



JOB SEEKING SKILLS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS AND DISADVANTAGED GRADUATES - WHO MIGHT HELP AND HOW

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Abstract:

Career guidance policies and services are designed to assist individuals at any point in their lives to manage their careers, including making informed occupational and education and training choices. They can help to ensure that individuals' decisions are based on self-assessments and labour market information, thus reducing market failures. For developing and transition economies, most of which have limited resources, career guidance services can increase the efficiency of the use of scarce education and training resources. The services also promote social equity and inclusion by helping to ensure equal access to information on labour market and education opportunities (Lmber, Booth, et al., 2015). The purpose of this article is to discuss job seeking skills for disadvantaged and graduates with special needs, family contribution and transition programs.

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1. Introduction

Lmber, Both, et al (2015) noted that most, if not all, European countries provide Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs), which require benefit recipients, sometimes involving employers, to fulfil obligations to seek and take work as a condition of their benefits. In many countries these are very large scale, with spending representing a noticeable proportion of Gross Domestic Product and high political importance. International experience confirms that the impact of ALMPs is often difficult to prove and less than hoped for. Not all have a positive impact. They often include wasted or deadweight costs that arise when the results are no different from what would have

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happened in the absence of the program. Employment subsidies have ambiguous effects: their net employment effect may be much less than the number of subsidised jobs, amounting to an unearned subsidy to the employer. The findings of various reviews of ALMPs imply that the programs as currently practised are not a solution to the problems of large-scale unemployment, Kuddo 2009, in (Lmber, Both, et al., 2015).

Tunstall, et al. (2012) presented a report that describes the task for jobseekers in the UK labour market in 2010–11. It focuses on young jobseekers with limited education and skills, and particularly on those from disadvantaged neighborhoods. The research covers three areas of the UK with varying levels of unemployment. It explores the availability of jobs and the number of jobseekers. It reports interviews with employers and young jobseekers. It also reveals the results of a unique experiment involving over 2,000 applications by fictional candidates to real jobs.

The research shows that:

- The recession has affected job supply in all areas. Intense competition means advertised jobs can be filled within days or even hours. Even well-qualified candidates can face repeated rejection. Jobseekers without constant access to the internet are at a disadvantage.
- Competition varies between places and types of work. Widening the types of job or distance searched over does not always reduce competition. Good local intelligence is vital.
- Despite widespread belief in ‘postcode discrimination’, there was no statistically significant difference in the success rates of fictional applicants from areas with poor reputations or other places.
- Location does matter. Many employers overtly prefer candidates who live nearby (Tunstall, et al., 2012).

In their study, Ingold, Valizade (2017) draws on an original comparative survey of employers in the UK and Denmark to analyse the role of active labour market programmes (ALMPs) in employers' recruitment of disadvantaged groups. Using the framework of Bonet *et al.* to conceptualise agencies delivering ALMPs as labour market intermediaries (LMIs), the effect of ALMPs on employers' recruitment was tested against organisational factors involving firm size and selection criteria. Although ALMPs marginally increased employers' probability of recruiting the long-term unemployed in both countries and lone parents in Denmark, their effect was negligible compared with firm size and employers' selection criteria. While ALMP agencies have the potential to increase employers' recruitment of disadvantaged groups, this is constrained when they act as basic ‘information provider’ LMIs. ALMP agencies' inability to act effectively as ‘matchmaker’ LMIs leads to a failure to overcome rigid intra-organisational barriers to such recruitment (Ingold, Valizade, 2017).

Lmber, Booth, et al. (2015) provided the following definition of the disadvantaged:

- inability for whatever reason, to compete fairly for jobs with the majority of others in a realistically chosen sector of the labour market;

- inability because the person lacks some relevant factor that might lead to success, be it confidence, knowledge, skills, or beliefs;
- for whatever reason includes all and any of those factors, and may be compounded by discrimination, legislation, poor support programmes, lack of educational facilities and so on (Lmber, Booth, et al., 2015).

