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Handbook Supported Employment

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Handbook Supported Employment

Abstract
[Excerpt] Supported employment has brought about improvements in the quality of life of women and men with a disability by enabling them to become active participants in society. It has a positive impact on families – and on employers who benefit from the contribution which disabled people can make at work. The strength of supported employment is that it enables people with disabilities to enter the real world of work by focusing on individual abilities and by providing varying levels of individualized support, depending on needs. Support and advice is also provided to the employer.

Keywords
supported employment, disability, labor markets, public policy

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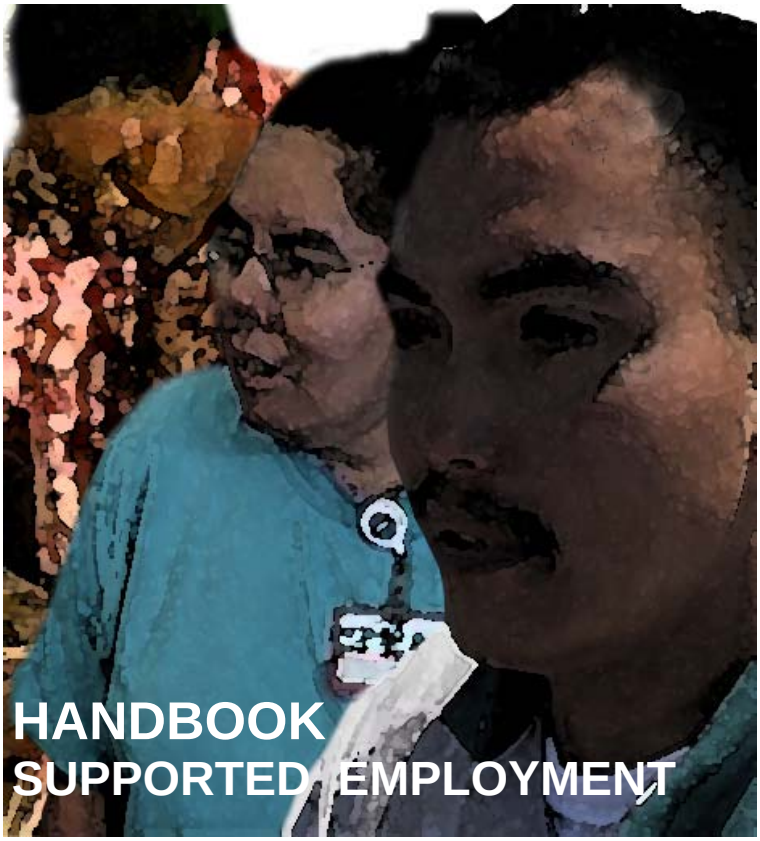

Wase: **Michael Kamp, Christy Lynch**

Table of contents

Introduction 3
Background 4
Definition of supported employment 4
Benefits of supported employment 5
Benefits for the person with a disability 5
Benefits for the parents/family 5
Benefits for the employer 6
Benefits for the public sector 7
What does supported employment involve? 8
Assessment 9
Job finding 9
Job analysis 12
Job matching 12
Job (re)design 13
Workplace introduction 13
Job coaching/Training on the job 13
Support outside the workplace 16
Ongoing support 16
Supported employment in context ..... **Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.**
How to start supported employment 17
Phase 1 – Spreading the idea 17
Phase 2 – Forming associations 17
Phase 3 – Starting activities 17
Phase 4 – ‘Growing’ supported employment 18
Supported Employment -- Web-Based Certificate Series ..... **Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.**

Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 23, states that every human being has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work, equal pay for equal work and protection against unemployment. People with disabilities have demonstrated a strong desire and ability to participate in the open labour market and contribute to the national economy. Supported employment was developed to enable people with disabilities to do so.

By focusing on abilities and *not* disability; by providing support to the person, depending on individual need; and by providing advice to employers, supported employment has been demonstrated as an effective way for people with disabilities to get and keep a job in the open labour market. The principle of supported employment can be implemented in all parts of the world provided that it is adapted to the cultural context and labour market trends of any given region.

