

Attitudes Regarding the Education and Employment of Persons with Disabilities

1. THE CONCEPT SYSTEM OF ATTITUDE

There have been many definitions and examinations regarding attitude in the last century, and the following is a short presentation on the concept system of attitude.

Attitude is a positive or negative relation to any object, person, group, situation or other phenomenon, often being linked to items of information or assumptions. The first item of information acquired has the greatest and most permanent effect. (Atkinson et al, 2005).

According to Prislín (1996, as cited in Csepeli, 2001) the most substantial attitudes are those that may fit into a given person's value system. Attitudes pertaining to given groups can be measured using attitude scales or interviews. Several examinations have reinforced the theory of Allport (1954), according to which previous experiences usually have a positive effect on the probability of the formulation of future relations and sympathies. In their study on the validity of contact-hypothesis, however, Balassa and Kovács (2010) emphasise that in Hungary there is a positive relevance of contact with ethnic groups (in mixed population settlements), while in other countries the opposite is true (prejudice increases, and the likelihood of stereotyping does not decrease).

2. ATTITUDES TOWARDS PERSONS LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

The following are the results of key studies that have, in recent years, addressed the phenomenon of discrimination in addition to attitude and behaviour in education, training and employment.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in accordance with the human rights model (UN, 2006), has had a significant impact on the rights to work and education, resulting in increasing intentions to ensure equal access and opportunities.

2.1. Attitudes in education and training

According to the Disability Strategy of the European Union, students with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 19 tend to drop out of secondary school, while the proportion among young people of the same age without disabilities is considerably lower (European Commission, 2010, 7).

The panel survey conducted by Eurostat shows that only 24% of people with disabilities between the ages of 30 and 34 had graduate education, while the proportion among people of the same age without disabilities was 36%. The Europa 2020 strategy aims to reach a proportion of 40% throughout the entire age-group. The greatest proportion of people with disabilities having a degree are in Finland and Luxemburg with 36%, while the fewest are found in Italy, with only 11% (Eurostat, 2014).

Although in recent years several theoretical and empirical studies have examined the attitudes of parents of students and their teachers, there are only very few articles written about measuring attitudes in the contemporary (same age) community (Szabó, 2016; Pongrácz, 2017), and scarcely any literature dealing with the inclination towards acceptance of people with disabilities in same age communities.

According to the literature analysis of Stepaniuk (2019), in Eastern European, ex-socialist countries (based on articles available in English: Czech Republic, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, and Ukraine) most parents are supportive of integrated education but stress the responsibility of the government. The economic resources of a family also determine whether the given child studies in a segregated or non-segregated institution. The stance of teachers is a substantial element of cooperation. According to the analysis, most of the teachers did not understand, or misunderstood the notions of inclusion and integration.

The overall attitude of Russian teachers towards students with disabilities was essentially bipolar in nature, one pole representing the medical, functional model, the other emphasising the importance of appropriate conditions for teaching, but in theory making no difference between persons with and without disabilities.

The teachers were mostly open towards students with physical disabilities and mild intellectual disabilities, while they displayed a more dismissive attitude towards students with more serious, behavioural, emotional and cognitive problems. The teachers interviewed emphasised the importance of further education and the demand for it. Those teachers who did not participate in the preparatory training sessions had a negative opinion of integration and were concerned about the school equipment (Stepaniuk, 2019).

The author finds the lack of data pertaining to children with disabilities problematic, and claims that attitudes towards people with disabilities continue to have a paternalistic and medical focus, and that acceptance is relative to the severity of the disability. Inclusive education is thus in competition with the 'inherited Soviet ideology' (Stepaniuk, 2019, 19).

2.1.1. Hungarian context

Based on her study of the attitudes of a majority of students (2017), Pongrácz establishes that among them there is a scarcity of inclusive and acceptive attitudes towards people with disabilities. Fisher (2009) believes that among teachers,

acceptance of people with moderate, severe and profound levels of intellectual disability is the least accepted. According to Szabó (2016), it is also typical in Hungary that teachers with the relevant set of educational skills and the practical experience of teaching are more apt to opt for teaching in integrated settings than teachers who do not have the above mentioned attributes. Hungarian teachers consider students with autism spectrum disorders and with psychological development problems the least capable of receiving education successfully (Szabó, 2016, 30).

