Including people with disabilities into the workplace in the Balearic Islands

Rosa Rosselló Ramón and **Sebastià Verger Gelabert**

are Doctors of Education Sciences and lecturers in the Department of Education Sciences at the University of the Balearic Islands. Their main research area focuses on primary and secondary school students with special education needs and the inclusion of people with disabilities into the workplace and adult life.

SUMMARY

If education is an inalienable right for children and young people with disabilities, securing employment plays a key role in their inclusion into adult life. A broad study was conducted to analyse the transition between the end of compulsory education and the beginning of employment in young people with disabilities in the Autonomous Community of the Balearic Islands. This article addresses the two key issues that arise from the study: first, the basic elements that intervene in conceptualising the topic and, second, an evaluation of the current situation in the community.

Introduction

The issues of employment conditions and the quality of life of people with disabilities have been studied on several occasions, although the two topics have often been dealt with separately. Nevertheless, they are closely related, as adequate employment conditions have a positive influence on an employee's quality of life (De la Iglesia, 2006).

Although the direct relationship between each individual's skills and type and degree of disability and the possibilities of obtaining a job is obvious, the fundamental role played by education in providing employment opportunities under the least restrictive and

most productive conditions possible is also well known. To echo Pallisera (1996), education performs a double function: a sociological function that involves a change in an individual's status and their personal role, and a psychological function associated with developing personal skills and with the need for personal identity.

Training is particularly significant between the end of formal education and finding a first job, as it is accompanied by an individual transition from adolescence to adult life that aims to achieve autonomy and personal independence. This paper ([1]) focuses on the period between the conclusion of post-compulsory studies and inclusion into the workforce.

From this perspective, an analysis of the needs of people with disabilities in relation to developing their life processes is the most suitable point of departure for organising an educational offer that enables them to help themselves enter adult life. As Álvarez and Garcia (1997) asserted, two aspects should be considered when defining needs: the training received by subjects and the demands of the context into which they wish to integrate.

Different criteria and orientations have been used to organise and develop professional training for people with disabilities, which both the OECD-CERI (1991) and Pallisera (1996) group into six points:

- an evaluation and guidance stage that evaluates both employment skills as well as training;
- a dynamic policy to reinforce basic knowledge that organises training into individualised, modular systems and promotes teacher training;
- a policy of close relationships between companies and training institutions, which should be promoted to extend the alternative training modality;
- a policy to renew training content related to the spread of new technologies, which is fundamental;
- a policy of cooperation among institutions specialising in training material at the community level, which should be promoted;
- individual participation in developing training schemes, which is the key to enabling people with disabilities to feel involved in their training plans.

---

[1] This article is the result of a broad, three-year research project conducted by the *Grup de Recerca Escola Inclusiva i Diversitat* (Education Research Group for Inclusion and Diversity) at the UIB, entitled: 'Analysis and optimisation of educational itineraries to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities', subsidised by the Ministry of Science and Technology (Official State Gazette, March 8, 2000).

Verdugo and Jenaro (1995) formulate a more detailed series of strategies for shaping the training practices used to prepare people with disabilities for employment.

1. identifying and practising work and tasks that reflect the community's current labour market;
2. training in skills that are critical for working efficiently;
3. training students inside the community;
4. using systematic instruction procedures to conduct training;
5. identifying adaptive strategies that encourage student independence;
6. reconceptualising the roles played by professionals and organisational structures;
7. involving parents in preparing their children for employment;
8. establishing the employment alternative that best suits a student's skills;
9. coordination and collaboration with adult services programmes.

Several of these strategies have been included in the country's legislative framework since Spain joined the European Union, as can be seen in agreements on professional training between the administration and social agents, such as the *Acuerdo de Bases sobre Políticas de Formación Profesional* [the basic agreement on vocational training policies], the *Acuerdo Nacional de Formación Continua* [the national continuing training agreement] and the *Acuerdo Tripartito Nacional de Formación Continua* [the national tripartite ongoing training agreement]. Further, Section 23.2 of the Public General Act on the Education System (1990) envisages organising social guarantee schemes that provide basic and professional training that enables students who do not successfully complete compulsory secondary to find jobs or continue their studies within the different alternatives of formal education, especially specific intermediate-level vocational training.