2. Finding Jobs for Handicapped and Disadvantaged Graduates the Placement Team

The following type of people can make valuable contributions to the placement effort.

- 1) Vocational school staff familiar with the student to be placed. These staff are generally teachers, aides, and counselors who will know the capabilities and limitations of the student and will be situated to help determine if employer needs and student capabilities are compatible.
- 2) Vocational school placement staff. Placement staff are aware of openings in various occupations and may also know which employers are most willing to hire handicapped students, and which plants or offices present the fewest physical barriers to the handicapped employee.
- 3) Employers and labor organizations. Employers and labor organizations are usually presented on advisory committees, and many vocational programs maintain extensive contact with them through work-study programs, on-the-job training programs and coordination of training efforts with apprenticeship committee requirements.
- 4) The handicapped student. A placement is more likely to be successful if it is in accord with the student's interests and aspirations. The handicapped-disadvantaged student should be as involved in working with placement personnel as would any student. Furthermore, the handicapped student, by demonstrating his or her expertise to visiting employers or at the employer's place of business, can help to overcome many of the concerns that an employer might feel.
- 5) Rehabilitation agencies, school special education departments, advocacy groups, and other organizations with a special concern for the handicapped. Such groups can often provide suggestions about integrating handicapped people in the work setting, and some of them may provide direct services in job placement. Identifying agencies and the services they provide is a task that must be undertaken locally (Dahl, Appleby, and Lipe, 1973, p230).

Successful job placement of handicapped and disadvantaged persons is contingent upon several factors. Wolfensberger (1967) lists several common errors of job placement workers:

- placement when the trainee is not yet emotionally prepared;
- insufficient briefing and training for a special job;
- inadequate communication with the supervisor about the characteristics of the individual;

- inadequate attention to such details as transportation;
- premature closure of the person as rehabilitated (Brolin, 1982, p231).

Wolfensberger indicated that in order for placement workers to be successful, they must have an understanding of the human beings associated with the handicap, believe the persons can be vocationally successful, believe they, themselves, can be successful in placing them, and be capable of exploiting all permitted flexibility. He cautions that traditional placement techniques may not always be effective with persons with handicaps and recommends apprenticeship-type arrangements and on-the-job training. He also feels traditional state agency services often give up hope too readily, whereas agencies specializing in the placement of the handicapped are more successful (Brolin, 1982, p230).

The job placement person's attitudes about their role in the job seeking and securing process is crucial to the success of the person with a handicap. They must obtain all relevant background information that is significant to placement decisions. Vocational counselors must be able to work closely with other disciplines, employers, and the individual's family in orchestrating this important culminating phase of the vocational preparation process. The counselor must know the employment market and be in contact with such agencies as the state employment service to ascertain appropriate possibilities. Counselors must listen to handicapped and disadvantaged persons' statements of interests and needs and be willing to get involved as much as appears necessary. The role of the vocational counselor in preparing the client to seek, secure, and maintain employment is critical. With some individuals, a considerable amount of time will have to be spent throughout the vocational preparation process, so by the time those individuals are thoroughly evaluated and trained they will have the necessary skills to get the jobs in which they are interested and for which they are trained to perform. Vocational counselors must be willing to devote time and effort on the individual's behalf. This may require working very closely with the employer before and after the handicapped or disadvantaged person is placed, to assure a smooth transition and a period of learning and support that may be vitally needed. Counselors must become strong advocates of their clients and remain available to them as long as their services are needed (Brolin, 1982, p. 231).

When the promising job opportunities are identified, the five steps outlined below will help to achieve successful placements. The steps are important in the placement of any student but are particularly important in placing the handicapped and disadvantaged:

- 1) Gear training programs for placement. The concern for placement may begin when the student is accepted into the program. This concern may lead you to include instruction in job-seeking skills, use of public transportation, and interpersonal skills needed on the job as well as instruction in skills and knowledge needed to perform job tasks. Students should emerge with competencies adequate for them to succeed in job hunting and on the job.