The Hungarian study related to the Dignity of Labour project establishes that there is no training available for persons with disabilities to further their competences and their chances of employment (Haidegger & Kozicz, 2013). Szellő (2015) maintains that there is no available support for young persons with disabilities, to provide vocational guidance or improve their future prospects. Hangya (2019) adds that accessing adult education is also hindered to an extent. She elaborates that in the area of domestic and EU supported labour rehabilitation training, most trainings are available for persons of altered working capacity, but it is important to stress that not all persons with disabilities are persons of altered working capacity! Besides the funding of materials and other tools, it appeared to be a more obstructive phenomenon in that teachers in adult education are frequently dismissive, the organisation of the education is inadequate and the educational materials also lack adaptation and substance.

2.1.2. Hungarian statistical data

With regard to the research results of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH) in 2011, 53.41% of people with intellectual disabilities aged 15 and over had not completed basic primary education (the group of people never finishing the first year of primary education or the first to third years of primary education or the fourth to seventh years of education), which also applied to 35.77% of people with autism, 40.21% of people with speech impairments and 20.71% of people with visual or hearing impairments. As for people with other disabilities, the proportion of students not completing primary education was under 20%. It is an important fact regarding 'people with multiple disabilities [...] that 15% of them have two, while 4% of them have three or more disabilities' (KSH, 2015, 27). The ratio of people not completing primary education stands at 34.7% for people with three different disabilities, and 23.6% for people with two disabilities.

When asking for data, persons were also asked about their other disabilities, but there are no available statistics describing the achieved level of education in various 'disability combinations'.

In 2011, the acquisition of a degree in higher education and the probability of employment had no consequent relevance, as the number of people with higher education is lower than that of employment demand. Also in 2011, 8.63% of people with intellectual disabilities, 20.34% of people with autism spectrum disorders and 23.47% of people with speech impairment (not to be confused with speech impediments) had a vocational or middle school certificate. The highest proportion of those receiving both middle and secondary school education were deaf students, followed closely by with people with other and unknown categories of disability. A total of 5.79% of

people with disabilities attended colleges in 2011, while the proportion in the whole population was 15.74% (KSH, 2011a).

2.2. Attitudes in employment – international relations

In the world of labour and employment, persons with disabilities can be considered multiply disadvantaged, as the hidden or open discrimination experienced in education continues. The ratio of people with higher education lags far behind that of people without disabilities, and the high number of dropouts make their success in the labour market even more difficult (European Commission, 2010, 9). In 2010, 46% of people with disabilities between the ages of 20 and 64 worked as an employee, as opposed to the number of people without disabilities, which stands at 72%. In 2011 this ratio was 0.9% higher, while the proportion of people without disabilities remained the same (European Commission, 2014, 62).

Based upon a survey conducted with 80 Italian employers, Santili, Nota, Ginevra and Soresi (2014) claim that the type of disability is a strong influencing factor, as the participants had more negative attitudes towards people with hearing impairments, people with intellectual disabilities and people with psycho-social disabilities. It thus appears that this selective prejudice often has roots in misinformation, although there was no significant difference of opinion between employers with or without previous experience of employing people with disabilities.

In Poland, the majority of the population, 79%, support the presence of persons with disabilities in the labour market. Most of them, however, have no direct relations with anyone who has a disability. With the decline of subsidised employment and sheltered workshops, employment in the free labour market is growing. From 2014 onwards, remunerations and fringe benefits are set on an individual basis, and do not depend on the type of employment (Jabłońska-Porzuczek & Kalinowski, 2018). Similarly to the regulations in Hungary, there is also a minimum quota in Poland, exempting employers from paying certain amounts to the National Insurance contribution funds.

For every 25th employee under 5% of the official employment quota, the employer has to pay a rehabilitation contribution (Act CXCI 2011).

A Swedish quantitative research study (Strindlund, Abrandt-Dahlgren & Ståhl, 2019) examining the attitudes of employers suggested a threefold recommendation for a solution: trust, contribution and support. Trust means not only that vested in persons with disabilities, or that between employers and employees, but also trust towards the authorities. *It is an important point that disability is independent of the employment and the work* (Strindlund et al., 2019, 2916). Contribution is the added value, i.e. if we do not dwell on the disability, and do not assume that it may affect a person's capability for work, we can already create a more welcoming environment. The importance of support is not only meant in the relation to an employer in financial terms, but also for educational and personal means, which are officially regulated, so it cannot be considered a motivating factor in the employment of people with disabilities.