This handbook is intended for people and organizations interested in creating new work opportunities for people with disabilities. It is designed to provide information about the potential of supported employment and to assist in how to start and implement the supported employment model.

Supported employment has brought about improvements in the quality of life of women and men with a disability by enabling them to become active participants in society. It has a positive impact on families – and on employers who benefit from the contribution which disabled people can make at work. The strength of supported employment is that it enables people with disabilities to enter the real world of work by focusing on individual abilities and by providing varying levels of individualized support, depending on needs. Support and advice is also provided to the employer.

Supported employment leads to personal growth: Example 1
At the end of the 1980s in the United States, a young woman with an intellectual disability had the opportunity to work in a restaurant through supported employment. Her parents worried about 'real work' for their daughter and were afraid that less care would be provided by the care organization. When the organization guaranteed the quality of the necessary care and support, the parents "gave it the benefit of the doubt". Paid employment and training on the job was provided. After a short period, the parents noticed many changes in their daughter's behaviour. Before she started her paid job, she only wanted to wear the same clothes. These were washed during the night, so that she could wear them the next day. Since she started the job she was changing her clothes daily and began to show interest in her environment. She started to watch television and to remember faces. Her situation changed in a positive way. There was personal growth and her individuality has been respected. The parents were very proud, not only because she had a job, but also because it had transformed her life.

Supported employment is increasingly accepted as an effective approach to promoting work opportunities for people with disabilities – including those with intellectual, psychiatric and severe physical disabilities - based on practical experiences and results. Supported employment can be carried out anywhere in the world, irrespective of the level of economic development. Examples of supported employment positions include catering, cleaning, stocking shelves in supermarkets, restaurant, kitchens, horticulture, gardening and many other areas.

Background

Supported employment was developed in the United States at the beginning of the 1980s, as a means of providing practical, on-the-job training to people with intellectual disabilities based on their individual needs. The method was designed for people with a disability who were not seen as capable of 'real work'. The systematic instruction and support they received in the workplace enabled them to build their skills, enter the labour market and succeed at the job in open employment.

Since then, the model of supported employment has been introduced in many countries around the world, including Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Ireland, New Zealand, Peru and Zambia. Alongside these developments, national associations for supported employment have emerged in many western European countries. In 1992, the European Union of Supported Employment was established and in 1995, the World Association for Supported Employment was set up.

World Association for Supported Employment (WASE)

The WASE mission is to promote the vocational integration of people with disabilities throughout the world, using the principles and model of supported employment.

WASE promotes supported employment, particularly in developing countries where people with disabilities are in a very disadvantaged position. Supported employment provides the opportunity to improve their living conditions through productive work.

Definition of supported employment

"Supported employment can be characterized as paid work in integrated work settings with ongoing support for individuals with disabilities in the open labour market. Paid work for individuals means the same payment for the same work as for workers without disabilities." – World Association for Supported Employment.

Benefits of supported employment

Recent experience with supported employment has demonstrated that it provides wide-ranging benefits to persons with disabilities, their families, employers and society as a whole.

Benefits for the person with a disability

Supported employment has now made paid work possible for persons with disabilities who, in the past, were perceived as unable to work. It enables them to earn an income, develop their skills and learn to recognize their abilities. Many disabled persons have grown in dignity and self confidence through their supported employment placements. They have built relationships, and participate more actively in their community. They have started to make their own choices, plan for the future and expand their options in life.

The supported employment model in action: Example 2
A person with an intellectual disability worked in a firm where both his work performance and relationship with other workers was satisfactory, even though he had difficulties in communicating. When a small organizational change was introduced, however, the person's work performance dropped. Noticing this drop, the employer asked the supported employment agency for advice. The job coach assessed the situation and discovered that, due to the organizational change, the disabled person's relationship with a co-worker had altered. This confused him and made him unsure about how to perform. The job coach made new agreements about roles, explaining to the disabled person what he had to do in the new situation and the performance problem was solved.