The goal of including people with disabilities into the workplace, and the general conditions that would enable that goal to be achieved, can be supported by three key premises:

• people with disabilities, like any other social group, are neither homogeneous nor uniform, but rather a diverse and varied group of people, in which each and every member has the same fundamental rights as other citizens. No one label encompasses an entire group; as diversity is an unquestionable fact; this is also true of the group of people with disabilities;
• the capacities of people with disabilities have some type of limitation that has more or less significant repercussions on their performances and activities. Nevertheless, it should be recognised

that in every case, these restrictions are accompanied by a series of capacities, possibilities and potentialities that can and should be developed. This is the point of departure for any action aimed at promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities, not from limitation or discrimination, but rather from integration and true equal opportunities, a challenge for society as a whole;

· the normalisation principle as a cohesive pattern and promoter of social action, aimed at terminating discrimination against, and the exclusion of the group of people with disabilities. This principle needs to be incorporated into society's general approach so that equal opportunities and the provision of resources allow the normalisation of life and the participation of all in society. This means offering options that enable participation and action.

These premises constitute the theoretical underpinnings of the general approach and actions that analyse the social and human status of people with disabilities in order to achieve social inclusion. This is based on non-discrimination and demands for the provision of the supports and aids required in enabling active participation in all areas of ordinary life. People with disabilities should have access to ordinary health, education, professional, leisure and social services, and the situations available to people without disabilities. To achieve this, discarding a segregationist and marginalising conception of this group in education, employment and all other spheres of life is necessary. The idea of disability policies as the sole responsibility of ministries or administrations should be changed to one in which people with disabilities are fully included in the general and collective responsibility of any government or administration; this is an issue that cuts across the mainstream.

These theoretical approaches should be translated into proposals for initiatives and actions that improve the quality of life and facilitate the social inclusion of people with disabilities. These proposals can be grouped into four basic types of action.

First are supports. In 1992, the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR) published a new definition of mental retardation (revised by Luckasson et al. in 2002) that included a new support-based action paradigm. A support is defined as any resource or strategy that promotes the interests and goals of people with or without disabilities and enables access to integrated resources, information and relationships in the family, education, professional and housing spheres, which leads to increased independence, productivity, participation in the community and personal satisfaction.

Supports are not only useful and necessary for people with disabilities, but also for anyone in need of a specific resource or

strategy to accomplish something. These aids can be provided by other people, ourselves, technology or community services. People with disabilities require natural and normalised supports and aids that allow them to accede to and participate in everyday activities the same way other people of their same age, sex and condition do. To accomplish this, the resources, strategies and means in each case which allow people with disabilities to overcome the barriers that impede participation as equals should be available as a social and normalised response. As Barton wrote (1998, p. 45): '… thus, a change in the objective of practice has taken place, which has gone from individuals and their insufficiencies to environments that increase disability and hostile social attitudes, because disability is not an abstract category, because it only and always occurs within a social and historical context that determines its characteristics'.

If individuals have access to adequate supports that enable them to address their needs, they are not handicapped; they are people with equal conditions; this must be the objective of all action at professional, personal and group levels.

Second is subsidiarity. This supports-related initiative poses three proposals and/or key consequences: subsidiarity at political level, general services at executive level and autonomy at personal level.

Subsidiarity is the objective of competential distribution; the application of this organisational principle is a clear instrument for distributing and regulating the exercise of competences. At the social level, this principle can be defined as one that begins at the individual, family, friends and community levels and successively reaches the local, autonomous and state government levels: each one of these becomes responsible only when the preceding level cannot efficiently satisfy a concrete need.

This involves a set of objective criteria on the attribution of competences and responsibilities, allowing limits and obligations to be established at different levels of power and administration based on a single criterion: the principle of maximum efficiency.

