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# Supported Employment in The Netherlands for people with an intellectual disability<sup>1</sup>, a psychiatric disability<sup>2</sup> and a chronic disease. A comparative study

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**Abstract.** The Dutch government and private agencies are striving to assist people with disabilities with employment. Job placement agencies in The Netherlands use various methods including a Supported Employment (SE) approach to achieve this result. This article examines similarities and differences in tasks performed and the amount of time spent on a task implementing SE across the following disability groups: people with an intellectual disability, a psychiatric disability and a chronic disease. Results revealed the greatest amount of time was expended on Job coaching activities for each group and that substantial time was expended on assessment and job seeking activities for persons with psychiatric or chronic disabilities.

Keywords: Supported Employment, Netherlands, employment, intellectual disability, psychiatric disability, chronic disease, return to work

## 1. Introduction

The Netherlands has a long history of reintegrating people with disabilities back into their labor market communities. Since 1985, attention has increasingly turned to assisting individuals with intellectual disabilities and mental disabilities with community based employment. This article examines the reintegration of people with intellectual, psychiatric disabilities or chronic diseases with going to work using a Supported Employment approach.

People with disabilities are often far removed from the labor market and have little chance of obtaining a job without assistance. The search for a connection between the labor market and the job seekers prefer-

ences and competencies has led to a variety of projects. Some job seekers do not pursue work until they become oriented with the concept of work and receive training in both basic and work adapting skills, such as associating with colleagues [17]. Other job seekers need an employment specialist to assist them with locating work while others are satisfied with volunteer work or day activities [17]. Employment staff provide individualized support to people with disabilities to assist them with obtaining, maintaining work. In The Netherlands, individual Counselors or Employment Specialists assist the person with locating a suitable job and in carrying out pre-employment activities. Job finders negotiate suitable work opportunities with the employer. Afterwards, the job coach provides coaching on the job.

Employment rehabilitation is the process by which a person with a disability is supported during his/her recovery, maintenance, and extension of his/her employment opportunities in the least restrictive environment [17]. A broad range of methods have been developed like Supported Employment, counseling and

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<sup>1</sup>In this article the target group 'people with an intellectual disability' also includes people with mental retardation.

<sup>2</sup>In this article the term 'people with a psychiatric disability' is used instead of the Netherlands term "psychiatric disease".

employment rehabilitation. These methods are often only used for a particular disability group. The Supported Employment concept originated in the United States and is based on the idea that given the right type and intensity of supports, people with the most severe disabilities can and should be integrated into the local communities' labor market [15]. In America and in The Netherlands this method has been primarily used to assist people with intellectual and psychiatric disabilities with going to work.

Supported Employment was introduced to The Netherlands in the early 1990s [9]. The Dutch define Supported Employment as "the totality of activities, means and facilities that provides support for employees with disabilities to participate in the labor process and/or to maintain their job" [9].

The Netherlands 5-step model of SE requires that the employment specialist implement the following activities: [15]: 1. investigate the job seekers' personal preferences and competencies (assessment); 2. search for job opportunities (job hunting/job finding); 3. analyze employers needs and job tasks, (job analysis); 4. determine if there is a potential "match" between the job requirements and the candidates skills and preferences, keeping in mind that support is available (matching); 5. on the job training and support (training on the job/job coaching).

Supported Employment is more than a combination of techniques. It is also a way of thinking based upon the emancipation of people with disabilities [2]. The values that drive this approach include, integration in the workplace by competitive paid employment, working side by side with nondisabled workers, rapid placement in a real work setting and ongoing longterm support [15]. The power of the model lies in the linkage between each step. The model should be seen as a process with which the different steps can be run through repeatedly – gradually and steadily producing a more closely-meshed picture [22]. In addition, a long term support plan is provided to help increase job retention. Often times a contact person is available at the workplace; this 'buddy' is one form of 'natural support', with an on-site contact, the (daily) presence of a job coach may become superfluous [7,9,16].