Supported employment has many positive effects related to personal growth.

The individual:

- earns income
- shares ordinary places
- makes choices
- is treated with respect and has a valued social role
- grows in relationships;
- enhances economic self-reliance
- increases self-esteem.

Benefits for the parents/family

Traditional forms of care and welfare have placed parents and family (as well as the person with a disability) in a passive role. In these approaches, the experts are regarded as those who know what is good for a person with a disability. The passive dependent role which parents have in such approaches can be a barrier to the

personal growth and development of their child. When parents have been informed that their child has no possibilities of a paid job on the open labour market, they are understandably anxious about new insights such as those put forward in supported employment. Their hesitation related to new developments is usually based on their concern that the necessary care for their child will be reduced or disappear.

Because supported employment emphasizes the person's abilities and *not* the disability, parents and family have an active and decision-making role. Parents have to learn to play this new role. Their participation should not begin at the moment when final decisions have to be made, but should be part of an ongoing process. Parents unaccustomed to this approach may need support to fulfil this role.

Experiences with supported employment have shown that parents are very proud that their child is able to perform in a paid job, when earlier it had not been thought possible. The participation of parents/family must be encouraged from the start. They can provide valuable information on many aspects of their child. This information can be used in an action plan, in its evaluation and in its modification. Participation can also be encouraged by giving parents/family a supporting and stimulating role in their child's development. Through this, a good preparation can take place for integration and participation in society and the world of work.

The benefit of supported employment has many positive effects related to the family circle of a person with a disability.

Parents and families:

- can fulfil an active role in the development of their son or daughter
- can see their child become a contributing member of the community
- their child can also contribute to the family income, which is very important in developing countries
- they can perceive their daughter or son as a person with abilities – and a future.

Benefits for the employer

At the beginning of the 1990s, when supported employment started in some European countries, two reactions were common: employers were not willing to hire persons with a disability and high unemployment rates were taken to imply that persons with disabilities had no chance of getting a paid job. A third view often expressed was that persons with a more severe disability were not able to work.

Experience since then has shown that employers are willing to hire persons with disabilities, mainly because supported-employment workers can perform the tasks required. Thus, employers' needs were also supported.

A significant aspect of supported employment is its strong focus on practical training on the job and on worker performance. All necessary support and advice is given both to the employer and to the worker with a disability. Persons with disabilities are well prepared to take up work.

Meeting the needs of the employer through supported employment: Example 3

An employer on the island of Majorca, Spain gave his perspective on supported employment by contrasting his experience with hiring both long-term unemployed unskilled workers and workers with a disability. He described the non-disabled workers as not adequately prepared for the job as they had difficulty in performing. There was no support available for them. The employer decided to terminate their employment.

The workers with a disability were well prepared and were trained on the job. Adequate support was provided. They were able to meet their employer's performance demands. His experience was positive. They retained their jobs.

Another important aspect for the employer is that many persons with a disability (especially persons with intellectual disabilities) can effectively, efficiently and accurately perform simple repetitive tasks. They like to do this type of work and often prove to be reliable employees, with low absenteeism and accident rates.

In general, the turnover in repetitive-task jobs is very high: the employer has to deal with frequent vacancies and high recruitment costs. For the employer, one economic reason for hiring workers with a disability is that they tend to remain in a given job for a long period of time.

Even in countries with labour shortages, the employment rate of people with disabilities is very low. Why? Sadly, the reality is discrimination, lack of opportunity, stereotyping and negative attitudes. Supported employment recognizes that the approach to solving the problem of unemployment and underemployment of disabled people needs to be multifaceted, yet oriented to the needs of employers.

The needs of the employer are the basis for the decision to hire a person with a disability to perform required tasks. There is also a growing opinion in society that employees of a firm should represent all groups of society – as all groups of people are consumers of their products and services. This also means that persons with a disability should be included in the workforce. Many successful firms are highly aware of the benefits of a diverse workforce.

