disabled persons with the intention of better helping them with regard to social integration. The educational methods most preferable for the successful social inclusion of disabled persons also vary.

- In some cases separated education is considered more suitable for developing knowledge and skills in disabled persons that would be of the most benefit for including them in mainstream society.
- In other cases separation is considered to be a form of segregation, which hinders the socialisation necessary for social inclusion. Authors holding this view promote educational integration and inclusion.

The way that social inclusion is understood and measured is not clearly defined and research deals mostly with specific cases in a certain concrete field or topic.

Employment is considered an important means in the transition from education to the wider society.

The process of transition from school to society (the process of social inclusion or exclusion) has scarcely been studied in detail.

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1. The goal of education and the preferable educational method

The general goals of education, as generally understood today by the organs involved, are described by UNESCO as follows:

- 'Ensuring that educational activities have comprehensive approaches that take into account the needs of currently marginalized and excluded groups
- Developing approaches, policies and strategies to address diversity in education
- Supporting national capacity building for government policymaking and system management in support of diverse strategies towards inclusive education
- Refining and developing indicators for inclusion and give support to strengthen capacities at the national level in developing indicators and using of various data in forming strategies and activities
- Gathering and disseminating information and ideas, and stimulating dialogue about the diversity of needs of those who are still excluded or marginalized from their right to education.' (UNESCO, 2003, 27)

European countries differ as to the kind of institutional provision (separated or integrated schools) they offer for the education of disabled persons. Yet no matter what educational settings exist in the various countries, the general experience is that disabled pupils have a lower educational attainment compared to that of non-disabled children.

'Young people affected by a physical or mental/psychological illness are more likely to be absent from school and in the longer run leave the school system early is supported by evidence from national and international surveys and research projects.' (European Commission, 2005, 77).

Some experts emphasise that school integration cannot be a goal in itself but only one of the possible tools.

Others such as Bánfalvy, Bucková and Calin adopt a more moderate approach. As Bürli states: 'Denn die Hypothese, schulische Integration führe zu einer verbesserten gesellschaftlichen Integration, konnte bisher nicht generell verifiziert werden.' (Bürli 1997, 57)

These authors, on the one hand, discuss the importance of the special, focused and expert support pupils will receive in separated schools for disabled persons in future social inclusion. On the other hand, these unfashionable opinions stress that when separated school systems were established they were intended to protect disabled persons from social environments that did not include them on equal terms due to their disabilities, which proved to be obstacles in a so-called 'normal' society.

Regarding the debate in France see Ravaud: 'Aujourd'hui, dans le système scolaire français, on peut distinguer deux voies de scolarisation pour les enfants handicapés: l'inîégration scolaire en milieu ordinaire et l'éducation spéciale qui concerne des établissements dépendant soit de l'Education Nationale soit des Affaires Sociales.' (Ravaud, 1995, 83)

As Seamus Hegarty elaborated: 'In an ideal world there would be no special schools since every child would receive an appropriate education in a local community school. No country is near achieving that goal, apart perhaps from Italy, and it has to be assumed that special schools will feature on the map of special education for some time to come. But that does not mean they can continue unchanged. Special schools have many advantages – concentration of expertise in teaching pupils with various disabilities, modified curricula and programmes of work, adapted buildings and equipment, training opportunities for staff, and links with local employers and post-school training agencies. These are the very things whose absence from ordinary schools makes them ineffectual in educating pupils with disabilities. The challenge to special schools then is to find ways of sharing their expertise and resources, and of embedding them in a wider educational context. Some special schools have already begun to develop outreach programmes. This can entail setting up working links with neighbourhood ordinary schools where staff and pupils are shared.'

'Some special schools act as resource centres, providing information and consultancy to local schools, organizing support services for families and contributing to in-service training activities. Discharging these functions successfully requires considerable changes within special school staff. New skills must be developed and new attitudes fostered. Transmitting a skill to others is not the same as exercising it oneself, and operating across several schools or in the community is very different from working in the closed confines of a single special school.'

'The most important changes required are attitudinal: staff who are jealous of their autonomy and intent on maintaining lines of professional demarcation will not set up effective collaboration. There must be a willingness to move beyond existing institutional bases and any status that may go with them, and to work co-operatively in whatever new structures may be advised. The upshot of all this is that special schools of the future could be very different from now. Emphasis would move away from educating limited numbers of pupils in relative isolation towards acting as resource centres. The latter could encompass curriculum development, in-service training, the collection and evaluation of equipment and computer software, and specialist assessment, as well as advice and consultation on all matters relating to the education of pupils with disabilities. These resource-centre functions are important in improving the standard of special educational provision regardless of where it is provided. By capitalizing on available experience and establishing a bank of information, materials and expertise, this offers a powerful model for making best use of frequently limited resources. If special schools have to make changes, ordinary schools have to undergo revolution. Ordinary schools have generally failed pupils with disabilities and major school reform is necessary before they can make adequate provision for them.'

