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WHAT'S PSYCHOLOGY GOT TO DO WITH IT: LABOUR MARKET INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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Abstract

The present contribution seeks to advance psychological approaches in inclusion of persons with a disability or health condition in decent work. People with disabilities and mental ill health appear to be among the most neglected groups when it comes to integration into the labour market (ILO, 2018; WHO, 2011). Article 27 of the CRPD emphasises equal access to the labour market as a governmental obligation and obliges signatory states to take appropriate measures (CRPD, 2006). However, specific programmes and measures to promote the employment of people with disabilities based on a human image of "protean career attitude" (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004) often achieve only moderate success despite the involvement of psychological services, as shown by the example of national concepts in Luxembourg (Limbach-Reich, 2019). Searching for reasons one can identify two main strands which, on the one hand, concern the perspective of people with disabilities in sheltered workshops with regard to the general labour market and, on the other hand, appear in the employers' insufficient recruitment practice (WHO, 2011). As the present study shows, for the majority of people in sheltered workshops this form of employment is the more attractive alternative under the given circumstances. Inclusion in the first labour market is only sought by a minority. The reasons given for the preference for a protected employment status are overstrain and negative experiences on the first labour market. At the same time, in an increasingly neo-liberal employment market, the willingness to employ people with disabilities seems to be only slightly pronounced. The majority of the population of disabled workers in a workshop are not considered attractive for the existing labour market, as they do not correspond to the propagated image of the individual oriented towards career advancement, entrepreneurship aspiration and self-optimisation (Seithe, 2013). In conclusion, it is demanded that psychology should review prevailing neoliberal assumptions about the human behaviour and become more politically involved. In particular, psychology has to ask itself whether, by pursuing inclusion in the labour market exclusively, it fails and contributes to blaming the victims, especially those with mental and psychological disabilities. If in the future there are fewer and fewer people available for paid work and unconditional basic income will rise (Harari, 2015; Kela, 2019), then psychology, in cooperation with other disciplines, must also face up to the challenges and develop approaches that make psychological well-being and self-actualisation possible beyond the overarching neoliberal employment rigor.

Keywords: *Inclusion, neoliberalism, disability, ethics of psychology.*

1. Introduction

Inclusion has become a worldwide buzzword in dealing with people with disabilities, experiencing material and/ or psychosocial hardship. Especially in the case of people with disabilities, there is hardly any practice today that disregards the emblem of inclusion. Initially introduced in sociology by Parsons (1965), subsequently in politics, especially in social policy, in social work, in economy, and in education, inclusion has become a topic of controversial and polemic debate. On the one hand, legal requirements of non-discrimination and human rights positions towards the inclusion of people with disabilities are increasingly articulated; on the other hand, separation and discrimination are still common phenomena. However, the questions raised in the context of inclusion are only gradually addressed by psychology, even though psychologists are essentially concerned with these intrinsic psychological topics such as human well-being, self-realization and social interaction for example: the big fish in the little pond theory is hardly ever mentioned in inclusive settings.

However, with the increasing dominance of neoliberal theories, psychology will be more and more obliged to enable individuals with disabilities and mental health issues to overcome welfare dependency and unemployment in order to both: make themselves independent of welfare and from an economic point of view, to thereby contribute to the increasing economic growth. The underlying slogan is: turn tax users into tax payers.

What part does psychology play in this conflicting field between individual well-being inclusion and neoliberalism, between humanity and economy, between individual precarity and structural crises?

2. Inclusion

The present discourse on inclusion has been strongly influenced by the original educational approach of bringing disabled and non-disabled children together in joint or inclusive education settings. Stainback and Stainback (1990) define inclusive education through teaching of pupils with special needs in regular classes, and providing all students within the mainstream appropriate educational programs. Inclusion refers to a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community in the course and having his or her educational needs met (p. 3).

The CRPD (2006) considers its' most prominent purpose: to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Two articles are particularly popular subjects for discussion:

Article 24 of the CRPD emphasizes the right of persons with disabilities to education without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity. States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.

Similarly, Article 27 stipulates the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others including the right of the opportunity to gain a living by freely chosen work and being accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.