- 2) Make effective employer contacts. When disabled persons are enrolled in your program, you should begin to alert employers to their upcoming 'availability and to convince them of the practicality of employing disabled people.
- 3) Deal with employer concerns. The employer wants an effective employee whom it is profitable to have on the payroll. When you present a handicapped or disadvantaged person for employment, you must be able to deal effectively with concerns raised by the employer that relate to the desirability of having this particular handicapped person on the payroll.
- 4) Smooth the transition to work. In this step, you will help the employer solve whatever problems arise as the handicapped student enters the work force.
- 5) Conduct placement follow-ups. Some placements don't go smoothly. Generally speaking, you can overcome placement difficulties if you catch the problem in time and work with the employer and your former student to eliminate the source of the trouble (Dahl, Appleby, and Lipe, 1978, p243).

2.1 Job Seeking Skills

Placement staff of the Nassau County (New York) BOCES, recommended the following as a minimum in each area:

- how to complete an application blank and/or resume;
- how to act effectively in an interview;
- the job applicant should know what the company does, the kind of jobs they have, and what kind of people they hire;
- the job applicant should be neat and clean and wear clothes appropriate to the type of work being sought.
- the applicant should present as much positive information as possible during the initial portion of the interview.
- the applicant's answers to questions about disability, job history, institutionalization, etc., should be brief and stated in a way that relieves the employer's concern (Dahl, Appleby, and Lipe, 1978, p244).

Poor job seeking skills are responsible for much of the unemployment among handicapped persons. Development of these skills should be one of the many responsibilities of vocational counselors in preparing their clients for employment, but often is minimized. It is important for individuals to know that the first few minutes of a job interview are extremely critical in employment decision making. Some problems individuals may have, are the inability to explain being in a special class, the inability to explain a lengthy period of unemployment, a poor work record, institutionalization, a lack of specific skills, poor personal appearance, and odd mannerisms. They also encounter such problems as not knowing where and how to find job leads or to make an appointment for an interview, ignorance of waiting room behavior, not knowing how to fill out an application blank, and ignorance of actual interview behaviors (Brolin, 1982, p231).

Vasa and Steckelbery said that appropriate job placement for a student is an essential concern of both the administrator and the instructor. The administrator should look for effective ways to make the job placement process less complicated. It is important that a job placement for disadvantaged or handicapped students give room for growth and advancement and that the student's potential is considered and not ignored. Having a job placement coordinator for the vocational special needs' students should ease the process for both students and instructors. The coordinator can assist with job development, job readiness, the transition process, individual job counseling, and follow-up services. Working with the VOSE coordinators, instructors, counselors, students, and parents, the job placement coordinator can greatly contribute to the achievement of job placement goals for each handicapped student.

The administrator with the instructors, if a job placement cannot be employed, should develop appropriate guidelines for job placement. These should include guidelines for:

A. Preparing students for interviews:

- interview role playing;
- job lead or possibilities for students;
- interview appointments;
- stressing competencies.

B. Follow-up and evaluation of student:

- interview experiences;
- adjustment to work site (Meers, 1987, p363).

2.2 Job Leads

Some of the major sources of job leads are: family and personal friends and acquaintances, employers' radio and television publicity, newspaper ads, state employment agencies, private employment agencies, state vocational rehabilitation agencies, chamber of commerce, and other community organizations (Brolin, 1982, p231).