Dixon, S., Smith, C., and Touchet, A. (2018) analysed the 2017 UK government attitude survey and extended it with their own survey. In their report they claimed

that in society there are negative stereotypes regarding the need for care and labour efficiency. There is a huge difference of opinion between those who, in fact, have experience of employing people with disabilities and those who have none. According to a House of Commons dataset from Q3, 2019, 53.2% of persons with disabilities aged between 16 and 64 were working at that time, while the rate of employment for people without a disability stood at 81.8%. Moreover, 6.7% people with disabilities were unemployed and 43% were economically inactive (Powell, 2020). According to the statistical data of May 19, 2020, currently 49.2% are employed (House of Commons Library, 2020)

2.2.1. Hungarian context

According to the discrimination and attitude survey of the Eurobarometer, Hungary ranks fourth among the 27 member states in the table of discrimination with regard to disability and handicap (Balázs-Földi & Dajnoki, 2016, 33), which represents a strong force hindering people's opportunities to become employed, besides other activities. The size of labour market share has a direct relation to a person's acceptance in society, as in Hungary the rate of employment of people with disabilities has scarcely changed since 2007, standing at 13% in 2011, and 16% in 2016 (KSH 2011; KSH 2018). Although according to Eurostat the employment rate in 2011 stood at 24%, it still represented the greatest difference between employment of people with disabilities and those without disabilities (Eurostat, 2011).

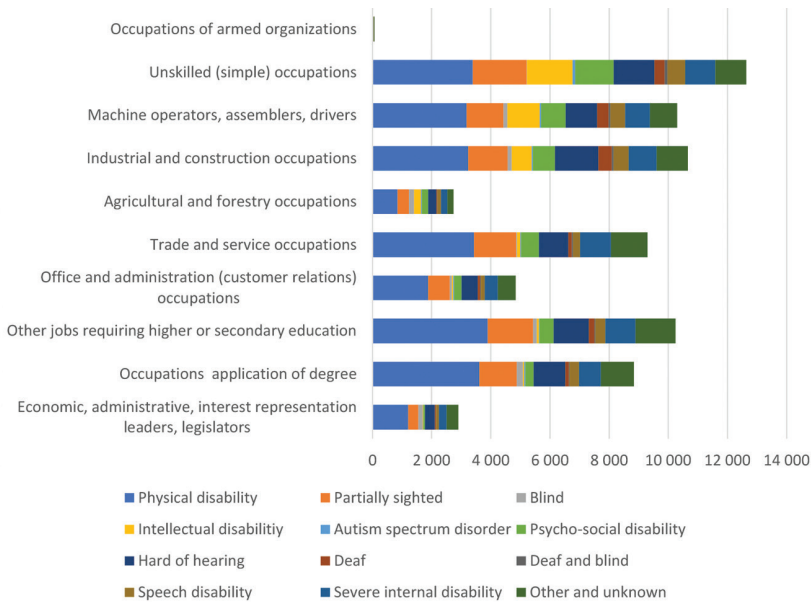
In 2013, the Equal Treatment Authority and the Institute of Sociology of the Centre for Social Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences performed a research study in Hungary on discrimination. In their study of employers and the labour market they also identified helping, integrative elements, such as state regulations, business and organisation culture, the spread of atypical forms of work, equal rights policies and practice at workplaces. Preconceptions on the part of employers, employment discrimination and permeability between primary and secondary labour markets (public employment) were revealed to be factors hindering integration. 'Labour market discrimination forms a fundamental block against integrated employment, which is important on both economic and individual levels.' (Balázs-Földi & Dajnoki, 2016, 314). According to Cseh (2014), the rejecting stance of society is considered by the actors themselves to be an obstacle against integration.

2.2.1.1. Hungarian statistical data

According to the details of the 2016 micro-census, negative discrimination is the worst for people over 45 years of age (KSH, 2018), which signifies the presence of ageism besides discrimination against people with disabilities. Negative discrimination was present in employment (8.4%), transport (7.5%) and health services (7.2%), according to the participants with disabilities (KSH, 2018, 27).

As seen in *Figure 1*, persons with disabilities were employed mostly in manufacturing and in positions not requiring preliminary training (KSH, 2011b). As there were no queries in 2016 for this target group regarding categories of employment, we have no statistical data for that time period.

Figure 1. Main employment categories, edited by the authors (KSH, 2011b)