'This reform must operate at two levels: the academic organization and curriculum provision of the school and the professional development of staff. The former requires rethinking the ways in which pupils are grouped for teaching purposes, the arrangements that schools can make for supplementary teaching and the modifications to the mainstream curriculum that teachers can make so as to give pupils with disabilities access to it. All of this forces major changes in teacher behaviour. Attitudes, knowledge and skills must all be developed to create and sustain a new kind of school where those previously disenfranchised are given an equal say and narrow concepts of normality are discarded.' (Hegarty, 1994, 16) Hegarty continues: 'Preparing pupils

with disabilities for adult life is a particular challenge for ordinary schools that run integration programmes. Many special schools have devoted great efforts to this area and have well-established leavers' courses. They also benefit from the greater control they can exercise over pupils' environments and exposure to the outside world. Ordinary school staff have to find ways of ensuring that pupils do not miss out on the systematic preparation they would receive in a good special school, and they must often do so with fewer resources and in contexts that allow for less control.' (Hegarty, 1994, 45)

The debate persists and has gained new impetus fuelled by the controversial findings of follow-up research conducted on current experience of integration in schools. A UNICEF Innocenti Insight study of 2005 highlights the situation in CEE/CIS countries and the Baltic States: 'The education debate is still very active. There are arguments that integration of children with disabilities into mainstream classrooms can be a drawback for some students, both disabled and non-disabled persons. That may be a question of adequate resources – a persistent and important issue. There is a case in the CEE/CIS region for linking special education schools with local mainstream schools to help to break down the tradition of segregation.

'In some Western countries, there is a trend to co-locate special schools on the same site as mainstream schools in the belief it provides the 'best of both worlds'. Serious efforts towards integration are being made in some countries, notably Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Macedonia.

'Where integration has occurred, it is largely accomplished by being at the same location as and/or mixing with mainstream students, rather than integrated or inclusive classrooms. Curricular integration, where children with disabilities learn together in the same classrooms with the general student population, is still seldom seen in the region – and where it is, it is often unplanned and, therefore, unsupported.' In Albania in 1996, as the Country Report notes, for the first time 'the integration of pupils with disability in regular school' became a declared policy goal – although the details of how to do this were not specified. A recent survey by the Albanian Disability Rights Foundation found that the integration of children with disabilities was quite limited and done largely in response to pressure from parents of children with moderate disabilities. In Hungary, where the special school system was retained, enrolment of children with disabilities in mainstream schools started spontaneously in the mid-1990s. However, schools 'did not have the technical, pedagogical and conceptual conditions necessary for the integrated education' of children with disabilities.

'The resistance of attitudes against the integration of children with disabilities in mainstream schools cannot be underestimated. In echoes of the 'charity' treatment of children with disabilities, parents and others may support integration only conditionally, e.g., the proviso that including children with disabilities in a regular classroom does not detract resources from non-disabled students. Additionally, there is substantial passive resistance incumbent in existing education systems and other social services.' (UNICEF, 2005, 20)

In the literature we can find several examples: 'Although parents were happy with the progress of their child at the school, they were disappointed about social outcomes. This was in part due to the fact that many children with disabilities came by bus from out of catchment: they had to make a new friendship base, and had less opportunity for carrying it on out of school hours.' (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2002, 150)

The UNICEF study continues with a quote from the Lithuania Country Report of 2002: 'Policy, law and practice have been linked in Lithuania to make strong progress for special needs education. The 1991 Law on Education recognized the right of children with special needs to be educated in schools closest to home. School committees started using more restrictive criteria for accepting children into special schools – a crucial gatekeeping function. Amendments in 1998 gave precise definitions of the role of pedagogical-psychological services in assessing special education needs and gave parents and children the right to choose the form and place of education. The law stresses integrated education and the right of persons, even those with complex or severe disabilities, to be educated.'

The UNICEF study then refers to staffing issues: 'The lack of teachers who are adequately trained to work with children with learning disabilities, behavioural problems and milder intellectual disabilities (a substantial population largely overlooked before the transition) is an issue for all CEE and CIS countries. However, staffing resources affect even countries that have increased the overall size of their special needs programmes. The Lithuania Country Report notes that 'pedagogues in general schools lack knowledge and skills necessary for educating of children with special needs who learn in the same class with their peers.' This despite the fact that the number of special staff working with children with disabilities in general schools rose by 58 per cent between 1996 and 2002. However, these integration specialists are still fewer in number than teachers employed in special schools. Staffing is also an issue for special schools. In Hungary, for example, institutes of special education, especially in rural areas, cannot attract enough staff, due primarily to low wages, low morale and difficult working conditions.

'*Excluded from education.* Many children with disabilities, especially those considered disabled from birth and those with intellectual disabilities, are still at risk of being excluded even from special education. […] Even in the Czech Republic, children with disabilities can still be given 'exemption from compulsory school attendance.' Some of the children who do not attend schools may receive education at home […].