Third are general services. All ordinary, general and social spheres must have the necessary and appropriate supports available to provide people with disabilities with the same opportunities as the rest of the population to participate in activities, despite their disabilities and real limitations. This is a challenge that needs to be met by any public, legislative and/or social initiative.

It is clear that many people with disabilities require good quality help and supports, based on integration into society to prevent these supports from becoming a source of segregation and margin-
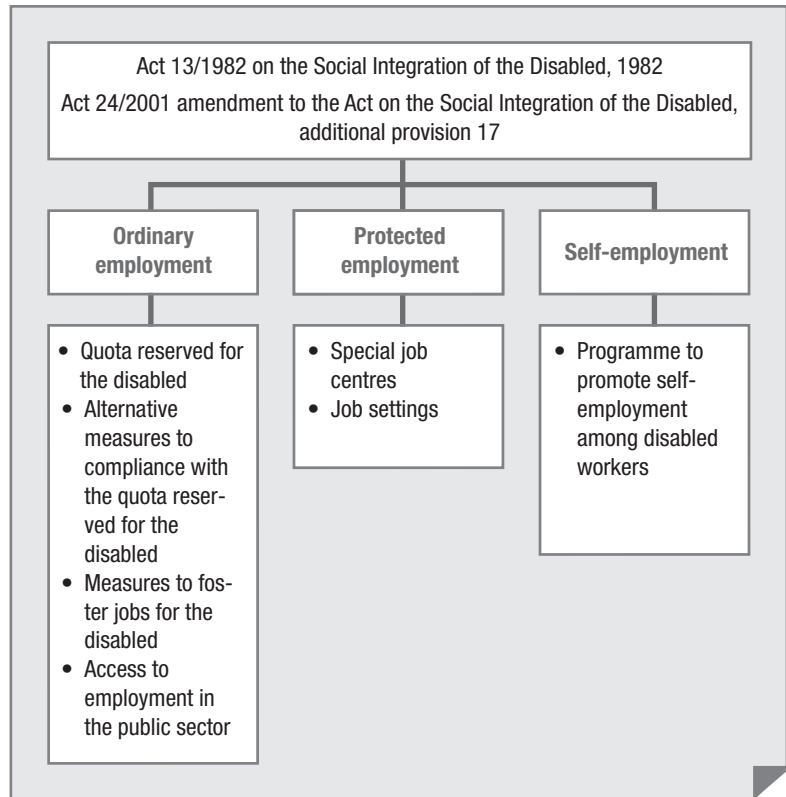
alisation. In this sense, people with disabilities should have access to good quality, ordinary health, education, employment and social services under the same conditions as others. This involves not only creating specific services for people with disabilities as a group, but also promoting their inclusion into general services in all areas of action: culture, urban planning, education, transport, housing, employment, health, sports, leisure, economic promotion, etc. The final objective is to avoid creating a false dichotomy between people with and without disabilities so that sufficiently broad, flexible services can be planned, organised, and executed to meet the ordinary, everyday needs of the entire population. The idea is not to think about offering services for people with disabilities that differ from those planned for the general population, but a service model that includes normalised and natural supports and ensures the equal participation of all in the benefits each service provides. This model requires learning to work not simply in favour of people with disabilities, but with and for them; a change in the attitudes of the public administration and authorities and technicians is a prerequisite in making progress in this direction.

Finally there is autonomy. The objective of all policies and proposals for action associated with people with disabilities should be the highest possible levels of autonomy. Social integration depends on levels of autonomy, which is far more closely related to levels of adaptation to the environment and access to technical aids and normalised supports than to the degree of disability.

Acting on the environment, modifying it so that it is accessible to all, also leads to a notable decrease in the need for technical aids and specific services, which would only be used in indispensable cases. Autonomy not only requires gradually and progressively taking advantage of opportunities to participate in activities, but also the resources and supports needed to develop autonomy within this context, not only to increase the quality of life of people with disabilities specifically, but also to the benefit of the population as a whole.