Dutch society is currently examining the reintegration process of people who are difficult to place in the labor market. On the one hand, this trend is based on the basic social right which stipulates that a job should exist for every person, and that a disability is no cause to exclude a person from the labor market. On the other hand, the economic situation and availability

of many jobs but not enough personnel, compel The Netherlands to locate new sources of labor. Both government and private agencies are striving to assist people with disabilities with employment. Job placement agencies use various placement methods to achieve this purpose. In contrast to the experience in the United States, application of the SE method in The Netherlands is still relatively new. During the past eight years, The Netherlands has instituted the method primarily for the (re)integration of people who have intellectual disabilities. Over the years, another target group, people with psychiatric disabilities has been added.

In the United States, paid competitive employment is important from an economic standpoint; however, in The Netherlands there is no direct financial necessity to work. The immaterial values related to work like self-esteem are important in both countries.

In The Netherlands, the social security structure stipulates that in principle everyone can receive benefits. Thus the motivation to work stems more from immaterial values, like status, social contacts and self-esteem [16]. On the other hand, the Dutch government wants to drastically reduce the number of people receiving benefits from the Dutch Disability Insurance Act (*Arbeidsongeschiktheidsverzekering* or *WAO*), as the collective expense is becoming a financial burden. In addition, a shortage in labor has heavily influenced the government's employment integration policy. Consequently, the Dutch government is doing everything it can to encourage reintegration – an example of this is the Dutch (Re)integration Disabled Act (*Wet (re)integratie arbeidsgehandicapten* or *WREA*). This law was implemented on July 1, 1998 and reflects the government's desire to provide a powerful push for the integration and reintegration of workers with disabilities.

To obtain this goal, existing legislation is being expanded and institutional obstacles that impede (re)integration are being removed [10]. The Netherlands has a number of laws that can facilitate funding for job coaching or step 5 of the Supported Employment approach. The organization that provides the person's benefits is responsible for his or her reintegration and the type of benefits received determines which law is applicable [3].

### 1.1. The research question

In The Netherlands Supported Employment has recently been used to assist people with chronic diseases. Without specialized support, the chronically disabled

experience great difficulties in finding work [7]. The application of the SE approach to a different target group may require model adaptations. To date, the literature does not describe the similarities or differences in SE model implementation among people with intellectual, psychiatric disabilities or with chronic disease labels.

This study examines the emphasis employment specialists placed on each SE step and compares the results across the three target groups (people with intellectual, psychiatric disabilities and chronic diseases). The results of this study can provide practical information to employment specialists and job placement agencies by providing insight into which steps of the SE process are emphasized by employment specialists by examining the average amount of time devoted to each step per target group. This information can optimize job coaching and assist job placement agencies with determining employment specialist caseloads. Since the mediation of clients is usually financed by external welfare benefit agencies, it is important that a job placement agency is able to project and estimate the number of persons who can be adequately served by the organization as well as determine staffing needs. The business prognoses of a company can then be adjusted for this estimate.

The hypothesis for this small scale study is:

*Are there differences in the amount of time spent and in the tasks performed when the five steps of Supported Employment are executed for people with intellectual disabilities, psychiatric disabilities and people with chronic diseases?*

## 2. The steps of supported employment

In The Netherlands Supported Employment consists of five distinct steps. Each of these steps are briefly described.

### 2.1. Step 1: Assessment

The individual with a disability is referred to an employment specialist on his/her own initiative or as a result of a referral from an agency that provides benefits to the person. Referrals must have a disability and be unable to find and maintain a job without coaching [8, 16,19]. During this phase the persons' competencies and barriers to work are assessed. In addition the person is asked about their preferences, previous work experience, and motivation [15,26]. After this information has been collected, certain tests may be conducted, like a psychological, a vocational or a stress test.

### 2.2. Step 2: Job finding

This step involves all activities related to locating suitable work [9,15], such as making contact with local employers to learn about work opportunities. Therefore, finding employment for people with disabilities requires an excellent knowledge of local labor market trends and business needs, in addition to perseverance and enthusiasm [18].

### 2.3. Step 3: Job analysis

During this phase more information is gathered about the business hiring practices and more specific information like the purpose of the position, the job tasks performed, the relative importance, frequency of job tasks, and the steps required to complete the job as well as the work environment. This comprehensive look at a job and the work environment increases the odds that there will be a good "match" between the job seeker and employer, thus increasing job retention [9].

### 2.4. Step 4: Matching

During this phase, the goal is to try and locate a match between the job and the job seeker. It is important to note that the candidate does not have to fully satisfy the employers need at placement, since the coaching and support provided in the workplace should relieve any discrepancy [8,15,20,25].

