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Employers of People with Disabilities: Attitudes, Challenges and Needs

Michal Alfasi Hanley¹

From 2010-2012 the employment rate among people with disabilities in Israel was 53%, significantly lower than the 75% rate in the non-disabled population. The low employment rate is derived from a series of barriers, both from the supply side (characteristics of the disabled population) and from the demand side. The latter refers to employers, who manifest negative attitudes towards workers with disabilities and fear cost implications.

This article will focus on employers' viewpoints regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities in the work force, by presenting data from a unique survey conducted during 2011 in Israel among 800 employers.

The purpose of the survey was firstly to estimate the rate and number of business sector employers who employ people with disabilities, and to describe their characteristics. Furthermore, this survey reveals employers' attitudes towards the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labor force, their motivations to do so alongside their concerns, difficulties and challenges. Finally, we wanted to learn what would assist employers to continue hiring disabled persons.

The findings of this survey reveal that only 5.4% of Israeli businesses employ people with disabilities, mainly small and medium-sized concerns. Furthermore, the findings show that the main motivation in hiring disabled workers derives from charity and decency, rather than from economic considerations.

In addition, the data show that employers are very concerned about the prospect of firing disabled workers and the cost of employing them. This

1 Research and Economics Administration, Ministry of Economy.

survey did not find differences in the attitudes of employers who hire disabled persons compared to those who do not.

The findings show that employers' main needs are for mentoring by other experienced employers and guidance from professionals in the disabilities field throughout the employment period.

Disability Mainstreaming in the One-Stop Shops: Israel and the OECD Countries

Gal Zohar¹, Lirit Gruber² and Yossi Freier Dror¹

The notion of mainstreaming has in recent years, become one of the central working principles for advancing people with disabilities in the labor market. Although the idea has been adopted by several countries, its interpretation is vague. This study attempts to clear up the obscurity surrounding the idea of mainstreaming by focusing on the One-Stop Shops providing guidance and employment. The goals in establishing these centers, their purposes and tools (services and training) are similar across countries, while the climate – the area where these services are provided – differs from country to country.

This study focuses on adoption of mainstreaming in Israel; we claim that mainstreaming in the recently established Israeli One-Stop Shop for people with disabilities has only been partial, as opposed to most of the OECD countries. Thus practically speaking in Israel, mainstreaming reproduces the exclusion of people with disabilities and leaves many on the margins of the labor market. This study holds up a mirror to the current policy of integrating people with disabilities into the labor market, and the dominant policy paradigm regarding the integration of excluded populations in Israeli society.

1 Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Ministry of Economy, Ministry for Social Equality and other government offices.
2 Mashav Applied Research.

Regulation of the Adjusted Minimum Wage: Israel as a Case Study

Efrat Keidar¹ and John Gal¹

This article explores the process of shaping the policy leading to legislation and implementation of regulations concerning the adjusted minimum wage in Israel. The process began with social legislation whose aim was to improve workers' rights in Israel, but that at the same time, permitted the exclusion of workers with disabilities and reduced work capabilities. The continuation of the legislative process is characterized by an attempt to integrate the discourse on equal rights, based on evolving laws in Israel with the world of people with disabilities. The article follows the historical process paying particular attention to the issues raised in connection with the medical model, as contrasted with the social model, employment, output, and wages for people with disabilities. The article throws light on the formulation of social policy in general, particularly as it affects people with disabilities.

1 Paul Baerwald **School of Social Work** and Social Welfare, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Sub-minimum Wage for People with Disabilities: A Cross-National Study

Or Raviv¹ and Orly Benjamin²

Stronger neo-liberal policies on the one hand, and the growing recognition of people with disabilities' rights on the other, have changed budget allocations for this population in diverse ways. In this context, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development has created the 'OECD disability policy' typology, to evaluate people with disabilities' work conditions based on two dimensions: compensation and integration. However, the model does not take into account the sub-minimum wage regulation and its contribution to employment rates, average gross incomes and poverty risks for workers with disabilities. Because the inclusion of the sub-minimum wage has the potential to challenge the OECD model, our study investigated it in a cross-national quantitative comparison. In this way, the study contributes to the understanding of the significance and effects of the sub-minimum wage policy. Moreover, our study connected the Israeli case to a cross-national comparison in a way that has not yet been considered. Four different data bases were used: the 2008 Israeli census of the CBS, the public data of the OECD 2006- 2007, Eurostat 2010, and a new database that was created by classifying countries distinguishing between those with and without the regulation. In our data analysis, no significant differences were found in the average employment rates between workers with disabilities compared to workers without disabilities, regarding countries with or without the regulation. However, gross average incomes (after transference) were found to be significantly lower for workers with disabilities in countries which legitimized the regulation. Paradoxically it was found that liberal welfare states which are more likely to operate the regulation, are also ranked significantly lower in the latter measurements, in comparison to countries characterized by

1 Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tel Aviv University.