Spain, along with other EU countries, has developed plans, policies and regulations to foster the insertion of the disabled into both ordinary and protected work environments (special job centres and vocational centres) and encourage self-employment. All these plans have their origins in Act 13/1982 on the Social Integration of the Disabled (1982), amended in 2001 (Act 24/2001 amendments to the Act on the Social Integration of the Disabled, additional provision 17), as reflected in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Act 13/1982 on the Social Integration of the Disabled, 1982

Act 24/2001 amendment to the Act on the Social Integration of the Disabled, additional provision 17

Ordinary employment	**Protected employment**	**Self-employment**
• Quota reserved for the disabled • Alternative measures to compliance with the quota reserved for the disabled • Measures to foster jobs for the disabled • Access to employment in the public sector	• Special job centres • Job settings	• Programme to promote self-employment among disabled workers

Various regulations and legal texts have been developed for each one of these modalities:

(a) Ordinary employment. Section 38 of Act 13/1982 of 7 April on the Social Integration of the Disabled establishes the so-called 'reserve quota', i.e. the obligation of public and private enterprises with a minimum of 50 employees to reserve the equivalent of 2 % of all posts for disabled workers.

   • Further, there are several regulations that govern the types of contracts (permanent, full-time or part-time) that the disabled may have, some of the most important of which are:

   • Ministerial Order of 13 April 1994 which regulates the aid and subsidy grants to encourage jobs for disabled workers established in Chapter II of Royal Decree 1451/83 of 11 May (Spanish Official Gazette of May 5) Paragraph five in the final second provision of Act 40/98 of 9 December (Spanish Official Gazette of 10 December).

(b) Employment in protected environments. Special job centres are enterprises in which all employees are disabled. The regulations that govern the operation of these centres are basically as follows:
  • Royal Decree 2273/85 of 4 December (Spanish Official Gazette of 9 December 1985), approving the Regulations for Special Job Centres.
  • Ministerial Order of 16 October 1998 (Spanish Official Gazette of 21 November 1998), on aid grants.
(c) Self-employed disabled workers. The Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs and the Programme to promote self-employment among the disabled have proposed a series of subsidies to finance entrepreneurial projects presented by unemployed disabled individuals who wish to be self-employed. These subsidies are regulated by Ministerial Order of 16 October (Spanish Official Gazette of 21 November 1998) which establishes the regulatory basis for granting public aid and subsidies to promote the integration of the disabled into special job centres or self-employment.

Because of these considerations, the study was structured around two key questions: the degree to which education has adapted to the needs of the labour market and whether training content fosters true inclusion. The ultimate purpose of the study was to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities by improving training itineraries, on the understanding that possibilities for full inclusion into the workforce are increased by doing so.

Many business and economic entities in the Islands can reap medium- and long-term benefits from the results of this study, both economically, through better-prepared employees, and socially, by offering more opportunities to people with disabilities.

Study objectives and methodology

The study's objectives are described below:
1. to describe the formal and informal post-compulsory training offer currently available to people with disabilities in the Community of the Balearic Islands;
2. to identify disabled students enrolled in the different education options;
3. to ascertain and analyse the opinions of professionals involved in each training modality;
4. to analyse the business sector's demands for professional competences in people with disabilities;

5. to ascertain and analyse the opinions of people with disabilities on the training they receive and their conditions at work;

6. to define training indicators and contrast them with various instances in education, the people involved and different areas of the business world.

These objectives were investigated from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Various education agents were involved in the process as seen in Table I below:

Table 1. **Summary of objectives and methodology**

Objectives	Methodology	Material/subjects
1 & 2	data analysis	manuals, reports and official websites
3	questionnaires	teaching staff
4	in-depth interviews	businessmen
5	in-depth interviews	people with disabilities
6	discussion groups	all previous agents involved in the study

Note: the main interest is not analysis of statistical data from which the results can be generalised, but detailed analysis of specific situations and the results arising.

Achieving the first and second objectives involved preparing a double-sided database that included both the vocational training currently available in the community and a census of people with disabilities enrolled in each training modality.