'In some countries, like Hungary, home teaching for disabled people remains 'under development'. Children with disabilities often drop out of school or complete basic education over a long time frame. In Estonia, for example, where school completion rates for students with disability are stable at around 90 per cent, the 2000 Population Census found that the majority of children with disabilities have only primary education; just one third have any form of secondary education. In Hungary, the 1990 Population Census found that among people with disabilities aged 7 and older, the share who have not completed any school grade was 11 per cent – several times higher than in the total population.

'*Early childhood programmes.* The critical importance of early childhood care and education is increasingly understood and embraced in international circles. This development approach is perhaps even more important for children with disabilities. One strategy that some CEE and CIS countries are using to reduce the 'stock' and 'flow' of students in special schools is to improve access to special preschool programmes. Some students may be redirected from special schools and others diverted before they ever enter. This approach appears to be used more in countries that already have high overall rates of preschool attendance.

'In the Czech Republic, for example, where kindergarten enrolment is over 80 per cent, the number of special kindergartens has increased from 177 to 235 between 1990 and 2000, providing service to 2 per cent of all children in preschools. Many other countries post much lower shares of children with disabilities participating in preschool education. In Hungary, 0.4 per cent of children attending kindergartens were in special programmes (although that is double the share in 1990). In Croatia, special groups for children with disabilities covered only 0.5 per cent of preschool pupils in 2001.

'*Secondary education.* In wealthier countries with clear commitments to special school enrolment, there have been increases in the number of school units and students at the secondary level. These include enrolment in special schools, vocational and technical institutions. In the Czech Republic, for example, new schools have opened for children with disabilities to continue their studies at upper secondary levels: In 1990, only eight secondary technical schools existed for children with disabilities; a decade later, there were 133. During the same period the number of vocational schools increased from 90 to 167. The rise of new, predominantly non-state schools in basic and secondary special education has opened up opportunities for Czech students with disabilities: In 1990 15,100 pupils attended upper-secondary special-education programmes; in 2000 19,000 pupils attended (3.6 per cent of all young people aged 14 to 17). In Russia […] the rate of students in special education at grades 9 to 11 has seen a tenuous increase, though it remains low compared to basic education figures or rates seen in the Czech Republic. 'In poorer countries, however, educational opportunities for children with disabilities have diminished during the 1990s…' (UNICEF, 2005, 22)

What, in general, has been revealed about the 'school-effect' is summarised by Evans: 'Pre-school experiences are important, especially those to do with laying the foundations of primary education, reading to children and so on; attending nursery school or play group can be part of this [...]. Absence of such pre-school preparation can be a risk factor, especially in families where the parents' own educational resources are limited. In school itself, the main risk factors are to do with being in a low stream, and experiencing remedial education. The social class composition of the school intake also features as does the type of catchment area (inner city, high rise rented housing and so on). One of the more surprising findings is the lack of identifiable school and classroom effects in most analyses. Counter-intuitively, even class size appears to have negligible effects on children's attainment. […] In terms of risk factors what seems to be significant is an overall disjunction between the capability of the family to provide the child with the necessary educational preparation and support and the expectations of the education system. Middle class families have little difficulty in keeping in step with what the system expects of them. Many less advantaged families

have great difficulty in doing so. Effective programmes are able to bridge the gap.' (Evans et al., 2002, 12)

2. Transition from education to the wider society

For a sociologist focusing on the social integration of disabled people, the role of education and the labour market are among the key factors. The last two decades have served us with valuable experience as illustrated in the professional literature.

A key performance indicator of education is the extent to which it is able to equip learners to enter the world of work. Education should not be an end in itself but a means of successful social integration including, in particular, the activity of work. Success, or the lack thereof, will, in this context, retroactively benchmark the education system while defining its tasks.

Here, in studying the labour market, we first need to limit our attention to the sector of wage labour and formal employment**,** mainly because this is the area about which we have comprehensive and empirical information; all the more so since, in analysing the wage labour environment, we may draw on our specific expertise and present a sociological perspective relevant to the labour environment as a whole. In addition, we subsequently aim to present the informal section of working activity.

In studying the relationship that disabled people have with the labour market, we are speaking about the great majority since only persons with severe disabilities (a relatively small group) are thought to have no working capacity. According to ICF-10, 'people with very heavy mental retardation' are described as 'capable of learning a smaller part of housework and other jobs of practice' (WHO, 1980, 344). Three key questions should be addressed while discussing the economic conditions of formally registered disabled persons:

- Job opportunities for disabled persons and people with health impairments;
- Living expenses in connection with disability;
- The extent and character of state-funded financial support for disabled persons, other than that related to employment, and any changes to which it may be subject.

3. Sociological factors determining labour market positions for disabled persons

In a sociological approach to the actual labour market position of disabled persons or people with certain health conditions**,** the following two questions should be distinguished:

1. How do the disabilities or health conditions, in themselves, influence the position of the person in the labour market?

2. How do the respective persons' overall social circumstances have any impact on their opportunities in the labour market?