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corporatist and social-democratic policies. Additionally, it was also revealed that workers with disabilities in comparison to others, have the highest risk of living in poverty in countries with a liberal policy. These findings were also reflected in the Israeli case.

The Influence of 'Laron's Law' on General Disability Allowance Recipients Who Began Working: Employment Rate and Characteristics

Ofir Y. Pinto¹ and Michel Strawczynski²

In the last few years, community programs for people coping with psychiatric disability have become part of a nationwide initiative. Recent legislation, (Equal Rights for Patients, 1996 and the Rehabilitation of the Mentally Ill in the Community, 2000), has resulted in more initiatives to encourage rehabilitation and the social and employment integration of this population into the community.

One of the most significant challenges in this area is the creation of interventions that are appropriate to the characteristics and unique needs of young adults (ages 18-30). The Demonstration Projects Fund of the National Insurance Institute and the Ministry of Health funded two rehabilitation programs to promote employment for this population: one – a 'supportive' model, and the second – a 'demanding' model. Evaluation of the two programs examines the extent to which the programs were adapted to participants' characteristics, promote their progress to independence and provide appropriate responses to their unique needs. The evaluation included five measurements (between July 2009 and March 2011), as well as a follow-up of program graduates (January through February 2012). Data were collected from about 53 participants in one program and 29

1 Research and Planning Department, National Insurance Institute.

2 Federmann School of Public Policy and Government & Department of Economics, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

participants of the second program, utilizing various sources of information - participants, graduates, parents, employers, and staff members, using in-depth interviews, observations, focus-groups, and self-administered questionnaires.

The findings indicate participants' significant progress in both models, using dimensions of integration at work and in other areas (such as integration into higher education). Main components identified as contributing to successful integration were: the rehabilitation and recovery approach of staff members, preparation of individual work plans, group elements of mutual learning and social activities, and intensive experience in the labor market.

Investment in Community Social and Employment Rehabilitation Programs for Young Adults Coping with Psychiatric Disability: Follow-up Study on the Intervention Strategy and Results of Two Alternative Models

Chen Lifshitz¹ and Or Catz²

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1 School of Social Work, Ashkelon Academic College.

2 Department of Psychology, Ashkelon Academic College.

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Employment of High Functioning People with Autism: Literature Review and Evaluation of a Pilot Program at Beit Eckstein

Dori Rivkin¹, and Yoav Loeff¹

People with high functioning autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) have difficulty entering and maintaining employment, and those employed often work at jobs below their intellectual abilities. A survey of literature provides recommendations for successful employment for people with high functioning ASD. These include providing guidance regarding job interviewing, disclosing the disability to the employer and expressing needs, and understanding non-verbal or indirect communication. Recommendations are also provided for adapting the job to the employee, such as explaining the purpose of the task, providing clear written instructions, clarifying dress code, adapting the work hours to employees' abilities, and providing a clear routine and a quiet and permanent workstation.

In Israel, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services and Beit Eckstein initiated a program in 2007 to help people with high functioning ASD join the competitive labor market. The two year program included three stages: A training workshop to impart soft work skills and communication proficiency; unpaid work experience; and assistance with job search and entry.

Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute evaluated the program's pilot stage from 2008-2011. The study included semi-structured interviews with 33 participants at 3 points in time, and interviews with 25 parents of participants, 9 employers, and 16 professionals at the ministry and Beit Eckstein.

1 Center for Research on Disabilities, Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute.

Evaluation findings:

- At the 2 year follow-up, 18 out of 26 respondents were working in competitive employment, most of them at their original placement. Two participants were studying and 6 were in sheltered employment. Many of the participants and their parents reported additional gains, such as developing independence and initiative, an increase in self-esteem, and improved social skills.
- The program was intended for those with high-functioning autism. However, some lower functioning people were accepted without any realistic expectation that they would adjust to competitive employment. This helps to explain why some participants were placed in sheltered frameworks.
- Like most people with autism, many of the participants had additional disabilities such as ADHD and learning disabilities or emotional problems, such as anxiety, depression, aggression and lack of self-control. The additional difficulties were usually the main barrier to work adjustment, more so than the obstacles typically associated with autism.
- The program staff had difficulty in finding employers willing to employ the participants. On average it took 3-4 months to find work, sometimes the search took close to a year.
- The program's individual support workers were mostly college graduates with many personal skills and high motivation. However, the role does not demand formal training, and is a poorly paid, part-time position with no prospects for promotion. This explains high staff turnover, which was detrimental for the participants.
- The program imparted the soft skills necessary for employment. However, more challenging work requires vocational training or further education. Most participants were placed in unskilled positions, and few found work that matched their intellectual abilities and areas of interest. Many of them complained of boredom at their jobs.