Various sources of information were used:

• data on the training opportunities currently available in the Autonomous Community of the Balearic Islands, directly extracted from manuals published each academic year by the Government of the Balearic Islands' Council of Education ([2]);

• data on all the people with disabilities enrolled in training options (post-compulsory secondary education, intermediate and advanced-level training cycles and Social Guarantee Schemes), provided by the General Direction of Educational Innovation and the General Direction of Vocational Training;

• the Government of the Balearic Islands' website, which posts all the courses offered each year and the public and private entities that run them;

([2]) Centres in the Balearic Islands that offer training are public or private and are financed partially or totally by public funds.

- associations for people with disabilities and representatives of the trade union sector, which were contacted to ascertain the informal training offer;
- data from the INEM (National Institute for Employment) on the enrolment of people with disabilities in vocational schools and work and training centres.

To achieve the third objective, several questionnaires were designed for professionals who work in formal and informal training options available in Spain. For formal training these included post-compulsory secondary education, intermediate and advanced-level vocational cycles, social guarantee schemes, guidance services and *Programas de transición a la vida adulta* (PTVA) (Transition to adulthood programmes).

For informal training, the research covered vocational training, work and training centres, and community guidance services.

The questionnaires were sent to all relevant centres, though the response rate was not particularly high. The data obtained is shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. **Participation index for formal training options**

Total number of answered questionnaires				
Post-comp. secondary ed.	Training cycles	PGS	Guid.	PTVA
6	23	15	7	15
Percentage of results				
75 %	61.52 %	40 %	53.84 %	71.42 %

Tableau 3. **Indice de participation pour la formation informelle**

Total number of answered questionnaires			
FP	AP/CTF	Guidance services	
		General serv.	Specific serv.
12	13	5	2
Percentage of results			
43 %	40 %	30 %	50 %

The two tables show the total number and corresponding percentages of questionnaires received from each of the sample sub-groups. It should be noted that the number of professionals attending to disabled students in certain educational spheres is low, hence the

relatively high percentages from a low number of direct scores.

Interviews were used in pursuit of the fourth objective, which was to analyse the demands of the business community. The *Mesa para la inserción laboral de personas con discapacidad con necesidad de apoyo* [the Roundtable for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities that Need Supports into the Workplace] ([3]) and the *Coordinadora de Minusválidos de Menorca* [The Handicapped Coordination Council of Menorca] provided their collaboration on this objective. A total of 23 interviews were conducted with different people from the business community on the Islands: 13 interviews in Mallorca and 10 in Menorca.

For the fifth objective, the Balearic Institute for Social Affairs (IBAS) provided access to the official database of employment statistics for all people with disabilities that live in this autonomous community. A total of 34 in-depth interviews (25 in Mallorca and 9 in Menorca) attempted to ascertain the opinions of people with disabilities on the training they received, conditions in the workplace and their quality of life.

Finally, discussion groups defined training indicators and contrasted them among the different agents involved in the study (people with disabilities, people from the business community and trainers). Representatives from organisations that train and hire people with disabilities, plus users of the different services, were invited to take part. A total of seven debates dealt with a variety of issues: proposals to increase sensitivity in social and business circles, formal training, informal training, job guidance, inclusion into the workforce and the business community's and users' viewpoints.

The information garnered from the discussion groups was analysed and used to complete partial reports that had been drafted in earlier stages of the study. Three final reports were prepared on formal and informal training options, the business community and the status of people with disabilities.

Shown below is a synthesis in two parts drawn from the conclusions of these three reports: the first focuses on reviewing the indispensable technical aspects of conceptualising the relationship between disability and placement in employment while the second offers a list of questions that reflect the situation and needs that shape the current panorama of employment training and placement.

([3]) The body in charge of aggregating in the autonomous community the relevant entities that develop supported employment programmes.

Results of the study

It is difficult to synthesise all the results obtained because of the complex research process involved and the inherent constraints of a publication of this kind; thus, this article will only focus on aspects closely related to the article's topic.