### 2.5. Step 5: Job coaching

Job coaching refers to providing one to one assistance with learning the job functions and achieving satisfactory performance in the workplace. Though this coaching is primarily for the employee, assistance is also provided to the employer [12,13,15,20].

The five steps may be executed by one employment specialist, yet this need not necessarily be the case. Within the framework of the Supported Employment methodology, the execution of the different steps can vary per employment specialist, per target group and per client.

### 3. Characteristics of the various target groups

The five SE steps, as described above, are in principle the same for all target groups, but the actual tasks performed within each step may differ depending on the disability group. These differences determine how the step is executed and applied to the target groups. The employment specialist will execute certain tasks of a specific step depending on the target group that is being served. Not every task will take the same amount of time, as the time required by the various target groups may vary. A review of the literature follows.

#### 3.1. *Supported Employment for people with an intellectual disability*

Employment specialists who work with persons who are intellectually disabled provide the most attention to the participant after the individual becomes employed [21]. While safety is of utmost importance for this group, this concern can lead to overprotection [23]. People with disabilities have indicated that they value the chance to prove that they can or cannot function at a certain level, for this group, SE is an effective method [22].

The training period required for an employee with an intellectual disability differs from that of a non-disabled worker. The job coach ensures that the employer is not unduly burdened with providing extensive additional training to the new employee with a disability by providing intensive, individualized coaching and the ‘adaptation’ of the work environment. This makes it possible for the employee with a disability to continue working even if he or she is not initially reaching the employer’s performance standards. On the job training assistance provides an added incentive for businesses to hire people with a significant disability [23]. In addition, the job coach may guarantee that the work is completed while the new employee is learning how to do the job. This also may encourage employers to hire individuals with disabilities since the fear of loss of productivity is alleviated [15].

Assuming that the aforementioned aspects influence the amount of time that an employment specialist spends on the step concerned, based on the literature, we expect that for persons with intellectual disabilities the greatest emphasis will be placed on job coaching or step 5 of Supported Employment.

#### 3.2. *Supported Employment for people with a psychiatric disability*

People with a mental disability or psychiatric history often have an extensive history with social services. This can result in a great lack of self-confidence and self-esteem as well as a high level of vulnerability and fear of failure [23]. People with psychiatric disabilities often report disappointment in their own capabilities or in the reactions they encounter in their surroundings. The relational side (being in close proximity with others, being able to work together, and standing up for themselves) can therefore play a much greater role than the issue of becoming re-accustomed to employment. When people want to work again they must learn to build up a social life. For this group, structure is very important, because structured activities enable them to get through the day in a meaningful way. SE offers good prospects to (ex-) psychiatric patients who wish to leave a sheltered work experience job [23].

If a job is sought for a person with a psychiatric disability, then the employment specialist must take into account the fact that participants should choose a position by themselves – if necessary, with coaching; they should also be the ones to establish contact with an employer [14]. Some authors believe that ‘Persons with psychiatric disabilities cannot be matched to a job, they must select a job. Job matching must be done with them and not to them’ [1].

Job coaching for this target group is less oriented to intervention on the work floor. A permanent placement in a workplace is usually not possible immediately. Often a series of temporary placements are necessary. Job seekers with a psychiatric background will often need to accumulate work experience and need a period in which they can determine what their interests are, learn employment skills and build up the necessary self-confidence [1,4]. Though “paid, competitive employment” is still the ultimate goal, before it can be realized several placements may be necessary [4].

When on the job coaching is needed, the employee cannot conceal his/her disability. To avoid being stigmatized, people may conceal their psychiatric background however. The employment specialist can assist the person with identifying the pros and cons of various positions, and with determining whether he or she satisfies job requirements. The employment specialist can also help the person write letters of application and improve their job interviewing skills [13].

Assuming that the aforementioned aspects influence the amount of time that an employment specialist

spends on the step concerned, the expectation is based on the literature, that for people with psychiatric disabilities the greatest emphasis will be placed on assessment (step 1) and job finding (step 2) of Supported Employment.