Both articles follow an inclusive approach and are directed against separating settings as well as special units in education and in employment. In the inclusion paradigm, classification (disabled and not disabled), diagnoses, and labeling of persons with disorders are already assumed as starting points for discrimination and therefore rejected (Hinz 2002). With the concept of egalitarian difference, disability is seen as just one aspect of diversity among many others (such as gender, sexual orientation or ethnic background) that are basically equal, without hierarchical ordering, and should be seen as enrichment in social situations (Prengel 2003).

The goal of the inclusion movement is to create a free society in which every person, including people with disabilities, enjoys equal rights to develop her or his own potential and participates on all social functions that are "open for all".

In educational sciences, sociology, social policy, social work and other sciences there are already innumerable articles and debates concerning the theoretical basic, different positions, implementability and obstacles of inclusion. The first national action report Luxembourg (Plan d'Action de mise en oeuvre de la CRDPH du Gouvernement luxembourgeois 2012, 1) states : "The overall objective is inclusion. An integrative system aspires to an admission of '*problematic cases*'. On the other hand, an inclusive system does not keep anyone out, but accepts everybody as he or she is".

3. Neoliberalism

Following the neoliberal paradigm, participation in the labour market is considered one of the central factors of social inclusion. Ultimately, in a capitalist society, inclusion means sub-mission to competition for jobs, and thus money, power and status. It is a competitive situation in which the subject is required to be as flexible, mobile, self-directed and employable as possible. (Keupp 2012, p. 268). And this means however, that not everyone is accepted as he or she is, it means that people with a lower employment value hardly have any chance to compete on the labour market. The concept of active inclusion aims to encourage or coerce people to acquire a human capital that is in demand on the labour market and to adapt to the requirements of a developing economy by means of an incentive and sanction system (carrot and stick approach). Employability is regarded as an individual responsibility of the job seeker. Unemployment thus turns into individualised behavioural problems like limited human capital, personal flaws or individual lack of motivation. Reasons for persistent unemployment are then hardly regarded as discrimination, but as factors for which the individual is responsible.

The pressure to perform and adapt to the labour markets, to which people with disabilities are subjected under neoliberal conditions within the framework of the inclusion postulate, is often masked by a flawless self-image of the high-performing disabled person, who knows how to convince the employer with outstanding skills and double effort. In this context, Schmidt (2008 p. 6) points out with the provocative thesis of the "high-performance cripple" as the paragon of a disabled person. He emphatically reveals the illusionary basis of this idealization by emphasising that "normal cripples" cannot meet the high-performance requirements of the labour market, even with inclusion measures or reasonable accommodations, and thus remain excluded.

Overstraining situations and internal attribution of failure may result from the so-called "creaming effect": Programmes and measures tend to favorite people with low support needs, while people with high support needs and severe impairments remain excluded from the labour market.

4. Employment

In 2017, the COSPH programme was launched in Luxembourg with financial support from the EU to integrate people with disabilities into the labour market. The objective of the programme is to increase the employability of jobseekers with disabilities in order to facilitate their reintegration into the labour market. People with disabilities undergoing this specific programme under the leadership of occupational psychologists at the national employment agency (ADEM) will be subject to a multi-tiered assessment, including, psychological, neuropsychological and psychiatric questionnaires, intelligence tests and stress resistance scales and other testing (e.g. ergo-kit). In a video-taped presentation of the programme, it was pointed out that only rationale test procedures were involved and it is not denied that these methods also have a control intention. (Cheating is no longer possible). With a total of 300 participants per year, a recruitment rate of 30% has been expected (ADEM 2016). First results show the following figure.

Figure 1. Outcomes of the COSP-HR Programme.

Statistics/ Year	2017		2018	
Number of people who have started the project	240	100 %	250	100 %
Number of people who have completed the project in its full scope	207	86.3%	212	84.8%
N of people guided to ordinary labour market or social initiatives	162	67.5%	157	62.8%
- Guided to main labour market	111	46.3%	112	44.8%
- Guided to sheltered workshops	51	21.3%	45	18.0%
Number of people who need to follow other steps	45	18.8%	55	22.0%
Number of hiring	39	16.3%	36	14.4%

Neither the total number of participants nor the expected proportion of hiring (first labour market) could be reached. Despite a decline in the general unemployment rate, the recruitment rate on the first labour market in 2018 (5.5%) has even dropped (2017: 5.9%) compared to the previous year (Statec 2019). The increasing difficulty of people with disabilities to get a job in the labour market is also shown by the fact that from 2017 to 2018 the percentage of people with disabilities among the unemployed population has increased from 22.5 to 23.8. Is unemployment actually due to psychological factors of the person with disabilities or are other factors more important here? An analysis of compliance with the legal quotas for the recruitment of people with disabilities in Luxembourg shows that their effective implementation by private companies is far below the legal requirements.