Examining the issue with regard to these two questions, we may conclude whether people with disabilities or health conditions generally face employment difficulties regardless of their social circumstances, or if it is rather those with a particular social background who are threatened by a lack of opportunities. It is all the more important to distinguish between these two questions, since depending on which one predominates (the emphasis on disability and health, or on social circumstances), this may determine the conditions under which a labour market intervention is made and solutions are found, tailor-made in terms of special needs education and medical treatment, and when to apply such intervention to the needs of various social strata defined in sociological terms.

The problem may be described in the following questions:

1. Is it the disability, or health condition, that makes it difficult for people to find employment, or the fact that they belong to certain vulnerable social groups?
2. Does every person with a disability or health condition face difficulties in finding a job, or mainly those that come from the more vulnerable groups of society?
3. Is it only people with disabilities or health conditions who face extraordinary difficulties in finding a job, or are all those who fall within the more groups of society confronted by these difficulties?
4. Are the solution and prevention of the employment problems faced by people with disabilities or health conditions better seen in terms of addressing the persons' disabilities or conditions, or addressing their other social disadvantages?

In our examination, we must delineate two groups within the population of people with disabilities or health conditions. The first consists of those who are incapable of working in terms of formal wage labour. For them, the disability or condition is so severe that they cannot be employed (people with severe physical or intellectual disabilities or degenerative health conditions). Their case therefore does not fall within our present examination. The second consists of people who have, to some extent, a reduced capacity for work. In our analysis, we shall now discuss the difficulties faced by this population.

Inclusion in the labour market is, in addition to family circumstances, motivation and education, dependent upon a person's state of health. The social composition of people with health impairments shows patterns similar to those seen in their educational and vocational composition. In the 1980s, 85% of those in need of rehabilitation were classed as blue-collar workers, among whom 38% were classed as manual labourers and semi-skilled workers. The number of those in need of rehabilitation among the blue-collar population as a whole was seven times as high as those among the white-collared. Fifty per cent of disability benefit recipients had previously been manual labourers or semi-skilled workers (Central Statistical Office, 1989). Besides family and educational disadvantages, health conditions also hinder people, especially those of a lower socio-economic status, as well as disabled persons who are employed.

The employment of disabled persons depends fundamentally on the following three factors:

- The working abilities of the disabled person,
- Motivation in relation to work, and
- The characteristics of labour demand.

The fact that the level of qualification among disabled persons is, on average, well below that of the overall average of the population (see the former results on school education), roughly at a similar level to that of underprivileged social groups, is pivotal, since disabled people mostly occupy lower positions and unstable, underpaid jobs.

Separated school education undermines the employment aspirations of disabled persons (particularly for severely disabled people). In addition, separated school education entails vocational training within a narrow spectrum for severely disabled persons. For example, the fact that there are few occupations available for blind people following school education reduces their labour market mobility and thereby their bargaining position from the start.

Furthermore, for those coming from lower socio-economic groups (mostly those graduating from special schools), an additional problem is that the family background does not give incentives to the children to learn further and pursue a career within the labour market. Poor families cannot even support them in learning further. Labour market demand for disabled people is low as a result of poor information available to employers, who may have fears about their capacity for work or are convinced that disabled persons can only underperform compared to non-disabled persons, or who believe that special and substantial input is required to create working conditions suitable for disabled people to be employed efficiently. More often than not, employers fear that the working activity of disabled people represents a risk to themselves and to others, tending to cause accidents more easily than that of non-disabled people.

However, it is also understood that workplaces in their current form are not always suitable for disabled people to be employed efficiently. The necessary adaptation of working conditions to meet the specific needs of disabled persons must involve additional costs for employers, who in most instances do not undertake this burden.

As a result of these factors, disabled people comprise a disadvantaged group within the labour market in many respects. With regard to quality of life, however, work and employment are of key importance for disabled persons just as they are for non-disabled people. Beyond its macroeconomic significance, work has several macro- and microeconomic consequences, both in individual and social terms. The significance of working and having a workplace is felt increasingly by those left without a job. Through the harm caused by unemployment both to individuals and to communities, we can understand the outstanding role working activity has in the social existence of people. We would like to highlight the key sociological aspects that are essential for both disabled and non-disabled people in terms of the effects of unemployment (Bánfalvy, 2003).

3.1. Drop in income

In the modern market economy, the main source of income is wage labour. If somebody loses his or her job and becomes unemployed, this will, in most cases, result in a loss of income. Today in Hungary, the average gross unemployment benefit is well below the average earnings of workers in both the blue- and white-collar sectors, while being just over the official social minimum. This loss of income has an increasingly severe impact on unemployed disabled people, the majority of whom (particularly among persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities) had been low-paid manual or semi-skilled workers. However, international experience shows that often the people who suffer financial difficulties the most are those who are least likely to claim state benefits. They do not know what they are eligible to receive and are often too helpless and powerless to apply for such assistance, or they consider it humiliating to claim benefits. In the census of 2001, 15 per cent of disabled persons over the age of 15 did not have any income (Central Statistical Office, 2001, 19).