Increasingly, firms are recognizing that they have a social responsibility and are using supported employment to meet this responsibility.

Benefits for the public sector

Governments in many countries have laws, regulations and facilities with a focus on people with disabilities. The public sector has a role and a responsibility to facilitate the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in society.

Supported employment is an important policy instrument to promote individual rights, inclusion and participation. This model is in harmony with policies related to human rights and the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in society and

work. It is based on the real needs of employers and the economy. It is aimed at the individual – tailoring and responding to the abilities of people with disabilities

Developing countries in the process of formulating policies on how to provide work opportunities for people with disabilities can now make a choice. Supported employment is an option for governments. It is a cost-effective alternative to high investments in segregated sheltered workshop programmes. The investment costs of supported employment over time compare favourably with more traditional approaches. From a policy perspective there are direct measurable results and supported employment reflects the best practice in the field.
As more people with disabilities became actively involved in the labour force, they became more economically self-reliant and less dependent on public resources.

Supported employment can be carried out anywhere. It is feasible in countries at every level of economic development, irrespective of culture. The baseline is the same: supporting people with disabilities to get and keep a paid job in the open labour market.

What does supported employment involve?

Supported employment is an investment in people, rather than buildings or equipment. It focuses on the individual abilities and needs of a man or woman with a disability. The support strategy is tailored to individual needs. The person with a disability is the key player in the supported employment process. The principle of supported employment is:

“No more support than needed and no less than necessary.”

If resources are scarce, supported employment can be carried out on a small scale, initially with the help of family and friends.

The supported employment model consists of several different phases:

- assessment
- job finding
- job analysis
- job matching
- job (re)design
- introduction into the workplace
- training on the job/job coaching
- support outside the workplace
- ongoing support.

The phases the individual undergoes and the intensity of the support provided depends on his or her situation. Not everyone requires each phase of the process. If it is clear what type of job is wanted and that such a job is available, the early phases can be skipped and the focus can be on training and placement.

Assessment

The model of assessment used in supported employment focuses on abilities. The emphasis is on what a person can do. This dynamic approach in assessment views the person with a disability as the key actor. The person's ideas, wishes, preferences and options form the basis of assessment activities.

If a person with a disability has little or no knowledge or experience of certain work or work options, the dynamic assessment approach helps the person to experience different specific types of work, so that he or she can make an informed decision on whether or not this type of work is individually suitable.

This dynamic approach also involves a proactive attitude. The assessment specialist and the person with a disability work together to find suitable options and solutions.

Assessment in supported employment recognizes that the outcome is not decided for the rest of the person's life. The individual's situation may change, just as options or wants may also change based on individual experiences. New experiences can be and are the basis for new choices.

Working together to solve individual needs: Example 4
Impressed by everything related to the fire brigade, a person with an intellectual disability may indicate to the assessment specialist that he envisages being a fire-truck driver. Instead of ignoring this job preference, the assessment specialist carries out a survey based on the individual's interests. As a result, one job option mutually agreed may be that he could work in the garage of the fire brigade, with the task of cleaning the fire trucks – and working in an environment that interests him.

Job finding

This involves surveying the open labour market to identify job placement opportunities suited to individual job seekers. The central criterion for suitability is that the job is consistent with the individual's interests as well as their abilities. The central criterion for opportunities is the employer's needs.

A good understanding of the employer and the firm as a whole is necessary. Thus an analysis of job possibilities in a given region is undertaken before a particular employer is approached. The objective is to acquire a clear understanding of job prospects in a specific region – not only the number of vacancies, but also knowledge about the firms and their activities. This type of work is carried out by placement personnel, either from non-governmental organizations or from the public employment service.

An inventory of available resources (including public transport) within the given region is also recommended.