OBJECTIVES I-II.
To describe current education options in the Autonomous Community of the Balearic Islands and identify disabled students enrolled in these options

Education options, as in the rest of Spain, can be classified in two main groups: government-regulated education and education that is not government regulated. The following options belong to the first group:

- upper secondary education;
- intermediate and advanced vocational training (IVT and AVT, respectively);
- transition to Adult Life programmes (TALP);
- social guarantee programmes (SGP).

Both secondary education and the vocational cycles (IVT and AVT) are primarily taught at public schools and are the basic options for young people between the ages of 16 and 18; both types of education include specific measures that adapt study courses to students with special needs and facilitate access. However, in general, TALP are only available at partially regulated or private schools and aim to help students with major disabilities develop personal autonomy and facilitate social integration; they include a specific vocational training component. SGPs are unregulated initiatives that are nevertheless the education administration's responsibility and are available at schools or other public or private institutions (city councils, companies).

The second group encompasses unregulated options, organised through labour administrations, and includes several alternatives: occupational vocational training (which primarily focuses on kitchen, gardening and agricultural training), *Escuelas Taller* and *Casas de Oficios* (programmes for long-term unemployed youth lacking basic skills) and vocational workshops. These options combine work and training and are oriented towards public utility services of social interest (rehabilitating natural and urban settings, promoting artistic heritage).

According to the 1996 municipal census, the total population of the Balearic Islands was 760 370 inhabitants, 25 150 of whom were disabled, i.e. 33.08 per thousand with respect to the total

population. The population sub-group between 16 and 20 years of age was distributed as follows, by education option:

Figure 2. **Distribution of the population by type of disability**
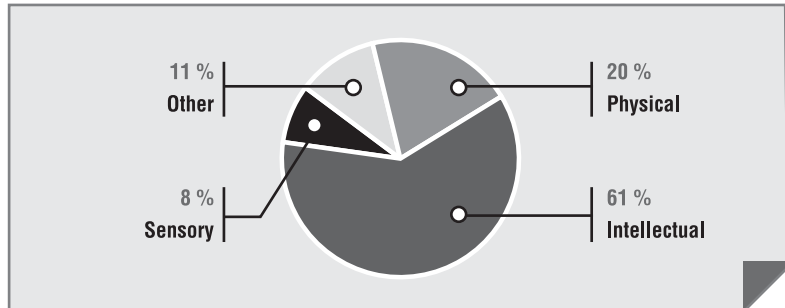
The intellectually disabled are not enrolled in upper secondary education or advanced vocational training and very few of them study in intermediate vocational training programmes. In fact, this group is primarily enrolled in unregulated options and Transition to adult life programmes in special centres, which may be a serious hindrance to finding work in ordinary companies.

Figure 3. **Distribution of the population by education option and type of disability**
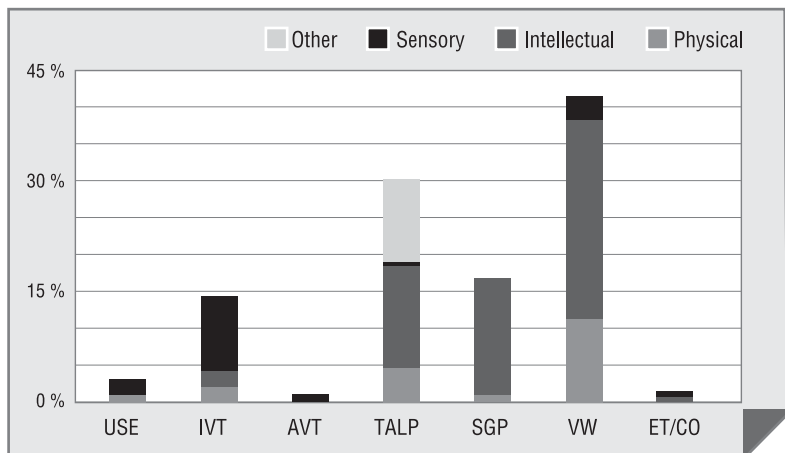
Finally, the graph highlights the fact that individuals with sensory disabilities are significantly represented in intermediate vocational training programmes, and that the category 'Other', which includes individuals with several disabilities or psychiatric disabilities, are only enrolled in Transition to adult life programmes.