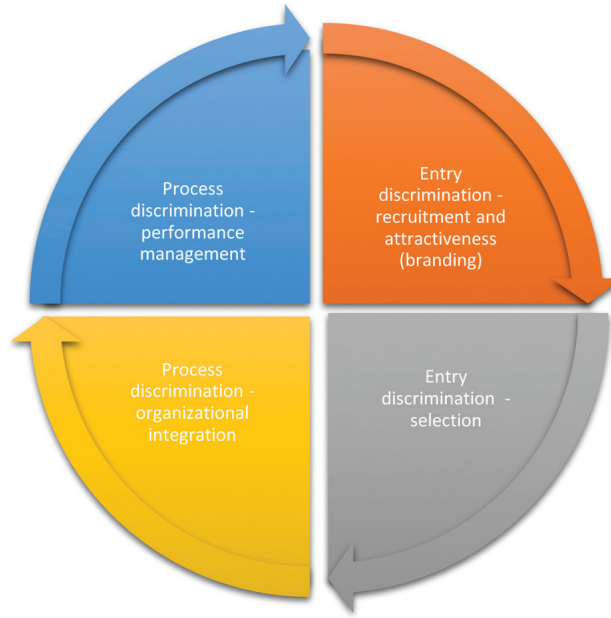


The country report for Hungary in 2019 (European Commission, 2019) states that Hungary has a low level of employment, and that ‘for persons with disabilities looking for employment, public services are provided in the framework of the National Employment Service, and the support of non-governmental providers is still very limited. This hinders access to personally tailored professional rehabilitation, recruitment and workplace transformation services, which emphasises the need for development’ (European Commission, 2019, 33).

2.2.2. The work discrimination model

Hungarian authors (Dajnoki, 2014, Csillag, Toarnicky & Primecz, 2018) have drawn attention to major areas of discrimination. Likewise, Bonaccio, Connelly, Gellatly, Jetha & Martin Ginis (2019), in a systematic literature review, also grouped employer attitudes in relation to international findings. Essentially, prejudice appears in four main areas, affecting hiring, and after recruitment it also affects the circumstances of work performance. The main four areas are the following: recruitment, selection, organisational integration and performance management. These areas were described by the Hungarian authors, but besides the common features of Hungarian and international areas of discrimination, it may be discernible as a new feature that this model may not only be used for persons with disabilities and/or persons with reduced capacity for work, but also to map out the employment environment for other groups of disadvantaged persons, as the discriminative cornerstones were reordered in accordance with the classic areas of HR.

Figure 2. Work discrimination model, edited by the author (Bonaccio, 2019, Dunás-Varga 2019, Csillag et al., 2018, Dajnoki, 2014)



During the process of recruitment and selection, the knowledge and professional skills of candidates are usually undervalued. Those who lack information and methodological knowledge do not know how to adapt processes or work areas, while also maintaining productivity. For organisational integration and efficiency, the review show that the most acute preconceptions were revealed concerning performance output, the negative stance of teammates and the possibility of diminishing work ethics. The research came to prove that the very opposite is typical: persons with disabilities perform at the same level of productivity, and the attitudes of teammates are mostly positive and supportive (in achieving this, there is also a strong role for organisational communication and process management). As far as workplace health protection and safety are concerned, although there is a higher probability of reporting a problem or injury, the persons in question show a better aptitude for following rules, so the number of more serious injuries is, in fact, lower than in the case of persons without disabilities. On the other hand, the time needed to return to work after a work accident is usually longer than in the case of employees without disabilities. Employers also worry about giving notice of dismissal, as they are afraid that terminating the employment of a person with disability may be legally more problematic. It is important to stress that termination on the grounds of underachievement is only considered discriminatory if the training, preparation and appropriate work environment have not been provided for the performance of work (Csillag et al., 2018, Bonaccio, 2019).

3. OUR RESEARCH

The preliminary samples for our large-scale review were collected in 2018. We collected 112 query forms for evaluation in Budapest and in Pest county, from large and medium size employers, while only a few small enterprises participated in this research. Most participants in the research sample had already had experience of employing persons with disabilities (56.25%), and 44% employed persons with disabilities at the time of the research. The query form included thirty mixed questions, of which, on average, the respondents answered 20–25 questions, and the query forms were processed using SPSS statistical software application.

The results revealed that the least desired groups of employees with disabilities were those with intellectual, psycho-social and multiple disabilities. Employers are most open to employing persons with physical disabilities and hearing impairments. Most of the employers did not ask for information, apply for professional help regarding the employment of people with disabilities, or know where to turn to for help, which revealed the problems associated with a lack of proper information.

The research found that several of the contributors were not willing to employ persons with disabilities in the near future. Four organisations claimed they did not plan to employ persons with disabilities from that time onward, as they had experienced low productivity. Six organisations did not employ persons with disabilities, but were planning to, although they did not know when that was going to occur. None of the respondents chose to select the option to employ persons with disabilities in one or two years. Eight organisations refused outright to employ persons with any disabilities. Those organisations that had never employed a person with disabilities before claimed that the reason was that higher management 'had no idea' how to handle such a situation, and that 'there were no persons with disabilities with the right skills', and also for fear of their 'low productivity'. It is discernible that 'low productivity' is a common supposition both for organisations that have employed persons with disabilities, and that have never done so, which goes beyond attitude and draws attention to training.