3.2. Socio-psychological harm

In modern societies, however, working activity has a more complex meaning than for it to be considered simply a way of earning an income. Work is an organic element of human life, it is the source of learning, knowledge and experience, a key pillar of our way of life, in which social reputation and identity are rooted. All these social experiences derive from the activity of work, and to a great extent modern societies make these experiences particularly available within the form and scheme of wage labour. Those who are jobless or unemployed will therefore lose a basic element of social existence. Unemployment is severely and irreversibly detrimental to the persons concerned as well as – indirectly – to the whole society (Warr, 1987). More specifically, what is this harm?

a) Weakened interpersonal relationships and isolation. Unemployed people and those permanently out of work have a narrower network of personal relationships than non-disabled persons do. Workplaces offer an opportunity for an exchange of experience and views; colleagues talk to one another about fashion, sports, politics, etc. and maintain contact beyond working hours. In going to and from work, people buy newspapers, as well as travelling with other people, shopping and happening to meet acquaintances, that is, acquiring a wealth of experience. The importance of such relationships, otherwise considered natural, is particularly intensified when people miss them.

b) Reduced social prestige and self-esteem. In modern societies, social prestige is closely related to positions occupied by people in work and involved in economic life with a view not only to social prestige but also to social identity. . The state of being unemployed cannot represent anything positive, in terms of identity. Therefore, unemployed people often appear inept or lazy, not only to others but also to themselves. Also, for disabled persons, it is not inconsequential whether they see themselves as employees, unemployed or simply incapable of working. What is more, disabled persons may, by securing a job, have a chance of seeing themselves primarily as

jobholders (who are otherwise disabled), rather than as disabled persons first and foremost, and have others also see them in this capacity.

c) Family conflicts. Loss of income due to being unemployed and the resulting problems, general frustration and poorer interpersonal relationships often give rise to family conflicts or even divorce. This especially holds true for those becoming disabled in adulthood when change to social roles caused by the disability is aggravated by the re-arrangement in family roles due to unemployment.

d) Health concerns. Early surveys on unemployment often stressed the context regarding health conditions and unemployment. In particular, for a short period after losing a job, the health condition of the person improved: many 'rid themselves' of an unhealthy job, with more time to spend in open air and for sleeping; furthermore, they could more regularly sustain their bodies since they were unemployed. What also contributed to their better state of health was that they had more time to take care of themselves including going to see a doctor if they had some health problem. However, long-term unemployed people soon began to feel the reverse. Their physical and mental condition worsened, which may be attributed to increased material difficulties and the consequences of the abovementioned mental and social harm.

e) Marginalisation, deviance, self-destruction. The accumulation of economic, social, physical and mental harm may result in the marginalisation of those concerned. They feel superfluous, excluded from normal society. They see division and separation from others ('our business is not their business'), and that they have different problems from those of non-disabled, active members of society. Either they are passively excluded from mainstream society, that is, they do not participate in social gatherings, do not read newspapers, discuss politics or may be non-voters, or they are actively engaged in challenging society (joining extremist political and social movements), or they may be criminals or prostitutes. More marginalised unemployed people often fall into self-destructive behaviour such as alcoholism and drug addiction, and, according to surveys, even the number of suicides is increasing among them. For disabled persons, existing levels of marginalisation may be enhanced by unemployment.

4. Explaining principles for the employment of disabled persons

In economic terms, disabled people and those with health conditions who are able to work are potential and actual employees of the same quality as their non-disabled counterparts. Like non-disabled persons, they are suited to specific jobs within certain bounds, while they are not suited to other particular jobs. For example, despite the fact that blind persons are undoubtedly limited in terms of working capacity, they should not be considered a working force with worse capabilities than rural workers, unskilled workers etc. since each group of employees has limited potential for occupation. In particular, women are not suitable for very hard physical work and juveniles cannot work for three shifts, while unskilled workers are not capable of carrying out skilled work.

In economic terms, disabled and non-disabled people do not represent two types of employee groups that are qualitatively different, especially since, as is well proven, whether or not companies employ disabled people has no bearing on their efficiency. While there are companies in Hungary and, even more so, abroad, that conduct business well and employ disabled people to a significant extent, there are also several companies where no disabled people are employed and yet they are just as likely to struggle or be confronted by a crisis.

In principle, technical, organisational and environmental conditions may be aligned with the needs of disabled persons, so, as in the case of any other group of employees, the harmonisation of working conditions with workers' needs is both necessary and achievable.

By way of an example, transport conditions could be adapted to meet the needs of disabled persons, thereby enabling them to be on par with non-disabled people in this regard, and this degree of equality may also be provided in the workplace and in work activity. In everyday life, we can find numerous examples of when, by creating suitable conditions for disabled people, they can experience social rehabilitation and inclusion. From the electoral system to furniture for the home, and from television programmes to the rules of sports adjusted for disabled persons, a wealth of examples may be listed. In principle, there is no reason why a working environment, adapted to specific needs, could not be created in institutional workplace settings.