OBJECTIVE III.

Opinions of trainers involved in each education option

Professional assessments of the different education pathways varied greatly. All professionals agreed that SGPs achieve the best results, although they do not comply with the sectorisation principle. Study participants also agreed about the gaps in their training in teaching the disabled, as well as the difficulties they encounter in adapting pathways to each student's needs.

OBJECTIVE IV.

Demands from the business community related to the professional competence of the disabled

In the Balearic Islands, 95 % of all labour contracts are promoted by associations for the disabilities that use supported work as a means of finding employment for the disabled. Businessmen cite interest, compliance with norms and criteria, and responsibility as positive aspects of their disabled employees' professional competences.

OBJECTIVE V.

Opinions of the disabled about training received and employments conditions

The data obtained lead to the conclusion that two priority factors condition employment: training and type of disability. Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities complete their basic compulsory education (and are later channelled towards social guarantee programmes, employment insertion programmes and, on rare occasions, intermediate-level vocational training), individuals with auditory sensory disabilities tend to enter training programmes and individuals with visual, sensory and motor disabilities, in greater numbers, continue upper secondary education, higher education study courses and university studies.

Not only do the possibilities of employment diminish at lower levels of education, but the jobs that are found also involve unskilled work and offer low pay, in line with the training required. Further, continuing education, especially in companies, does not take this group into consideration.

From theoretical approaches to the reality of inclusion in the workforce

A series of needs have been detected as a result of reviewing the basic theoretical aspects of inclusion in the workforce and analysing the research; these must be corrected if people with disabilities are to be genuinely integrated into the workplace. At the same time, they reflect the current state of this issue in the Autonomous Community of the Balearic Islands as well as in the rest of most Autonomous Communities in Spain.

Many students with disabilities (mainly mentally retarded students) do not finish their education. This is especially evident in intermediate level vocational training and post-compulsory education. Further, 40 % of the teaching staff and 60 % of the guidance counsellors in the study admit that most students (40 %) do not obtain the necessary and appropriate professional training to carry out their future tasks.

Job counselling services are dispersed and professionals in formal education are not very familiar with them. This lack of information prevents existing employment resources and possibilities from being known and therefore limits counselling and the expectations of students with disabilities. Further, the training offer for students with disabilities is clearly much more limited.

General counselling services do not care for the needs of people with disabilities directly but tend to channel users to specific services. This accentuates the specific and restrictive character of these services and distances them from more normalised contexts.

One salient consequence of the two previous points is the lack of coordination between the networks of general and specific training and employment services, which also affects the needs of those involved.

Two important aspects of employment counselling have been detected: first, work and attention are excessively focused on transition periods; second, the process does not include developing basic social competences for inclusion into society and employment from an open and flexible point of view. This is stated by 60 % of the businessmen who participated in the study.

Clear deficiencies exist in training staff to deal with disabilities in both formal and informal education. Thus, 40 % of the teaching staff in the study admit to having great difficulties in adapting general programmes to the specific needs of students with disabilities. This situation is aggravated by two key aspects: one is teaching staff and student attitudes, which do not foster true social inclusion; the other

is the difficulties that exist in mediating and resolving conflict.

Generally, the training offer for people with disabilities is not directly related to the demands of the workforce. In most cases, training responds to the continuance of a determined offer that has existed for many years or the maintenance of existing collaborations between entities and enterprises and does not include a genuine interest in discovering and adapting to new professional profiles or future career paths. Although there has been a gradual increase in the number of school places, the nature of the proposals has not changed in the last seven years.

Informal training offers services that do not fulfil the principle of sectorisation, as in most cases they are located in out-of-the-way places or places that are difficult for their users to reach. This is accentuated by poor public transport infrastructures in the three Balearic Islands.