There are many different ways to collect relevant information. Contacting people in their own environment can contribute to success in finding jobs. Using networks of people, such as business people who meet each other on a regular basis, rotary clubs and others, can be very effective. Each person in a circle of contacts can add relevant information. The people who can give information may be family, friends or colleagues, for example.

It will be easier to identify prospective jobs if supported employment is actively marketed, drawing on success cases. When there is a successful placement, the next step is to make an appointment with the employer who hired the individual. Ask if he or she is willing to speak to other employers about the experience. When there are several interested employers, an advisory group of employers can be formed to help identify the jobs where recurrent difficulties occur in recruiting and retaining non-disabled workers. These are opportunities for supported employment placements, as illustrated in example 3. Success stories can be published in the newspapers. Information can also be given at meetings or clubs for employers. Promotional material may also be developed.

The job finder visits prospective employers to explain the potential of supported employment and describe the prospective employee. During this visit, a specific job is not discussed with the employer. Rather the needs of the employer are identified. The reason for this is that a clear understanding of the job setting must first be established so that possibilities are maximized rather than limited.

Employers who have little or no experience in hiring a worker with a disability may be hesitant but in most cases this hesitation is based on lack of knowledge or on apprehension about how to deal with a person with a disability. As a starting point the focus must be on what the employer requires in relation to the work to be done. When it is clear that a candidate with a disability can do the work, an appointment can be made with the employer. During the appointment, the nature and amount of support to be provided to the employee and the employer can be agreed. The case report in example 5 illustrates this phase of job finding and also underlines the key principle of supported employment, “No more support than needed and no less than necessary.”

Supported employment in practice - Bolivia. Example 5

Manuel is a job coach in Bolivia. This is his case report of Maria, housemaid, 19, and single

Assessment
Maria came into my office very early one morning. She immediately said that she needed a job but that so far she had not managed to find one. I explained that I was there to support her in her search for work. We looked at what type of job Maria wanted and what she had done previously. She has Down's syndrome and we concluded that this was a barrier in finding a job. Maria wanted to be a maid. She told me she had helped her mother in cleaning the house since she was a kid. She and her mother were trying to find Maria a job by asking around, but nobody had yet hired her. I suggested she try to get some work experience, in order to obtain a recommendation from someone locally well-known. She liked the idea and together we made a list of ten people reputed as reliable and socially minded. A few days later Maria returned to my office and we decided to send a letter to ten selected persons. Maria told me what she wanted to say in the letter, I typed and printed it and sent out the ten letters. Next we rehearsed a short story of what Maria would say when she followed up her letter with a phone call asking for work. We agreed that she was to mention she was supported by me and my agency. At my office, she spoke with six of the ten people. The sixth person responded very positively and invited her for an interview. Maria then called the other five to explain the situation. Again we prepared together what she would discuss at her interview. The next day I received a phone call from a very happy Maria. She had been accepted for a tryout period of (unfortunately) unpaid work as the assistant to another maid. We agreed she would call me whenever she needed to and that she would try to obtain a good written recommendation.

Job finding
After several weeks Maria returned to my office with the news that she had been hired as an assistant maid in the same house. She was glad, but disappointed about the poor wages. She asked me if I could help her in this and I agreed.

Job analysis
We also discussed if she could handle the various tasks of the job and Maria said she could handle it well.

Matching
The job matched Maria's needs.

Job coaching
Maria made an appointment to see her employer with me. Maria and I had previously prepared what she would say. Her employer was a little annoyed that Maria was asking for more wages. I supported Maria's argument but in the end Maria didn't get what we had set as a goal. She and her employer agreed on an amount in the middle.

Ongoing support

Maria drops by once in a while, when she needs some advice or just to chat about things.

Job analysis

Once a potential job has been identified the job coach must carry out a job analysis to identify in detail the tasks involved. The job coach thoroughly examines the various elements of a job to identify those which the person with a disability can complete and those for which the person will require training.