Disabilities may often be transformed into advantages in the world of work. With reference to Schnell, Barcza stated the following about deaf people:

1. 'So many deaf people are employed in extremely noisy industrial plants, which means that fewer hearing people are put at risk of industrial deafness, while employers and social security services are exempted from paying for occupational injuries;
2. Workplace noise does not affect the nervous system of workers who are hard of hearing or deaf to the extent that it diminishes the quantity and quality of work, thereby enhancing profitability for the employer;
3. This idea would be a great move towards finding a practical solution of the social situation of hard of hearing and deaf people without involving a significant sacrifice from the 'able' society.' (Schnell ref. Barcza, 1993, 315)

The formal employment of disabled people is not specifically determined by economic factors but by direct technical ones or ultimately by social interests and values**.** A solution, neutral in economic terms and achievable in technical terms, to the problems hindering the employment of people with disabilities and health conditions would be a realistic technical solution and actual employment, but only if the society making the relevant decisions and aiming for the inclusion of disabled persons

In a period of economic upturn with a huge expansion of the labour force, higher employment rates appear not only among non-disabled persons but also among people with disabilities and health conditions. However, once an economic downturn occurs and the demand for labour falls we see the appearance of groups that 'cannot be employed in a profitable manner'. These groups include not only people with disabilities and health conditions but also unskilled workers, long-distance commuters, women with no more than secondary school graduation, immigrants, the Roma minority and others, in other words, all groups in a weak social position, to whose detriment it is

easier to implement dismissals, or who can safely be blamed for any declining efficiency of company output. As finding a job is increasingly difficult in general so those labour groups that are unable to protect themselves are excluded from the labour market while intensive efforts are made to serve the interests of those who benefit from this exclusion, with the suggestion of some ideology. In this context, the losers in this game are given a label to legitimise the situation or for some ideological purposes. Labels such as 'lazy', 'drifter', 'lumpen elements', or negative perceptions of people with disabilities or health conditions also serve to disguise the fact that unemployment is rooted in macroeconomic and social inequalities lying behind the direct causes. It is obvious that only those in a vulnerable position are excluded from the labour market, rather than all the drifters and lazy, or alcoholic workers.

Even if these labels hold good for some of those excluded, deviance is not only a reason for, but also a consequence of, the failure of both the labour market and society as a whole to implement inclusion to the same extent. When accounting for labour market successes and failures, putting individual excellence or fault to the fore serves to facilitate the exclusion of social groups unable to defend themselves within the labour environment. This upside-down logic is all the more dangerous as many disabled people, and generally all those in a marginalised position, believe that the fault lies with them. The resulting frustration reinforces harmful behaviour such as alcoholism, crime and voluntary dropping out from the labour market.

For disabled persons, employment may contribute to a lower public burden in the same way as would their better social inclusion. Arguing for the many-sided necessity of employment, Tegyey summarised his view as follows: 'In the employment of the disabled with reduced working capacity, it must be ensured to give them the most appropriate job opportunity despite their handicap, that is, such a job where working capacity requirement could be provided to the fullest possible, where sufficient output is achieved to allow for them to earn their living. On the basis of this suggestion, that is, to develop working abilities and fine-tuning those as far as possible, all the disabled persons' social problems would be solved. It is proven that – according to our thoughts above – the disabled people mostly have the working capacity to solve their social problem on their own' (Tegyey, 1991, 155).

As far as the disabled persons' position in the labour market is concerned, we believe that:

1. The characteristics of disabled persons in terms of special needs education or medical treatment cannot fundamentally explain the difficulties that they face in the labour market. It is rather their social origin, and the extent to which they are able to enforce their interests, that are telling motives;
2. Basically, the same social factors affecting opportunity prevail for them as for non-disabled people. Therefore, they are more at risk of losing their jobs or becoming unemployed if they come from a more disadvantaged social group or have a lower level of education.

Modern wage-labour, which is only one of the existing forms of work, has, therefore, several latent functions other than that of earning an income. Some such functions are also present in other activities while these latent functions, of the utmost relevance

for people's social life, only exist in such a high proportion and with such consistency in paid work (Bánfalvy, 2003).

At the same time, it also should be considered that in modern society employment provides people with manifest and latent material and non-material resources and experiences**.** As Jahoda observes: 'Paid work as a social institution is not for these forms of experience; its raison d'être is to produce goods and services for the purpose of profit to be obtained. However, as an unwanted but inevitable consequence of its objectives and organization, paid work is to force these expereince categories upon all the participants. While the unemployed are left alone to find these categories of experience in something else if they can, and if not, they will suffer from the lack thereof, in the eye of the employed those are guaranteed. The quality of experience in categories is essential, rather than the categories themselves' (Jahoda, 1982, 39).

What can be done if there is no realistic way of offering paid work to certain individuals or groups such as disabled persons? How can such an experience be provided for these disabled or socially disadvantaged persons?