### 3.3. *Supported Employment for people with a chronic disease*

The majority of persons with chronic disabilities who are between the ages of 18 and 65 receive disability (WAO) benefits. Many people with a WAO grieve about a disrupted employment past. Oftentimes, much assistance is needed to facilitate the person's return to work. Large-scale projects that fund education or work experience, have shown little effect and are characterized by a high dropout rate, unless long-lasting individualized attention is guaranteed [5].

Though there are many types of chronic conditions, there are some common traits that are shared among people with chronic diseases. One aspect relates to insecurity [2,27]. This target group fears that their symptoms will occur or become worse and often there is also much doubt about personal functioning and abilities. In addition, due to their extensive contacts with health services, individuals often report feeling dependent on therapy or therapists' facilities [27]. Reactions from the environment also impact employment for people with chronic disabilities. In this respect, an important distinction is whether a condition is clearly visible. If the disabling condition is visible, this can elicit both understanding and aversion. If the condition is not visible, then a lack of understanding may result in the perception that the person should be able to independently perform the work.

These reactions also impact the person with a chronic disability. These reactions vary from being deviant or extra performance-oriented, to being passive, depressed or aggrieved and the feeling of victimization [27]. Aside from the condition itself, these added factors determine the 'illness burden'. Friends, family members, colleagues and a good work adaptation can positively influence the balance [27].

Persons with a chronic disease have a number of characteristics that hinder reintegration. They often lack self-confidence, have long histories of unemployment, frequently have not accepted the disease, and will need retraining [2,3,27]. Through assessment, these factors can be investigated and attempts can be made to overcome these barriers as much as possible and facilitate reintegration.

Assuming that these factors influence the amount of time that an employment specialist spends on the steps concerned, based on the literature we expect that for the target group with chronic disabilities the greatest emphasis will be placed on assessment (step 1) of Supported Employment.

## 4. Methods

The Investigators used data collected during a research project that studied the effects of Supported Employment on reintegrating persons with chronic diseases.

### 4.1. *Participants*

Nine organizations were approached and asked to participate in this investigation. Six organizations were chosen via a random sample from the directory of the Dutch Association of Supported Employment (NVSE) and three organizations had participated in the research project. These nine organizations were asked to randomly distribute a questionnaire to at least 1 and no more than 3 employment specialist(s) who are responsible for reintegrating one or more target group(s).

Fifteen ( $N = 15$ ) employment specialists who were familiar with the Supported Employment method and actively placed candidates in paid jobs took part in the study. Nine females and six males completed the questionnaire. The average age of the employment specialists was 40 years and 90% had completed a college education. The characteristics of the participants were representative for all employment specialists who work for an organization that is a member of the Dutch Association of Supported Employment (NVSE).

Seven of the respondents worked with persons with intellectual disabilities, three with people with psychiatric disabilities and five employment specialists worked with individuals with chronic diseases.

### 4.2. *Instrumentation*

A questionnaire was developed that was divided into five sections that correspond to each of the five steps of SE. The participants were asked to indicate how much time they expended on each step and to provide an estimate of the average amount of time they spent on each task within each of the five steps.

The employment specialists were instructed to base their averages on data from the past 15 clients they had

mediated using time cards that are either stored in a computer database or on a calendar. The organizations also had access to publications that describes the different tasks within each step of the SE model. This information serves as a service manual and establishes the ongoing time protocol.

Tasks completed when implementing SE were also examined. Activities that may be conducted when implementing each step of SE were based on a literature review [11,15,24]. Questions were openly formulated for the different steps and can be found in appendix A.

The employment specialists were asked to describe the activities or tasks they conducted with each of the SE process for the people they served. The travel time; that is, the time that employment specialists spent when traveling to a the participant's workplace was not included for Step 5 Job Coaching.

## 5. Results

This section provides a response to the following query:

*Are there differences in the amount of time spent and the tasks performed when the steps of Supported Employment are implemented for people with an intellectual disability, people with psychiatric disability and people with a chronic disease?*

The following information indicates the average number of hours needed to implement each step per target group. Subsequently, the formulated tasks focusing on the differences per target group are described.

### 5.1. Time

The time that the employment specialists spend per target group on the separate SE steps (average number of hours) is reported in Table 1.