2.3 Family Contribution

The parents' inflections, interest, and estimation of importance clue the student as to the attractiveness of certain roles within one's life. Parents stimulate the fantasies of children and adolescents which, at times, includes ideas about jobs, roles, responsibilities, and accomplishments. This happens with the normal student. Parents of disadvantaged or disabled students imagine that their son or daughter will be unable to handle the responsibilities or meet a certain level of prerequisite attributes. But parents are often not accurate as to what abilities are needed for a job. The great flaw in this delicate balance is that parents and educators often operate upon imagination rather than information. Both need a great quantity and quality of information about occupations and other career roles, sexism influences, the student's abilities, what other

individuals with handicaps have achieved, and the cooperative efforts of home and school in providing the appropriate training (Brolin and Kokaska, 1979, p300).

Most parents find it hard to believe that their handicapped or disadvantaged son or daughter could achieve a satisfying competitive job after barely making it through school and with so low an academic level (in many cases). Therefore, the family may discourage their member from expecting much from vocational training and placement efforts. Vocational workers will need to realize this and involve family members meaningfully and early in the vocational planning process to gain their cooperation and support. The parents or entire family should be provided detailed information about the nature of the job and how they can be of assistance in supporting their son or daughter. The family should serve as a sounding board when the person comes home from work, and should help explain, if they can, things that were found confusing. They should display excitement and pleasure with the individual's independence. If there are any serious problems, they should contact the vocational counselors immediately. They are as much of a part of the entire operation as anyone. At the same time, they must not meddle and become a nuisance to the employer so that they affect the person's employment (Brolin, 1982, p233).

Vasa and Steckelberg pointed out that within the past two decades, the perceived relationship between the home and the school has undergone a major transformation. Whereas, in the past, parents were not regarded as particularly useful in contributing to the educational process, their more extensive involvement in the school is now increasingly viewed by educators as essential. This change in attitude about parent involvement has been brought about by several factors:

- passage of legislation (specifically Public Law 94-142 and Public Law 94-482) that delegates certain responsibilities to parents in their children's education,
- the increasing realization that parents play a key role in the education of their children, and
- the realization that parents also play an important role in the vocational choices of their children (Meers, 1987, p345).

Phelps and Ronald believe that the family still provides an important influence on the future employment of students. However, the school system is expanding its role by providing experiences that will make the students aware of thousands of occupations on hundreds of career ladders that will provide not only employment but also insight as to requirements for advancement and for job satisfaction (Phelps and Ronald, 1979, p43).

2.4 Transition Programs

Transition from school to work is currently a national mandate from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) and the Carl D. Perkins Act, which underscores the importance of transition for special needs' students. There are a number of key factors involved in transition from school to work. Literature has

identified several consistent program components found in most models of transition, including:

- functional curriculum: instruction that focuses on independent living skills, particularly vocational and employability skills, but on social skills as well.
- integrated school services: instruction and support services that are provided in the least restrictive environment and that increase interaction with handicapped students.
- community based instruction: instruction that is conducted outside the classroom and in or near actual employment setting.
- parental involvement: utilization of family members for instruction, reinforcement, and assistance with support systems.
- integrate cooperation: interaction and utilization of various agencies and organizations for the purpose of coordinating services that facilitate the transition process.

These program elements are essential to the transition process and enhance instruction, support, and coordination, which are fundamental for the successful transition from school to work (Meers, 1987, p128).

There is no way to identify all the jobs people with handicaps can perform. People with various handicaps are functioning successfully in almost every occupation that exists (Brolin, 1982, p234). Some examples of jobs for persons with various disabilities are presented next. Disadvantaged persons can perform the same jobs as well.

2.5 Examples of Jobs for Persons with Physical Disabilities

A. The following are examples of jobs persons with physical disabilities can successfully perform:

- epilepsy: parts salesperson, telephone solicitor, short order cook, house cleaner and nurse aide.
- paraplegia: administrative clerk, accounting clerk, protective officer, general inspector, dental technician-crown and bridge, television and radio repairer.
- quadriplegia: reporter, receptionist, electronics assembler, business programmer.
- cerebral palsy. television and radio repairer, furniture upholsterer, cashier, computer operator, and mail clerk.
- multiple handicaps: waiter/waitress, barber, machine presser, printer, and reproduction technician.