For disabled people with bleak prospects of employment, it could be a more realistic short-term ambition if they seek the type of paid work experience that is available for others from an alternative source. Organised drives for voluntary work, sports and leisure activities and more effective communication may provide opportunities to help those concerned and compensate, at least partially, for their metaphorical 'lack of vitamins' concerning lost opportunities of paid work.

In addition, following the dissolution of traditional forms of paid work and the slackening of the rigid borders between work and non-work (leisure-time) related activities, a process is emerging of convergence between new forms of paid work such as flexible working hours, virtual workplaces and variable labour relations, and the forms of 'alternative vitamin replacement', as in Warr's 'vitamin model' (Bánfalvy, 2003). Perceived differences between paid workers and non-paid workers are diminishing, including judgments made both socially and individually of these two forms of existence. Thus, making distinctions between the 'vitamin sources' and 'alternative vitamin sources' is also decreasing, both for disabled and non-disabled persons.

5. Experiences from the past

Employment conditions were extremely difficult, not only for persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, but also for those with other disabilities in the 1990s, when unemployment began to assume increasing proportions. Regarding the situation of deaf and hard of hearing people, the magazine, 'The Deaf', wrote as follows: 'With enterprises liquidated, numerous deaf people have lost their jobs, becoming unemployed. Unfortunately, employers of today are not interested in hiring disabled people. Accusations have been made that deaf people have claimed disability benefits in order to avoid working. This is untrue and offensive. With so many enterprises liquidated, deaf people have been forced into claiming disability benefits. The enterprises have profited by avoiding having to make severance payments, which they have done by making deaf people believe that they are better off claiming disability benefits, but unfortunately neglecting to inform them that it is impossible for them to find a job since employers would sooner hire unemployed people rather

than someone eligible to receive disability benefits. This may be understandable but it is unacceptable to the deaf community. For a young man of working capacity and ambitions, disability benefits are humiliating and to be avoided if possible. Thus they tend to tire of looking in vain for a job and of being dependent on their parents or on any other people or agencies. They feel ashamed but continue to seek employment. Employers are also prejudiced. If they come to know of the applicants' deafness they do not employ them. They are afraid of communication difficulties, understandably, although these could be overcome by showing some patience' (1995, 9).

Another study discussed the position of disabled persons in the labour market with regard to the problem of unemployment (Bánfalvy, 1997). In analysing the ways that people become unemployed we saw that both disabled and non-disabled people most frequently lost their job as a result of a company lay-off. However, it is remarkable that among the jobless disabled persons involved in the study the majority did not find a job after graduation, although they were no less qualified than non-disabled persons. Hence, if there was no drastic difference between disabled and non-disabled persons in formal terms of being unemployed, the effect of disability was clearly shown. At the same time, disabled people were not dissatisfied with their previous job significantly more than non-disabled people. The reason for being unemployed, for disabled people, was not based on their hope for better living conditions or on any voluntary decision they may have made. The figures suggested that the feeling of comfort experienced by disabled people in work was greater than that of those out of work while it lagged behind that of non-disabled people in work. It is vital for disabled persons, too, to be employed, with a view to experiencing the feeling of comfort. Among those interviewed, disabled people out of work saw themselves as having the lowest social prestige or being regarded at the lowest level.

Komáromi (2002) studied the greatest two hundred Hungarian enterprises. Inter alia, they aimed to discover the extent to which these enterprises employed disabled people and how they did so. The results showed the following: 'In Hungary, 58.1 per cent of large enterprises employ people of reduced working capacity while 41.9 per cent do not employ any such persons. There is a difference even between those enterprises employing people of reduced working capacity in terms of how many such people they employ' (Komáromi, 2002, 62).

'Among those enterprises employing people of reduced working capacity most employ disabled people with impaired mobility. 65.8 per cent of these enterprises employ people with some mobility impairment. Deaf employees comprise the second largest category (24.1 per cent). 19 per cent and 10.1 per cent of the enterprises in question employ people with low vision and cumulative disability, respectively. Persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities comprise the most peripheral group of all the disability groups. 3.8 per cent of the enterprises employing people of reduced working capacity employ persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.

To sum up, 82.3 per cent of the enterprises employing people of reduced working capacity employ people with some disability.' (Komáromi, 2002, 68)

The researchers also intended to examine what disabled persons feel about employment or comfort in work, and their study revealed the following:

'Most of those involved in the study felt discomfort, the key sources of which were the fear for some being how long they would be able to continue working while others' main concern was unemployment and for almost all there was a fear of

having insufficient means. Moreover, there were negative experiences such as the humiliating mandatory medical test. Furthermore, they feel there is no public body to help them, and that they merely represent a burden on the government. Most of the older people involved felt lost since the huge social and economic transformation that took place in 1989 and 1990.

'Those working only as casual labourers or those out of work reported that they all would have liked to work, mostly for material reasons but also to spend their time in a useful manner.