The program's potential was clearly demonstrated and it has been expanded and revised to address some of the issues described.

Employment-integration Challenges of People with Disabilities: A Review of Four Target Groups

Denise Naon¹, Dafna Haran², Hagit Sofer-Furman¹ and Yael Hadar¹

The employment rate for people with disabilities in Israel, as in other OECD countries, is significantly lower than that for people without disabilities. In Israel, the policy to promote the integration of people with disabilities into employment tends to focus on recipients of general disability benefits from the National Insurance Institute (NII). However, the population of people with disabilities, specifically those who are not working, is much broader, and includes many individuals who are not eligible for disability benefits. This population varies widely in its socio-demographic characteristics, in aspects related to the disability and in the level of assistance provided to them by the state.

This article addresses all people with disabilities who are not part of any occupational framework. Altogether in 2010, this population numbered some half a million people. Within this population, we identified a number of groups with significant unrealized employment potential, according to the following criteria: size of group, severity of disability, motivation to work, and employment-facilitating resources such as being young and possessing high-school education. The groups were identified from those receiving general disability benefits from the NII and from those not receiving any disability benefits. Partially overlapping these groups, two additional ones with high employment potential were identified, namely young people with disabilities who neither work nor study and people who dropped out of work because of an illness or disability. The article presents

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- 1 Center for Research on Employment of Disadvantaged Populations, Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute.
 - 2 Center for Research on Disabilities, and Center for Research on Employment of Disadvantaged Populations, Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute.

empirical findings on the characteristics of individuals in each of the groups and the employment barriers they face, examines their unique needs for the assistance required in order to promote their integration into the job market, and proposes a number of possible solutions for these needs.

Apart from the distinct needs of the different groups and specific interventions they require, the article addresses needs for assistance and programmatic directions common to all: in response to the partial utilization of employment-rehabilitation services, an increase is recommended in the budgetary resources invested in these services, along with expanded outreach activities. In view of the structural-organizational division of the various authorities and agencies providing services for people with disabilities, it is important to create a one-stop center to help individuals effectively navigate the different service systems and optimally increase take-up of benefits. Finally, it is suggested that recent policy reforms, aimed at promoting disability benefit recipients' integration into employment, be disseminated and elucidated for the target population.

Exploration and Career Self-Efficacy among Young Adults with and without Physical Disability

Galia Ran¹, Rinat Michael¹ and Rachel Gali Cinamon¹

The purpose of the current study is to examine career development processes among individuals coping with disabilities. The term 'career' was conceptualized in this study using a broad perspective of the work role and its connections to other life roles. Specifically, career exploration, self-efficacy to manage work and family roles, and subjective well-being were examined among young adults with and without physical disabilities. Participants were 79 young adults: 25 coping with a physical disability and 54 without disabilities. They completed 4 questionnaires independently and voluntarily through the social networks. Significant differences were found between the 2 study groups: young adults with physical disabilities reported lower levels of exploration in work and economic domains, lower levels of self-efficacy to manage future work and family roles, and higher levels of subjective well-being compared to youth without disabilities. In addition, physical disability, self-efficacy in managing work-family conflict, exploration of education, occupation, and role management were all significant predictors of subjective well-being. Research findings support the broad humanistic perspective which is commonly used in relation to persons with disabilities. According to this perspective, choosing a life style, including an occupational choice, is based on social construction and exists within an environmental and personal context. The findings also may provide a foundation for the continuation of research, policy, and intervention in the field of career development for youth with disabilities.

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Initiating a Law Establishing a Duty to Hire a Deaf Person: Deaf and Hard-of-hearing Women in Israel's Occupational World

Irit Dalumy¹

In the encounter with and integration into the occupational world, deaf and hard-of-hearing women stand in a unique confluence of their social position as disabled women. This is a junction of three categories of identity: status (the occupational world), gender (female) and sensory disability (deafness and hearing disability).

Through the testimonies of deaf and hard-of-hearing women, both employed and retired with academic education, who participated in a narrative qualitative study, the nature of their encounter with the occupational world becomes clearer. This encounter begins in their socialization into the occupational world and the tracking they underwent in their youth, through their attempts to be hired for a job and dealing with the scarcity of options available to them, the presence of their hearing disability and dealing with the attitudes of those surrounding them, until their integration into the work routine. All this while continuously dealing with changes in and the deterioration of the disability.

This article shows how, influenced by their integration into the occupational world, these women's self-perception and identity is formed. They strive for social and personal change. Acting according to the principle of group and self-representation, the women change their environment, both as individuals and as representatives of the deaf in particular and of disabled people in general. Through their personal struggle, the deaf and hard-of-hearing women raise political awareness.