Job quotas for people with disabilities are not met by the public administration (20 % of the places seem not to have been covered) or private enterprise (only 40 % of enterprises offer long-term contracts to people with disabilities). Further, civil service exams do not include adaptations in content that meet candidates' needs.

Low expectations of people with disabilities among the business community, professionals and these people's own families have been detected; to a large extent, they become determinant in finding employment.

Insecure employment conditions, characterised by short-term contracts and seasonality, may lead to lost jobs. This situation causes a high degree of insecurity and distrust towards the business community and diminishes expectations of independence and autonomy. Only 40 % of people with disabilities who participated in the study had a long-term contract and only 4 % of these had any chance of being promoted.

In most cases, low wages result from the low level of qualifications and low-skilled jobs.

There is no culture (and services) that encourages the social and professional inclusion of people with disabilities into all spheres: housing, leisure, social and personal relationships, etc. This is evident from the analysis of questionnaires, interviews and group discussions.

If education is an inalienable right of children and young people with disabilities, having a job is a key element in the inclusion of adults with disabilities. Training is the basis for securing a job, which represents the beginning of promoting equal conditions for the inclusion of adults with disabilities into society. Thus, a priority

objective should be to foster the incorporation of adults with disabilities into the job market in the most normalised way possible, to encourage social inclusion and normalised lives.

The inclusion of people with disabilities into the workplace is still far from being a reality, despite the initiatives and efforts of recent years. People with disabilities are excluded from the job market and are inactive, as their main problem is not unemployment but inactivity. This locks the group into a vicious circle that tends to lead to marginalisation: low levels of training and, as a result, severe difficulties in finding employment and increased chances of being excluded from ordinary social circles. Further, even when employment can be found, it is generally at the lowest level, in terms of qualifications and wages, a fact that accentuates the marginalisation of this group.

The needs for improvement considered in this study will provide guidelines that lead to true improvement. Although many obviously positive experiences exist - people who have been smoothly integrated into an inclusive work environment - work still remains to be done to reach all the disabled individuals who need special support. The conclusions presented are a springboard for future research that may shed more light on this area.

Access to adult life requires dispensing with the false stereotypes that prevail in society and eliminating the hesitancy, doubts and lack of confidence characteristic of many of those around people with disabilities, of those who train or work by their sides, of the business community, even of the technicians and professionals who train them, of their families, of themselves and of the laws and norms that govern society.

In conclusion, Montobbio (1995, p. 60) points out that: 'No hope exists of a real identity for young people with disabilities if they are not assigned an active social role in the world of adults'. At present, most people with disabilities, with their virtues and defects, with their capacities and values, do not have opportunities to take part in active life. They should be given the opportunity to make mistakes, commit errors and, as a result, improve.

Bibliography

Álvarez, V.; García, C. *Orientación vocacional de jóvenes con necesidades especiales: un programa de transición a la vida adulta*. Madrid: EOS, 1997.

Barton, L. *Discapacidad y sociedad*. Madrid: Morata, 1998.

De la Iglesia Mayol, B. Do we provide opportunities or only value productivity? *European journal of vocational training,* 2006, No 38, p. 85-98.

Luckasson, R. et al. *Mental retardation: definition, classification and systems of supports.* Washington, DC: American Association on Mental Retardation, 2002.

Montobbio, E. *La identidad difícil: el falso YO en la persona con discapacidad psíquica*. Barcelona: Masson, 1995.

Pallisera, M. *Transición a la vida adulta i vida activa de las personas con discapacidad psíquica*. Barcelona: EUB-PPU, 1996.

OECD. *Handicapped youth at work: personal experiences of school-leavers.* Paris: OECD, 1991.

Verdugo, M.A.; Jenaro, C. La formación profesional y la transición a la vida adulta. En Verdugo M.A. (dir.). *Personas con discapacidad: perspectivas psicopedagógicas y rehabilitadoras*. Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1995, p. 717-788.