In summary, the results of this study established that the organisations mostly blame the lack of accessibility in the built environment, while the other crucial factor is the lack of information. Employers mainly prefer roles requiring no preliminary training, and positions with graduate and secondary school education, usually in a form of atypical employment. Employers who currently have workers with disabilities are interested in acquiring rehabilitation subsidies.

Depending on the pilot results, we plan to continue quantitative and qualitative research studies in 2020 and 2021, expanding the review area locally and on the organisational level. We shall continue to examine the attitudes towards persons with disabilities, experiences, focusing on intellectually disabled people with regard to the model of workplace discrimination.

4. THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON THE LABOUR MARKET

The emergency situation brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic can have an extremely negative effect on both our target group and their employers. This refers not only to social services and care, but also to their status in the labour market. There are several segments in Hungary that have endangered operation (hotels and restaurants, tourism, production and manufacturing), and this can have a negative effect on the employment of persons with disabilities. It can be assumed that the oversupply of labour caused by lost workplaces, even if only temporarily, will influence the possibilities of employment in the next one to three years, and it may even coincide with further processes of economic recession (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020). According to the report of the Institute of Economic and Enterprise Research (GVH), released on the 15th of March, 2020, 74% of businesses regard their business position as unfavourable, especially in the areas of accommodation, catering, transport, logistics, postal services and commerce (GVI, 2020a). The institute explains that after the second wave of the 24th of March, 2020 'most terminations of employment are highest, on average, at companies providing business and personnel services, 5.1 persons, and the lowest number is at agricultural businesses (0.2 persons, on average, at 19 responding companies)' (GVI, 2020, 4). It is difficult to establish an accurate diagnosis as there are dependent variables for the given country's technological, social and welfare statuses. According to the latest statistical data, the rate of employment dropped to 69.2% in April, 2020 (a 1.1% drop against the data for the previous month), while the unemployment rate increased by 0.4%, which represents a 26.5% increase compared to last year's data. The number of inactive people (not unemployed, not working, not looking for work actively or unable to find a new job within two weeks) grew by 54 thousand. There is no specific data on the employment of persons with disabilities, but it can be assumed that they are also included in these processes. The census of 2021 will probably provide an answer on how permanent the 2020 results remain, and there will be a separate panel dealing with persons with disabilities.

SUMMARY

Attitudes towards persons with disabilities prove to be permanent and affect participation in both education and the labour market, as well as access to them. In the world of labour and employment persons with disabilities may be considered multiply disadvantaged, as the hidden or open discrimination experienced in education continues. The ratio of people with higher education lags far behind the ration of that of people without disabilities, and the large number of dropouts makes their success in the labour market even more difficult. Although the depth and direction of attitudes in the European Union are varied, it can be claimed that it is still typical to undervalue citizens with disabilities, especially those living with intellectual and psycho-social disabilities, possibly because of the consideration of cognitive functions in both cases. The acquisition of a higher education degree and the probability of employment has no consequent relevance, as the number of people with higher education is below that of employment demand. Negative stereotypes about people with disabilities

are present in Europe to varying degrees, as societies foster negative stereotypes regarding the need for care and labour efficiency. There is a huge difference of opinion between those who have experience of employing persons with disabilities and those who have none.

Lack of information is prevalent in the case of both trainers and employers. It would be of great importance to gain support on an EU level, to start further training and other professional programmes. The contact hypothesis, which states that direct experience and contact can influence opinions regarding a certain group, appears to be an important influence on both teachers and employers. It is visible within the work discrimination model, as the discrimination processes appear in related areas of HR. The main four areas are the following: recruitment, selection, organisational integration and performance management. These areas have been described by Hungarian authors, but besides the common features of Hungarian and international areas of discrimination, it may appear that this model might probably not only be used for persons with disabilities and/or persons with reduced capacity for work.

Our results also revealed that the least desired groups of employees with disabilities were those with intellectual, psycho-social and multiple disabilities. Employers are most open to employing persons with physical disabilities and hearing impairments. Most of the employers did not look for information, did not apply professional help for the employment, did not know where to turn to for help, which revealed the problems around lacking proper information.

Employment affected by external pressure and by a rigid subsidising system cannot really increase the likelihood of employment, furthermore, as an external motivating force it cannot be permanent if this system is transformed. It is expected that the integrative and inclusive processes will be effective in transforming social attitudes in the long term, and this will result in the growing participation of people with disabilities in the labour market and in education.

The challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic affect all social groups, especially people with disabilities. It would be worthwhile to examine the effects of this on the organisation of the labour market, as well as on the practice of working from home and on digital solutions, as these have all had an impact on employment.

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