1 Arab Academic College for Education in Israel.

Promoting Self-employment and Business Initiatives for People with Disabilities

Yoav Loeff¹

In recent years there has been a growing understanding that self-employment can be an important job-setting for some people with disabilities. Among its advantages are the opportunities for independence and innovation and the option of working in an area of personal interest. Self-employment can provide an alternative for people who have difficulty finding work as employees, whether due to lack of interest on the part of employers or because of disability related issues, such as reduced mobility, difficulties in communication and need for flexible working hours.

Self-employment for people with disabilities also presents challenges. Often people with disabilities have less business experience, knowledge and connections than others. In addition, they have more difficulty obtaining loans to set up their business. Professionals at employment services for people with disabilities are often unaware of self-employment as an option, or discourage it due to concern about financial risk. This is partly due to the unrealistic definition of a successful business as a profitable and growing enterprise, when in fact a small independent business can be considered a success if it provides its owner with a modest income and personal interest and satisfaction.

This paper surveys programs and research findings in Israel and other countries to help people with disabilities who wish to be self-employed. Several conclusions are offered:

- As people with disabilities usually need more assistance, programs to promote self-employment need to be more comprehensive than those intended for the general population.

¹ Center for Research on Disabilities, Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute.

- In addition to training and assistance in preparing a business plan, participants need ongoing support for several years.
- In addition to professional guidance, it is important to encourage informal support from family members, friends or volunteers.
 - Programs need to strike an appropriate balance between business content, and disability-related content. This can be done by co-operating with professionals and agencies specializing in entrepreneurship and those trained in rehabilitating people with disabilities.
- Some self-employed people feel lonely and isolated. This can be addressed through support groups, encouraging partnerships or establishing common workspaces for several businesses.
- Programs need to address the issue of finding appropriate funding sources for the initial investment.

To conclude, self-employment of people with disabilities is not only possible, but also necessary. However, as in the general population, this form of employment is not for everyone. Programs can help people who wish to start small businesses, but they require strict implementation of the guidelines above to achieve the desired results.

From Volunteer to Activist: Volunteers with Disabilities

Galit Yanay-Ventura¹

The goal of this article is to broaden our understanding of people with disabilities who volunteer. The article is based on field work in which 35 Jewish and Arab volunteers with physical, mental and/or cognitive disabilities were interviewed. All participants volunteered at assistance organizations for people with disabilities; over half of them were active in management and leadership in the organizations and the remainder in support and guidance roles. The greater part of the interview concerned the meaning volunteering held for them as they executed their roles, labor relations and relationships with staff members at the organization. Findings show that volunteering is common among resourceful individuals. Volunteers are characterized by a normative outlook whereby they do not view their disability as an obstacle, and they display broad-minded action for transforming the social condition of people with disabilities and for personal aid. Examination of their aid practices shows that the identity of the volunteers as people with disabilities shaped their caring approach towards beneficiaries. Therefore, understanding the uniqueness of their approach to clients is a key factor in the development of an organizational culture which promotes integral recruitment of volunteers.

¹ Department of Human Services, Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel.

Looking at Volunteers with Disabilities from the Disability Studies Point of View

Iris Finkelstein¹

Despite considerable theoretical and legislative advance in the attitudes towards people with disabilities and their respective rights, people with disabilities in Israel still suffers from exclusion and rejection, and their ability to contribute to Israeli society is constantly questioned. Research in this field indicates that their involvement rates are low in all of the social fields, including in the labor force, when compared with the population of people without disabilities.

As a part of the developing professional perception of volunteering as a significant tool for social integration, skills and personal abilities development, volunteering has the potential to change negative attitudes regarding people with disabilities. Therefore, this article seeks to propose volunteer activity as a means for removing employment barriers and of social integration for persons with disabilities.

The phenomenon of volunteers with disabilities, in Israel and around the world, is not common. The integration between the accepted perception of volunteer activity as an altruistic activity of charity, based on a one-sided system of power, in which the giver is able and strong, while the receiver is weak and unable, doesn't support the notion of persons with disabilities as volunteers. Usually, people with disabilities are perceived as the beneficiaries of volunteering and not as volunteers. Negative attitudes towards the productivity of persons with disabilities, strengthen this perception, and thus most of the volunteer programs are aimed not at the integration of people with disabilities as volunteers but as the target of charity.

¹ Bar Ilan University, JDC Israel – Ashalim Ronit Bar, JDC Israel – Ashalim.

In light of the considerable advantages innate in the volunteer activity and the potential of volunteer activity for social and occupational integration, the article proposes volunteering among people with disabilities as a means for inclusion and empowerment. This approach is adequate with critical disability studies, since it presents the volunteer activity of people with disabilities as a source of power and an execution of the right to choose, a source for self-fulfillment and personal and professional development. On the other hand, the article deals with the concern regarding potential exploitation of people with disabilities in the volunteer-employment market.