The potential job is examined and divided into smaller components so as to determine which skills and knowledge the employee will need to achieve performance and employment success. It must be emphasized that the intent of the task analysis is not to formulate a list of job qualifications. This would only limit opportunities. Rather, the objective is to formulate the basis for designing a training programme and/or to describe the job.

Job analysis can also identify those tasks presently performed by employees which are additional components of their jobs. These might productively be combined into a new job and performed by a worker with a disability. This could include activities such as filing, data entry, watering plants, making coffee.

Special attention must always be given to job requirements, physical demands and working conditions.

Examples of job components that need to be examined are:

- the level of education specified for the position
- description of the various functions (the overall activity)
- underlying tasks accompanying the position (including time spent, level of difficulty, materials used, physical requirements and psychological requirements)
- role of co-workers.

Information is gathered during the job analysis through direct observation and speaking with individuals who are familiar with the work to be done. Often the job analyst spends time in the work setting and performs the various job tasks to gain Informative insights.

Job matching

The next phase is to compare information acquired from the job analysis and the assessment in order to achieve optimal job placement. This comparison determines the degree to which the demands of the job match the abilities and interests of the prospective employee.

In this step of the supported employment process, the individual with a disability is “matched” to a particular job. A perfect match between employee skills and the demands of the position is unlikely. The intent, however, is to find the best possible match between the interests and abilities of the person with a disability and the demands of the position. It should be emphasized that the person must be actively involved at all stages of the matching process.

Job (re)design

It may be that the person with a disability cannot perform one or more tasks of the job. Here, the possibility of removing these tasks from the job and replacing them with other tasks should be explored. In this way a job can be (re)designed so that it meets the employer’s needs and better matches the employee’s abilities.

The job analysis may have led to the combination of a number of duties to create a new position for the person with a disability. If the prospective employee is not yet able to perform all tasks demanded but can acquire the necessary skills, then a training plan is agreed upon.

Tasks must be clearly defined from the outset, for employer and employee.
It must be clear which duties are expected of the employee, what the employer can expect and how the work is organized. In some situations people with disabilities have lost their jobs because of differing interpretations or expectations.

Workplace introduction

Before starting in the firm, an orientation plan must be made for the (future) employee.to introduce to the firm, co-workers and supervisors, as well as workplace rules, work-related safety and health. He or she must also be aware of the formal and informal organizational structure within the firm and its (often unwritten) rules. For example, in a more formalized environment, the employee must ask permission to perform tasks, while the informal line is for all employees go ahead with the tasks at hand. It is also essential to be aware of how to deal with various internal rules pertaining to coffee breaks or lunchtime, for example. Co-workers should meet the person with a disability and their role should be clarified before the person starts working. In many cases a person with a disability has lost his or her job because the introductory process was inadequate.

Job coaching/Training on the job

One of the most important aspects of supported employment is training on the job. Most of this training is provided by a job coach and takes place in the firm. Training is tailored to the specific requirements of the job, according to the criteria of the employer.

Job coaching involves on-the-job teaching of the necessary practical and social skills to increase the independence of the worker with a disability and to strengthen their ability to perform. Coaching also focuses on the guidance and activation of persons

in the direct environment of the worker with a disability, so that both job inclusion and social inclusion can be optimalized.

Supported employment in practice – the United Kingdom. Example 6

Angela is an employment officer in England. This is her case report of John, a website designer, age 36, married, with two children

Assessment

I was called by John's counsellor, who explained that John was facing several difficult challenges. He was suffering from autism (Asperger syndrome), had been unemployed for six years and recently was also having marital problems. The counsellor asked if I would see John and an appointment was made. In my first meeting with him I described the method of Supported Employment. John was very nervous. He agreed in principle with what I proposed and spoke accurately about his illness. I couldn't discover much about his wish to work, although he has a degree in Chemistry. Before our next appointment I had received a report from John's neurologist and from his counsellor. It showed a complex personality, highly intellectual and lacking in social abilities. John did a test concerning his employment interests, which strongly pointed in the direction of structures and computers.
In our final assessment meeting, John agreed to my suggestion that I would try to find him a job as a web designer.

