

Professional Competences of Intellectually Disabled Persons

Occupational therapy workshop is the institution which creates social and professional rehabilitation possibilities in respect of gaining or restoring abilities necessary to take up a job by disabled persons, incapable to take up it. Carried on rehabilitation covers guidance, professional training, selection of suitable place of work and its equipment.

Workshop, when realizing these aims, should equip its participants in all indispensable skills to take up a job, assistance in finding employment for those who are properly prepared, giving instruction to future employers of intellectually disabled persons.

Activities undertaken in occupational therapy workshops should shape disabled persons' skills and abilities which characterize an employee (conf. P. Mamot,2006).

Disabled person, ready for taking up a job, should own certain characteristics of personality (conf. K. Piotrkowska,2006).

Attitude of an individual toward oneself:

- * self-dependence
- * emotional resistance
- * optimism
- * motivation
- * self-acceptance

Attitude towards other people (including disabled persons):

- * social activity
- * interpersonal skills
- * group cooperation

In accordance to M. Misztal-Kurek (2005, p. 11) the introduction of the participant of occupational therapy workshop should be done due to following steps:

- Evaluation of professional competences

- Preparation of a family
- Searching for employer / selection of work position
- Test of work place
- Introduction of a client to the work (often within an assistance of a therapist)
- Building up a natural support at the work place
- Evaluation of situation and withdrawal of the therapist
- Tracking – lesser frequency of visits

Instructors of occupational therapy gives assistance to workshop participants when taking up a job and keeping it. In scope of occupational training, together with participants, they write curriculum vitae, complete documents necessary for employment, register at labour office, search for proper job offers, prepares for job interview.

Scientific Issues

The aim of undertaken researches was to estimate the impact of revalidation reactions, conducted in occupational therapy workshops, on development of interests and professional competences of mentally disabled persons.

Following scientific issues were formulated:

- How does the participation in occupational therapy workshops shape the professional interests?
- What development is observed along participants of workshops in case of work and resources ?
- What is the degree of the development of motor and pace of work improvement at subjects ?
- What are the changes of interpersonal contacts of subjects toward co-workers and work guardians?
- How does the participation in occupational therapy develops professional maturity of subjects?
- What development in emotional-motivation sphere and occupational attitude at subjects is observed under the influence of therapy?
- What changes at development of intellectual sphere are visible during occupational rehabilitation?

Following scientific tools were used during researches:

- 'Scale of developmental evaluation of the participant of occupational therapy workshops' issued by Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People
- 'Test of professional interests' issued by Facilitators Manual for the Job Finding Club (1993)
- Observation sheets - six-month and annual evaluation of an individual occupational rehabilitation progress of workshops' participants, authorship of occupational therapy workshop's program council
- Questionnaire for parents and guardians of occupational therapy workshop's participants, authorship of occupational therapy workshop's program council
- Questionnaire of background interview, authorship of occupational therapy workshop's program council

Scientific researches covered 30 participants of occupational therapy workshops (15 persons with mild and 15 with moderate intellectual disability) at the age of 20 – 49. All of subjects have participated in occupational therapy since 2005.

In workshop, in which researches were conducted, realizes: activities in several studios, as well as, the training of occupational adaptation. During this training, participants are able to get accustomed with a following issues:

- What is the job?
- What are my interests and occupational skills?
- What are the characteristics of a good employee?
- What are rights and obligations of an employee?
- What is its vision of a future work?
- Where one can find a job?
- How to create a CV?
- Who is the vocational counsellor?
- How to come off well during a job interview?
- What is a contract of employment?

Results of the Research

Initial level of the occupational competences owned by representatives of particular groups was very differentiated and depended on the level of intellectual disability. In the first

research persons with moderate intellectual disability , in all of groups achieved weak or sufficient results, in all of researched areas. In the second group, none of the subject achieved weak result in researched areas.

After six-month of systematic therapy, the visible increase in occupational competences was noticed in the following areas:

- Subjects' occupational interests has changed and became more specified.
- Occupational skills and maturity of those workshop's participants who have a moderate intellectual disability - developed considerably (93.24%). Persons with mild intellectual disability has not developed following occupational competences: comprehension of given instructions, creativity, perseverance, pace of work, discipline, obeying the regulations.
- Under the influence of systematic occupational therapy – the positive changes in ‘emotional-motivational sphere’ were observed at persons with moderate intellectual disability (86.58%). These persons were characterized by: better emotional stability, resistance to frustrations, bigger number of adequate reactions to certain social situations. Among subjects with mild intellectual disability the above mentioned changes were observed, as well as, in sphere of self-assessment and responsibility. However, it is not the growth enabling to reach the higher level of ones’ owned occupational competences.
- Development of intellectual sphere in scope of awareness concentration, perceptibility, memory, visual-motoric coordination was observed at 73.34 % of moderately and 33.33% of mildly intellectually disabled participants. Under the influence of occupational therapy and conducted vocational training, persons with mild intellectual disability started to (independently or within the assistance of the instructor) read skilled literature, describe their professional interests, more actively spend their free time.
- Changes in sphere of independence of environmental communication, orientation in rules of workshop’s functioning, obeying restrictions.
- Positive changes in interpersonal relations

Conclusions and Demands

The analysis of changes between results obtained by every group of subjects, enables to state that the level of intellectual disability , and connected with it abilities and limitations

in functioning of certain individuals, have a significant value in success of occupational therapy. Simultaneously, conducted researches states, that systematically carried on researches gives the measurable results.

Summarising obtained results one should state several practical demands:

- Having a job and performing it is a crucial element of every human's life, it's a measure of it's worth, usefulness in a society. Every persons with intellectual disability should has a job. It has to find it's place on both: open and protected labour markets. The selection of the position should be individually adjusted to it's psychical and physical abilities.
- Professional rehabilitation should be carried on in natural environment, similar to one, in which non-disabled persons functions. It should be rich in situations enabling the gain of new professional experiences.
- All of experts taking part in a process of preparation and adaptation to work conditions of mentally disabled persons, should consider their right to undertake the professional activity within their individual abilities, interests and level of owned skills and professional competences.

Every constructed, individual plan of professional therapy should take into consideration: needs, abilities and specific limitations in functioning of mentally disabled persons, as well as, adjust properly means of influence and owned resources.

The normalization of mentally disabled persons' life may concern many aspects of their personal and social functioning. One among others is professional activity, taking up a job, and, therefore, make one's own living.

Occupational therapy workshops, as the therapeutic institution, gives the assistance to adults with intellectual disability. The main aim of the carried on occupational rehabilitation is the assistance given among shaping individual interests and acquiring a proper level of professional competences, which enables taking up and holding a job.

References:

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