Figure 2. Quota-fulfillment year of observation 2014-2015.

Size (employees)	Mandatory quota	Enterprises	Employees	Companies comply	Employment potential
25-49	1 employee	865	38303	5%	865
50-299	2%	835	69926	10%	1399
300 and more	4%	126	72314	0%	2893
Total		1826	180543		5157

(Data compiled by Mellouet 2019, 2)

Despite legal obligations, most employers do not meet the quotas. This situation may be made worse by the fact that the state has not set up a monitoring body and no sanctions are imposed for non-compliance with quotas. At the same time (2015) the ADEM counted for over 4000 persons with disability without employment. The number comparison shows: If private employers would meet their legal obligations, the problem of unemployment for people with disabilities would be solved for the long term.

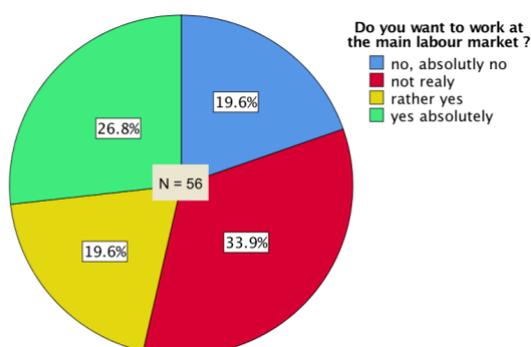
Although it is obvious that the unemployment of people with disabilities is a social problem, psychological programmes mainly focus on improving the person looking for a job. There is still no equally widespread psychological counselling activity for employers to be more welcoming towards the inclusion of people with disabilities. How can we, as psychologists, justify this?

5. Psychology and the neoliberal figure of man

Teo (2018) suggests that even most psychologists have adopted the neoliberal form of subjectivity as their dominant approach and speaks of the new human concept of the «homo liberalus». according to which people are primarily oriented towards attaining the highest possible individual profit. Neoliberal theories baptize the homo economicus, the protean worker, and identify the protean career attitude (Hall 1996), suggesting that people aspire to climb the career ladder as high as they can, to make the biggest buck. If we follow this assumption, we cannot plausibly explain that people with disabilities want to stay in a workshop and do not aspire to switch to the first labour market.

On the basis of 38 questionnaires and four qualitative interviews, a research study conducted in a sheltered workshop (mostly frequented by people with psychiatric disorders so called ATP) in Luxembourg concludes that the majority of participants reveal negative feelings about the first labour market and that inclusion for them does not seem desirable (Dondelinger 2013). Another study carried out in 2017 on the basis of 12 guideline-based interviews with workers with intellectual disabilities in a sheltered workshop reveals that most participants are satisfied with their employment situation and there is not a single respondent who states that he wants to work in the first labour market under all circumstances (Alves Rodrigues 2017).

Figure 3. Aspiration towards first labour market.



In 2019 a survey undertaken by Ruppert in a sheltered workshop particularly designed for persons with autism spectrum disorders indicates that 53% (19.6 + 33.9) do not want to work at the main labour market. The studies showed an overall tendency that the severity of a disability reduces the aspiration to the first labour market (Ruppert 2019).

Psychology should respect this preference and should not participate in carrot and stick approaches to force people to enter the first labour market.

6. Conclusion

There is a danger that psychology will be used recklessly by the concept of neoliberalism to assist economic pressure. This may be facilitated by the fact that the concept of inclusion has led to the subjugation of all people, including people with disabilities, to market mechanisms. Especially in the adoption of the neoliberal view of

man, the dilemma of solving social problems through individual interventions arises for psychological interventions. In particular, the thesis of the priority of inclusion in the labour market in order to enable social participation must be viewed critically.

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