'The participants all gave an account of great difficulties both in terms of seeking jobs and working. 'An inappropriate structure of labour supply in Hungary gives a serious cause for concern. The participants would mostly have liked to have distance working or part time (four to six hours a day) jobs while the availability of such jobs was very low. Among the difficulties of looking for work, age was a primary one, in addition to reduced working capacity, mostly for older applicants, for whom the problems of age and reduced working capacity were intertwined.

'It was the claiming of disability benefits that presented a stumbling block in job search, as well as a problem in working activity, rather than the disability itself. They felt that the employers tended to employ fewer disability benefit claimants as they would have extra income. Accordingly, they described their experience when their colleagues and employers showed a negative attitude towards them, on account of this extra income. This presumably accounts for many feeling that it is 'indecent' to claim state benefits while having a paid job. At the same time, benefit claimants are forced to enter into employment because the benefits are so low.

'Another problem that appeared was that many disabled people had no car, preventing them from going to work. High expectations in workplaces and low tolerance on the part of their employers were also a cause for concern' (Komáromi, 2002, 149–150).

In their case study, the authors examined a company initiative to design a network for the coordination and control of further employment of its own employees of reduced working capacity. Two results were highlighted from the analysis:

'On the one hand, […] the key motivation of company X for designing a nation-wide network was the occurrence of costly labour law cases involving increasing amounts of money, according to one interviewee. At no time was the point raised that the company could improve its image by also employing people of reduced working capacity. According to the interviewee, this was not an aim for Hungarian enterprises.

'On the other hand, it transpired during the interview that the network could only provide between five and ten jobs in total per annum. Many rehabilitation processes are inadequate for meeting the needs of workers of reduced working capacity since the jobs offered would be situated somewhere else, away from their previous workplace. We raised the notion that there may be some complex value for the employer in not helping their disabled employees relocate, in that the whole initiative may serve as an 'alibi' to avoid litigation risks without really contributing to the further employment of the company's workers of reduced working capacity' (Komáromi, 2002, 197).

Recently it has gradually become apparent that society is obliged to pay attention to disabled people and try to meet the criteria laid down in the Law of Equal Opportunities. However, the process is very slow and inconsistent. Perhaps we have begun to accept that the entrance of a building with many stairways cannot be accessible for those in

wheelchairs, but we do not take account what may present an obstacle for persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities…

Based on feedback given by the participants the training system could also be widened, or even specialised for those taking steps in the direction of integrated employment. I believe the following statement may also refer to the training of persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities as well:

- They could attend targeted special training programmes that take into account their problems in which learning through practice would play a prominent role;
- Further education is not a real option for these young people. Therefore, in their case, preparations for the role of an employee are the main vehicle, mission and objective, rather than that of an entrepreneur' (Komáromi, 2002, 50–51).

6. Recent national and international efforts

Domestic and international analyses (Bánfalvy, 2012) indicate that societies tend to 'write off' disabled persons and people with health conditions by offering minimum pecuniary services under the titles of support for people with disability and impaired health. Any ambitions that a society may have and influence that disabled people may exert are not strong enough to prevent health conditions or poor school performance from being classed as incapacity and disability, no matter how much environmental conditions are adjusted to meet the needs of people with disabilities and health conditions. It does not effectively serve the integration of people with health impairments into a society if working opportunities are perceived as appropriate in many various ways and means. In addition, as international and domestic evidence shows, this integration has the least chance of existing in formal employment.

A new approach to integration in employment has recently materialised. In particular, it involves inclusion in the labour market as a key element of social integration: In the 1990s, the basic approach to social need underwent serious changes with regard of the objectives and forms of social assistance. Rather than accommodation, it has been the demand for the remainder of capacities to be used or labour inclusion coming at the forefront. The emphasis has shifted from passive labour market measures such as assistance and benefits to active policies for all groups struggling with employment difficulties.

Increasing strains on national budgets due to increasing numbers of people in need, the precedence of passive labour market policies (assistance and benefits) and a widespread economic slump. In more developed countries societies, equal opportunities in life and work are increasingly a cause of urgent action and socio-political commitment. Equal opportunities in the labour market involve equal access for all to work, vocational training and certain occupations with no discrimination.

For socially disadvantaged groups, special emphasis was given to the improvement of individual employment prospects, the widening of educational and training opportunities and the creation of labour market possibilities where skills and experience could be acquired in accordance with open labour market requirements.

In Hungary, the issue of equal opportunities and the inclusion of socially disadvantaged citizens have increasingly gained ground, thanks in part to European

Union standards adopted after Hungary's accession and to macroeconomic exigencies and constraints. In recent years, raising the level of employment has been a key strategic element of employment policy including in particular the improvement of employment opportunities for socially disadvantaged people as well as the planning and application of methods of integration suited to meeting the needs of all those stranded on the periphery of society. The government has attempted to improve employment opportunities for disabled persons by making changes to the legal environment. At the same time, non-governmental organizations have also played a notable part in helping disabled persons find employment, in addition to the significant efforts made by the government.

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