Job finding

Our marketing officer showed me a small list of software companies. I asked her to seek out a job in a small firm. Several weeks later, she proposed a job for John as a web designer in a small company, designing programmes for care organizations.

Job analysis

In my first appointment with the company I asked for a job-specific description and made a detailed list of all tasks, the work environment, colleagues, the firm's structure and its organizational culture, etc.

Matching

First I described the tasks to John and we then visited the company. John was introduced to his prospective colleagues but reacted distantly. He made it quite clear that he was not much interested in interacting socially with his co-workers. I witnessed their negative reaction. During my follow-up visit, the employer informed me that John's prospective colleagues were not very enthusiastic and that in fact the deal was off. I proposed to the employer that we could perhaps change the working conditions in such a way that his colleagues would be able to deal with John's lack of social abilities. I also promised that I would use job coaching to facilitate the contact between John and his colleagues. After much hesitation, the employer said he would give it a try, but only if I would guarantee my ultimate support.

Job coaching

I coached John prior to his starting the job. We fully discussed what social interaction on the job would entail, the expectations of his colleagues and John's own expectations. The result of our talks was that we agreed that John was to respect his colleagues' need for a chat and I would ask his colleagues to respect John's dislike

of socializing. John commenced his job. The work itself presented no difficulty for him; his employer was very satisfied with his results. The only problem was that John kept on working as long as there were things to do, sometimes for 12 hours a day. I spoke with John and we agreed he would work no longer than eight and a half hours and that he would try to set his time limits the moment he received an assignment. When I spoke with the employer, we agreed that he would limit John's assignments in order to prevent him working longer hours. Coffee breaks and lunchtime are not for relaxation as far as John is concerned. He works on at coffee time and at lunch time he spends 15 minutes eating with colleagues and then returns to work. John's colleagues are accustomed to this situation and are very satisfied with having a skilled website designer.

Ongoing support
Twice a week I visit John. We always perform the same ritual. We look at his tasks and we adjust the planning. At the same time I see how John is and when he is stressed we talk about it for a short while, which helps. I also regularly speak with John's employer.

Attention must not only be given to the work and the work environment, but also to individual aspects of the worker, for example, specific personal support related to the disability. This type of support can be provided by family, friends or professionals.

The function of a job coach can be fulfilled by an employee of the firm as well as by an external person, who usually works for a supported employment agency or organization.

The job coach is also intended to be a resource for employers and co-workers. For example, if there are changes in workplace equipment, the employer can consult the job coach to determine whether the supported employee needs specific training to enable him or her to use the new equipment. The person with a disability is trained by the job coach to work with a machine. The job coach can also be consulted when problems arise at the workplace and the employer or co-workers cannot deal with these (as example 6 shows). Lack of communication or problems at home can affect on-the-job performance and behaviour. The job coach can be asked to give attention to these problems and help the employee with a disability to resolve workplace issues.

The job coach must be familiar with all aspects of the supported employment job. A job coach must familiarize co-workers of the person with a disability with supported employment methods and with their role in the process. Often, the job coach is already performing tasks in the firm to gain insights before the person with a disability takes up the job. The job coach is responsible for the introduction phase and for the training programme for the employee. The programme carefully describes the skills necessary for the job itself and disability-related support.

When the person with a disability begins work, the job coach provides training in the required skills and supports the person in many other ways. A large proportion of job tasks may initially be completed by the job coach. This balance changes as the worker gradually adjusts to the job and assumes responsibility for it.

The amount of support and the roles of the employer, co-workers and the job coach are continuously evaluated. Changes and adjustments are then agreed. It is essential that there is full agreement and understanding about the roles and duties of each party. In many cases a person with a disability loses a job because of too few appointments and lack of evaluation.