Table 1 indicates that the time spent on Assessment, Step 1, was 14% for people with intellectual disabilities, 25% for people with psychiatric conditions, and 29% for the chronically disabled. The time devoted to Job Finding, Step 2 was 13% for people with intellectual disabilities, 18% for people with psychiatric conditions, and 22% for people with chronic disabilities. Independent of the target groups, Job Analysis, Step 3 and Matching, Step 4, received less emphasis with the total time spent on both steps varying from 13% to 18%.

The greatest amount of time, 60% of the total time, for the intellectually disabled group was spent on Job

Coaching step 5. Furthermore, results indicated that 44% of the time is spent on job coaching individuals with psychiatric disabilities, and 31% of the time is expended on persons with chronic disabilities. In regard to the chronically disabled, it should be noted that the differences in time expended on Job Coaching and Assessment is insignificant, at 31% and 29%, respectively.

People with intellectual disabilities require the most amount of intervention at 167.75 hrs of time. Whereas the average time expended working with people with psychiatric disabilities is 100.67 hours and 51.75 hours for individuals with chronic diseases.

Employment specialists who are responsible for serving two different target groups, namely the intellectually and the chronically disabled groups, or the intellectually and the psychiatrically disabled groups ( $N = 3$  employment specialists), indicated that mediation for the intellectually disabled target group takes significantly more time than for the chronically or psychiatrically disabled target groups.

Notably, there are significant differences in the distribution of the number of hours that are devoted to a person per target group for Assessment step one and Job Coaching step five. For the intellectually disabled, the standard deviation for step one is 12.45 and 46.43 for step five. For the psychiatrically disabled, the standard deviation for step one is 4.62 and 26.85 for step five. The chronically disabled target group has a standard deviation for step one of 20.25 and 12.41 for step five.

### 5.2. Variance analysis

Results show that people with intellectual disabilities require the greatest number of service hours, and that the least amount of time is devoted to people with chronic diseases. A variance analysis was used to determine if the difference in the time spent per step between the three target groups was significant. A 3 x 5 design (target group x amount of time spent on the 5 steps) revealed a significant effect for the three target groups ( $F(2,20) = 2.18, p < 0.10$ ). This means that the time spent in employment SE for the different target groups significantly differed. To ascertain where this difference lies, a variance analysis was conducted. The analysis revealed that this was due to the differences between SE steps three ( $F(2, 15) = 4.98, p = 0.03$ ), four ( $F(2, 15) = 3.78, p = 0.05$ ) and five ( $F(2,15) = 8.76, p = 0.01$ ).

Table 1  
Time the employment specialists spend per target group on the separate SE steps (average number of hours)

Step	People with an intellectual disability ( $n = 7$ )				People with a psychiatric disability ( $n = 3$ )				People with a chronic disease ( $n = 5$ )			
	Ave- rage	Min	Max	St. dev.	Ave- rage	Min	Max	St. dev.	Ave- rage	Min	Max	St. dev.
1 Assess- ment	23.75 (14%)	6	37.50	12.45	24.67 (25%)	22	30	4.62	14.95 (29%)	2.25	50	20.25
2 Job finding	21.65 (13%)	9	40	10.12	18.50 (18%)	7.50	24	9.53	11.15 (22%)	3.50	22.50	9.31
3 Job analysis	11.71 (7%)	8	18	3.90	6 (6%)	6	6	0	5.30 (10%)	0.50	12	4.47
4 Matching	10.07 (6%)	5	17	4.26	7 (7%)	5	8	1.73	4.35 (8%)	1	8	3.10
5 Job coaching	100.57 (60%)	50	200	46.43	44.50 (44%)	13.50	60	26.85	16 (31%)	2	30	12.41
Total	167.75	78	312.50	47.77	100.67	54	128	40.61	51.75	9.25	122.50	42.33

When the individual characteristics of the employment specialists such as age, sex, employer, and education were added to the variance analysis as covariates, steps 3, 4, and 5 were still significant (step 3  $F(6, 15) = 9.19$   $p < 0.01$ , step 4  $F(6, 15) = 6.53$   $p < 0.01$ , step 5  $F(6, 15) = 18.08$   $p = 0.00$ ).

### 5.3. Contents of the tasks

The questionnaire provided information on the tasks performed within each step of SE for each target group. These tasks as described in the previous paragraphs, are carried out in a similar fashion for each group. The differences are described below.