B. The following are examples of jobs persons with hearing impairments can successfully perform:

- assistant drafter, animal caretaker, warehouse manager, auto mechanic, and horticultural worker.

C. The following are examples of jobs persons with visual impairments can successfully perform:

- X-ray attendant, piano technician, disc jockey, accountant, and watch repairer.

D. The following are examples of jobs mentally retarded persons can successfully perform:

- building maintenance worker, carpenter, library assistant, medical technician, and paint worker (Vocational Preparation of Persons with Handicaps, Donn E. Brodin, 1982).

2.7 Some Disadvantaged Groups in the United States culture

A. Native American

Employment, income, and jobs among native Americans are constant sources of problems (p. 127). Some of the reasons American Indians are so underrepresented in the professional and paraprofessional fields are because of cultural conflicts, social and economic problems, as well as enormous health problems, alcoholism, and below poverty level incomes. In addition, racial problems, which encourage poor educational systems, oftentimes result in frustration. The only practical solution for improving health care, educational and economic status, and the quality of life of the native American, is to educate American Indians on professional and paraprofessional levels so they can assume decision making roles in the non-Indian world, as well as in their own Indian world (Wall, 1976, p135).

B. Mexican Americans

Vocational education is not all the education that the Mexican American needs in order to function in the world of work, and in order to become a contributing member of society. He needs general education, as well (Wall, p. 159, 1976). Mobility in the occupations' structure via vocational education for the linguistically and culturally different is contingent upon a reduction in stereotyped attitudes of the major members of society, the employers (p. 161). Generally, Mexican Americans are characterized by low levels of education attainment, low occupational status, and low incomes. The unemployment of Mexican Americans is at least twice that of the Anglo-Americans, and their low participation rate in the labor force points to considerable hidden unemployment. About three out of ten Mexican-Americans are living below the poverty level (p. 157). The continuing inability systems to expand vocational education opportunities sufficiently to serve all children and adults who need it is a growing concern not limited to a geographic area or specific location. Among those who most need the benefits of vocational education are the rural and urban Mexican Americans. One important function of vocational education is to enable students to fulfill their career aspirations more effectively. Job satisfaction and self concept, which contribute to the self worth of the Mexican American, are traceable to his career choice during educational preparation. Relevance of instruction and proper counseling services are reinforcements of a choice well made (Wall, 1976, p161).

C. Black Americans

Moody and Sheppard indicated that numerous factors have been cited that affect the performance of minority group members, especially blacks, in vocational education programs. Included are:

- a. blacks' perceptions of certain occupations as being "unworthy," demeaning, or something for blacks only;
- b. historical and contemporary forms of discrimination and socioeconomic deprivation experienced in such areas as education, income, and housing;
- c. misconceptions and prejudices on the part of vocational education decision makers;
- d. cultural and value differences; and,
- e. attitudes of blacks toward vocational education (p. 116).

Vocational education alone cannot solve such problems as discrimination, historical biases, cultural value differences, and negative social attitudes that face most black employees. It can only be a major part of a total system working together to enable black youth to cope with the problems of realizing complete job success (p. 108). More must be done to enhance the employment preparation of all American youth. It is important that black youths be given a broader preparatory vocational curriculum which interacts with a larger socioeconomic system to better prepare them for work (Wall, 1976, p107).

3. Conclusion

A comprehensive career education program for disabled students should include five developmentally sequential phases, or levels. These phases are: career awareness, career exploration, pre-vocational education, vocational education, and vocational reeducation. A comprehensive career program for today's disabled students must be future-oriented and must reflect the skills and attitudes that will be required for them to function in the society and economy of their future, the 21st century. The ultimate objective of such a program is to prepare today's disabled students to become self-sufficient, independent, and contributing adult members of society, both now and in the future world of the information age Cain, Jr. and Taber (1987) in Alsaadat (2020).

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