Individualizing the supported employment process for people with disabilities: A lesson for the job coach

Supported employment involves dealing with individual situations. Individuals differ, their attitudes and abilities differ and so do their interests, options and possibilities. People with learning difficulties, for example, benefit considerably from on-the-job training. The individual is the key, as both case reports show. In example 5, the client only needed a little help. In example 6, much attention is given to structuring the tasks. Effective support requires individualized responses to individual needs.

Support outside the workplace

Supported employment may also include the provision of support outside the workplace, which may be necessary in some situations.

The type of support differs from person to person, depending on individual needs. Examples include:

- helping the person to get organized
- assisting in monitoring the person's financial situation
- providing transport
- training in using public transport
- helping in solving individual and family problems
- providing specific, disability-related support, for example health care support
- helping in planning activities
- mediating with public officials to arrange services and facilities.

A lack of attention to support needs outside the workplace may result in job loss for a worker with a disability because of some of the above issues, for example, not being organized to reach work on time.

Ongoing support

Agreements are made with employers on the terms and conditions of employment. The employer's expectations and arrangements regarding ongoing support are also agreed.

In situations where these agreements are not clear from the outset, problems may arise which sometimes result in the worker with a disability not being retained in the job. Many employers have identified the provision of ongoing support as one of the

most important aspects of the supported employment model. Should any difficulties arise, employers perceive ongoing support as a safety net for both them and the disabled employee.

How to start supported employment

Supported employment is based on the values of full inclusion and human rights for people with disabilities. It is compatible with the "social" model of disability in which the person with a disability is recognized as a citizen who has the right to participate. Due to disability, a person might not be able to exercise their rights. Here, individual support can help to achieve inclusion and participation.

At the beginning of the 1990s, organizations in western European countries were asking the question: How can we start supported employment?

Based on experience over the past ten years, the following phases have been identified:

***Phase 1* – Spreading the idea**

The first phase involves contacting people who are attracted to the supported employment approach. Those interested can form a committee or a task force. It is important that all relevant players are involved (persons with disabilities/ relatives, service providers, employers, public sector representatives).

This group of people can start by collecting and spreading information about supported employment. Through this more people can become involved and local, regional and national meetings organized.

***Phase 2* – Forming associations**

As a result of the first phase, in many western European countries, local, regional and national associations for supported employment were established. These organizations spread information on the developments on supported employment through conferences and workshops. The meetings also facilitated the exchange of practical information among persons who were involved in the implementation process.

***Phase 3* – Start-up activities**

The most important phase is starting activities by using the various steps of the supported employment model – assessment, job finding, job analysis, matching, job coaching and ongoing support. Supported employment usually begins on a small scale. The supported employment organization CITY from Los Angeles, USA, uses as its mission statement "One person at a time". It is best to start with one person and make supported employment a success story for this individual. This success

becomes an example for others to follow. Through these small steps supported employment can be implemented and extended.

In a developing country with a lack of service provision, supported employment services can be started by volunteers. Family and friends can play an integral role, carrying out job finding and other activities to support the person with a disability.

Networks of family and friends can assist in identifying suitable jobs. The town or village can provide a meeting place for the organization. In concrete terms it means the use of all available resources in the local community.

Phase 4 *– 'Growing' supported employment*

When supported employment is growing, there is also a need to look at the organizational structure of the supported employment organization itself. As numbers increase and more people with disabilities are successfully working in supported employment, attention must be given to management aspects, administration and the development of the organization and its staff.

Evaluation is needed – of the supported employment services and, linked to this, of the training and development needs of those providing these services.

Once the success of supported employment is demonstrated, it will generate interest. All players will respond positively when they perceive how they can benefit. Employers will share their experiences with other employers. Parents will talk about their child's personal growth and development through supported employment. People in public administration will spread the word that the policy to promote supported employment is a success. Most importantly, people with disabilities will gain from their independence and from their employment status, and will become powerful advocates of supported employment

After a ten-year experience of supported employment, western European countries are increasingly deciding to apply this model as a mainstream activity at the core of government strategy, in order to realize inclusive employment for people with all types of disabilities.

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