**Step 1 – Assessment** Assessment information is obtained in different ways for the target groups. Results show that the employment specialists who work with people with a psychiatric disability and the chronically disabled group never or rarely obtain information from family members; whereas, employment specialists who work with the intellectually disabled groups routinely obtain information from the family.

In addition, results indicate that employment specialists who work with the chronically disabled group rarely spend time observing the person, while those who work with people with intellectual disabilities and psychiatric disabilities do use direct observations to gain information.

**Step 2 – Job Finding** Results revealed that there is little to no difference in the tasks completed to locate work opportunities among the employment specialists who work with the various target groups.

**Step 3 – Job Analysis** Job analysis is one strategy used by employment specialists who work with the intellectually disabled group to divide the tasks that must be executed into single operations. Results also

show that employment specialists who work with the psychiatrically disabled group analyze the job tasks by interviewing the employer, performing the job for a day, or by touring the place of business. Those who work with the chronically disabled target group revealed that questions such as ‘what exactly do the tasks comprise’, ‘what do the tasks require of a person’ and ‘what degree of independence is required’ are most important.

**Step 4 – Matching** Employment specialists who work with the intellectually disabled target group utilize a checklist, such as registration methods and employee analysis forms to match people to jobs. However, the employment specialists who work with the other two target groups do not use these methods. In addition, results indicated that employment specialists who work with the intellectually disabled target group accompany their job seeker to job interviews, while those working with the other groups accompany the job seeker only when the service is requested.

**Step 5 – Job Coaching** Differences in job coaching, are seen in the areas of employee coaching, work adaptations, and long-term coaching. Employment specialists who work with the intellectually disabled group accompany the new employee to the workplace and teach him or her the job. Employment specialists who work with the psychiatrically disabled group come to the workplace on a regular basis and conduct evaluative talks with the employee. The employment specialists who work with the chronically disabled group indicate that the participants often do not need coaching on how to perform the job. However if needed, the employment specialists are on call to provide job coaching services.

Related to work adaptations, checklist or pictorial clues are often used by people with intellectual disabilities to assist them with carrying out job duties. For people with psychiatric disabilities, these adaptations are



often oriented to reducing work related stress, pressure, and the amount of work. For the chronically disabled, these adaptations are often oriented to the workplace.

There are also major differences in long-term job coaching. Results indicate that employment specialist provide on the job contact for persons with intellectual disabilities throughout their employment. In contrast those who serve the psychiatrically disabled and the chronically disabled groups only maintain contact by telephone and generally long-term follow up is concluded at some point in time.

## 6. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify the differences in the types of tasks performed and in the amount of time required to implement the five steps of Supported Employment approach for people with intellectual, mental/psychiatric, or chronic diseases.

The Netherlands research findings describe how employment specialists, who serve the different target groups, spend their time and the types of activities they conduct when implementing supported employment.

Based on a review of the literature, the authors expected that the greatest time would be spent on Job Coaching step 5 for people with intellectual disabilities. These results confirm this expectation. Another expectation was that the greatest amount of time would be spent on Assessment step 1 and Job Finding step 2 for people with psychiatric disabilities. However, the results revealed that similar amounts of time are spent on Job Coaching (step 5), and on Assessment (step 1).

The literature indicates that many people with mental disabilities wish to conceal their psychiatric background from their employers to avoid being stigmatized. However, the results of this research indicate that the employment specialists do assist their clients in the workplace, which means that those served in this study did not conceal their disability. This may shed light on why the expectation on how time would be expended for this group was not supported.

The authors expected that Assessment (step 1) would be emphasized for the chronically disabled group. The results show that for the chronically disabled target group the greatest amount of time is devoted to Job Coaching (step 5). However, it should be noted that the difference in time between Job Coaching (31%) and Assessment is insignificant at 31% and 29% respectively.

A comparison between the three groups revealed that for each the greatest amount of the employment specialist's time is spent on job coaching, but there are significant differences in these figures. Employment specialists spend an average of more than 100 hours or 60% of their time on Job Coaching people with intellectual disabilities. Whereas, 44% of employment specialists time is spent on this activity for people with psychiatric disabilities and on average 33% of time is spent coaching people with chronic disabilities. Although job coaching is the most time consuming activity, results show that for people with psychiatric disabilities and chronic disabilities the first two steps, Assessment and Job Finding, also receive significant attention.

It is important to note that the results of this study are based on the average amount of time spent on each of the 5 SE steps. The average amount of time does not mean that this is the norm. Nor do these results support providing the same approach to individuals based on their disability labels. The amount of time required to effectively assisting a person with a disability and the tasks performed are highly dependent upon the individual being served, the workplace, the type of job, and the employment specialist's experience and caseload. The description of the types of activities performed with each step of supported employment and the average number of hours that an employment specialist devotes to a person may provide guidance to job placement agencies when they are attempting to determine staff to client ratios. This research indicates employment specialists who work with people who have intellectual disabilities (average 167.75 hrs. per client) can serve significantly fewer individuals than employment specialists who work with the psychiatrically disabled (average 100.67 hrs. per client) or those with chronic diseases (average 51.75 hrs. per client). The differences in the amount of time expended relate to the number of hours that are required to provide Job Coaching (step 5). Nevertheless, the distribution among the groups varies quite a lot for step one and five, and this puts the average results into perspective.

## 7. Conclusions

The social welfare agency usually pays for vocational services. If a job placement agency can estimate average caseload size, then the organization may be able to project hiring needs and number of persons who can be effectively served by existing personnel. This information becomes interesting given recent develop-

ments in the area of privatization among reintegration organizations. Many of the organizations that assist people with a disability using a Supported Employment approach originated from the support service industry. Commercialization of the reintegration market is also occurring in the soft sector. In the past, government subsidies or special funds were their largest source of revenue; today, organizations must be able to operate independently, without subsidies. They must also be able to compete with other mediating organizations.

The amount of time that employment specialists spend on a SE step by specific disability groups provides insight into how their colleagues implement Supported Employment. This can provide staff with information on what to do and may offer new insights on how to fulfill their job.

As described in the results, in most instances the enrollment of clients at the various job placement organizations and payment for the reintegration projects is carried out by executive agencies. If a job placement organization depends on client enrollment and payment for reintegration projects, employment specialists believe that this fact, in large part, determines the time they can devote to a client – and therefore, determines indirectly the tasks they can carry out to achieve reintegration. Although Supported Employment promotes a highly individualized approach to vocational assistance, in practice under the current social security structure the executive agency often dictates to what extent a program will be customized and tailored to the individual.

The results of this study indicate that in practice, other points of attention – in terms of time as well as in terms of tasks – are important for the different target groups. This information may help job placement organizations adapt the Supported Employment model to better serve the different target groups. Information on which step(s) to emphasize and task contents may be helpful to practitioners.

Furthermore, the ability to perform certain tasks may require specific competencies on the part of the employment specialist. The employment specialist's personality, skills, and knowledge needed to serve for a particular target group are different for the various target groups [6]. This information can also help job placement agencies develop a profile for employment specialists which can assist with recruiting qualified staff. This article documents current practices but further research is necessary to describe an employment specialist profile suitable for the various target groups.

## Appendix

The formulated questions/tasks are:

**Step 1:** 1. talks with the candidate (quantity and contents of the talks); 2. observation of the candidate; 3. obtaining information by requesting written material from other agencies; 4. obtaining information from family members or other friends of the candidate and 5. reporting.

**Step 2:** 1. exploration of the regional labor market for jobs; 2. keeping up with regional developments in the area of employment; 3. making contact with employers; 4. preparing contact with the employer; 5. meeting with the employer; 6. the actual negotiation with the employer; and 7. potential follow-up meetings with the employer.

**Step 3:** 1. gathering information about the position; 2. information about the workplace; 3. analysis of nature of the production process; and 4. analysis of the tasks comprised by the position concerned.

**Step 4:** 1. making use of a checklist; 2. comparison between job analysis and the employee analysis; 3. preparation for the job interview; 4. contact between potential employee and employer; 5. charting financial consequences of having a job for the potential employee; and 6. charting financial consequences of employing a client for the employer.

**Step 5:** 1. coaching of the employer; 2. coaching of the employee; 3. orientation and acquaintance; 4. training and intervention; 5. realizing adaptations; 6. stabilization and fading coaching; and 7. long-term coaching.

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